Theological and Intellectual Roots in Deobandi Thought: A Paradigm from Muḥammad Qāsim Nānawtawī's Discourses with Special Reference to his *Ḥujjat al-Islām*

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Abstract

This article focuses on *Ḥujjat al-Islām*, one of the important works of Muḥammad Qāsim Nānawtawī. Many of his books, epistles, and letters were written in response to Christian and Hindu missionaries: texts through which a lay reader can glean Nānawtawī's polemical methodology (critiquing and refuting Christian theological anthropology and Hindu mythology) but also his particular approach to dialectics, as based on propositional logic and pragmatic philosophy and distinct from earlier scholastic theology. This brief article examines a limited part of Nānawtawī's discussions pertaining to the existence of God, His essence, and the meaning of monotheism.

Introduction

Muḥammad Qāsim Nānawtawī's unique discourses yielded a new approach in the Muslim study of religion. In the traditional seminary curriculum in the Indian Subcontinent, Nānawtawī's corpus is popularly

known as *al-ʿUlūm al-Qāsimī* (the Qāsmī Science) and has influenced the areas of anthropology of religion, Islamic philosophy, and comparative religion.[1] Many scholars of the Deoband School are known for their interpretation of Nānawtawī's work and are thus known as *Shāriḥ al-ʿUlūm al-Qāsimī* (Commentators on the Qāsmī Science).[2] This article first presents a brief biography of Nānawtawī[3] and then turns to his encounter with Christian polemicists during the famous "*Maylah-e Khudā Shanāsī*" (Fair of God-Consciousness) held in two consecutive years 1876 and 1877 at a village named Chandpur in the district of Shāhjahānpūr.[4] It will also cover Nānawtawī's comparison and response to Christian and Islamic beliefs about God and the purpose of human creation. In doing so this article offers a glimpse into Nānawtawī's methodology and situates his approach within comparative religion. Because there is little existing literature on the topic, the genre of this article is descriptive and encyclopedic rather than critical. I trust that this article will introduce a new area of study and research in Islamic, religious, and comparative religious studies.

Muḥammad Qāsim Nānawtawī (1832–80) was born in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. His birthplace, the ancient village of Nānawtā (Nanauta or Nanota),[5] fell under the jurisdiction of District Sahāranpūr. Nānawtawī studied under Shāh ʿAbdul Ghanī Mujaddidī (d. 1878), a prominent hadith teacher who was the intellectual successor of Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.[6] In 1866, Nānawtawī founded the seminary Darul Uloom Deoband, launching the eponymous Islamic revival movement.[7] His vibrant intellectual abilities, competence in comparative religion, and his tireless activities as an apologist earned him the titles *Ḥujjat al-Islām* (proof of Islam) and *Ḥujjat-Allāh fī al-Arḍ* (proof of God on earth). He earned a reputation as a master of Islamic religious philosophy and Islamic scholastic theology in the Urdu- and Farsi-speaking Muslim world. Indian Islamic scholars to this day hold that none stands equal to him in defending Islamic tenets in later nineteenth century South Asia.[8]

Nānawtawī's life may be categorized into three different phases. The first phase of his life was full of political struggle; the second focused more on polemics with Christian and Hindu missionaries while contributing to several revival movements; and the third was the intellectual and academic revolution for which he became most famous.[9] In all three phases, Nānawtawī fought for Muslim political and intellectual resurgence.

The Politics of Qāsimī-ism

The British colonial regime declared the revolt of 1857 to be a "mutiny". Battles between rebels, civilians, and colonial forces were struck at many sites.[10] The ʿulamāʾ saw this uprising against the British as a lawful measure. Indeed according to them it was a pious duty to fight against the British forces and to support the emperor.[11] Fighters (mujāhidīn) joined them from small towns and villages, and finally they met British forces at Shamli.[12] There is no detailed information available but the initial results were in the favor of the mujāhidīn, who successfully captured district headquarters.[13] Yet they were forced to retreat with significant losses, given the strategic British position and organization. Muḥammad Ḍāmin and many mujāhidīn were slain in this battle,[14] a few were arrested by the British forces, and the rest were dispersed. Nānawtawī was injured[15] but was able to escape and was never arrested.[16] He reappeared after the public amnesty issued by the British government. Thus, the Shamli battle ended with loss and dismay and did not give desired results to the mujāhidīn.

The results of the uprising had serious consequences for the course of Islamic scholarship in India. After the failure at Shamli, Nānawtawī and his colleagues realized that they must change their modus operandi. Their greatest imperative now was to save the Islamic identity of Muslims. Thus, they set their goal as reinstating Walī Allāh's intellectual legacy, precisely for its social implications.[17] Founding the seminary was clearly about "much more than a matter of preserving and continuing the scholarly tradition."[18] Nānawtawī alienated himself from the political anticolonial movement and avoided confrontation with the government. He and his colleagues insisted on educational uplift of Muslim society, as a means of restoring the integrity of the community. Nānawtawī sought to establish an organized and systematic chain of seminaries (madāris) in accordance with the Walī Allāhī tradition.[19]

Although some scholars have analyzed Nānawtawī's reform movements as strictly theological and socio-religious, others argue that his movement had political ambitions for the Muslims of the Subcontinent. The Deoband movement has also been characterized as "Muslim Conservatism"[20] meant to "secure political independence and freedom for religion and culture."[21] Some held that Nānawtawī's Dār al-ʿUlūm merely "attempted to foster traditional religious imaginaries."[22] Others insist that Deobandism "has inspired modern revivals of Islamic fundamentalism."[23] But the complex reality is that the Deoband movement of Muḥammad Qāsim

Nānawtawī sought to revive the community of Sunni orthodoxy, strongly opposing non-Islamic elements in Islamic culture and society and fostering tendencies of self-assertion.

Nānawtawī's Deoband movement was directly associated with the school of Walī Allāh. According to ʿAtīq Aḥmad Bastawī, "Ḥujjat al-Islām Mawlānā Muḥammad Qāsim Nānawtawī prolonged Walī Allāh's movement. The fundamental elements in the Qāsmī thought are derived and benefited from the thought of Shāh Walī-Allāh Dehlawī."[24] In the words of Fuad Shahid Naeem:

> In the integration of these three elements, the legal, the intellectual, and the spiritual, Nānawtawī personifies both the essence of Sunni scholarship in the later centuries, especially in the Indian Subcontinent, as well as the foundations of the school of Deoband, which has often been called reformist or puritanical, but which, in reality, finds its roots in these three elements, and which largely follows an interpretation of the Islamic tradition that has its origins in Shāh Walī-Allāh.[25]

As the renaissance of the Walī-Allāh School, later Qāsmiyyat became synonymous to Walī Allāhiyyat.[26]

Nānawtawī composed eight principles as the constitution of Darul Uloom Deoband.[27] One of these eight maintains that the seminary should meet its financial requirement from public funds and should not get financial support from the government. Thus it became South Asia's first Islamic seminary absolutely dependent on public support (not one or two wealthy patrons or the government). This principled stance brought more people in contact with the institution, inaugurating a different relationship to the people it served. For Darul Uloom Deoband was developed to protect the religious ideologies of Muslims in India. This approach, which Nānawtawī adopted and dictated, became a motivational force and turned into a mass revolution. According to Muhammad Qasim Zaman,

> The Deobandis were also the first to develop the model of loosely-affiliated madrasas supported by smalltime local contributions, and their madrasas have been the greatest beneficiaries of it without yet forswearing more lucrative sources of patronage at home or abroad.[28]

These other madrasas did not have any direct administrative affiliation with Deoband, but their syllabi and pedagogy were modelled off it.[29] Although politics was formally excluded from the curricula of these institutions,

Nānawtawī and his colleagues kept alive the spirit of struggle for independence and a robust theologico-political understanding.[30]

Nānawtawī in Western Literature

Although there is a vast Western academic literature on Deoband, the majority of these authors describe it as a movement of social, educational, and political revival and thereby neglect its intellectual traditions. Nānawtawī himself, although one of the most distinguished and towering figures of Deoband, has not been sufficiently studied in this literature. The bulk of his corpus, as of the majority of Deobandi scholars, remains untouched by translation or systematic (let alone critical) analysis.

With a few exceptions, there is still a lack of understanding what and how Deobandi *ʿulamā* thought. Barbara D. Metcalf thoroughly analyzes the Deoband movement in its historical milieu and its impacts on the Muslims of South Asia.[31] Most of her impressive work is dedicated to Deoband's social, religious, and educational impacts, and how the powerful emergence of Deoband set a direction for Subcontinental Muslims.[32] She discusses *ʿulamā*'s confrontations with modern challenges[33] but does not detail or examine at length Nānawtawī's intellectual discourse—apart from a brief discussion of his *Tasfiyatul ʿAqā'id*.[34] (She did partially translate Ashraf ʿAlī Thānwī's *Bihishti Zewar,* with a limited commentary.[35]) For his part, Brannon Ingram conducts a comparative study of the *ʿulamā* during Mughal and later periods,[36] elaborating theological aspects of the Deoband movement and its integration with Sufism.[37] Ingram's formidable book is dedicated to Deoband's movement of Sufi-theological reform, the reach of Deobandi traditions through Tablighī Jamāʿat, and especially Deoband's expansion into South Africa. Yet it does not thoroughly examine or extensively analyze the literature of any of the Deobandi *ʿulamā*. Finally, Muhammad Qasim Zaman, well known for his masterful scholarship on Deoband, produced a valuable monograph on Ashraf ʿAlī Thānwī.[38] Yet his expertise being in juridical traditions rather than theology or comparative religion, Zaman does not closely attend to Nānawtawī's scholastic theology.

Two scholars, SherAli Tareen and Fuad S. Naeem, do read the difficult and challenging works of Nānawtawī without relying on secondary sources. Tareen's article on his polemics (see further below) introduces and summarizes Nānawtawī's *Qiblah Numā* and *Mubāḥithah*, originally written in classical and difficult Urdu.[39] He does not include the complexities of Nānawtawī's philosophical arguments, which are the key element of *Qiblah Numā*.[40] He does discuss the section of *Mubāḥithah* in which Nānawtawī

responds to Dayānanda regarding the miracle of Muḥammad[41]—but the most important section, which is Nānawtawī's philosophical discussion of monotheism and his response to his Christian opponents, is not here covered. This article indicates the depth of Nānawtawī's corpus, which has yet to be plumbed and made available for understanding and further analysis.

Naeem's dissertation is a descriptive analysis of Nānawtawī's scholastic theology, presenting itself as "the first full-length study on Nānautvī in a Western language."[42] Naeem introduces Nānawtawī's major books and treatises, making his thesis unique and commendable.[43] He traces Nānawtawī's intellectual roots into the Walī Allāhī traditions,[44] and provides synopses of his works *Intaṣar al-Islām*, *Taqrīr Dilpadhīr,* and *Qiblah Numā*.[45] He also explains the key terms of Nānawtawī's thought. For instance, when Nānawtawī coins the term *tajallīgah-i rabbānī* for describing the status of the Kaʿbah,[46] Naeem translates the term as "a locus of divine theophany."[47] He strives to bring Nānawtawī's recondite writings into the limelight, raising hopes that more Western scholars will give them the attention they deserve.

The Shāhjahānpūr Fairs for God-Consciousness[48]

Even before the 1857 uprising, Christian priests were actively engaged in promoting Christianity in India.[49] Christian missionaries had established modern schools, hospitals, orphanages, and colleges, thus widening their reach.[50] Avril Powell mentions that the Mughal court had realized the threat of Christian missionary involvement, leading the prince Mirza Fakhr al-Dīn (d. 1856) to give royal protection to the *ʿulamā* and to encourage them to respond to the missionaries.[51] But after the fall of the Mughal empire, Hindus too had sought to advance their religion.[52] At mass gatherings and fairs, Christians and Hindus jointly began the propagation of their respective religions. In 1876, the first "Fair of God-Consciousness" (*Maylah-e Khudā Shanāsī*) was organized by the Hindu priest Munshī Pyāre Lāl Kabīr Panthī as a site of debate between Muslims, Hindus, and Christians.[53] Adherents, propagators, and defenders of the three religions were present, but Hindus (despite having arranged the event) did not engage in major discussions.[54] A popular British priest, Padre Knowles,[55] led the Christian polemical objection to the Islamic claim, arguing in support of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.[56] The Muslim side was championed by Muḥammad Qāsim Nānawtawī, his two distinguished disciples Maḥmūd Ḥasan (popularly known as Shaykh al-Hind) and Fakhrul Ḥasan, and the famous debater Sayyid Abul Manṣūr of Delhi.[57] On the first day, several Muslim

debaters participated in the discussion, answered to the objections of Padre Knowles, and raised their questions about Christianity. On the second day, only Nānawtawī represented Islam. The complete description of this event is recorded in Nānawtawī's *Guftugū-e Madhhabī: Wāqiʿah-e Maylah-e Khudā Shanāsī*.[58] In addition, several of the topics considered there (theism, God's existence and His essence, the consubstantial unity of God, and the simplicity of existence) were covered in his famous book *Ḥujjat al-Islām*.

The Second Fair of God-Consciousness was held the next year (March 1877) in the same town. The founder of Arya Samāj, Pundit Dayānanda Saraswatī,[59] and another Hindu preacher, Munshī Indrāman, spoke on Hindu religious beliefs and philosophy; Padre Knowles had invited Priest Scot[60] to bolster the Christian claims; and Nānawtawī was again representing Islam. He spoke on God, the Islamic doctrine of monotheism, and the authenticity of the revealed Qur'ān.[61]

Raḥmatullāh Kairānwī[62] (d. 1891) had already encountered the Agra-based missionary Karl Gottleib Pfander[63] (d. 1865),[64] and Christian missionaries were active in Agra, Peshawar, and Delhi.[65] Therefore, it is possible that Nānawtawī had been able to prepare for this type of polemical debate beforehand.

Nānawtawī's Methodology in Comparative Religion

According to Tabraiz Alam Qasmi, Nānawtawī was the founder of such branches of scholastic theology (*ʿilm al-kalām*) which apprehended pragmatic approaches in rational arguments. Simultaneously, Nānawtawī aligned revealed knowledge with philosophy. The highly technical language he uses is challenging for a modern reader not familiar with classical Urdu. He does not cite other books, not even other texts of philosophy and scholastic theology. The order of Nānawtawī's authorities in his polemics proceeds from transmitted knowledge (*manqūlāt*) to philosophy and logic (*maʿqūlāt*) to perceived knowledge (*maḥsūsāt*).[66] Thus pragmatic philosophy and sensory capacity become the foundation of his discussion. In doing so he seeks to develop the logical and philosophical entailments of Qur'ānic verses.[67]

Nānawtawī's response to Hindu and Christian polemicists in comparative religion registers a systematic approach that is distinct from past discourses. If the disputation (*munāẓarah*) had been a critical form of argumentation historically widespread in Islamic theological and juridical circles (for instance, for debating legal or theological doctrines within

Islamic sects or juridical schools), Nānawtawī in the nineteenth century extended its form "outward", beyond the limits of the Muslim community, in response to the proselytization of Christian and Hindu preachers.[68] Nānawtawī's methodology also allows him to incorporate (without becoming mired in) classical Islamic theological discussions. For instance, he employs the framework of *al-waḥdat al-wujūd* extensively in his *Ḥujjat al-Islām*; he expands Walī Allāh's claim that rationality is limited against an existence which is not restricted. Indeed the focal point of Nānawtawī's philosophical theology is existence (*wujūd*); he engages Islamic scholastic discussions by employing a variegated terminology for existence (*mawjūd aṣlī, wāḥid ḥaqīqī, mawjūd muṭlaq,* etc.).[69]

Nānawtawī accepted post-Renaissance thought as an intellectual challenge. Nānawtawī's contemporary and another important Muslim reformer, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān of the Aligarh Movement, also confronted this challenge but responded differently. The latter figure held that better explanations of religion can be carried out with the support of rationality and scientific advancement. In so doing, however, he frequently subjected revelation to the authority of rationality. In contrast, Nānawtawī held that revelation is already sufficient and persuasive, while the purpose of logic and philosophy is to explain the claims of revelation.[70] A major part of *Ḥujjat al-Islām*, for instance, is dedicated to a rational, mathematical explanation of Q. 102 (Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ) (e.g., the terms *wāḥid* and *aḥad* pertaining to the divine unity and unicity). This configuration of the disciplines represents Nānawtawī's contribution to the tradition of Islamic scholastic theology. The remainder of this article illustrates this method in his polemics.

The First Debate

In this debate Padre Knowles and Priest Scot raised questions regarding Islamic monotheism. They explained the Christian doctrine by which Christ is consubstantial (of one and the same nature) with the Father. While the oneness of God is an essential part of both Islam and Christianity, their monotheisms differ; from the Islamic perspective, Christianity verges on being a polytheistic religion. In his arguments against Knowles and Scot, Nānawtawī put forward Islam's claim as being the sole universal truly monotheistic religion.

Against the Consubstantial Unity of God

The Christian doctrine of divine consubstantial unity refers to "Three Persons in one Consubstantial Godhead."[71] In his response to this notion,

Nānawtawī argues that God's existence never detaches from His essence while human existence is neither permanent nor enduring.[72] The human was once nonexistent and one day will again perish. This contingency establishes that human existence is not pre-eternal, but is rather "borrowed" (*mustaʿār*). That is, everything which comes into existence is temporal (*ḥādith*), not original; rather it is a reflection of the original and its existence is borrowed from it. Metaphorically, human existence can be understood by the example of steam rising from hot water or the reflected light of the moon. Water gets heat from fire, while the moon is illuminated because of the sun. Fire and the sun, respectively, are the original source of the heat and the moonlight.[73] Similarly, our existence is the manifestation of God's favor.

On the other hand, God's existence (*wujūd*) is His own and is not borrowed or favored. The actual and innate nature of God's existence can be better explained with the examples of fire which cannot exist except with or as heat, or the sun which cannot but emit sunlight. God's existence does not detach from His essence (*dhāt*).[74] Existence cannot negate such essence with which it is identical (God's existence is necessary to His essence).[75] The "being" of God's essence cannot be experienced as nonexistent; this existence and presence is called God.[76] In such a condition the relationship between His existence and essence is intrinsic, like the relationship of a pair being "two."[77] To be clear, that does not mean God's existence and essence are countable (*maʿdūdāt*), for that property is borrowed and contingent, not real. But the digit two is tangible and irrevocable, like the properties of divine existence and essence. Therefore, God's existence is innate and ceaseless.

All existences other than Him are the consequences of His bringing them into existence: "Just as many windows have different forms, but the light is the same, then all shapes look differently, and they look differently than that light. Likewise, light is also different and different from every form."[78] In this parable, the light emanates from the medium (windows). These windows are the existent things while the light is existence itself. Nānawtawī further explains that observable things, despite having a single existence, may have distinct properties. As such, light passing through two windows of different size is reflected in two different shapes, even though in property and quality it is same. Of course, the shape is not the light itself;[79] rather, sunshine passing through windows consists of two things (light and its shape) although the light itself is one. Creatures thus consist of

two things (existence and properties) although their existence itself is one. So how then could the "Necessary Being"—the source of all existence—be two?[80] Ishtiyāq Aḥmad, a professor at Darul Uloom Deoband who edited and commented on Nānawtawī's works, finds that "an existence cannot have double states."[81] Is compound existence possible? In the subsequent sections Nānawtawī emphasized the simplicity of existence and insisted on God's absolute unity, against the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

The Simplicity of Existence

The very nature of God's existence is evidently not compound, for compounds can be divided into smaller units. However, the last particle will always be an indivisible existent. This proves that existence itself is simple (non-compound) and that nothing can surpass this boundary of existence (i.e., nothing can be beyond existence).[82] God's unity or oneness (*waḥdat*) means that there is no composition (*tarkīb*) in His existence; His oneness rests on His stature of being the True One (*wāḥid ḥaqīqī*), where oneness is not merely a question of number. God is the singular one, not numerically one (*wāḥid ʿadadī*); He is "devoid of any complexity or composition,"[83] beyond division (*tajazzī*) and splitting (*tabʿīḍ*). The True One is not a compound. Here complexity is impossible. This is denoted with the terms unity (*waḥdat*) and monotheism (*waḥdāniyyah*), while splitting (*tabʿīḍ*) refers to dividing a piece or part from a whole. Of course, the number one may be divided or split into smaller fractions and divisions; it is temporal (*ḥudūth*) and contingent, for it is space- and time-bound. In contrast, the True One is beyond space and time. Rather, time and space are bound to the True One, which is neither illustrative nor is it restricted.[84]

Establishing Divine Monotheism and the Domain of Existence

Nānawtawī further argues that it is logically impossible that the 'Necessary Existent' (the strongest existent) allows another being to contain its domain. More simply, God does not contain other beings in Himself. The domain of existence is greater and inclusive of the domains of humans, animals, bodily objects, and even substance.[85] This is the only reason that these creatures are called existing (*mawjūd*). Thus all spatial extensions fall under the domain of existence.[86]

The Second Argument

Nānawtawī founded this argument on the premise that two different things cannot be an *ʿillah* (*ratio lagis*, or root cause) of a single fact.[87] If there exist two or more necessary existents, they will be distinguished from each other

(or else they will be the same). Since they are existent, they share the common characteristic (ṣifah) of existence but are distinguished on the basis of something else, a distinguishing quality.[88] Although there is a rational possibility that one of these two existents has no assured qualities alongside existence, that is ultimately illogical (the quality of existence alone is impossible, apart from an existent). Through this discussion, Nānawtawī works to establish the absolute and unadulterated existence of God's essence, concluding that a composite existence (which is a single attribute) cannot be caused by two assumed distinct factors of the two necessary beings. If there were two necessary beings, distinguished from each other and at the same time from their common existence, the relation between the necessary being and that common existence would be like the one between the earth and sunlight: separable. Two things are only inseparable if one of them is the root cause (ʿillah) and other is the effect (maʿlūl), like the sun and sunlight. Yet if these necessary beings could be separated from their existence in common, they would no longer be existent. Thus we must conclude that there is only a single necessary being. The above discussion is meant to argue against the literal sense of the doctrine of the Trinity. According to Nānawtawī, in Christianity, "God is one and three in its literal meaning"[89] (not in some exclusively metaphorical sense)—a notion which is here polemically undermined.

The single and absolute necessary being, which has no quality other than existence (mawjūd muṭlaq),[90] is in fact the source (makhraj) of all existence and other necessary existents. But the question remains: what is the root cause (ʿillah) of a common existence? Do both of these existents share two different additional qualities which distinguish them? If that were so, the common existence should have two root causes.[91] A single accidental existence cannot be originated from two original and innate sources, while a single original source can be the cause of innumerable accidental existences. As a result, common existence, which is a single thing, cannot be the reflection of something else for two different assumed necessary existents.[92] For instance, if two different qualities (e.g., knowledge and potential) of two different assumed beings are supposed, they cannot separately be the root cause for each effect: rather, both of them differentiate each other essentially along with their common existence.[93] Thus existence and the object diverge like sunlight and the earth, which do not have an innate relationship.[94] No essential, logical link keeps them from separating. Thus

existence and the quality must be distinguished, invalidating its originality and implying the existence of a prior necessary being.

None is Equal to Him in and Beyond the Domain of Existence

There is a singularity in existence (*wujūd*). According to Nānawtawī, "the source (*makhraj*) [of an existent] shall definitely be single."[95] Thus, the existence of an existent is borrowed from the necessary existent. Secondly, that domain surrounds all other domains (see Q. 4:126), so there is no possibility of the existence of another domain in and beyond His domain.

In All Circumstances Existence is Boundless and Infinite

Existence is limitless and infinite. If we restrict existence and consider it finite and limited, then we must assume another infinite and absolute existence beyond the limit of this finite existence. Thus there is no absolute and infinite beyond the existent (*mawjūd*); in this condition, existence (*wujūd*) must be assumed to be absolute and infinite.

Nānawtawī further explains the impossibility of plurality and partnership in divinity. Real plurality (*taʿaddud ḥaqīqī*) may exist only on the sole condition that nothing be similar and unified. In contrast, oneness (*waḥdat*) depends on singularity. If numerous deities cast similar qualities and attributes, then there is a possibility of a certain unity, though only to the degree of their being qualified (*mawṣūf bi-l-waṣf*). Thus it is also impossible that there are multiple gods or creators with a single quality (*wāḥid ṣifat*); the partner gods then would only have borrowed, not innate attributes.[96]

God Cannot Have Relatives

On the ground of the above discussion, Nānawtawī claims that God's innate existence is distinguished from all other existences. Since God is the source of all existence, He cannot have partners or relations (which would entail God not being singular, but being part of a class). Nānawtawī writes: "When it is accepted that God is One without partners, then He will have no father, no mother, no son, no brother, etc. That can only happen when plurality is imagined despite the unity (singularity) of the category."[97] Humans only have relatives from their own respective class and category. If God had such relations as do creatures, then God must be a class, species, or category—which is impossible, since the above discussion has proven that there is no duality in divinity. Christians claim that the Bible calls God the "father" and Jesus His "son", but Nānawtawī argues both that the authenticity of the present biblical text is altogether questionable[98] and that the use of such terms, if and when they occur, is metaphorical

rather than literal. "Sometimes subjects, out of love, call their kings and rulers 'father' or 'mother'; also, it is common that out of love a ruler calls all his subjects his 'sons' and 'daughters'. Similarly, out of devotion, any sage or prophet would have called God 'father'."[99] Third, Jesus was born to the Virgin Mary, not as the "son" of God, which clearly contradicts the singularity of monotheism.[100] That was a miracle of the sort through which God shows His power and signs: technically, such miracles are events contrary to the habitual course of things in nature, which can only happen through the divine will and omnipotence. In much the same way, God first created Adam without parents; and then created Eve without a mother; and then created Jesus without a father—but none of them were begotten by God as His progeny; else Adam must literally be the first son of God, which no theology claims! Mary begot Jesus as a divine sign, through God's capacity of making her bear a child without a male. God sent to Mary the Archangel Gabriel to give her the glad tiding of a son, for Mary was not able to bear the command of God directly (without the angelic intermediary).[101]

There is also an important clarification to be made. If contradicting beliefs are found in the doctrines of two different religions, then these contradicting beliefs should be compared rationally and logically. Christianity and Islam have several common beliefs, such as in God and His innate existence, revelation, and Jesus. However, Jesus' status in these two religions differs, each religion claiming a divine writ for that status, for which condition logic and rationality are the means by which to compare their claims.

Words which Create Confusion Must Be Outlawed

Nānawtawī states that the Christian understanding of the terms "Father" and "Son" is erroneous. Indeed he argues that any terms which create confusion and ambiguity should be disqualified from the religious domain.[102] At the least they require a much more developed hermeneutics. For instance, if a king out of love calls any one of his subjects his "son", that person cannot be assumed to be the king's real son and heir or venerated as is the king. That man cannot be established as a member of the royal family despite the king's appreciation and calling him "son". The human class of royalty is not distributed through language (the king calling a subject his "son"). And since God is not even a class or category of humanity, how then can it be possible that a person from the category of creatures is associated with God as His son? Of course, all humans irrespective of class share common habits and needs[103]—but there is no consistency between God and human based on their respective class and category.[104]

Refutation of Sonship

Dependency is antithetical to divinity, argues Nānawtawī. God is innate, and innate existence is completely free from want and dependency. Knowledge, potential, anger, beauty, etc., are subject to their existence (*wujūd*). A thing without existence cannot attain the above attributes. How is it possible that someone become a scholar but not exist? These attributes of knowledge, potential, and so on all necessarily belong to an existent. If that were not the case, then all attributes would exist without existence. It is evidently confirmed that God has these attributes and is in want (*ḥājah*) of nothing, for such dependency only exists where the needed object is unavailable.[105] Rather, God is free and pure from all deficiencies and errors: endowed with every perfection (*jāmiʿ al-kamālāt*).[106] If there were a lack of perfection (*kamāl*), that would be a fault in His divinity. All existents (*mawjūdāt*) are subject to God's will for their existence, but God is not subject to any will.[107] Therefore all qualities other than existence are subject to that existence (*wujūd*).

In his commentary, Aḥmad extends this discussion and writes that Nānawtawī's statement "Deficiency is nothing except the lack of perfection"[108] is the foundation of the argument that "deficiency is the negation (*intifāʾ*) of a quality which is nonexistent."[109] That is, being deficient is an absence of perfection. If the source of all qualities is existence (*wujūd*), then the source of deficiency is necessarily nonexistence (*ʿadam*), which is the innate attribute of all possibilities.

This also clarifies confusions about the relationship of good and evil, perfection and deficiency. If good attributes are the shadow (*ẓill*) of the attributes of the necessary existent, then evil and deficiency will be the absence of a reflection of the divine. Since the source of evil is not existence but the nonexistence of divine reflection, which is one of the attributes of all possibilities, there is no possibility of benefiting from such evil. In addition, there is a difference between benefit (*ifāḍah*) and creation (*khalq*). The former obtains through already-existing things, while the latter refers to originating something from nonexistence. In these terms, God is the creator (*khāliq*) of evil but not its benefactor (*mufayyiḍ*).[110]

Man is Full of Desires

In this discussion Nānawtawī states that (unlike other creatures) the more man has power and abilities, the greater his desires. More than any other creature, moreover, man exploits resources on this earth. And man's natural habits—urinating and defecating among them—are integral to his life.

With such ungodly attributes, man cannot achieve divinity. Thus, including man in godhood (assimilating two separate classes) is clearly erroneous.[111] Nānawtawī further argues that allowing for the filiation of two separate classes (a divine father and a human son), however much they share certain qualities, contravenes the rational order. However much humans and monkeys may be considered together on the basis of their shared needs for nourishment and rest, for instance, a creature with needs (*iḥtiyājāt*) cannot be associated with the One, the Creator, who is free from want and need (*mustaghnī*).

Arguments Based on Jesus' Actions

Nānawtawī states that through his actions Jesus expressed worshipping God (*ʿubūdiyyah*) rather than being worshipped (*maʿbūdiyyah*). There is no proof of him demanding to be worshipped.[112] Along with his other human attributes, Jesus lived a life as a pious servant of God and worshipped God as he was enjoined. Taken together, these elements overwhelmingly contradict him having a share in divinity.

Nānawtawī further considers the miracles of Jesus, which could be interpreted as being the work of a deity. He argues that miracles are always part of the prophetic careers of divine messengers; such miracles do not obtain without the command and will of God.[113] If other prophets before and after Jesus likewise had miracles performed at their hand, without these entailing a share of divinity, then Jesus's miracles do not grant him a special distinction.

Arguments Against the Trinity

According to Nānawtawī, the doctrine of the Trinity contravenes the principle of religious belief and must be condemned—for belief must be treated like any other report, while the basis of religion rests on its validity.[114] If the belief is right, the religion is right; if the belief is wrong, the religion is wrong.[115] The other parts of a religion, which include worship and other rituals, depend on this basic belief. Based on this principle, a simultaneous Oneness and Trinity is logically impossible, a claim as explicit as sunlight (meaning, not requiring further proofs or argument)—to say nothing of the fact that Christianity lacks rational or literal proofs for establishing the Trinity, and even the Bible (so Nānawtawī argues) does not endorse that doctrine.[116] However astute Christian scholars' hermeneutics, Nānawtawī insists that a religion's fundamental creed must be clearly proclaimed in its scripture and not require esoteric interpretation.[117]

Rule of Hearing and Seeing

Revealed (*naqlī*) or rational (*'aqlī*) arguments are unacceptable against an eternal truth or principle. For instance, the rising of the sun from the east is an eternal and unalterable truth; the falling of objects on earth is a principle of gravity, and this is an absolute principle and law. No adversary's argument can be sustained against them. Put otherwise, rational or revealed proofs are "heard," while beliefs which are confirmed directly, experientially, without bearing any supporting proof, are "seen". For example, one person watches the sun set on the horizon while the other sits inside and announces sunset based on a clock. The one watching the sun will be absolutely sure if and when the clock is wrong; for a clock is made for showing the correct time but is rejected when it contradicts reality and human observation and experience. In these terms, the present text of the Bible must be deemed something that is "heard", because it has passed through historical recensions and distortions, while the eternality of God is as strong as something that is seen. Nānawtawī writes:

> As such the clock is made for letting us know the time [of an event], but has no weight against the [direct] viewer [of the event]. And the reason of this is that there is a possibility of error in the clock. Similarly, the Bible was meant to guide but has no credibility against sanity (and there should be no confusion that we reject the [present] Bible which was [once] revealed by God but [now] has no credibility) because there are possibilities of error in copying the present copies of the Bible.[118]

According to Nānawtawī the Christian doctrine of the Trinity contradicts the eternality of God and His absolute oneness; thus it is similar to something that is heard instead of something that is seen.

Nānawtawī's Christian opponents in this debate argued that the fundamentals of religion are not tested on logic and wisdom; rather, they are established and eternal truths, like scientific principles and laws.[119] Nānawtawī also argued against this claim. According to him,

> However, the eye (should it not squint, which leads it to perceive reality differently; nor have weak vision, which leads it to improperly perceive reality) does not err in seeing reality and its perception (*idrāk*) needs no mediator.[120]

Thus, astuteness is free from obscurity. He further states, "Similarly, sagacity and acumen do not err in recognizing reality." Rationality needs no further reference or evidence for perceiving reality.[121] This was Nānawtawī's logical

point of view, which Padre Knowles and his colleagues did not respond to. Furthermore, Nānawtawī argued against the credibility of the present versions of Bible and insisted that religious doctrines cannot be based upon the Bible, given the latter's historical corruption as scripture.[122]

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This article has comprised an anglophone introduction to the Qāsmī Science. It finds that Nānawtawī followed Avicenna's philosophy with a logically rigorous commitment to Islamic creed. His arguments in support of religious doctrine insist that belief is rational, in contrast to his Christian adversaries Knowles and Scot, both of whom admit that belief pertains to the supernatural and thus is extrarational. Beyond the specifics of their dispute, this study finds that the arguments between Nānawtawī and his Christian opponents are significant from the comparative religious studies point of view, as well as for opening a new vantage on the intellectual history of nineteenth-century South Asia.

Endnotes

1.   Atif Suhail Siddiqui, "ʿUlūm al-Qāsimī: Religious Philosophy of Muḥammad Qāsim Nānawtawī and the Birth of the Deobandi Islamic School of Thought," *Islamic Literature Review: An International Journal of Islamic Revival* 1, no. 1 (Deoband: Deoband Institute of Islamic Thought, 2014), 32.

2.   Shabbīr Aḥmad ʿUthmānī (1887-1949), a prominent Islamic theologian, politician, and staunch supporter of Mohammad Ali Jinnah (founder of the state of Pakistan), was a graduate of Deoband who is widely remembered as *Shāriḥ al-ʿulūm al-Qāsmi.* Many of his writings are commentaries on Nānawtawī's complex corpus. Similarly, Muḥammad Ṭayyib (1897-1983), grandson of Nānawtawī and the longest serving rector of Darul Uloom, is also known as *Shāriḥ al-ʿulūm al Qāsmī* for the same reason.

3.   Barbara D. Metcalf has briefly written about Nānawtawī's family, life, religious education, movements, and sufi training. See Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 76–80.

4.   "On May 8, 1876, *Maylah-e Khudā Shanāsī* (Fair for God-Consciousness) was held at Chandapur village, near Shahjahanpur (U.P.), under the auspices of the local Zamindar, Pyare Lal Kabir-panthi, under the management

of Padre Knowles, and with the support and permission of the collector of Shahjahanpur, Mr. Robert George." Sayyid Mahboob Rizvi, *History of the Dar al-Ulum Deoband* (Deoband: Idārā e Ihtimām, Darul Uloom, 1980), 1:89. See also Nānawtawī, *Mubāḥithah Shāhjahānpūr,* ed. Fakhrul Ḥasan (Delhi: Maṭbaʿ Mujtabāʾī, 1891), 3.

5.   Asīr Adrawī, *Mawlānā Muḥammad Qāsim Nānawtawī: Ḥayāt awr Kārnāme* (Deoband: Shaykhul Hind Academy, Darul Uloom, 1997), 42. See also Atif Suhail Siddiqui, *Life and Thought of Ḥujjat al-Islām Imām Muḥammad Qāsim Nānawtawī* (Deoband: Deoband Institute of Islamic Thought, 2016), 12.

6.   Siddiqui, *Life and Thought,* 13.

7.   Mahboob Rizvi, *History of the Dar al-Ulum Deoband*, 2:87. Darul Uloom did not remain merely a seminary; it was transformed into a systematic school of Sunni Islamic thought. Its disposition (*mashrab*) is in accordance of Nānawtawī and his colleague Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī. See Muḥammad Ṭayyib, *ʿUlamā-e Deoband kā Dīnī Rukh wa Maslakī mizāj (Arabic: ʿUlamāʾ Diyūband: Ittijāhimim al-dīnī wa-mazājuhum al-madhhabī* (Deoband: Shuʿbah Nashr wa Ishāʿat, Darul Uloom, 2010), 163.

8.   Sayyid ʿAbdul Ḥayy Laknawī in his *al-Iʿlām* (popularly known as *Nuzhat al-Khawātir*) grants only two moderns the title of Imām (in the formula al-Shaykh al-Imām al-ʿĀlim al-Kabīr): Mullā Niẓāmuddīn, founder of the famous Dars-i Niẓāmī, and Muḥammad Qāsim Nānawtawī, founder of Dār al-ʿUlūm Deoband. See his *al-Iʿlām bī-man fī-Tārīkh al-Hind min al-Aʿlām* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1999), 1:1067. See also Muḥammad Burhānuddīn Qāsmi, "Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī ke Ḥawāshī main Al-Imām Muḥammad Qāsim Nānawtawī kā Andāz (Method of Imām Muḥammad Qāsim Nānawtawī in the Scholium of Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī)" in *Ḥujjat al-Islām Imām Muḥammad Qāsim Nānawtawī: Ḥayāt, Afkār, Khidmāt* (New Delhi: Tanẓīm Abnā-i Qadīm Dār al-ʿUlūm Deoband, 2005), 299-300. Also, Muḥammad Yaʿqūb Nānawtawī (d. 1884) notes that he was titled Ḥujjat al-Islām due to his work in comparative religion and his outstanding service to the cause of Islam. See Mohammad Sayfur Raḥmān Qāsim, *Haḍrat Nānawtawī awr Khidmat-i Khatm-i Nabuwwat* (Nānawtawī and His Service to the Seal of Prophethood) (Gujaranwala: Jāmiʿah Tayyibāt, 2008), 25; cf. Siddiqui, "ʿUlūm al-Qāsimī," 12.

9.   Nānawtawī initiated a movement of widow remarriage and was the initiator of a Sunni revival against Shiite influence. He also campaigned for several political movements. He is most famous for establishing Darul Uloom Deoband, which paved the way for an Islamic educational revolution amongst the Muslims of the Indian Subcontinent. For details, see Siddiqui, *Life and Thought*, 49-81 and Manāẓir Aḥsan Gīlānī, *Sawāneḥ Qāsmī* (Deoband: Maktabah Darul Uloom, 1383 AH), 2:1-79.

10. The uprising began on May 10, 1857, at Meerut, some seventy kilometers north of Delhi. Indian sepoys in British forces refused to follow orders and rebelled against the British commanders; they killed many British officers and military men and marched towards Delhi. The rebellion spread to other places: major battles were fought at Agra, Kanpur, Jhansi, Lucknow, Calcutta, and elsewhere. For details, see Colonel GB Malleson, *The Indian Mutiny of 1857* (London: Seeley and Company Ltd, 1891).

11. Gīlānī, *Sawāneḥ Qāsmī*, 2:137-138.

12. Shamli is a district in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh situated around fifty kilometers from Deoband. During the uprising of 1857, the *'ulamā'* gathered in Shamli, fought against British forces, and captured the Tahsil of Shamli. However, they could not sustain their victory and were eventually forced to scatter. Many were arrested and some executed by the British forces. See Gīlānī, *Sawāneḥ Qāsmī*, 2:126-130, 141.

13. Ibid., 2:155.

14. Ibid., 2:146 and 151; also see Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, 83.

15. Gīlānī, *Sawaneḥ Qāsmi*, 2:160.

16. Ibid., 2:171-173; also see Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, 82.

17. Ali Riaz, "Madrassah Education in Pre-colonial and Colonial South Asia," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 46, no. 1 (2010): 81.

18. Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Ashraf Ali Thanawi: Islam in Modern South Asia* (Oxford: Oneworld Publication, 2008), 3.

19. See Rahman, *The Madrassa and the State in Pakistan,* as cited in Riaz, "Madrassah Education in Pre-colonial and Colonial South Asia," 81.

20. SMA Akhtar Hashmi, *Muslim Response to Western Education: A Study of Four Pioneer Institutions* (New Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 1989), 73.

21. ZH Farooqui, *The Deoband School and the Demand for Pakistan* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963), 23.

22. Ali Altaf Mian and Nancy Nyquist Potter, "Invoking Islamic Rights in British India: Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi's *Ḥuqūq al-Islam*," *The Muslim World* 99, no. 2 (April 2009): 312.

23. John F. Burns, "Adding Demands, Afghan Leaders Show Little Willingness to Give Up Bin Laden," *The New York Times*, September 19, 2001.

24. 'Atīq Aḥmad Bastawī, "Ḥujjat al-Islām Mawlānā Muḥammad Qāsim Nānawtawī kā fiqhī Dhauq wa Mizāj", in *Ḥujjat al-Islām Imām Muḥammad Qāsim Nānawtawī: Ḥayāt, Afkār, Khidmāt* (New Delhi: Tanẓim Abnā-i Qadīm Dār al-'Ulūm Deoband, 2005), 262.

25. Fuad Shahid Naeem, "The 'Ulama of the Indian Subcontinent at the Rise of the Modern Age: Maulana Ashraf 'Ali Thanvi and His Response to Modernism" (MA thesis, George Washington University, 2003), 31.

26. Siddiqui, "*'Ulūm al-Qāsimī*," 14.

27. Mahboob Rizvi, *History of the Dar al-Ulum Deoband*, 1:115; Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, 94-98.

28. Zaman, "Islam in Modern South Asia: Continuity and Change since the Early Twentieth Century" in *Religion and World Affairs Series* (Boston: Institute of Culture, Religion and World Affairs, December 2016), 5.

29. Zaman, *Ashraf Ali Thanawi*, 4.

30. Siddiqui, *Life and Thought,* 69-70.

31. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, 16-46.

32. Ibid., 87.

33. Ibid., 198.

34. Ibid., 144. Cf. Fuad Naeem, "Interreligious Debates, Rational Theology, and the ʿUlamaʾ in the Public Sphere: Muḥammad Qāsim Nānautvī and the Making of Modern Islam in South Asia" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2015), 52.

35. Barbara D. Metcalf, *Perfecting Women: Maulana Ashraf ʿAli Thanawi's* Bihishti Zewar (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992)

36. See Brannon D. Ingram, *Revival from Below: The Deoband Movement and Global Islam* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), chap. 1: "A Modern Madrasa," 31-54.

37. See ibid., chap. 2: "The Normative Order," 55-91.

38. Zaman, *Ashraf Ali Thanawi.*

39. SherAli Tareen, "The Polemic of Shahjahanpur: Religion, Miracles, and History," *Islamic Studies* 51, no. 1 (2012): 51, 57-59.

40. Ibid., 51.

41. Ibid, 55-63.

42. Also see Siddiqui's *Life and Thought*: although published from Deoband, India, this is the first full length biography of Nānawtawī in a western language.

43. Naeem, "Interreligious Debates, Rational Theology, and the ʿUlamaʾ in the Public Sphere," 58-60. It is worth noting that Naeem does not mention that Nānawtawī's *Taḥdhīr al-Nās* (Gujaranwālā: Idārah al-ʿAzīziyah, 2001) (a philosophical explanation of the seal of prophethood of Muḥammad) was later elaborated in his collected correspondence with ʿAbdul ʿAzīz Amrohī, published as *Munāẓrah ʿAjībah* (Karachi: Maktabah Qāsim al-ʿUlūm, 1978).

44. Naeem, "Interreligious Debates, Rational Theology, and the ʿUlamaʾ in the Public Sphere," 85.

45. Ibid., 159-171.

46. Nānawtawī, *Qiblah Numā*, ed. Ishtiyāq Aḥmad (Deoband: Maktabah Darul Uloom, 2013), 43.

47. Naeem, "Interreligious Debates, Rational Theology, and the ʿUlamaʾ in the Public Sphere," 168. Theophany may be an erroneous rendition, for it is an ancient Greek term later incorporated into the biblical traditions, which refers to incarnation as well as the deity's appearance. See James T. Burtchaell, "Theophany," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Thomson and

Gale, 2002), 13:929. None of the English translators of the Qurʾān (e.g., Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Mohammed M. Pickthall, Arthur John Arberry, M. Habib Shakir, or Muhammad Asad) use the word theophany for rendering *tajallī* (Q. 7:143).

48.   See more details in Tareen, "The Polemic of Shahjahanpur."

49.   Avril A. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1993), 194.

50.   Ibid., 205.

51.   Ibid., 218.

52.   Thomas R. Metcalf mentions that Muslims after the fall of the Mughal Empire were reluctant to engage with the new government and its education system; they believed that the new education system was meant to spread Christianity among the Indian Muslims. See Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857-1870* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965), 122-123. Ali Khan also quotes a Western missionary saying, "Our great object was to convey as largely as possible knowledge of our literature and Science to the young persons; but another and more vital object was to convey a thorough knowledge of Christianity." G. Ali Khan, "Educational Conditions of Indian Muslims during the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 52, no. 1 (Karachi: Bait al-Hikmah at Madinat al-Hikmah, 2004), 47. Letters of the priest A. Edmond addressed to Indian employees of the new British colonial regime insisting on a common culture and common religion (Christianity), were released by the British government, which were insisting on a common culture and a common religion, which should be Christianity. These letters were addressed to the Indian employees of the new British colonial regime. Muḥammad Miyān, ʿUlamā-e Ḥaq awr unke Mujāhidānah Kārnāme (The Righteous ʿUlamāʾ and their Revolutionary Activities) (Deoband: Islāmī Kitāb Ghar, n.d.), 1:26. SR Wasti describes the difference between Muslims and Hindus under the newly established British rule, which favored Hindus, while Muslims suffered due to their being erstwhile rulers of India and so adversaries to the British. This gave benefit to the Hindus, while Muslims were on the main target of the new colonial government. See SR Wasti, "Muslims in Bengal: A Historical Study up to 1905," in *Muslim Struggle for Freedom in India* (Delhi: Renaissance Publishing House, 1993), 60. S. Malik quotes William Howard Russell: "Our antagonism to the followers of Muhammad is far stronger than that between us and the worshippers of Shiva and Vishnu … If we could eradicate the traditions of Muhammad by one vigorous effort, it would indeed be well for the Christian faith and for the British rule." See S. Malik, "Muslim Historical Literature in the Era of Early Muslim Nationalism: A Case Study of Sir Sayyid and Taʾib," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 1, no. 2 (1984): 6.

53.   Tareen, "The Polemic of Shahjahanpur," 52.

54. Nānawtawī, *Mubāḥithah,* 45.

55. Knowles was a European (in *Ḥujjat al-Islām* he is mentioned as being English) teacher whose Christian denomination is unknown. In Nānawtawī's *Mubāḥithah* he is titled Padre, a common Urdu term for a Christian scholar or priest. He worked as a teacher in British Mission School in Shāhjahānpūr until 1875; in 1876 he was transferred to Kanpur's Mission School. During his stay in Shāhjahānpūr he was engaged in preaching into the vicinity of that town and especially in Chāndpūr. He enjoyed the support and hospitality of local landlord Munshi Pyare Lal. Pyare Lal was impressed with Knowles and agreed to organize a fair in Chāndpūr on the behest of Knowles in 1876. See Nānawtawī, *Mubāḥithah,* 3; Nānawtawī, *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* ed. Ishtiyāq Aḥmad (Deoband: Maktabah Darul Uloom, 2013), 22; Mahboob Rizvi, *History of the Dar al-Ulum Deoband*, 1:3; and Tareen, "The Polemic of Shahjahanpur," 53.

56. Nānawtawī's *Ḥujjat al-Islām* (see 27-75) is the response to all these objections which Knowles and other Christian polemicists raised against Islam.

57. Ibid., 4 and Mahboob Rizvi, *History of the Dar al-Ulum Deoband*, 1:89.

58. Nānawtawī, *Guftugū-e Madhhabī: Wāqiʿah-e Maylah-e Khudā Shanāsī* (Delhi: Maṭbaʿ Mujtabāʾī, 1293 AH).

59. This article is mainly focused on the debate held in 1876 between Nānawtawī and his Christian opponents. A detailed discussion of the debate between Nānawtawī and Dayānanda can be found in Tareen, "The Polemic of Shahjahanpur."

60. Scot's denomination is also unknown. He was famous for his competence in logic, in which field he composed and published a treatise for which he was awarded Rs. 500 by the British government. See Nānawtawī, *Mubāḥithah,* 54 and 80.

61. Siddiqui, *Life and Thought,* 26.

62. Raḥmatullah Kayrānwī, born in Kayrānā, Uttar Pradesh in 1818, is known for his magnum opus *Iẓhārul Ḥaq*, besides which he wrote *Izālah al-Shukūk, Izālah al-Awhām,* and *Iʿjāz ʿIswī*. He migrated to Mecca and established Madrassah Ṣawlatiyah. See Laknawī, *al-Iʿlām bī-man fī-Tārīkh al-Hind min al-Aʿlām*, 1228-29. Powell calls him 'Defender of Islam': *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 47.

63. Karl Gottlieb Pfander, born in 1803, was a German missionary who preached in Armenia, India and Turkey. He began his missionary activities at the age of 17 for the Basel Society based in Basel, Switzerland. Pfander learned Arabic and Persian and wrote *Mīzān al-Ḥaq, Ṭarīq al-Ḥayāt, Remarks on the Nature of Mohammedanism,* and *Ḥal al-Ishkāl*. In 1822, Basel missionaries arrived in India, which gave Pfander the opportunity to preach Christianity in India; his attacks on Islam ultimately resulted in a polemical engagement with Raḥmatullāh Kairānwī. See Clinton Bennett, "The Legacy of Karl Gottleib

Pfander," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 20, no. 2 (1996): 76-77; also see Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 135.

64. In 1854, Kayrānwī had a polemical encounter with Pfander. The English-speaking Muḥammad Wazīr Khān, ruler of the princely state of Tonk (Rajasthan), and Imād al-Dīn Lāhiz, who converted from Islam to Christianity, helped Kairānwī and Pfander translate each other's arguments. See Christine Schirrmacher, "The Influence of German Biblical Criticism on Muslim Apologetics in the 19th Century," http://www.contra-mundum.org/schirrmacher/rationalism.html.

65. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 68.

66. Tabraiz Alam Qasmi, *Difāʿ-e Islām me Ḥaḍrat Nānawtawī kā ʿAqalī Istadlāl* (Nānawtawī's Rational Arguments in the Defense of Islam), https://apki-awaznews.wordpress.com, retrieved on August 17, 2018.

67. See ʿAtīqur Raḥmān ʿUthmānī, "Naẓrāt," *Burhān* (Delhi: November 1943).

68. Malik, "Muslim Historical Literature in the Era of Early Muslim Nationalism," 6. In the twentieth century Arya Samaj began a Shuddhi (Sanskrit for "purification") movement aimed at converting Muslims to Hinduism. See G.R. Thursby, "Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India: A Study of Controversy, Conflict, and Communal Movements in Northern India, 1923–1928," *Studies in the History of Religions (Supplements to Numen)* 35 (1975); also see RK Ghai, *Shuddhi Movement in India* (Columbia: South Asia Books, 1990).

69. Nānawtawī, *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 53-58.

70. In *Taṣfiyatul ʿAqāʾid* (Deoband: Kutub Khānah Aʿzāziyah, n.d.)*,* Nānawtawī responded to thirteen questions from Sayyid, who demanded rational reinterpretation of the Qurʾān. Nānawatawī responded that rationality is not the final authority and cannot check revelation.

71. Richard Meux Benson, *The Divine Rule of Prayer* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1866), 45.

72. See Ibn Sīnā's discussion of the difference between existence and essence: existence is something which "affirms or establishes the existence of something" (the existent) while essence is "the reality by virtue of which something is what it is," which Ibn Sīnā says is the existent's reality (*ḥaqīqah*) and its nature (*ṭabīʿah*). See Olga Lizzini, "Ibn Sina's Metaphysics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2016), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/ibn-sina-metaphysics/.

73. We observe an extinct heat when the fire is extinguished, so a question rises about fire's tangible property of heating. Nānawtawī also clarified this objection. According to him, heat does not separate from fire when fire is extinguished. This state of (extinguished) fire and inexistent heat is defined by him as an "extreme level of companionship". Heat and fire here both change their property to nothingness (*ʿadam*); thus, does existence embrace nothingness? The properties of heat and light are ontological (*wujūdī*) and existence and

nothingness are absolute contradictions. The assimilation of two extreme contradictions is impossible. Rationally, no existent can go into nothingness, and attributing space to nothingness is irrational since occupying space is an ontological quality. In addition to that nonexistent being infinite, thus, it cannot occupy volume. See Nānawtawī, *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 48-49. Ibn Sīnā also levels a similar argument in his *Metaphysics* regarding the relationship between existents and existence: nothing is possible without the domain of its existence and only existents "can be conceived and discussed."

74. According to Ibn Sīnā, God is the Necessary Existent (*wājib al-wujūd*), which is impossible if His essence detaches from His existence. See Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhiyyāt* (Qum: Markaz al-Nashr Ḥawzah Ilmiyyah, 1418AH), 56.

75. See Nānawtawī, *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 46-47.

76. Nānawtawī called it *mawjūd aṣalī*; see *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 53.

77. Nānawtawī, *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 47. This example creates confusion because of the ambiguity in the terms single and double (qualities pertaining to quantity). A thing which is one in quantity is called single; when another thing joins it, it is double. But this pertains to countable existents, not the numbers themselves. See Ishtiyāq Aḥmad's commentary in Nānawtawī's *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 49.

78. Ibid., 52.

79. The shape of light is a possessive phrase, where shape is possessed and light is possessor. It shows that the two are different entities.

80. Heat and cold cannot be alienated from a (intrinsically) non-hot thing, water (which is made hot with the heat of intrinsically-hot fire, and is made cold with the help of intrinsically-cold ice). Therefore, the sources or origins of heat and cold cannot accommodate biodiversity (doubleness), which is contrary to the unity of heat and cold. See Nānawtawī, *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 52-53.

81. See Aḥmad's commentary at this section.

82. Nānawtawī, *Ḥujjat al-Islām*, 53.

83. William Vallicella, "Divine Simplicity," in Jeremy A. Evans, *The Problem of Evil: The Challenge to Essential Christian Beliefs* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishing Group, 2013), 179.

84. See Aḥmad's commentary in Nānawtawī's *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 54.

85. Nānawtawī, *Ḥujjat al-Islām*, 56.

86. Ibid., 57. As such, a circumference (*muḥīt*) cannot enter into the domain of another: they cannot trespass the favors of each other. See Aḥmad's commentary here.

87. In Arabic, *ʿillah* and *sabab* have different meanings and definitions, while in English both are rendered "cause". A *musabbab* (effect) is not necessarily entailed by a *sabab* (cause): e.g., a cloudy sky (cause) does not necessitate rain (effect). Technically, "A *sabab* is a sign whose presence necessitates the existence of a *ḥukm* (rule) and that which, if absent, necessitates an absence of that rule." In contrast, a *maʿlūl* (effect) is necessarily entailed by an *ʿillah*

(cause): e.g., the presence of the sun (ʿillah) necessitates it being day (maʿlūl). Technically, "An ʿillah, however, is not specific to the ḥukm that has been legislated for its sake; it exceeds it to other matters and analogy can also be made on ʿillah itself." For details, see Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, *The Islamic Personality, v. 3,* http://islamicsystem.blogspot.com/2011/03/difference-be-tween-al-illah-and-al_18.html (retrieved on December 12, 2018). Nānaw-tawī uniquely develops the use of term ʿillah in theology.

88. Nānawtawī, *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 57-58.
89. Ibid., 73.
90. At this stage only existence exists, without any attribute or quality—and this state is impossible. See Abul Ela Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyid Dīn-Ibnul ʿArabī* (Cambridge: University Press, 1939), 1-2.
91. See Aḥmad's commentary in Nānawtawī's *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 58-59.
92. The effect (maʿlūl) is the reflection of the root cause (ʿillah); thus a single thing cannot simultaneously be the reflection of two things. For instance, the reflection of light on a wall as an effect is due to the effective cause, which is a mirror. See Nānawtawī, *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 59.
93. See the discussion of light and windows under the section on Consubstantial Unity, above.
94. See Aḥmad's commentary in Nānawtawī's *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 59.
95. Existence is not a compound, so necessarily its source is also single. See ibid., 60.
96. Nānawtawī, *Qiblah Numā*, 231.
97. Nānawtawī, *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 62.
98. The issue of the Bible's textual distortion is widely discussed by Nānawtawī, with several proofs presented during his debate with Knowles (*Mubāḥithah,* 40-42).
99. Nānawtawī, *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 63.
100. Ibid., 63-65.
101. The Qurʾān mentions two cases of creatures being unable to bear God's glory or direct command: the former when Mount Sinai could not bear the divine glory (Q. 7:143) and the latter when even the mountains were not able to bear the Words of God (Q. 59:21).
102. Nānawtawī, *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 65.
103. The highest and lowest classes of humans, kings and paupers alike, share similar needs: food, water, shelter, clothing, etc. Even so, distinctions obtain.
104. Nānawtawī, *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 65.
105. Ibid., 68.
106. Ibid., 69.
107. If they are subject to God for their existence, they are automatically subject to God for other wants and needs. See ibid.
108. Ibid.

109. See Ahmad's commentary in Nānawtawī's *Ḥujjat al-Islām*, 69.
110. Ibid., 69-67.
111. Ibid., 71.
112. Nānawtawī claimed that despite the present version of the Bible having been distorted, there remain verses (e.g. in the Gospel of John) which deny Jesus' status as God or his being divine, as claimed by the Christians (*Mubāḥithah,* 40).
113. The Qur'ān indicates that Jesus' miracles were divine signs, for inviting people towards him as the true messenger of God (Q. 3:49; 5:10).
114. In *'Aqā'id al-Nasafi* three principles are mentioned: epistemology, reasoning, and uninterrupted transmission of true reports. See Muḥammad Ṣiddīq Ḥasan, *Baghiyah al-Rā'id fī Sharaḥ al-'Aqā'id* (Gujranwala: Idārah Aḥyā' al-Sunnah, n.d.), 8.
115. Nānawtawī, *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 73.
116. Ibid. Also see the "Blessed Trinity" in the 1913 *Catholic Encyclopedia*: "In Scripture there is as yet no single term by which the Three Divine Persons are denoted together." https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=5222.
117. Nānawtawī, *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 73-74.
118. Ibid.
119. Christian polemicists' argument was that God (the triune God at that), prophecy, revealed books, messengers and other fundamental beliefs of religions are eternal truths in no further need of proving rationally. See Aḥmad's commentary in Nānawtawī's *Ḥujjat al-Islām,* 74.
120. Ibid., 75.
121. Ibid. See also the example of Abraham, who reasoned through a rejection of false gods (Q. 6:75-79).
122. Nānawtawī, *Mubāḥithah,* 40-42.