



Kabbani's Allegations of Anthropomorphism against the Salafis

Version 1.0

This article looks at Kabbani's accusations against the Salafis that they are anthropomorphists as regards their belief in the Attributes of Allaah. (All quotations from Kabbani, unless otherwise stated, are taken from his work 'Islamic Beliefs and Doctrine According to Ahl al-Sunna', Vol. 1, as-Sunna Foundation of America publication, Second Edition, 1997)

COMPARING ALLAAH TO THE SUN, THE MOON AND THE CREATION

Having taken offence at the words of ibn Taymiyyah, Kabbani writes:

"In his infamous 'Aqida wasitiyya, Ibn Taymiyya establishes a clear-cut case of tamthil or similitude for Allah and His attributes by comparing Him to the moon in his interpretation of the verse 57: 4: 'He is with you wherever you are' (Ibn Taymiyyah says): 'The phrase 'and He is with you' does not mean that He blends into creation... Nay the moon... one of the smallest of Allah's creations, is both placed in the heaven (mawdu'un fi al-samaa') and present with the traveller and the non-traveller wherever they may be. And the Exalted is above (fawq) the Throne, as a watchful guardian of His creatures and their protector Who is cognizant of them.' (Kabbani continues):... we all know that none of the Ahl al-Sunna ever compared Allah to the moon, or Allah's knowledge to the moon's rays. Exalted is Allah high above the fancies of those who give such examples for Him. Yet we find today the same type of aberration still passing for Islamic education, in books such as Ibn al-'Uthaymin's Sharh al 'aqida al-wasitiya, which we will address in a few pages, and where the author, dissatisfied with Ibn Taymiyya's moon, turns to comparing Allah to the sun instead."

(Kabbani, Islamic Beliefs and Doctrine According to Ahl al-Sunna, p. 98, 1997)

It will be clear, if Allaah wills, to any seeker of truth that no attempt has been made by either ibn Taymiyyah or ibn al-Uthaymeen to liken Allaah to His creation. Ibn Taymiyyah's recourse to the example he chose was simply as an illustration of the use of the word ma'a (with) in the 'Arabic language. Not that he is saying Allaah is the moon or the moon is Allaah or that there is any similarity between them, despite Kabbani's assertions. Anyone truly familiar with the works of ibn Taymiyyah and ibn al-Uthaymeen would be the first to acknowledge their censure of those who liken Allaah to His creation or vice versa.

Ibn al-Uthaymeen, for example, said: "Ahlus-Sunnah are free from resembling Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, to His creation, both in respect of His Dhaat and His Attributes... Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah affirm the Attributes for Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, without resemblance" and he added: "Our belief is that there is nothing which resembles Allaah." (Sharh al-'Aqeedah al-Waasitiyyah 1/pp. 102 and 108 of ibn al-Uthaymeen)

And ibn Taymiyyah clearly said: "They (Ahlus-Sunnah) do not make resemblance between His Attributes and the attributes of the creation, because for Him, Glorified is He, there is no comparison, nor equal, nor partner, and there is no analogy for Him with His creation." (al-'Aqeedah al-Waasitiyyah 1/p.127 with the commentary of ibn al-Uthaymeen)

Furthermore, if Kabbani is adamant in his criticism of the examples used by ibn Taymiyyah and ibn al-Uthaymeen, how then does he view the following ahaadeeth?

Jareer ibn 'Abdullah reports: We were with the Prophet and he looked at the (full) moon and said: <<Certainly you will see your Lord as you see this moon and you will have no trouble in seeing Him...>> (Al-Bukhaaree)

Abu Sa'eed al-Khudree relates: We said: O Allaah's Messenger! Shall we see our Lord on the Day of Resurrection? He said: <<Do you have any difficulty in seeing the sun and the moon when the sky is clear?>> We said: No. He said: <<So you will have no difficulty in seeing your Lord on that Day as you have no difficulty in seeing the sun and the moon.>> (Al-Bukhaaree)

Abu Hurayrah relates: They (the Companions of the Prophet) said: O Messenger of Allaah, will we be able to see our Lord on the Day of Judgement? He replied: <<Do you have any difficulty in seeing the sun at noon when there is no cloud over it?>> They said: No. He again said: <<Do you have any difficulty in seeing the moon on the fourteenth night when there is no cloud over it?>> They said: No. Thereupon he said: <<By Allaah Who is the One in Whose Hand is my life, you will not face any more difficulty in seeing your Lord than you face in seeing one of them.>> (Muslim)

Or is Kabbani going to find fault with these hadeeth also?

Or is he going to accuse his own teachers 'Abdullah ad-Daghestani and Nazim al-Qubrusi of similitude in comparing Allaah with the Queen of England?

"Allah Almighty called Muhammad (peace be upon him) to His Divine Presence, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) went as ordered, just as a dignitary is received by the Queen of England."

(Nazim, Mercy Oceans - The Teachings of Maulana Abdullah al-Faizi ad-Daghestani, p. 9, 1980)

Kabbani ought therefore to take the following words of his that he has directed at others and apply them to his teachers: "Since when do created things serve as an analogy for the Creator?" (Kabbani, p.191)

After expressing disdain that Allaah has apparently been compared to the sun and moon, Kabbani, in contrast, is offended later in his book (pp. 197-198) by ibn al-Uthaymeen's negation of the fact that none of the Prophets share in any of Allaah's Divine Attributes. Kabbani hurriedly points out that, yes, the Prophets have been described with some of His Attributes! Once again he misses the point. Ibn al-Uthaymeen's negation was to show that there is no similarity between the reality of Allaah's attributes and those of the Prophets. Ibn al-Uthaymeen is fully aware that in a number of places in the Qur'aan both the Attributes of Allaah and those of the Prophets have been described using the same words.

Now here is the crux of the matter: Is Kabbani, by insisting that the Prophets are described with some of the Attributes of Allaah, falling into anthropomorphism?

Or put another way: Does, for example, saying that Allaah has the Attribute of Life and Knowledge and at the same time affirming that the Prophets and indeed others from the creation also have life and knowledge cause the speaker to fall into the very same abyss of tashbeeh (anthropomorphism) that Kabbani is quick to accuse others of?

Or is this merely a resemblance in wording and not in the true reality of such attributes?

CLARIFICATION ON THE WAY OF THE SALAF FROM THE IMAAM OF HADEETH AND AUTHOR OF THE FAMOUS SUNAN, AT-TIRMIDHEE

At-Tirmidhee writes in his Sunan (1/128-129):

"It has been said by more than one person from the People of Knowledge about such ahaadeeth that there is no resemblance to the Attributes of Allaah. And the Lord - the Blessed, the Most High - descends to the lowest heaven every night. So they say: Affirm these narrations, have faith in them and do not deny them, and do not ask how. The likes of this has been related from Maalik ibn Anas, Sufyaan ath-Thawree, ibn 'Uyaynah and 'Abdullah ibn al-Mubaarak, who all said about these ahaadeeth: 'Leave them as they are without asking how.' Such is the saying of the People of Knowledge from Ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah. However, the Jahmiyyah oppose these narrations and say: This is making resemblance (tashbeeh)! However, Allaah - the Most High - has mentioned in various places in His Book the Attribute of Hand, Hearing and Seeing. So the Jahmiyyah make false interpolation (ta'weel) of these verses and explain them in a way other than that explained by the People of Knowledge. They say: Indeed, Allaah did not create Aadam with His own Hand. And they say that the meaning of Hand is: Power. Ishaaq ibn Raahawaiyah (one of the famous teachers of al-Bukhaaree) said: 'Resemblance is if it is said: Hand like my hand, or similar to my hand. Or Hearing like my hearing, or similar to my hearing. So when it is

said: Hearing like my hearing, or similar to my hearing, then this is making resemblance. But if what is being said is what Allaah has said: Hand, Hearing, Seeing, and it is not asked how, nor is it said: like my hearing, or similar to my hearing, then this is not making resemblance. Allaah - the Most Blessed, Most High - said in His Book: <There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing.>"

Could anything be clearer than this in clarifying the confusion that Kabbani has portrayed in his books?

Let us look closely at this statement from at-Tirmidhee:

- i. The view he has expressed, as he himself affirms, is the position of the People of Knowledge from Ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah, such as: Maalik ibn Anas, Sufyaan ath-Thawree, Sufyaan ibn 'Uyaynah, 'Abdullah ibn al-Mubaarak and Ishaq ibn Raahawaiah.
- ii. That the Jahmiyyah accuse Ahlus-Sunnah of anthropomorphism when they agree with the views of the Imaams mentioned in (i) above.

The only justifiable reply to Kabbani's aspersions that the Salafis are anthropomorphists is the statement of Alee ibn al-Madeene (teacher of al-Bukhaaree) who said: "When someone says so and so is an anthropomorphist, we come to know that he is a Jahmee." (Reported by al-Laalaka'ee in Sharh Usool I'tiqaad no.306). And Aboo Haatim ar-Raazee (d.277H) who said: "A sign of the Jahmiyyah is that they call Ahlus-Sunnah anthropomorphists." (From his book Ahlus-Sunnah p.21).

- iii. Ahlus-Sunnah are not making resemblance between Allaah and His creation when they affirm for Allaah those attributes that He has described Himself with, such as: Hand, Hearing, Face etc. As Ishaq ibn Raahawaiah said: "Resemblance is if it is said: Hand like my hand, or similar to my hand. Or Hearing like my hearing, or similar to my hearing. So when it is said: Hearing like my hearing, or similar to my hearing, then this is making resemblance..."

This is the very same understanding of the Salaf which ibn Taymiyyah was to repeat centuries after Ishaq ibn Raahawaiah:

"It is a must to affirm that which Allaah affirms for Himself, whilst negating any likeness to Him with His creation... Whoever says: His Knowledge is like my knowledge, His Power is like my power, or Love like my love, or Pleasure like my pleasure, or Hand like my hand, or Istawaa like my ascending, then he has resembled and likened Allaah to the creation."

(at-Tadmuriyyah, p.20, of ibn Taymiyyah)

Aside from showing that the methodology of ibn Taymiyyah was wholly in conformance with Ishaq ibn Raahawaiah and the other scholars of the Salaf which at-Tirmidhee mentioned, this quote is another concise reply to the allegations of anthropomorphism

maliciously levelled at him. Ibn Taymiyyah's way, as he himself describes, was to believe in the Attributes of Allaah: "whilst negating any likeness to Him with His creation."

Therefore, since the Salafis do not say: "Hand like my hand, or similar to my hand. Or Hearing like my hearing, or similar to my hearing," but rather say whatever Allaah has said about Himself, this is not, despite what Kabbani would have his readers believe, anthropomorphism. As Ishaq ibn Raahawaiyah concluded: "Hand, Hearing, Seeing, and it is not asked how, nor is it said: like my hearing, or similar to my hearing, then this is not making resemblance"

KABBANI'S WAY IS IN ACCORD WITH THE TEACHINGS OF THE JAHMIYYAH AND IN OPPOSITION TO IMAAM ABOO HANEEFAH AND ABUL HASAN AL-AZH'AREE

iv. According to at-Tirmidhee, the Jahmiyyah say: "Indeed, Allaah did not create Aadam with His own Hand. And they say that the meaning of Hand is: Power."

At-Tirmidhee shows how Ahlus-Sunnah have rejected this interpretation. Yet Kabbani disagrees with the likes of this great scholar of hadeeth as well as the Imaams mentioned by him and chooses instead to fall in line with the beliefs of the Jahmiyyah. Kabbani's interpretation of Hand as meaning Power can be found on p.185 of his book. Earlier in his book (p.110) Kabbani says that Hand could mean Covenant ('ahd) or 'care' (al-'inaya). The same attribute is interpreted as 'kindness and goodness' on p.118, and then again, after mentioning Power as a possible understanding, Kabbani, presumably unsure as to its true meaning, gives two further options: it could also mean Mercy or Generosity. Further into the book (p.199) we find Favour being added as yet another alternative. It is surprising then to find Kabbani saying: "There was never nor is there now any disagreement among the Sunni scholars about issues of belief." (p.216). He himself mentions that there are at least six substantive differences between al-Azh'aree and al-Maturidee (p.7, footnote).

Imaam as-Saabooni (d.448H) also confirms the false interpretation of the Jahmiyyah regarding Allah's attribute of Hand (in his book detailing the belief of the Scholars of Hadeeth): "So they (the Scholars of Hadeeth) do not distort the words from their context, by carrying the meaning of the two Hands of Allaah to mean two bounties or two powers which is the distortion of the Mu'tazilah and the Jahmiyyah, may Allaah destroy them."

(Aqeedah Ahlus-Sunnah wa Ashaabul-Hadeeth wal-A'mmah, no.3)

And al-Haafidh ibn 'Abdul-Barr (d.463H) wrote:

"Ahlus-Sunnah are agreed in affirming all of the Attributes which are related in the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, having faith in them and understanding them in a real sense ('alal-haqeeqah) not metaphorically. How they are is not to be asked. However, the

Jahmiyyah, the Mutazillah and the Khawaarij deny them and do not carry them upon their real sense, claiming that whoever affirms them has made resemblance and they claim that whoever recites them as they are is a mushabbih (a person guilty of making resemblance)."

(ibn 'Abdul-Barr, At-Tamheed 7/145)

These are the very same Jahmiyyah about whose founder - Jahm ibn Saffwaan - al-Bukhaaree reports with his isnaad in Khalq Af'aalul-'Ibaad (no.70):

"There was a man from the people of Marw who used to be a friend of Jahm but then cut off from and avoided him. So he was asked: 'Why do you avoid him?' So he replied: 'He has done things which cannot be tolerated. One day I recited a particular verse - the narrator forgot which verse it was - and he (Jahm) said: 'How eloquent was Muhammad.' I tolerated this. Then he recited Soorah Taa Haa and when he reached <The Most-Merciful made Istawaa over the Throne> he (Jahm) said: 'By Allaah, if I could find a way I would erase it from the Mushaf.' So I tolerated this. Then he recited Soorah al-Qasas and when he came to the mention of Moosaa he said: 'What is this? The story of Moosaa is mentioned at one place and not completed, then it is mentioned here and not completed.' Then he (Jahm) kicked the Mushaf out of his room and so I attacked him."

Ibn Katheer relates:

"Jahm ibn Saffwaan was killed by the governor of Marw, Salam ibn Ahwaz, in the year 128H."

(Ibn Katheer, al-Bidaayah wa an-Nihaayah 9/364)

Imaam Aboo Haneefah has also long since explained the error of figuratively interpreting the Attribute of Hand:

"For Him (Allaah), the Most High, is a Hand, a Face and a Self, just as he has stated in the Qur'aan. And whatever Allaah, the Most High, has mentioned in the Qur'aan regarding the Face, the Hand and Self, these are Attributes of His without (delving) into the howness. It is not said that His Hand means His ability or His bounty (ni'mah) because this is a nullification (ibtaal) of the Attribute..."

(Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, and see Sharh 'Aqeedah at-Tahaweeyah p.219 of ibn Abil-'Izz al-Hanafee)

Likewise, Abul Hasan al-Ash'aree said: "... the saying of Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic: <Whom I have created with My Own Hands> (38:75), its apparent and real (haqeeqee) meaning is the affirmation of two Hands for Allaah. So it is not permissible to alter it from the apparent meaning of two Hands to that which our opponents claim except with a proof... Consequently, about His saying: <Whom I have created with My Own Hands> it is obligatory to affirm two Hands for Allaah, the Most High, in its real meaning not with the meaning of two bounties (ni'matayn)."

(al-Ash'aree, Al-Ibaanah 'an Usool ad-Diyaanah, p.133. The ascription of this book to Abul-Hasan al-Ash'aree, and that it was his final book concerning beliefs, has been attested to by a number of scholars: al-Haafidh ibn 'Asaakir in Tabyeenul-Kadhab al-Muftaree (p.152), al-Bayhaqee in al-I'tiqaad (p.31), adh-Dhahabee in al-'Uluww (no.276) and Ibnul-'Imaad in Shadhraatudh-Dhahab (p.303))

It is interesting to note from this quotation that Abul-Hasan al-Ash'aree considered those who altered the apparent (dhaahir) meaning of two Hands to be 'opponents' of what he himself was upon in respect of his beliefs! Where does this leave Kabbani?

A CENSURE OF TA'WEEL

This is the very nature of ta'weel. Not only does it contradict the way of the Salaf (as will be shown) but it also leaves one unsure as to whether the understanding arrived at through ta'weel is the one intended by the text. If Allaah has said Hand, how can the interpreter be sure that He, the Most High, intended by this something other than Hand, such as: power, bounty or favour etc?

Just as al-Haafidh ibn Hajar indicated:

"The one who takes the path of the Khalaf cannot be sure that that which he makes ta'weel of is the intended meaning and it is not possible to be certain of the correctness of the ta'weel."

(Fath al-Baaree 13/436 of ibn Hajar)

Kabbani himself (p.165) quotes al-Bayhaqee as saying:

"Bayhaqi said: 'The safest method is to believe in them (i.e. the Attributes) without modality, and to keep silence concerning what is meant except if the explanation is conveyed from the Prophet himself, in which case it is followed.'"

If the safest way is to remain silent unless there is an explanation from the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam, why does Kabbani then not follow this principle? There is little benefit in Kabbani listing the works of al-Bayhaqee amongst his 'Recommended Books of Sound Doctrine' (p.211) and then contradicting the advice contained in them. Where is the text from the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam showing us that he performed ta'weel of the Attribute of Hand and explained it to mean power, bounty or favour etc. as Kabbani has done?

Imaam al-Juwaynee explained in his retraction from the way of the Ash'arees:

"I did not find anything by which he (the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) followed up such texts (about the Attributes) with which he described his Lord, neither with another text nor with anything that would cause the meanings to be removed from their real (haqeeqah) meaning or cause ta'weel to be made of them... I did not find that he sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam used to warn the people from having faith in what was apparent in his speech with which he described his Lord, whether it was concerning Allaah being above His creation or the Hands of Allaah or other than these. There is nothing recorded from him which proves that these Attributes have another inner meaning other than what is apparent from their meaning..."

(Risaalah Ithbaatul-Istawaa wal-Fawqiyah, pp.176-183, which is part of Majmoo'atur-Rasaa'il al-Muneeriyah)

Qaadee Abu Ya'laa (d.458H) said:

"The proof for the futility of ta'weel is that the Companions and those who followed them from the Successors understood them (the Attributes) upon their apparent meaning and they did not take recourse to ta'weel nor did they move away from the apparent meaning. If ta'weel were permissible, they would have preceded us in it..."

(Ibtaalut-Ta'weelaat li-Akhbaar as-Sifaat, p.21, manuscript)

Adh-Dhahabee writes:

"The scholars of the Salaf explained the important and the unimportant words (from the Qur'aan and Sunnah)... as for the verses and the ahaadeeth about the Attributes, they never subjected them to ta'weel and they are the most important (texts) in the Religion. So if ta'weel were permissible they would have undertaken it. Know with certainty that reciting them and leaving them as they came is the truth, there is no explanation for them other than this. We believe this and remain silent, following the Salaf, in the belief that they are the Attributes of Allaah... and that they do not resemble the Attributes of the creation."

(Siyaar A'laamun-Nubalaa 10/505 of adh-Dhahabee)

Indeed, speaking about the Attributes of Allaah is to speak about an affair of the Unseen. Allaah is to be described only with that which He has described Himself, either in the Qur'aan or in the Sunnah of His Messenger sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam. To do otherwise and take the words conveyed in the texts away from their apparent meaning would be to offer an interpretation which could only be permissible by another revealed text, since it is only through revelation that knowledge of the Unseen can be arrived at.

Ibn Jareer at-Tabaree writes, after mentioning some narrations on speaking about the Qur'aan from personal opinion:

"These reports bear witness to what we have said, that it is not permissible for anyone to interpret, according to his opinion, those verses of the Qur'aan whose interpretation can only be known through a text of the Messenger of Allaah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam or through an indication towards it which he has given."

(Jaami' al-Bayaan 1/pp.77-78)

Ibn Qudaamah (d.620H) wrote:

"If he should say: 'You have abstained from the interpretation of the Qur'anic verses and narrations which have come down to us in respect of the Attributes,' claiming that the Salaf did make ta'weel of them and explain them, then he is uttering falsehood, forging lies, and is guilty of the most grievous aberration. For there is no question about the fact that the doctrine of the Salaf, in this regard, consisted in acknowledgement, unreserved approval, and avoidance of the temerity of using allegorical interpretation (ta'weel) and resemblance. Moreover, the fundamental rule is to presume the lack of their use of ta'weel. So let him who claims that they did interpret them allegorically produce evidence in support of his statement. But there is no way of knowing this save by the transmission and relation of narrations. Let him then transmit to us narrations to this effect on the authority of the Messenger of Allaah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam or his Companions or from one of the Successors or one of the approved Imaams. Furthermore, he who claims this is one of the people of kalaam (theological rhetoric), and they are the most ignorant of men with regard to the narrations."

(Tahreem an-Nazar fee Kutub Ahl al-Kalaam, no.16. It has been translated and edited in English as 'Ibn Qudama's Censure of Speculative Theology' by George Makdisi, 1985, p.7, from which I have adapted these quotes)

Ibn Qudaamah goes on to say (no.53; p.21 of the translation):

"Ta'weel is tantamount to the passing of judgement upon Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, regarding matters which the interpreter does not know, and the interpretation of His intent by that which the interpreter does not know that He intended. Now, the most that the interpreter can claim is that a given expression admits a given meaning in the classical language. But it does not necessarily follow from the mere fact of the expression's admissibility of this meaning, that this meaning is intended by it. For just as it may admit this meaning, it may also admit others. It may even admit still other meanings with which the interpreter is not acquainted. Besides, he does not possess an encompassing knowledge of the content of dialects. This is especially true of the people of kalaam; for they are strangers to the knowledge of dialects and the beneficial sciences."

KABBANI'S DECEPTION IN CLAIMING TO REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF AHLUS-SUNNAH

Later we will look at Kabbani's attempts to ascribe ta'weel to the Salaf and some of the arguments used to support his theory. Before proceeding to do so, however, one is left somewhat mystified as to why Kabbani even troubles himself to find a link between his way and that of the Pious Predecessors of this Ummah and to claim to broadcast their views under the banner of Ahlus-Sunnah? He said about his teacher:

"When Mawlana Sheikh Nazim opens something, if that something is to be found in books, then it is not important. He only opens something that has never been written. Every second there is creation of knowledge."

(Kabbani, Mercy Oceans Shore of Safety, pp.92-93, 1993)

Why then, in contrast to the way of his teacher, does Kabbani try to reproduce what is contained in the books of the earlier generations if, as he says, such things are not important?

Kabbani goes on to say:

"Their knowledge has become as nothing in the ocean of knowledge of the saints of this present day umma. Every second, there is creation of new knowledge. Previous knowledge is over and done with. It is now limited to its own time and place." (ibid, p.93)

What benefit, therefore, is there in Kabbani quoting the earlier scholars if, as he would have us understand, their knowledge is over and done with, it is now limited to its own time and place?

Just as it is said about his teacher:

"Nor did he (Nazim al-Qubrusi) accept that translations of some traditional tafseers (Commentaries) would be useful because they were intended for the scholars ('ulama) of that time to provide explanations for their own people."

(Preface to Nazim's, The Quran for 20th Century Man, p.1, no publication date given)

Why then does Kabbani in his work translate excerpts from the traditional Tafseer of at-Tabaree (e.g. on pp.137, 144, 169) as well as the Tafseer of al-Qurtubee (e.g. p.147) if these were only intended to provide explanations for people of their own time?

Kabbani's teacher describes an incident in which a scholar is rebuked by Allaah on the Day of Judgement because he had merely memorised the Qur'aan, thousands of hadeeth, knew many points of Divine Law and jurisprudence from the Imaams of the Schools of Law and spoke with the quotations of al-Hasan al-Basree and al-Ghazaalee! He is asked to bring some knowledge other than this because, as Nazim al-Qubrusi says: "... he had gained no knowledge whatsoever during the course of his life."

(Nazim, Mercy Oceans' Endless Horizons, p.56, 1982)

If acquiring these fields of knowledge will not benefit the Muslim in the Hereafter, then what will? If what is required is something other than these, why does Kabbani mention the Qur'aan and hadeeth in his book and quote the Imaams of the Madhabs, as well as repeating (accurately or otherwise) the words of al-Hasan al-Basree (e.g. p.195) and al-Ghazaalee (pp.139, 171, 200)?

Is all of this the approach of someone who is seeking the way of the Salaf? Or is it the way of someone who is looking to devalue the statements of our Pious Predecessors, not to mention disheartening the Muslims from memorising the Qur'aan and hadeeth, so that it becomes an open licence to say whatever he wishes about the Religion whilst masquerading as someone who is representing Ahl as-Sunnah?

After casting aside the knowledge of the Salaf, they have the audacity to claim that their teachings enable their followers to reach the level of the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam himself:

"The Naqshabandi Order teaches the very highest good manners, manners which make its followers lovely to their Lord and to all people. It gives them subtle and exact perception which enables them to arrive at the very essence of any matter; that is the level of the Holy Prophet himself."

(Nazim, Mercy Oceans' Endless Horizons, pp.85-86)

In all of this there is also a reply to Kabbani's sweeping slander (pp.2-3): "They (i.e. the Salafis) consider that anyone who continues on the way of these noble ancestors to be a kafir or disbelievers, as if all these great imaams were wrong and their Islam doubtful!"

Aside from challenging Kabbani to support this irresponsible accusation with proof from the works of the Salafis, we also ask: Who is it that is leading people away from the Islaam of the noble ancestors? Is it the Salafis, or is it Kabbani and his teachers who, as we have just seen, would have us accept that previous knowledge is over and done with, that translations of traditional commentaries of the Qur'aan are of no use and that learning the jurisprudence of the Imaams of the Schools of Law will have no worth before Allaah on the Day of Judgement?

One should take Kabbani's claim about his book that: "This book and the second volume bearing the same title, are only a foundation for the correct teaching of the doctrine of Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'a..." (p.3) with a very large pinch of salt!

KABBANI AGAIN ATTEMPTS TO PROVE A METAPHORICAL MEANING FOR ALLAAH'S ATTRIBUTE OF HAND

Kabbani says:

"... many of the Salaf also applied such figurative interpretation (ta'wil) of Allah's 'Hand,' as shown from the explanation of aydin (Hands) as meaning 'strength' in the verse: 'We have built the heaven with (Our) hands' (51:47). Ibn Jarir al-Tabari said in his Tafsir: Ibn 'Abbas said: 'It means: with strength.' He reports an identical position from Mujahid, Qatada, Mansur, Ibn Zayd, and Sufyan al-Thawri."

(Kabbani, p. 111)

A cursory referral to any of the following well known English translations of the Qur'aan will show the reader that in not a single one of them is this verse (51:47) translated in the way Kabbani has presented it.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali translates it as: <With power and skill did We construct the Firmament.>

Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall: <We have built the heaven with might.>

N. J. Dawood: <We built the heaven with Our might.>

Muhammad Muhsin Khan: <With power did We construct the heaven.>

Why is it that these translators differ with Kabbani and make use of the word 'power / might' as opposed to Kabbani's 'hand'? Naturally, it is because the word in the Qur'aanic text actually means 'power / might / strength' and not 'hand'. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that at-Tabaree and the reports he quotes in his Tafseer explain the verse to refer to Allaah's 'power / strength' since this is none other than the literal wording of the text. There is, in fact, no mention of 'hand' in the verse at all. Kabbani, in stark contrast, translates the verse his own way and proceeds to use it as an example to show that the commentators cited by at-Tabaree applied figurative interpretation to the Attribute of Hand and interpreted it in other than its apparent meaning.

This very same invalid argument concerning verse (51:47) was employed by Nuh Ha Mim Keller during a lecture delivered at the Islamic Cultural Centre, London Central Mosque, 1995! Is this mere coincidence? Or is it evidence of a common methodology? How apt is the saying of the Messenger of Allaah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam: <<From the speech of earlier Prophethood is: If you feel no shame then do as you wish.>> (al-Bukhaaree)

Compare this with verses where the actual word 'Hand' is mentioned and how the above same translators have correctly rendered such verses:

Abdullah Yusuf Ali: <The Jews say: 'God's hand is tied up.' Be their hands tied up and be they accursed for the (blasphemy) they utter. Nay, both his hands are widely outstretched.> (5:67)

Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall: <He said: O Iblis! What hindereth thee from falling prostrate before that which I created with both My hands?> (38:78)

N. J. Dawood: <Do they not see how, among the things Our hands have made...> (36:71)

Likewise with Muhammad Muhsin Khan in respect of all three verses above.

KABBANI AND THE WAY OF ABUL-HASAN AL-ASH'AREE

Kabbani writes:

"Its (i.e. Ahl asSunnah's) doctrine received a classic formulation at the hands of the renewer of the 3rd Islamic century Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari (d.324)... For the most part he did not give figurative interpretations to problematic expressions of divine attributes (such as Allah's 'Hand' etc.), but rather urged that they be accepted as they have come without saying how they are meant, while maintaining Allah's absolute transcendence from any resemblance to created things according to the verse above. Yet, as Nuh Keller explained, 'later members of his school did give such interpretations in rebuttal of anthropomorphists, preserving the faith of Islam from their innovations in the same spirit and with the same dedication that the Imam had preserved it before them by his rebuttal of the Mu'tazilites.'"

(Kabbani, pp. 6-10)

In other words, latter day Ash'arees moved away from what al-Ash'aree himself was upon and resorted to interpretations he had made no use of. Somehow, the initial creed of al-Asha'ree was not equipped with the ability to refute the anthropomorphists! This renders the ascription of modern day Ash'arees to the correct school of Abul Hasan al-Ash'aree as null and void. Kabbani has thereby himself proven the accuracy of the claim of the Salafis which he quotes in his book (p.31): "Salafis say: 'Those who call themselves Ash'aris today do not follow the way of Abu al-Hasan al-Ashari, and practice the ta'wil (figurative interpretation) of the attributes of Allah.'"

THE TRUE WAY OF THE SALAF IN KABBANI'S BOOK

Ignoring for the moment Kabbani's distortion of the Salafi belief, particularly his misrepresentation of the shaykhs 'Abdul-Azeez ibn Baaz, ibn al-Uthaymeen and al-Albaanee, there still remains something corresponding to the true Salafi position regarding the Names and Attributes of Allaah in Kabbani's book. These can be found in the following excerpts (however, it is worth noting that Kabbani does not present these quotes as representing the true Salafi position):

"The obligatory way to proceed is either to explain these words according to their external meanings which conform with Allah's transcendence above any like or partner, and this includes not explaining them as bodily appendages and other corporeal imagery. Therefore it will be said, for example: He has established Himself over the Throne as He has said, with an establishment which befits His majesty and oneness; and He has a hand as He has said, which befits His divinity and majesty; etc."

(Kabbani, p. 117, citing al-Buti)

Where is the anthropomorphism in this? As far as Kabbani is concerned, Salafis who follow the principles outlined in this quote resemble Allaah to His creation!

A further reference to the Salafi belief is found in the following words from one of the leading students of Imaam Aboo Haneefah, and Kabbani again reproduces this in his book:

"The scholars of the Law have agreed from East to West that belief is obligatory in Allah's attributes as mentioned in the Qur'aan and the hadiths conveyed from the Prophet by the trustworthy narrators, without likening Allah to the creation and without explaining them. Whoever explains them and says what Jahm says has departed from the practice of the Prophet and the Companions and parted with the Congregation of Muslims, because he has described His Lord as nothing."

(Kabbani, p.188, citing Muhammad ibn al-Hasan as-Shaybaanee)

Note the explanation of the Attributes which Imaam Muhammad as-Shaybaanee is censuring here, and that is the explanation offered by Jahm ibn Safwaan. Who is it therefore who has "departed from the practice of the Prophet and the Companions and parted with the Congregation of Muslims"? Is it the Salafis, whose explanation of the Attributes fall in line with the approach of the Imaams of the Sunnah mentioned earlier by at-Tirmidhee (as well as Muhammad as-Shaybaanee)? Or Kabbani whose precedent for his beliefs is none other than Jahm ibn Safwaan, as the earlier example showed?

Now either Kabbani knows that these quotes from his book represent the Salafi position on the Attributes of Allaah and he has chosen instead to blatantly misrepresent their beliefs to his readers. Or he does not know that they depict the Salafi position and has thereby not only falsely accused the Salafis of anthropomorphism but also spoken without knowledge. Either of these two reasons highlights a grave defect in his work.

THE CREED OF IMAAM ABOO HANEEFAH

Mullah 'Alee al-Qaaree al-Hanafee (d.1014H) writes, clarifying the creed of Imaam Aboo Haneefah, after mentioning the famous narration of Imaam Maalik 'Istawaa is known, but how is unknown':

"Likewise, our great Imaam (Aboo Haneefah) has the same stance as this position (of Imaam Maalik), and the same is the case with every verse and hadeeth from the Mutashaabihaat such as Hand, Eye, Face and other than these from the Attributes. So the meanings of the Attributes are known, as far as the 'howness' is concerned this is not known. Because the understanding of 'how' is branched onto the knowledge of the 'howness' of the Dhaat (of Allaah) and its reality. Therefore, if this (knowledge of the 'howness' of the Dhaat of Allaah) is unknown, how can the 'howness' of the Attributes be understood. The safe and beneficial conclusion in this regard is that Allaah be described with what He has described Himself and with what His Messenger has described Him without tahreef (distortion), ta'teel (divesting Allaah of the Attribute), without takyeef (asking 'how') and tamtheel (resemblance). Rather, the Names and Attributes are established for Him, and resemblance to the creation is negated. So your establishment would be free from resemblance (tashbeeh), whilst your negation would be free from divesture (ta'teel). Whoever negates the reality of Istawaa has thereby divested (Allaah of an Attribute), and whoever makes a resemblance for Him to the istawaa of the creation is a Mushabbih. But whoever says: Istawaa, without any likeness for Him, he is upon Tawheed and free from any blame."

(Mirqaat al-Mafaateeh Sharh Mishqaat al-Masaabeeh 8/251 of 'Alee al-Qaaree)

So this is the creed of Aboo Haneefah, free from any blame, and it is, in many ways, a clarification of the creed of the Salaf as opposed to the mishmash presented by Kabbani.

EXPLANATION OF THE SAYING OF MULLAH 'ALEE AL-QAAREE AL-HANAFEE

(i) Mullah 'Alee al-Qaaree al-Hanafee says: "So the meanings of the Attributes are known, as far as the 'howness' is concerned this is not known."

This is what is known as tafweedh: affirming the wording and meaning of the Attribute whilst consigning the 'howness' to Allaah. This is exemplified in the famous statement of Imaam Maalik when he was asked how Allaah had ascended the Throne: "Istawaa is known, but the 'howness' is unknown." Kabbani also gives this narration of Imaam Maalik in his book (pp.38, 136, 179).

We see that Imaam Maalik affirmed that the meaning of Istawaa is understood but the how of it is not. Therefore it is for us to affirm that which we are able, i.e. the meaning of Istawaa, but not to question about that which we have not been granted knowledge, i.e. the 'howness' of the Attribute. And upon this way of Imaam Maalik are the Salafis.

Ibn al-Qayyim wrote: "This is why Maalik and Rabee'ah said: 'Istawaa is known and how is unknown,' and likewise ibn al-Maajishoon and Imaam Ahmad and others amongst the Salaf have said: 'We do not know the 'howness' of what Allaah has informed about Himself even if we know its explanation and its meaning.'"

(Mukhtasar as-Sawaa'iq al-Mursalah 1/165)

Shaykh ibn al-Uthaymeen also explains:

"And in any case, there is no doubt that those who say: 'The madhab of Ahl as-Sunnah is tafweedh (of the meaning),' they have erred because the madhab of Ahl as-Sunnah is to affirm the meaning but to do tafweedh of its 'howness'. And let it be known that speaking with tafweedh (of the meaning), as Shaykh al-Islam ibn Taymiyyah has said, is amongst the most evil of the sayings of the people of innovation and ilhaad. When a person hears about tafweedh, he says: 'This is good, I will be safe from these (people) and those (people). I will not speak with the madhab of the Salaf and nor will I speak with the madhab of those performing ta'weel. I will take the middle path and will be saved from all of this. And I will say: Allaah knows best, we do not know what its meaning is.' However, Shaykh al-Islam says: 'This is amongst the most evil of the sayings of the people of innovation and ilhaad.'"

(Sharh al-'Aqeedah al-Waasitiyyah 1/p.93 of ibn al-Uthaymeen)

KABBANI'S MISUNDERSTANDING OF TAFWEEDH

As for Kabbani, he thinks that the tafweedh of the Salaf is to consign both the meaning of the Attribute as well as its 'howness' to Allaah. Indeed, he defines tafweedh as: "committing the meaning to Allaah." (Glossary, p.ix) and goes on to say: "Thus we see that the way of the Salaf was mere acceptance of expressions on faith without saying how they are meant..." (p.108)

There are a number of reasons why this understanding of tafweedh is incompatible with the creed of the Salaf:

(a) Imaam Maalik said: "Istawaa is known, but the 'howness' is unknown." So we repeat that the meaning of Istawaa is known, unlike the tafweedh of Kabbani in which the meaning is referred back to Allaah. It is to be noted that Kabbani himself quotes ibn al-'Arabi as saying: "Hence, from what the Imam of Muslims Malik has said we can conclude that istawa' is known..." (p.179).

(b) Imaam Maalik chastised the questioner for asking about the 'howness' of the Attribute of Istawaa not about its meaning. The narration states: "A man came to Maalik and said (to him): 'O Abu 'Abdullah <The Most Merciful Ascended over the Throne> how did He ascend? It was on this basis that he declared the question to be an innovation, not in

regards to affirming the meaning of Istawaa, which, as we have seen, Imaam Maalik said was something known.

(c) If we take tafweedh upon the understanding of Kabbani (i.e. committing the meaning to Allaah) then the statement of Imaam Maalik would have read: "Istawaa is not known, and likewise its 'howness' is unknown."

(d) Understanding the meanings of the Attributes of Allaah is the only way to know our Lord, the Most Perfect, and it is for this purpose that mankind was created: <I have not created jinn and man except to worship Me.> (51:56). Both at-Tabaree and ibn Katheer give one of the meanings of this verse to be that Allaah did not create us except to know Him. So if we do not know the meanings of the Attributes with which He has described Himself, how can we then know Him? And how could we then fulfil the purpose for which we have been created?

(e) Either the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam knew the meanings of the words with which Allaah described Himself or he did not. If he knew them then he would have taught their meanings to his Companions by virtue of the command of His Lord: <O Messenger! Proclaim that which has been sent down to you from your Lord. And if you do not do it, then you have not conveyed His message.> (5:67). And if he sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam did not know their meaning then it results in a Messenger from Allaah who speaks about His Lord's Attributes and yet he does not know what they mean and he is speaking with words he does not understand, and this is inconceivable.

(f) Shaykh ibn al-Uthaymeen writes: "Allaah, the Most High, says: <We have revealed to you (O Muhammad) the Book as an exposition of all things.> (16:89). Where is the explanation in words whose meanings are not known?! And most of what has been mentioned in the Qur'aan are the Names of Allaah and His Attributes. If we do not know what their meanings are, is the Qur'aan an exposition of all things?! Where is the explanation?!" (Sharh al-'Aqeedah al-Waasitiyyah 1/93)

(g) There is no benefit in negating the 'howness' of something for which the meaning is not known. Rather, it is only after one has understood the meaning of something that one can either affirm or negate the 'howness'.

There is little mileage in Kabbani trying to relegate the texts about the Attributes as being from the Mutashaabihaat verses of the Qur'aan about which Allaah says:

<It is He Who has sent down to you the Book: In it are verses which are Muhkam, they are the foundation of the Book. And others which are Mutashaabihaat. As for those in whose hearts is perversity, they follow the Mutashaabihaat thereof, seeking discord and searching for its meanings. But none knows its meanings except for Allaah. And those firmly grounded in knowledge say: 'We believe in it all as being from our Lord.' And none will grasp the message save men of understanding.> (3:7)

Kabbani says: "This is not because the mutashabih has no meaning, but because the correct meaning is not known to any human being. There is no doubt that all the mutashabihat have a meaning, but it is known only to Allaah..." (p.38, citing al-Ghazaalee)

If the meaning of the Mutashaabihaat is not known to any human being how is it that Imaam Maalik said: "Istawaa is known..."? And it is clear from 'Alee al-Qaaree's statement: "Likewise, our great Imaam (Aboo Haneefah) has the same stance as this position (of Imaam Maalik), and the same is the case with every verse and hadeeth from the Mutashaabihaat such as Hand, Eye, Face and other than these from the Attributes. So the meanings of the Attributes are known, as far as the 'howness' is concerned this is not known," that what he considered as Mutashaabihaat was the 'howness' not the meaning since he himself said: "So the meanings of the Attributes are known..."

And this is the meaning of the verse: < But none knows its meanings except for Allaah...> That is to say, none knows the 'howness' of it save Allaah.

Ibn Taymiyyah writes in al-Hamawiyah:

"... the explanation of the Attributes whose reality Allaah is alone in knowing is the knowledge of the 'howness' which is something unknown to us. So Istawaa is known, its meaning is understood and explained and translated in other languages, and this is the explanation that those firmly grounded in knowledge have an understanding of. But as for the 'howness' of the Istawaa, this is the explanation that none but Allaah, the Exalted, knows."

If Istawaa had been from the Mutashaabihaat then Imaam Maalik (by virtue of his affirmation that the meaning of Istawaa is known) would have been guilty of seeking its meaning in opposition to the verse: < As for those in whose hearts is perversity, they follow the Mutashaabihaat thereof, seeking discord and searching for its meanings.> and it is not permissible to think that an Imaam the likes of Maalik ibn Anas would contradict the verse in such a blatant fashion. This shows that he did not consider this Attribute (and other Attributes for that matter) to be from the Mutashaabihaat texts.

Even if we were to concede that the texts regarding the Attributes of Allaah were from the Mutashaabihaat, then their meaning would still be known by the People of Knowledge since it is perfectly permissible to read the above verse as:

<But none knows its meanings except for Allaah as well as those firmly grounded in knowledge, who also say: 'We believe in it all as being from our Lord.'>

As opposed to the more familiar reading:

<But none knows its meanings except for Allaah. And those firmly grounded in knowledge say: 'We believe in it all as being from our Lord.'>

Ibn Katheer explains in his commentary of this verse:

"From them are those who stop (the verse) at the end of: <... as well as those firmly grounded in knowledge.> and many of the commentators of the Qur'aan and people of 'Usool have followed them in that... ibn Abee Najeeh reports on the authority of Mujaahid on the authority of ibn Abbaas that he said: 'I am from those well grounded in knowledge who know its explanation.' And ibn Abee Najeeh said on the authority of Mujaahid (that) those well grounded in knowledge are aware of its explanation and they say that they believe in it."

But it must be said that there is a difference of opinion on the possible readings of this verse with a number of commentators of the Qur'aan preferring the reading: <<But none knows its meanings except for Allaah. And those firmly grounded in knowledge say: 'We believe in it all as being from our Lord.'> And Allaah knows best.

THE WORDS OF MULLAH 'ALEE AL-QAAREE AL-HANAFEE CONTINUED

(ii) Mullah 'Alee al-Qaaree al-Hanafee says: "Because the understanding of 'how' is branched onto the knowledge of the 'howness' of the Dhaat (of Allaah) and its reality. Therefore, if this (knowledge of the 'howness' of the Dhaat of Allaah) is unknown, how can the 'howness' of the Attributes be understood."

This is what the Salafis say and believe: Speaking about the Attributes of Allaah is like speaking about the Essence of Allaah.

(iii) Mullah 'Alee al-Qaaree al-Hanafee says: "The safe and beneficial conclusion in this regards is that Allaah be described with what He has described Himself and with what His Messenger has described Him without tahreef (distortion), ta'teel (divesting Allaah of the Attribute), without takyeef (asking 'how') and tamtheel (resemblance)."

Just as ibn Taymiyyah, whilst likewise propagating the way of the Salaf, had said some three hundred years prior to 'Alee al-Qaaree: "From belief in Allaah is to believe in whatever He has described Himself with in His Book, and with whatever His Messenger sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam has described Him with, without tahreef, without ta'teel, without takyeef and without tamtheel."

(ibn Taymiyyah, al-'Aqeedah al-Waasitiyyah, pp. 72 and 82, with the commentary of ibn al-Uthaymeen)

A brief definition of these terms:

Tahreef (distortion): To alter the wording of the Names and Attributes or change their meanings. Such as the saying that Istawaa means istawlaa / isteelaa and the saying that Hand means power and bounty. Kabbani has fallen into both of these examples of distortion.

Ta'teel (divesting Allaah of the Attribute): Removal of the Attributes and to deny them for Allaah. There is a subtle form of denial which like tahreef is camouflaged as ta'weel. Such as the view of Kabbani that Hand means power or bounty which contains both a distortion of the word Hand as well a denial of Allaah's Attribute of Hand.

Takyeef (asking 'how'): Asking or explaining how the Attributes are. For example, to ask: 'How did He ascend?' or 'How is His Hand?'

Tamtheel (resemblance): This is the same as tashbeeh, which is to resemble the Attributes of Allaah to the creation. The Believer must stick to His, the Most High's, saying: <There is nothing like Him.> (42:11) which means that there is nothing whatsoever similar to Him.

This encapsulates the creed of the Salaf as regards the Attributes of Allaah. They describe Allaah, the Most High, with whatever He has described Himself, whilst:

- avoiding any distortion of the Attribute;
- avoiding the negation of the Attribute;
- not asking how the Attribute is; and
- remaining clear from resembling His Attributes to the creation.

What is there in this approach that Kabbani finds so unpalatable?

Ibn Katheer writes:

"Indeed, the path we traverse in this issue is to follow the way of the Pious Predecessors, such as Maalik, al-Awzaa'ee, ath-Thawree, Layth ibn Sa'd, ash-Shaafi'ee, Ahmad, Ishaq ibn Raahawaih and others from the scholars of the Muslims, both past and present. Their way is to recite them as they are, without takyeef, tashbeeh nor ta'teel."

(Tafseer Qur'aan al-Adheem 2/230 of ibn Katheer)

(iv) Mullah 'Alee al-Qaaree al-Hanafee says: "But whoever says: Istawaa, without any likeness for Him, he is upon Tawheed and free from any blame."

This is again what the Salafis say and the very thing that Kabbani objects to!

THE APPARENT (DHAahir) MEANING OF THE QUR'AAN AND SUNNAH

In continuation of his relentless attack on ibn Taymiyyah, Kabbani says:

"The evidence for this claim (i.e. Kabbani's accusations of anthropomorphism) is found in ibn Taymiyya's writings... Here and in other works he indicates that Allah's 'Hand', 'Foot', 'Shin' and 'Face' are literal (haqiqi) attributes, and that He is upon the Throne in person (bi al-dhat). His error was in believing such attributes are literal, and declaring as divesters-of-Allah's-attributes (mu'atilla) all the Ahl al-Sunna who believed them to be metaphorical. These are amongst his unwarranted innovations in faith..."

(Kabbani, p. 45)

Consider also what Jamal al-Zahawi writes:

"Since clear reason and sound theory clash in every way with what the Wahhabis believe, they are forced to cast reason aside. Thus by their taking the text of the Qur'an and Sunna only in their apparent meaning (zahir) absurdity results. Indeed, this is the well spring of their error and misguidance."

(The Doctrine of Ahl al-Sunna, p.42 of the English translation, with notes from Hisham Kabbani, 1996)

What reply can one begin to give to al-Zahawi if he believes that the apparent meaning of either the Qur'aan or the Sunnah leads to absurdity? What benefit, therefore, is there in quoting Qur'aanic or hadeeth texts in reply to the accusations he and his followers have made?

Furthermore, affirming the texts upon their apparent (dhaahir) meaning, he would have us believe, is the well spring of error and misguidance.

What then of the views of the following scholars:

Imaam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d.241H): "The hadeeth, in our estimation, is to be taken by its apparent (dhaahir) meaning, as it has come from the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam..."

(Usool as Sunnah no.27 of Imaam Ahmad)

Al-Khattaabee (d.388H) said: "The madhab of the Salaf with regard to the Attributes of Allaah is to affirm them as they are with their apparent (dhaahir) meaning, negating any resemblance to the creation and without asking how they are."

(Al-Ghuniyah 'an Kalaam wa Ahlihi, as quoted in Mukhtasar al-'Uluww (p.257/no.311). See also al-Asmaa was-Sifaat (2/p.198) of al-Bayhaqee)

Al-Khateeb al-Baghdaadee (d.463H) said: "As for speech about the Attributes (of Allaah), what is authentically related about them in the Sunnah, then the way of the Salaf, may Allaah be pleased with them all, was to affirm them all as they are, upon their apparent (dhaahir) meaning..."

(Al-Kalaam 'alas-Sifaat (pp.19-20) of al-Baghdaadee)

Shaykh 'Abdul-Qaadir al-Jeelaanee (d.561H) said: "It is essential to carry the Attribute of al-Istawaa (Allaah's ascending) upon its apparent sense... it is related from them (i.e. the Salaf) that they carried the meaning of Istawaa with its apparent meaning."

(Al-Ghuniyatut-Taalibeen (1/50) of 'Abdul-Qaadir al-Jeelaanee)

Ibn Qudaamah (d.620H) said: "The way of the Salaf is to have faith in the Names and Attributes of Allaah that He has described Himself with in His Revelation, or upon the tongue of His Messenger sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam, without increasing or decreasing upon it, nor exceeding the limits, nor explaining them, nor making ta'weel of them in a way which opposes the apparent (dhaahir) meaning."

(Dhammut-Ta'weel (p.11) of Ibn Qudaamah)

Al-Haafidh ibn 'Abdul-Barr (d.463H) wrote: "Ahlus-Sunnah are agreed in affirming all of the Attributes which are related in the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, having faith in them and understanding them in a real sense ('alal-haqeeqah) not metaphorically."

(ibn 'Abdul-Barr, At-Tamheed 7/145)

Abul Hasan al-Ash'aree (d.324H) who wrote in Al-Ibaanah 'an Usool ad-Diyaanah (p.133):

"The ruling concerning the Speech of Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, is that it is taken upon its apparent (dhaahir) and real meaning. Nothing is removed from its apparent meaning to a metaphorical one except with a proof..."

Or are these scholars not considered from Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah?

KABBANI'S TEACHERS AND THE APPARENT MEANING OF THE QUR'AAN AND SUNNAH

If the apparent wording of the Qur'aanic verses relating to the Attributes of Allaah are not what is intended, how does Kabbani explain the following words of his shaykh and teacher, 'Abdullah ad-Daghestani (Grandshaykh)?

"We believe there is a Face for Allah Almighty," says our Grandshaykh, "But, a description of His Face is not imagination. You may imagine one face, and he, another, and so on. If yours is right, what about ours? We cannot describe all the attributes of Allah Almighty, we just know that He has them."

"O Nazim Effendi," says our Grandshaykh, "I was dreaming today of the eyes of my Lord! I cannot describe the beauty of his eyes! They are not like anything."

[Nazim, Mercy Oceans, pp. 11 and 44, 1980]

These words of Kabbani's teacher, considered by his followers to have been the Sultan of the Awliya, affirm in clear, unequivocal terms, both a Face and Eyes for Allaah (whilst obviously taking into account that these Attributes in no way resemble the creation).

Or is ad-Daghestani's affirmation of these Attributes also error and misguidance according to the criterion of Kabbani and al-Zahawi?

Abul-Hasan al-Ash'aree said:

"And He has two Eyes without any mention of how."

(al-Ash'aree, Al-Ibaanah 'an Usool ad-Diyaanah, p. 9 and Maqaalaat p.290)

Ibn Hajar also writes in Fath al-Baaree (13/373) that al-Bayhaqee mentions a witness for the hadeeth of Aboo Hurairah (i.e. the hadeeth reported by Aboo Dawood in his Sunan that the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam recited Soorah an-Nisaa Verse 58 and read upto <Hearing Seeing> and placed his thumb on his ear and the one next to it upon his eyes) from the hadeeth of 'Uqbah ibn 'Aamir: 'I heard the Messenger of Allaah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam say upon the minbar: <<Our Lord certainly hears and sees>> and he pointed to his two eyes.' (Ibn Hajar declared its chain of transmission to be hasan).

The preceding quote from ad-Daghestani is an indication that Kabbani is neither upon the way of his spiritual master nor Abul-Hasan al-Ash'aree in affirming the Attributes since they both affirm Eyes for Allaah, an affirmation which Kabbani takes great offence at - refer to Kabbani, p. 197.

THE SLANDER AGAINST IBN TAYMIYYAH THAT HE CONSIDERED ALLAAH TO BE A BODY (JISM)

Another unfounded allegation thrown in the direction of ibn Taymiyyah is that he considered Allaah to be a body (jism). This ancient argument has, sadly, also been repeated by Kabbani in our time as well as Hasan as-Saqqaaaf who wrote in his notes to Daf Shubhah at-Tashbeeh (pp. 245-246):

"Entering into this category is al-Harraanee (ibn Taymiyyah)... who has affirmed a jism (body) for Allaah in many of his books. From this is his saying in at-Ta'sees (1/101): 'There is not in the Book of Allaah, nor in the Sunnah of His Messenger, nor a statement from any one of the Salaf of this Ummah and its Imaams that He is not a body, and that His Attributes are not bodily, consisting of organs...'"

The falsity of as-Saqqaaaf's allegations can be explained in the following ways:

i. The previously mentioned quote that he ascribed to ibn Taymiyyah is not from his own words. Rather, ibn Taymiyyah was quoting the saying of the people of kalaam (theological rhetoric) in explanation of their views. However, in order to bring about his accusation, as-Saqqaaaf conveniently omitted the beginning of ibn Taymiyyah's words where he began by saying: "They say...."!

How ludicrous then are the words of Kabbani: "We warn the reader not to be deceived by the disclaimer invoked by some of Ibn Taymiyya's admirers that he did not really hold all these beliefs but merely quoted them in his review of the positions of those he criticised." (Kabbani, p.66)

ii. Ibn Taymiyyah has repeatedly spoken against describing Allaah as a body or with organs: "Indeed, the term body (jism), organs ('arad), extent (mutahayyiz) and their like are all newly-invented terminologies. We have mentioned many a time before that the Salaf and the Imaams have not spoken about such things, neither by way of a negation nor by way of affirmation. Rather, they declared those who spoke about such matters to be innovators and went to great lengths to censure them."

(refer to ibn Taymiyyah, Majmoo' al-Fataawaa 3/306-310 and 13/304-305, Minhaajus-Sunnah an-Nabawiyah 2/134-135, 192, 198-200 and 567)

iii. Ibn Taymiyyah also wrote in Sharh Hadeeth an-Nuzool (p. 71) that describing Allaah as a body is: "An innovation in the Sharee'ah, a corruption of the language and a contradiction to the intellect. Rather, it is repudiated by the Sharee'ah, the language and the intellect."

DR. SA'EED RAMADAAN AL-BUTI DEFENDS IBN TAYMIYYAH

Even Dr. Sa'eed Ramadaan al-Buti, who Kabbani happily quotes (pp. 117-134) because he wrote what was in Kabbani's view a 'landmark study of the 'Salafi' innovation', is quick to point out the fallacy of the accusations against ibn Taymiyyah:

"We are amazed when we see the extremists declaring ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy upon him, to be an unbeliever. And also at them saying that he was one who held Allaah to be a body (mujassid), and I have studied long and hard as to where I could find a statement or a word from ibn Taymiyyah that he wrote or said which would indicate his holding Allaah to be a body as was quoted from him by as-Subki and others and I have not found anything from him like this. All I found was him saying in his legal rulings, 'Indeed Allaah has a Hand as He said, and has risen over the Throne as He said, and He has an Eye as He said'."

Al-Buti adds to this:

"I referred to the last work written by Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, 'al-Ibaanah', and I found him saying exactly what ibn Taymiyyah said..." (Nadwa Ittjaahaat al-Fiqr al-Islaamee, pp. 264-265, of al-Buti)

A FURTHER ACCUSATION AGAINST IBN TAYMIYYAH

Another distortion of ibn Taymiyyah's views, again repeated by Kabbani (p.96), is what ibn Batootah (d.779H) alleges in his Rihlah (1/110):

"I was present in Damascus on Friday where he (ibn Taymiyyah) was admonishing and reminding the people from the pulpit of the congregational mosque. During his speech he said: 'Indeed Allaah descends to the lowest heaven of the world just as I am descending now.' Then he descended one step of the pulpit..."

Again, the falsehood of this claim can be shown from a number of angles:

i. Ibn Taymiyyah was not the khateeb of the aforementioned masjid, rather it was Qaadee al-Qazwaynee. Ibn Batootah himself says in his Rihlah (1/107): "At the time of my entering it (Damascus) their Imaam was Qaadee Jalaal ad-Deen Muhammad bin Abd ar-Rahmaan al-Qazwaynee from the great legal jurists, and he was the khateeb of the masjid."

ii. It is a clear contradiction of ibn Taymiyyah's way concerning the Attributes of Allaah. Ibn Taymiyyah clearly states the forbiddance of likening Allaah to His creation: "It is a must to affirm that which Allaah affirms for Himself, whilst negating any likeness to Him with His creation." (at-Tadmuriyyah, p.20, of ibn Taymiyyah).

iii. Ibn Taymiyyah has also said: "Whoever considers the Attributes of Allaah to be like the attributes of the creation, such that the Istawaa of Allaah is like the ascending of the

creation, or His Descending (Nuzool) is like the descending of the creation or other than that, then he is a deviated innovator." (ibn Taymiyyah, Majmoo' al-Fataawaa 5/262).

iv. Ibn Taymiyyah has a separate book concerning the hadeeth of Allaah's Descending - Sharh Hadeeth an-Nuzool - and in it there is no trace of the anthropomorphic beliefs which Kabbani and others have falsely accused him of.

v. It is not possible that ibn Batootah witnessed ibn Taymiyyah deliver this speech since ibn Batootah states in his Rihlah (1/102) that he entered Damascus on the 9th of Ramadhan in the year 728H. However, ibn Taymiyyah was in prison at this time as ibn Katheer states in al-Bidaayah wan-Nihaayah (14/135) that he was imprisoned on 6th Sha'baan 728H and remained there until his death on 20th Dhul-Qa'dah 728H.

vi. Ibn Batootah did not write the book Rihlah with his own hand, rather it was collected by Muhammad bin Jazee al-Kalbee who writes in the introduction: "I have quoted the meaning of the words of Shaykh Abu Abdullaah (ibn Batootah) with words that give the meaning of what he intended."

The author of the infamous Al-Albani Unveiled deemed it necessary to say (pp. 112-113):

"Even if one was to denounce Ibn Battuta's account as being a false and fabricated statement, one may wish to know that the greatest scholar of Hadith in his time, Shaykh al-Islam al-Hafiz Ahmad ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (Rahimahullah) has reported an incident in al-Durar al-kamina (1, 164) where again ibn Taymiyyah descended the steps of the minbar in order to illustrate his understanding of how Allah descends (nuzul) as early as the year 705/1305 AH (some 21 years before Ibn Battuta's account). Hafiz Ibn Hajar's source for this incident was one of Ibn Taymiyya's own disciples by the name of Sulayman Najm al-Din al-Tufi al-Hanbali (d.716/1316)."

These words of al-Tufi al-Hanbali are also repeated by Kabbani (p.96).

However, it is clear from what al-Tufi says (i.e. "... they mentioned that he had cited the hadith of Allah's descent...") that he is merely relaying what others have said, not that he is necessarily agreeing with the correctness of the accusation.

Incidentally, the author of Al-Albani Unveiled believes that the event referred to by al-Tufi took place 21 years before ibn Batootah's account whereas Kabbani seems to think that it is a report of one and the same event!

THE SCHOLARS AGREE ON THE CORRECTNESS OF IBN TAYMIYYAH'S WORKS

After all this, it comes as no surprise that those who argued with ibn Taymiyyah about the contents of his books found that indeed his beliefs were exactly those held by the Salaf of this Ummah. Ibn Katheer writes that when the scholars of his time gathered for a sitting with ibn Taymiyyah to discuss his work al-Aqeedah al-Hamawiyyah that ibn Taymiyyah's replies to their accusations were not able to be rebutted (al-Bidaayah wan Nihaayah, 14/5). And likewise he mentioned that when the scholars sat to argue with him regarding his Aqeedah al-Waasitiyyah the argument ended with them accepting all that was contained in the book (Vol. 14 of al-Bidaayah under the heading 'Aqd al-Majaalis ath-Thalaatha').

KABBANI'S UNFOUNDED ALLEGATIONS AGAINST IBN TAYMIYYAH CONTINUE

Nevertheless, the allegations continue. Kabbani lists (via al-Haytami / Taj al-Din al-Subki) eleven cases wherein ibn Taymiyyah has supposedly violated scholarly consensus (pp. 101-103). The author of Al-Albani Unveiled (again via as-Subki) mentions twenty-two examples (pp. 114-116). It is not intended to look at the accuracy or otherwise of any of these assertions (with the exception of one below), this will be dealt with elsewhere if Allaah wills. However, it is fitting to mention what Kabbani quotes at the end of his list of allegations:

"Some said: 'whoever looks at his (ibn Taymiyyah's) books does not attribute to him most of these positions...' and in Al-Albani Unveiled it reads: "Some scholars said that most of the above quoted statements did not belong to ibn Taymiyya..."

This begs the question: If it is the case that there are serious doubts as to whether ibn Taymiyyah even held such views then why bother to mention them in the first place? Is it so that people will begin to have doubts implanted in their hearts and minds about this exemplary scholar?

Anas ibn Maalik reports that the Messenger of Allaah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam asked: <<Do you know what calumny is?>> They said: Allaah and His Messenger know best. He then said: <<Conveying the words of some people to others in order to create mischief between them.>>

(Al-Bukhaaree in al-Adab al-Mufrad and al-Bayhaqee in Sunan al-Kubraa. There is a similar report from ibn Mas'ood in Saheeh Muslim)

Shaykh 'Alee Hasan al-Halabee comments on the hadeeth:

"Tale carrying is a foul disease. When it enters the heart it corrupts it, and when the heart is corrupt the rest of the body becomes corrupt and one's actions are destroyed. How many people there are today whose evil actions have been made alluring to them by their devils, so they think that their deeds are good and free from blemish! How many there are today

who think that tale-carrying is a good deed and a righteous action which they are performing! However, these people who circulate amongst the servants of Allaah, the One free and far removed from all imperfections, spreading mischief, falsehood and leading hearts astray, then the sincere Muslim should not give them any chance to operate but should rather turn away from them and keep away from them! This is the least punishment possible for these people!" (Al-Halabee, translated as Forty Hadeeth on the Islamic Personality, p.46, 1995)

And the Messenger of Allaah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam said:

<<It is sufficient falsehood for a person that he narrates everything which he hears.>>

(Muslim in the introduction to his Saheeh, as well as Aboo Dawood, Ibn Hibbaan and al-Haakim)

Here is one of the eleven accusations Kabbani quotes against ibn Taymiyyah:

"that the world (al-'alam) is of a pre-eternal nature (qadim bi al-naw') and that it existed with Allah from pre-eternity (wa lam yazal ma' Allah) as an everlasting created object (makhluqan da'iman), thus making it necessarily existent in His Essence (fa ja'alah mujaban bi al-dhat) and not acting deliberately (la fa'ilan bi al-ikhtyar), elevated is He above that!"

(Kabbani, pp. 101-102)

Kabbani adds a footnote, saying: "These are of the crassest expressions of kalam and speculation in which one could possibly indulge."

Conveniently there is no reference given by Kabbani for this statement from the works of ibn Taymiyyah so that its accuracy could be assessed. We have already seen clear examples of how ibn Taymiyyah's views have been misrepresented. Nevertheless, how does Kabbani view the following words of his teacher Nazim al-Qubrusi?

KABBANI'S TEACHER EXPLAINS THAT MANKIND IS UNCREATED!

Nazim al-Qubrusi said:

"Allah Almighty is greatest. He is timeless, ever ready, without beginning. He is king. And yet you cannot find a king without a kingdom. Without subjects his kingship has no meaning. Just as there can be no meaning for a prophet without an ummah (nation). Therefore, Allah was ready without beginning, and his servants also were ready without beginning. If there were no people, to whom was He Allah? Was it to Himself? No! A hadith relates: 'I was a secret treasure and wanted to be known.' His people were part of

this treasure... When people come to this world, they have the appearance of beginning, but in reality they were with Allah always, without beginning."

(Nazim, Mercy Oceans, p.13, 1980)

Aside from voicing the opinion that mankind is pre-eternal, Kabbani's teacher has unjustly and alarmingly brought the existence of Allaah down to the level of human existence. Allaah's Kingship, we are told, is in need of a kingdom. Just as the Prophethood of a Prophet is valueless without a nation, likewise, Allaah's existence must have the creation to give it any real meaning!

Compare this belief of Nazim's with the sound Islamic doctrine as expounded by al-Tahawee in his 'Aqeedah (which I quote from Kabbani's own book, p.16):

(11) "He creates without His being in need to do so..."

(14) "It was not only after the act of creation that He could be described as 'the Creator' nor was it only the act of origination that He could be described as 'the Originator'."

(15) "He was always the Lord even when there was nothing to be Lord of, and always the Creator even when there was no creation."

It goes on to say in Mercy Oceans (p.82):

"A disciple commented, 'You gave us a good lesson, Maulana, when you told us that there is no king without a kingdom, no prophet without an ummah, no creator without creatures. Allah is uncreated, and servants are also uncreated. But when we come to this life, we forget.' 'Yes', replied the Shaykh. 'It is enough. You cannot go too deep without sinking!'"

So Nazim al-Qubrusi is instructing his followers, amongst them Kabbani, that the servants of Allaah are uncreated! Whereas Allaah - the Most High - has said:

<<O mankind! Worship your Guardian Lord Who created you and those who came before you.> (2:21)

<<Allaah created you and that which you do.>> (37:96)

<<It is We Who created man, and We know what suggestions his soul whispers to him .>> (50:16)

The verses with this meaning are many.

KABBANI'S OBJECTION TO USAGE OF THE TERM 'BI-DHATIHI'

As for Kabbani's objection to usage of the term 'bi-Dhatihi' in relation to the Istawaa of Allaah over the Throne (pp. 65, 108, 140, 142, 176), and particularly his conclusion that this term: "has no precedent in Qur'an and hadith, and is therefore rejected," then this conclusion is in itself rejected. There are a number of phrases and terminologies used within the various Islamic sciences, such as the science of hadeeth, fiqh, tajweed and their like, which are not to be found in either the Qur'aan or hadeeth. Should all these terms then be rejected? In the age of the Companions the Qur'aan was referred to as the 'Speech of Allaah', the addition 'not created' commonly used later was not employed by them due to an absence of the need to so do. When the fitnah of the Jahmiyyah raised its head concerning the status of the Qur'aan (created or uncreated) the scholars of the Salaf had no hesitation in then referring to the Qur'aan as the 'Speech of Allaah, not created.' But the term 'not created' is found neither in the Qur'aan nor in hadeeth. Just as Imaam Ahmad clarified on being asked about a persons who refrains from saying that the Qur'aan is uncreated or that it is created but merely affirming that it is the Speech of Allaah and remains silent beyond this, is there any leeway for such an individual? He replied: "Why should he remain silent? If what the people had fallen into had not occurred, silence would have been permissible, but since they have said what they have said, then why should they (Ahlus Sunnah) not speak?" (Abu Dawood in his al-Masaa'il pp.263-264). Accordingly, the term 'bi dhatihi', although not employed to begin with, came into use at the appropriate time when it was helpful for the People of Knowledge to clarify the false interpretations of the various sects.

Abu Ja'far ibn Abee Shaybah (d.297H) wrote:

"It is known through continuous narrations that Allaah created the Throne then made Istawaa over it with His Dhaat."

(Kitaab al-'Arsh p.51 of ibn Abee Shaybah, as cited in 'Usool ad-Deen 'inda Imaam Aboo Haneefah p.308, footnote, of Muhammad ibn 'Abdur-Rahmaan al-Khamees)

Imaam at-Talamankee al-Maaleeke (d.429H) said: "There is a consensus from Ahlus-Sunnah that Allaah Ascended over His Throne bi-Dhatihi... There is a consensus from Ahlus-Sunnah that Allaah Ascended over His Throne in a real sense, not metaphorically."

(Related in Siyaar A'laamun-Nubalaa (17/566) of adh-Dhahabee)

Qaadee Abdul Wahhab (d.422) said: "The greatest of Ahlus Sunnah, may Allaah have mercy upon them, have made it clear that Allaah rose over His Throne in Person."

(Darr at-Ta'aarid al-Aqal wan Naql, pg. 203, of ibn Taymiyyah)

Adh-Dhahabee said:

"The likes of this phrase (bi Dhatihi) has preceded from Abu Ja'far ibn Abee Shaybah and Uthmaan bin Sa'eed ad-Daarimee. Likewise, Yahya bin 'Ammar, the preacher of Sijistaan, used it in his Risaalah, and al-Haafidh Abu Mansoor al-Waa'ilee as-Sijzee in al-Ibaanah where he said: 'Our scholars, such as ath-Thawree, Maalik, the two Hamaads, ibn 'Uyaynah, ibn al-Mubaarak, al-Fudayl, Ahmad and Ishaq are agreed that Allaah is above His Throne by His Dhaat and His Knowledge is in every place.'"

(Mukhtasar al-'Uluww p.255)

Adh-Dhahabee goes on to explain: "These (narrations) that he (as-Sijzee) quotes from them are famous and preserved, except for the word 'in Person', for it is from himself which he attributes to them in meaning."

Shaykh 'Abdul-Qaadir al-Jeelaanee (d.561H) - revered amongst Sufis - said: "It is essential to carry the Attribute of al-Istawaa (Allaah's ascending) upon its apparent sense without ta'weel; and that He Ascended by His Dhaat (Self) over the Throne. Istawaa does not mean sitting and touching as the Mujassimah and Karraamiyyah say; nor does it mean grandeur and highness ('uluww) as the Ashariyyah say; nor does it mean conquering (isteelaa) as the Mu'tazilah say. None of this is related in the Sharee'ah. Neither has this been related by any one of the Pious Predecessors from the Companions and their students, nor is it related from the Scholars of Hadeeth. Rather, it is related from them that they carried the meaning of Istawaa with its apparent meaning."

(Al-Ghuniyatut-Taalibeen (1/50) of 'Abdul-Qaadir al-Jeelaanee).

THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN THE WAY OF KABBANI AND SHAYKH 'ABDUL-QAADIR AL-JEELANEE

There is no doubt that Shaykh 'Abdul-Qaadir al-Jeelaanee – irrespective of what the Sufis have falsely attributed to him - was upon the way of Imaam Ahmad not only in Fiqh but also belief. Yet despite Kabbani's attempts to portray for the reader - via ibn al-Jawzee for the most part - the beliefs of the Hanbali scholars, we see from the preceding quote at least three marked differences between Shaykh 'Abdul-Qaadir al-Jeelaanee and Kabbani:

- i. That the Attribute of Istawaa is taken upon its apparent sense - vs - Kabbani's criticism of those who uphold the Attributes on their apparent meaning as well as al-Zahawi's attack on the Wahhabis for doing the same.
- ii. Shaykh 'Abdul-Qaadir al-Jeelaanee's rejection of the view of the Ashariyyah that Istawaa means grandeur and highness ('uluww).

According to al-Haytami and al-Qalyubi, as quoted by Kabbani (pp. 30-31), this would render Shaykh 'Abdul-Qaadir both an innovator and outside the fold of Ahlus-Sunnah for not following the way of the Ashariyyah or Maturidees.

iii. The rejection of interpreting Istawaa as Isteela (Istawla) - vs - Kabbani who mentions this as one of the interpretations given for this Attribute and indeed refers to it as: "Among the least injurious and most befitting meanings..." (pp. 106, 139, 184-185).

Imaam al-Juwaynee, in his retraction from the madhab of the Ash'arees, explains:

"Allaah expanded my chest about the state of those Shaykhs who made ta'weel of Istawaa to isteelaa... and it is my belief that they do not understand the Attributes of the Lord, the Most High, except with what befits the creation. Therefore, they do not understand Istawaa as truly befits Him... so this is why they distort the words from its proper context and deny what Allaah has described Himself with."

(Risaalah Ithbaatul-Istawaa wal-Fawqiyah, pp.176-186, which is part of Majmoo'atur-Rasaa'il al-Muneeriyah)

Ibn Qudaamah wrote:

"The one performing ta'weel combines the ascription to Allaah of an Attribute which He did not ascribe or adjoin to Himself, with the negation of an Attribute which Allaah did adjoin to Himself. When he says: 'The meaning of Istawaa is istawlaa,' he is ascribing to Allaah the attribute of isteelaa, but Allaah did not ascribe this attribute to Himself. He is also thereby negating the Attribute of Istawaa, despite the fact that Allaah has mentioned it in the Qur'aan in seven places."

(Tahreem an-Nazar fee Kitaab Ahl al-Kalaam, no.58; p.23 of the translation)

Kabbani adds (p.107): "To those who object to istawla on the grounds that it supposes prior opposition, Ibn Hajar remarked that that assumption is discarded by clinging to the verse: 'Allah was ever Knower, Wise.' (4:17), which the commentators, he says, have explained to mean 'He is ever Knower and Wise.'"

Ibn Hajar, however, goes on to say: "But it is possible to refute some of these meanings for others as has preceded from ibn Battaal... and the Reviver of the Sunnah, al-Baghawee quoted in his tafseer from ibn Abbaas and the majority of the commentators that its meaning was to rise above, similar statements were said by Abu Ubaid and al-Faraa'..." (Fath al-Baaree 13/406)

Ibn Battaal's declaration that Istawaa means to rise above and that this is the true position of Ahlus-Sunnah, as well as the similar meaning given by ibn Abbaas, are both mentioned by Kabbani (p.105). But needless to say he is unable to resist attempting to interpret away even this correct definition and says (p.106): "'To rise,' 'ascend,' and 'rise above' must be

understood in the sense of rank and lordship..." This, as we have seen, has already been replied to by Shaykh 'Abdul-Qaadir al-Jeelaanee in his words: "It is essential to carry the Attribute of al-Istawaa (Allaah's ascending) upon its apparent sense without ta'weel... nor does it mean grandeur and highness ('uluww) as the Ashariyyah say..."

The language of the Arabs does not permit the meaning of Istawaa to be designated as isteelaa, and this definition is not quoted from any of the Imaams of the Language whose saying is depended upon. This is why ibn al-Jawzee says in Zaad al-Maseer (3/213): "This meaning is rejected according to the Linguists." And ibn Abdul Barr said in at-Tamheed (7/131): "Their saying in explanation of Istawaa that it means isteelaa is not correct according to the language."

On a quick side point, we have just seen al-Haafidh ibn Hajar refer to Imaam al-Baghawee as the 'Reviver of the Sunnah'. So here is an example of the Sunnah which he revived:

"The Finger is an Attribute from amongst the Attributes of Allaah, and likewise everything of this nature that occurs in the Book and Sunnah, for example the Face (Wajh), Eye (Ayn), Hand (Yad), Leg (Rijl), Coming (Ityaan and Majee), and the Descent to the Lowest Heaven, His Rising over His Throne, Laughter (Dahk), Joy (Farh)... these and their likes are Attributes of Allaah in which it is obligatory to have faith, leaving them upon their literal meanings, turning away from ta'weel and keeping a distance from resemblance, along with the belief that none of the Attributes of the Creator resemble anything from the attributes of the creation, just as His Self does not resemble the selves of the creation. Allaah said: <There is nothing like Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing.> It was upon this that the Salaf of this nation and the scholars of the Sunnah were upon, they accepted them all with faith and stayed away from likening Allaah to His creation and ta'weel. They relegated the knowledge of the 'how' (of the Attributes) to Allaah." (Sharh as-Sunnah, 1/170, of al-Baghawee)

This is the very revival of the Sunnah that Kabbani is seeking to stamp out!

KABBANI'S METAPHORICAL MEANING FOR THE THRONE OF ALLAAH

Kabbani attempts to prove a metaphorical meaning for the Throne by saying:

"This is confirmed by Ibn 'Abbas' own explanation of the Throne as cited by al-Khazin in his tafsir of 2:255 as meaning Allah's knowledge, which Ibn Kathir cites with his chain of transmission through Ibn Abi Hatim."

(Kabbani, p. 186)

Ibn Katheer's chain of transmission contains the narrator Ja'far ibn Abee al-Mugheerah about whom ibn Hajar said: "Truthful, has some vain fancies." (at-Taqreeb no.960).

Shaykh al-Albaanee says: "The chain of transmission is not authentic." (asSaheehah 1/p.226)

The one who Ja'far reports from is Sa'eed ibn Jubayr, and ibn Mandah said: "He (Ja'far) is not strong in that which he narrates from Sa'eed ibn Jubayr." (al-Meezaan no.1536 of adh-Dhahabee). This is also mentioned by Shaykh Muqbil ibn Haadee in his checking to ibn Katheer (1/p.549).

KABBANI'S USE OF ANOTHER INAUTHENTIC REPORT ASCRIBED TO IBN 'ABBAAS

Likewise, Kabbani makes use of another inauthentic report attributed to ibn 'Abbaas (p. 196):

"Ibn 'Abbas said when he was asked about Allah's saying 'On the day the leg shall be uncovered' (68:42): 'If you find something from the Qur'an to be obscure, seek its meaning from poetry; verily poetry is the register (diwan) of the Arabs. Have you not heard the poet's saying: Your people have opened the way of sword-blows upon the necks, And war or battle rose on every leg (i.e. it was impossible to flee).' Then he said: 'This is a day of affliction and violence.' Thus the meaning of verse 69:42 is: 'On the day when affliction befalls them in earnest.'"

The weakness of this report as well as other similar narrations has been dealt with in a precise manner by Shaykh Saleem al-Hilaalee in his book *Manhal al-Raqraaq* (refer specifically to pp. 17-36 for a clarification of the weakness of the narrations attributed to ibn 'Abbaas).

Shaykh Saleem al-Hilaalee, in addition to mentioning the hadeeth of Aboo Sa'eed al-Khudree from al-Bukhaaree in which he attributes the Saaq (Shin) to Allaah: "It will be said to them: 'Do you know any sign by which you can recognise Him?' They will say: 'The Shin.' So Allaah will then uncover His Shin whereupon every Believer will prostrate before Him and there will remain those who used to prostrate before Him just for showing off and for gaining good reputation (in this world)," also brings two reports from Aboo Hurairah (p.64) to the same effect:

i. Recorded by ibn Mandah in *ar-Radd 'ala al-Jaymiyyah* (p.40) and *al-Eemaan* (811, 812), and ibn Jareer at-Tabaree in his *Tafseer* (29/26) with their chain of transmission. Shaykh al-Hilaalee says: "Its chain of transmission is saheeh, its narrators thiqah."

ii. Recorded by ad-Daarimee in his *Sunan* (2/326) with his chain of transmission. Shaykh al-Hilaalee says: "Its chain is hasan, its narators are thiqah except for ibn Ishaq for he is truthful and commits tadlees. However, he has clearly stated having heard the hadeeth, therefore it is hasan."

THE HADEETH OF THE SLAVE-GIRL: 'WHERE IS ALLAAH?'

Kabbani says (p.149):

"Concerning the saying of the slave-girl when the Prophet asked her: 'Where is Allah?' (ayn Allah) And she said: 'In the heaven' (fi al-sama'): She belonged to a people who worshipped stones and denied the Maker. When she confirmed the existence of Allah, she became thereby a believer. If the Prophet had condemned her for this answer, it would have been established that she was disbelieving in the Maker. But as he said of her: 'She is a believer.' He understood from her gesture magnification of the Creator."

There are some important points that need to be made about the hadeeth referred to by Kabbani and his comments to it:

(i) The full text of the narration is: Mu'aawiyah ibn al-Hakam said: "I had a slave-girl who tended sheep for me in the direction of Uhud and Al-Jawaaniyaah and I came one day and found that a wolf had taken one of the sheep, and I am a man from the children of Aadam, I became angry as they do, but I hit her very hard. So I came to the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam and he made me aware of the seriousness of that, so I said: O Messenger of Allaah, shall I free her? He said: <<Bring her.>> So I brought her and he said to her: <<Where is Allaah?>> She said: 'Above the sky.' He said: <<Who am I?>> She said: 'You are Allaah's Messenger.' He said: <<Free her for she is a Believer.>>"

(ii) The hadeeth establishes the unequivocal validity of asking the question: 'Where is Allaah?'

(iii) That the only acceptable answer from a Believer to the question 'Where is Allaah?' is to say 'In (above) the heaven' since the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam himself accepted this answer and did not criticise it in any way. To give an answer other than this would be to venture into the realms of speculation.

(iv) The word fee (in) does not mean Allaah is surrounded or bounded by the sky or anything else of His creation, rather it means above and over the sky, something which can be found correctly explained in Kabbani's book (pp. 147-148).

(v) Kabbani's statement: "She belonged to a people who worshipped stones and denied the Maker" signifies a lack of knowledge of the state of the people to whom the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam was sent. They did, in fact, believe in the Maker (Allaah) but this did not deter them from directing a part of their worship to their stone idols. Allaah, the Most High, says about them:

<Say: Who is it that sustains you from the sky and from the earth? Who is it that has power over hearing and sight? Who is it that brings out the living from the dead and the dead

from the living? And who is it that rules and regulates all affairs? They will soon say: 'Allaah'. Say: Will you not then show piety (to Him)?> (10:31)

<Indeed if you were to ask them who it is that sends down rain from the sky and gives life therewith to the earth after its death, they will certainly reply: 'Allaah'. Say: Praise be to Allaah. But most of them understand not.> (29:63)

<If you were to ask them who created them, they will certainly say: 'Allaah'. How then are they deluded away (from the truth)?> (43:87)

(vi) Kabbani's statement: "When she confirmed the existence of Allah, she became thereby a believer." This unique definition of what causes someone to enter into belief completely disregards the verses mentioned above in which the idol worshippers from the era of the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam confirmed their belief in the existence of Allaah but this certainly was not sufficient to render them Believers. Furthermore, his definition would also render Shaytaan a Believer merely because he affirms the existence of Allaah! Also, Allaah, the Most High, says: <The Jews and Christians say we are the children of Allaah and His loved ones.> (5:18) so does this mere affirmation of His existence make them Believers?

The slave-girl, it must be remembered, also confirmed the Messengership of Muhammad; this together with her correct belief in Allaah warranted that she be declared a Believer. Merely affirming one without the other is disbelief in both Allaah and His Messenger.

Kabbani's lackadaisical approach to this issue of defining belief, it seems, is inherited from his teachers. Nazim al-Qubrusi says:

"Our Grandsheikh says whoever is never saying ALLAH is a kafir, unbeliever. Anyone saying ALLAH, even in his own language, you must not say to him 'Kafir'. This is clear, our Grandsheikh is leaving this so wide, so open, not making conditions, all Prophets just came to make people, believing in their Lord, not in themselves. Anyone saying 'God' must be considered a believer. Even if a person says, as we do in English 'Oh my God', Allah is catching him."

(Nazim, Mercy Oceans Book 2, pp. 174-175, 1980)

So anyone who says 'Oh my God' is a Believer, there are no other conditions beyond this!

(vii) Kabbani says: "If the Prophet had condemned her for this answer, it would have been established that she was disbelieving in the Maker." Kabbani himself shows that it is unacceptable to condemn anyone who says that Allaah is in (above) the heavens.

(viii) Again, according to Kabbani, to say that Allaah is in the heavens is in fact equivalent to "magnification of the Creator." Why then does he criticise the Salafis for their 'magnification of the Creator' when they say that Allaah is in (above) the heavens? If,

according to him, the Prophet understood this reply to mean praise of Allaah, why does Kabbani describe the belief that Allaah is in the heaven as being unacceptable?

(ix) There are some who were perplexed by this hadeeth and the fact that it represents a decisive blow to the beliefs of the Jahmiyyah and the Ashariyyah. They simply took recourse to declaring it inauthentic or sought to cast doubt on its wording. From them, Zaahid al-Kawtharee and Hasan as-Saqqaaf. The former being described by Kabbani as the renewer of the religion of Islaam and the reading of the latter's books are openly encouraged by Kabbani (see Kabbani, pp. 81-83, 211 as well as Kabbani, *The Doctrine of Ahl al-Sunna*, pp. 11, 13, 57).

FURTHER PROOF FOR THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE HADEETH: 'WHERE IS ALLAAH?'

Disregarding for the moment the rigorously authenticated recording of this hadeeth in Saheeh Muslim where the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam asked: <Where is Allaah?> and the slave-girl replied "In the heavens", presented below are other supporting routes of transmission for this narration taken from Imaam at-Tahaawee's *Sharh Mushkil al-Athaar* along with the analysis of Shaykh Shu'ayb al-Arna'oot (in which the wording 'Where is Allaah? In the heaven' is likewise preserved):

(a) at-Tahaawee says: ibn Abee Dawood reported to us, saying: 'Eesa ibn Ibraheem al-Birakee reported to us, saying: 'Abdul-'Azeez ibn Muslim al-Qasmalee reported to us, saying: Muhammad ibn 'Amr reported to us on the authority of Aboo Hurairah: (the hadeeth)

Shaykh Shu'ayb al-Arna'oot grades this chain of transmission to be hasan (vol. 12 / no.4991) and adds: "Reported by ibn Khuzaimah in at-Tawheed 1/283-284 (181) via the route of Ziyaad ibn ar-Rabee' on the authority of Muhammad ibn 'Amr ibn 'Alqamah with this (the above) chain of transmission."

(b) at-Tahaawee says: Yoonus reported to us, saying: ibn Wahb narrated to us that Maalik reported to him; and al-Muznee reported to us, saying: ash-Shaafi'ee reported to us, saying: Maalik reported to us on the authority of Hilaal ibn Usaamah, on the authority of 'Ataa ibn Yasaar, on the authority of 'Umar ibn al-Hakam (this should be Mu'aawiyah ibn al-Hakam as Imaam ash-Shaafi'ee points out in ar-Risaala p.242 and as does ibn 'Abdul-Barr in at-Tamheed 22/76): (the hadeeth)

Shaykh Shu'ayb al-Arna'oot grades this chain of transmission as being authentic to the standard of Imaam Muslim (vol. 12 / no.4992).

He adds that it is also recorded with this isnaad by ibn Khuzaimah in at-Tawheed 1/283 (180) on the authority of Yoonus ibn 'Abdul-'Alaa; by al-Bayhaqee 10/57 via Muhammad ibn 'Abdullaah ibn 'Abdul-Hakam on the authority of ibn Wahb with it; by Imaam ash-

Shaafi'ee in ar-Risaala p.242; Imaam Maalik in al-Muwatta 2/776-777; an-Nasaa'ee in al-Kubra no.7756, and others.

(c) at-Tahaawee says: Yoonus narrated to us, saying: Bishr ibn Bakr narrated to us on the authority of al-Awzaa'ee, saying: Yahya ibn Abee Katheer reported to us, saying: Hilaal ibn Abee Maymoonah reported to us, saying: 'Ataa ibn Yasaar reported to us, saying: Mu'aawiyah ibn al-Hakam as-Sulamee narrated to me: (the hadeeth)

Shaykh Shu'ayb al-Arna'oot grades this chain of transmission as being saheeh (vol. 12 / no.4993).

(d) Additionally, the narration is recorded with their routes of transmission by: Ahmad 5/447-448, Aboo Dawood no.930 and 3282, al-Bukhaaree in al-Qiraa' Khalf al-Imaam no.70, ibn Hibbaan no.165 and 2247, ibn Abee Shaybah 11/19-20, at-Tayaalisee no.1105, al-Bayhaqee in al-Asmaa was-Sifaat pp.421-422, ibn al-Jarood no.212, ad-Daarimee 1/353, al-Laalikaa'ee no.652 and ibn Abee 'Aasim in as-Sunnah no.489.

KABBANI'S LIMITATION OF ALLAAH'S ATTRIBUTE OF HEARING

In further attempting to refute the belief that Allaah is above His Throne, above the Seven Heavens as He has described Himself, Kabbani resorts to a quite remarkable piece of deduction:

"Al-Sufuri relates in his Nuzhat al-majalis that Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni was asked: 'Does Allah lie in a specific direction?' He replied: 'No.' He was asked: 'From where did you obtain this knowledge?' He said: 'From the saying of the Prophet : 'Do not say I am superior to Yunus ibn Matta.' (Bukhari). This prohibition is related to the fact that Yunus said from inside the fish at the bottom of the sea: 'There is no God save Thee. Be Thou Glorified. Lo! I have been a wrong-doer' (21:87). And Allah conversed with Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him, above seven heavens and heard Muhammad's speech just as audibly as He heard that of Yunus. If the Lord of Truth were in a specific direction He would have heard one speech better than the other."

(Kabbani, pp. 161-162)

It is the tail-end of this quotation that is of most interest: "If the Lord of Truth were in a specific direction He would have heard one speech better than the other."

Could anything be a more clear-cut case of resemblance than this? Kabbani, by citing this example, would have us accept that the Hearing of Allaah is the same as human hearing in that they are both governed by distance - the further the speaker is the more difficult it is to hear. Therefore, by having us believe that distance affects Allaah's hearing, the argument is put across that if Allaah was truly above His Throne then he would have heard the Prophet

Muhammad clearer than He did the Prophet Yunus in the belly of the whale! But since He heard then both to an equal standard it proves that He was at an equal distance from them both, that is to say, He was as much present in the belly of the whale as He was above the Heavens to where the Prophet made his Ascension! This is supposed to represent evidence against the belief of the Salaf that Allaah is above His Throne, above the seven heavens! Let it be known that the Salafis do not place any such obscene limitations on the Attributes of Allaah.

THE WAY OF THE SALAF REGARDING ALLAAH'S ATTRIBUTE OF 'ULUWW (BEING ABOVE HIS THRONE)

The correct belief in respect of Allaah's Attribute of 'Uluww (being above His Throne) is exactly as described by Imaam Aboo Haneefah:

Aboo Mutee' al-Hakam ibn 'Abdullah al-Balkee said: "I asked Aboo Haneefah about the one who says: 'I do not know whether my Lord is in the sky or the earth.'" So he said: 'He is a kaafir, for Allaah, the Most High, says: <The Most Merciful has ascended over the Throne> and His Throne is above the heavens.' So I said: "If he says: 'I say that He ascended above the Throne but I do not know whether the Throne is in the heavens or the earth.'" He said: 'If he denies that He is above the sky then he is a kaafir.' (Sharh 'Aqeedah at-Tahaweeyah p.288 of ibn Abil-'Izz al-Hanafee, and Mukhtasar al-'Uluww no.118 of adh-Dhahabee)

This narration also explains the statement of Aboo Haneefah given by Kabbani:

"He said in his al-Fiqh al-akbar: 'Allah has no limits, nor any rivals... He who says: 'I do not know if my Lord is in the heavens or on earth' is a disbeliever, and he who says: 'He is on the Throne, and I do not know whether the Throne is in the heaven or on the earth,' he is also a disbeliever.' Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi explained this to mean: "The reason is that by such words he suggests a place for Allah and this is idolatry.'" (Kabbani, p.136)

Why did Aboo Haneefah impute with kufr one who does not know whether Allaah is in the heavens or on earth? According to al-Maturidee it is because this suggests a place for Allaah but this ignores Aboo Haneefah's words from the first quote: "If he denies that He is above the sky then he is a kaafir." Additionally, al-Maturidee's own conclusion would only stand if the individual had actually affirmed that Allaah was in a particular place - heaven or earth - but this is not the case since the individual says: I do not know if my Lord is in the heavens or on earth'.

Again, Imaam Aboo Haneefah's declaration of kufr is clear from the first quotation. The one who does not know whether Allaah or His Throne is above the heavens or earth is disregarding the verse cited as proof by Aboo Haneefah: <The Most Merciful has ascended over the Throne> since this, as Aboo Haneefah concluded, clarifies that Allaah is above

His Throne, above the heavens. Just as one of the teachers of al-Bukhaaree, Muhammad ibn Yusuf, said in continuation of the creed of the Salaf: "The one who says that Allaah is not over His Throne is a kaafir..." (Khalq Af'aalul-'Ibaad no.66 of al-Bukhaaree)

Ibn Abil-'Izz writes:

"Do not pay any attention to those who reject this narration from those who ascribe themselves to the Madhab of Aboo Haneefah, for a group of the Mu'tazilah and other than them attribute themselves to him but differ with him in a large number of his beliefs. And those who oppose some of the beliefs of Maalik, ash-Shaafi'ee and Ahmad also attribute themselves to them. And the story of Aboo Yusuf asking Bishr al-Mareesee to repent when he denied that Allaah is above His Throne is well known, reported by 'Abdur-Rahmaan ibn Abee Haatim and others."

(Sharh 'Aqeedah at-Tahaawiyah, p.288)

Why should this not be the position of Aboo Haneefah when it is in full conformity with the verses of the Qur'aan, the hadeeth of the Prophet sallahu 'alayhi wa sallam and the sayings of the Salaf of this Ummah (of which he is undoubtedly one).

Allaah, the Most High, says:

<Behold! Allaah said: O 'Eesa, I will take you and raise you up to Myself.> (Soorah Aali-'Imraan 3:55)

<They fear their Lord who is above (fawq) them.> (Soorah an-Nahl 16:50)

The Messenger of Allaah sallahu 'alayhi wa sallam said: <<Do you not trust me and I am the trustworthy servant of Him Who is above the sky. The news of heaven comes to me in the morning and the evening.>>

(al-Bukhaaree and Muslim from Aboo Sa'eed al-Khudree)

He sallahu 'alayhi wa sallam also said: <<Those who are merciful will be shown mercy by the Most High. Have mercy upon those on the earth, then He who is in the sky will have mercy upon you.>>

(Ahmad, Aboo Dawood, al-Bukhaaree in at-Tareekh al-Kabeer, al-Haakim who authenticated it and adh-Dhahabee agreed. At-Tirmidhee graded it as hasan saheeh in his Sunan)

Also the lengthy hadeeth in which the Prophet sallahu 'alayhi wa sallam describes the journey of the righteous soul through the heavens after death: <<... thereafter it is taken up to the sky which is then opened for it. It is said: 'Who is this?' So (the Angel) says: 'It is so and so.' It is said: 'Welcome to the blessed soul,' and it does not cease to be referred to as

this until it reaches the heaven in (above) which is Allaah, the Most High.>> (Ahmad, as well as al-Haakim who declared it to be authentic to the standard of al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)

Imaam Maalik: "Allaah is above the sky and His Knowledge is in every place, not being absent from anything." (Aboo Dawood in al-Masaa'il p.263, al-Aajuree in ash-Sharee'ah p.289, and others)

Imaam ash-Shaafi'ee: "The saying which I hold regarding the Sunnah and which I found those whom I have seen holding such as Sufyaan, Maalik and others, is affirmation of the testification that none has the right to be worshipped but Allaah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allaah, that Allaah is above His Throne over His heaven, He draws near to His creation as He wishes and descends to the lowest heaven as He wishes..."

(Mukhtasar al-'Uluww no.118 of adh-Dhahabee from Abu Thawr and Abu Shu'aib, both reporting from ash-Shaafi'ee)

Imaam al-Awzaa'ee (d.157H): "We, whilst the students of the Successors were many, would say that indeed Allaah, the Most Perfect, is above His Throne and we believe in what is related in the Sunnah about the Attributes."

(al-Bayhaqee in al-Asmaa was-Sifaat (p.408). Ibn Hajar graded its isnaad as being jayyid in Fath al-Baaree 13/406)

Shaykh ul-Islam Abdullaah ibn al-Mubaarak (d.181H): "He is above the seventh heaven above His Throne and we do not say as the Jahmiyyah say: 'He is here on the earth'."

(Khalq Af'aalul-'Ibaad no.13 of al-Bukhaaree, ar-Radd 'alal Mareesee pp.24, 103 and ar-Radd 'alal-Jahmiyyah p.50 of ad-Daarimee and 'Abdullaah ibn Ahmad in as-Sunnah pp.7, 25, 35 and 72)

The verses, ahadeeth and sayings of the Salaf with this meaning are many.

KABBANI'S ENDEAVOUR IN ASCRIBING FIGURATIVE INTERPRETATION OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF ALLAAH TO IMAAM AHMAD

Kabbani claims:

"As we mentioned already in the excerpt from Dr. Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan Buti's al-Salafiyya, it is established that Imam Ahmad explained Allah's 'coming' in the verse 2:210 as the coming of His order (amr) as related by Bayhaqi in his Manaqib Ahmad with a sound chain cited by ibn Kathir in his al-Bidaya wa al-nihaya... Similarly, Imam Ahmad

explained verse 89:22 to mean Allah's order according to Ibn Hazm in al-Fasl fi al-milal and Bayhaqi's al-Asma' wa al-sifat..."

(Kabbani, p.193, also pp.144-145)

Similarly, Nuh Ha Mim Keller said: "The hadeeth master Haafidh ibn Katheer reports in al-Bidaayah wan-Nihaayah that Imaam al-Bayhaqee related from Haakim, from Aboo 'Amr ibn Sammaak, from Hanbal, the son of the brother of Ahmad ibn Hanbal's father that, quote: 'Ahmad ibn Hanbal figuratively interpreted the word of Allaah, Most High: <And your Lord shall come...> as meaning: His recompense shall come.' Al-Bayhaqee said this chain of narrators has absolutely nothing wrong with it."

(From a taped lecture delivered at the Islamic Cultural Centre, London Central Mosque, 1995)

This presentation of Imaam Ahmad's view is rejected for a number of reasons:

i. The chain of transmission of the narration which al-Bayhaqee mentions from Haakim from Aboo 'Amr ibn as-Sammaak is weak. Adh-Dhahabee said in his Talkhees of al-Haakim's al-Mustadrak (1/539) that Aboo 'Amr ibn as-Sammaak is unknown.

ii. What is authentically related from Imaam Ahmad is that which al-Qaadee Aboo Ya'laa narrates in his book Ikhtilaaf ur-Riwaayatain (1/250) and also ibn al-Qayyim in Mukhtasar us-Sawaa'iq (p.386): "Hanbal said: I said to Aboo Abdullaah (Imaam Ahmad): 'Allaah - the Mighty and Magnificent - descends to the lowest heaven?' He said: 'Yes.' I said: 'Is His descent by His Knowledge or what?' He said to me: 'Be quiet about this', and he became very angry and said: 'Pass on the hadeeth as it has come". And Abdullaah bin Ahmad said in his book as-Sunnah: "I asked my father: 'Allaah descends to the lowest heaven. How is his descending, is it His knowledge or not?' He said: 'Be quiet or severe punishment shall afflict you!' Then he said: 'Pass on the hadeeth as it has come."

iii. Ibn Taymiyyah said: "There is no doubt that that which is reported in mutawaatir form from Ahmad opposes this narration (in which Imaam Ahmad is supposed to have resorted to ta'weel) and makes it clear that he does not say: 'The Lord comes (meaning) His command comes and descends', rather he rejects the one who says that." (ibn Taymiyyah, Sharh Hadeeth an-Nuzool, p.202)

iv. Ibn al-Qayyim wrote: "As for the narration reported from Imaam Ahmad - then his companions are divided into three groups regarding it. The first: That this is mistakenly attributed to him since the only one who spoke about it is Hanbal and he is one who has many opinions/reports which are in opposition to what is well known from the madhhab of Ahmad... However, what is correct is that it is a rejected narration (shaadh) which opposes the essence of his madhhab." Ibn al-Qayyim went on to say that a similar difference arose amongst the companions of Imaam Malik: "Something similar to this difference occurred in the madhhab of Malik. It is well known from him and from the

Scholars of the Salaf to affirm the texts of the Attributes and the prohibition of resorting to ta'weel (interpolation). It has been reported from him (Maalik) that he interpolated the saying (of Allaah's Messenger): <<Our Lord descends...>> with the meaning: His command descends. This report (from Maalik) has two chains of narration; the first: from Habeeb his scribe, and this Habeeb is not the actual Habeeb, rather he is a liar (kadhhaab) and a forger (waddaa') by unanimous agreement of all the Ahl ul-Jarh wat-Ta'deel and not a single one of the scholars depended upon him in his narration and in the isnaad. The second, in which there is an unknown person (majhool) whose condition is not known. Therefore, amongst his companions are some who affirm this narration and amongst them are those who do not because the most famous of his companions have not narrated anything like this from him." (ibn al-Qayyim, Mukhtasar us-Sawaa'iq al-Mursalah, 2/260-261)

v. Furthermore, ibn Jareer at-Tabaree in his Tafseer of 89:22 reports the following narrations from the Salaf in explanation of the verse: Ad-Dahhaak said: "...the angels descend in ranks of separate lines, then the Exalted King descends with Jahannam next to Him, on His left." Qataadah said: "... and Allaah comes on that Day with Jahannam." He also said: "Paradise and Hellfire are next to Him when He descends from His Throne to His Kursee to judge His creation."

vi. And ibn Katheer, despite recording the statement attributed to Imaam Ahmad in his al-Bidaayah, wrote in his Tafseer of 89:22: "The Lord - Blessed and Exalted is He - comes as He wills, and the Angels come in front of Him, ranks upon ranks."

MORE OF KABBANI'S ATTEMPTS TO PROVE FIGURATIVE INTERPRETATION

Continuing with his proofs for figurative interpretation, Kabbani writes:

"Further proof of the figurative import of Allah's 'descent' from high is the hadith narrated by Tirmidhi and Ahmad on the authority of Abu Hurayra whereby the Prophet said: 'By Him in Whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, if you were to extend a rope down all the way to the seventh earth, verily you would alight upon Allah!' (p.163)

The chain of transmission of this hadeeth is not authentic since the narrator reporting from Aboo Hurairah is al-Hasan al Basree and he is classified amongst those who commit tadlees.

Furthermore, at-Tirmidhee said: "This hadeeth is rare (ghareeb) by this route. It is reported from Ayoob, Yoonus bin 'Ubayd and 'Alee ibn Zayd that they said: 'Al-Hasan (al-Basree) did not hear from Aboo Hurairah.'"

Likewise, an-Nasaa'ee said in his Sunan (no.194): "He (al-Hasan) did not hear from Aboo Hurairah."

Ad-Daaraqutnee said: "In the narration of al-Hasan on the authority of Aboo Hurairah there is a break, it is not established that he heard from Aboo Hurairah. It is reported via another disconnected route on the authority of Aboo Dharr."

(Refer to Dhilaal al-Jannah fee Takhreej as-Sunnah no.578 of Shaykh al-Albaanee)

There is also no proof for figurative interpretation in the explanation Kabbani provides for Allaah's Laughter (as mentioned in the hadeeth of the Prophet) which he takes to mean Allaah's Pleasure or Allaah's Mercy. Kabbani writes:

"Ibn Hajar quotes al-Khattabi: 'The literal attribution of wonder to Allah is absurd and its meaning is good pleasure (rida)... and it could mean that Allah causes His angels to wonder at the good deed of the couple... Abu 'Abd Allah (al-Bukhari) said: 'The meaning of Allah's laughter here is mercy (rahma).' Ibn Hajar comments: 'I did not see this in the manuscripts of Bukhari which have reached us.' Bayhaqi in al-asma' wa al-sifat confirms al-Khattabi. Al-Khattabi continues: 'The interpretation of laughter as good pleasure is more likely than its interpretation as mercy because the laughter of the recording angels (al-kiram) indicates good pleasure.' Ibn Hajar comments: 'Good pleasure on Allah's part necessitates mercy from Him, since the two necessarily go together.'" (p.206, also pp. 205-207)

Firstly, al-Bayhaqee does not mention a chain of transmission for this statement back to al-Bukhaaree. Secondly, there is no record in al-Bukhaaree's Saheeh of him saying such a thing despite having recorded ahaadeeth concerning Allaah's Laughter in a number of places. Ibn Hajar said: "I did not see this in the manuscripts of Bukhari which have reached us."

From Kabbani's work we see the following explanations being offered for Allaah's Laughter:

- (i) His pleasure (pp. 205-207)
- (ii) His mercy (pp. 205-206)
- (iii) His generosity (p. 207)
- (iv) His goodness (p. 207)
- (v) Allaah causing the Angels to wonder (pp. 206-207)

Which of these is the correct interpretation? Some of them, all of them, or just one of them?

The Messenger of Allaah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam said:

<<Our Lord Laughs at the giving up of hope of His slave whilst the change in his circumstance is near.>> A Companion said: "O Messenger of Allaah, does our Lord, the Mighty and Majestic, Laugh?" He said: <<Yes.>> So he said: "We do not (therefore) give up hoping for good from a Lord that Laughs."

(Ahmad, 4/11-12, ibn Maajah no.181, al-Bayhaqee in al-Asmaa wasSifaat p.987, ibn Abee 'Aasim in as-Sunnah 1/244. It was authenticated by Shaykh al-Albaanee in as-Saheehah no.2810)

If we take Laughter in this hadeeth to mean 'pleasure' as Kabbani has postulated, the question of the Companion to the Prophet: "Does our Lord Laugh?" would mean: "Does our Lord become pleased?" which is something affirmed in numerous places in the Qur'aan.

<Allaah well-pleased with them, and they with Allaah.> (5:119)

<If you are grateful, He is pleased with you.> (39:7)

<<Allaah's good pleasure was on the Believers when they gave the oath of allegiance to you underneath the tree.> (48:18)

<Come back to thy Lord, well pleased, and well-pleasing unto Him.> (89:28)

As for Laughter, this is not mentioned in the Qur'aan, and there is no hint whatsoever in the words of the Prophet sallallahu alayhi wa sallam that he offered the Companion a figurative meaning for Allaah's Laughter.

And if we take Laughter in this hadeeth to mean 'mercy' as Kabbani has also presumed, the question of the Companion to the Prophet: "Does our Lord Laugh?" would mean: "Does our Lord show mercy?" which is equally unconvincing.

THE PERILS OF RESORTING TO KALAAM (THEOLOGICAL RHETORIC)

One can only think that Kabbani's views about the Attributes of Allaah are a result of the perils of resorting to Kalaam (theological rhetoric, tainted with Greek science and philosophy), an approach that Kabbani makes a number of references to in his book (pp. 112, 167-168, 173). On p.112 for example, we are told that Abu Bakr ibn Furak embarked on the study of kalaam after being perplexed about a hadeeth which referred to one of the Attributes of Allaah (although the hadeeth is in fact weak!). And on p.173 Imaam al-Haramayn is referred to as: "The true Imaam and teacher of the scholars of kalaam." We have previously had a taste of a typical kalaam deduction in Kabbani's reproduction of the

words of Imaam al-Haramayn: "If the Lord of Truth were in a specific direction He would have heard one speech better than the other." No doubt this was said by Imaam al-Haramayn before he abandoned kalaam, returning to the way of the Salaf (refer to Fath al-Baaree 13/350 of ibn Hajar).

Al-Haafidh ibn Hajar wrote:

"Some embarked to affirm (the Attributes of Allaah) whilst others negated it. The former went to the extent of making resemblance between Allaah and the creation, whilst the latter went to the extent of denying the Attributes of Allaah (ta'teel). The rejection of this from the Salaf, such as Aboo Haneefah, Aboo Yusuf and ash-Shaafi'ee, and their sayings in regards to the censure of the people of kalaam, is well known. The reason for such censure was that the people of kalaam spoke about those matters which both the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam and his Companions remained quiet about... The people of kalaam did not content themselves until they filled the Religion with issues and the sayings of the philosophers. They made this philosophy the basis and the foundational principle to which everything was referred back to, and all that which opposed it from the narrations then false interpretation (ta'weel) was made of them, even if they were averse to the result. They claimed that what they had compiled was the noblest branch of knowledge and the most deserving to be acquired, and those who did not utilise what they had laid down, then they were from the laymen and the ignorant ones. So delight is for the one who clings to what the Salaf were upon and distances himself from the innovations that the khalaf introduced. However, if one cannot keep away from it, then let him take only that which he needs and let the way of the Salaf be his intended goal."

(Fath al-Baaree, 13/253)

Imaam Aboo Yusuf, a leading student of Imaam Aboo Haneefah, said:

"Whoever seeks his religion through kalaam is a heretic (zindeeq)."

(Ta'weel Mukhtalif al-Hadeeth (p.43) of ibn Qutaybah; Tabyeen Kadhib al-Muftaree (p.333) of ibn 'Asaakir; Sharfu Ashaab al-Hadeeth (p.4) of al-Khateeb al-Baghdaadeel; and Sawn al-Mantiq wal-Kalaam (p.60) of as-Suyootee)

Al-Haafidh ibn 'Abdul-Barr wrote (citing ibn Khuwaizimdaad):

"The people of the innovated sects in the view of (Imaam) Maalik and the remainder of our companions (of the Maalikee madhab) are the people of kalaam. Every person of kalaam is from the people of the innovated sects and innovations, whether he is an Ash'aree or other than an Ash'aree, and his witness is never accepted in Islaam. Indeed, his witness is to be ostracised and he is to be punished for his innovation, and if he persists then repentance is sought from him."

(Jaami' Bayaan al-'Ilm, 2/117)

WHY THERE IS OPPOSITION TO THE WAY OF THE PIOUS PREDECESSORS IN AFFIRMING THE NAMES AND ATTRIBUTES OF ALLAAH

Those who oppose the way of the Pious Predecessors in affirming the Names and Attributes of Allaah do so under the pretext that they are avoiding making any resemblance between the Attributes of the Creator and those of the creation. They resort to interpreting the verses and hadeeth that mention the Names and Attributes and accused those who affirm them on their apparent meaning as being Mushabbihah (Anthropomorphists).

The futility of their claim is known from a number of angles:

i. They automatically assume that because the Attributes Hand, Face etc. have been affirmed for Allaah in the Qur'aan and Hadeeth that this somehow constitutes a resemblance to the creation. Therefore, they interpret away such words for no other reason than that their minds cannot dispel making resemblance. In so doing they have forgotten the verse <There is nothing like unto Him...> since in it is a denial of any resemblance and a cure for the disease of anthropomorphism. The resemblance is only in the wording and not in the reality of the Attributes of Allaah and those of the creation.

ii. Allaah - the Most Perfect - describes both Himself and the creation by means of the same word in many places in His Book, such as His saying about Himself: <Indeed, Allaah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing> (Soorah al-Mujaadilah 58:1) and He says in respect of the creation: <How clearly will they see and hear...> (Soorah Maryam 19:38). So is there any resemblance between the Seeing and Hearing of Allaah and that of the creation, simply because they have both been described with the same words? No! Rather the resemblance is only in the wording and not in the reality of the respective attributes. And the same applies for the remainder of the Names and Attributes of Allaah: there is no resemblance between them and anything else, and there is no need to resort to the distortion and twisting of the words of the Qur'aan and Sunnah to try to avoid resemblance since resemblance did not exist to begin with.

iii. Allaah - the Most High - says: <The description of Paradise which the pious have been promised is that in it are rivers of water the taste and smell of which are not changed, rivers of milk of which the taste never changes...> (Soorah Muhammad 47:15) Our Lord has informed us that in Paradise there are rivers of water and milk, but are they the same as the water and milk of this world? No! Because their taste and smell does not change whereas the water and milk of this world alters in smell and taste after a time. So there is no true resemblance between the two except for the names - they can both be described as water and milk. In this is a further reply to the one who, for example, claims that affirming the Attribute of Hand for Allaah is resembling Him to the creation, since the likeness is only in the name, not in the reality.

iv. They are forced to affirm some of the Attributes for Allaah since affirming them is required by necessity. They affirm for Him the Attributes of Life and Knowledge since denial of these would result in the worship of one who was without life and knowledge. So they affirm such attributes, unlike others, such as Hand, despite the fact that all of them have been mentioned in the same Qur'aan. Therefore, it may be said to them: But in the Qur'aan we also find that the creation has been described with the attributes of life and knowledge, such as the verse: <And peace on him (i.e. Yahya) the day he was born, the day he dies, and the day he will be raised up to life> (Soorah Maryam 19:15) and the verse: <They said: Do not be afraid! We give you glad tidings of a boy possessing much knowledge and wisdom.> (Soorah al-Hijr 15:53). So we say: You have resembled Allaah to His creation since you have affirmed life and knowledge for both of them. Their reply is: No, rather the Life and Knowledge of the Creator in no way resembles that of the creation! So we say: Then why are you not able to affirm for Him a Hand that likewise in no way resembles the hand of the creation? Why the inconsistency?

DISTORTION AND DEFAMATION

Kabbani's practice when attempting to refute the Salafis and others appears to be to distort their views and present them in this distorted fashion to the unwary reader. This is not the way of sincere Believers in Allaah but is rather a trait of the Jews and Christians, whose only ammunition in trying to destroy the credibility of Islaam and the Muslims before the ignorant masses was to resort to deception.

And if the Naqshabandi Sufis have to speak ill of the Companions of the Prophet to win their point, so be it! They unashamedly exclaim that: "... he (Uthman ibn Affaan) sometimes held on firmly to his own desires instead of putting them completely in line with the Prophet's" and they say that he was unable to "totally leave his own desires behind." They believe about 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab that "... he did at times set his will against the will of the Prophet," and that behaviour of this nature meant that the "soul is kept from awakening, it remains passive." (see the Naqshbandi work by Nazim, Mercy Oceans' Hidden Treasures, pp. 38-39, 43-44). Little wonder then that Kabbani says: "We ask Allah to guide all Muslims in their belief and to bring all who have strayed back to the truth... back to the guidance of Abu Bakr and 'Ali..." (p.2). What happened to the guidance of 'Umar and Uthmaan? Obviously, we see from the examples quoted above that 'Umar and Uthmaan, may Allaah be pleased with them both, being unable to set their desires and will in line with the Prophet's as the Naqshabandi's would have us believe, do not warrant inclusion in Kabbani's du'a! This is despite the fact that the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam ordered us to adhere to the way of all four Rightly-Guided Khaleefas in an authentic hadeeth which Kabbani mistranslates as: "Follow my Sunna and the Sunna of my rightly guided companions after me." (p.2) but which should read: <<... and the Sunnah of the Rightly-Guided Khaleefahs after me.>>

And if it is found that there is a remote possibility that a Companion has understood something differently to Kabbani he simply looks for a text which describes such Companions as: "... uneducated beduin unversed in the minutiae of language and the subtleties of speech which elude the mind." (refer to Kabbani, p. 130, citing al-Khattabi). Somehow the 'uneducated' Companions were unable to understand the import of the Prophets words, but Kabbani will explain for us what they meant!

The noble Imaam, 'Abdullah ibn al-Mubaarak (d.181H), said: "If the good qualities of a person outweigh his bad qualities, then his bad qualities are not mentioned."

[Siyar A'lam an-Nubalaa (8/352) of adh-Dhahabee]

If this is the principle applied to the generality of the Muslims, how much more then is it applicable to the Companions of the Prophet, particularly since there is a textual prohibition about speaking ill of any of them. Due to the great importance of this subject and the significance of speaking about the Companions in unfavourable terms, the scholars and Imaams of the Sunnah have consistently warned against those who unleash their tongues against the Companions:

Imaam Ahmad said in Usool-us-Sunnah (no.67): "Whoever disparages and degrades a single one of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam or dislikes them on account of something that occurred from him, or mentions his shortcomings, then he is an innovator."

Al-Qurtubee wrote in his commentary to Soorah al-Fath 48:29: "So everyone who belittles any of them or throws doubt upon his veracity as a narrator has thereby opposed Allaah - the Lord of all creation - and tried to abolish the basis of the Sharee'ah of the Muslims... so anyone who attributes falsehood to them or to a single one of them, then he is outside the Sharee'ah, a denier of the Qur'aan, trying to cast doubt upon the Messenger of Allaah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam and whoever attributes falsehood to any of them has indeed reviled them... and the Messenger of Allaah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam has cursed those who revile his Companions, so the one who attributes falsehood to the smallest of them enters into the curse of Allaah which the Messenger of Allaah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam bore witness to..."

At-Tahaawee wrote in his famous 'Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah (no.93): "We love the Companions of the Messenger of Allaah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam and do not go to extremes in love for any particular one, nor do we declare ourselves free from any of them. We hate those who hate them or who mention them with other than good. We do not make mention of them except with good. Love of them is Deen, Imaan and Ihsaan and hatred of them is Kufr, hypocrisy and tyranny."

The reader should not be surprised at this attitude of the Naqshabandi's towards the Companions of the Prophet. The Naqshabandi shaykhs teach their followers that they are personally responsible for the completion of the development of the Companions after

their deaths. One of the teachers of Kabbani said: "... we have been given a miraculous favour from the Lord that if we notice an incompleteness on the part of anyone, and point it out, it will become complete. When I was pointing out that some of the Sahaba were sometimes using their own wills and not putting their desires in line with the Prophet's thus causing their incompleteness, at that moment Allah Almighty completed for them their development there in the grave, and so, they are very happy indeed." (Nazim, Mercy Oceans' Hidden Treasures, pp. 66-67).

Kabbani then has the boldness to say that pseudo-Salafi authors (as he calls them): "... are prone to correct everyone great and small including the companions." (p.215)

If this is the attitude of Kabbani and his followers towards the Companions, what then of other Muslims, such as the scholars and Imaams of the Sunnah who are certainly less in stature than the Companions - do the Naqshabandis also complete their development for them in their graves?

It comes as no surprise, therefore, to find Kabbani aligning himself with those who have declared both ibn Taymiyyah and ibn al-Qayyim to be either disbelievers or, at the very least, deviants. Despite the fact that their excellence has been affirmed by a host of trustworthy scholars.

For example, Kabbani says: "Shaykh al-Islam al-Taqi al-Subki said of him (ibn Taymiyyah): 'His learning exceeded his intelligence.'" (p.218)

Whereas al-Subki is also recorded as having said:

"As for what you (i.e. adh-Dhahabee) say with regard to ash-Shaykh Taqi ad-Deen (ibn Taymiyyah), then I am convinced of the great scope, the ocean-like fullness and vastness of his knowledge of the transmitted and intellectual sciences, his extreme intelligence, his ijtihaad and his attainments in that which surpass description. I have always held to this opinion. Personally, his status in my eyes is greater and more esteemed, for the asceticism, piety, religiosity, his helping the truth and standing firm on it for the sake of Allaah alone, his adherence to the path of the Salaf and his abundant taking from it, and his strangeness in this time, nay any time."

(ad-Durar al-Kaamina of ibn Hajar under the biography of ibn Taymiyyah (1/159) and Dhail Tabaqaat al-Hanaabilah (2/392) of ibn Rajab al-Hanbalee)

As for al-Subki's son, Taaj ad-Deen al-Subki, he went to extremes in criticising ibn Taymiyyah. Such that as-Sakhaawee endorsed the following words about him, following his statement: "Did any of the Hanbalees raise their heads (i.e. become prominent)?"

"This is from the strangest of things, and the most sectarian/partisan of attitudes, and this is why the Qaadee of our time, and Shaykh of the madhhab al-Izz al-Kanaanee wrote under this statement: 'And likewise Allaah did not raise the heads of the Mu'attila' and then he

said about Taaj ad-Deen Subki: 'He is a man having little manners, lack of scholarly integrity, ignorant of Ahl as-Sunnah and their ranks.'

(al-I'laan bi at-Tawbeekh liman Dhamma at-Taareekh (94-95) of as-Sakhaawee)

IN DEFENCE OF IBN TAYMIYYAH AND IBN AL-QAYYIM

Badruddeen al-'Aynee al-Hanafee (d.841H), author of the famous commentary on Saheeh al-Bukhaaree, wrote in his commendation of ar-Radd al-Waafir of ibn Naasir ad-Deen ad-Dimashqee ash-Shaafi'ee (d.842H), an explanation of the ruling on one who pronounces ibn Taymiyyah to be a disbeliever:

"Since this is the case, it is binding upon those in authority that they punish this ignorant trouble maker - who said that ibn Taymiyyah was a kaafir!! - with various types of punishment, severe beating and long imprisonment. Whoever says to a Muslim: 'O kaafir,' then what he has said returns upon him, especially if it is the like of such a filthy one speaking against this scholar, particularly since he is deceased, and there is a prohibition recorded in the Sharee'ah from speaking ill of the deceased Muslims, and Allaah will manifest the truth."

Al-'Aynee also said: "Whoever says ibn Taymiyyah is a kaafir then he is in reality himself a kaafir, and the one who accuses him of heresy is himself a heretic. How is this possible when his works are widely available and there is no hint of deviation or dissension contained therein."

This commendation is established as being authored by al-'Aynee, may Allaah have mercy upon him, despite the attempt of some to discredit it. It is mentioned by al-Haafidh as-Sakhaawee (student of al-Haafidh ibn Hajar) in ad-Dawl al-Laamee (10/13), who described it as: "Defending ibn Taymiyyah to the utmost."

Ibn Hajar also says in his endorsement of the same book (and this is also mentioned by as-Sakhaawee 8/104): "No one says about ibn Taymiyyah that he is a kaafir except two types of people: either one who is himself a kaafir, or one who is ignorant of him... and all the different groups of the people of his time praised his knowledge, Deen and zuhd."

Ibn Hajar also said in his commendation to ar-Radd al-Waafir (p.68): "And if there were no virtues of Shaykh Taqi-ud-Deen (ibn Taymiyyah) except for his famous student Shaykh Shams-ud-Deen ibn Qayyim al-Jawzziyah - the author of many works, which both his opponents and supporters benefit from - then this would be sufficient indication of his (ibn Taymiyyah's) great position."

In the biography of ibn Taymiyyah in ad-Durar al-Kaaminah, Ibn Hajar writes:

"The shaykh of our shaykhs, al-Haafidh Abu al-Yu'maree (ibn Sayyid an-Naas) said in his biography of ibn Taymiyyah: 'al-Mizzi encouraged me to speak my opinion on Shaykh al-Islaam Taqi ad-Deen. I found him to be fortunate in the sciences that he had. He used to fully understand and implement the Sunan and Aathaar (narrations), memorising them. Should he speak about tafseer then he would carry its flag, and should he pass a fatwa in fiqh then he knew its (or his) limits, and should he speak about a hadeeth then he was the companion of its knowledge and owner of its narrations. Should he give a lecture on Religions and Sects then none was seen who was more comprehensive or meticulous than he. He surpassed in every science over the sons of his like. And you would not see one like him, and his own eye did not see one like himself. He used to speak on tafseer and a large number of people would attend his gatherings, and an agreeable number would return (having drunk) from his sweet, rich ocean. Until the sickness of envy crept (into the hearts) of the people of his city. And the people of Nadhr gathered together and picked out anything that could be disapproved of in his beliefs, and they memorised certain statements with respect to this. And they undermined him due to this. They laid traps for him by which they could declare him to be an innovator. They thought that he had left their way, and split off from their sect. So they argued with him, and he with them, and some of them cut relations with him, and he with them. Then he argued with another group who were attributed to the Fuqaraa who thought that they were upon the minute details of the inner reality and upon its truth. And he exposed these Orders. This reached the first group and they sought help from those who cut relations with him and harboured malice towards him. They took the matter to the rulers, each of them having decided that he was a disbeliever and they prepared a meeting, inspiring the ignorant people to spread the word amongst the great scholars. They took steps to transfer the matter to the king of Egypt. And he was arrested and put in prison. Gatherings were convened to discuss the spilling of his blood. They called up for this purpose the people from the small mosques and students, those people that would argue to make others happy, and those that would argue to show their cleverness, and those that announced takfeer and called for disassociation. Your Lord knows what is in their hearts and what they proclaim. And the one who announced his kufr was no better than the one who argued to make others happy. The sting of their plots crept up on him, and Allaah made futile every plot, and rescued him at the hands of those that He chose. Then he continuously moved from one trial to another, in all his life he did not move from trouble except into trouble. And then there followed what followed in the matter of his arrest. He stayed in prison until he died, and to Allaah all matters return. And on the day of his funeral the streets were crowded, and the Muslims came from every roadway..."

This account recorded by ibn Hajar lays to waste what Kabbani tells his readers about ibn Taymiyya's imprisonment (p.98):

"In consequence of such strange positions, Ibn Taymiyya was imprisoned by agreement of the Muslim scholars of Egypt and Syria who wished to prevent the dissemination of his ideas. His imprisonment, it should be stressed, came as a result of the consensus of the scholars of his time and not, as it is falsely claimed by his admirers, a massive conspiracy

against him. Nor was he put in jail by a tyrannical ruler, nor due to the jealousy of his contemporaries, as is postulated today by some of those who claim to follow his teachings."

As-Suyootee described him as: "Shaykh al-Islam, the Haafidh, the Faqeeh, the Mujtahid, the distinguished Mufassir, the rarity of his time, scholar of the ascetics."

(Al-Ashbaah wal-Nadha'ir 3/683)

According to 'Alaa ad-Din al-Bukhari, as cited by Kabbani (p.218), it is disbelief to refer to ibn Taymiyyah as Shaykh al-Islam! What then of this reference from as-Suyootee? Not to mention the numerous other scholars who applied this title to him, as ibn Naasir ad-Deen records in ar-Radd al-Waafir. Shaykh Bahjatul Baitaar writes: "Ibn al-Hureeree said: 'If ibn Taymiyyah is not Shaykh al-Islam then who is?'" (Hayaat Shaykh al-Islam ibn Taymiyyah, p.26)

As for the noble Imaam, ibn al-Qayyim, many of the scholars have spoken in praise of him:

Ibn Hajar wrote in ad-Durar al-Kaaminah (4/21): "He possessed a courageous spirit as well as vast and comprehensive knowledge. He had deep knowledge concerning the differences of opinions of the scholars and about the ways of the Salaf."

As-Suyootee said in Badhiyyatul-Wi'aat (1/62): "His books have no equal and he strove and traversed the path of the great Imaams in tafseer, hadeeth, fundamentals (usool), the branches (furoo') and the 'Arabic language."

His student, the scholar of tafseer, al-Haafidh ibn Katheer, wrote about him in al-Bidaayah wan-Nihaayah (14/246):

"He attained great proficiency in many branches of knowledge, particularly knowledge of tafseer, hadeeth and usool. When Shaykh Taqiyyud-Deen ibn Taymiyyah returned from Egypt in the year 712H, he stayed with the Shaykh until he died, learning a great deal of knowledge from him, along with the knowledge he had already occupied himself in obtaining. So he became a singular scholar in many branches of knowledge. He also continued to seek knowledge greatly day and night and was constant in humbly calling upon his Lord. He recited well and had fine manners. He had a great deal of love and did not harbour any envy for anyone, nor harm anyone, nor seek to find fault with anyone, nor bear any malice towards anyone. I was one of those who most often kept company with him and I was one of the most beloved of people to him. I do not know of anyone in this world in this time who is a greater worshipper than him. His Salaah used to be very lengthy, with prolonged bowing and prostration. His companions would often reproach him for this, yet he never retorted back, nor did he abandon this practice - may Allaah shower His Mercy upon him."

Another of his students, al-Haafidh ibn Rajab, said in Dhayl Tabaqaatul-Hanaabilah (4/450):

"He rahimahullah was constant in worship and performing the tahajjud Prayer, reaching the limits in lengthening his Salaah and devotion. He was constantly in a state of Dhikr and had an intense love for Allaah. He also had a deep love for turning to Allaah in repentance, humbling himself to Him with a deep sense of humility and helplessness. He would throw himself at the doors of Divine obedience and servitude. Indeed, I have not seen the likes of him with regards to such matters."

Mullah 'Alee al-Qaaree said in al-Mirqaat (8/251) that both ibn Taymiyyah and ibn al-Qayyim were:

"... from the great ones of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah and from the awliyaa of this Ummah."

And all praise is for Allaah. The choicest peace and blessings upon His final Messenger to mankind, his family and Companions.