The Creed of the Haafidh, Abu Bakr al-Khateeb al-Baghdaadee (d. 463H)
An Issue Pertaining to the Attributes of Allaah

[Excerpt from the book “The Mountains of Knowledge”, Salafi Publications]

This treatise is extant as a single preserved manuscript in adh-Dhaahiriyyah Book House in Damascus, collection no. 16.

THE ISNAD

The Shaikh Abu Taalib al-Mubaarak bin Alee as-Sairafee¹ informed us - granting us permission (to convey it) - saying: Abul-Hasan Muhammad bin Marzooq bin Abdur-Razzaaq az-Za’faraanee² informed us - reading it while I was listening in the month of Rabee’ ul-Awwal of the year 506H - saying: The Haafidh, al-Khateeb Abu Bakr Ahmad bin Alee al-Baghdaadee informed us, saying:

THE TEXT

“A person from Damascus wrote to me asking me about some matters” - and he mentioned them - “so I replied to them.” Then he read to us the reply to what he had been questioned about saying:

“I comprehended what the esteemed Shaikh wrote - may Allaah make his support to perpetuate and may He make excellent his success and his guidance (to the right way) - and I relied upon what had been acquired by me of knowledge regarding him, which I pursue [ --- ] upon his tracks, and that I respond to him with what I hope will be in agreement with his inclination. And I ask Allaah to protect me from erring and to grant me - from His Bounty and Mercy - success in arriving at the correct word and deed.

As for Speech Regarding the Attributes:

Then what has been reported of such Attributes in the Authentic Compilations (as-Sunan as-Suhhaah) - the madhhab of the Salaf - may Allaah be pleased with them all - is to affirm them, and to carry them upon their literal meanings (alaa dhawaahirihaa)⁴ and to

¹ Known as ‘Ibn Khudair’ (483-562H), from Baghdaad. Very truthful and a righteous man. Refer to Siyar A’laam un-Nubulaa (20/487).

² Known as ‘al-Jallaab’ (442-517H) from Baghdaad, a faqeeh, a muhaddith and steadfast. Refer to Siyar A’laam un-Nubulaa (19/471).

³ A word undecipherable by the verifier of the treatise [Translators’ note].

⁴ Al-Khattaabee (d. 388H) said: “The madhhab of the Salaf (the Pious Predecessors) with regard to the Sifaat (Attributes of Allaah) is to affirm them as they are alaa dhaahir (with their apparent
deny (knowledge of) their true nature (kaifiyyah) and to negate tashbeeh (resemblance) for them.

But a people have denied these Attributes and so they nullified what Allaah - free from all imperfection - affirmed for Himself and another people amongst those who affirmed them actualised them and thus fell into something of tashbeeh (resemblance) and takyeef (enquiring into their true nature).

And what is correct is treading upon the course which is middle and balanced amidst all the affairs - and the religion of Allaah [lies] between the excessive person and the negligent one.

**And the Principle in this Matter is:**

That speaking about the Attributes is a branch of speaking about the Essence (Dhaat) and thus follows it exactly and takes its example. So when it is known that affirming the Lord of all the Worlds - the Mighty and Majestic - that it is an affirmation of existence, not an affirmation of the true nature (kaifiyyah), then it is exactly the same for affirming His Attributes. Indeed, it is an affirmation of their existence, not an affirmation of defining (their nature) and giving them a form.

So when we say: Allaah has a hand, hearing and seeing, then these are Attributes which Allaah the Exalted has affirmed for Himself and we do not say: The meaning of hand is ‘power’ and nor do we say: The meaning of hearing and seeing is ‘knowledge’. And nor do we say: Indeed, they are limbs. And we do not resemble them with the hands, hearing and sight which are indeed limbs and which are the mechanisms of the actions (of hearing, seeing and grasping etc.)

meaning), negating any tashbeeh (resemblance) to them, nor takyeef (asking how they are).” Al-Ghuniyah an Kalaam wa Ahlihi - as quoted in Mukhtasir al-Uluww (no.137).

Qaadee Abu Ya'laa (d. 458H) said: “It is not permissible to repel these narrations - as is the way of the group from the Mu'tazilah. Nor to become preoccupied with ta’weel - as is the way of the Ash'ariyyah. It is obligatory to carry them upon their dhaahir (apparent) meaning; and that the Attributes of Allaah do not resemble any one of His creation, nor do we have an aqeedah (belief) that there is any tashbeeh (resemblance) to them. Rather [we believe] in what has been reported from our Shaikh and our Imaam, Abu Abdullaah, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Hanbal, and others from the Scholars of Ashaabul-Hadeeth.” Ibtaal ut-Ta’weelaat (p.4)

Shaikh Abdul-Qaadir al-Jeelaanee (d. 561H) said: “It is essential to carry the attribute of Allaah al-Istiwaal (Allaah’s Ascending) upon its apparent sense - without ta’weel, and that He ascended by His Dhaat (self) over the Throne. Istiwaal does not mean sitting or touching - as the Mujassimah and Karraamiyyah say. Nor does it mean uluww (grandeur and highness) - as the Ash’ariyyah say; nor does it mean isteeleaq (conquering and dominating over) - as the Mu’tazilah say. None of this is related in the Sharee’ah. Neither has this been related by any one of the Salaf us-Saalih (Pious Predecessors) from the Sahaabah and the Taabi’een, nor from the Ashaabul-Hadeeth (Scholars of Hadeeth). Rather, it is related from them that they carried the meaning of Istiwaal with its apparent (dhaahir) meaning.” Al-Ghuniyat ut-Taalibeen (1/50) of Abdul Qaadir al-Jeelaanee.

5 Abu Haneefah - may Allaah have mercy upon him - said in Fiqh ul-Akbar: “It is not to be said that ‘His Hand means His power’ because that is a nullification of the Attribute.”
And we say: Affirming them is obligatory because at-Tawqeef (the texts of the Qur’aan and the Sunnah) have reported them and it is obligatory to negate tashbeeh (resemblance) from them, due to the saying of the Blessed and Exalted:

**There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.**

and His saying - the Mighty and Majestic -:

**And there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him.**

And when the People of Innovation say about the People of (Authentic) Narrations - due to their reporting of such ahaadeeth - that they report what does not befit Tawheed and which is not authentic - meaning by that to rebuke them and to confuse those whose knowledge is weak - and they accuse them with the disbelief of the people guilty of tashbeeh and the ignorance of the people of ta’eeel (denial of the Attributes) - then they (the People of the Narration) reply to them that: In the Book of Allaah there are clear, decisive verses, the intent behind them is understood by their apparent meanings (dhaahirihaa) and there are unclear verses the meanings of which cannot be grasped except by referring them to the clear and decisive (verses). But it is obligatory to believe in all of them (tasdeeq) and to have faith in them all (eemaan). Similarly, the narrations of the Messenger (sas) are carried upon the same principle, they are revealed (just) like this Revelation - the unclear amongst them are referred to the clear and decisive amongst them - but all of them are to be accepted.

**So the Hadeeth Reported About the Attributes are of Three Types:**

**Amongst them:** The affirmed reports about which the Scholars of the narrations are agreed upon regarding their authenticity - due to their abundance and the integrity found in their transmission - therefore accepting them and having faith in them is obligatory along with protecting the heart from a belief that would overcome it and which would necessitate resembling Allaah to His creation., and describing Him with what does not befit Him such as limbs, particles, changing and movements.

**The second type:** Reports which are disreputable and with unfounded chains of narration and repulsive wordings. The people of the knowledge of transmission are agreed upon their falsity and it is not permissible to be occupied with such narrations and nor to stop over them (to consider them).

**The third:** Reports about which the people of knowledge are in disagreement regarding status of their transmission - so some of them, as opposed to all of them - accept them. In this situation, it is obligatory to strive in finding the truth regarding them and to inspect

---

6 Shooraah 42:11
7 Ikhlaas 112:4
them closely - so that they are either associated with the people of acceptance (Ahl ul-Qubool) - or that they are placed in the confines of falsehood and corruption.

And as for specifying such ahaadeeth, then I have not occupied myself with them and a collection of them has not proceeded from me - but perhaps that will occur afterwards - if Allaah wills.⁸

⁸The chain of narration of this text is authentic to al-Haafidh al-Khateeb.