
A refutation of those who accuse Ahlus-Sunnah of confining Allaah to a place

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Questioner: Who are the kuroobiyoos [Cherubim] Angels?

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): Who are the kuroobiyoos Angels? As far as I know, there is no hadeeth in which a mention of this name has been made of the Angels, ‘the kuroobiyoos Angels.’ And in reality for thirty years this name had not passed by me in the hadeeths which I had read in hundreds if not thousands of books, most of which were manuscripts, until [finally] I heard a mention of them in Mina during Hajj.

I was sitting during a calm, beautiful night during the days of Mina speaking to some of our Egyptian, Syrian and other brothers from Ansaar as-Sunnah, when a Shaykh came in, gave salaam, sat down and started listening [to what was being said]. After I stopped speaking for a short while he entered the discussion and started speaking.

It became apparent from what he said that he was from those who had studied at Azhar University and who harboured a hatred against the Salafee da’wah or the da’wah to Tawheed, and that he was affected by some of the false claims which are attributed to the group of Tawheed in all the Muslim lands, whether here or Egypt or Syria or any other place.

So he started to attack and say that the Wahhaabee da’wah was a good call but [the problem was] that they liken Allaah to the creation.

So I asked him, ‘How is that?’

He replied that they say that Allaah the Mighty and Majestic–Subhaanallaah he was declaring the Qur’aan to have a mistake without even realising it—he said, ‘They say that Allaah rose over the Throne.’

So I said, ‘Is that their saying or the saying of the Lord of all the worlds?’

He corrected himself and said that they explain the aayah to mean that Allaah is sitting on His Throne. I said to him: my brother, the difference between them and those who oppose them is not in likening the Lord of the worlds to the creation since they are united that it is falsehood.

Rather, the difference is in whether it is correct to interpret [the word used in the aayah] ‘istiwa’ [rose over] to mean isteelaa [conquered] or is the correct interpretation that istiwaa means ista’laa [ascended over]? So I started talking about this topic at length.

¹ (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) (rahimahullaah) May Allaah the Most High have mercy on him

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And naturally the summary of the Salafee creed in this issue is that Allaah has the characteristic of being above all things [fawqiyah]. So he latched on to this [statement] and said, 'Is it possible [to believe] that Allaah the Mighty and Majestic is above the Throne? That would mean that we have situated him in a place.'

So I said to him, 'No, this is a mistake on your part and we declare ourselves to be free from a belief which confines Allaah the Mighty and Majestic to a place whereas He is the All-High, the Most Great.' Then I started to debate with him in a specific way and so said to him ...'

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): Do you agree with me that Allaah was and there was nothing [in existence] with Him?

The Azhari Shaykh: Of course.

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): Was the Throne there when Allaah was?

The Azhari Shaykh: No.

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): So Allaah was and there was nothing with Him and then He created the Throne?

The Azhari Shaykh: Yes.

I carried on with him in this manner and then said: We are now on earth, what is above us?

The Azhari Shaykh: The sky.

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): Then?

The Azhari Shaykh: The second.

And we carried on like this until we came to the seventh. Then I said to him, 'What is above the seventh?'

The Azhari Shaykh: The Throne.

I said—and here is the crux of the matter— what is above the Throne?

The Azhari Shaykh: The Kuroobiyoan Angels.

So this was the first time in thirty years that I heard this name. I said, 'What? The kuroobiyoan angels are above the Throne?' We know that it is the Creator of the Throne who is above the [Mighty] Throne according to the aforementioned aayah and the Salaf's interpretation of it [which states that] He rose over the Throne, i.e., ascended over it, and as those relied upon in this matter said:

And the Lord of the Throne is above the Throne but
Without describing Him as being in a place or being connected [to the Throne]

So Allaah is in no need of the worlds, but for the first time I was [now] hearing that it is the kuroobiyoan Angels that are above the Throne, [so I asked him], 'Do you have an aayah which establishes, firstly, that there are angels called, 'The kuroobiyoan Angels?'

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The Azhari Shaykh: No.

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): Okay. Do you have a hadeeth in which a mention of them has been made with this name?

The Azhari Shaykh: No.

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): So then where did you get this ‘Aqeedah that above the Throne are the Kuroobiyoos Angels?

The Azhari Shaykh: This is what our Shaykhs at the noble Azhar University taught us.

So I said how strange. I know that [from what] the Azhari scholars teach their students in their lectures concerning that which is connected to the principles of ‘Aqeedah and Usool al-Fiqh is that, ‘[Points of] ‘Aqeedah are not established through aahaad hadeeth which are authentic,’ so how have they taught you a point of ‘Aqeedah that is not mentioned in the Qur’aan nor the Sunnah? How have you come to believe this?

He was dumbfounded. I continued and said to him, ‘Imagine that those angels who you call the Kuroobiyoos are above the [Mighty] Throne—what is above them?

So he stopped. Baffled.

And I had already spoken to him about the fact that Allaah was and there was nothing with Him ... so there was nothing there [with Him], thereafter He said, ‘Be!’ and the creation was. If we conclude that we haven’t reached the Throne yet and in your opinion those angels are above the Throne: then what is above the Throne? Nothing or something [wujood/existence/being/entity]?

The Azhari Shaykh: No, nothing.

[So I said] because we had agreed that nothing was in existence before Allaah the Blessed and Most High created the heavens and the earth ... Allaah was and nothing was with Him ... so before Allaah created anything there was nothing—so when your knowledge leads you to understand that the Kuroobiyoos angels are above the Throne and that nothing from the universe is there after that, the creation having ended ... [thereafter] when the Salafees say that Allaah the Blessed and Most High rose over, i.e., ascended over, the [Mighty] Throne—why do you accuse them of having confined Allaah the Mighty and Majestic to [a place in] His universe when there is no universe there?

For the universe is limited and restricted and in our opinion the end of the universe and its highest part is the Throne and in your opinion it is the Throne and then above it are the ‘Kuroobiyoos Angels,’ and then nothing after that.

So the correct ‘Aqeedah according to both the intellect and the text is truly that of the Pious Predecessors—because they did not say that Allaah is in a place, as you [falsely] assume, because there is no ‘place’ beyond the Throne, only total and complete nonexistence [of anything] except Allaah the Blessed and Most High.

But what is the matter with you when you fled from that which you accused the Salafees of, [something] which they are [in fact] free of—since [we say that] Allaah is not in a place because there is no universe or place after the [Mighty] Throne, Allaah having ascended over it—but what’s the

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matter with you fleeing from affirming this attribute for Allaah the Blessed and Most High, i.e., the attribute of declaring Him completely free of any likeness to His creation and not ascribing the qualities of the creation to Him [tanzeeh], because He is not in the universe.

So how is it that you say He is everywhere, you confine Him to being inside His universe which He created after it was not in existence?

So you are the Mushabbihah, and you are the Mujassimah [anthropomorphists].

And we the Salafees are nothing other than those who go by what Allaah the Most High said, **‘There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer,’**² and upon this aayah, upon [the meaning contained in] its beginning and end, we declare Him, the Most High, to be totally and utterly free of any likeness to His creation and do not ascribe the qualities of the creation to Him [tanzeeh], whilst affirming [His] Attributes as befits His Majesty and Exaltedness.

² سورة الشورى - Soorah ash-Shooraa [42:11]