CHAPTER TWO

Life, Education and Books

of

Shaykhul-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah
Chapter Two: The Life, Education and Books of Ibn Taymiyyah

2. EDUCATION, LIFE AND BOOKS OF IBN TAYMIYYAH

The life, age and works of Ibn Taymiyyah have been one of the greatest attractions of writers of diverse origins and interests. He has been the object of investigation and study of different writers in different languages throughout history. Each researcher had looked at the subject from a different angle. Some dealt with his life; some others looked at his juristic opinions on different matters; others, however, looked into his polemics and debates; others, yet, had dealt with his philosophical and logical contributions. Some studied his reformist and educational efforts in society. Other researches concentrated on his propagation, jihad or defense of Islam against attacks from within and without. On other occasions, his thought in general is studied. Some reached a conclusion in his favor; others favored to be in the other side. Almost all his life and career are sufficiently covered by the researches carried out by Muslims and non-Muslims. Throughout eight centuries, researches and books have been authored covering a broad spectrum of his legacy. Bakr Abu Zaid stated that traditional religious scholars from the four schools wrote on him, mostly from the Shafi‘ī School, where as many as twenty eight had written on him\(^1\). He was included in the classified biographical compendia (\(\text{\textit{tarājim}}\)) in the category of the jurists, in the category of the ḥadīth specialists and in that of the exegetes. Ten of his contemporaries who missed to meet him wrote independent biographies. Some wrote even more than one biography about him, some two and some three.

Contemporarily, attempts have been made to write a historiographical account of the studies conducted so far about him. For example, Dr. Salahuddīn al-Munajjid in his book \(\text{\textit{Shaikhul-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah, Siratuhū Wa Akhbaruh ind al-Mu‘arrikhīn}}\) (Ibn Taymiyyah’s Biography And News In The Historians’ View) enumerated as many as seventeen biographies arranged chronologically. Another compendium is \(\text{\textit{al-Jame‘ Lisīrat Ibn Taymiyyah}}\) written by Muhammad Azīz Shams and Ali bin Muhammad al–‘Amrān in which they collected the traditional biographies whether written as separate books or as independent chapters, traversing the time span between the eight century to the thirteen century AH, counting seventy five. Despite the long span, it is limited to those biographies penned down in Arabic. However, an exhaustive account
of the studies conducted on him would possibly run to hundreds. Al-ā'uddīn Al-Raḥḥāl in his \textit{Ma'ālim Al-Ijtihād} p. 43 in 2002 mentioned that Al-Faryŏ‘ī reported that ninety-six separate works, one hundred and two biographical studies included with other biographies and twenty orientalist studies have been conducted on Ibn Taymiyyah. It follows from the above that the personality and thought of Ibn Taymiyyah have been throughout the ages a central theme that many have opted to study. This testifies to his being a genius of rare existence.

\section*{2.1 BIRTH}

Authentic material sources of all ages are unanimous that Ibn Taymiyyah\textsuperscript{2} Taqiuddīn Abul-‘Abbās Ahmad, son of Shihābuddīn Abdul-Ḥalīm, son of Majduddīn Abul-Barakāt Abdul-Salām, son of Abdullah Abul-Qāsim Al-Ḥarrānī was born on Monday 10 Rabī‘ al-Awwal 661 AH, which corresponds to 22 January 1263 CE. He was born into a devoutly religious family famous for its scholarly pursuit. His father and grandfather were both highly esteemed scholars of the age. His father was a mufti and professor, and his grandfather had even assumed higher ranks in many fields of knowledge and Islamic jurisprudence, in particular.\textsuperscript{3} He is credited with authoring the book of the legal rulings entitled \textit{Al-Muntaqa}, which has been taught until the present day in the Arab world, and maybe elsewhere too. His mother is Sittul-Ni`am, daughter of Abdul-Raḥmān, son of Ali al-Ḥarrāniyyah, who had nine sons but no daughter.

Ibn Taymiyyah was accorded the title \textit{Shaykhul-Islām} by many of his contemporaries and it is used since then down to the present day. This provoked his hate mongers into excessive aversion and rage that reached the extent of charging with disbelief anyone calling him so. Despite the absence of threat, Ibn Nasiruddīn (d. 842 AH)\textsuperscript{4} explained the graveness of the prejudiced charge in his independent book written solely for this purpose, entitled \textit{al-Radd al-Wāfir}, and quoted around ninety scholars who willingly used the title in their writings.

\section*{2.2 Education and Academic Qualities}

As Harran was threatened with the approach of the Mongols, the family of scholars had to venture a very hard journey for the safety of their lives. They were carrying the scientific wealth (i.e. books) which was the dearest ever to their hearts and which
could otherwise be in danger should the Mongols lay hand on them. They used pulling beasts for the transport of the load, which soon in the middle of the route fatigued them, forcing the caravan into a halt. The pious scholars raised hands, supplicated, and miraculously overcame the obstacle course.\(^5\) They could barely escape the danger of such risky migration to Damascus, which assumed a high position at those times paralleled only by Cairo as the two havens of scholars of that caliber. At that very time (i.e., in 667), Ibn Taymiyyah was hardly seven years of age. He started his education in Damascus.

Since his early life, all academic credentials and scholarly qualities manifested themselves clearly in him. He possessed a highly retentive memory, sharp wits, quick improvisation, a fluent tongue and an invincible urge for seeking knowledge. He obtained fame in an early age by virtue of the rare characteristics he demonstrated. One of the scholars from Aleppo visited Damascus. He came to a tailor near the madrasa where Ibn Taymiyyah studied; asking him about a boy whose name was Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah, mentioning that he heard that he had a fast memory. The tailor pointed to the street leading to his school, which Ibn Taymiyyah frequented every day. The man waited the child to pass by. After a while, he turned up with a wide board in hand. The man dictated to him twelve or thirteen *ahādīth* with their chains of narrators, asked him to read that once, took the board immediately and asked him to recite that. The child proceeded reciting all that was written in continuous flow. He commanded him to clean that and wrote another set of selective *ahādīth* and ordered to rehearse in the previous manner. Every time, the child stood up the challenge confidently. The old man prophesied that that child would be a force to be reckoned with, as what he witnessed was rare to happen.

Furthermore, he, as described by Al-Dhahabī, started his life with complete purity, continence and chastity along with complete devotion to worship and religious service. He used to attend the madrasas and religious circles, debates, and convince the listeners at an early age, transfixing and astonishing dignitaries and scholars of the town. He qualified for issuing *fatwas* (independent legal opinions) at the age of nineteen and assumed the teaching chair of his father at the age of twenty-one.\(^6\) Al-Bazzār narrated that a Jew used to interrupt his way in his younger age to pose questions as he noticed the signs of intelligence in him. Ibn Taymiyyah used to
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answer his questions, pointing to the misconceptions and discrepancies in his religion. This frequently happened until at last the Jew was convinced and converted to Islam.7

He learned arithmetic, committed the Quran to memory and learned writing at an early age. He mastered Arabic linguistics, hadīth, jurisprudence, commentary on the Quran, history, algebra, logic, astronomy and comparative religion and even started writing books in his teenage. He debated in his prepubescent age. He had many means of strengths: strength in stalwartness, strength of memory, strength of personality, strength of voice and declamation and strength of intelligence.8 Ibn Abdul-Hādī sketched the academic endeavor in his early life thus:


His teachers… were more than two hundred.

He heard Musnad Ahmad [Imam Ahmad bin Ḥanbal’s collection of hadīth] many times, Mu’jam Al-Ṭabarānī Al-Kabīr, the big collections of ḥadīth as well as the extracts, took much concern about ḥadīth and he himself read many and adhered to hearing ḥadīth[from ḥadīth scholars] for years. He heard the Ghaylāniyyāt[ a big collection of ḥadīth which al-Dārqutnī compiled and narrated from Abu Bakr Al-Bazzār from Abu Ṭālib bin Ghaylān] in a session, copied and selected. He wrote al-Ṭibāq and al-Athbāt, learned writing and arithmetic in the madrasah, occupied himself with learning sciences, committed the Quran to memory, then resorted to Islamic Jurisprudence, then the Arabic language under Abdul-Qawi to good comprehension, read and deliberated the book of Sībawayh, understood it and mastered the Arabic grammar. Moreover, he directed all his interest to the commentary of the Quran until he broke the record in that. He also had great command over the fundamentals of fiqh; all these when was only in his teenage.9

By the beginning of his third decade he was a fully qualified scholar, capable of debating and convincing, writing books, issuing fatwas, holding classes that were attended by not only the masses but also the scholars and rulers, and which brought him great fame in the Muslim world. Scholars, supporters and adversaries10, acknowledged his being a big figure in the academic domain, an invincible force in debates, and as a comprehensive encyclopedia.11 He was characterized by endurance and indefatigable persistence in research.
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As narrated by the contemporaries, once he was discussing any topic, it seemed to the audience to be the only subject he mastered. This is the testimony of the hostile contemporary the maliki scholar, Ibn Makhluf.

He was an avid reader, persistent knowledge seeker and feeling an ever-lasting thirst for details in religious matters. Throughout his life, he was not seen involved in other than reading, teaching, writing, preaching, issuing legal opinions or expounding Islamic theology and law. His brother who undertook to take charge of financing him has spared him the quest for the worldly gains necessary for sustenance. He devoted all his time for the quest and dissemination of religious sciences and the defense of Islam. Often, he used to write, teach or dictate extemporaneously. For example, he dictated a whole volume in explanation of the Quranic chapter called al-Ikhlas (i.e. the 112th chapter in the Quran). Hardly had he quoted a hadith except that he was able to mention the imam who collected it, the companion who narrated it and the authenticity or otherwise of the narration. Once he was imprisoned in Egypt with no references at his disposal, but he wrote many books small and big and enriched his discussions therein with the necessary quotations from the Quran, sunnah and the sayings of the companions, mentioning the names of the authors and narrators, attributing every quotation to its authority and the books taken from. Such writings were checked by some of his disciples and found to be sound. An example of such improvised books is his al-Sharim al-Maslul, which is overflowing with quotations, intricate and delicate arguments and discussions with striking originality. He initiated the discussion in clear language, proposed decisions, quoted, analyzed weighed the evidences, accepted and rejected, all in uninterrupted flow. A Jew brought him a poem skeptically questioning the Islamic doctrine of qadar (predestination). Ibn Taymiyyah thought for a while and wrote an impromptu one hundred-eighty-four-line poem following the same meter and rhyme in a lucid form that if a commentary is attempted, it would run to two volumes. His responses were described as spontaneously proceeding, seemingly effortlessly as if known and prepared for in advance and pronounced with no pauses or hesitation. It was enough for him to read a book once to recall it whenever he wished to quote therefrom either in word or meaning. People from remote territories would come to him with probing questions. Then he would sit and scribble --on the spot-- pamphlets and booklets in response to
their queries. He used to give full answers, and if he felt that his answer would lead to other doubts; he used to clarify that too along with many of the relevant matters, thus, dispelling misconceptions and disambiguating intricate concepts and issues. He was very swift in writing, which rendered his handwriting too illegible for the fresh reader.

2.3 Areas of Interest

He demonstrated a great command in commenting on the Holy Quran. For a very short verse, he was able to write a big volume. He himself admitted that before proceeding to explain a verse of the Quran, he would read one hundred references on the same. Therefore, he soon became an encyclopedic exegete having no parallel in his age, and authored rich commentaries on certain parts of the Quran. The extant portions are probably less than the lost ones. He wrote, for example, on the meaning of *Istiğhāthah* (i.e., to say: I seek refuge in Allah from the cursed Satan), *Basmalah* (i.e., so say: In the Name of Allah…) and tens of selective verses of the Quran.

Moreover, Islamic theology was the field on which he favored to focus much of his writing. He wrote and debated a lot to prove what he believed to be the orthodox belief of the followers of the Prophet and had to face the bitter consequences thereof. He devoted much of his writing to explicating the meaning and manifestations of worship, which is the exclusive right of Allah and draw clear lines of demarcation between the Islamic concept of monotheism and its opposite. He discussed many issues that stemmed from the discussions of the scholars of the time and adduced rational and scriptural evidences in substantiation of his arguments. The precedence of reason over revelation, the intercession of the dead on behalf of those who seek their blessings and the travel initiated to visit the graves typified the discussions in vogue. The beatific names and attributes of Allah and refutation of the denial of attributes as well as anthropomorphism occupied a big space in his writing.

Furthermore, from the legacy he left behind, it is obvious how authoritative he was in the field of *ḥadīth*. He memorized a huge number of *aḥādīth* along with their references, degree of authenticity, the narrators thereof, etc. When he wrote about any matter of religious import, he deployed and rallied a large number of *aḥādīth* in substantiation of his arguments, refuting, inter alia, the opposing views, evaluating the evidences they adduced in a very smooth way, without deliberation on the
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arrangement of the ideas or the affectation of style and method. Hardly did he read a hadith that he was able to probe into its meaning, check its authenticity and relevance to the topic under question make substantive comments on the narrators and crosscheck his with those of the experts in the field. al-Dhahabī said, “a hadith not known to Ibn Taymiyyah is not a hadith an epithet that was ascribed to hadith specialists such as Yaḥya Ibn Ma‘īn, Abu Zur‘ah, etc.

In jurisprudence, he occupied a prominent place among the scholars of Islam. He was more aware of the approaches and principles of the founders of the various schools of thoughts than those who followed and specialized in such schools. When discussing any juristic opinions of the followers of schools, he could point out confidently where such scholars deviated from the theories and principles of their respective imams. He supported every issue he discussed with quotations from the șahabah or the jurists or both. Although he was a Ḥanbali jurist, he followed no particular school. He believed it is prohibited for any one qualified to make independent opinions to imitate any of the imams, who themselves warned against following them if their opinions were not in line with the evidences. He vehemently opposed blind imitation, and encouraged ʿijtihād to those capable of tackling it. He rightly believed that Allah and His messenger have the exclusive right to be followed. He was able to take action and issue a fatwa in perplexing situations where the people were too hesitant to take decision such as when the Qāzān-led campaign assaulted Shām (Great Syria). The Mongols at that time had already professed Islam. The Muslims in Shām divided in their opinion regarding the expedient way to ward off the attack. His juristic opinions are widely dispersed in his works, densely associated with citations from the Quran and Sunnah and the orthodox ancestors in Islam and were highly convincing. On a few issues, he even opposed the opinions of the four imams, instigating the criticism and confrontation of the contemporaries, who acted only within the confinement of the four schools.

He possessed a comprehensive knowledge on religious sciences and acquired great position in some other secular sciences, such as logic and philosophy, in which he discussed the systems of argumentations of not only the Muslims but also those of Aristotle and Plato in a purely rational but strongly convincing manner. He had also good knowledge about arithmetic and algebra. He was a great linguist. He had read
al-Kitāb, Sibawayh’s masterpiece, despite its intricate details, comprehended it, and was even able to find eighty points that needed to be reevaluated in that book. Additionally, he demonstrated in his debates and discussions good knowledge of history. In answering the different wrong allegations, he could point out the anachronisms therein.\textsuperscript{15}

\section*{2.4 Physical and Moral Features}

Ibn Taymiyyah was white with a black head and a beard mixed with a few gray hairs. He was middle in height. His eyes were like speaking tongues. His shoulders were wide. His voice was clearly audible with a fluent tongue, quick in reading. He used to have a streak of harshness in debates but soon he would restrain himself with clemency and magnanimity, and reached the acme in excessive courage, tolerance and sharp wit.\textsuperscript{16}

\subsection*{2.4.1 Sincerity}

One of the outstanding characteristics of Ibn Taymiyyah was his sincerity in his career. This is evident from the fact that he had been throughout his life exerting to bring back the prophetic practice to life enduring all such incarcerations and detentions without obtaining any worldly gains, neither money nor offices. Rather he sought no offices, favoring to live solely for disseminating true Islamic knowledge and practice. He used to say boldly what he believed to be the truth without any conservation or fear. This was due to his alacrity to jeopardize his life, prestige or fame for the service of Allah. He used to cast the truth in the face of sovereignties and rulers uncompromisingly.

Ibn Taymiyyah was not only a man of powerful memory. Rather what set him apart from the scholars of the time beside his memory was his deep and scrupulous search for truth. In watching hours of the night, he would spend a long time trying to understand a single issue, imploring Allah for the disclosure of the right solution. His study of matters was thorough and encompassing. For one single matter, he would review the whole literature and exhaust all the evidences available, analyze and judge. For example, in discussing whether the Prophet saw Allah, he said, “we have pondered over all what has been written and quoted, which were almost one hundred
books, but found nothing authentically narrated from a companion or imam.”  
He immersed deep in the secrets of topics and came out with independent but well-searched conclusions that he adhered to and proclaimed boldly even if such conclusions happened to be in open contradiction of the opinions of the leaders of the four schools. His main references were the Quran, the Sunnah and the consensus of the scholars. This trend inflicted on him the animosity of some of those of imitative propensity, which he totally ignored. Shamsuddīn al-Dhahabī, accounting the reasons of his animosity with some scholars, said:

He was a man who least humored people with often hurried reaction. He was not interested in official privileges, nor did he go by the norms of the politicians [protocols in today’s language, if so to speak]. He helped his enemies against himself by indulging in discussing issues bigger than the minds and the knowledge of people of the time could tolerate.  

When talking or writing about any issue, it appears to the audience that all the textual and rational evidences are present before his eyes and roll over in timely moments on his tongue effortlessly. This enabled his conclusions to be very authentic and authoritative and left his adversaries stunned and subdued. Any one reading his literature thinks that he hardly ignored anything and left almost no minute detail to be added.

2.4.2 Austerity

Ibn Taymiyyah was invested with a nature uninterested in this world since his childhood. al-Bazzār said that an eyewitness told him that the father of Ibn Taymiyyah told his teacher to encourage him to study with the payment of forty dirhams to be given to him monthly if he worked hard to study and memorize the Quran. In response to this offer, Ibn Taymiyyah said to his teacher, “sir, I have made an oath of allegiance to Allah not to receive any allowance for the Quran.” al-Bazzār added that if a common person of the time was asked who was the most ready to reject worldly interests and was most keen in seeking the Hereafter, he would say: Ibn Taymiyyah. When he travelled to Egypt to mobilize the Muslim army against the Mongols, he was offered a daily allowance and gifts. Content with his mean resources, he willingly turned down the offer. Thus, he led an austere life, eating and wearing modestly, wishing for no more.
2.4.3 Courage and Generosity

He was a man of proverbial courage. This is evident in the situations where he was alone in the front line. As stated above, he used to make opinions depending on revelation and the legacy of the companions of the Prophet, even if that contradicted the popular belief regarding such issues. He used to sacrifice being harassed for freedom of research. He upheld the conclusions he arrived at after conscientious research, disregarding the reaction and indignation of the scholars and rulers of the time, who followed the schools of thought. Another sign of courage was the unparalleled role he played in fighting the Mongols and the heretic Nusayrids. During such fight, eyewitnesses reported, he was in the front line encouraging the fighters through preaches, promising them of the reward assigned by Allah to those defending the frontiers of Islam; and acted what he preached. He played a combatant and mobilizing role. When he mounted his horse, he would show himself like the strongest knight and firmest fighter, crying the Islamic war cry ‘Allahu Akbar’ (Allah is the greatest).

Moreover, when Qāzān approached Damascus for attack, Ibn Taymiyyah, accompanied by the sages of the town, entered his presence and he was the spokesman of the group saying, “you claim that you are a Muslim and have a qādi, imam, a sheikh,…your father and your grandfather were disbelievers but did not do what you have done. They signed pacts and remained loyal to them but you promised and betrayed and were not as good as your word.” He did not eat the food offered to them there, clearly explaining that the food is made from the animals looted from the people and cooked with the wood logged from the trees of the peasants. Qāzān felt unusual awe and asked him to pray for him. Moreover, a common man complained to Ibn Taymiyyah about one of the authoritarian rulers of the time. Ibn Taymiyyah came to such person, who sarcastically said to Ibn Taymiyyah, “it is I, who wanted to come to you because you are an austere scholar.” Ibn Taymiyyah said, “Do not play tricks. Moses [the prophet] was better than me and Pharaoh was worse than you but Moses used to come many times a day to the door of Pharaoh to invite him to the faith.”
2.4.4 Magnanimity

In every occasion, Ibn Taymiyyah came to prominence and his word was even more audible than that of the scholars holding official positions. His independence in research and opposition of the followers of the different schools irritated them and so they plotted to block or hinder his progress. They caused him many apprehensions. Yet, when he was able to retaliate, he epitomized the magnanimous brother. This occurred when Al-Mansūr Muhammad bin Qalāwūn came to power for the third time and wanted to avenge himself on those who took part in his ouster, including some religious scholars who also had often conspired and harmed Ibn Taymiyyah. Al-Mansūr consulted him about executing some of them, reminding him of the inconveniences Ibn Taymiyyah was inflicted because of them, and imploring to get a fatwa from him to carry out the revenge legally. Ibn Taymiyyah reminded him that those were the scholars of Islam, the like of whom was rare to find, and pleaded amnesty. He carried on dissuading him until he at last forgave them. Further, Ibn Taymiyyah declared that all those who participated in harming him were clear from his grievances.

The Maliki qāḍi, Ibn Makhlūf, who was on bad terms with Ibn Taymiyyah, confessed, “We did not see like Ibn Taymiyyah. We incited people against him but he eluded us; however, when he was able to retaliate, he pardoned us and argued in our favor.” Ibn Qayyim said, “I have not seen anyone representing these qualities [the highest degrees of magnanimity] as Ibn Taymiyyah, to the extent that one of his friends said, ‘I wish I could treat my friends [as kindly] as Ibn Taymiyyah does to foes.’” Ibn Qayyim said that one day he brought him the news of the death of one of his avowed enemies, who had fiercely harmed him. Ibn Taymiyyah scolded, frowned at him and got immediately to the deceased’s family, consoled them and told them to consider him their father and requested them never to hesitate to ask his help whenever in need. He used to pray for his enemies, who instigated the peoples and rulers and even those who appealed for his execution. For example, Ali bin Ya‘qūb al-Bakrī, was one of the Sufi scholars, who advocated the concept of seeking succor from the dead saints, Ibn Taymiyyah authored a book in which he refuted and rejected the practice as an innovation. He got furious and targeted Ibn Taymiyyah. Some Sufi scholars demanded that he be penalized but al-Bakrī appealed to the rulers that he
should be executed as an infidel. He even met Ibn Taymiyyah in isolation and now supported by Sufi common people, avenged himself by beating him. He spared no chance to defame or harass him. Indignant fans and supporters from different social strata came to the aid of Ibn Taymiyyah, asking him to decide as to which punishment should be applied to the antagonist Sufi. Ibn Taymiyyah said that he never avenged himself. People urged him not to concede in this way. He responded, “The right is mine, yours or Allah’s. If it is mine, I have pardoned them. If it is yours, do not ask if you are unwilling to follow my advice. If it is Allah’s, He will take His whenever He wishes and in the way He favors.” This was in the year 711 AH. Nevertheless, the fans wanted to discipline al-Bakrī. He resorted to Ibn Taymiyyah, who graciously and ungrudgingly interceded on his behalf and requested that he be acquitted. Thus, he was fair and kind to both his fans and foes. His aim was not to induce any problems and disturbances among the Muslims. He said, “I, by Allah, am one of the keenest to help in extinguishing any evil in this and in others and in establishing good. If Ibn Makhlūf does whatever [hostile actions] to me, by Allah, never will I be able to do him any good except that I will do it and will not support his enemy against him…this is my intention and inclination although I know everything [of the enemies’ actions].”

This moral character is clearly demonstrated in discussing, debating and answering the deviants. He used to mention the good aspects of the opponents. He used to admit the virtues of men even if they were his opponents and innovators in his opinion. For example, when he talked about Ibn Kullāb, whom he criticized on other issues, he said that he had virtues, knowledge and faith, credited with rebutting the Jahmites. Moreover, he defended him when some people charged him that he intended to spread Christianity in the Muslim lands. Further, he was asked about the sālimite sect. He answered that they were generally Sunnis; followers of Abul-Ḥasan bin Sālim…deviated in some issues and so were considered as innovators. Once he was invited to debate with a Shafiite knowledgeable scholar. After the debate, he was asked to comment on the scholar. He said, “I saw a man with the Shafiite thought dripping from his beard,” meaning the man had overwhelming knowledge. He spoke well of his antagonists before the sultan, interceded on their behalf, and pleaded that they be pardoned. He warned the sultan that if he killed them, he would not find any
more knowledgeable than them. The rule he applied in judging people is as he himself explained: it is possible that same person or group will have correct and incorrect beliefs or practices. They are then worthy of praise in their good deeds and worthy of punishment in their erroneous ones. To mention and highlight either exaggeratedly is unfair. Allah’s religion is to strike a middle way between the two extremes. Then he gave an example of Abul-Ḥasan Al-Ashʿarī. He said that the latter had a worthwhile response to the innovators, which should be praised if pure intention was maintained and had diverted from the path of sunnah in some issues, on which he is to be dispraised, if insisted after being informed. Although he launched the fiercest attack against the Shia, he admitted, “Some of them have faith and good deeds.” He also said, “Amongst them are devout worshippers, remote from transgression and are austere.” Furthermore, in his talking about the Muʿtazilites he said that they, despite their deviation, “supported Islam in many situations and rebutted the atheists with rational evidences.”

2.4.5 Merciffulness

Ibn Taymiyyah was a man of tender humanitarian feeling. He would respond kindly to whosoever needed his help. He would not hesitate to give anything in his possession to those who needed succor. He would visit the needy and vulnerable and enquire about their needs, and do the best he could to alleviate their sufferings. If he had nothing to offer, he would even take off some of his clothes and give them away. Moreover, he would stint on the food he had, to oblige the indigent. As an eyewitness reportedly told al-Bazzār, Ibn Taymiyyah never refused to give anything asked from him even his original books. Rather he would tell the asker to take whatever by himself.

Besides holding that rank in the academic realm, he was a model for humility. Al-Bazzār reported that he did not see anyone in his time like Ibn Taymiyyah in that. He was extremely humble with all: the elderly and the young, the elites and the common, the good well-off people and the poor. He would even be more kind to the poor than to the affluent, entertaining, amusing and sharing with them and even serving them to console them. He did not get bored with anyone enquiring about matters of religion. He would, instead, be cheerful and show amiability to all indiscriminately. He would
himself carry the copy of the pupil who came to him for classes. If the student rushed to do that instead, he would retort that since the written were the sayings of the messenger of Allah, he should carry it. He would sit in an insignificant place in a session gathering him with his students.\textsuperscript{40}

He exaggeratedly venerated the \textit{Sunnah} of the Prophet, May peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. In very critical and hard situations, he adheres to what he knew to be the prophetic way. For example, after succeeding in deploying the forces against the Mongols, he was there in the Muslim army. The ruler of the Egyptian army wanted him to join his battalion, but he apologized because according to the \textit{Sunnah}, he should be with the battalion of Shām as they were his people. He followed the example of the Prophet also in that he ordered people to break the fast as the Prophet did in the battle during the month of Ramadan.\textsuperscript{41} He exerted his full efforts to live according to the prophetic model, starting from his personal affairs such as clothing, drinking, eating, etc., to public life where he is mixing with people. He combined between the retreat life and the social life. He had been seen in the mosque where he listened to the people and issued fatwas. He also visited the ill, attended funeral ceremonies, went round, bidding the good and forbidding the wrong, etc. He also spent much time in praying supererogatory prayers. He was a devoted worshipper, with proverbially excellent and solemn performance. He exemplified firm belief in Allah. In the fight against the Mongols, he promised the Muslims that they would be victorious. His prayer was often answered. He used to pray for the people for quick recovery, aid, etc., and soon got his prayers answered. He gave glad tidings to the people that their woes will soon be alleviated, and soon stability was restored through the ouster of Baybars II (Al-Jāshinkīr).

Therefore, we can conclude that the antagonist campaign launched against him is unjustifiably prejudiced. Moreover, the debates and responses he carried out were out of compassionate bent for rectification of conduct and not in humiliation or exclusion of others.

2.5 \textbf{ Debates }

Ibn Taymiyyah’s aim was to restore the way of the orthodox generations (the \textit{salaf}). He spared no effort in trying to reach this end. Further, the age he lived was, in his
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estimation, replete with alien ideas and erroneous doctrines. The cultural contact with
the others and the foreign encroachments, among many other factors, brought about
many deviations in religion and more specifically to matters related to the Islamic
doctrine or faith. He was a man of rigorous faith and powerful polemics. Taymiyyah
was described in debates as:

He cannot be defeated through misunderstanding as he had excessive cleverness,
nor through shortage of knowledge as his knowledge was unfathomable, nor did
he manipulate religion, nor did he uphold views independently out of desire, nor
did he draw random conclusions. Rather, he would support his arguments and
debates with the Quran, hadīth and analogical reasoning (qiyās), following his
reliable predecessors. Therefore, he is rewarded once for his mistakes and twice
for his right decisions.42

However, he was not the first to tackle this task. In terms of the Islamic theology, Ibn
Taymiyyah meticulously tried to follow the same doctrines the salaf upheld and the
four imams. He never opposed their theological doctrines. But the age he lived was
full of the issues that needed to be reinvestigated in the light of the circumstances
surmounting real life. There are some who try to portray him as a man who came to
oppose the mainstream belief or innovate in religion. Therefore, a brief account of
how all differences in theology came into being in the Muslim world will reveal what
was the original belief the salaf advocated. The following paragraphs will shed light
on this issue.

2.5.1 The Theological Development across History

From a pure Islamic point of view, the best way is the way laid down by the Prophet
Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and traced by his followers.
This was the most accepted way. This can be reflected by comparing between the
mainstream trend and the subsequent changes that were modeled by different sects
and factions and which effected debates and theorization. The formative period of the
theological debates can be dissected into the following stages:

- The first stage extends across the first century. They used to depend wholly on
  the Quran and the Sunnah in relation to ‘aqīdah without going into detailed
  elaborations therein. As people were still capable of understanding the Quran
  through Arabic, which they mastered, there was no need for the written
  material. Islam remained pristine and devoid of any superstitions or
innovations. People were more in need of education, which the companions carried out amply. If any filthy ideas infiltrated into the society, they could be easily distinguished as abnormal and intrusive. The people who broke with the guidance of the companions, (who were the most knowledgeable and nearest to prophetic example), were the first to fall victims of this plague. The Shia and the khaijites, (whom Ali fought), not only deprived themselves from the prophetic guidance through condemning its bearers (the companions who narrated the authentic doctrine) but also cursed them and charged them with disbelief. This undermined their allegiance with the Prophet, and severed their ties with the original teachings. This singled them out as insignificant groups of innovators in a pure community.

- The second century: now people felt the need to answer the innovators, through writing. In doing so, they needed to set rules and find definitions of terms such as īmān (faith), its increase and decrease, qadar (predestination) and its core concepts, seeing Allah, the speech of Allah, His names and attributes and other terms which in the first century used to be discussed in general terms when people were aware of the language. The need was more urgent in the second century as they needed to clarify the terms, their meanings and rules that control such concepts and how to set them according to full-fledged investigation in the Quran and Sunnah into separate works. As people started denying some previously acknowledged matters such as seeing Allah, the divine predestination, the Quran as Allah’s uncreated word and went to extremes on penalty and pardon of sin, formulating the rules and writing had become necessary. Furthermore, in this century, small polemical responses to specific sects and particulars of doctrine also appeared, albeit in a small number.

- The third century: here the need became even more urgent. The deviants in turn had formulated rules for the justification and thereby promulgation of their doctrines. Comprehensive researches in response to them were produced in which the previous literature as well as the Quran and Sunnah were more vehemently explored. These researches, at this time, were based on well-defined methodology and terminology.
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- The fourth century: in this century, speculative theology swept over the reliable scientific trend in most of the Muslim lands. The latter methodology had its supporters but they were comparatively a few since then down to the age of Ibn Taymiyyah. This also provided fertile environment for the esotericism and rafidite thought. The emergence of doctrine identified with the statelets such as Fatimids, Buwaihids and Kharijites, etc., occasioned the dominance of speculative thought over the orthodox and slackened the earlier adherence to textual evidences.

In a like manner, Mutazilite School prospered in times when the leaders at the late Abbasid rule championed it. Abul-Hasan al-Ash’arī, the founder of the Ash’arī School, was a Mutazilite theologian. He mastered the thought, discovered its faults and reverted to the School of Ahl-Alhđith, later known as Ḥanbali School in theology, most probably because at that time the leading imam of the school was Ahmad bin Ḥanbal, the founder of the Ḥanbali fiqhi School and the most prominent of those who faced the inquisition of the Mu’tazilites. Al-Ash’arī aimed at proving the same doctrine rationally in order to combat the Mu’tazilites with their own approach. Still, he is sometimes seen divided between the schools, thus arriving at inconclusive conclusions. Al-Ash’arī declared in his al-İbānah that he is the follower of Ahmad bin Ḥanbal in his doctrine. The Ḥanbalites and the Ash’arites remained the two schools that preponderantly retained the orthodox faith. The majority of scholars were followers of either. Although there were differences between them, they were interdependent. However, hostilities between the two schools erupted only in the year 469 AH when Abu Nasr Ibn al-Qushayrī arrived at Baghdad and taught in the Niżāmiyyah School. He was an ash’rite from the east. He fervently praised his school and at the same time, bigotedly vilified the Ḥanbalites. This immediately triggered a warlike conflict between the followers of the two schools. It was the first clash of its type to emerge between them. Since then prejudice has been observed in the writings of some scholars of the two schools. By the Mamlûk era heated debates reached a climax, which Ibn Taymiyyah said to have tried to mitigate.

This gives a clear indication as to the development and evolution of the approaches and sects. Ibn Taymiyyah strove for the salafi way most of the time shorn of formal protection. He was sometimes detained and ostracized. However, through his
charisma, professionalism and dynamism he could mobilize even the formal machineries to the fulfillment of his high aspirations in the defense of Islam.

Ibn Taymiyyah criticized individuals and groups on the bases of the following:

- Because they adopted faulty approaches, (speculative, philosophical, esoteric, etc.,) in understanding Islam;
- Because they gave reason precedence over revelation;
- Because of partial and incomplete study in which some of the evidences are neglected;
- Because of altering the orthodox way of understanding and deduction;
- Because they invented new doctrines; or
- Because they tried to nullify some elements in Sharia

On the bases of these reasons, he opposed the Asharites, Jahmites, esotericism, Shia, etc., debated with all these either in writing or in councils in the presence of formal and informal audience.

2.5.2 Themes of Debate

The areas of research which caused difference between Ibn Taymiyyah and his contemporaries were quite great in number. However, there are main and major points which can represent a wide range of such differences. In the following paragraphs some of such main points are discussed.

2.5.2.1 Divine Attributes

The Jahmites denied Allah’s attributes, denied man’s free will, denied the beatific vision (i.e., seeing Allah in the Hereafter), and believed that Paradise and Hell would perish after being populated and that the Quran is created and many others. The Mu’tazilah adopted a rational method in studying the Islamic doctrine. To the vitiation of Sharia, they assign to mind the identification of good and bad; they claimed that the Quran was created, that man was completely free and was therefore the author of his own acts, and that a perpetrator of major sins was neither a Muslim nor a disbeliever; rather, he is in a middle position. Nevertheless, they believed that
on the day of resurrection such would be cast in Hell, ineligible for the Prophet’s intercession.

The Ash’arites affirmed only seven divine attributes and denied the rest on the ground that they will be understood as resembling those of humans. They were also divided between the literal and allegorical interpretation of the attributes that have semblance of human physique, such as the hand and the face, etc. While their leader, Abul-Ḥasan, was inclined to the literal, some of his followers tended to favor the allegorical. It should be noted, however, that the belief in the literal meaning does not mean that Allah, for example, has a physical hand. Rather, He does have a hand but such hand necessarily does not resemble those of the creatures, as there is none like him. He has hands the features of which are unknown to people. They (Ash’arites) also argue that Allah’s word is eternal as it comes from the eternal. This goes against the fact that Allah makes fresh speech whenever He wishes. Moreover, they believe that Allah’s word does not differ from nation to nation. It is the same to all. In Hebrew, it is the Torah, while in Arabic; it is the Quran and so on. In reaction to the Mu’tazilite concept of free will, they affirmed that Allah has created the actions of man while he is only provided some power to carry out such acts, which they term as kasb (earning). Therefore, his role is not instrumental; in reality, man has no will of his own.

Ibn Taymiyyah argued that Allah’s attributes are rationally undeniable, since none can deny His being existent, living, etc., the denial of which is tantamount to atheism. To believe in a god with no attributes is to worship a non-being. To acknowledge some and deny some under the pretext that they lead to anthropomorphism is not fair, since according to this logic, this applies to all attributes. The creator and creation share the names of attributes. In reality, however, they are entirely different, very much as they are different among creatures.

2.5.2.2 Divine and Human Acts

Ibn Taymiyyah also argued that man is fully responsible for his acts because both options are open to him and he can freely choose either. However, to believe that Allah does not create man’s actions is firstly a stark opposition to the Quran and secondly leads to the conclusion that there are incidents in this universe in which
Allah does not interfere or will. Moreover, it is unjust on Allah’s part to punish man for something he cannot avoid. As to the perpetration of major sins, Ibn Taymiyyah stated that Allah and His messenger recognized the thief, adulterer, the wine drinker, murderer, etc., as believers, though they are punishable; and it is up to Allah either to punish or pardon.

He opposed the principle of justice as set by the Mu’tazilites. According to them, all that Allah can do is just and good. This sounds perfect. However, they infer two conclusions from this: the first is that Allah has nothing to do with man’s actions. (See above). They negate that Allah wills or intervenes in man’s actions, including his misdeeds. The second is that Allah does not will bad things to happen. Ibn Taymiyyah believed that Allah does what is just and refrains from doing unjust things. He is exalted high above doing anything bad or unjust. He enjoins the right and forbids the wrong and false. Ibn Taymiyyah also propounded that nothing escapes His predestination. Good and bad events occur by His leave. In the same manner, Allah wills man’s deeds the good and bad inclusively. Ibn Taymiyyah assigned the Qadariyyah’s reluctance to accept this doctrine to the lack of distinction between two different but related concepts, viz, the will and the pleasure of Allah. He wills all incidents in the universe and nothing happens without His will but He likes obedience and dislikes disobedience, likes good and hates evil, and so on.

2.5.2.3 The Quran: Created or Uncreated?

Regarding the Quran, Ibn Taymiyyah believes that it is the word that Allah spoke to the Prophet through the ways of revelation.\textsuperscript{51}Therefore, it should not be attributed to any other. The Quran understood as such, cannot be said to be created. The speech is an inseparable attribute of Allah, and cannot be said to be standing on its own right. Anyone hearing the Quran is hearing Allah’s speech. The Prophet is reported to have said: “who will protect me so as to convey Allah’s speech.” Allah calls the Quran “the speech of Allah”.\textsuperscript{52} Ibn Taymiyyah vehemently rejected the idea of the creation of the kalām (speech, part of which is the Quran) as it leads to the conclusion that Allah’s attributes are created, although he stated that the paper and the ink with which the Quran is written as well as the voice of the human reader of the Quran are created. To say that the Quran as sound and letter is subsistent in Allah is, according to Ibn
Taymiyyah, an innovation. The predecessors in the first three generations did not discuss this issue nor did they ever question the Quran being the word of Allah.

The Quran and the Sunnah are clear in referring to the Quran as Kalāmullāh (Allah’s speech). This is enough to settle the problem. Nevertheless, the perplexing part is in the man’s reading the Quran. On the one hand, it is the action of man, (which the opponents adhered to) and on the other hand, what man is reading is Allah’s speech that He revealed to His Prophet, and, therefore, Allah’s speech should not be said to be created, (which Ibn Taymiyyah firmly stood for). The idea first germinated in the deviant heads (Jahmites). The Mu’tazilah set for themselves the rule that Allah should not be described with attributes because this would imply multiplicity; hence their denial of the divine attributes. Kalām is no exception. It is an attribute. Therefore, it goes against their approach if they acknowledge the Quran as Allah’s Kalām. Ibn Taymiyyah asserted that the Quran is the uncreated word of Allah. He also admitted that the voice of the reader of the Quran is created. These two propositions are obviously tenable. However, his insistence that the Quran in letter and sound is Kalāmullāh may seem inconclusive. Nevertheless, his insistence is justified when the whole scenario becomes clear.

Ibn Taymiyyah was vigilantly aware that the claim that the Quran was created was an attempt to divest Allah of His attribute of speech and reduce him to a dumb being, who created the Quran in the angel who in turn conveyed the message to the messengers. When Ibn Taymiyyah emphasizes that the Quran was in letter and sound the uncreated word of God, he is speaking of the way it was spoken by Allah. It should not be understood as to mean that he did not differentiate between the Quran when first revealed as the spoken word of Allah and the reading of the reader. He is also aware of the difference between the kalām and sound produced by the human reader. The kalām denotes the meaning and content of the Quran, which has a different ontological realization from the action of the human being. The Mu’tazilites’ position is precarious, because all existent beings have more than one attribute and the very same thing can have too many attributes. Thus, the multiplicity of the attributes does not contradict the singularity of the subject.

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Ibn Taymiyyah also debated with Sufis. Sufism underwent many changes and passed through many stages ranging from the purity of monotheism and complete following of the Prophet to superstitions and innovations. In later generations appeared theories alien to Islam. Some of the Sufis thought of exempting themselves from the duties of Sharia. At some stage, they freed themselves from its bounds. Ibn Taymiyyah quoted a Sufi mystic as saying that, “the seeker of their [Sufis’] path in his initial stages differentiates between obedience and disobedience…then he sees only obedience…then sees neither obedience nor disobedience.” It means that the beginner Sufi starts like any one, differentiating between what is pleasant to Allah and what is not. However, as he goes up along those degrees of Sufism, he relies mainly on qadar. Whatever he does, he attributes that to Allah’s predestination. He is not culpable for any mistake. Then he reaches a stage where he sees the existence as one. Here there is no difference between good and bad or monotheism and polytheism. These had allegedly transcended the simple human existence and claimed that they had attained union with the divine existence, so much so, that they (the human and the divine existence) were inseparable and undistinguishable. This culminated into the pantheism theory.

Ibn Taymiyyah further clarifies their aspects of deviation by saying that a group of those who discussed monotheism following the Sufi approach upheld that to prove Allah’s lordship is the final aim and to get self-annihilation in that is the end. Any one reaching this stage is no longer bound to differentiate between the good and the bad; and this led them to rescind the impositions and the prohibitions and the promise and the threat, laid down by Allah. They did not distinguish between the will of Allah, which is inclusive of all creations, and His love and pleasure, which are conditional on obeying Him. Allah wills the good and the bad but likes the good only. All that occurs in this world is by His leave and will, but He commands and likes only the good. Others turned into witchcrafts, boasting high ranks of self-righteousness and miraculously awesome states. Some believed that a wali (saint, a pious man) has an edge over the prophet, because they claimed that the former received from Allah through no medium, unlike the latter.
Ibn Taymiyyah has categorized Sufis into different classes: some are pious people and devout worshippers who lead austere life and had no interest in wealth and power. Their main aim is to please Allah. Some were mercenaries, seeking sustenance through pretentious asceticism. His hottest debate was directed towards those who introduced new notions in religion undermining the very principle of monotheism. He stated that people like Ibn ‘Arabī and Ibn Sab‘īn denied the creator and claimed that the very existence of the creature is the existence of the creator and that there is nothing beyond the heavens. Ibn ‘Arabi went as far as to believe that dwellers of the Paradise and the dwellers of the Hellfire are both enjoying, though differently. Ibn Taymiyyah was right in his attack against this because they annul the divine message. Allah sent prophets to people to set the criterion of what is good and what is not and promised the reward according to the actions. To repeal this principle will cause disorder and destruction, because, according to this philosophy, people are not accountable and all will ultimately abide in the divine bliss whether in Paradise or Hellfire. They also insolently cancelled any distinction between Allah and His creation.

2.5.2.5 The Bāṭiniyyah

The Bāṭiniyyah (esoterists) are those who interpreted the religious texts exclusively on the bases of a hidden meaning they claim to know. In their interpretation of the Quran, for example, they may suggest meanings not in line with the context or even the language the Arabs had known. According to them only prophets and saints, know this aspect of religion. They also claimed that their imams were infallible in that they never committed any mistake. This sect included the Ismailis, the Nuṣairids, the Qarmatians, etc. it started as a secret group during the Umayyad reign. As vulnerable communities, they worked clandestinely underground but when powerful, they appeared what they really were. Some historical accounts suggested that their aim was to pervert people from the divine guidance and establish a godless society. They are against religions and morality. They were putsch mongers and revolutionary in nature. Al-Baghdādi wrote that researchers differed on the motives behind their campaign, and reported that the majority were of the opinion that that they aimed to revive Zoroastrianism, by means of the false interpretations they made to the Quran and Sunnah. Others attributed them to the Sabians. He further argues that the historians
affirm that that were the descendants of the Zoroastrians, and were inclined to their faith. They did not dare to declare their faith but resorted to the misinterpretation of the Quran. Their affair was explicit as an attempt at abolishing Sharia, but the camouflage they structured to trap people was that they claimed affinity to and support of the prophetic household, until their propaganda gained currency. They claimed the lineage of the Prophet to gain respect and support, and fortify themselves against ouster.

As to the lineage of the Ismailis, Ibn Taymiyyah believed that their ancestor was a Jew, brought up by a Magian. They did not follow the same religion as the twelvers, the Zaidis or the extremists, who believed in the divinity or the prophethood of Ali. They were more evil than those all were. Therefore, Muslim scholars wrote much about them to disclose their secrets and unravel their evil, and hence the Muslims’ assault against them.

2.5.2.6 The Philosophers

Ibn Taymiyyah identifies two kinds of philosophers:

1. The naturalists: these, according to him, denied any existence beyond the heavens. As it is clearly understood, they posited that this world is independently a necessary being; there is no originator or creator.

2. Theists: these acknowledge the existence of the Deity of this universe. This is the faction which Ibn Taymiyyah discussed more often.

The philosophers exerted their minds to prove the existence of Allah through philosophy. Ibn Taymiyyah quotes them as saying Allah cannot have attributes or be described. They, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, asserted the wisdom of Allah and denied His volition. They said that if Allah had volition, then He would be doing things for interest, but He is exalted above that. Ibn Taymiyyah rejected these postulates as self-contradictory. Furthermore, he stated that some of the philosophers denied Allah’s knowledge of the particulars, and that He does not hear or respond to the prayers of people. For example, Ibn Sīna asserted that the souls of the dead could intercede on behalf of their loving visitors, by virtue of what they gain from the active intellect owing to their departure from the body. This, he asserted, could happen
without the knowledge of the interceding soul or even Allah. Ibn Taymiyyah rejected this notion categorically and justified that this way would lead people to take the graves of the righteous as objects of worship. This also reduces Allah to a helpless being. Ibn Taymiyyah saw that their approaches were conspicuously faulty and were insufficient and incapable of guiding to the true belief, the belief that Allah willed to establish in the hearts of the believers, and with which He sent His messengers. He viewed their approach as self-contradictory, blasphemous, complex, futile or all combined.

Ibn Taymiyyah’s ontological theory is based on the conviction that the aim of creation and revelation to prophets is to establish the belief in the existence and oneness of Allah. Any notion violating this should be categorically ruled out. Therefore, the eternity of the world, divesting Allah of His attributes, the claim that one of the intellects created the world, and that incidents in this world emanated from the Necessary Being without His knowledge, all these, Ibn Taymiyyah rightly observed, were detrimental to the concept of tawḥīd (rigorous Islamic monotheism), which is what all the Divine Message is about.

2.6 Trials and Tribulations

The opinions Ibn Taymiyyah held often caused him suffering due to the stereotyped practices attributed falsely to Islam. He often revolted against anything that he considered anti-Islamic. Here are some of the issues for which he met much inquisition.

2.6.1 The Epistle to Hamah

The first combat was in the year 698 A.H. Ibn Taymiyyah sat in the mosque teaching as usual. Some Shafi‘ī scholars floated issues in the epistle he sent to Hamah. They objected to some of the elements therein. He defended his position and answered their probes. The session was concluded peacefully.

In the year 705, Ibn Taymiyyah accompanied an expedition to fight some Rafidites. He demonstrated great knowledge and courage in the way he co-led the expedition. This brought him great fame. Rulers now recognized his role and followed his recommendations. Envy struck the hearts of some of the peers.
2.6.2 Encounter with Ahmadiyyah

In the same year, the Ahmadiyyah (a Sufi sect) sued Ibn Taymiyyah for freedom of religion. They requested the governor to order Ibn Taymiyyah not to interfere with their affair. Ibn Taymiyyah refused, declaring that each one is bound by the injunctions of Sharia and none can be out of such bounds. This happened when many smaller chances had occurred where he discussed to some of them and to others about the false wonders they performed and told them that they were devilish gimmicks. They boasted their ability to enter the fire without being harmed. Ibn Taymiyyah declared his willingness to meet the challenge and suggested that he and they would have bath and rub their bodies well with detergents and would enter together. They backed away. The challenge was too much for them. Rather, one of them slipped with this and confessed that their juggler could pass only to the Tatars (the Mongols). The audience caught this confession and discarded their complaint and the meetings broke up with the resolute decision that they be bound by the Sharia and leave their superstitions. Ibn Taymiyyah wrote a book elaborating on their devious way.60

2.6.3 Al-Aqīdah Al-Wāsitiyyah

In the same year, the Vice Sultan, the qādīs and Ibn Taymiyyah held a meeting in which they questioned some issues in Ibn Taymiyyah’s al-Aqīdah al-Wāsitiyyah. They deferred some issues to the next meeting. Sheikh Ṣafiyuddīn Al-Hindī was assigned to lead the discussion but he fell too short of carrying the task efficiently in the face of Ibn Taymiyyah. They agreed to deputize sheikh Jamāluddīn al-Zamalkānī to carry out the debate. Ibn Taymiyyah was very alert and truly impressed people with profound and witty discussions. The book was approved. Consequently, people cheered up the peaceful end, which was in favor of Ibn Taymiyyah. These meetings were conducted when the Sultan, induced by the Maliki qādī Ibn Maklūf and Naṣrūddīn Al-Munbījī, had sent a decree that Ibn Taymiyyah’s ‘aqīdah should be scrutinized. Then the vice sultan in Damascus left the city. The void left behind was occupied with tumults. The Maliki qādī punished some of the fans of Ibn Taymiyyah. The arrival of the Vice Sultan stopped hostile actions but hearts continued simmering. The same administered a third council and Ibn Taymiyyah was not convicted.
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2.6.4 The Anthropomorphism Charge

In the same context, Ibn Taymiyyah was told that Naṣruddin Al-Munbijî had been an advocate of wahdatul-wujūd (pantheism) after Ibn Arabî. Ibn Taymiyyah wrote a three hundred-line letter admonishing him for that. Naṣruddin Al-Munbijî held a counsel with some of the qâdis who (allegedly) for fear of changing the faith of the people, and rousing sedition appealed to the sultan in Cairo to summon Ibn Taymiyyah. A letter was sent to Damascus to this effect, ostensibly recognizing the previous sessions and claiming to vindicate him of the previous charges. All knew it was a trick. However, Ibn Taymiyyah wanted to promulgate his thought in Egypt, too. Elites and commoners saw him off sadly. On his arrival in Cairo, a council was held in which peer debate was expected. Ibn Taymiyyah started to talk but he was silenced. Al-Shams bin ‘Adnân was selected plaintiff, who immediately claimed that Ibn Taymiyyah wrote that Allah is on His throne in the literal sense of the word and that Allah speaks with letter and sound. The judge was Ibn Makhlûf, the Maliki scholar. Ibn Taymiyyah started to defend himself with praising Allah and so on just as it was conventional when starting a sermon. They objected to this beginning and demanded instant response to the claim.

Ibn Taymiyyah enquired about the judge. They told him that the assigned judge was the Malikite scholar. He retorted with the question, “how come that you be the judge while you are my opponent?” This infuriated the judge. A verdict was issued that Ibn Taymiyyah be incarcerated. An edict was read that he be jailed in the citadel. Religious as well as political leaders engineered, supported by a large number of jurists and Sufis, the subsequent ostracism against Ibn Taymiyyah and the Ḥanbalites.61 However, in 705 he was freed. The sultan ordered the administration of a general meeting. Nevertheless, this time the leading adversaries desperately circumvented the encounter.62

2.6.5 The Issue of Istighāthah

In the same year, another suit was reported to the authorities against Ibn Taymiyyah. The Sufis litigated him on the bases that he criticized Ibn Arabî, their spiritual model. The Shafi’î qâdi was designated judge. No point was proved against Ibn Taymiyyah, except that he insisted that istighāthah (succor in dire distresses) ought to be asked
from Allah alone and not the Prophet. Some scholars saw no issue in that but the Shafi‘ī qādi viewed that as a disrespect for the Prophet. Ibn Taymiyyah believed that invocation should be addressed to Allah; then as the Prophet is closest to Allah, he may be used as a means of intercession and not the object of prayer. Then he was given choices: either to be released on conditions or to be detained. He favored prison, despite the reluctance of his followers. He did not want to compromise his freedom of thought for freedom of body. Yet, friends could convince him to leave for Damascus. He accompanied them. Yet, the people wielding authority insisted that he be sentenced to prison. He was brought back to the court the next day. There he was told that he had to be imprisoned. Qāḍīs were indecisive to pronounce the verdict, some on the ground that he was not convicted. Therefore, he willingly went to prison, where he was served and allowed to receive visitors.

In 709 AH Ibn Taymiyyah was exiled to Alexandria. He started teaching as usual; everyday gaining more and more followers. The purpose of sending him there was that Alexandria was the old center of Sufis and Sufism. There it was expected that his approach would irritate the inhabitants and they would probably assassinate him, ridding the authorities of the persistent headache. The top religious authority was Nāṣrūddīn Al-Munbījī, the zealous advocate of Ibn Arabī, and the top political authority was the king al-Muẓaffar Baybars, who looked at Ibn Taymiyyah as the supporter of his rival al-Nāṣir, who resigned from his position due to some political reasons. Ibn Taymiyyah had no supporters in Alexandria and therefore it was expected that he would face his fatal end shorn of any public or political protection. Alexandria was the haven of the followers of Ibn Sab‘īn, the mystic Sufi. This negatively affected the conduct of people and one of the gravest repercussions was that people started liberating themselves from the restrictions of Sharia. Ibn Taymiyyah vigorously fought the bad propensities and misconceptions about Islam. People loved him, and his thought quickly circulated; and the market of the innovators curtailed.

Later on in this year, there were tremendous changes that occurred in the political milieu. The king al- Nāṣir rose to power again. Now he brought back Ibn Taymiyyah from his ‘asylum’ and induced Ibn Taymiyyah to grant him a fatwa to penalize those scholars who supported his rival. Ibn Taymiyyah dissuaded him, spoke highly of them
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and interceded on their behalf. He was so close to the heart of the king that the latter used to follow his opinion in many occasions. But Ibn Taymiyyah used this privilege in fighting corruption. For example, bribery was rampant in Syria at that time. Ibn Taymiyyah urged the king to enact strict measures to check this phenomenon. Moreover, if any governor oppressed people and he knew about that he would raise the people’s grievances to the king and plead in their name that that governor be sacked.

With this tender consideration, it is no longer surprising to find common people and scholars immensely loving and sympathizing with him in his woes.

2.6.6 The Issue of Divorce

He came back to his hometown Damascus, where he was received warmly by the equally loving masses. Here he became more involved in writing about the Islamic jurisprudence. He targeted issues that were problematic. He realized that people had taken the word of divorce as a means of oath. They used to swear at their wives with the pronouncement of divorce. Failure to carry out the oath caused them losing their partners. Ordinary oaths were atoned with fasting three days, feeding ten indigents or liberating a slave. When it came to the kind of oath in vogue, (i.e., making oaths with words of divorce), no atonement was possible. The couple would be immediately separated. This double standard invoked his doubts concerning the validity of such decisions. He started digging up in the references for the opinions of the companions and their followers to crosscheck the resolutions reached by the majority of the scholars in his time. In this, he found that considering the legacy of the orthodox predecessors and the cumbersome situations people were put in due to the previous decisions, it was expedient or rather appropriate not to nullify a sacred bond such as marriage with slips and lapses and unintended divorces. He wrote invalidating such so-called divorces, proclaiming that those pronouncements should be treated simply as shere oaths.

This incited the opposition of the litigious rivals in office as well as the followers of the four schools. To suppress the fuss, the chief qāḍi advised Ibn Taymiyyah to stop publicizing that opinion. Therefore, the book was formally banned. This was in 718 AH. Then, Ibn Taymiyyah scrupled about hiding knowledge from people. He resumed
his disseminating it. He never hesitated to proclaim the truth even if that irritated the rulers and if the ruler was once his savior and supporter. He was summoned to attend the court where he was urged to refrain from that opinion which ‘rebelled’ against the four schools. Yet, he out of fear from none but the Great Ruler (Allah) did not cease to spread the truth he reached after ample research and investigation. Again, in 720 AH, he was summoned and reproached for his decision but they did not put the issue to debate for fear of his invincible arguments. Receiving no conceding response, they decided to send him to jail. For five months and eighteen days, he was in prison. Then in 721 AH he was released.

2.6.7 Visiting the Graves

He continued writing, editing and adding to his books for a few years. In the meantime, the hearts of the diverse groups he had opposed were simmering with envy and abhorrence. Despite the various motives, these united and joined hands to curb the free scholar. To consolidate the attack they dug into his literature. A fatwa he issued seventeen years before seemed drastically serving the purpose of inciting the elites against him. They distorted the fatwa to mean that Ibn Taymiyyah prohibited visiting the graves including the gravesite of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). However, originally, he did not prohibit such visit. Rather, he prohibited initiating a travel to any gravesite however holy that might be. This comes in perfect conformity with the prophetic ḥadīth, where the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said initiating a travel is allowed to none but three mosques, his mosque, Bait al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) and the Holy Mosque at Makkah. With reading this fatwa differently, they incited the court against him in 726 AH. He was detained without investigation.

In the prison, his brother was allowed to attend him. The enemies aimed at optimizing the chance by putting his students under incessant inquisition and detention. They were later released, however. Scholars with good faith were vigilant in observing the socio-religious change the innovators had created in the wake of his imprisonment. They appealed to the authorities not to help the enemies of Islam with the imprisonment of the supporter of the Sunnah. However, the imprisonment provided a good seclusion for the studious scholar to devote all his time without any interruption.
to worship, especially at that old age, and to scrupulous research. He dedicated his
time in answering and responding to the erroneous trends and false beliefs in fashion
those days. His writings leaked out into the society with lighting speed. Now his
enemies realizing that they needed more importantly to imprison his thought, they
conspired to obtain a formal order to check his writing. All books in his possession,
which mounted to sixty volumes and fourteen bundles, were carried along with all the
writing utensils at his disposal to the grant bookstore in the town. He, unable to resist
the urge of dispelling misconceptions and expounding the Islamic thought in its true
perspective, used charcoal. He did not stay there for more than five months. Soon he
was released to a wider and more beautiful life after an illness brought his life to end
in 728 AH.

2.7 Death

When he died in 728 AH in the citadel wherein he was imprisoned, men and then
women came and recited the Quran beside his body, and then it was taken and
washed. People flooded to the place seeking the blessings of seeing him. Then they
held the funeral prayer at the citadel. The citadel and the way leading to the mosque
were congested with people. The corpus arrived at noon at the mosque, which was
already densely filled by people of all social strata. The funeral prayer was repeated
after the noon prayer. People were in huge numbers, which even kept augmenting.
The city allies and markets were too narrow to accommodate the sudden influx of
people conveniently.

After that, the body was carried out on heads and fingers all stunned by the tragic
event, weeping and sobbing. People while busy with looking at the coffin amidst the
crowds lost their Turbans, handkerchiefs and shoes. The coffin was seen going back
and forth due to the heated contest of people, every one wishing to participate in this
honorable duty. All loved him except those envious few and some of the Sufis and
Shia. The number multiplied as the people proceeded towards the cemetery. They had
to stop at intervals due to the jam. They halted in one of the markets on the way to the
cemetery to offer the funeral prayer for the third time. People would come in groups
to offer the funeral prayer delaying the burial to be done shortly before the afternoon
prayer (i.e., ‘Aṣr). People
from the outskirts and villages came to witness the ceremony. Damascene people
closed their shops. All except the physically challenged and the old attended. Those
unable to witness were greatly sympathetic, and participated with their prayers.
Women who attended the ceremony apart from those on the roofs all bewailing him
were estimated to be fifteen thousand. Men were estimated to be one to two hundred
thousand. People offered large amounts of money to buy his clothes. Many people
read the whole Quran for him and frequented his grave in the wake of his burial.
Many poets wrote eulogies lamenting his death and praising his character.65

2.8 Books

As stated above and depending on the account of al-Dhahabī, who was an authentic
authority being his student; Ibn Taymiyyah started writing books when he was
nineteen. When he was twenty, he was already a great scholar whose books were
circulating in the Muslim world. Historians differed on the number of the books he
authored. Some said he left thousands of books; others curtailed the number to
hundreds. Ibn Abdul-Hādī quoted al- Dhahabī as saying that the number reaches five
hundred. Then the same quoted al- Ḍhahabī as stating that the books of Ibn
Taymiyyah had at that time become over four thousands. Al-Siyūṭī reported that to be
three hundred.66 Al- Ḥajawī said that his books were three hundred in five hundred
volumes in addition to his fatāwa (pl. of fatwa, juristic verdicts) which mounted to
three hundred67 thus summing them up to be eight hundred. These are the accounts of
his contemporaries and students. They were uncertain about the number of the books
he wrote. Why was it difficult to exhaustively enumerate his books? This can be
summarized thus68:

- People used to come to him from all parts of the Muslim world and enquire
  about matters of religion. He would sit, write, and give it to the man waiting
  for the answer. Sometimes he had a chance to have that redrafted. Sometimes
  he did not. Such being the case, many tracts or pamphlets and even books had
  disappeared.
- He was a prolific writer. He wrote very fast, citing, balancing evidences,
  attributing citations to their respective authors, judging the degree of the
  authenticity of aḥādīth and their narrators all from his memory, producing
such multitude of books but without any scheme of distribution or preservation.

- The official ban placed on his books for some periods and the confiscation of the same for some others. Those who had his books tried to hide them, either with them, or entrusted them to others, or sold them or gave them away. Moreover, some were even stolen or denied but, in fear of the authorities, none could claim them.
- His friends used to take some of his books. He would ask them to give them back for redrafting. Out of love for the possession of his books, they would not.
- He used to write, in some cases, without giving a title to that. His scribe or students used to give the title. Therefore, some books have more than one title, thus upsetting the calculation.
- He wrote a great number of books while in prison, where there was no one to make extra copies, and gave them away to acquaintances and strangers indiscriminately.

Nevertheless, his books achieved wide circulation. “Hardly had one come to a town, except that one would find his books thereat.” The more intensely some attempted to confine his books, the wider the circulation they gained. The following reasons account for that:

- Allah supports him who works for His cause. Ibn Taymiyyah, as acknowledged by those who knew him in person, devoted his entire life for the defense of Islam and the rectification of the Muslims’ faith and practice.
- His very detention and the ban placed on his writings ensued adamant reaction from the sympathetic public. Moreover, when the books forcibly got out of prison, they luckily became in the hands of the readers. Thus, they were instrumental in publicizing them.
- People felt his tender feeling towards them in all his affairs and his care for the welfare of the Muslims. They could observe his disinterested strife against the threats of the intrusive forces that jeopardized the land and mind in the Muslim World.
His fame as an advocate of the salafi approach and as an indefatigable activist.

His convincing argumentation and well-referenced polemics.

His freedom from bigotry to any school of law; thus he was seen as a man for all.

Anyone came for enquiry got his demand immediately. Ibn Taymiyyah did not need to consult references nor did he have any engagements to delay the answer. Even in his session in the mosque for teaching, he did not follow any particular syllabus. Rather, individuals would bring the issues for discussion, either in the form of oral questions or books for explanation, verification, etc. Therefore, he was nearer to the masses.

In many cases, he wrote on demand. The receiver of the copy written was keen to keep and often to disseminate it too.

Now, it is in order, to have a cursory look into some of the books he wrote.

1. *Kitāb al-Īmān*

In this book, Ibn Taymiyyah discussed the meaning of ‘Īmān’ and ‘īslām’ as used in the Quran and Sunnah. He elaborated on the implications and invalidations of both and discussed the factions that went wrong in understanding these and the influence of that. The book was published in Amman, Jordan by Al-Maktab Al-Islāmī in one volume consisting of three hundred and seventy-nine pages, and edited by Muhammad Naṣiruddīn Al-Albānī. Yūsuf bin Ḥasan Ibn A-Mubarrid, (d. 909 AH) mentioned the book in his *Muṣam Al-Kutub*.

2. *Fatwa al-Ḥamawiyyah al-Kubra*

In the year 698 AH, Some people came with questions from Hamah to Ibn Taymiyyah, enquiring about what the best position a Muslim should assume regarding the attributes of Allah. He referred them to another scholar. Again, the question came to him. In one session, in reply to the question, Ibn Taymiyyah wrote this book, wherein he discussed the attributes of Allah, rallying evidences from the Quran and Sunnah in support of his arguments. This spurred the animosity of those who viewed this affirmation as leading to anthropomorphism. He proved that his was the approach of the companions and those who followed them. He pointed out the danger
and the implications of taking the attributes figuratively or negating them all together. He showed how indecisive those who adopted speculative or allegorical approaches had become due to their insufficiency.

The book was edited by Ḥamad bin Abdul-Muḥsin Al-Tuwajirī, and published in one volume by Dār Al-Ṣumy‘ī (Riyadh), KSA in 2004. Muḥammad bin Ṣāleḥ Al-ʿUthaymīn commented on and abridged it into Fatḥ Babb al-Bariyyah Talkhīṣ Al-Ḥamawiyyah and Abu Zubair Abdul-Rahmān Harrison translated this abridged version of the book


It is a critical study of the speculative approaches of the Jahmites. Ibn Taymiyyah himself revealed the motivations behind the writing of this book. He said that when he wrote the answer for the questions that came from Hamah (see book no. 2 above); one of the best jurists raised some probing questions about that. Ibn Taymiyyah had to answer back. He answered in ten volumes. What made him extend discussion was that the people who produced these skeptical questions were not independent in their responses. Rather, they depended on the arguments of the followers of the Jahmites, mostly from those of Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Umar al-Rāzī. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah tried to show the deficiencies in his arguments and the Jahmites’ method, in general.

The book was published (in ten volumes) in 1420 AH by the King Fahd Complex in Madīnah, KSA. Yūsuf bin Ḥasan Ibn A-Mubarrid, (d. 909 AH) mentioned the book in his Muʿjam Al-Kutub.

4. Al-Akhnāʾiyyah or al-Radd ʿala al-Akhnāʾī

This book is a response to the the Maliki qāḍī, Muhammad bin Abu Bakr Al-Akhnāʾī. It is an attempt to elaborate on the question of travelling to the graves of the saints and messengers. Ibn Taymiyyah issued a fatwa to the effect that travelling to the graves of whosoever was prohibited in Islam. This created a commotion in the intelligentsia. Al-Akhnāʾī wrote a research on the topic proving the opposite. Al-Akhnāʾī abused Ibn Taymiyyah in this book, claimed that the mainstream scholars confirmed his own
conclusion and that Ibn Taymiyyah breached the consensus of the scholars. Ibn Taymiyyah authored this book and differentiated between the mere visiting of graves, which is commendable, and the initiation of travels to the graves, which the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) proscribed. Ibn Taymiyyah thought that the mistake that led the qāḍī to denounce his conclusion was due to obscuring this difference. The book discusses and refutes the evidences of the opponent, explained the salafi way of visiting the graves, denounced his claim of the scholars’ confirmation but overlooked his invective.

The book was published in 1423 AH by Al- Maktabah Al-‘Aṣriyyah, Beirut, Lebanon and edited by Addānī bin Munīr Al-Zahwī. It consists of 253 pages.

5. Raf‘al-Malām ‘an al-A‘immah al-‘lām

It is about the respect and loyalty due to the religious scholars, especially the four imams. The difference between their decisions should not lead to any distrust in them. He justified their position, vindicated them from intentional deviations. He stated that they all agree on the absolute subordination to the Prophet and disclosed the secrets and reasons behind their disparity. He attributed their disagreement on some issues to the familiarity of each with the evidences relevant to the matter under discussion. For example, why they differ on a particular issue while the Sunnah is clear in that issue? Ibn Taymiyyah answered by stating three reasons for that: a) that particular hadīth did not reach that particular scholar, b) that he did not consider it authentic to act and judge by it, or c) that he thought the hadīth had been abrogated. He also elaborated on the other reasons that contribute to the difference in opinion. Yet, he declared that the scholars starting from the šaḥabah up to that time had knowledge that was short of exhausting every aspect in religion. Moreover, none apart from the prophets is infallible. Such being the case, unintentional mistake is inevitable. The difference of understanding the same thing is also an impetus that triggered difference or wrong judgment. He concluded by asserting the belief in all the Quran and Sunnah and warned against partial following.

The book was published in 89 pages in 1983 by the General Presidency of The Administrations of the scientific researches, Ifta, Da‘wah and Guidance, Riyadh,
KSA. Muhammad bin Ali al-Dawūdī mentioned this book in his Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn.

6. Ḥuqūq Ahl al-Bayt

Literally translated, the title of this book would mean ‘the rights of the prophetic household’. He starts by elaborating on the merits that Allah had conferred on them. He also mentioned the special formal care that is due to them. Therefore, the fay’ (the warless spoil that the Muslims gained from their enemies) is partially the right of the household who were loyal and loving to the Prophet’s first-supporting companions (Muhājirīn and Anṣār). No one abhorring them is eligible to this right. He discussed the Shia’s abuse to the companions and stated that Ali and the companions were intimate friends; and even when Ali fought in the Battle of the Camel, he did not take prisoners, nor he killed them, nor took their property as spoil, nor did he chase any escaper, nor ended the life of the injured. Rather, he prayed for the dead of the two parties and said, “Our brothers did wrong to us.” Ignorance, Ibn Taymiyyah said, among other things made the Shia transgress the bounds of Sharia. The book in general is a smooth discussion with the Shia on the issues that caused them to part with the guidance of the Prophet and the companions including that of Ali too.


7. Dar’ Ta ṣūruḍ al-‘Aql wa al-Naqīl

The literal meaning of the book is ‘warding off the text-reason conflict’. The whole message Ibn Taymiyyah wanted to convey through the writing of this book is that reason and Sharia or religion can never be contradictory or conflicting. The general rule that innovators created, as he states from the very beginning, is that when reason and revelation contradict, reason should be given precedence. This is because reason is the base, upon which texts are situated. To depreciate reason is to depreciate both, because denouncing the base is denouncing what is thereon. Thus, they prove that reason should be placed first. Then they either interpret the text allegorically or suspend interpretation. Ibn Taymiyyah resolves the matter by saying that if two evidences seem contradictory, it is possible that they both bear clear-cut statement of
the matter under discussion (and in this case, they cannot be contradictory). It is also possible that they remotely point to that; or one may be of the former type and the other of the latter, (and here the one precisely relating is given precedence. He maintained that degrees of authenticity and relevance of the evidences of the issues under discussion should be taken as the criterion of weighing such evidences. Furthermore, He exposes the ways the innovators manipulated the texts, and according to that understood the doctrine and law erroneously. The book is a refutation of all the decisions made on the above stated rule and other related matters.

The book runs to ten volumes. Imam Muhammad bin Saud University published it in 1991. The book was edited by Muhammad Rashād Saлим. Şalaḥuddin bin Aybak bin Abdullah al-Şafī cited the book along with a good number of Ibn Taymiyyah’s books in his al-Wāfī Bil-Wafiyyāt.

8. Al-Tadmuriyyah

Ibn Taymiyyah mentions at the beginning what forced him to write this book. It was a request from a man from Tadmur. The man, as Ibn Taymiyyah accounts, asked him to elaborate on Allah’s attributes, Islamic concept of monotheism, Sharia and predestination. This is because these issues are of paramount importance and to know them is direly needed by any Muslim. Beside, many misunderstood these issues. This book, therefore, attempts to explicate aspects of monotheism, its implications and invalidations. As monotheism also means to devote worship to Allah, and as worship implies complete submission and complete love, then it is part of monotheism to believe in Allah’s creation (including all incidents that take place in the world), and command (all that Allah ordered to be done or avoided). Under creation comes predestination and under command comes Sharia. This devotion in worship is the crux of the message of all prophets. The book also contains the areas of monotheism where the pioneers of speculative theology and the Sufis and some others erred. The book consists of 241 pages.

It was published by Maktatabat Al-Obaikān, Riyadh, KSA, and edited by Muhammad bin Awdah Al-Saudī.
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9. Al-‘Aqidah al-Waṣīṭiyah

It is an epistle to the people of Waṣīṭ. It is characterized by its lucidity and, unlike most of his books, went through thorough and tough official scrutiny, and debates were conducted between Ibn Taymiyyah and his professional opponents on this treatise. Whenever his doctrine was questioned, Ibn Taymiyyah used to refer them to it and further challenged them with giving them a three-year period to find out any inconsistency therein. This book is simply an elaboration and commentary on the six bases of faith (īmān), namely, belief in Allah, His angels, His books, His scriptures, His messengers, the Last Day and the qadar (good and bad predestined incidents).

Under īmān, Allah’s attributes and His nearness to pious people are discussed. The uncreatedness of the Quran and the beatific vision are also dealt with under the first four aspects. Under the Last Day, incidents that would take place in the hereafter are explored. The book also deals with the degrees of the people in their belief in predestination. The method and belief of Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamā‘ah is highlighted and the author demonstrates how they are middle between extremes in all aspects of religions.

The book was published by Āḍwā’ Al-Salaf, Riyadh, KSA. The book runs to 71 pages. Ashraf Abdul-Maqṣūd edited the book. Many scholars particularly of the Arab countries explained and published this treatise. The book was translated into English by the Islamic research Department of Jamia Salafia, Banaras (India). Darussalam publications republished the book with amendments.

10. Al-Nubuwwāt

The book is a discussion of prophethood, characteristics of the prophets and their miracles. It deals with the prophets’ endeavor, strife and triumph over the infidels of their communities. It sets a line of demarcation between the miracles of prophets and the extraordinary maneuvers of the acrobats and the sorcerers. It also deals with the concept of miracle adopted by the Ash’ari School and the pitfalls committed in the study of the miracles.
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The book was published in two volumes by Aḍwa’ Al-Salaf, Riyadh, KSA in 2000 AD. Abdul-‘Azīz bin Śāliḥ Al-Ṭuwayyān edited it and made an introductory study to the topic and a short biography of Ibn Taymiyyah at the beginning.

11. Bughyat al-Murtād fi al-Radd ‘ala al-Mutafalsifah wa al-Qarāmiṭah wa al-Bāṭiniyyah

As the title reveals, the book is a response to the philosophers and Bātinis (see above). An enquiry into the authenticity of three aḥādīth spurred the writing of this book. The first indicates that the first thing that was created was the mind or intellect. The second shows that Allah was an unknown treasure, and then He liked to be recognized so He created His creation. The third states that Allah was but none was with Him and now He is as He was. The intention was to define the position of the issues derived from these hadīths, and which the factions identified in the title adopted. Citing the judgments of the early masters of hadīth, Ibn Taymiyyah ruled out the first as well as all aḥādīth to that effect as fabricated. Philosophers (including Ikhwān Al-Ṣafā, some of the Jahmites and those of the pantheists, who developed an inclination to philosophy) depended on these forged aḥādīth to justify the Aristotelian philosophy, which postulates that the first thing to emanate from the Necessary Existent was the first intellect. The book demonstrates and denounces the application of Islamic terms to mean alien concepts imported from non-Muslim thought. The philosophical thought was so appealing to some people in the Muslim lands that they strove to visualize the worldview postulated by the philosophers even though it undermines the very bases underpinning monotheism.

The book was published by Maktabat Al-‘Ulūm wa al-Ḥikam, Madīnah, KSA. It was edited by Mūsa Al-Duwīsh. It runs to 531 pages.

12. Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah

The author states the reason that prompted the authorship of this book. He said that some people brought him a copy of a book entitled Minhāj al-Karāmah fi Ma’rīfah Al-Imāmah, written by a rafiḍite called Ibn Al-Muṭḥaf Al-Ḥillī for the king Khudabandeh. Al- Ḥillī in this book claimed that the imamate is the first prerequisite in Islam. He also tried to establish the preference of Ali to the other companions. In
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doing so, he curses the companions, starting with the Prophet’s own most beloved wife, ‘Ā’ishah. In an attempt to decorate his ideology, he dispraises the people of Sunnah and attributes to them false statements they never said. Ibn Taymiyyah authored this book as a response to this Rafidites. The book, therefore, picks up statements of the author of Minhāj Al-Karāmah and refutes them.

The book, moreover, elaborates on the respect due to the companions and demonstrates the wickedness and ignorance of those who target the best of the Muslim community, especially those whom the Prophet had identified by name as people of paradise. Moreover, the author states two main reasons for this: the ignorance of Shia and their habit of telling lies to the extent that the hadīth specialists used to discredit their narrations. The book condemns the statement that imamate is the most honorable issue for the Muslims to know, the infallibility of the imams, the claim that their ideology is obligatory upon Muslims to follow, etc. The book demonstrates through quoting the Rafidites that he mainly depended upon obviously fabricated ahādīth.

Minhāj Al-Sunnah Al-Nabawiyyah was published by Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University in nine volumes in 1986. It was edited by Muhammad Rashād Sālim.

13. Al-Risālah al-Qubrušiyyah

Literally translated as the epistle to Cyprus, the book is a letter to the Cyprian sovereign appealing to him to deal kindly with Muslim prisoners in his custody and at the same time inviting him to Islam. The letter is an invitation to the king to faithfully and sincerely re-evaluate the Christian faith and to discard blind imitation. In the very beginning, the author highlights the purpose of the creation of the world and the monotheism-polytheism conflict throughout the ages. Then it discusses the succession of the prophets for the guidance of people to Allah, who supported them with miracles as signs of their veracity. A link in this chain of prophets was His slave Jesus, the man of the miraculous and immaculate birth. The letter proceeds to explicate the extremism and deviation of the Christians, their gimmicks, discrepancies and adulteration and distortion of the Bible, supporting that with historical, rational and scriptural evidences. It also shows how Islam is middle between the extremities of
the Christians and Jews. Ibn Taymiyyah then speaks of the tolerance of the Muslims, how he personally extricated the Christians from the tight grip of the Mongols, how kindly the Muslims treat the Christian prisoners and the early Muslim-Christian dialogue, initiated by the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). He also speaks highly of the victories of the Muslims over their enemies, how they subdued armies many times their number, etc. The tone of the letter is amiable, diplomatic and compassionate.

The book was published by Maktabat al-Sayyid in 1979. It runs to 76 pages. It was edited by Ali Assayyid Šubh al-Madanî. Salaḥuddîn bin Aybak bin Abdullah al-Ṣafî cited the book along with a good number of Ibn Taymiyyah’s books in his al-Wāfî bil-Wafîyyat.

14. Qa’idah ‘Azîmah fi al-Farq bayn Ibâdat Ahl al-Islâm wa al-Īmân wa Ibâdat Ahl al-Shirk wa al-Nîfâq

The title literally means a great rule in the difference between the worships of the people of faith and the worships of the people of polytheism and hypocrisy. It is a detailed discussion of the characteristics of sound worship. The book stipulates two conditions for worship to be acceptable: that it should be devoted solely to Allah and that it should be performed in the way He prescribed through His Prophet. Islam is the religion of all the prophets, but the law each brought from Allah was different. The companions of the Prophet followed him, disseminated his guidance to the people and were alert of any aspect of associationism (shirk). The true believers assumed their role. Then people who missed the prophetic guidance created many innovations. The book is an investigation into this phenomenon.

The book runs to 143 pages. It was published in 1997 by Dār Al-‘Āşimah, Riyadh, KSA. It was edited by Sulaimān bin Šāliḥ Al-Ghoṣn

15. Al-Jawâb al-Ṣâhiḥ Liman Baddala Dîn al-Masîh

The title can be translated as ‘the right answer to those who altered the religion of Christ’. It is a response to a letter that came from Europe in which the writer tried to prove through the Bible and the Quran that Christianity as it was at those times was
the true religion of Jesus Christ and that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was sent particularly to the Arabs. The response touched areas such as heresies created by the Christians, that the true religion of Jesus should not be different from that brought by Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) or any other prophet that Christianity has been abrogated by Islam and that Islam is a universal religion binding to all men and jinn. He supported his arguments by rational, philosophical, historical, biblical and Quranic evidences.

The book runs to six volumes. It was published in 1999 by Dār Al-‘Āṣimah, Riyadh, KSA. It was edited by ‘Ali bin Ḥasan and others. Salaḥuddīn bin Aybak bin Abdullah Al-Ṣafdī cited the book along with a good number of Ibn Taymiyyah’s books in his al-Wāfi Bil-Wafiyyāt.

Due to the wide circulation and due to the vast number of his writings, biographers had different accounts of his books albeit with a good deal of overlap. Here I shall attempt to list titles along with the references where they are found. In cases where the same is mentioned in more than one place, I will attribute it to only one. It is noteworthy that some of the books were given what looked like headlines and not titles. This may be an instance where he did not give titles but people just phrased headlines indicating the content.


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In the previous sections, the way Ibn Taymiyyah followed in his debates with the different Muslim factions has become clear. He would often resort to the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad’s Sunnah in dealing with the various topics that caused the difference between him and the opponents. However, he never missed to use his common sense in his discussions. He established harmony between the religion and reason.

He was a man who lived the worries and fears of his nation. As one of the great intellectual references to whom people resorted in times of adversity; he was a compassionate scholar who vividly interacted with the vicissitudes that befell his community, and positively and actively participated in the protection of his nation from the intellectual and military invasion of the foreign hostile powers.

As part of his lifelong struggle for truth and protection of his community and Islamic ideals, he was overwhelmingly keen to rebut the falsifications made by the Christian clergy against Islam. Through hermeneutical travesties, they attempted to doctor Islamic texts to support their Trinitarian notions. He was motivated by a letter sent to the Muslim lands to establish their theology and align Islamic texts to testify to their allegations. In reaction, he made assiduous explication of the Christological belief the Christians tried to market inside the Muslim lands and provided convincing responses.
thereto. In the following chapter, an attempt shall be made to discuss his answers to the notion of unity and indwelling, which they based on Trinitarian assumptions.

Notes and References

1 Bakr Abu Zaid, in his preface to Al-Jami’ li-Siratihi, 2nd ed. 1422 AH: Dār Ā’lām Al-Fawā’id, Makkah, KSA p. 15

2 Taymiyyah was the title given to one of his grandfather (Muhammad Ibn Al-Khiḍr). It was narrated that he had seen a girl at Taymā’ and when he came back home his wife gave birth to a girl which he called Taymiyyah likening her to the girl he had seen at Taymā’. Then he was nicknamed Taymiyyah. Others believe that the nickname was given to the newborn girl.


4 Muhammad Bin Abdullah Al-Qaisi, a Shafiite scholar.


6 Ibíd vol.1 pp. 20-21


8 Bakr Abu Zaid, in his preface to Al-Jami’ li-Siratihi, pp. 18-20


10 Al-Dhahabi, Ṭabaqāt Al-Huffāẓ, Dārul-kutub Al-Ilmiyyah vol.4 p.192

11 See Abu Zahrah, Ibn Taymiyyah, Huwāthu Wa ‘Aṣrah, Dār Al-Fikr Al-’Arabi, Cairo, 1991 p. 80


14 Al- Al-Bazzār wrote in his, Al-A’lām Al-Aliyyah fi Manāqib Ibn Taymiyyah that he asked Ibn Taymiyyah about the reason why he comparatively wrote more on the Islamic faith (Aqīdah) and requested that he write on jurisprudence a book on his own selective opinions on juristic issues. Ibn Taymiyyah replied that matters of jurisprudence are less serious. If the Muslim imitates any reliable scholar, it is permissible. The faith, however, has been erroneously dealt with by the deviant factions such as the philosophers, the esoteric groups, the atheists, the pantheists, etc.

15 For his sciences see also Al-‘Omari, Shihābuddin Ahmad bin Yahya, Masālik Al-Absār Fi Mamālik Al-Amsār, (Al-Mujamma’ Al-Thaqafi, Abu Dhabi, 1423) vol.5 p. 696-7

16 Ibn Al-Wazīr, vol. 5 p.264

17 Ibn Taymiyyah, Jamī’ Al-Rasā’īl, edited by Azīz Shams, Dār ’Ālam al-Fawā’id, 1422 AH
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19 Abu Zahrah, p. 84

20 Al-Bazzār, pp. 45-46


22 Al- Bazzār, p.70

23 ‘Al-‘Omarī vol.5, p.699


27 ibid vol. 2 p. 329

28 Ibn kathīr vol. 14, p.70


30 Al-Dhahabi, Tarīkh Al-Islam Al-Maktabah Al-Tawqīfiyyah, vol.17 p.216

31 Ibn Taymiyyah, Majmou’ Al- Fatawa vol. 5, p.555

32 Opct. vol. 30 p.93

33 Shawkānī, Al-Badr Al-Tāle’, Dār al-Ma‘rifah, Beirut, 1250 AH vol. 1, p.115

34 Ibn Taymiyyah, Al-Fatāwa al-Kubra, Dār-ul-kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut 1987 vol.6, p.662

35 Ibn Taymiyyah, Minhāj Al-Sunnah, Imam Muhammad Bin Saud Islamic University, KSA, 1986, vol. 6, p.302

36 ibid, vol.5 p.157

37 Ibn Taymiyyah, Dār’ Ta‘ārud Al-’Aql Wal- Naql, Imam Muhammad Bin Saud Islamic University, vol.7, p.106

38 See Al-A ‘lām, p.48

39 See Al- A ‘lām, p.65

40 See Al-A ‘lam, pp. 50-52.

41 Ibn kathīr: Al-Bidāyah Wal-Nihāyah, 14/26
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42 Ibn Hajar, Al-Durar Al-Kāminah, Majlis Dā’iratul-Ma’ārif Al-Uthmāniyyah, India, 1972 2nd edition vol.1 p.177


44 The term ‘Shia’ here does not apply to those who simply favoured Ali to the rest of the companions. Rather, it refers to those who condemned most of the Sahabah as infidels.

45 See Al-Ibānah, p. 20. It should be noted here that it took Abul-Hasan Al-Ash‘ārī some time to get rid of the Mutazilite traces in his thought. This book, being one of his late books, manifested almost total transfer. His followers dilated the difference between him and Ahl Al-Hadīth through clinging to his early persuasion.

46 Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī (d. 571 AH) authored a book entitled Tabyīn Kāmilah Al-Mutāṣib Sāḥibah (Exposing the Fabricator’s Lies Concerning What Has Been Attributed to Abu’l Hasan Al-Ash‘ārī). In this, he highlighted some of the doctrines attributed wrongly to Abu’l Hasan Al- Ash‘ārī.


48 Ibn Taymiyyah, Majmū’ Al-Fatāwā, vol.3, p.228

49 See his discussions of their doctrines in his Talbīs Al-Jahmiyyah

50 Allah says, “And Allah created you and what you do” (Quran: 37:96)

51 For the manners of revelation see Quran: 42:51.

52 Allah says: “And if anyone of the polytheists seeks your protection, protect him so as to [let him] hear the kalām (speech or word) of Allah.” (Quran: 9:6)

53 Ibn Taymiyyah stated that Quran as letter and sound is Allah’s word. The opponents mistakenly attributed to him the belief that Allah spoke with sound and letter. They also attributed to Imām Ahmad the belief that the readers’ voice and the ink with which the Quran is written are eternal. In his book Majma‘ Al-Fatāwa vol. 3, p. 170 he declares that it was a fabrication and said he collected the saying of Ahmad and showed that the imam never upheld that view.


55 Al-Baghdādī, Al-Fārq Bayn Al-Firaq, Dār Al-Āfāq Al-Jadīdah, Beirut, 1977, p. 279

56 Ibid p. 269

57 Ibn Taymiyyah, Majmū‘ Al-Fatāwā, vol. 4, p. 162

58 Ibid vol.16, p.130

59 Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah Wa al- Nihāyah, vol.14, p.4

60 ibid. vol. 14, p. 36

61 Ibid vol. 14, p. 38

97
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62 Ibid vol. 14, p. 45

63 Ibid

64 Nadwī, Abul-Ḥasan, Rijāl Al-fikr wa al-Da’wah, translated by Sa’īd Al-A’ẓumī Al-Nadwī, Dārul-Qalam Damascus, 2002 p.102

65 Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah Wa al-Nihāyah, vol 14, pp.135-6

66 Al-Dhahabi, Tabaqātul-Ḥuffāz, p. 521


68 Abdul-Hādī mentioned some in his Al-‘Uqūd, pp. 80-81

69 Abdul-Hādī, Al-‘Uqūd p. 23

70 Al-Ḥajawī said that because of his trial, people liked his books, looked for them, publicized them, revived their content and followed its material, thus he became a leader and gained wide celebrity.

71 Anthropomorphism used to be associated with the Ḥanbalites due to their affirmation of the attributes of Allah. Ibn Taymiyyah in his book Majmu’ Al-Fatāwa vol.3, p.197 exonerated imam Ahmad from this charge and affirmed that only a few of the followers of Ahmad viewed that whereas the pure Hanbalites never upheld this doctrine. Anthropomorphism was more observed in the non-Hanbalites, e.g., all the Kurds who were all Shafiites and who followed this doctrine more than any other people and the people of Jillān, and it was found in the Karramites who were all Hanafis.

72 Ibn Al-Muharrid, Yūsuf bin Ḥasan (d.909) Maktabat Ibn Sīna for publication and distribution, edited by Yusra Abdul-Ghanī Al-Bishrī, p. 116

73 Al-Ṣafī, Khalīl Aybak (d. 764 AH), Dār Iḥya’ Al-Turāth, 2000, edited by Ahmad Al-Arna’ūṭ and Turki Muṣṭafa.

74 Al-Dāwūdī, Muhammad bin Ali (954 AH) Dār Al-Kutub Al-‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon

75 Al-Kattānī, Muhammad Abdul-Ḥayy (d.482 AH), Dār Al-Gharb Al-Islāmī, Beirut, Lebanon, vol. 1, p. 275

76 Ibn Abdul-Hādī, Shamsuddīn Muhammad bin Ahmad (d.744 AD), Dār al-Kitāb Al-‘Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, edited by Muhammad Hāmid al-Faqī