About the Book

The Arabic title is Iʿtiqad Ahl al-Sunnah, meaning The Creed of Ahl al-Sunnah. It was written by Imam Abu Bakr al-Ismaʿili. The book gathers the beliefs that the scholars of Hadith held and taught.

The main purpose is to explain the creed of Ahl al-Sunnah using the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the way of the early Muslim scholars. The text covers Allah's Names and Attributes, the Qur'an, Qadar, Iman, the Hereafter, the Companions, leadership, worship, manners and the way Muslims should deal with one another.

About the Author

His name was Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Ibrahim ibn Ismaʿil al-Ismaʿili al-Jurjani. He was a major Imam, Hafiz, jurist and scholar of Hadith. He was born in the year 277 AH and died in 371 AH. He studied Hadith from a young age and became known for his knowledge, memory, understanding and reliability.

Scholars praised his knowledge and position. He was counted among the leading Hadith scholars of his time.

Some of His Works

Among the works listed for him are: his Muʿjam of his teachers, al-Mustakhraj ʿala Sahih al-Bukhari, an introduction to Sahih al-Bukhari containing comments and benefits, al-Musnad al-Kabir, Musnad ʿUmar, Musnad ʿAli, Musnad Yahya al-Ansari, Musnad Yahya ibn Abi Kathir, al-Fawa'id, al-ʿAwali, Hadith of al-Aʿmash, a collection of Hadith from a group of scholars, questions in Hadith and other writings in Fiqh and creed. One of his works is this short creed. It explains the belief of the people of Hadith and Sunnah.

The Method of the People of Hadith

Their way is to hold firmly to the Book of Allah and what is authentically reported from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. They accept what the revelation teaches without changing its meaning, denying it or inventing a belief that has no proof. They believe that the safest and clearest path is the path followed by the Companions and the early scholars of Islam.

The Creed

1. **Holding to the Qur'an and Sunnah** – The people of Hadith hold firmly to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger ﷺ.

2. **Accepting what Allah and His Messenger taught** – They believe in what Allah says about Himself and what the Messenger ﷺ authentically taught about Allah.

3. **Allah's Beautiful Names** – They believe Allah is called by His Beautiful Names.

4. **Allah's Attributes** – They affirm the Attributes Allah affirmed for Himself without asking how they are.

5. **Allah's Hand** – They affirm what is authentically stated about Allah's Hand without asking how it is.

6. **Allah's Rising over the Throne** – They believe Allah rose over the Throne as He stated, without asking how. The exact nature of this is not compared to creation.

7. **Allah is the Creator** – Allah owns His creation and is completely independent of it. Creation needs Him. Allah creates what He wills and judges as He wills. He is not questioned about what He does while creation will be questioned.

8. **Allah is called by the Names He named Himself** – Allah is called by the Names He gave Himself and by the Names authentically taught by His Messenger ﷺ.

9. **Nothing escapes Allah** – Nothing on earth or in the heavens is beyond Allah's knowledge or power.

10. **Allah does not have created weaknesses** – Allah is far above sleep, tiredness and other weaknesses of created beings.

11. **Allah created Adam عليه السلام** – Adam عليه السلام was created by Allah.

12. **The hearts are under Allah's control** – The hearts of the servants are under Allah's control. He turns them as He wills. This does not mean Allah resembles His creation.

13. **No invented language about Allah** – They do not describe Allah using invented expressions such as saying He is a body or using other terms that the Qur'an and Sunnah did not use.

14. **Allah's Names are not created** – They do not say Allah's Names are created. His Names belong to Him.

15. **Allah has true Attributes** – They affirm that Allah has hearing, sight, knowledge, power, strength, speech and other Attributes established in revelation.

16. **Allah is All-Knowing and All-Powerful** – Allah has perfect knowledge, power, hearing, sight and speech. His Attributes are perfect and are not like the attributes of creation.

17. **Muslims will see Allah in the Hereafter** – The believers will see their Lord in the Hereafter as taught in the authentic texts. They do not describe exactly how this seeing will happen.

18. **No one can leave Allah's knowledge** – No one can escape Allah's knowledge. A servant cannot defeat Allah or make something happen outside His knowledge and will.

19. **The Qur'an is the Speech of Allah** – The Qur'an is the Speech of Allah and is not created. It is recited by people, written in the Mushaf and memorized in hearts. The human voice, writing and actions are created but the Qur'an itself is Allah's Speech.

20. **Allah alone is the true Creator** – Allah is the Creator in reality. The servants perform their actions but Allah created them and their abilities. Allah guides whom He wills and allows whom He wills to go astray according to His wisdom.

21. **Good and bad happen by Allah's decree** – Good, bad, sweetness and bitterness happen by Allah's decree. Nothing occurs outside His knowledge and decree.

22. **Creation needs Allah** – All creation is in need of Allah at every moment. Allah needs no one.

23. **Allah descends as authentically reported** – They believe the authentic Hadith about Allah descending to the lowest heaven. They accept it without asking how and without comparing Allah to creation.

24. **The Hereafter and seeing Allah** – They believe in the Hereafter and in the authentic reports about the believers seeing Allah.

25. **Intercession** – They believe in the intercession that Allah permits. Intercession belongs to Allah and only happens with His permission.

26. **No Tajsim or false comparison** – They do not believe Allah is like created bodies. They do not compare His Attributes with the attributes of people.

27. **Iman includes belief, speech and action** – Iman is belief and action. It increases through obedience and decreases through sin.

28. **A Muslim is not declared outside Islam merely because of a sin** – A person who faces the Qiblah and remains upon Tawhid is not declared outside Islam simply because of a sin. The text warns against making unlawful declarations about Muslims.

29. **Difference over abandoning Salah** – The early scholars differed about a person who deliberately abandons the obligatory prayer until its time ends. Some regarded abandoning Salah as disbelief based on the texts about prayer. This is presented as an issue in which scholars differed.

30. **Abandoning other obligations** – A group of scholars did not declare a Muslim outside Islam simply for abandoning another obligation while still accepting that Allah made it obligatory.

31. **Islam and Iman** – Many scholars used Islam and Iman together and explained that a person's religion includes inward belief, outward words and actions.

32. **Iman is accepted through what Allah accepts** – Iman is not accepted when a person knowingly rejects what Allah has required. True Iman includes submission to Allah.

33. **Meaning of Islam** – The text discusses scholars who used the words Islam and Iman in closely connected ways. Islam includes submission to Allah and following His commands.

34. **People of Tawhid may be removed from the Fire** – Allah may remove sinful people of Tawhid from the Fire through the intercession of those He permits and through His mercy.

35. **The Hawd is true** – The Prophet's ﷺ Hawd, the special pool given to him, is true.

36. **The Hawd is real** – They affirm the Hawd without rejecting it or turning it into only a symbolic meaning.

37. **The Mizan is true** – The Scale on the Day of Judgment is true.

38. **The Reckoning is true** – The accounting and reckoning on the Day of Judgment are true.

39. **No specific person is guaranteed Paradise or Hell without evidence** – They do not say that a particular Muslim is definitely from Paradise or Hell unless there is evidence from revelation. They hope for good people and fear for sinners.

40. **The people of Paradise are known through revelation** – When authentic revelation gives the good news that a particular person is from Paradise, they accept it and testify according to that evidence.

41. **Punishment of the grave** – The punishment of the grave is true for those who deserve it. Allah may forgive whom He wills. The questioning and events of the grave are part of belief in the unseen.

42. **Munkar and Nakir** – They believe in the questioning in the grave by the angels described in the authentic reports.

43. **Avoiding unnecessary disputes** – They avoid useless arguments, fighting and personal disputes about the religion. They follow the Qur'an and authentic Sunnah instead of making religion into endless argument.

44. **The Rightly Guided Caliphs** – They recognize the leadership of Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه after the Messenger of Allah ﷺ because the Companions chose and accepted him.

45. **Umar رضي الله عنه** – After Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه came the leadership of Umar ibn al-Khattab رضي الله عنه.

46. **Uthman رضي الله عنه** – After Umar رضي الله عنه came the leadership of Uthman ibn Affan رضي الله عنه. The people of the Shura agreed upon him.

47. **Ali رضي الله عنه** – After Uthman رضي الله عنه came the leadership of Ali ibn Abi Talib رضي الله عنه.

48. **Loving the Companions** – They recognize the excellence of the Companions رضي الله عنهم and give them the respect given to them in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

49. **The early Muhajirun and Ansar** – They especially recognize the virtue of the earliest Muhajirun and Ansar whom Allah praised.

50. **Respect for all Companions** – They do not insult or attack the Companions. They speak about them with respect and leave the disputes that happened between them to Allah.

51. **Fear of Allah even with good deeds** – A believer does not feel completely safe from Allah's punishment simply because of good actions. A believer combines hope in Allah with fear of falling short.

52. **Allah's mercy and brotherhood** – They believe in Allah's mercy and they maintain the rights of Muslim brotherhood. The believers are brothers.

53. **Love for Abu Bakr**, **Umar**, **Uthman and Ali** – They love Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali رضي الله عنهم and recognize their virtue.

54. **Obedience to legitimate Muslim leadership** – They obey Muslim rulers in what is right and do not obey anyone in disobedience to Allah. Their approach seeks to prevent unnecessary bloodshed and division.

55. **Respecting the Companions who were alive during the Prophet's time** – The Companions who lived during the time of the Messenger ﷺ are respected. The text warns against insulting any of them.

56. **Jumu'ah and congregational prayer** – They attend Jumu'ah and congregational prayer behind Muslim leaders, whether those leaders are righteous or sinful. The validity of the prayer is not made dependent on the personal perfection of the Imam.

57. **Jihad with Muslim leaders** – They recognize Jihad under Muslim leadership when its proper conditions are present. The text states this even if the leader has personal sins.

58. **Making du'a for rulers** – They make du'a that Muslim rulers are corrected and guided. They do not make du'a for their destruction.

59. **No armed rebellion** – They do not believe in taking up the sword against Muslim rulers merely because of their sins.

60. **Avoiding fighting during internal Fitnah** – They avoid fighting during internal Muslim Fitnah when the matter is confused and Muslims are fighting one another.

61. **Unity with a Muslim leader** – When the Muslims have a recognized leader and unity, they reject rebellion that breaks that unity without a valid Islamic basis.

62. **Islam is the home of the Muslims** – The lands where Islam is openly practiced, Salah is established and Muslims live securely are treated as Muslim lands. The text warns against carelessly declaring Muslim lands to be lands of disbelief.

63. **Good deeds alone do not guarantee Paradise** – No one enters Paradise merely because of his actions. A person's good actions are a means but entry into Paradise is ultimately by Allah's mercy. A person should never become proud of his worship.

64. **Allah's mercy is the reason for salvation** – The believer works hard in obedience while knowing that Allah's mercy is greater than his actions. The Prophet ﷺ taught that even he enters Paradise by Allah's mercy.

65. **Death occurs at the appointed time** – When a person dies, he dies at the time Allah had already appointed for him.

66. **Provision is from Allah** – Allah provides every living creature with its provision. A person's provision is written and no one can take away what Allah has decreed for him.

67. **Shayatin and whispering** – Allah created devils who whisper to people and try to mislead them.

68. **Protection from Shaytan** – Shaytan may whisper to a person and try to deceive him. The believer seeks protection in Allah and follows revelation.

69. **Sihr exists** – Magic exists in this world. The text also mentions that using magic is forbidden. A Muslim does not treat magic as something harmless.

70. **Warning against religious innovations and major sins** – They avoid religious innovations, serious sins and shameful actions. The text also warns against pride, arrogance, betrayal, oppression and other sinful behaviour.

71. **Avoiding people who openly call to Bid'ah** – A person who openly calls others to a religious innovation is treated differently from someone who keeps a private mistake to himself. The text warns against sitting closely with people who actively spread Bid'ah.

72. **Seeking knowledge** – They believe in learning beneficial knowledge, teaching it and seeking understanding of the religion. They also recognize the importance of collecting and preserving the Sunnah of the Messenger ﷺ.

73. **Staying with the Muslim community** – They encourage remaining with the Muslim Jama'ah and avoiding division.

74. **Staying away from unlawful food and drink** – They avoid what Allah has made unlawful in food and drink.

75. **Avoiding intoxicants** – They avoid intoxicating drinks and anything that takes away the mind.

76. **Commanding good and forbidding wrong** – They believe in encouraging what is right and warning against what is wrong according to knowledge, wisdom and the Islamic rules. They also avoid ignorant arguments. The overall path is to remain united upon Allah's religion and not divide.

Important Final Principles

The creed finishes by stressing unity upon the religion of Allah, holding firmly to the Qur'an and Sunnah and avoiding division, religious innovation, unnecessary argument and paths that lead away from the guidance of the early Muslims.

A student should understand that these points are connected. Belief in Allah leads to following His revelation. Following revelation includes correct belief, worship, good character, respect for the Companions, care for Muslim unity and staying away from innovations and sins.

Key Words

Ahl al–Sunnah: Muslims who follow the Qur'an, authentic Sunnah and the way of the early Muslim scholars.

Ahl al–Hadith: The scholars and followers who gave special care to preserving and following the authentic Hadith.

Iman: Faith. In this text it includes belief, words and actions and it increases and decreases.

Qadar: Allah's decree. Nothing happens outside Allah's knowledge and decree.

Sifat: Allah's Attributes, such as knowledge, power, hearing and sight.

Tashbih: Comparing Allah to His creation. Ahl al-Sunnah reject this.

Takyif: Trying to describe exactly how Allah's Attributes are. Ahl al-Sunnah do not do this.

Bid'ah: A religious innovation introduced into the religion without proof.

Hawd: The Prophet's ﷺ pool in the Hereafter.

Mizan: The Scale on the Day of Judgment.

Shafa'ah: Intercession that happens only with Allah's permission.

Fitnah: A trial, confusion or serious conflict that can harm people's religion and unity.