

THE SIFAAT AL-MUTASHAABIHAAT



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CHAPTER ONE

Describing Himself in the Qur'aan Allah Ta'aala says that "*there is nothing like Him*". It is therefore understood that there is absolutely no resemblance between the *sifaat* (attributes) of Allah and the *sifaat* of His creation. However, the Qur'aan and the Ahaadith mention certain *sifaat* of Allah Ta'aala which apparently resemble the *sifaat* of man. These *sifaat* are known as the *sifaat al-mutashabihaat*.

There is consensus among the 'ulamaa of the *Ahlus-Sunnah* regarding the following three aspects of the *sifaat al-mutashaabihaat*:

1. The apparent meanings of these *sifaat* definitely haven't been intended by Allah Ta'aalah.
2. When these *sifaat* are used to criticise and ridicule Islam and this problem could be averted through *ta'weel* (interpretation), it will be compulsory to resort to *ta'weel*.
3. When there is only one *ta'weel* and that *ta'weel* is easily understood, it is compulsory to adopt it. For example, when Allah Ta'aala says, "*He is with you wherever you are*", He doesn't mean that he is physically with man because that is impossible. Thus, the interpretation of this statement of Allah Ta'aala is that "*He is fully aware of your actions, He hears and sees you all the time ...*" Since this is the only

possible *ta'weel* and it is easily understood, it is compulsory to adopt it.¹

However, despite their agreement in the above three aspects, there is a difference of opinion among the *Salaf* (former '*ulamaa*') and the *Khalaf* (latter '*ulamaa*') with regards to *ta'weel* in instances other than what is mentioned in points two and three. The *Salaf* generally refrained from *ta'weel*; they preferred *tafweed* (entrusting all knowledge of these *sifaat* to Allah Ta'aala). On the contrary, the *Khalaf* prefer *ta'weel*.

Some '*ulamaa*' like Ibn Hajar Haitami, Mulla Ali Al-Qaari and Muhammed Sa'eed Ramadaan Al-Booti explain the difference of opinion between the *Salaf* and the *Khalaf* in a slightly different manner. They say that the statement that the *haqeeqat* is not intended is already *ta'weel*. Thus, both groups – the *Salaf* and the *Khalaf* – make *ta'weel*. Therefore, the difference between them is that the *Salaf* make *ijmaali ta'weel* and the *Khalaf* make *tafseeli ta'weel*.²

Ijmaali ta'weel is that upon acknowledging that the *haqeeqat* is not intended, it is then maintained that the intended meaning is known only to Allah and befits His greatness. Thus, we will say that we do not know what is intended by *istiwa*. However, it is an *istiwa* that befits the greatness of Allah.

¹ مناهل العرفان ج2، ص206

² مرقاة المفاتيح ج3، ص 924 (دالا الفكر 2002-1422)

السلفية مرحلة زمنية مباركة لا مذهب اسلامي ص133-132

Tafseeli ta'weel is when a metaphorical meaning in accordance with Arabic grammar and the *usool* (general principles) of the sharee'ah is attached to the *aayah* or *Hadith* under discussion. Thus, *yadullah* is explained as the help of Allah.

Present-day Salafis

Present-day *Salafis* claim that their view in this regard is the same as that of the *Salaf*. (That's why they call themselves *Salafis*.) However, although they do follow the *Salaf* in refraining from *ta'weel*, there is a vast difference between their views and the views of the *Salaf*. While the *Salaf* (and the *Khalaf*) are of the opinion that the apparent meanings of the *sifaat al-mutashabihaat* are impossible and could never have been intended by Allah Ta'aala, *Salafis* say that the apparent meanings have been intended but there is definitely no relationship between these *sifaat* when used to describe Allah Ta'aala and when used to describe man.³

Example:

Let us consider the example of "*yadullah*" (the "*hand*" of Allah). The *Salaf* say that the apparent meaning definitely hasn't been intended because "*there is nothing like Him*". Thus, they say that only Allah knows the intended meaning of "*yadullah*". On the contrary, the *Salafis* say that the apparent meaning definitely has been intended. However, because "*there is nothing like Him*", there is absolutely no similarity between the "*hand*" of Allah and the hand of man. Hence the statement:

³ درس ترمذی ج 2، ص 203

له يد لا كيدنا

He has a 'hand', but His hand is unlike ours.

(In technical terms the difference between the two standpoints is that while the Salaf maintained that the *haqeeqat* is not intended, the *Salafis* claim that it is intended but it's *kayfiyyat* is unknown to us.)

Does the Salafi Opinion Tantamount to Tashbeeh?

The *Salafi* opinion in this regard is the opinion of 'Allaamah Ibn Taymiyya. While explaining Ibn Taymiyya's opinion regarding the *Hadith-un-Nuzool* (which falls under the category of the *sifaat-al-mutashaabihaat*) in the Dars-e-Tirmidhi ⁴, Mufti Muhammed Taqi Uthmaani mentions that:

1. Ibn Taymiyya opposes *tashbeeh* in his book *Sharhu Hadith-in-Nuzool*.
2. He also claims that his opinion regarding the issue of *nuzool* is identically the same as that of the *jamhoor* (vast majority) of the *Salaf* and the *muhadditheen*.
3. This claim is debatable because there is a fine and delicate difference between his opinion and the opinion of the *Salaf*.
 - ~ Some of the *Salaf* say the *haqeeqi* meaning definitely hasn't been intended and we don't know what is intended.
 - ~ Others among them say that we should observe so much of caution in this regard that we shouldn't even ask whether the *haqeeqi* or *majaazi* meaning is intended; we must adopt absolute *tawaqquf*.

⁴ درس ترمذی ج 2، ص 203-206

- ~ Ibn Taymiyya says the *haqeeqi* meaning is intended but, unlike the *nuzool* of created bodies, the *nuzool* of Allah does not constitute movement from one place to another because it is free from any attributes of *hudooth* (creation) and it is beyond our comprehension.
 - ~ In other words, the *Salaf* make *tawaqquf* in explaining the word *nuzool* whereas Ibn Taymiyya makes *tawaqquf* in explaining its *kayfiyyat*.
4. This difference of opinion between the *Salaf* and Ibn Taymiyya is not a difference of *tashbeeh* and *tanzeeh* – it is just two different ways of expressing *tanzeeh*. It is therefore incorrect to exclude Ibn Taymiyya from the *Ahlu-Sunnah* in this issue.
 5. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the opinion of the *Salaf* is safer because *tashreeh* (explanation of Allah's *sifaat*) is a dangerous valley in which it is difficult to protect one's self from *ifraat* and *tafreet*.

The Difference between *Luzoom* and *Iltizaam*

Contrary to the above, many other '*ulamaa* argue that the approach of Ibn Taymiyya and his followers does result in *tashbeeh*. In our analysis it appears that the *laazim* of this approach is *tashbeeh*. However, the *fuqahaa* differentiate between *luzoom-ul-kufr* and *iltizaam-ul-kufr*. (*Luzoom-ul-Kufr* is when the unavoidable consequence of an opinion is *kufr*. *Iltizaam-ul-Kufr* is when the proponents of such an opinion believe in the resultant *kufr*.) They therefore explain that even if a person's opinion may result in *kufr*, he will not be classified as a *kaafir* unless he actually believes in the resultant *kufr* in his opinion. Applying the same rationale, we could conclude that

although the opinion of Ibn Taymiyya does result in *tashbeeh*, the factors referred to by Mufti Taqi Uthmani prove that he did not make *iltizaam* of *tashbeeh* . . .

Ibn Hajar Haitami writes in *Al-Fataawa Al-Hadeethiyyah* that the *jahawiyyah* (those who believe that Allah is in a specific direction) and the *mujassimah* (those who ascribe a body to Allah) are not regarded as *kaafir* unless they believe in the *hudooth* of Allah and the *lawaaazim* thereof. He then explains:

لأنَّ الأصَحَّ في الأصول أن لازم المذهب ليس بمذهبٍ جَوَازٍ أَنْ يُعْتَقَدَ الْمَلْزُومُ دُونَ الْإِذَازِمِ
“. . . Because the more correct principle is that the *laazim* of an opinion is not an opinion due to the possibility that the person concerned believes the *malzoom* but not the *laazim*.”⁵

Nonetheless, the opinion under review has been criticised for being self-contradictory, dubious and a *bid'ah*.

Self-Contradictory

Shaikh Muhammed Sa'eed Ramadaan Al-Booti explains in his book *Kubra Al-Yaqeeniyyaat Al-Kawniyyah* ⁶ that it is impermissible to accept the *dhaahir* (*haqeeqi*) meanings of these *sifaat* because doing so would result in the Qur'aan being self-contradictory. Consider the following examples:

1. If the *haqeeqi* meanings of these *sifaat* are accepted one aayah would imply that Allah has only one eye and another

⁵ الفتاوى الحاديثة ص 108

⁶ كبرى اليقينيّات الكونية ص 139

aayah would imply that Allah has many eyes. These aayaat are:

ولتصنع علي عيني (سورة طه, آية 39)

and

واصبر لحكم ربك فانك بأعيننا (سورة الطور, آية 48)

2. The *haqeeqi* meaning of one aayah is that Allah is sitting on the 'arsh (throne) while the *haqeeqi* meaning of another aayah is that Allah is not on the throne – He is "*closer to man than his jugular vein*". These two Aayaat are:

الرحمن علي العرش استوى (سورة طه, آية 5)

and

ونحن أقرب اليه من حبل الوريد (سورة ق, آية 16)

3. The *haqeeqi* meaning of one aayah is that Allah is in the skies only and the *haqeeqi* meaning of another aayah is that He is in the skies and the earth. These two aayaat are:

أأمنتم من في السماء أن يخسف بكم الأرض (سورة الملك, آية 16)

and

وهو الذي في السماء اله و في الأرض اله (سورة الزخرف, آية 84)

Similarly, Shaikh Muhammed Abdul Azeem Az-Zurqaani writes in his book *Manaahil-ul-'Irfaan*⁷ that those who say that the *haqeeqi* meanings are intended (i.e. the *Salafis*) contradict themselves because:

⁷ مناهل العرفان ج2, ص313

1. Separation of the *laazim* (inseparable attribute) from the *malzoom* (possessor of the inseparable attribute) is impossible.
2. The *laazim* of the *haqeeqi* meanings of the *sifaat-al-mutashaabihaat* is *hudooth* and attributes of *hudooth*.
3. By saying that the *haqeeqi* meanings of these *sifaat* are intended, one would be attributing *hudooth* and *sifaat* of *hudooth* to Allah.
4. By then saying that although the *haqeeqi* meanings are intended, there is no resemblance with anything *haadith* (thus *hudooth* and *sifaat* of *hudooth* cannot be attributed to Allah), one is separating the *laazim* from the *malzoom*.
5. The result of such an opinion in relationship to the issue of *istiwaa* would be that Allah is sitting and He is not sitting, He is on the '*arsh* and He is not on the '*arsh*, He is in a fixed place and He is not in a fixed place, He has a body and He doesn't have a body . . .

'Allaamah Ibn-ul-Jawzi writes in his book *Daf'u Shubhatut-Tashbeeh* that: "...They say that these ahaadith are among the *mutashaabihi* which is known to Allah alone. Then they say 'we interpret it according to its *dhaahir* meaning. How amazing! Can there be a *dhaahir* meaning for something whose meaning is known to Allah alone?"⁸

⁸ دفع شبهة التشبيه ص 9

A Dubious Opinion

Shaikh Az-Zurqaani also writes, "Some people in this age have transgressed (the laws of the Sharee'ah) and unlawfully engrossed themselves in the (issue of the) *sifaat-al-mutashaabihaat*. In the course of their discussion and comments on these *sifaat* they utter statements which have not been permitted by Allah. Their statements in this regard are dubious and have the possibility of *tashbeeh* and *tanzeeh* and *kuf*r and *imaan* as a result of which these statements themselves are *mutashaabih*."⁹

A Bid'ah

'Allaamah Shahrastaani writes in his *Al-Milal Wan-Nihal*: ". . . A group of the *muta-akhireen* (latter-day scholars) thereafter added to what the *Salaf* had said. Thus they said that it is compulsory to retain the *dhaahir* (*haqeeqat*) of these *sifaat* and to interpret them exactly as they have been mentioned without making *ta'weel* or *tawaqquf* regarding the *dhaahir*. Thus they engaged in total *tashbeeh* – and that is contrary to what the *Salaf* believed."¹⁰

Shaikh Muhammed Abu Zahrah writes in his *Taarikh-ul-Madhaahib-il- Islaamiyyah*: "By *Salafis* we mean those people who wrongly attribute that description to themselves even though dispute the fact that some of their opinions are actually those of the *Salaf*. They appeared in the fourth *Hijri* century and were followers of the Hambali madhab. They claimed that

⁹ مناهل العرفان ج2، ص312

¹⁰ الملل و النحل ص79 (دار الكتب العلمية 1413-1992)

all their opinions reach Imaam Ahmed bin Hambal who revived the '*aqeedah* of the *Salaf* and fought in its defence. Their appearance was then revived in the seventh Hijri century by Shaikh-ul-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah . . . These opinions then surfaced in the Arabian peninsula in the twelfth *Hijri* century – revived by Muhammed bin Abdil Wahhaab . . . "11

A few pages later Shaikh Abu Zahrah writes regarding the opinion of Ibn Taymiyyah: ". . . So is this truly the madhab of the *Salaf*? In answer to this, we say, The *Hambalis* of the fourth *hijri* century adopted this opinion before him and claimed that it is the opinion of the *Salaf*. However, the '*ulamaa* of that time disputed with them and proved that it definitely results in *tashbeeh* and *jismiyyat* . . . And that is why the Hambali jurist and orator Ibn-ul-Jawzi opposed them and refuted the claim that this was the opinion of the *Salaf* and Imaam Ahmed."12 A little later Shaikh Abu Zahrah writes: "At this moment I think it is necessary to state that the claim that this is the *madhab* of the *Salaf* is debatable."13

Hence, 'Allaamah Anwar Shah Kashmeeri mentions in his *malfoozaat* that Ibn Taymiyyah's opinion is a *bid'ah* and very close to *tashbeeh*.¹⁴ Similarly, Shaikh Al-Booti writes that, "Leaving these texts in their *dhaahir* without making any

11 تاريخ المذاهب الاسلامية ص190 (دار الفكر العربي 1996)

12 تاريخ المذاهب الاسلامية ص196

13 تاريخ المذاهب الاسلامية ص197

14 ملفوظات محدث كشميرى ص214 (اداره تأليفات أشرفيه)

ta'weel whether *ijmaali* or *tafseeli* is impermissible. It is something which neither the *Salaf* nor the *Khalaf* adopted.¹⁵

Clear and Unclear *Tashbeeh*

As previously mentioned, many '*ulamaa* opine that the *Salafi* opinion constitutes *tashbeeh*. Based on their opinion, it could be asked: Do we regard the proponents of the *Salafi* opinion as Muslim? Does the *Salafi* opinion render a person out of the fold of Islam?

Answer: There are two types of *tashbeeh* and *tajseem*.

1. *Sareeh* (Clear) – Belief that Allah is a body like other bodies.
2. *Ghair Sareeh* (Unclear) – Belief that Allah is a body unlike other bodies.

According to Hanafi scholars, the first type is *kufr* (blasphemy) and the second type is *bid'ah* (innovation) but not *kufr*. Explaining these two scenarios, Ibn-ul-Humaam writes that:

- If the *mushab-bih* says that Allah has a hand and foot like (that of) the servants, he is an accursed disbeliever.
- If he says that Allah is a body unlike (other) bodies, he is an innovator. The reason why such a *mushab-bih* is not a disbeliever is that he has merely utilised the word *jism* (body) for Allah. Although usage of this word for Allah creates the impression that He is deficient, the *mushab-bih* thereafter eliminates this impression by attaching the clause that Allah is unlike (all other) bodies. Hence, all that

¹⁵ كبرى اليقينيّات الكونية ص 139

is left is utterance of the word *jism* (body) for Allah which utterance is sinful and a cause for punishment . . .¹⁶

The Other *Madhaahib*

- ~ The *Maaliki* opinion is no different from that of the *Hanafis*. They too classify the first type of *mushab-bih* as a disbeliever and the second type as an innovator.¹⁷
- ~ While *Shaa'fi'ie* scholars agree that the second type is astray, they differ whether the first type should be classified as a disbeliever. In *Al-Majmoo'* Nawawi writes: "Among those who are classified as disbeliever is the one who engages in clear *tajseem*."¹⁸ Others, including Imam Al-Haramayn, Ibn Al-Qushayri and 'Izzud-Deen bin Abdis-Salaam are of the opinion that they are sinful and astray but they are not unbelievers.¹⁹
- ~ *Hambali* scholars regard the *mujtahideen* among the *mushab-bihah* as disbelievers but not their followers.²⁰

¹⁶ *Fath-ul-Qadeer* V.1 Pg.350 (**Note:** The *Salafi* could object to the citation of a *fiqh* text in this regard. However, this objection is baseless; Ibn-ul-Humaam's *Al-Musaayarah* is sufficient proof that he was an acclaimed expert in *fiqh* and *kalaam*.)

¹⁷ *Al-Qawl At-Tamaam* Pg.324

¹⁸ *Al-Majmoo'* V.4 Pg.253

¹⁹ *Al-Qawl At-Tamaam* Pg.328

²⁰ *Al-Qawl At-Tamaam* Pg.328

CHAPTER TWO

Answering a Few Objections

The First Objection: Equal Treatment of All Attributes

Salafis object that all the *sifaat* of Allah should be treated equally. Why do you insist on making *ta'weel* in the *sifaat* of *yad, saaq, rijl, rahmah, ghadb* etc. yet you do not do the same in respect of the *sifaat* of '*ilm, qudrah, sam', basr, kalaam* and *iraadah*?

Answer

The claim that all the *sifaat* of Allah are the same and should be treated equally is false. In actual fact, there are two types of attributes:

1. Those which are proven from '*aql* and *khabr*. These are known as the *sifaat al-'aqliyyah*.
2. Those which are proven from *khabr* only. They are known as the *sifaat al-khabriyyah*.

The differences between the two types of *sifaat* prove the invalidity of this objection.

The First Difference: The *dalai-il* of the *sifaat al-'aqliyyah* are *qat'iy* in their *thuboot* and *dalaalat*. Hence, the person who rejects them is a disbeliever. However, the *sifaat al-khabriyyah* are proven from *dalai-il* that are either *dhanny* in their *thuboot* or *qat'iy* in their *thuboot* but *dhanny* in their *dalaalat*. Hence, people who deny such *sifaat* are not disbelievers. Accordingly, those who opine that the *sifaat* of *yad, saaq, rijl, rahmah, ghadb* etc. are not to be interpreted according to their

apparent meanings may not be classified as wrong let alone being classified as disbelievers.

The Second Difference: The fact that the *sifaat al-'aqliyyah* are proven from '*aql*' (also) means that '*aql*' cannot comprehend a deity lacking any of these *sifaat*. On the other hand, because the *sifaat al-khabriyyah* are established from *khabr* only, '*aql*' is unable to comprehend their existence. In fact, '*aql*' on its own (without *khabr*) leads man to denial of such *sifaat*. For example:

- ~ Allah's *sifat* of *qudrah* is established by '*aql*'. Thus, '*aql*' cannot fathom a deity lacking *qudrah* i.e. a helpless deity. Nonetheless, it is also proven through *khabr* that Allah has *qudrah* over everything.
- ~ With regards to *al-yad*, however, we all definitely agree that this is something '*aql*' would never understand on its own. In fact, '*aql*' unaccompanied by *khabr* leads man to deny attribution of *al-yad* to Allah. '*Aql*' regards *al-yad* as a human limb by which he fulfils his tasks. Thus, *al-yad* is proof of man's helplessness. Remember a man whose hand is paralyzed or amputated is unable to fulfill his tasks the way he desires. In short, the purpose of the hand is to complete man's deficiency. It follows that if Allah does whatever he wishes, why should he have a hand?

The Third Difference: The *sifaat-al-'aqliyyah* are generally the objective of the texts in which they are mentioned. Thus, such texts are often accompanied with the command to believe in these *sifaat*. For example:

فاعلم أنه لا إله إلا الله
واعلموا أن الله على كل شيء قدير
واعلموا أن الله بما تعملون بصير

In contrast to the *sifaat-al-'aqliyyah*, the *sifaat-al-khabriyyah* are generally not the objective of the texts in which they are mentioned. Thus, the purpose of such texts is neither to draw our attention that these are among Allah's *sifaat* nor to command us to believe in them. For example:

تَجْرِي بِأَعْيُنِنَا جَزَاءَ لِمَنْ كَانَ كُفْرًا
بَلْ يُدَاهِئُ مَبَسُوتَاتٍ يُنْفِقُ يُشَاءُ

The purpose of the first *ayah* is the ship Nooh (as) while the the purpose of the second *ayah* is the benevolence of Allah. Neither is أَعْيُنِنَا the purpose of the first *ayah* nor is يُدَاهِئُ the purpose of the second *ayah*. In fact, there is not a single *ayah* saying: 'Believe (bring *imaan*) that Allah has an eye' or 'Know Allah has two hands' etc. With the regards the *sifaat-al-'aqliyyah*, however, there is so much emphasis that termination of *ayaat* with reminders of these *sifaat* is a common phenomenon in the Qur'aan.

وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ
وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ
وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

The Fourth Difference: Names are derived for Allah from the *sifaat-al-'aqliyyah*. For example, Allah's names *Al-Qadeer*, *Al-'Aleem* and *Al-Samee'* are derived from his *sifaat* of *qudrah*, '*ilm* and *sam*'. However, no names have been derived for Allah from his *sifaat-al-khabriyyah*. Thus, Allah has never called Himself *Al-Mustawi* or *An-Naazil* etc.

The Fifth Difference: While there is a difference of opinion among the *Ahl-us-Sunnah* with regards the *sifaat-al-khabriyyah*,

there is no dispute among them, neither among the *Salaf* nor among others, with regards the *sifaat-al-‘aqliyyah*.²¹

The Second Objection: The Statement of Imaam Maalik (ra)

الاستواء معلوم و الكيف مجهول

In defence of their viewpoint, *Salafis* cite the above statement commonly attributed to Imaam Maalik (ra)

Answer One: There are various versions of Imaam Maalik (ra)’s statement.

- a. الاستواء غير مجهول و الكيف غير معقول و الايمان به واجب و السؤال عنه بدعة
- b. الكيف غير معقول و الاستواء منه غير مجهول . . .
- c. الرحمن على العرش استوى كما وصف به نفسه و لا يقال كيف و كيف عنه مرفوع

While there are valid *asaaneed* (chains) for all of the above, there is no valid chain to Imaam Maalik (ra)²² for the first statement i.e. الاستواء معلوم و الكيف مجهول

Answer Two: If for argument sake, we acknowledge the soundness of attributing the above statement to Imaam Maalik (ra), it would have to be interpreted in the light of the other three statements (a, b and c). Thus, we say that the meaning of الاستواء معلوم is that it is معلوم الورد (we know that it is mentioned in the Qur’aan) and its لغوى meaning is غير مجهول (not unknown) when it is not attributed to Allah. However, its attribution to Allah is كيف because it demands تكيف whereas there is no كيف for

²¹ Condensed from *Al-Qawl At-Tamaam* Pg.114-117

²² *Al-Qawl At-Tamaam* Pg.247-249

Allah. The reason why there is no كيف for Allah is that كيف is the attribute²³ of أشكال and أجسام

The Third Objection: *Tafweed* is Tantamount to *Ta'teel*

It is often argued that *tafweed* is tantamount to *ta'teel* (negation of Allah's *sifaat*). This is very far from the truth. The proponents of *tafweed* do not negate any *sifaat* of Allah. On the contrary, they accept all the *sifaat*, except that with regards the *sifaat-al-mutashaabihaat* they believe that we do not know their meanings. In fact, it is absurd to accuse them of *ta'teel* whereas they vehemently oppose the deniers of the *sifaat*, in particular the *Mu'tazilah* who believe that Allah is 'Aleem without 'ilm, Samee' without sam' etc.

The Fourth Objection: The Statement of Many *Salaf*

Do many of the *Salaf* not explain that their approach to these *sifaat* is إجراؤها على الظاهر Does this not indicate that they interpret these *sifaat* according to their *dhaahir* (apparent) meanings?

Answer:

Their writings also explain that "they entrust the knowledge of such *sifaat* to Allah, acknowledging that only He knows their actual meaning." Hence, we conclude that when they said that their approach is to make إجراء or إمرار of according to the *dhaahir*, they meant the *dhaahir* of the word rather than its meaning. So, while the *Salaf* made إظهار اللفظ the Salafis do so على ظاهر المعنى

²³ *Al-Qawl At-Tamaam* Pg.447

CHAPTER THREE

The Question of *Ta'weel*

Besides the above, the question of *ta'weel* also deserves attention. Let alone regarding *ta'weel* as impermissible, *Salafis* scorn those who make *ta'weel* even though they are among the greatest 'ulamaa of their times. Their arguments in this regard are:

1. The *Salaf* never made *ta'weel*. If *ta'weel* is permissible, why didn't the *Salaf* make *ta'weel*?
2. *Ta'weel* is a type of *ta'teel*. Those who make *ta'weel* are in fact denying the *sifaat-al-mutashaabihaat*.

Our Answers

Firstly, the fact that the *Salaf* never made *ta'weel* is no proof of impermissibility because:

1. There is no concrete evidence that they refrained from *ta'weel* because they regarded it as impermissible.
2. There are other possible reasons for them refraining from *ta'weel*. That being the case, we should apply the rule:

إذا جاء الاحتمال بطل الاستدلال

"Argumentation is invalid when there are other possibilities"

Two other possibilities for the *Salaf's* not making *ta'weel* are:

1. Extreme fear of Allah. Despite their academic competence, extreme fear of Allah caused them to doubt their competence in this regard.
2. Different circumstances. Due to the religious climate in the age of the *Salaf*, there was no need for *ta'weel*. However, circumstances changed with the passing of time. Thus the

Khalaf had to face such challenges which were non-existent during the age of the Salaf. Hence while the Salaf felt no need for *ta'weel*, the *Khalaf* found no alternative other than *ta'weel* in order to defend Islaam from the objections certain deviates in their age. Quoting Abu 'Ubayd's statement that "*we narrate these ahaadith but we do not attach any meanings to them*". 'Allaamah Khattaabi writes: "It is appropriate that we do not engage in issues which people who were more learned, earlier and elder than us refrained from. However, the people of our time are of two types:

- Those who totally reject whatever is narrated from this type of ahaadith. By doing so they belie the 'ulamaa who narrate these ahaadith and these 'ulamaa are the *a'imma* of *Deen*, the transmitters of the *sunnah* and the connection between us and Allah's beloved Rasul ﷺ عليه و سلم
- The other group accepts these narrations but adopt the *dhaahir* in a manner that takes them very close to *tashbeeh*.

We disapprove of both approaches. It is therefore imperative that we seek for these ahaadith, provided they are established through the process of *naql* and *sanad*, such an interpretation that is based on the meanings of the *usool* (principles) of *Deen* and the *madhaahib* of the 'ulamaa but does not invalidate the narration..."²⁴

²⁴ نقل الشيخ البوطي هذه العبارة في كتابه السلفية (ص144) عن معالم السنن (ج5، ص95 - من طبعة حمص) و لكني لم أجدها في معالم السنن من طبعة دار الكتب العلمية (1411-1991)

Imaam Nawawi writes in a similar manner that: "... by doing so they had no intention of opposing the *Salaf* – may Allah protect us from entertaining such thoughts regarding them. However, they needed to do so because the *Mujassimah*, the *Jahmiyyah* and other deviant sects in their time were many in number and they were dominating public opinion. They (the *Khalaf*) therefore needed to curb them. That is why many of them excused themselves and said: 'If we enjoyed the same purity of belief and absence of deviates as the *Salaf* enjoyed in their time, we would have never engaged in any form of *ta'weel*.'²⁵

Secondly, the claim that none of the *Salaf* made *ta'weel* is false. Consider the following:

1. 'Allaamah Zarkashi has mentioned in his *Al-Burhaan*²⁶ that *ta'weel* is narrated from Sayyidina Ali, Sayyidina Ibn Mas'ood, Sayyidina Ibn 'Abbaas and others *radiallahu anhum*.
2. Imaam Ghazzaali mentioned in his book *At-Tafriqah Baynal-Islaam Waz-Zandaqah* that Imaam Ahmed made *ta'weel* in three instances.
3. For example, he (Imaam Ahmed) made *ta'weel* in the *aayah*

وجاء ربك و الملك ...

("And your Rabb and the angels will come . . .")

He says it means:

وجاء أمر ربك

²⁵ نقل هذه العبارة عن شرح النووي عاى صحيح الامام مسلم الشيخ علي بن سلطان القارى فى مرقاة المفاتيح ج3،

ص924 (دار الفكر 1422-2002)

²⁶ البرهان ج2، ص79 (مكتبة دار التراث)

("And the command of your Rabb . . .")²⁷

4. Imaam Shaafi'i also made *ta'weel*. Thus he interpreted the words *فأينما تولوا فثم وجه الله* as *وجه الله* in the *aayah* ²⁸
5. Imaam Bukhaari says that in the *Hadith* of the *Ansaari* and his wife who hosted the guest of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* and spent the night in hunger, the words "*Allah laughed*" means Allah showed mercy.²⁹
6. Even Ibn Taymiyyah made *ta'weel*. Thus he interpreted the word *كل شيء هالك الا وجهه* as *جهته* in the *aayah* ³⁰ Making *ta'weel* in this manner he then says: "And this is the opinion of the *jamhoor* (vast majority) of the *Salaf*."³⁰

Finally, the claim that *ta'weel* is a type of *ta'teel* is also baseless because if it was true, in view of the above mentioned examples of *ta'weel* among the *Salaf*, it would mean that even the *Salaf* were guilty of *ta'teel*.

Furthermore if merely stating that the *dhaahir* has not been intended is *ta'weel* (and therefore the *Salaf* and the *Khalaf* all make *ta'weel*), wouldn't the statement of Ibn Taymiyyah and the *Salafis* that "the *dhaahir* is intended but the *dhaahir* when attributed to Allah is totally different from the *dhaahir* when attributed to any of the creation" also constitute *ta'weel*? Hence, even Ibn Taymiyyah and the *Salafis* are guilty of *ta'teel*.

²⁷ المرجع السابق

²⁸ الأسماء و الصفات ص456 و السلفية ص135

²⁹ فتح الباری ج7, ص82 و السلفية ص134

³⁰ مجموعة الفتاوى ج2, ص238 و السلفية ص135

That is why Shaikh Najmud-Deen Al-Baghdaadi says in his *Ishaarat-un-Nabeeh* that:

من قال: "لا أقول بالتأويل ولا أشبه" فقد تأول!

*The person who says, 'I neither make ta'weel nor tashbeeh'
has made ta'weel.*³¹

مرينا تقبل منا ان أذنت السميع العليم برحمت يا أرحم الراحمين

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ذكره الشيخ زاهد الكوثري في تعليقه على دفع شبهة التشبيه ص 61 (المكتبة الأزهرية للتراث 1418-1998)³¹