CHAPTER THREE

Christ in the Writings

Of

Ibn Taymiyyah
Christianity has become a Christocentric religion, wherein Christ is the focal point of discussion. Rather, most of the innovations took place due to the different understanding of the nature and status of Christ. Therefore, this chapter is devoted to Ibn Taymiyyah’s discussions on Christ.

3.1 \( \lambda \rho \gamma \omicron \varsigma \) (Logos)

The Greek translation of the Bible introduced some Greek words into Christianity along with their cultural connotations. The Greek word transliterated as ‘logos’ contributed greatly in creating much hermeneutical controversy. We first have to understand that the term has many meanings: a word (being the expression of a thought or reasoning; a saying), speech, discourse, communication, divine utterance, analogy. As regards to God, it means decree, mandate and order. The *logos* is a common term (used 330 times in the New Testament) with regards to a person sharing a message.\(^1\) Moreover, in pre-Christian Judaism, wisdom, word, and, for that matter, spirit was near alternatives as ways of describing the active, immanent power of God. In the Old Testament, "the word of God" repeatedly denotes the revelation of God and the divine will. In Hellenistic Judaism, the Law of Moses had been identified with wisdom.\(^2\) Furthermore, the *logos* may refer to the act of speaking, as in James: 3:2-3 or the faculty and skill of speaking, as in Ephesians: 6:19-20. When it is attributed to God, it may mean revelation as in John: 10:35.

This leads to the fact that *logos* was used to cover the whole speech process and skill. The word *logos* may refer to any of the stages of speaking: either as the power of speaking, or as the collection of thoughts and ideas (foreknowledge), or as the words spoken, received or enacted. With reference to biblical use it also means what God says to His elected people (prophets and messengers, who in turn conveyed the same to His servants),\(^3\) and their prophecies\(^4\) and God’s command which is naturally manifest through revelation.\(^5\) Sometimes, however, the person who received the ‘word’ and acted and preached according to it is made its referent. We in our ordinary language refer to some people as being the incarnate of abstract qualities. This
personification is seen also in the Old Testament, wherein wisdom (which is identified with the law) is personified as a ‘lady’. This is clearly a figurative use. Ibn Taymiyyah is completely aware of the diversity and of the wide coverage of the term, and therefore constantly urges the Christians to opt one meaning for the use in explicating their dogma instead of having many meanings.

Moreover, the statement in John: 1:1 which does not consider Christ and logos as one or rather does not mention Jesus is equivocal. Nevertheless, what John said in other places should be considered. In other verses, he differentiates between the Christ and the word of God (logos). See for example: John: 10:35 and Revelation: 1:9. Therefore, it could be said that the word of God is His revelation to His selected prophets one of which was Christ.

However, in Christian dogma, the logos is Jesus, who is therefore believed to have existed before all ages. Being the logos, he is the creator of everything. This Greek term has been the main reason for deifying Christ; since the word of God is eternal, comes from God, and considered as the God’s faculty of speech, wisdom or foreknowledge, it is identifiable with Him. All these attributes are identified with Christ because of a cultural conflation. The Nicene Creed describes Jesus as being ‘homooúsios’ with God the Father, meaning consubstantial, or of the same essence/substance as the Father. The concept of consubstantiality (and likewise co-eternality) of three principles had no traces in the post apostolic literature. The Holy Spirit as a person is not traceable either. The Bible is replete with references wherein God is portrayed as a transcendent being that is clearly distinct from the world including Christ. The main difference is accentuated through the various meanings an allegorical statement can accommodate. The personification of impersonal things especially the logos occasioned the point of departure from the monotheistic principles that divine religions are pivoted on.

Thus, the Son is referred to as the Word of God, as described traditionally to be the logos. Discussed rationally, it appears to Ibn Taymiyyah as a mysterious hybrid. λόγος (Logos) has many meanings. The various understandings of the logos and its relation with God brought many themes into light. Is God immanent or transcendent? Is He in
need to assign intermediaries between him and the corporal world? Are the personified beings identified with God form a hierarchy or unity? What is the meaning of the triadic formulas in the Christian literature? Many theories were produced, because it was a Greek word used to connote different meanings in different contexts. Apart from this are the cultural and political circumstances that Christianity suffered and survived although not unaffected.

Having a monotheistic mindset, Ibn Taymiyyah could not reconcile Nicene concept of Godhead and monotheism. Furthermore, he found the Christian concept of Trinity is, from the ontological and rational point of view, unpalatable. In his analysis of the concept, he picks up the ‘Word’ element in the picture, whereby he seeks to identify the identity of the word to make a judgment accordingly. The word, he noted, can be God, His attribute or both. If no one of these is possible, then it must be a being distinct from God. If it was God Himself, or both God and His attribute, then it would be the Creator of the world, (who is the Father). However, the Christians believe that the Father is not the Christ. Moreover, if the word was an attribute of God, then it could not be the creator, whereas, according to the Christian theology, the Christ is the creating word of God. Further, an attribute of God inheres in Him and does not detach itself to unite with or dwell in another such as a human being/form. Nor does the self or the substance ever exist stripped of its attributes. Therefore, Allah exists with His attributes, which do not constitute/possess a superfluous or extra identity. Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that there is no being in the universe without attributes, although he admits that there is a difference between the existences of the two.9

Therefore, it is absurd to say that the attribute deserves to be worshipped. The Christians propound that the Word of God is worshipped along with Him. They dedicated the first ecumenical council to defining the nature of Christ and asserted that he was God. Christ, they further elaborate, is the speaker among the Prophets. They also call him the creating word of God10, who would descend at the end of time and judge between people11. He will also forgive people who had faith in him. The word of God, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts, cannot create, forgive sins or judge between people just because it is an attribute exactly like mercy, ability, etc., which do not
Chapter Three: Christ in the Writings of Ibn Taymiyyah

constitute separate entities. No one prays any of God’s attributes. Ibn Taymiyyah reiterates the query whether the word of God, which appeared in Jesus, is God’s speaking attribute (i.e. the capacity to speak) or the speaking self? If it means God’s spoken word, then it can mean either of two meanings: first, it means the revelation that the Prophet Jesus received, which is true. Second, if it means that God’s word, which is His attribute, detached itself from Him\textsuperscript{12}, descended and united with Jesus, then this is not true. Ibn Taymiyyah generalizes that nothing that is detached from God can be an attribute of Him, let alone being a creator. He tells us that the mistake of the Christians is three fold: one, because they made the son and the Holy Spirit as the attribute of God; second, they made that attribute a creator; and third, when they believed that the attribute united with a human and that human is the creator of the heavens and the earth. He states that the error in the indwelling is a triple error beside their errors in the Trinity, wherein they secluded three attributes apart from God’s various attributes to be independent substances forming the triune God. Thus, in both places, the error is triple.

3.2 The Trinity

The doctrine of trinity has been the focal point in Christianity. many debates have been carried out due to this incomprehensible dogma. Moreover, the Muslim-Christian debates concentrated on it. Here the meaning and implications of this doctrine are briefly dealt with.

3.2.1 Definition and Difference

The Catholic Encyclopedia asserts, “In scripture there is as yet no single term by which the three divine persons are denoted together”\textsuperscript{13}. Moreover, in the writings of the early Christians, it is not used neither as a term nor as an agreed upon meaning denoting a triune god comprised of consubstantial coeternal persons, as this meaning first appeared in the fourth century. As for the meaning of Trinity, it is according to Advanced Learners Dictionary, “the existence of one God in three forms, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”\textsuperscript{14}. According to Easton dictionary of biblical terms, the Trinity is:
“[A] word not found in Scripture, but used to express the doctrine of the unity of God as subsisting in three distinct Persons. This word is derived from the Greek trias, first used by Theophilus (A.D. 168-183), or from the Lat. trinitas, first used by Tertullian (A.D. 220), to express this doctrine. The propositions involved in the doctrine are these: 1. That God is one, and that there is but one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Kings 8:60; Isaiah 44:6; Mark 12:29, 32; John 10:30). 2. That the Father is a distinct divine Person (hypostasis, subsistentia, persona, suppositum intellectuale), distinct from the Son and the Holy Spirit. 3. That Jesus Christ was truly God, and yet was a Person distinct from the Father and the Holy Spirit. 4. That the Holy Spirit is also a distinct divine Person.

It should be noted however that those who coined or used the term, speak of three persons in one, being equal in divinity. To Theophilus, the trinity refers to God, His word (logos) and His wisdom (Sophia). To Tertullian, it refers to God, His Reason and His word as an expression of that reason. He thinks of the son as second in position. Even in later eras after the canonization of the Trinitarian creed in 325 CE, difference in meanings continued and many opinions emerged. Maulana Taqi Othmānī wrote:

“In elucidating and interpreting the doctrine, however, the views of the Christian scholars themselves are so divided and contradictory that it is extremely difficult to arrive with certainty at one conclusion...some say that it is the totality of the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit. Others are of the view that the Father, the son and the Virgin Mary are the three persons whose unity represents the God... One group is of the opinion that each of three per se is God just as the whole is God. Another group is of the view that each of the three separately is God but when compared to the whole each has a lesser status, and the word ‘God’ has been used for each in a slightly wider sense. The third group is of the opinion that each of the three is not God, but that God is only the whole (trinity).”

3.2.2 Meaning of the Hypostases

This Greek term has had many meanings and dimensions. Greek philosophers, who were the natives of the term, differed concerning its meaning diametrically. Therefore having a cursory look into the meaning is pertinent here.

“The word hypostasis (Greek ὑπόστασις) means underlying state or underlying substance, and is the fundamental reality that supports all else... Neoplatonists argue that beneath the surface phenomena that present themselves to our senses are three higher spiritual principles or hypostases, each one more sublime than the preceding,... Plotinus taught that God exists in Three Hypostases, The One, The Divine Mind and The Word-Soul. In the Christian Scriptures this seems roughly its meaning at Hebrews 1:3. Allied to this was its use for "basis" or
"foundation" and hence also "confidence," e.g., in Hebrews 3:14 and 11:1 and 2 Corinthians 9:4 and 11:17.\textsuperscript{18}

Ibn Taymiyyah posits that the word 'μονός' (ὑπόστασις or hypostasis) is mentioned nowhere in the divine books that are available at the disposal of the Christians. The Disciples of Christ never used it either. Then, it is an invented term, which is said to have a Roman origin, denoting ‘the origin’ and sometimes has other meanings too. Therefore, the Christians differ about the meaning of this word as it is from a foreign language. Sometimes they say that the meaning is persons; sometimes qualities; some other times attributes and sometimes essences (jawāhir, pl. of jawhar). Others, however, make the term more inclusive to enshrine the accidents as well as the essence.\textsuperscript{19} They further say that the term refers to the essence with any of its properites. The essential attributes forming the hypostases (along with the essence) are believed by the Christians to be consubstantial unlike the other subordinate attributes. Ibn Taymiyyah tells them that if this means that they are essences it becomes clearly incredible and no sane man would uphold it. If they differentiate between the different attributes, and on the bases of that, they make some attributes to participate in the formation along with the essences and place them on the same footing as the essences, this is wrong on the following grounds:

- Believing that attributes are of two categories: some coessential and others are accidental is in the sight of all faiths false.

- The Christians say that every existing thing has a mental concept representing an existence different from its existence in the outer world. Ibn Taymiyyah admits it is true that what we conceptualize in the mind is necessarily different from the thing available in the outer world. In the mind, we simply have an idea. Nevertheless, the question he poses is that whether the resultant in the outer world is one or two.

Ibn Taymiyyah attempts to explain the meaning using his knowledge of the Bible, the Quran and his mental power. From the Quranic perspective, the Holy Spirit refers to
the Archangel Gabriel, who brings down revelation to the prophets.\textsuperscript{20} In the Quran, it, besides referring to the agent of revelation, also refers to the revelation \textit{per se}, and therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah maintains that the Christ was supported with both, as they are co-related.\textsuperscript{21}

The Holy Spirit in the prophetic terminology is the moral and spiritual support that Allah confers on whom He wills of the righteous including the prophets. Furthermore, it refers to the light, guidance, revelation and the angels that descend to the aid of the people of God. Ibn Taymiyyah gives scriptural evidences in support of his opinion, some of which are as follows:

- The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) commanded Ḥassān bin Thābit (the poet companion) to defend him by poetry, saying, “Verily the holy spirit is with you as long as you defend His Prophet.” and prayed for him saying: “O Allah! Support him with the holy spirit.”
- The Quranic verse, “For such, He has written faith in their hearts and supported them with a spirit from Him.”(Quran: 59:22)\textsuperscript{22}

As such, the Holy Spirit is not a person in the Trinity or something with which only Christ was honored or identified. The Christians, Ibn Taymiyyah states, consider the Holy Spirit to mean both the support stated above as well as the life and ability of God.\textsuperscript{23} Ibn Taymiyyah argues that the Christians should concede either that the Holy Spirit in other people is not the life of God, or that it is the same in all people. If they agree on the latter, then similarly, the Holy Spirit is in all those who are said in the Bible to have it. Many people are stated in the Bible to have the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{24}

\subsection*{3.2.3 The Biblical Evidences}

Through his reading of the literature on Christianity and the letter he received, Ibn Taymiyyah learned that the Christians depend on certain texts in their scripture to substantiate their claims. Here he tries to answer such claims. In the following paragraphs, these will be considered separately along with the answers Ibn Taymiyyah strived to provide.
The first quotation Ibn Taymiyyah gives is one he attributed to *Genesis*, the first book of the Torah. There he quotes that when God had willed to create Adam, said: let us make a creature in our likeness in our image. Ibn Taymiyyah mentions that some translate the verse to ‘let us make a man …’ He must be referring to this verse: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”²⁵ The Christians believe, Ibn Taymiyyah said, ‘God’ here means His spirit and His word. Further, he attributes to the Christians that they said that God said, “Adam has become as one of us”, insinuating at his wish when he ate the tree and became naked. This quotation is mentioned in the Bible currently held by the Christians today thus: “And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.”²⁶

The Christians also give the following verse as evidence for the Trinity as Ibn Taymiyyah quotes them: “Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven”²⁷. The repetition of the word ‘lord’ signifies the lordship of the son. Ibn Taymiyyah answers them in the following:

- Nothing is like Allah.²⁸
- The Christ is not mentioned by name. It is open to all men.
- If by His spirit, they mean His life or knowledge which are God’s attributes, the attribute cannot be like the person it subsists in. If they mean something else then this must be created and the creature can never be like the creator.
- The word ‘make’ in the verse makes it clear that the being that is made is a created being, whereas Christ in their sight is a creator.
- Likeness is not identicalness. Two things can be similar in some aspects but not necessarily identical. There is only a common area between them. The other features are different. After all, the phrase is not an evidence for the three persons in any way.
- Practically, many different things may come under the same name though they are completely different just as in the case of colors. They share the name ‘color’ but obviously, the black is not like the white. Therefore, the name may be the same but realities are different.
Chapter Three: Christ in the Writings of Ibn Taymiyyah

- Since he is created (‘let us make man’) he cannot be the Christ in his divinity. The verse cannot mean His spirit or word. It refers to a created being over which Christ in his humanity possesses no merit.
- The verse mentions Adam not Christ.\(^{29}\)
- The plurality of the pronoun in the text does not mean multiplicity of persons. In many languages, the plural can refer to great sovereignties that have men and supporters under their command. As God created everything, He will not have anyone as His equal.

The second verse the Christians take to testify to the divinity of both the Father and the son, namely, “Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven”\(^{30}\). The texts mention two lords. Ibn Taymiyyah gives the following answers:

- To call God’s life or knowledge son or lord is wrong. Moses never in the Torah named any of such attributes son or lord.
- The one who provides rain is naturally the one who has it with him. He would not provide rain while it is with another. Christ does not have the rain.
- The attribute is dependent on something else. It cannot have independent actions.\(^{31}\)
- It is acceptable in language to repeat the same noun instead of using the pronoun in the second case. It is like saying the Lord rained from what He possesses.

In addition, the Christians rely upon this verse in their affirmation of the Trinitarian doctrine: “Moreover He said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.”\(^{32}\) Ibn Taymiyyah answers them in the following:

- The Christians claim that the repetition of the word God here refers to the three persons, although they do not believe in three gods. Moreover, this verse does not have any indication to the Trinity. Rather, it affirms only one God.
- Believing in a god who is worshipped by Abram, Jacob and Isaac does not prove the existence of three persons.
He, further, noted that the Christians interpreted the speech of prophets wrongly to suit their desires. For example, they interpreted the ‘son’ mentioned in their scripture to mean the word, while from the point of the language, they are two different utterances. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyyah elaborates, the word *son* in the language of their scriptures applies only to anyone happened to grow under the care of God; in other words, to created beings. It is a title said to be conferred on many righteous people such as the apostles and people of Israel as in “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” These who are said to be the sons of God are not believed to be divine and did no become incarnate, why then the Christ? This tells us, Ibn Taymiyyah rightly observes, that the title son of God refers to humans only.

### 3.2.4 Trinity: A Concoction

The Christians think that what they believe is firmly grounded on prophetic traditions and biblical references. Therefore, they think that no one has any right to question this belief. Ibn Taymiyyah answers them in the following manner.

- The Christians say in plain language that Jesus is a coeternal true God from a true God from the essence of his father and that Christ is coequal. They claim that he created and was not created but born of the Father before all ages. They also proclaim that the Holy Spirit is worshipped and glorified. The adjective ‘consubstantial’ tells the reader that Christ is another essence and the statement that the Holy Spirit is worshipped tells that he is an independent God. Therefore, they believe in three gods.

- Ibn Taymiyyah criticizes the Christians for their claim that God is one with three attributes, forming the hypostases. He asserts that Allah is one with many attributes. To make them only three is not right. Even a numerical examination would prove the Trinity false. This is because to the Christians the Father is an essence with two attributes: life and knowledge, which make the persons two not three. Therefore, he becomes a god with three persons. Nevertheless, God’s attributes are not only three.
• They differ in the meaning of the persons. The Holy Spirit for example is interpreted as power, life and sometimes as existence. The word is taken to mean the wisdom, knowledge and sometimes as speech.\textsuperscript{35}

• There can be many parts comprising a whole but these constituent parts cannot be the same. They are necessarily different. In the case of the Trinity of the Christians, however, the persons are all one. Yet, they believe that God is indivisible.

• The divine scriptures are all unanimous that God is one and that there is no god beside Him. He is the only god worthy of worship. There are no references to the incarnation or indwelling neither plainly stated nor potentially meant in any of the divine scriptures. Only a few texts may be interpreted to mean some of what the Christians believe. Thus they left the categorical in favor of the allegorical, which is too insignificant beside the categorically stated texts that command the worship of one and forbid the worship of any beside Allah. Otherwise, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that once there is a divine text no one has the freedom to choose another meaning.\textsuperscript{36}

• They curse those who deny the divinity and the coessentiality of Christ. They also curse those who say that Christ did not sit to the right of his Father or that the Holy Spirit is not a god and those who deny triune unity. They also curse those who say that Christ is the Father. So, they curse him who say that he is the creating Father and him who says that he is not the creator. He who affirms one and denies three is wrong and he who affirms three and denies one. Thus, the truth as well as falsehood is negated. This, Ibn Taymiyyah affirms, is sheer contradiction.\textsuperscript{37}

• The three sects, the Nestorians, the Melkites and Jacobites curse one another. Moreover, the Milkites and the Jacobites curse those who deny that Mary gave birth to God.\textsuperscript{38} They affirm that she gave birth to a fully human and fully divine being. The Milkites and the Nestorians curse those who affirm that they both [the Father and the son] are one essence (\textit{homosious}) with one will\textsuperscript{39}. Furthermore, the Christian sects parts of which are these are all different in their understanding of the Trinity and the incarnation. They uphold self-
contradictory notions. For example, some believe that Mary is the wife of God and some make her a god. Some consider the Christ the physical son of Allah, and so on.\(^{40}\)

The Christians adamantly claim that they follow the Torah as well as the divine books in their creed. Ibn Taymiyyah answers them in the following:

- The books contain abundant evidences affirming the oneness of God. In no one of them is there any mention of the Trinity, the hypostases, the indwelling or the incarnation or the assertion that he was a true God from a true God; nor is there any mention of the attributes of Allah as being His son, god or lord.\(^{41}\) Rather, these doctrines are clearly opposed and confronted in these books. The names of the supposed persons are not mentioned in their books. Ibn Taymiyyah declares that if the Christ said this they should ascertain as to the meaning he intended. The Christians should examine the language he used to speak, and the way he used to convey his intents. However, it is clear that the meanings of the persons are entirely invented. If the meaning in the Bible is earnestly sought, it would contradict the meaning they concocted. For example, the meaning of ‘son’ is clear that it means anyone brought up by the grace of God under His protection, which applies to the creatures only. Israel, David\(^{42}\) and the apostles and many more are called the sons of God in the Bible.\(^{43}\)

- At the same time however, they unanimously admit their creeds were determined by the church fathers in the ecumenical councils, the first of which was during the time of Constantine in 325 CE, wherein they made the creed the Christians today believe and wholeheartedly follow. It is not something they received through the prophets.\(^{44}\) They incrementally developed and fashioned them to be in line with the divinity of Christ.

Ibn Taymiyyah gives a full account of the ecumenical councils in order to show that they took for granted what those councils brought forth. Throughout his discourse, Ibn Taymiyyah posits that the Christians came to the already distorted scripture and understood it all differently from the message the prophets of God brought, namely...
Chapter Three: Christ in the Writings of Ibn Taymiyyah

monotheism. They followed enigmatic statements and left the clear-cut ones all because they are not willing to concede the divinity of Christ, thus bringing forth a syncretism of true religion and Hellenistic paganism.

3.3 The Principle of Incarnation

The doctrine of incarnation is not postulated exclusively in Christianity. Rather, it is a traditional doctrine in other faiths, too, which signified for some researchers to be imported from pagan faiths. Nevertheless, our discussion will be confined to how it is perceived in the Christian faith, and how Ibn Taymiyyah struggled to rebut it and repudiate it as rationally and theologically untenable, since it is a stark contradiction against the concept of tawhid. Although this doctrine blurs the God-man distinction, the Christians upheld it tenaciously.

It is the central Christological issue that bewildered humanity not on the bases of its metaphysical or supernatural implications and complications but on the bases of its syncretism and patent discrepancy. There were myriads of people who raised voices against it, including people in the Christian faith. Moreover, the pioneer scholars, in their endeavor to disambiguate it, produced various interpretive approaches that unfortunately fell too short of serving the purpose. Their scriptural and rational evidences prove the opposite. The best plausible solution is not conclusive. In addition, as it is the case with many Christian doctrines, the texts they provide are either twisted to mean what they believe, or are pointing to the opposite. Therefore, their ex post facto rationalizations represented the springboard from which Ibn Taymiyyah used to launch his critique against their doctrines.

The doctrine of incarnation in Christian theology refers to the supposed embodiment of God the son in human form as Jesus Christ, so as to fulfill the law, atone for the sins of humanity and save them by sacrificing himself. The incarnation, according to the Christians, took place through the Holy Spirit. After this common ground for many Christians, various Christologies were propounded by the different Christian churches.
3.4 Christian Rationalization of the Mixing

It is stipulated in the fourth ecumenical council (451 AD) that Christ is both divine and human, without confusion, without change, without division and without separation. It is mandatory for Christians to believe in it. Ibn Taymiyyah quotes a Christian historian’s classification of mixing. This Melkite historian (al-Ḥasan bin Batrīq) said that mixing is of the following types:

The first: the mixture of two concrete natures and their change, such as the mixture of the wine and water; Second: the mixture with distinction as in the case of oil and water in one pot or flux and silk, wherein each preserves its distinct existence in the other. The historian as is quoted by Ibn Taymiyyah observed that the two types of mixing could happen only in the concrete materials. He proclaimed that change happens here and each material changes when it unites with the other, and the ensuing mixture is a matter that has the characteristics of both but not of any one of them in its pure form as in the case of copper and gold. Ibn Batrīq, being a Melkite, said that the Nestorians fell in error when they described the unification of the human and the divine in Christ as the unification of two persons. He said that this unification implies change, which entails corruption. They, with this blasphemous proposition, attributed to God to suffer death and calamities. The third type of mixture, presented by the Christian apologist is the mixture wherein it is only a mere indwelling free from change, separation or corruption. This is a kind of penetration of the spiritual nature into the material earthly nature, in which the former permeates throughout the latter, thus occupying every single space of the material nature again without any change or corruption for either of the two natures. This type of mixture like that which occurs between the soul and the body, or the fire and the iron, where the two become one firebrand subsisting in the fire nature but mixing with the nature of the iron without separation or discontinuity, transfiguration or corruption. On the bases of this mode of mixture, the divine creating word managed to mix with the human nature. This is the claim of the Christian apologist.

Ibn Taymiyyah objects to the way the Christian historian tried to differentiate between the two types of mixture where he confirmed a change or transfiguration in one of the
cases but negated it in the others. Ibn Taymiyyah states that if change is admitted in the case of the mixture between the two material things, then it is equally possible in the case of the mixture of the spiritual and the material. Ibn Taymiyyah emphasized that the evidences the opponent presented are directly opposing this argument. Ibn Taymiyyah tries always to turn the table against his adversaries in debate. Rather, he standardizes the practice and thinks that it is a general rule that whatever proofs the deviants offer can always be turned against them. The following examples demonstrate this.

3.5 The Christian Illustration

To explain the incarnation to those who do not subscribe to it, the Christians provided many illustrative explanations in an attempt to demystify it. Here an attempt is made to enumerate the examples that Ibn Taymiyyah mentions and the way he exposed the falsifications thereof.

1. The water and the container: when the water is in the container taking its shape, neither the water nor the container loses its properties. Similarly, the word of God dwelled in the body but each retained its qualities. Ibn Taymiyyah shows the differences between the doctrinal implications of the incarnation and the example they gave to draw analogy between the two:
   - It implies that the divine is in need of the human just in the same way the water needs the container
   - It is sheer indwelling and there is no sense of unity, as the water does not pervade the container’s body.
   - The elements remained separated, whereas the doctrine supposes that they are united.

2. Another example is the example of the tree wherefrom God spoke to Moses. The Christians affirmed that as God dwelled in the tree to talk to Moses, He similarly dwelled in Christ to talk to people. Ibn Taymiyyah brings into light the fact that the sound that was heard from the tree was not of the tree, whereas the sound that was heard from the body was Christ’s. Christ before
and after unification spoke the same sound and people who knew him did not notice any difference. Therefore, it is clearly his, not God’s.

Furthermore, when God spoke to Moses from the tree the voice heard was diametrically different from the voices people were accustomed to hear. Therefore, the voice was so difficult for the people to capture that they asked Moses to spell it out for them. This is a biblical truth. Ibn Taymiyyah reported that according to the Christians, Christ united with God from the beginning of his formation and continued to unite until his ascension and sitting to the right of his Father. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah denies any analogy between the incarnation and speaking from the tree, which is used by the Christians to justify union. Ibn Taymiyyah tells us that people unanimously agree that God did not dwell in the tree nor did He unite with it. Rather, He said, “I am God beside whom there is no God so worship me and establish prayer at my remembrance.” God spoke in the first person, ordering Moses to worship him. All that He spoke was of the same kind. However, in the case of Christ, God did not speak to people in this manner. Christ used to differentiate between himself and the Father.

Secondly, God speaking to Moses from the tree is very much the same as his descent from the heavens, or his descent on the Day of Judgment to judge between people. However, unification with humans is rationally impossible besides being not stated by any of the prophets. Moreover, they, Ibn Taymiyyah proceeds, claim that the unifying element took Jesus as a barrier, a place to dwell in and speak to people through. At the same time, they claim that the Father did not unite with nor dwell in Jesus. This entails that a part of the Father united with Jesus and the other part did not. The Father did not unite but the son did unite. This is in plain contradiction to the principle of the indivisibility of God.

3. They also gave the example of the log of wood or rod of iron and fire. They stated that the incarnation in human form is very much like the unity of fire and the wood or iron. There is unity of two different yet distinct elements.
Ibn Taymiyyah pointed out the differences between their doctrine and the example wherewith they tried to support their claim. The fire in the burning wood does not exist outside the wood and then united with it. Rather, the wood turns into fire due to the contact with it. The fire manifested in the wood was the result of that source fire not the fire proper. Moreover, if that is hit, the hitting occurs on the fire too. If this example were sound enough, it would imply that hitting or beating before or after crucifixion could have been inflicted on the divine character, which is plain blasphemy. To give another aspect of the invalidity of the example they gave, Ibn Taymiyyah tells them that any object be it animate or inanimate when put in fire changes diametrically. Similarly, the human body or anything else, when put in fire, sometimes melts and sometimes burns; and the fire after burning or dissolving it, changes too. In addition, there can be many objects near the fire; the heat that one object gets is not the same heat that the others get. If the Christians liken God and the speaking word to the fire and its light or heat, then, to believe that the word of God united with some of His creation entails multiplicity. Moreover, if the burning iron is put in water or beaten, these happen to both of them. This means that the beating, crucifixion, the spitting, the worship, the prayer, the eating, the drinking, etc. all happened to the human as well as the divine aspects of Christ.

4. They also gave the example of the sun, which despite being distinct, its light and heat permeate the universe and falls on every object. Likewise, the word of God took the human body as its principle in which it subsisted.

Ibn Taymiyyah urges the Christians to differentiate between the physical existence of the sun and its impact. What is seen or felt on the objects is merely the impact and the not sun proper. The sun is far removed from the objects on which fall its light and rays, what to think of the distance between God and His creation. Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyyah argues that the sun does not unite with or dwell in the rays that are dependent on other objects, nor does it unite with the objects that receive its light. The sun is a distinct entity. Moreover, the sun’s light that is inherent in the sun is not the light that is dependent on the various objects it falls on. Rather, it is seen red on red objects and black on black objects. Moreover, the example of the sun and its light is also invalid on the ground that the light of the sun is in need of the object it falls on. It
is blasphemy to believe that God is in need of any created thing. In addition, heat cannot reach the objects that are hidden under other objects. If the Christians consider God a spirit in the Christ, then a parallel statement can be made that the sun existed in a small area of land. If anyone said about a much smaller object such as a planet, a mountain or even a big rock that it was in the womb of a woman, that person would be ridiculed, what if this claim is said about God! If the Christians say that God descended from heaven on the mount and spoke to Moses from the bush or in the column of cloud, it does not mean that he united with a creature, nor does it mean that His speech was subsistent in any of His creation. However, the Christians uphold that God united with Christ and his voice was the voice of the Lord of the World without any medium.  

According to the *salaf*, Ibn Taymiyyah affirms, Allah spoke the Quran and the other scriptures and He spoke to Moses without any medium. None of them said that the speech that Moses heard was eternal. Rather, they said that Allah is ever speaking in the time and manner He wishes. This is because the speech is a perfect attribute and then He possesses this faculty. No one can be called All-Hearing All-Knowledgeable All-Merciful, if these attributes are inherent in a being other than him. Likewise, the speech that is done at will is more an attribute of perfection than when done unwillingly. The speech that is dependent on someone yet proceeds without his will, is consequently either impossible or is a shortcoming on the part of that person, who is said to speak against his will, as in the case of the demoniac. Moreover, is it perfect for God to be eternally speaking than to speak after being unable to; if this is the case when it is supposedly possible, how far more so when it is impossible! It is blasphemous to think that Allah is deficient.

The Muslim *ummah* was safe from innovation in religion because whenever a heresy surfaced, there were religious scholars who were able to refute it and show people the right path, unlike in the case of the Christians who innovated in religion and confronted those who opposed them. This is why the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “Allah looked at the inhabitants of the earth [before the advent of Muhammad peace and blessings of Allah be upon him] and
condemned them all, the Arabs and the non-Arabs, except for some of the People of the Book.\footnote{53}

5. They also gave the example of the soul and the body\footnote{54} to justify the incarnation. Ibn Taymiyyah refutes this example and establishes the differences between this example and the supposed unification of the speaking word of God and the human Christ.

Ibn Taymiyyah says that it is not a correct example for the following reasons:

- It is universally acknowledged that the body is diametrically different before and after it separates from the soul. There is no difference bigger than the difference between life and death. Adam, for example, was created from water and earth, and then he became burnt clay. Then the soul was breathed into it, whereupon, he became a body with blood, nerves and flesh. Can any sane person claim that Adam was the same before and after the breathing of the soul? His descendants are created from a small drop. This passes through many embryological stages. In all such stages man is merely a dead body. After the soul is breathed into it, the body starts to manifest life. The blood runs in the veins and arteries, and the baby starts all his movements and activities only after that.

- As the soul feels the pain with the body, then, according to the example given by the Christians whereby the unification of the word with the human body is equalized with the soul and the body, the word of God felt the pain of the persecution of Jesus and torture at the crucifixion. It also must have felt the hunger and the thirst of the human body.

- This nullifies the clause that the ‘Christ was fully human and fully divine’ as, by the same token, man should have been fully a soul and fully a body just as before unification. Likewise, the burning rod of iron would be fully fire and fully iron. However, the man is a composite of the two. Man is not a soul and man is not a body. The
word *man* applies to both united. If it were real unification, then Christ would be half-human and half-divine. Ibn Taymiyyah said:

It is not right to say that Christ himself was fully divine and Christ himself was fully human, as conceptualizing this in its full sense, would lead to the definite conclusion … that the very human is the divine himself. If this is said as regards to two creatures, such as an angel and a human that they are the same, this is obviously false. What if it is said about the Lord of the World?

- The Christians claim that the Christ was crucified and died and that his speaking soul left him and in this very state, the divine did not leave him. Here, whereas the soul departs with the body at death, the divine character did not. Therefore, this unification is more influential than the unification of the soul and the body.

- The soul on its unification with the body has features and behaviors different from those it had before the unification. Again, when it leaves the body, its actions and features change. If the example is true, then it means that God after unifying with the human changed actions and features just as the soul, and He would be like the abstract soul before unification.

- The soul and the body share the same actions, the good and the bad and their consequences. This is even more true to the soul than to the body. If God were so, then whatever Christ did at will, it would be God’s. Moreover, as the soul is addressed with the injunctions of the law, then God incarnate is likewise addressed with the injunctions that the Christ was ordered. The God incarnate would pray and worship. This nullifies their claim that he created with his divinity and ate and worshiped with his humanity. The soul and the body in their unification share the same actions. So, if God gives any command, they both would carry out that command. If any pain befalls them, they both suffer, and rather, the soul suffers more. Interestingly, when a jinn possesses any human being, such man or woman changes the way he/she speaks; the voice becomes the jinn’s not the man’s. If the body
is beaten then only the jinn suffers the pain. This is common
eperience.
Ibn Taymiyyah said that he did that several times. The jinni changes and the person
possessed changes and the beating is felt only by the jinn. If we consider the
unification of the soul and the body more perfect, then the soul must undergo even
more changes. The Christians adamantly assert that the divine quality was observed
on the Christ neither before nor after the performance of the miracles. He was seen
simply as a human like any other human.

3.6 Transfiguration: A Corollary

Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that the incarnation entails transfiguration. The human or the
divine would change into the other essence or a third essence. This is in clear conflict
with the doctrine that supposes that the incarnation is free from any confusion,
division or transfiguration\textsuperscript{57}. In addition, when two things unite, they become one. If
they do not become one then they are not united. If the result of the union is either of
the two constituents, then the other is nonexistent. Clearly, in this case it is
annihilation not unification. Moreover, one should note that some of the Christians
believe that Christ is one with one nature, one substance and one will.

Ibn Taymiyyah emphasizes that the union with God must necessitate a tremendous
change. The Prophets during revelation used to undergo a lot of physical exhaustion
and psychological and spiritual developments that were easily observable to the
people who happened to be present. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of
Allah be upon him), for example, would undergo physical experiences such as total
preoccupation, excessive perspiration, increased body weight, etc. to the extent that if
he was on his mount, it would sit, due to the overweight that is added to the weight of
The Prophet after the revelation started. If his leg happened to be leaning on another’s
leg, that other would feel all but breakage. These bodily manifestations appeared on
the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), although he did
not claim unity with God, nor did he claim that he saw God.
Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah argues, that Jesus could not unite with God without being recognized by the people. Rather, people thought that they were talking, mixing with and accompanying a human being. Ibn Taymiyyah, further, argues that the prophets including Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon them all) declared that man could not see God in this life. If seeing is not feasible, unification and incarnation are a fortiori not.

Yet, according to Christians, Christ did not witness any changes commensurate with the magnitude of the event (i.e., unity with God). Rather, they insist that before baptism he performed no miracles. Ibn Taymiyyah wonders how could it happen without any such manifestations, whereas according to them, when Moses heard the voice he was enshrined in light, which would have a lesser impact than the unification as it is nothing besides the unification with God. Ibn Taymiyyah uses common sense to defy the notion that God spoke through the Christ in the literal sense of the word. He argues that if an angel or a jinn united or dwelled in a human being and spoke through him, the people would easily recognize that the speaker is not that human but another. How clear it would be of God! It would be much clearer in deed!

Ibn Taymiyyah also points out another error the Christians have fallen in: he states that unity necessitates that the united two should become one and has the same actions and the same features. The Christians confirm unity but differ on the question of the features; they (monophysites and chalcedonians) differ whether Christ has one nature or two natures. Moreover, some say that he has one will (monothelitists) and some say he has two wills.

### 3.7 Incarnation: An Insult to God

Ibn Taymiyyah declares that the indwelling is not credible unless the thing or the being which is said to indwell is in need of the thing that receives, (or is the locus of) the indweller. He compares the theory of God incarnate with that of the philosophers and the pantheists. He says that the philosophers proposed the theory of matter and form (hilomorphism), in which they affirm that matter is the principle of form. They also acknowledge that the form is dependent on matter. Moreover, the philosophers
uphold that the heavens are eternal and Self-Necessary and that the first of them is a cause for the rest heavens, which the Christians in their theology try to emulate. In the same manner, the proponents of the Unity of Existence consider the relation of the creator to the creation as the relation of matter and form, as suggested by Ibn Sab‘een, who says that God is water in water, fire in fire, and in everything in the form of that thing. Ibn Taymiyyah said that “he who thinks that Allah is in need of anything in any way, he is a calumniating disbeliever, since need is an attribute of deficiency. How much more grave is then the case of those who claim that He is in need of everything, [insinuating at the pantheists.]?” Interestingly those who investigated into the relationship between Christian dogma and its intellectual environment affirmed that the early Christians were influenced by both the philosophers and the stoics who were materialists and pantheists. Here Ibn Taymiyyah makes almost the same assertion.

The Christians claim that in the same manner as the abstract matters need something concrete to appear through, God wanted to appear to people therefore He dwelled in Christ. Ibn Taymiyyah makes the following refutations against this claim:

How can we proof that the spirit of man is more subtle than all other creatures, including the angels, Gabriel and the spirit that was breathed into Adam? Even if it is taken for granted that God united, it means that He united with or indwelled in blood and flesh. He did not unite with the spirit.

The appearance of God through the body of Christ must effect such a great change that everyone who happened to see him like the apostles and the others would surely have recognized him. If this did not happen, it simply means that there is no difference between God and any of His creations. The implications of these are invalid. If God is so insignificant that people did not see or recognize him, then their claim that God appeared through the Christ is not correct. It becomes absurd to claim that God made the incarnation a means to appear to people and yet people do not recognize him. If people did not see God then the example they gave is useless, since in no case could people see God.
Rather, the appearance of divine affairs is more feasible in the abstract than in the concrete. The angels take the revelation from God then they bring it to the prophets. Such revelation reaches the angels first then it reaches the Prophets, as they are the intermediaries. If it were possible that God united with any, He would a fortiori unite with the angels not the humans. In order to receive revelation from the angels Allah has qualified the prophets to be able to receive revelation from the angels. The angels sometimes come to the prophets in an inhuman form. They do not need to change their forms or unite with the humans. Therefore, God did not unite with Gabriel so as to be able to talk with the prophets. Moreover, it is acknowledged that the angels sometimes take the form of men, but no one ever seen an angel and a human becoming one. If this is not possible in the case of an angel, then it is more so in the case of God.

Jinn may unite with the human being but they never become one with him. Rather, they become two with two wills and two essences. The jinni enters the human being and speaks with his tongue.

The Christians are different concerning the nature of Christ despite their emphasis on the unification. Some of them say he is one nature (monophysitism) but some claim that he has two. Some say that he has one will (monotheilism) but the others claim that he has two. Then for each kind, there must be a different kind of unification. This is naturally not as easy as the dwelling of a jinn in a man. If this cannot happen in the case of the angels and the jinn, it is, a fortiori, less likely in the case of the Lord of the World. The Christians should concede that he is one with one will and nature, in which case all that happened to one, must have happened to the other too. If they do not subscribe to this view, then they adopt that God multiple.

3.8 Essence vs. Accident

To negate the multiplicity of gods in the concepts of incarnation and Trinity, the advocates have imported the philosophical dichotomy of essence and accident, as exclusively representing the whole existence. Whereas the former denotes anything that is existent on its own right, the latter depends on another in its existence. In short,
Chapter Three: Christ in the Writings of Ibn Taymiyyah

incidents are the properties that essences may have. Now, in the discussion of God’s existence in the Trinity and as incarnate these terms seem to avail much for the Christians in negating multiplicity of gods, especially when we consider that the Christians affirm that the word or son of God is of the same essence as the Father.

Ibn Taymiyyah states that the Christians consider God to be an essence; since essences are superior to incidents. Therefore they believe they describe God with the best names and avoid assigning to him any lesser degree. Rather, they say that He is the noblest existing ever; therefore, He is an essence. Furthermore, they believe, as Ibn Taymiyyah reports, that God is an immaterial essence. This means to them that He although being a jawhar (essence), He does not receive accidents or occupy space, unlike the material things. Apparently, they follow this tactic to prove the divinity and incarnation. Ibn Taymiyyah responds in the following:

- Using the term is the least thing to repudiate, since Allah is not named jawhar in the Scriptures. Rather, he asserts that it is a Roman word interpreted differently by different people. Sometimes they say it denotes origin, sometimes person and in other times the self along with the attributes. However, he said there is a difference between calling Allah with such names and just talking about him using those names. Calling him is not permissible except with His beatific names that are mentioned in His scripture or by His messenger, following the verse, “Allah has the beatific names, so call him with them.” To talk about him with other good names to elaborate on the meaning, this is permissible, as long as they have correct meaning. He also maintains that this term (jawhar) has been taken from the Greek philosophers, and has no place in religious terminology. Moreover, he says that philosophers did not differ on the essence of things as they did concerning the accidents. Some believe they are additions to the essence, whereas others say they are not. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah says it is safer for the Christians to let the divine to be interpreted not in the light of these philosophical implications, since neither the name nor the meanings is stated by the prophets and the scriptures.
Secondly, he believes that the intelligible can only be visualized by the mind, as having independent existence. The same thing can be said about the existence of a jawhar or essence divested of its attributes; in reality, however, there is nothing such that has essence but no properties or accidents. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that calling Allah as essence ripped of attributes is a philosophy traceable to Aristotle and his followers who denied the attributes of Allah. Thus, he concludes that the Christians who uphold this theory are followers of philosophers not the Christ or apostles. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyyah diagnoses the confusion of the Christians thus:

“The reason for this is that they structured for themselves a dogma partially from the clear cut texts, such as their statement that God is one; some from their equivocal texts of the prophets, such as the son and the holy spirit; and some from the literature of the philosophers and the attribute-denier polytheists, such as those who say that He is essence without properties.”

3.9 Misinterpretation of the Scriptures

There are biblical texts that led some to use them as evidences for their assumptions of indwelling or incarnation, such as: “the Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir into them; he shined forth from the mount of Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his hand went a fiery law for them.”

The verbs ‘rose up’ and ‘shined forth’ are possibly misinterpreted as to prove God permeating the world through unity or indwelling. However, it is unanimously agreed among all religions that God did not dwell in Moses when He spoke to him; and in the same manner, He did not dwell in the mount of Paran, although He stated that He ‘shined forth from’ it. Ibn Taymiyyah gives more examples from the Bible wherein these verbs are used but did not mean the literal interpretation, such as in the case when it is stated that God came from Jerusalem. Whereas it is thus stated, neither Moses nor anyone else claimed to have seen God as independent or incarnate in any form. Rather, Christ asserted that no one could see God, which is an inclusive negation. Further, touching would have a greater bearing than mere seeing. Therefore, if no human can see God, then, a fortiori, touching is more to be so. Likewise, unification is far more unlikely than seeing.
If this supposed unification is interpreted to mean that knowledge emanates from Allah into the hearts and minds of the prophets\textsuperscript{69}, then it is not the exclusive right of Jesus Christ. Moreover, the slave cannot be a deity by virtue of the knowledge that ‘dwells’ in him.

The question whether the speech and knowledge of Allah is He or ‘other than Him’ is difficult to say immediately, as the phrase ‘other than Him’ is equivocal. If it is taken to mean that they are independent of Him, then it is not right. The attributes of anything cannot be other than or distinct from the object on which they depend. This is more so in relation to the creator. If, however, the phrase ‘other than Him’ means that they are not He, then the attribute is not the subject proper. Moreover, the name of the Lord Allah when used in its absolute sense, it includes the Holy Self along with all that He deserves of the attributes of perfection. It is not possible for the essence to exist bereft of its attributes. Therefore, the name ‘Allah’ includes also the perfect attributes of Him. In fact, nothing exists divested of its attributes. With this, Ibn Taymiyyah tries to prove that the word of God, which, according to him, is the attribute of speech, cannot be distinct from Him and dwell in human body.

Ibn Taymiyyah opens possibilities for the interpretation of the texts that seem to include any trace of incarnation. The Christians claim that God, in order to talk to His people, appeared to them through the Christ. As He is too subtle to appear to people, He wanted to show himself through a concrete body. Ibn Taymiyyah here raised the question: was the word that united with the Christ God’s attribute, His essence or both? If the uniting element was God’s attribute of speech, then this can mean either of two things: if God’s speech was sent down on the Christ, then this is true and it is not the exclusive privilege of the Christ. All prophets received revelation in this manner. If it means that the attribute of speech detached itself from God and dwelled in the Christ, then this is not true. Yet, if true it would not avail the Christians anything since they believe that Christ was the creator of the heavens and the earth\textsuperscript{70}, the creator of Adam and the son of Adam, the creator of Mary and the son of Mary; the son by his humanity and the creator by his divinity. Furthermore, he says that the Christians admit that God dwelled in the Christ as He did in others. The dwelling in
the Christ is like the indwelling that is mentioned by David that God dwelled in the hearts of the saints. This is obviously the indwelling of faith and the knowledge of God and not God per se.  

3.10 Anthropomorphic Texts

Thus, the appearance of God to His servants can mean the appearance of faith in their hearts or it can mean the appearance of God’s cognitive example or notional image in their hearts. Even in the Quran, there are texts that seem to carry this meaning: that God pervades the world (with His power and knowledge). Such texts should not be interpreted literally. For example, Allah said in the Quran, “He is God in the Heaven and God in the earth.”

In the authentic hadīth of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), Allah is reported to have said: my slave, I got ill but you did not visit me…my slave, I was hungry but you did not feed me,” etc. In a similar context, Allah said that if He loves any of His slaves, He becomes the hearing power with which he hears, the sight with which he sees, the hand with which he takes and the leg with which he walks. In the same manner, when any person would like to express his love to another, such person uses expressions such as, ‘you are in my heart’, you are my heart’, ‘you are in my eye’, etc. Through these examples, Ibn Taymiyyah tries to prove that such expressions must not be taken literally. They are merely expressions of love, knowledge, etc., and there is no intention of indwelling. Ibn Taymiyyah diagnoses the mistake as lying in the inability of the advocates of the indwelling to distinguish between the different kinds of existence of any object and the existence of its cognitive example in the mind of the perceiver. This very mistake, Ibn Taymiyyah opines, has led the people like abu Yazīd Al-Biṣṭāmī, and the rest of the proponents of the idea of immanent God to advocate the pantheistic theory.

In our daily experience, the same thing can have many manifestations: physical, cognitive, orthographic, verbal, etc. Ibn Taymiyyah gives the example of the sun. It is the sun, which is in the sky, the sun, which is thought of by the hearts or minds of people, the sun whose name is articulated by the tongues and the s-u-n that is written
with pens. If the word ‘sun’ is written in paper, and some assert that the sun is on paper, no one would think of it to be the object which is in the sky. Rather, one would think of its orthographical realization.

Ibn Taymiyyah provides the reader with even more examples where such expressions should not be taken literally. It can be said that two people are united whereas they are far apart. Such unification can be unification through ideology or through loyalty or through aim. These types of unification do not mean physical unification. It also can happen even without the knowledge of any of the unifying parties. The seen can indwell in the heart of the seer without his knowledge.

Regarding the terms and titles that the prophets did not negate or affirm such as the direction and the spatial boundaries of God, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts, they should not be negated or affirmed. However, if the affirmer arrives at a correct meaning, then he is correct. If he speaks in terms of negating such uses and he arrives at a correct meaning then he is correct, even if he used wrong expressions. However, those who affirm or negate the truth and falsehood at the same time are correct in what is right and wrong in what is wrong. They have thus confused the truth and falsehood. All prophets are unanimous that God is above. Moreover, in the Quran and the Sunnah are about one thousand references to this fact.

### 3.11 The Ascension and God’s Indivisibility

Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyyah utilizes the biblical narrative of the resurrection of Christ and his sitting to the right of his Father to rebut the Christian belief of the indivisibility of God. Ibn Taymiyyah shares with them the belief that God is indivisible. However, according to this narrative, God is portrayed to be divisible. Ibn Taymiyyah said that their statement that God is indivisible contradict their creed and the way they portray Him, namely, that He has united with Christ and that Christ ascended to the heavens and sat to the right of his Father. The ascender, according to them, was Christ, who was fully human and fully divine. They do not believe that the one, who sat to the right of the Father, was Jesus in humanity. Rather, they believe
that Christ in his full humanity and full divinity sat to the right of the Father. Is there a clearer example of division than this?

Moreover, this is not the statement of the prophets so as to claim that it is right but intelligible for humans. It is, rather, the statement of the bishops. They pinpointed it and made it their creed. If they spoke of what they could not comprehend, then they are ignorant and must not be followed. If the Christians understood that, then no sane man would understand of the fact that the Christ in his divinity sat to the right of his Father anything other than the latter is independent of the God incarnate. Understood as such, it is plain division and separation.

Ibn Taymiyyah is highlighting one of the critical issues in the unity and distinction paradox. The divine is claimed by the Christians to be inseparable and indivisible. Yet, they insist on the incident of the ascension and the sitting to the right of the Father. If the divine existence is one, it will not sit to the right of its own self. The phrase ‘to the right of his Father’ tells us clearly that it (divine existence) is not one.

As a result, another question arises: is the God incarnate the Father or His attribute? If He was the Father, then Christ was the Father. However, this is unanimously denied by all the Christians. If God the incarnate was not an attribute of the Father, the whole picture becomes rationally unpalatable and absurd. God’s attribute cannot detach itself from Him, nor can it unite with or dwell in anything. Moreover, no sane person would ever think of an attribute to be a creator. Interestingly, the Christians believe that Christ created everything including Adam and Mary, although he is the son of both. According to them, with respect to his divinity, he created them; but with respect to his humanity, he was the son of Adam and Mary.

Ibn Taymiyyah also shows that they are uncertain whether God just took Jesus to be a barrier for Him through whom He could talk to people, or that He really united with him. In other words, is it union or indwelling?

Ibn Taymiyyah tries to use the arguments of the Christian sects refuting one another. Ibn Baṭrīq, the Melkite historian, tries to rebut the Nestorian doctrine of unity. Ibn Taymiyyah proves that the Melkites’ stance on the issue is not better than that of the
Nestorians. For example, Ibn Batūṭa disagrees with the Nestorians on the time of the unification. He said that if they say that God united with Christ before pregnancy, then it means that He united with him before he became a man, which is against the Nestorian condition that He united with a partial man. Ibn Taymiyyah concludes that the Melkites are more erroneous in this regard. If the Melkites claim that He united with him when he was a full human, then there is no scope of partnership of the two natures.

3.12 The Christian Convert Argues

Ibn Taymiyyah quotes a Christian convert to Islam who had been a great authority in Christianity. This scholar was called Al-Ḥasan bin Ayyūb. Ibn Taymiyyah quotes Al-Ḥasan bin Ayyūb explicating the doctrines of the different Christian groups in his statement of the reasons that led him to convert to Islam. According to him, the Jacobites professed that Mary had begotten God (theotokos), that he suffered pain and was crucified and died. After three days, he rose from the dead. This goes against the Chalcedonian creed. The Melkites, for instance, claim that Christ is one person with two nature; each nature has a will. The human has a will (like David and Ibrāhīm) and the divine has a will (like the Father and the son.) They, like the Jacobites, claim that Mary has begotten a god and that Christ is a name that enshrines the human and the divine natures. Although they confess this, they claim that the body of Christ died but God who they claim Mary has begotten, did not die except by the essence of the human nature within him. Ibn Taymiyyah wonders:

Did begetting, death and all other acts that the Christians talk about happen to Christ apart from his two natures? How could a rational person consider it correct to worship a god who is begotten from a human woman, died and suffered from pain and epidemics?73

This obviously contradicts with the number of the persons of the triune God, claimed by the Christians. In the above statement, Christ has two natures, two essences but one person. However, in the Trinitarian creed, the three persons are one essence and one god. Therefore, the objection raised here is that “they prove two hypostases for one essence and only one hypostasis for two united essences, although the hypostases’
will is only one. Still, they claim that there are two wills and two natures for the human character and the divine character.\textsuperscript{74}

Furthermore, Al-Ḥasan bin Ayyūb points out more faults in their creed. He says that if the son was called so because he came from God, the Holy Spirit has a more right to be called so, since it also came from God. Otherwise, what is the difference between the two? He also declares that the Holy Spirit was superior to the son, since it led him to the trial of the Devil and changed him, from the simple human to the God incarnate. The changer is superior to the changed and the arranger is superior to the changed. The doer is superior to the object. He finds out another contradiction. The claim that Mary has begotten a god and the claim that he was crucified and buried are contradictory.

Ibn Taymiyyah brings into light the will of Christ. He observes that two opposing wills cannot coexist in one entity. The human will would struggle for eating, drinking, worshipping and praying whereas the divine will would take to an opposite direction. Each will would shirk the actions of the other. If they exist in the same thing then it would want two opposing actions at the same time. This is and absurd. Ibn Taymiyyah concludes that if the Christians understand what they say, it would mean that it is reasonable. If they say what they do not understand, then it necessarily means that they said about Allah what they do not understand.\textsuperscript{75} However, if anyone quotes the prophets verbatim, he is not obliged to comprehend what they say. Nevertheless, the Christians, Ibn Taymiyyah rightly observed, brought about things that are neither reasonable nor authentically reported from the prophets.

If the Christians justify the unification by saying that he did so in order to set a perfect example for humanity, it is no wonder that they claim He felt sorry, and bit His hand with repentance so as to set an example for the people to repent their sins. Ibn Taymiyyah concludes that whatever bad opinions the devious sects have about God, the Christians’ allegations would even be worse and more disgracing. Moreover, as they espouse this kind of unification they cannot rebut the other’s allegations that God united with any one apart from Christ unless they adduce specific evidences regarding that, (i.e. evidences that state clearly that that was the exclusive privilege for the
Christ to the exclusion of any other.) If they deny it on the bases that no one claimed that or that they do not have any idea about that, it can be easily said that their ignorance of the existence of something does not make it nonexistent. If something is taken as a sign for the existence of another, its absence does not necessarily mean that other thing is nonexistent too. It is only when the first is a necessary condition for the existence of the second; the nonexistence of the first leads to the nonexistence of the ensuing thing. Even the anthropomorphists never claimed that God ever united with any of His creatures.

Although Ibn Taymiyyah often mentions only three groups of the Christians, he acknowledges the existence of many apart from them and further refers the reader to the history written by the Christian historian Sa’īd bin Al-Batrīq for more information.

The physical birth of God incarnate from the human woman necessitates that that woman became a wife, and had a sexual act with the Father. This act with the human is more feasible than unifying with him and facing the same fate as he has. Moreover, the begetting, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts, cannot be thought of except with created things.

### 3.13 The Crucifixion for Atonement

Ibn Taymiyyah starts with stating the ideological background of the doctrine. He said that the Christians say that the Christ, who is both divine and human, surrendered to the disbelievers’ crucifixion in order to avoid being cast in Hell by the Satan as the other prophets. They further state that he did not expose himself, as God or Son of God, to the Satan so that he may not know him, and surrendered to the enemies to take, beat him, spit in his face, put the thorns on his head and crucify him. He showed meekness on his death, screamed for the aid of his lord and asked Him why He subjected him to his enemies. He did all this in order not to be noticed by the devil, so the devil will not recognize that he was the God and the son of God. Therefore, he will not take his spirit to the Hell as he took those of Ibrahim and Noah.
Ibn Taymiyyah attempted to disprove this doctrine (as he understands it) in the following arguments:

- If Satan took the children of Adam by the sin of their father, (as the Christians claim), then there is no difference between the human Christ and the others. If he took them under the pretext of their own sins, why should he take them by the sin of their father?

- Will those who came before the demise of the Christ, will they meet the same fate as those who came after him? If yes, why then was the devil enabled to take the predecessors and not the successors, since they are more sinful than the prophets are? How could it be reasonable that God empowered the devil to punish the prophets before Christ while the tyrants after him were spared?

- Taking the offspring of Adam to the Hell is either just or unjust. If just, then the devil is not to be blamed; and it is not appropriate for Christ to elude him to escape the justice that he deserved, since it is compulsory to let justice take its course. If, however, it was unjust, why did not God prevent the devil from doing it? If the answer was that God could not, then they would be attributing inefficiency to God. If He was able to ward off such injustice but did not do it then there is no difference between warding it off before or after the Christ. The time factor has no bearing here.

- The devil should not be held culpable before the Christ, and therefore there is no need to punish or blame him. If he was justified then there is no need for the trick. He should not be taken by his crime.

- Before the crucifixion, if the devil was excused, how could it be logical to be punished through the crucifixion as he could have said that he did not know that the crucified was the Christ in his humanity? Further, he could have said to God that you had given me the permission to take all humanity to Hell and the Christ is but one of them. I did not know that you or your son united with him. If I knew, I would have glorified him but I did not know.

- Taking the people apart from the Christ to the Hell is, according to the Christians, permissible. And if that is true, then God would have no plea against the devil.
Chapter Three: Christ in the Writings of Ibn Taymiyyah

- If the sins of Adam and his children should not be assigned to the devil, it is not logical to claim that the devil has the right to tempt the people to do evil and he is given the right to punish them. Here, Ibn Taymiyyah detects an analogy between the Christians and the Zoroastrians, who claim that all evil and punishment is exclusively carried out by the devil. He further observed that the Manichaeism is a syncretism of Christianity and Zoroastrianism, and their leader was a Christian Zoroastrian.

- If God united or dwelled in the Christ in order to confront the injustice of the devil, then why did not he do the same in any of the children of Adam, before the Christ since the people before him were more sinful than the people who came after the Christ?

- The Christian arguments are completely illogical. How is it possible that all the people, including the saints and the prophets before the Christ were in the prison of the devil by the sin of their father Adam and how is it possible that the only way God resorted to was the crucifixion of Christ. How is it possible that the prophets who were higher in rank than Adam be imprisoned in the devil’s prison? Ibrahim’s father was a disbeliever and God did not take Ibrahim by the sin of his father. How is it possible that he was imprisoned by the sin of his farthest father? Moreover, Noah strove hard to revert his people to the religion of God all his lifetime, and at last, God destroyed them by his prayer, how could he be imprisoned by the sin of Adam?

- What is the relationship between the Crucifixion, which is one of the major sins, and the extrication of these from the devil? Allah could have prevented him from doing any injustice and punished him. Allah is always in the favor of his helpers and friends. Why did Allah forsake them and made them in the custody of his and their enemy? Was He unable to protect them, or was He not aware of his mischief? If the Christians say so, then it is plain blasphemy, contradiction and degradation of God.

- This creed entails that those who were before the Christ, including those who killed the apostles of the Christ and burned his Bible and the perpetrators
throughout the ages are not culpable for their crimes, as the crucifixion of Christ obliterates all sins humans did.

- The Bible discredits the Christians in this regard. It states that the Christ decried those who claimed to be his followers and told them that they did not know their scholars.

- If sin was invalidated with his ascension, then those who killed him are no longer condemnable by their sins, for after his coming there would be neither sin nor sinners. Those who killed his disciples or burned their books are, too, not sinners. Moreover, all sins since his coming until the Day of Judgment are immediately forgiven. If this is true, then the whole existence becomes meaningless.

Al-Ḥasan bin Ayyūb, quotes in this regard, a few hymns that the Christians repeat in their prayers. He quoted, for example: Oh Our Lord, who has conquered with his pain the severity of death” and “with the prayers of our Lord Jesus Christ, death was invalidated and the devil’s sedition were stopped and long gone.” In addition, the hymn that is pronounced on the second Friday after Easter: “We have pride in the Cross, which invalidated our sin and we are safe and secure because of it.” This is discredited by the Bible itself. In Mathew: 7:22-23, Christ is reported to have said, “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

This very belief is not in keeping with the biblical declaration. If the sins are forgiven, then why the Christ is threatening not to recognize them? Secondly, in what way are they in need of his forgiveness? Moreover, in other places in Mathew, we are told that people would be divided as per their deeds: some in everlasting bliss and the other in everlasting punishment. See, for example, Mathew: 25:41-46. This is a plain contradiction with the supposed story of the atonement of the son through the sacrifice he made on the Cross and the whole story of the incarnation and the indwelling. The people are divided into two groups on the bases of their deeds. Those who carried out the commandments
would be blessed and those who rebelled would be punished. Then only the sins cast them into punishment. Understood as such, the incarnation and indwelling, the crucifixion and the atonement all become baseless myths that Al-Ḥasan bin Ayyūb kept incessantly questioning.

The Christians use the Quran in order to justify their belief. They claim that the verse, “they did not truly kill him, nor did they crucify him. Rather, He raised him to himself.” supports Dyophysitistic Christology. They say that Christ was crucified and felt the pain with his humanity not with his divinity. Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that Christ was raised body and soul, and therefore he was no longer in need of food, etc., for he has a state different from the state of the people of the earth. Ibn Taymiyyah adds that the Quran in the same context states that Christ said to Allah, “I was a witness over them while I stayed among them. However, when you took me up, you were the watcher over them.” Taken together, the Quranic verses tell us that after the rising of the Christ Allah alone was the witness.

He also quotes the Christians as saying that the verse, “and [remember] when you made out of clay a figure like that of a bir by leave, and you breathed into it, and it became a bird by my leave” indicates that the creator was the word of god identified with the human Christ. They also quote David as saying that God created the heavens and the earth with the word of God. The leave stated in the Quranic verse was the leave of God incarnate, according to the Christians. Ibn Taymiyyah said that if the creator was God, then He would not need the permission of anyone. In addition, there would be no grace bestowed upon him. Moreover, the text they quote tells very clearly that the word was created with; it was not the creator proper. Once we know that he did what he did by the leave of another, then he had the human status like any of the Prophets.

3.14 Temporal Considerations

Here he discusses the concept of pre-existence or co-eternity with the father which is vigorously emphasized in the ecumenical councils. The doctrine of the incarnation can be refuted with reference to the chronological succession of the process of
unification. Ibn Taymiyyah did not miss to ask the question: if the word was the creator and the created which unified with or dwelled in Mary and the created man was taken as barrier, was this alleged creating of this man before, after or during unification? It is entirely absurd to claim that this was before creation, as it is surely impossible to create after the unification. If it was during the unification, then it implies that they have never been together. Some Christians claim that God united with a lifeless body before the spirit was breathed into it, and this union continued after death until he rose up from the grave. Until the time of union, no miracle was performed by this body. However, they substantiate their claim of his divinity by the miracles. Moreover, the non-performance of miracles does not necessarily mean the negation of divinity or divine unification. It also implies that the performance of miracles is a proof of divinity, even if this appeared from a non-living thing. If this is true, then the worshippers of the calf are more excused than the Christians. If God united with the blood clot and the buried body, then it is also possible for him to unite with the calf and the idols.

3.15 Parallels in Muslim Theology

The Christians tried to support their allegations with finding parallels in the Muslim theology. They present these as pretexts for their doctrines. Ibn Taymiyyah therefore, shows the Christians the differences between them and the Muslims. In this regard, the Christians insinuate at the advocates of anthropomorphism. Subscribers to this doctrine liken Allah to His creation. They hold that the physical attributes of Allah mentioned in the Quran should be held in complete analogy with those of humans. They think that Allah for example has a hand like hands of His creation, a leg like the legs of His creation and the same is said about the remaining attributes but they do not believe that Allah is a body. Ibn Taymiyyah proves that these are in a better position than the Christians are. He discusses this and points out the differences and similarities. He stated:

- Despite the fact that both the anthropomorphist Muslims and the Christians share the fact that they interpret texts literally, none shares the Christians the belief in the Trinity and incarnation.
The Muslims took what is there in the scriptures literally, but the Christians followed what is not in the scriptures.

The Muslims associated the seemingly anthropomorphic verses with the verses that deny the likeness of Allah to any of His creatures, whereas the Christians did not associate the Trinity and the incarnation with what negates them.

The Muslims did not call His attributes with names that they invented and interpreted the prophets’ statements to mean them; but the Christians gave them names that the prophets never heard of.

The Muslims did not abandon the many clear and straightforward statements in favor of a few statements that might imply wrong doctrines. However, the Christians did.

The Muslims did not concoct codes that the prophets did not know of. But the Christians canonized creeds that were not brought by the prophets.

The Muslims did not believe in something absurd. Nevertheless, the Christians did.

The Muslims did not uphold self-contradictory notions, whereas the Christians believed that God was one but at the same time claimed that he is two natures (divine and human) and three (persons).

Ibn Taymiyyah concludes that on the bases of the above, the Christians have no right to claim that they are like the Muslims. Further, he affirms that the excessive Muslims who liken Allah to His creation and whom the Muslims consider as non-Muslims are better than the Christians in their theology. The former are less presumptuous in opposing both, religion and reason. If the devious Muslims are better than the Christians are, then it is far more so with reference to the righteous who uphold true doctrines. Ibn Taymiyyah strikes a balanced way between anthropomorphism where God is likened to His creation and the denial of attributes. Ibn Taymiyyah admits that the Quran and sunnah contain seemingly anthropomorphic texts but they do not contain anything of what the deniers of attributes claim. None of the books state that God is neither inside nor outside the world, neither immanent nor
transcendent, neither above the world nor is He pointed at, that nothing goes up to Him, nor comes down from Him, that nothing can approach him nor does He approach anything, to the rest of what the deniers of attributes believe. The books do not support anything of these false allegations but the there are many verses that contains what seems to indicate corporealism. However, to say that God embodied as the angels or the jinn is more credible that the incarnation upheld by the Christians. This is because it is conventional that the angels can take a human form but they did not become absolutely humans. If this is not feasible for the angels to unite with the humans, how is it possible in the case of the Lord of the World to unite with the humans? Moreover, it is also possible for the jinni to dwell in the human body and speak with his tongue. Nevertheless, they are two essences, two wills and two natures. The Christians claim that the lord of the world united with the human and then some of them claim that he has one nature (Monophysites, like Jacobites) and some claim that he has two natures and two essences (Chalcedonians).

3.16 Divinity of Christ

The assumed divine incarnation of the word of God, (the logos) led the Christians to claim that Christ was God. They tried to establish this doctrine through textual as well as rational evidences, thereby producing many Christologies: pneumatic, angelic, kenotic chalcedonian, monophysitic, monothelitistic, etc. They cannot break away from the ecumenical canons, which the bishops of the different patriarchates decided and devised in the fourth century. A thorough examination of some Christian writers in the early centuries is enough in reaching the conclusion that the Christ was not thought of as the immanent god who was coeternal, consubstantial and one with the Father in the literal sense.

The various apologies compiled by scholars such as Justin, Tertullian (around the years 169 and 220 AD), Tatian, Numenius, Ignatius and Astrides (first half of the second century AD), who lived in the early Christian centuries, proves that a great section of their writings depicts and demonstrates God as one. However, the views of some of them that affirm a trio of godhead were serious attempts at analogizing the Unitarian view inherited from the original Christianity and the Greek philosophy,
which introduces the *logos* as part of the heavenly power independent of God. The translation and dissemination of Christianity in the Hellenistic world was one of the main factors in the departure from pure monotheism to a triadic God.

When Christianity was languishing under persecution of the Greek polities that did not acknowledge Christianity as a true religion, the Christian missionaries tried to preach Christ through the philosophy the Greek recognized. The *logos* which is basically a Greek word was deeply rooted in Greek philosophy; and for the Christians to have the Greek recognition had to use the same terminology, claim Christianity to be the right philosophy which Greek philosophers sought to obtain and incrementally got their theology Hellenized. This syncretism led to having this dogma canonized in the fourth century, under the auspices of Constantine the emperor, who though convener did not recant his Hellenistic beliefs totally. Therefore even in early Christianity there was an obvious analogy between Christian theology and Greek mythology/philosophy, especially middle Platonism. According to middle Platonism, god formed a hierarchy of three principles, with the middle (Demiurge) playing intermediary role between the supreme, who has no immediate contact with the material world, and who is said to be not omnipotent, and the material world. Therefore, the material world is the creation of this intermediary agent.

This philosophy echoed in the post apostolic literature especially in the apologies addressed to Hellenistic elites. This triadic formula infected Christianity and culminated in the canonization of Trinitarian dogma after much rationalization and theorization. Moreover, the early church fathers in the first and second centuries such as Justine, Tatian and Irenaeus were not unanimous on the nature and relationship of the principles forming the heavenly power. However, none of them viewed them to constitute an eternal consubstantial unity or even tri-personal God. They viewed them to form a hierarchy of different layers and places. See *Proto-Trinity*, by Thomas Edmund Gaston.

The Muslims followed different approaches and made various judgments concerning these evidences. Some tried to judge them according to the biblical evidences without questioning the authenticity thereof. Yet, others disregarded the authority of their
book and although they did not believe in them as God’s word, they responded and refuted their allegations with references from their books. Others attempted to undermine the authenticity of their texts to disprove all claims based on these texts. Some others targeted these doctrines and found out their deficiencies through rational arguments. In this section, we shall see how Ibn Taymiyyah tried to refute the doctrine and whether he acknowledged any authority to their texts.

The divinity of Christ forms the backbone of Christology. It is a putatively accepted doctrine among most of the Christian denominations. As some of the Christian sects do not accept it, this opens up vistas for investigation. In fact, it is this supposed incarnation that postulated the divinity of the Christ, according to the Christian theology. In the previous section we discussed the incarnation of the word of God. In this section, the divinity of Christ is investigated and the evidences thereof are analysed.

3.16.1 Godhead vs. Messengership

According to the Christians, there is a triune God comprised of three persons, one of which is the Christ. He is considered as the second person in the Trinitarian unity. Considered as such, he is accorded the status of deity. Anyone not believing this belief is considered to be of the followers of the Antichrist who will come at the end of time. The Bible said:

“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”

In the following pages, we shall attempt to probe into the issue and evaluate the answers of Ibn Taymiyyah. Ibn Taymiyyah held the view that the ontological dualism of godhead and messengership postulates that the Christ can be either a messenger or god. As these are mutually exclusive, the Christ cannot be both. So, to claim that he is either nullifies the other. Now the Christians should admit that the Christ is simply a human being sent by the Creator of the world to put across His message, or they can claim that he was a god and here they cannot deny the multiplicity of gods.
Furthermore, mixing entails transformation. It is impossible to find two things retaining their individual qualities or properties while united. Change is ineluctable. Applying this example to the issue under discussion, God becomes the messenger and the messenger becomes God. If this conclusion is true, especially with reference to the example of fire and the rod of iron, in the discussion of the unity, then the sufferings on the stakes and outside them must have affected God too. If this is held by the Christians, their statement is more degrading for God than the statement of the Jews who claimed that God was poor and stingy and so on.

3.16.2 Biblical Evidences

In addition, the biblical quotations they cite in substantiation of their theology if authentic should be understood within the linguistic framework of Christ’s verbiage. The linguistic uses he followed entail a different interpretation. They quote this biblical verse, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” This statement, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, propounds that within the prophetic uses of the language it means that the Christ is God’s selected and beloved. The title was also applied to Israel or Jacob when God addressed him with, ‘Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: The title was also given to the Prophet David and the Christ himself said to the apostles that God was his and their father. Nowhere in the discourses of the prophets is it mentioned that the word of God is the son of God in the real sense of the word.

As the title applies to these creatures, it entails that the Christ is created like them. Thus, the title is given to the human Christ not the Christ as a deity ‘eternal born not created’. Ibn Taymiyyah also said that it is mentioned nowhere in the discourses of the prophets that Jesus was eternal and born not made. They did not designate the eternal as the son of God. Nor is it stated that God made anything eternal son for himself. He further did not dub any of His attributes His son.

In addition, the biblical quotation that Christ shall be god indicates that it does not mean real divinity. ‘Shall be called god’ is not a proper expression befitting God. The
other description that characterizes Christ is that he comes and dominates in real
dominion. This expression tells us, as Ibn Taymiyyah said that it does not refer to
Allah as He is the ever-possessor of the world. He is also characterized with the
epithet ‘the light of the day’. He is not made the light itself. These descriptions are
accorded to a human being. Had they been attributed to the lord of the world who
united with the human Jesus, those who quoted it would have clearly indicated. They
would not articulate such utterances, which are either clearly or apparently stating the
opposite, or are general and not relevant to the matter under discussion.

However, there are similar statements said by the Prophet Muhammad (peace and
blessings of Allah be upon him). Yet he never claimed the same allegations. The
Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is reported to have
said that he was written at the records of Allah as the seal of the prophets when Adam
was lying as mud. He further said, “I will tell you what I first was like. I am the
invocation of my father Ibrahim, the glad tiding of Jesus, the dream of my mother; she
saw when she was about to give birth to me that light emanated from her lighting the
palaces of Shām.”92 This is a clear statement that he was named the seal of the
prophets when Adam was only lying in his mud. The meaning of the statement of the
Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is that Allah
predestined that he be the seal of the prophets and be prominent through this
prophethood. The time of this prophecy is between the creation of Adam and the
blowing of life into him. Yet he never claimed eternality although he said, ‘before life
was.’ This very characterization shows that it is for one who cannot be god since it is
not proper to say that God was before life was. Habakkuk also is quoted to say that
Allah was seen on the earth and that Allah mixed with people.93 Ibn Taymiyyah says
that we have to make sure of the prophethood of these two, the authenticity of the
narration and the correctness of translation. After that, judgement can be made
according to the same criteria as any quotation. Moreover, in the hadith of the Prophet
Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) there are quotations that
suggest the pervasion of Allah in the world. Allah is reported by the Prophet
Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to have said that He refers to
Himself as being ill, thirsty, etc., since these exigencies befall man. This is
Chapter Three: Christ in the Writings of Ibn Taymiyyah

interpreted to mean that giving charity to the Muslim, helping him in any way is tantamount to helping Allah although He is in no need to anyone. The Christians talk to the images in their churches but say that the address is directed to the people representing theise images. This allegorical or figurative language should not be taken literally to indicate the divinity of anyone. These expressions should be understood to mean that the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) wanted to indicate the high status a Muslim assumes in the sight of Allah.

Ibn Taymiyyah picks up some of the biblical prophecies that the Christians believe to foretell the advent of Christ, and points out that they do not necessarily mean him since it is not stated clearly. Moreover, he proves that these prophecies apply more clearly to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) than to the Christ. Some of such prophecies are mentioned below.

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” 94

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” 95

“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever” 96

In response to these biblical quotations Ibn Taymiyyah argues that these are more applicable to Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) than the Christ for the following reasons:

- “The government shall be upon his shoulder” refers to the seal of prophethood on his shoulder, which is a sign that he is the true prophet. This feature is the exclusive possession of Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him): that he was sent with the sword which he wears on his shoulders. The phrase, ‘mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace,’ testifies to this.
Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was dominant over the followers of the other religions and he was the prince of peace.\textsuperscript{97}

- The phrase, ‘Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end,’ also is a proof that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was the Prophet who was prophesied as he is the last of the prophets and no Prophet was raised after him. Therefore, his law and authority being perfect, required no more laws to be revealed. As such, his law is eternal.

Another verse he quotes is this from Mathew: 13: 41: “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.” This verse, he asserts, does not refer to the Christ as God. He indicated that some of the Christian scholars said that this verse does not imply that Christ is the lord of lords, or that he is the creator of the angels. He said further that the lord of the angels assigned them to guard the Christ. This is testified by the statement of Luke when he said that God sent him an angel from Heaven to support him.\textsuperscript{98} If the Gospels testify that, the angels keep and guard Christ it means that the angels obey the Christ by Allah’s order and that they as well as Christ are in the service of God. He quotes some of the biblical verses that portray that the angels are merely servants of Allah help to support the messengers and prophets. He also cited the verses wherein Christ states that he is sent by Allah and the verse wherein he is sighted and heard to shout for Allah’s help such as when he was on the Cross.

The Christians take as plea for the divinity of Christ the verse wherein it is stated that man was created in the likeness of God. Ibn Taymiyyah refutes this by stating that this is not special to Christ. He is merely one of the creations said to be created in the likeness of God. The word of God is meant here and if this word means the divine attribute of knowledge, then it is not possible that one’s attribute can be like him. Apart from this is that the Christians believe that the Word of God is not created.\textsuperscript{99}

Moreover, he quotes the verse from Genesis 1: 26: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” Ibn Taymiyyah maintains that similitude of a thing to another does not entail that they are identical, which implies that they do not share states of possibility, prohibition and permissibility. Rather, there are two things:
Chapter Three: Christ in the Writings of Ibn Taymiyyah

- An Area of overlap, which they share. It is a collective concept that is particular to neither of them. Being as such, the similarities here do not breach the line of demarcation between the creator and the created.

- Those properties that are particular to one of similar things; for instance, the attributes of knowledge, life and power. Those particular to God are not available in the slave and vice versa. The defects that are peculiar to the slave should not be attributed to God. Likewise, the divine perfection, which is the exclusive right of God, must not be attributed to the slave. Furthermore, the phrase, ‘in our image, after our likeness’ does not involve the attributes like the speech, the life, and the other attributes that are subsistent in him (the created), because these are created, and then it does not include the divine which they claim to have been incarnate in the human. He also maintained that the human is like the other humans. Therefore, this similarity is not special of the Christ. The phrase, ‘who can be in His likeness if not His word and spirit?’ is baseless.

The statement, ‘For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,’ with the use of the plural does not indicate multiplicity of the speaker. If the human kings use the plural to refer to themselves individually, God has more right to do so. Moreover, the word which is inherent in something cannot speak. Thus, their claim that God addressed His attribute which they call the son or the spirit is a false claim.

One of the verses they quote to prove the divinity of Christ is “Then the LORD [sic] rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD [sic] out of heaven.” The Christians take this as plea since there are two lords mentioned. The claim, Ibn Taymiyyah said, can be refuted on the following grounds:

- The convention in the Torah is not to refer to any of God’s attributes as the son or the Father. Therefore, Moses did not say this statement.
If supposedly this was not the convention, then the one who sent rain is normally the one who has the rain. The attribute do not have anything nor does it do anything on its own right.

The repetition of the noun does not necessarily indicate multiplicity of persons. Rather, it may highlight the absoluteness of the person referred to.

The Christians also make use of this verse to substantiate the alleged divinity of Christ. The verse reads, “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Ibn Taymiyyah propounded that this (as is shown in the following) does not act as a proof for the allegation.

The word ‘my lord’ can never be used to refer His to attributes. If the Christ was any of His attributes, it is not right to say that the verse means him. If this is the case, then his human entity is far beyond being referred to as such. This being the case, it is now clear that neither the divine nor the human entities of the Christ are meant here.

In the first instance he said ‘the Lord’ whereas in the second instance he said ‘my lord’ attributing him to himself as his lord, who created him, while in the Christian theology they, despite their excessiveness, say that he is ‘true God from true God’. They make him creator.

Such being the case, the verse can be interpreted as to mean that the speaker, the Prophet David, out of humility spoke about the Christ as being his master because he thought him to be superior to him.

They also take this verse as a plea, “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” For Ibn Taymiyyah this nullifies the supposed pre-existence of Christ. He looked into the matter from the following perspectives:

He said there is no mention of the attributes of God as son, nor is there any mention of the Trinity. Therefore, it is not a proof in their favor.

This can be turned against them as God called David his son. This is a clear proof that the title is not an exclusive right of Jesus. Thus, the son as a title is not the attribute of God. Rather, it applies to anyone whom God has fostered of the slaves of His.
• The statement ‘this day have I begotten thee.’ Indicates a recent incidence; something that took place after being nonexistent. However, they believe that the emanation of the word from the Father is an eternal thing. In addition, only one of two conclusions can be arrived at: a) it means the day I begotten you. And here ‘begotten’ means ‘created’. B) It means selected, indicating that that day selected him according to the language of the Bible.

Then Ibn Taymiyyah makes a comparison between the Christians and the polytheists of Quraish. He said that the polytheists of Quraish set up gods and yet believe that they are created by God, not creators, whereas the Christians believe in Jesus to be a creator. They said that the one who spoke to Moses from the tree is one and the same as the one who spoke to His other slaves. There is a great difference between God and slaves. Furthermore, by comparison, Moses had greater miracles than Jesus did.

Then Ibn Taymiyyah looks at the issue from the Quranic perspective wherein he states that as the spirit from which Jesus was created was itself created, Jesus must be created.

Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyyah set four criteria for the establishment of the divinity of Christ. He deals with each one separately:

1. The prophecy that the archangel Gabriel brought from the heaven
2. The statement of John that is confirmed by the Christ, wherein he said that women never ever brought one like him as stated in Matthew: 11:11.
3. The voice heard from the heaven
4. The answer of Christ when John asked about whether he is the one to be awaited as in this verse, “When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?”

Ibn Taymiyyah inferred from the story that if Christ was God why did he need to be perfected through the Baptist and why was he unknown to John the Baptist? He inferred that the Baptist, the performer of baptism must be greater than the one baptized. Secondly, God could not be unclear to a man like John. Thirdly, the answer
Jesus gave was thus “Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.” Ibn Taymiyyah says that the answer he gave did not include any claim of divinity. He did not mention any attribute of God as being existent in him. The miracles he pointed out are evidences for prophethood most of which were performed by the prophets. John did not point to him as creator. Moreover, what he said about Christ might be out of courtesy not that he was inferior to Christ.

3.16.3 The Story of the Devil

Ibn Taymiyyah also cites the story of the Devil and his temptation of Christ. This he quotes in substantiation of the humanity of the Christ. The Devil according to the Christians restrained and tempted him in the mountain for forty days. The Devil moreover said to the Devil that if he was the son of God to order the rocks to become bread. The Christ told him that it is written that the life if man does not become bread. Whereupon he led him to Jerusalem and made him stand on the temple and told him that he was the son of God throw yourself …etc.

Ibn Taymiyyah wonders how the Christians know all about this and yet still believe in the divinity of Christ. Any sane man can easily come to the conclusion that this cannot take place between God and Satan. The Satan tempted the Christ and ordered him to do many bad things to the extent that he ordered him to prostrate before him. And only then the Christ got offended and rebuked him and God sent an angel to take him. This is the biblical wording:

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple. And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;
And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.\textsuperscript{106}

Ibn Taymiyyah points out many things in this story that refute the divinity of Christ. They are:

- It is impossible to for the Devil to be given the power to tempt God
- The inability of the Christ to defend himself and his need for the angel to rid him of the Devil
- The declaration of the Christ that he is ordered to prostrate before God\textsuperscript{107}

All these are clear indications of the humanity of the Christ. Rather, these put Christ in a humiliated position, a position that does not even befit a prophet. This great prophet of God is portrayed to be played with by the Satan, who is the utmost avowed enemy of God. How is it possible that a great prophet such as Jesus be subjected by the Devil?

3.16.4 Subordinationism

Among the most prominent early Christian theologians, Arius (c.250 – c.336) upheld that the son is subordinate to the Father. “In reaction, the church developed its doctrine of the Trinity, whereby the Son (and Holy Spirit), though distinct persons (hypostases), share with the Father, as his ontological equals, the one being or substance (\textit{ousia}) of God.”\textsuperscript{108} The Council of Nicaea condemned Arius and established the Trinitarian dogma in 325. This is a historical fact that Ibn Taymiyyah is well aware of.

Ibn Taymiyyah points out one of the main manifestations of the humanity of Christ. By bringing these issues into light, Ibn Taymiyyah demonstrates that the Bible indicated clearly that Christ was a helpless and subordinate human being. He quotes the following situations:

- His prayer to God such as when people used to come to him to pray for them in situations of distress or illnesses, when he shouted on the stakes, as in this
verse “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”  

His prayers for the Jews, and his prayer as in the following:

- “And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

- “He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.”

The Christ also declares that he cannot be like his God.

- He said, “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.”

Ibn Taymiyyah also quotes the Bible as stating that God cannot be seen and he who sees him shall die. Jesus has been with the people for thirty-three years and yet they did not die. He also quoted Psalms:8:5: For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Further, the biblical statement says that God said to Jesus that He (God) has begotten him. Being begotten means that he is not eternal and is therefore created. This emphasized through the adverbial ‘this day’ this specification has dispelled all doubts that he was not before that day. The offer after that to answer his prayers demonstrates that he is in need of God as he is helpless and unable. Other collaborative evidences are:

- “Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.”

- “We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.”

- “And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.”

- “And he said unto her, What [sic] wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.”
“And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”

Moreover, when Christ was asked about the hour he responded that he did not know it and said that his Father only knows it. At the same time, he said that the son does not know the hour. These two propositions lead to the conclusion that he was only human. If they claim that, only the human did not know we could say that none knew except the supreme God. It is stated in Matthew 24:36: “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”

Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyyah noted that if The Christians believe that Jesus is God because he is entitled in the Bible as lord, then all those who are called lords are similarly gods such as some of the kings and some of the prophets like Joseph as stated in the Torah. Ibn Taymiyyah mentions many examples of this type.

3.16.5 Prophecies about the Divinity of Christ

Ibn Taymiyyah again says that if the Christians say that the prophets foretold about the divinity of the Christ as in “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Immanuel according to Ibn Taymiyyah means ‘God with us’. Ibn Taymiyyah responds to this presupposition by saying that this is a title conferred on the nobles.

Overall, whatever is stated about the divinity of Christ can be proved for the other prophets, too. Whatever the Christians might say to support the claim, Ibn Taymiyyah finds out parallel proofs for the other prophets, thus negating all peculiarities allegedly dedicated to the Christ to portray him to be God.

Furthermore, he says the Christians cannot prove that Christ was God except through proving the authenticity of their books; they can prove the authenticity of their books only through proving the apostles infallible messengers of God, which in turn can be proven only through proving that Christ was God. This infinitely cycling argumentation makes their point impossible.
Ibn Taymiyyah quotes some of the *ahādīth* wherein the cardinal crime perpetrated by the Christians, are highlighted. Allah is reported by the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to have said, “The son of Adam has belied me while he has no right to do so, and abused me while he has no right to do so. He belied me when he said, ‘How can He revive me as He first created me,’ whereas creating something for the first time is not easier than reviving it. He belied me when he said that I have taken a son whereas I am the one needless who does not beget nor is begotten. I have no equal.”

Therefore, Muath bin Jabal said that the Christians profaned Allah in a way that no one ever did it. For prevention, the Islamic law prohibited all to talk about God in terms of the son or child, in order to block all ways leading to polytheism. It also prohibited bowing for anyone even if that is done as a greeting. In like manner, it prohibited offering prayers on the sunrise time and banned even little consumption of wine. Through these preventive measures, Islamic Sharia has preserved monotheism from all transgressions.

Ibn Taymiyyah wanted to pose a question for the Christians, a question that they are not able to answer: the divine character in Christ where is it taken from; in which scripture is it mentioned? Which Prophet has foretold his advent? Ibn Taymiyyah says that the only evidence they have in support of their claim is the verse in Mathew, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”.

An examination has been so far made into the claims brought forth by the Christians in justification and substantiation of the incarnation and Trinity, and how Ibn Taymiyyah refuted them. He very often takes evidences from their scriptures and interprets them according to his understanding of the basic teachings of God in the Quran and according to his understanding of philosophy and logic. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that he believed their scripture to be authentic and free from error. In the following chapters an investigation into the true position he stands in relation to the authenticity of their books will be attempted.
Chapter Three: Christ in the Writings of Ibn Taymiyyah

Notes and References


2 See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logos#Logos_in_Hellenistic_Judaism, accessed on 04/09/2015

3 As in Mathew: 7:24 and 7:26

4 As in 2Peter: 1: 19

5 The Acts of Apostles is replete with references to the word of God where revelation is meant.

6 As in Proverbs: 1:20-33; 8:1-9:6


8 Some traditional commentators such as Barclay have viewed the gospel of John as an attempt to reconcile Christianity to Greek thoughts.

9 Here Ibn Taymiyyah gives a rule: when we say that the attribute is not different from its subject, it means that they are not one and the same thing. Yet, he emphasizes that the name given to anything refers to both the attribute and the being it is dependent on. Therefore, he criticizes the philosophers who did not differentiate between the thing known, for example, and the knower. Moreover, they in their discussions about Allah, said He is the intellect, the person who has intellect and the thing that the intellect contains. Therefore, they do not differentiate between the known, the knower and the knowing mind. The philosophers consider these as having one existence. According to them, the lord of the world is merely knowledge. The peripatetic philosophers call the angels the intellects, but as the prophets never talked about the angels as the intellects, it is utterly not right to call them so. Ibn Taymiyyah further talks about Aristotle and his followers and says that they have no knowledge of the angels or the jinn. Al-Jawāb vol. 5, pp.25-26

10 This is again one of the influences of Greek philosophy. The logos is the creating word of God as it is God’s command. When the Christians took Jesus to be the logos or Word of God they considered him the creating word of God and therefore the creator of everything.

11 This has its precedents in plato’s thought. Justine in his First Apology said: “ And Plato, in like manner, used to say that Rhadamanthus and Minos would punish the wicked who came before them; and we say that the same thing will be done, but at the hand of Christ.” http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm retrieved on 24-2-2015

12 All these meanings are the meanings of the Greek ‘logos’.

13 The Catholic Encyclopaedia, The Dogma Of The Trinity


14 Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 11th edition, Edited by Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, Oxford University Press

15 This tells us very clearly that the term and naturally the meaning associated to it are a later creation or innovation.
Chapter Three: Christ in the Writings of Ibn Taymiyyah


19 *Al-Jawāb* vol. 3, p.200

20 Referred to in the Bible as ‘the angel of the lord’ who ‘appears’ to different people to convey divine messages.

21 *Al-Jawāb* 2/187

22 Even now, some Christians acknowledge this meaning such as Robert Schmid, who writes in his article entitled “The Triple Myth of The Trinity” that “many excellent papers and books have been written giving reasons why the Holy Spirit is not a person, but simply the power of God.”

23 I found it nowhere stated that the Holy Spirit is identified with God’s life of ability. Theophilus of Antioch believed it to be His wisdom. Holy Spirit has different meaning in different contexts. It signifies divine power, the soul in man, the giver of strength of faith, etc.


25 *Genesis*:1:26:

26 *Genesis*:3:22

27 *Genesis*:19:24

28 It should be noted that in the Bible (*Isiah* 40:18 ) God is mentioned to have no equal: “To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare with Him?”

29 Ibn Taymiyyah cross checked and concluded that the man meant here in Adam as is clear from this verse in *Genesis*:5:1: “This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him”

30 see *Al-Jawāb*, vol. 3, p.450

31 The Christians believe that the Father has no source whereas the Holy Spirit proceeds from Him and the Son is begotten by Him. Ibn Taymiyyah interprets this association as His attributes, based on the fact that some of the early Christians made a similar attempt regarding the Holy Spirit and the word.

32 *Exodus*:3:6

33 *John*:1:12

34 *Al-Jawāb* vol. 3, p.477

35 *Al-Jawāb*, Vol. 4, p.449

36 *Al-Jawāb*, Vol. 4 p.452

156
37 *Al-Jawāb*, vol. 4, p.464

38 The Nestorians did not believe her to be *theotokos* (birth giver of God) but named her *Christotokos* (birth giver of Christ). Nestorian Christology was condemned by the council of Ephesus in 431.

39 Those believing that they are of one will are called Monothelitists.

40 *Al-Jawāb*, vol. 4, pp. 466-7

41 The triune god comprised of three equal persons is not found in the pre-Nicene literature. Justin (around 100-165 AD) stated that God is unnamed because names serve to distinguish one thing from another in the realm of the multiple and diverse existence, but since God is one and unique, he cannot be named in any way.

42 *Psalms*: 89: 26-27


44 *Al-Jawāb*, vol. 3, pp. 227-8

45 John Hick for example in his *The Metaphor Of God Incarnate*: Christology In A Pluralistic Age. (Louise Ville: Westminster, 1994) p. 27 said that “divine incarnation… requires that an eternally pre-existent element of the godhead, God the Son, or the divine *logos*, became incarnate as a human being. But it is extremely unlikely that the historical Jesus thought of himself in any such a way. In deed he would probably have rejected the idea as blasphemous.” Furthermore, the contributors in *The Myth Of God Incarnate* mention that Jesus was a man approved by God and that the later Christian conception of him as God Incarnate the second person in the Trinity were a merely mythological or poetic way of expressing his significance for humanity. Moreover, the existence of the non-Trinitarian churches is a historical fact.

46 Mixing here stands for the ensuing ‘confusion’ of the two natures of Christ.

47 Al-Ḥasan Bin Al-Brāṭīq

48 *Al-Jawāb* vol. 4 pp.355-8

49 The Christians are not unanimous concerning the time the unification took place. Majority of them believe in his being eternal (i.e. he pre-existed his birth), just as the *logos* (God’s wisdom, speech) was with him from the beginning, as it is his attribute.

50 *Al-Qur’ān*: 20:14

51 This example is quoted from Justine who in turn quoted it from Philo who was middle Platonist Jew to demonstrate the relationship between God and the *logos*.

52 *Al-Jawāb*, vol. 4, p. 323-5

53 *Al-Jawāb* vol. 4, p.324

54 The soul-body relations equated with higher celestial relations is traceable in the metaphysics of Plato and the stoics. Plato believed that the world is created by the Craftsman who though not omnipotent creates the World Soul, which relates to the world in the same way the soul relates to the body. The stoics believed that God is the world soul who pervades the world.
This is similar to the platonic philosophy. “Plato explains that the world was created from chaotic matter by a god that he calls the Demiurge (literally ‘the Craftsman’). The Demiurge creates the World-Soul, which relates to the world in the same way that the human soul relates to the human body. Interestingly, the Demiurge is not omnipotent; he has to use the pre-existent chaotic matter to form the world and in this way Plato explains the imperfections in the world.” Thomas Edmund Gaston Proto-Trinity: The Development of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the First and Second Christian Centuries, University of Birmingham Research Archive, e-theses repository, 2007 (unpublished).

The Chalcedon Creed reads: Following the holy Fathers, we all with one voice confess our Lord Jesus Christ one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead, the same perfect in humanity, truly God and truly man, the same consisting of a reasonable soul and a body, of one substance with the Father as touching the Godhead, the same of one substance with us as touching humanity, like us in all things apart from sin; begotten of the Father before the ages as touching the Godhead, the same in the last days, for us and for our salvation, born from the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, as touching humanity, one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.(see Investigating Christian Theology : Clergy Development Church of The Nazarene, Kansas City USA . 2003, p. 34)

It is written in the Bible ( Deuteronomy: 12-15)that “then the lord spoke to you [Moses] from the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words but you saw no form…so watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the Day of the Lord.”

See (Job: 9:11, Mathew:6: 6, John: 1:18, Exodus: 33:20, etc.)

Authentic hadiths (although there is an opinion to the contrary) testify that on the night he (Muhammad) ascended to Heaven he did not see Allah.

Al-Jawāb vol. 4, p.315

Al-Jawāb vol. 4, p.377

Stipulating material intermediaries is deeply rooted in middle Platonism. However, they needed such intermediaries because they believed that God is transcendent and therefore to deal with the material world such intermediaries are required. Justine denounced this and said that it was impossible that God left the super celestial realm to make Himself visible in a little spot of earth, a statement flagrantly opposing the notions of incarnation and Trinity.


Al-Qurʾān :7 : 180

Al-Jawāb, vol. 5 pp. 54-55.

Deuteronomy: 33:2

In Deuteronomy: 4:12: God said to Moses “And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice.”

This is also a philosophical concept, related to the logos, clearly stated by Justine. He believes that the logos is issued from God, and held it to mean reason and wisdom.
John 1:3 “Through him [Jesus] all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” And more clearly this verse: “but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.” (Hebrews 1:2)

Al-Jawāb vol.4, p.315

Al-Qur‘ān:43: 84

Al-Jawāb’s translation entitled Answering Those Who Altered The Religion Of Christ, abridged by Ashshahhat Ahmad At-Tahan, rendered into English by Bayan Translation Services, p. 281

Ibid. p. 282

Many acknowledge that the Christians are made to believe in the doctrine of the Trinity by their religious leaders, Even that means that they have to disable their reasoning faculty. For example, Robert Schmid writes in his article entitled “The Triple Myth of The Trinity” that “the fact that no one understands what that means, does not bother most [Christians], after all, their leaders, ministers, theologians and tradition confirm that to be a biblical fact that is to be believed, not understood.”

There are many interpretations for the role of both Christ and the Satan in the crucifixion, and explanations for the intent and extent to which each was aware of the whole plan. However, the Bible contradicts what Ibn Taymiyyah said about the Christians in this regard. The Christians today as far as my knowledge goes do not believe that the Satan imprisoned the sinners in hell in the real sense of the word.

Al-Jawāb vol.2, p.208

Al-Qur‘ān:4 :157-8

Al-Qur‘ān:5: 117

Al-Qur‘ān :5: 110

see also al-Jawāb, vol. 4, p.439

Al-Jawāb, vol. 4, pp. 361-341

In The Preaching of Peter he said: “… we and the good Greeks worship the same God, though not according to perfect knowledge for they had not learned the tradition of the Son.

Middle Platonism is the period of Platonism between Antiochus of Ascalon (c.130–68 B.C.) and Plotinus (A.D. 204–70). Cambridge dictionary of philosophy, second edition, Robert Audi Cambridge University Press


1 John:4:2-3

Matthew:28:19:

Prophets in the Bible were called gods, as in John 10:34-36: “Jesus answered them, is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the
scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?"

89*Exodus*:4:22


91 *Al-Jawāb* vol.3, pp.133-4

92 Ahmad Bin Ḥanbal: *Al-Musnad, ḥadīth* no. 17163

93 Probably he means this verse in Habakkuk (3:3): God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.”

94 *Isaiah*:7:14

95 *Isaiah*:9:6

96 *Isaiah*:9:7

97 *Al-Jawāb* vol.3, pp.406-7


99 *Al-Jawāb* vol.3, p. 442

100 *Genesis*:19:24

101 *Psalms*:110:1

102 *Psalms*: 2:7

103 *Al-Jawāb* vol.3, p.454

104 *Luke*:7:20:


107 *Al-Jawāb*, vol. 4, pp.108-9

108 Cambridge dictionary of philosophy p. 44

109 *Mathew*:27:46

110 *Mathew*:26:39

111 *Mathew*:26:42

112*Mathew*:10:24
Chapter Three: Christ in the Writings of Ibn Taymiyyah

113 Al-Jawāb 4/135

114 John:11:41

115 Acts:24:3:

116 Mathew:20:23:

117 Mathew:20:21:

118 Luke:24:49:

119 He may be referring to this verse in Genesis: 45:9: “Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not.”

120 Isaiah: 7:14:

121 This is also confirmed by English dictionaries.

122 Al-Jawāb vol. 2, p.398

123 Sahīh Al-Bukhārī hadīth no. 4482

124 Mathew:28:19
CHAPTER FOUR

Alteration

In

The Divine Message
4 ALTERATION IN THE DIVINE MESSAGE

The alteration in Christianity has been a common thesis discussed by many scholars who could observe the wide gulf separating the true divine teachings that are traditionally acknowledgeable and rationally reasonable, from the current enigmatic tenets of belief in Christianity. Minds (even from the Christian circles) that are not marred by preconceived notions and Trinitarian propensities have opposed Christian doctrines that have been incrementally augmenting over time. The subsequent additions and deletions that both the scripture and the religion suffered made this gap become larger. Therefore, alteration, as proved by Ibn Taymiyyah, has two aspects: the alteration through inventing new doctrines like the Trinity, incarnation, divinity of Christ, etc., and the alteration of the meaning of scriptural texts through translation and interpretation, which collaboratively influenced the Christian theology. Both these aspects that brought about changes in Christianity are probed into in this chapter.

Moreover, as the transmission of the Bible is another issue that sheds light on the authenticity and therefore authority of the Bible, Ibn Taymiyyah discusses it extensively, although it is apparently viewed secondary to the discussion of the interpretation and translation. The Christian Bible consists of the Old Testament and New Testament. Although the Jews believe only in the so called Old Testament, they do not follow the versions followed by the Christians. Furthermore, given the plurality of Jewish sects, there are a number of versions accepted within the Jewish communities. Moreover, the Christian translation and interpretation of the Old Testament as part of their own scripture, has been adjusted within the Trinitarian paradigm and therefore they assigned to it meanings the Jews do not acknowledge.

4.1 Innovation in religion

Throughout this voluminous work, (al-Jawab), Ibn Taymiyyah tries to prove the new additions the Christians have presumptuously introduced into the religion of Christ. The Christians on the other hand try to prove their stance through quoting the Quran,
as supporting their creeds and confirming the authenticity of their books. In response to this, Ibn Taymiyyah explores the Muslim exegetic literature to disprove this fallacy. In so doing, he proves that the Christians have severed all ties with Christ’s message by inventing a totally new religion of their own making and therefore he considers them to be totally far from truth and as having committed the greatest form of disbelief. The Quran recurrently and discursively asserts their disbelief on the bases of their innovation and twisting the meaning of the texts to support their false allegations.

Ibn Taymiyyah identifies three reasons for the deviation of the Christians:

1. They abandoned the texts that are clear and categorical in favour of those which are ambiguous or allegorical.

2. They do not have a sound criterion to distinguish between the divine from the devilish miracles.

3. They reposed implacable trust in concocted narrations, as they possess no systematic technique of scrutinising these narrations. These are taken for granted and never subjected to authentication.

Apart from that, the Christians have no scriptural foundations for their dogmas. Their scriptural evidences are either not authentic or irrelevant to the topic of discussion. The whole Christian theological edifice is structured on untenable arguments.

In this chapter the Christians’ allegations regarding the authenticity of their scripture and the validity of their doctrines and whether these are supported by the Quran are presented along with the responses of Ibn Taymiyyah.

4.1.1 Changing the Monotheism

Jesus was one of the mightiest messengers and faithful prophets, who made the propagation of monotheism (tawḥīd) their major aim and devoted their whole lives to serving this purpose. The Quran expresses very plainly how Jesus was created with the word of Allah \(^2\) and therefore he is called the word of Allah (being created purely by the word of Allah without any human/sexual intervention). However, after his
Chapter Four: Alteration in the Divine Message

ascension, people deified him and even went as far as to make this one of the pillars of faith, without which faith is null and void. Even at this stage, the Quran communicates a dialogue in heaven between Allah and His messenger Jesus, wherein Allah questioned him if he ordered people to take him as god, which he denied outright. Although Islam makes it obligatory and as a pillar of Islam to believe in Jesus and all the prophets, it states that divinity is the exclusive right of Allah. The concept of monotheism has a rigorous and strict meaning in Islam, allowing only a binary taxonomical classification of beings into godhead and creations, where the first position is occupied exclusively by Allah. It means that worship is the exclusive right of the Almighty. Worship again has a more inclusive meaning in Islam. All words and deeds and even thoughts that please Allah are types of worship that should be devoted exclusively to Allah. Thus, invocations and prayers, vows, seeking help or protection that Allah alone is able to afford, fear, hope, etc. are all types of worship that should be offered to Allah alone. This puts Islam (as prescribed to all the prophets in its pristine form) as the only religion loyal to this ideal. Judaism and Christianity are said to be monotheistic religions whereas they (as represented by the followers) have demolished the very bases of monotheism as they assign divine qualities to people. The Christians set up Jesus as God and son of God and the Jews believe Ezra son of God as reported in the Quran.

Ibn Taymiyyah made it his focal point to prove the wide difference between monotheism and the practices and doctrines the Christians brought in. What made this task easy is the Christian’s vulnerable stance in this regard. The divinity and sonship of Christ are in patent contradiction to the purpose for which humanity in general was created, which is the pure worship to Allah; and the incarnation and Trinity oppose the oneness and transcendental nature of Allah. Ibn Taymiyyah departed from the following propositions:

- The Quran stated plainly and condemned such practices as profaning Allah and setting up deities with him.
- The Bible proclaims the humanity, servitude, subservience and helplessness of Christ, and warns against those who innovate in religion.
- The whole textual packages the Christians depend on in this respect are either a human creation or misinterpretation.
Chapter Four: Alteration in the Divine Message

- Their doctrines are not consistent with reason, and crush the very bases of monotheism.
- It is historical fact that it was too late that their current doctrines were canonised.

The bishops and archbishops of the various patriarchates assumed the rank of Allah and obtained for themselves the right to canonize any set of beliefs and doctrines in their ecumenical counsels. Such doctrines became instantly in force, and anyone who opposed them was excommunicated and cursed as a heretic.

Ibn Taymiyyah rallies many textual evidences available in the Quran and Bible, and supports that with historical facts and reason. As regards monotheism, Ibn Taymiyyah says:

For tawḥīd, the Jews likened the Creator to His creation and blemished the Lord with qualities that befit the created. They said that Allah is poor, miser, and that He is susceptible to fatigue, etc. The Christians described the created with qualities of perfection that are special for the creator. They said that Christ created the heavens and the earth, and that he is eternal, omniscient, omnipotent... However, the Muslims were guided to truth by Allah in matters they differed. Therefore, they did not liken the creator to the created nor the created to the creator. Rather, they affirmed for Allah what He deserves of the qualities of perfection and glorified him high above all imperfections and affirmed that He is one having no similar or equal …. Thus they, unlike the Jews, glorified him high above defects and above similitude to creation unlike the Christians.5

Therefore, the Christians’ error, as Ibn Taymiyyah has put it, emanated from their extremist reverence for persons. They initially erected Jesus as son of Allah through misinterpretation, although ordinary pious people are referred to as sons of God in the Bible, but not deified. The sonship of Christ, the union with the Father, the indwelling and the divinity of Christ were all introduced into Christianity formally in the time of Constantine6, the king of the Roman Empire in the fourth century after the demise of Christ. At that time the bishops were convened by the king to standardize doctrines to unite the Christians folks, under the Roman Empire. This council came in response to the pathetic disparity among the Christians.

Ibn Taymiyyah quoted the hadīth of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when he said the Christians took their religious leaders as gods, since they legalized the illegal and prohibited the lawful. The institution and canonization of
certain articles in the Christian faith made their (canonical creeds’) authority as divine, meaningless, for they are man-made. So, the deification of Christ was clearly intended by the Christians but they never felt that they deified the fathers of the church as well. Ibn Taymiyyah does not stop here. He elaborated on the issue and propounded that some factions deified Mary, the mother of Christ. Moreover, they made as gods the three persons of the Trinity. He said:

They associated with Allah the prophets and others below them. Therefore, they worshipped the Christ. Further, they took their priests and monks as gods apart from Allah. In addition, they made the disciples of Jesus messengers of God, and claimed that man is elevated to the status of the prophets by virtue of his good deeds; and as a result, they prayed to them and sought their intercession after their death. If a pious man among them dies, they build a temple on his grave, and draw images therein.7

As for the title ‘God’, Ibn Taymiyyah proved that the Bible made it the title of Moses and others too. Therefore, he concludes that the Christians did not understand the language of the Bible and took it literally. Their preconceptions blurred their vision to see that these terms are used figuratively. They quote the verses that state that Christ is God, lord and son to prove their points but at the same time they fail to see the same applied to other people too.

The enormity of the mistake in monotheism made Ibn Taymiyyah dwell the longest on this theme, and arrive at the conclusion that they worship many gods and therefore they are miserably different in understanding the very basics of their religion, and therefore deeply immersed in disbelief.

4.1.2 Disgracing the Prophets

The position of the prophets is another issue that needs to be highlighted here. The Jews humiliated the prophets and messengers of Allah. They calumniated them and ascribed to them even immorality and painted for them pornographic images in their Scripture. Further, they subjected some of them to abject and miserable torture and they put some others to death.8 On the contrary, the Christians hyperbolically revered some of them and went to extremes in that.9 They even considered the apostles of Christ as infallible messengers of Allah. Moreover, they erected many of saints as gods through seeking their succour in dire circumstances. Islam, however, as it always
does, strikes a middle way in this respect between deification and humiliation. In Islam the prophets of Allah are venerated but not deified. Ibn Taymiyyah said:

For the Muslims, they were guided by His [Allah’s] leave to truth in matters wherein they differed. They believed in all the prophets and did not discriminate between them. They did not go to extremes regarding them as the Christians did, nor fell too short of paying them the homage due to them, as did the Jews.  

The Muslims revere the Christ more than the Christians, as they believe in all that he said and do not alter his words or intent. Through wrong interpretation, the Christians introduced illogical and absurd themes into religion and when questioned about the logicality thereof they would say that they are beyond reason or are unintelligible to human mind. The best and the seal of the prophets, Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), assumed the status of the messenger-slave, and it was the highest peak a prophet may reach. In contexts of praise in the Quran he was described as such. He and Noah, Ibrahim, Moses and Jesus were called the mightiest of the messengers of Allah as the Quran puts it. But none of these was ever called god, nor son, nor lord, for the biblical usage of the terms ‘god’, ‘father’, ‘son’ ‘lord’ and the like created problems for humanity. Ibn Taymiyyah invited the Christians to read the Bible in the correct context and perspective. Many scholars of the Bible acknowledge that the Bible propounded that the context of the writers rather than the actual contexts overcame its presentation. It is mainly because of misreading, misconceptionalization and adamant insistence on trinitarianism that the Christians ended up with many gods in a supposedly monotheistic religion.

In addition, in Islam it is a precondition of counting any as a Muslim that he or she should believe in all the prophets indiscriminately. Moreover, part of this belief is to believe in their being infallible, which makes their actions and sayings absolutely true and exemplary for their respective peoples. Having this status they should be obeyed. This necessarily implies that their ordinances are not contradictory. On the basis of this logic their message is the same. All of them urged their respective peoples to worship none save Allah. Anyone denying or speaking badly about any of the prophets is immediately judged as a disbeliever. The followers of other faiths after the coming of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) are bound by this rule. They are all unsalvageable from the torments of the hellfire, in which they would
dwell permanently, if they do not follow Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). This is because disbelieving in one of the prophets is tantamount to disbelieving in all, given the unity of their message. Therefore, the Quran contains many texts affirming the disbelief of the People of the Book (the Jews and the Christians), since they denied some of the prophets of Allah.\textsuperscript{14}

4.1.3 Playing with the Divine Ordinances

Christ is quoted even in the Bible as to say to his people that he did not come to change the law.\textsuperscript{15} The law here refers to the legal system in the Torah, which was given to Moses. In the Quran, it is stated several times that Christ came to confirm, not to change the Torah.\textsuperscript{16} However, he is also quoted to have said that he came to make lawful some unlawful items previously prohibited in the Torah. In other words, he came to slightly modify the legal injunctions of the Torah. The Quran reports the Christ as saying: “And I have come confirming that which was before me of the Torah, and to make lawful to you part of what was forbidden to you, and I have brought to you a proof from your lord, so fear Allah and obey me.”\textsuperscript{17}

The response of the population that Jesus addressed was diverse: the followers of Christ accepted the institution and later went even further in error and aberration when they believed that their fathers have the right to abrogate even what Christ brought. But the Jews rejected it all, for they denied abrogation. They thought that the modification vitiates the authority of the commandments in the Torah. Thus biblical as well as Quranic references testify to the fact that Christ did not bring a totally new law but adopted the law brought by Moses. Therefore, there are slight changes in legislation between the books revealed to Moses and Christ. The Muslims were balanced in this regard and believed that Allah has the exclusive right to modify his law through the prophets whenever He wishes. Therefore, we should believe in what Allah revealed to Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), even when the successor prophet changes items in the law of his predecessors. Since all come from Allah, we should accept them indiscriminately, as this is part of their message. Otherwise, man has no right to abrogate any of the creator’s law brought by the prophets.
Chapter Four: Alteration in the Divine Message

As regards legislation, the Jews were extremists. They prohibited the good things and went to extremes regarding impurities to the extent that they prohibited eating with the woman who is in her menstrual cycle or even staying with her in the same house. Moreover, certain fats as well as certain animals with cleft hooves are prohibited and many other things. With these constraints on diet made obligatory upon the Jew, Christ made lawful for them some of what has been prohibited for them, as a sign of mercy from Allah. However, they believed that Allah does not abrogate anything after endorsing it. Right to the other sharp extreme, the Christians took everything as lawful including wine, pork, and all animals. They also considered everything as pure including urine, and the like, and repealed circumcision. They, unlike the Jews, as regards abrogation, believed it to be the prerogative of their bishops to abrogate even divine commandments, as they did many times in all their ecumenical councils (the first one being that of Nicaea in 325 CE), wherein they totally changed their religion and associated others with Allah in His lordship and godhead. Moreover, they also adulated the Cross, on which Christ was believed to have been crucified.

The Muslims, however, were guided in the matters wherein they differed, and Allah made lawful for them all good things and prohibited all obnoxious and abominable things and removed the restrictions and constraints that yoked the children of Israel, (unlike the case of the Jews) and commanded them to be pure and clean from all kinds of impurities, unlike the Christians. Generally speaking, Ibn Taymiyyah notes, Christendom are inclined towards accepting falsehood, such as the Trinity, the union and the indwelling; and the Jewry are characterized by rejecting the truth and maligning the prophets.

In addition, in their commitment to falsehood and being so deeply immersed in error and bigotry, they condemn and curse anyone asking them for fair judgment regarding things they innovated in religion. It is always the way of the biased individuals of all social strata and scholars of various ideologies. The Christians’ extremist stance on the person of Christ is motivated with the same things that motivate some Muslims sects which highly and unduly glorified their saints and leaders, such as Ali bin Abi Tālib, who is deified by some of the Ismailis. They face the incessant demand for evidences that prove their opinions with supposing that these issues are
Chapter Four: Alteration in the Divine Message

incomprehensible. Ibn Taymiyyah recurrently differentiates between bringing something incomprehensible and bringing something known to all to be impossible. In other words, there is a big difference between what is unreasonable and what is impossible to fully comprehend. What the Christians innovated falls into the first category.

During the time of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), the Torah according to Ibn Taymiyyah had enough guidance to lead the Jews, since the Quran tells Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) about this fact. Allah says, “How come they unto thee for judgement when they have the Torah, wherein Allah hath delivered judgement (for them)? Yet even after that they turn away. Such (folk) are not believers.”21 The same thing is said about the Gospel which the Quran tells their followers to make their judgements according to them. Allah says in the Quran, “and let the people of the gospel judge on the bases of what Allah has revealed in it.”22

Ibn Taymiyyah is of the view that this reference is valid in matters where the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) have the same judgements. The Christians were bound by the Law of Moses unless such rules were abrogated by the Christ. Likewise the matters that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) abrogated, should not be followed, even though they may be there in the pre-abrogation revealed book. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that what remains in the Gospels today contains enough light to lead its followers to the truth that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was the last messenger of Allah and therefore they have to follow him, although he admits that what remains today in the Bible as regards the law is mostly the Christians’ invention. Allah says in the Quran in describing some sections of the People of the Book, (particularly the followers of Moses) thus: “those who follow the unlettered Prophet whom they find written in the Torah and the Gospel…”23 this unlettered prophet is Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It is also clearly stated that the Quran is the book dominating all other scriptures. The Quran says, “And we have sent down to you [Prophet Muhammad] the book in truth confirming the books before it and dominant over them. So judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their desires, diverging away from the truth that has come to you…”24
Another aspect that the Christians introduced, as Ibn Taymiyyah puts forward, is monasticism. Ibn Taymiyyah says it is a sheer innovation. It has no place in the teachings of Christ. The Christians take a Quranic verse as a plea for the lawfulness of their monasticism. The verse is “…and we ja’alnā (made, placed), in the hearts of those who followed him, compassion and mercy. But the monasticism which they invented for themselves, we did not prescribe for them, but they sought only to please Allah therewith, but they did not observe it with the right observance. So we gave those who believed their due reward, but many of them are rebellious.” 25

Ibn Taymiyyah propounds that Allah in this verse praises those who followed Christ and whom Allah has bestowed with mercy and compassion. Monasticism is stated to be invented by the Christians. Then those who followed the prophets and did not change their religion are praised in the verse unlike the rebellious innovators. Thus, the verse does not praise the Christians for monasticism, according to Ibn Taymiyyah.

Some interpret the verse to mean that Allah made in their hearts mercy, compassion and monasticism, and this is supported by face-value reading. However, Ibn Taymiyyah rejects this interpretation on the following grounds:

- Monasticism was not practiced by the early Christians; the disciples did not practise it. It was invented later unlike the mercy and compassion, which were in the hearts of all those who followed Christ.
- Allah has said that they invented monasticism unlike the mercy and compassion, which are ‘made’ in their hearts.
- Mercy and compassion are things related exclusively to hearts, whereas monasticism is not related to hearts. Therefore, it cannot be subsumed under the verb ‘made’.

Again some interpret it to mean that Allah did not prescribe it for them except for the pleasure of Allah. Others take it to mean that they did not do it except for the pleasure of Allah. Ibn Taymiyyah rejects this interpretation on the following grounds:

- The monasticism was not prescribed at all as the verse plainly states that it was invented.
• When Allah ordains anything, He does not do that in order to seek His own pleasure. It is people who do whatever they do for this purpose.

• Why monasticism in particular is referred to as something that is ordained for the pleasure of Allah? The verse does not mention things initially ordained, what to speak of monasticism?

• To say that they did not do it except to seek the pleasure of Allah does not necessarily entail any praise for them, for nothing can avail Allah’s pleasure unless it is ordained by him.

4.1.5 The Crucifixion

The crucifixion is another issue Ibn Taymiyyah touches while exploring the Christians’ doctrines. He follows the Quran in this regard and propounds that the Christ was not crucified but a substitute was. The Quran states that: “… they did not kill nor crucify him; but another was made to resemble him (and they killed that man not Christ). And in the succeeding verse Allah tells that He raised Jesus to Himself.”

The Christians, instead of condemning this inhumane attempt to kill the innocent prophet of Allah, venerated the Cross and made it their motto which they believe to be part of their identity. They hang it in their necks and attribute to it much good. In the time of the Roman emperor Constantine, this Cross was allegedly discovered by Helen, the mother of Constantine. She travelled to Jerusalem and reached the place where the Cross was buried and made excavations and discovered a number of crosses. A test was conducted to identify the Cross, on which Christ was crucified. The healing of a sick person was the test applied. They brought an ill person and put the crosses individually on him. Only one of them could heal the illness. That was therefore identified as the Cross they were searching for.

Long before that, her son, the emperor, saw in His dream, while the war between him and his rivals was ablaze, that he would be granted victory over his enemies through the cross which he saw in the sky. That allegedly was his own claim which induced him into formalising Christianity in his kingdom, and entitled him later to play a vital role in the forming of their religion. Ibn Taymiyyah more emphatically attributes much of the alteration of the Christian religion to this emperor. He, with his pagan
background entered into the fold of Christianity but without recanting his previous beliefs. This, along with the long contact of Christianity with the Helens caused many Roman doctrines to be fossilised in Christianity. That is why Ibn Taymiyyah says that the heresies the Christians are upholding now originated from paganism. He says that their religion is a mixture of Roman beliefs and prophetic guidance.

4.2  Alterations in the Scripture

In the previous sections, alterations in religion have been discussed. The second aspect of alteration is the scripture. Here, an attempt is made to deal with the ways the Christian scripture was transmitted and how well they match the standards of authenticity.

4.2.1  Transmission of the Bible

Ibn Taymiyyah held that the Torah was originally handed down from Allah to the Prophet Moses all at once. However, it was lost by the passage of time. The lands of the Jews underwent apocalyptic attacks from different kings who meant to destroy the lands of the Jews and ransack them. The transmission of the Torah, he asserts, was interrupted when Jerusalem was destroyed. It is said later that this transmission of the Torah was resumed when a man called Ezra re-dictated it. People differed who this man could be. Some are of the opinion that he was a prophet; others believed he was not a prophet. His copy is said to have been compared with an antique copy and found identical.

This, Ibn Taymiyyah negates, cannot safeguard against error, especially when we know that it was not memorized like the Quran by almost all followers. The transmission of one, two or three is not enough to consider what they transmitted authentic. Thus, Ibn Taymiyyah refutes the authenticity claim through this historical examination, which historians acknowledge. The assaults of the Babylonian, the Persian and the Roman kings played a great role in sacking cities wherein the followers of Moses and Jesus lived, practiced their religions and kept their religious books. As these kings were averse to the religion per se, they would leave no stone unturned to destroy everything pertaining to religion. Therefore, temples were destroyed at times, the holy books were burned and religious people were killed.
Therefore, their knowledge, preservation and practice of their religions must have suffered as a result. Moreover, the Christian historians acknowledge that apart from the fact that the Torah was collected in written form long after the demise of Moses, (although it is believed by some to have written some portions of the Exodus and some laws for the community) it took roughly half a century to be completed. Dennis Bratcher in his book entitled *The Development of the Bible* (page one) writes:

> However, it is likely that the Bible actually began to take shape as Scripture later as the earliest written traditions began to be collected into books about the time of Solomon, around 1000 BC. The Old Testament in roughly the form that we know it did not emerge until after the return from Babylonian exile around 500-450 BC.

The Christian scholars admit that the Bible as is seen in the present form developed over two thousand years. This is not as regards writing it in books only but revelation is given more protracted period outliving the prophets themselves.27 Some of the books at times were considered as part of the scripture then discoveries of older manuscripts led to either modification or exclusion of the previous books. One such book is the Preaching of Peter, and the Apocrypha. This is also true with respect to the different versions of the Bible. The grave defects in the King James version of the Bible, for example, called for its revision.

Ibn Taymiyyah seems indifferent regarding the time when the Torah was written. What concerns him is the interrupted transmission whether oral or written. He considers it sufficiently authentic if concomitantly transmitted28 either orally or in a written form. This is actually the standard set in Islamic scholarship in the scrutiny of hadīth. A hadīth thus transmitted is considered authentic. It should also be noted that he equates the Gospels with the hadīth of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in that they both are merely reports of the prophets’ words and deeds.

The status of the Gospels, in his view, is even weaker for it was not written down nor dictated by Jesus; it was only after the ascension of Christ that the apostles who accompanied Jesus, namely, John and Mathew wrote their accounts of Jesus, which they admit are not exhaustive of his words and deeds (see John:21:25). Moreover, they did not claim that Christ conveyed them as God’s word. They admit them as their
personal accounts of the life of Christ—what he said and did. Therefore, they are very much like writing the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). They are mere accounts made by people subject to scrutiny. Not many people memorized or recorded them. What is worse, Mark and Luke did not see the Christ. After all, the narration of two or three is liable to error, especially when we consider their confusion in the man crucified; was he the Christ or not, and whether he was God or not, although Christ is the focal point of the entire Christendom.

Ibn Taymiyyah makes a comparison between the way the Quran was transmitted and the way their books were transmitted. He highlights a very crucial difference. That is of the isnād (the study of the continuity of the line of narrators). This is a science in Islamic scholarship wherewith the authenticity of the hadīth narration is scrutinized. The Muslims have developed this meticulous technique on the bases of which they judge the authenticity or otherwise of any narration. This involves the study of the men who transmitted the hadīth: whether they are trustworthy or not, whether they perfectly preserved the hadīth they narrated, in memory or records, whether the chain of the narrators is broken or not, the phraseology involved to signify the way the hadīth was received, etc. All these guard against fabrication and forgery. However, the Christians do not possess such investigative techniques. Moreover, the Prophet has testified that his ummah will not agree on error, a testimony the Christians did not obtain for themselves. Rather, they agreed in error when they belied the Christ and Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon both of them). Further, thousands of people transmitted the Quran whereas a relatively small number of people transmitted the Bible (in translation).

In addition, Ibn Taymiyyah highlights another criterion for the authenticity of narration. That is, whether it was concomitantly transmitted. This, he mentions to prove the authenticity of the Quran and show the superiority of it over the rest of the so-called divine books. The Christians boast, as Ibn Taymiyyah puts it, that their scripture is written in seventy-two tongues; therefore, change is not feasible with this great number. Ibn Taymiyyah rightly refutes this by referring to the language the Christ spoke. He says that the language Christ spoke was Hebrew. It was later that it was translated in other tongues. Furthermore, he says it is common knowledge that
the copies available in the hands of the Jews, Christians, and Samaritans are obviously different.\(^{32}\) They are not identical copies. This testifies to the fact that change is necessarily there in their respective scriptures. More, it is impossible to find anyone who claims to have mastered seventy-two languages, checked the copies in the world, and concluded that they are identical. On the contrary, it is enough to find some of the copies different to judge the change, which actually what people came to observe. The copies of the Psalm are even worse in this regard as the change there is more prevalent. He says that he himself saw some of the copies of the Psalms in which Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was mentioned by name as a prophet, whereas in the other copies there is no mention of him. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah reaches the conclusion that changes in their scripture can easily be proven through observation and comparison. The laxity and leniency in taking matters of religion made their standards of scrutinizing authenticity and validity incredibly low.

Ibn Taymiyyah uses the correct yardstick to ascertain the alteration in the text. With the difference in the texts available with the different Christian sects and those with the Jews and the Samaritans, no claim of originality remains valid. Moreover, if the change is only in the words, given the different translations then it would not create such confusion, but the difference is actually in the meaning, too. Even contemporarily, whole verses are being expunged from time to time,\(^{33}\) and some of them are reinstated after being obliterated. Other verses are modified; hence, the multiplicity of the versions of the Bible.

The Christians, as Ibn Taymiyyah tells us, hold that the people received the scripture from the apostles, (who were, according to them, messengers of God) each in his respective tongue. Ibn Taymiyyah gives the following arguments to refute this claim:

- If these narrations/copies are not concomitantly transmitted, they become an invalid source of knowledge.
- This is a big lie. Many nations did not receive any gospel in their language such as the Arabs. The Arabic versions were translated from Hebrew, Roman and Syriac. The first translation of the Torah into Arabic was in the tenth century.
Chapter Four: Alteration in the Divine Message

- The Christian gospels are only four, written by four people, two of whom saw Christ whereas two did not see him. This is not concomitance in narration that guards against forgery. The tongues in which the gospels were narrated came after these four apostles. The apostles did not speak seventy tongues. Moreover, the apostles were not infallible. The Christians do not claim that they are prophets. Therefore, they are prone to mistake.

- In the content of these books are clear proofs in stark opposition to the wrong allegations they made, such as the Trinity, incarnation, divinity of Christ, etc. One should not abandon clear proofs in favor of ambiguous statements.

- Supposing it is true that the Bible is available in seventy-two languages, each language would have many copies, making it difficult to say that all copies are identical and are still in the form they received them from the apostles.

After this, Ibn Taymiyyah holds a comparison between the Quran and the Bible in terms of their transmission. In the transmission of the Quran people did not depend on the copies they had. They depended mostly on their memorization, something individuals in the Christian faith hardly ventured to do, not to speak of big numbers of people. Therefore, Muslims were able to correct any mistake in any of the copies of the people, unlike the Christians. Further, they did not preserve the words verbatim only, they also preserved the script (the orthographic system); that is, how single words should be written. This manifests the superiority of the Quran in its authenticity over any other book. Therefore, if this is true in the case of the Torah, which is the most authentic part of the Bible, what to say about the gospels! Ibn Taymiyyah builds on this conclusion that if the books with the Jews and Samaritans are different from those with the Christians, this means the Christians did not take from the same source, and thereby authenticity is affected.

4.2.2 Interpretation of the Bible

Apart from the mistakes in narration, the Christians mistook also in interpreting their books. Ibn Taymiyyah highlights their difference in the meaning they ascribe to the specific texts. Difference in interpretation led naturally to difference in theology. When they mistook in interpreting the meanings of terms such as the Word Of God,
the Son of God, the personification of some abstract things, the use of allegorical expressions (like baptismal formula) and the like, they were led astray in many cardinal issues pertaining to the understanding of Godhead, which is the most important thesis in any religion. Interestingly, in Christianity no name is known for God. By this they are equally entrenched in disbelief as the Jews since they disbelieved in what Moses and Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon both of them) brought. The leading bishops concocted creeds that are not sanctioned by the previous prophets or Christ. Therefore, they differed with the rest of the bishops of their time and charged them of altering the scripture. All those who did not accept the creeds made by the dignitaries in the ecumenical councils were anathematized as heretics or even heresiarchs. This easily leveled charge governed the judgments against the Jews, who in turn charged them of confusion and change. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah concludes that the Jew, Christians and Muslims are all unanimous that the scriptures of the Christians underwent alteration. He further says that scriptures contain news and commandments. The news should be believed and the commandments should be carried out. The People of the Book discredited much of their news and violated many of their commandments. In addition, each sect proves this condition in the other sects.  

Moreover, in response to the Christians’ claim that the Muslims believe that all the copies of the Bible were altered after the advent of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him); he said that this claim is baseless, as the Muslims cannot prove it. They cannot carry out a global survey to make this generalization. The Muslims believe that change is undeniable but not necessarily in all the copies on the earth. The Muslim scholars are unanimous that alteration is in interpretation and meaning. As regards the change in words after the spread of copies around, however, Muslims are different. Some of the Muslim scholars are of the opinion that they were not changed; many of the Muslim scholars and the Christians viewed that only some of the words are changed. Some of the People of the Book even believe that altered words are more than those in the original form, especially in the New Testament, wherein change is more prevalent and which many scholars are of the opinion that only a small portion is God’s word. Therefore, the Gospel which is the word of God is not the one available now.
Chapter Four: Alteration in the Divine Message

However, it should be noted here that when he talks about the change after the massive spread of copies, as viewed by some Muslims is not in word, they do not mean that the Bible is God’s word. Rather, what they mean is that at a particular time all the copies of the Bible are similar. What consolidates this view is the fact that it is inevitable that all Bibles available are mere translations (which are naturally influenced by the translators’ preconceived notions\textsuperscript{36}, and the original copies are nonexistent or even not written, not to speak of the successive revisions carried out for the Bible. That is why there are many versions of the Bible. Talking about the revisions made to the Old Testament, Peter J. Gentry observed “The process of making systematic, thoroughgoing revisions…continued from possibly 200 BC through AD 200.”\textsuperscript{37} As late as the 17\textsuperscript{th} century the King James Version of the Bible is said to contain grave defects. This called for the modification and correction carried out by the Bible scholars, and as a result, many versions of the Bible have been produced.

Moreover, the Torah in the hands of the people now contains commandments and judgments of Allah, although it witnessed a change in the words. He quotes the Quran (5:41-42) where it is stated that the Jews altered the word of God and in the next verse it exclaims why the Jews should come to you [Muhammad] when they have Allah’s judgment in the Torah. He concluded that the Torah that outlived the sack of Jerusalem, the coming of Nebuchadnezzar, the ministry of the Christ and the mission of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) have these two characteristics (alteration and preservation of commandments). And the copies available at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) were preponderantly in agreement concerning words, where we can find slight change across copies just as the case of the copies of the ḥadīth books. For the commandments, there is hardly any Muslim claiming the change in text, although that they are unanimous that the Torah has undergone tremendous change. The calumniations against the prophets are clear indications of the change.

As of the Gospels, he quotes the Quran: 5:47 where it is stated that the people of the Gospels are ordered to follow its judgment. This testifies to the fact that it still contains God’s judgment and commandment but does not guard against the change in the news. The change in text occurred in the news more.
Ibn Taymiyyah also quotes a counter argument the Muslim scholars propose: that the verse ordering the Christians to judge according to their Gospels was valid only before the coming of . This he accepts and opines that this is in agreement with the other reading of the verse. However, he says that they are ordered to follow the judgment of their books where they are not abrogated by commandments of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). This is in keeping with known rule the Muslim scholars have formulated, which reads, “The law of those before us is a law for us unless it is abrogated by our religion.” The Quran speaks about itself to be confirming but dominating the previous books. Therefore, he says that the Quran is considered as the judge and witness over the other scriptures.

The question that arises here is that whether Ibn Taymiyyah considers the Bible God’s word or not? He states that the narration of two or three is not enough to render the narration sound and reliable. He also said that long after the ascension of Christ the apostles started writing the gospels, which are not God’s word but accounts of the words and deeds of Christ, which contains enough guidance to lead them to the right path. He believes that the Bible if read without presumptions will surely act as a path to truth which lies in Islam. He further declares that the change occurred in news is more than in the commandments. He is most probably motivated by stories such as ascribed to the prophets, which humiliate rather than honor them. The crucifixion, the incarnation, the divinity of Christ, the inherited sin, the story of the devil and the like belong to this category. These issues made Christianity totally against the principle of tawhīd. It is by virtue of this that it became at variance with Islam as a genre. In short, he acknowledges that although the transmission was interrupted and the apostles did not claim to exhaust his tradition, still it is sufficient in leading to the truth which is Islam. He further points out that many texts in the Bible refer to Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as the one prophet prophesied by the Christ.

It should be noted also that whenever Ibn Taymiyyah quotes or refers to the gospels he never mentions the epistles of Paul. He is totally aware of him. Yet he does not mention him probably because he did not consider him as a Christian but an enemy to Christianity given his enmity prior to his ostensible conversion. More, Ibn Taymiyyah does not believe in theophany in any religion.
4.2.3 Criteria for Authenticity

According to Ibn Taymiyyah, to examine the veracity and authenticity of any narrated text, a set of standards should be observed:

- That it is transmitted through a continuous chain. The chain of narrators should not be broken. However, for heavenly books, the narrators should be so many that it is clear that they cannot collectively concoct a lie, such as when they are dispersed and no one knows of the other, and produce exactly the same thing.
- The trustworthiness of the narrators
- If such text is merely a translation, as in the case of the Bible, such translation should be precisely like the original.
- It should be interpreted according to the intent of the author, not the intent of the translator.

The response Ibn Taymiyyah made, checks the Bible against all these standards. He asserts that the Torah was lost after the destruction of Jerusalem. Someone rewrote it later. This person is not well known so as to ascertain his trustworthiness, nor is he enough to narrate a heavenly book, being only one. A big number of people are needed to concomitantly transmit it, in a manner that makes it impossible for them to agree on error. The suggestion here is that the two first standards are not satisfied in the Torah.

As for the gospels, they are accounts written by ordinary people who are not immune against error. The gospels written by the apostles are no exception. The apostles are not prophets to say that they are infallible, and to accept whatever they say. They are at best messengers of Christ.

In addition, when the Christians quote the previous prophets they need four things:

- To prove the prophethood of such people;
- To know the exact words they said;
- To prove the correctness of the translation of their sayings;
- The intent of the prophets should not be marred by misinterpretation.
Although Ibn Taymiyyah never quoted from the epistles of Paul, he discusses the alleged visions he saw. It is a very dangerous thing to canonize the epistles of someone who is, apart from being once the avowed enemy of Christ, an ordinary man claimed to have seen Christ. By virtue of this alleged vision he became an apostle whose messages were taken for granted as infallible guidance from the Christ. Knowledge about Allah should not be taken so lightly. Scrupulous investigation should be carried out. Single narration is naturally inauthentic, or at least undependable. Ibn Taymiyyah believes that such vision cannot be from God. Everyone can claim to have this vision and distort religion in the way one wishes. This leads us to the conclusion that whatever Ibn Taymiyyah says regarding the authenticity of the Bible, he does not consider the epistles of Paul as part of that. He did not bother to discuss the authenticity of these epistles because he said that if Paul did really have a vision of something, it was a devil.\textsuperscript{40} Devils do appear to people to misguide them off the right path.\textsuperscript{41} Some Muslims had a vision of something assuming itself to be God, telling them that they were exempt from all religious responsibilities. God will not make such a declaration as He cannot be seen in this world and because He never declares any to be exempt from his duties including the prophets and the angels, what to say about ordinary people.

4.2.4 Interpreting of Quran by Christians

The Christians, in their hard endeavor to substantiate the authenticity of their doctrines, tried to interpret some of the verses of the Quran in such a manner as to suit their theology. Here a set of the verses they quoted for this purpose will be presented along with the meanings, they assigned to them and Ibn Taymiyyah’s answer to counteract them.

- **Well-guided community before the Prophet Muhammad** (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): They quoted the verse (3:113) wherein Allah praises that section of the People of the Book as being still pious believers. This, Christians claim, is a divine testimony for the soundness of their religion. Ibn Taymiyyah tells them that the term ‘People of the Book’ includes the Jews as well the Christians\textsuperscript{42}, whereas the Muslims and the Christians agree that the Jews are non-believers. Furthermore, The Quran praises those who followed Moses in other verses such as in (8:159) where it
is stated that of the people of Moses is a community that leads with truth and establish justice therewith. Therefore, he further tells them that the verse means those who believed in Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as in the verse (3:199) which reads: “verily, there are among the People of the Book those who believe in Allah and what has been revealed to you.”43 This verse, he clarifies to them, speaks about, as the majority of the exegetes of the Quran say, the Negus, the Abyssinian king and the like who believed in Prophet Muhammad’s message but were not able to migrate to him, due to the office they were occupying among the disbelievers. Faithfully, Ibn Taymiyyah quotes the other opinions too, which reads to the effect that the verse refers to all the People of the Book who believed in the message of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Ibn Taymiyyah argues that the Quran would not have called them the People of the Book just in the same case when it does not refer to the pagans after embracing Islam as pagans but as Muslims.

- **Vindication from Shirk (Polytheism).** Present day skeptics also claim that the verse advocates religious pluralism. The verse is “verily those who believe and those who are Jews, Christian, and Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good deeds shall have their reward from their lord and on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.”44 They say this is clear proof of the Quran’s recognition of the Christian theology as being valid even after the commission of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Ibn Taymiyyah states that the verse does not support this claim since it equates them to the Jew and the Sabians, whereas the Christians and the Muslims agree that the Jews are non-believers since they disbelieved in the Christ. Secondly, if the verse does not praise the Jews, it similarly does not praise the Christians. Ibn Taymiyyah reports that the verse addresses the followers of prophets who followed the pristine and valid guidance, before they were abrogated by successive divine messages and before the alteration. Therefore it includes those who followed them before alteration and abrogation. He further elaborates that the People of the Book are not part or those who believed in Allah and the Day of Judgment and also were not part of those who did good deeds.45
Rather, Allah says in the Quran, “fight against those who did not believe in Allah and the day of judgment, nor forbid what Allah and His messenger has made prohibited, and those who did not acknowledge the religion of truth [Islam] among the People of the Book until they pay the jizyah with willing submission and feel themselves subdued.”

The Quran is clear that people of Trinity, those who said that God is Jesus Christ are those of the Christians and Jews who claimed they were the most beloved by Allah, are disbelievers. He also addressed them saying that the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is sent to them also after along interval of divine message.

- **Bound to follow Muhammad** (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): The Christians brought forth the argument that the book that is revealed to this man (Muhammad peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) speak of him as having no firm belief in what he preached. For this, they quote the Quran to support their freedom from following him. In this connection they quote verse (34:24) which can be translated thus, “and we and you are rightly guided or in plain error.” This, they say, tell very clearly the uncertainty of Muhammad in his religion. They also quote "I do not know what will be done with me and with you.”(46:9) Ibn Taymiyyah assertively propounds that the Quran is full of the commandments that order and invite them to follow the Prophet. Moreover, he was commanded to fight them, and he did carry out the commandment. He fought them to either convert or succumb to his rule. As for the apparent uncertainty in the discourse is another way of stating that the disbelievers are unjust and erroneous. It is similar to the case of two opposing parties, one just and the other is an oppressor. The former may at some situation say to the latter that either of us is unjust you or I. This is as to say that the unjust of us has become easily recognizable. This is a fair manner of expression. As for the prophet not knowing the recompense going to happen to him and the disbelievers, this Ibn Taymiyyah admits that the prophet does not know the unseen future unless informed by Allah.

- **Christians are blessed**: The Christians, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, claim that the faction or group referred to in the first chapter of the Quran as the blessed or those endowed with grace, are the Christians. However, he
considers this one of the biggest calumnies since the Quran is very clear in considering them as nonbelievers, ignorant and astray in several places in the Quran. As the context of the verse puts it, it orders the Muslims to seek Allah’s guidance and help in following the path of those bestowed with His grace. If those were the Christians then the Prophet and his nation would seek to follow the religion of the Christians. Furthermore, if Jesus is stated in the Quran to be one of those blessed, there is no plea for them in that since this applies to other prophets.

- **Referred to as guidance even in the Quran**: Moreover, in the second verse in the second chapter of the Quran, which reads, “this is the book wherein there is no doubt, (being) guidance for the pious,” refers, according to the Christians, to the Christians and their book. Ibn Taymiyyah says if the Christians tried to thus interpret the Quran, the interpretation of which has been concomitantly transmitted from the Prophet himself, what to say of their interpretation of their book which were not transmitted so credibly? This is a clear proof that they changed the scripture at their disposal. Ibn Taymiyyah affirms that this verse refers to the Quran and there is no mention of their books in this verse nor the contexts supports it.

The conclusion derived by Ibn Taymiyyah is that the Christians wish to alter and twist the meaning of the Quran in the same manner as they did with the Bible. He said that these Christians followed in their manipulation of the Quran the same method as they did with the Torah and the Gospel. They abandon the entirely clear texts which have only one possible meaning and adhere to allegorical texts suggesting many meanings, though they may contain meanings contrary to what they advocate. It is they and their like, who are meant in the verse,

He it is who sent down to you the scripture wherein entirely clear verses; these are the substance of the scripture, and (sent down) others that are allegorical. Those with aberration in their hearts follow the allegorical, seeking dissension. No one knows the meaning thereof save Allah. The people well rooted in knowledge say we have believed in it; all is from our lord. (Quran: 3:7)

- **The churches praised in the Quran**: They quote this verse (22:40) “Those who have been driven from their homes unjustly only because they said: Our Lord is Allah. For had it not been for Allah's repelling some men by means of
Chapter Four: Alteration in the Divine Message

others, cloisters and churches and oratories and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft mentioned, would assuredly have been pulled down. Verily Allah helps one who helps Him. Lo! Allah is Strong, Almighty. The Christians say that the Quran speaks highly of our churches as places wherein the name of Allah is mentioned much. Ibn Taymiyyah repudiates this by saying that the mentioning of the name of Allah is mentioned just after the mosques, which are exclusively the Muslims’.

This necessarily tells us either that the name of Allah is mentioned there only or that this includes the temples of the non-Muslims before the commission of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), or before alteration and abrogation. Again, he faithfully quotes the counter arguments of the Muslim scholars. He quotes al-Dāhīdāhī who was a great authority in tafsir as saying that Allah likes to be remembered even by those who commit shirk. That is, the one who associates others with Allah is better than the one who insolently denies the existence of Allah.

This makes him conclude that the People of the Book are better than the pagans. This conclusion is true if checked against the other verses of the Quran. The Quran never praises the People of the Book who did not believe in the message of and follow the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). On the contrary, it considers them as disbelievers who deviated from the guidance of prophets. However, in the context of comparison, the Quran prefers the least of the two evils. He says when the Romans were defeated by the Persians, the companions of the Prophet were upset because the Romans were people of divine scripture closer to truth than the Persians were. Therefore, if the Persians destroy such temples, it is an evil; if the Muslims who will establish mosques in their places destroy it, it is better. It depends on whether the religion is closer to truth. The crux of the verse, he says, is to establish the conception that destroying the places of worship is evil only when not substituted by what is better than them.

- **The ḥawāriyyūn in the Quran.** They Christians adduce these verses to prove that the ḥawāriyyūn the apostles of Christ were mentioned in the Quran appreciatively, as they were the people who went round in the seven regions
of the world to preach the Gospel. They quote verses such as these: 1) “verily, we have sent our messengers with proofs and sent down with them the book and the criterion so that people would act justly.” (57:25) and 2) “mankind were one community and Allah sent prophets with glad tidings and warnings and with them He sent down the book (al-kitāb) in truth to judge between people in matter wherein they differed.” They argue that the verses refer to the Disciples of Christ, who collectively preached one book, i.e., the Gospel. The verse talks about many messengers preaching one book. So, they definitely do not mean messengers such as Abraham, Moses, etc., since each one preached a different book. Ibn Taymiyyah answers them in the following points: first: the verses do not authenticate the disbelief in Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) who was sent to them and to other peoples who showed tenacious adherence to an abrogated religion. Second, their alleged claim that they will follow Christ and his apostles is a stark falsehood, as they are followers of neither, for two reasons: one, most of their religion is changed and therefore, not belonging to the Christ nor to his apostles. Two, the Christ prophesied the coming of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), as in the verse (61:6). Third: to say that the Quran revered their apostles is wrong interpretation of the Quran. After all, they have a long history of misinterpretation. They interpreted many verses in the same manner. The verse does not avail them the meaning they ascribe to it for the following reasons: A) the worthiest prophets of this description are those named in the holy Quran itself as in the verse (4:104). B) The mention of iron in this verse as being sent down as the revelation was sent is a clear indication of the role of jihad the Muslims would be carrying out. C) The book mentioned in the verse is not a specific book. Rather, it is a genre as in the verse (2:177). D) It talks about all the books revealed to the prophets.

Furthermore, the next verse talks about prophets such as Noah, Ibrahim, etc. This is a departure from the general to the specific, to draw attention to the qualities of some particular prophets. E) No verse in the Quran considers the apostles messengers. However, the verse (36: 14) wherein two messengers were sent to a town [some believe it is Antioch] but the dwellers of the town belied them. Then one more was sent to them. Again, they did not follow
them and upon that Allah caused them to perish through an awful cry. The Christians and some of the Muslim scholars believe that they were followers of the Christ. Nevertheless, the Christians believe they were two: one was Peter Simon and the other was Paul. And they also believe that they followed them. So, even in the Christian narrative they were not apostles of Christ. Furthermore, the people of Antioch were not inflicted with such collective death. Scholars of Islam are well aware of the fact that no such calamity after the revelation of the Torah took place. Moreover, the book was not sent with the apostles. It was sent with the Christ.

The verse (2:213) which reads “people were one community; then Allah sent the prophets as bringers of glad tidings and as warners, and sent with them the Scripture so as to judge between people in the matters wherein they differed.” The people sent here is taken by the Christians to mean the apostles of Christ. Ibn Taymiyyah rejects the interpretation as invalid since the apostles were called messengers not prophets in their books. Besides, the book they preached was not sent with them nor did it contain judgment between people, unlike the Quran and the Torah, in which the verses on legal issues are abundant.

- **Scripture testified:** The Christians boast of the Quran’s confirmation of their scripture. Ibn Taymiyyah agrees with the fact that the Quran confirms the books before it. Nevertheless, he declares that the Christians missed to differentiate between what Allah has actually revealed to the prophets before the commission of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the doctrines they are adhering to. The Quran did not confirm the Trinity, the unity of the divine and the human, the indwelling, the divinity and the sonship of Christ, the legalization of illegal things such as the pork, impurities, etc., all these are abominable things oft-dispraised in the Quran. Moreover, if what they adhere to was valid, then the Prophet would not have fought them.

The Christians presumptuously tampered with the meaning of the Quran in their dialogue with the Muslims, to fit their false argumentations. Here are some of the verses they adduced to prove their aberrations:
1. They took as a plea the verse (42:15) wherewith the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) commanded people to believe in whatsoever books Allah has sent down including the Quran, the Torah and the Gospels. To refute the meaning they ascribed to this verse, Ibn Taymiyyah studies it within context. The previous verses talk about the sending down of books to bind people in true belief but the People of the Book differed and had doubts therein. Therefore, the prophet warned against difference and doubts and commanded to believe in all the books revealed and to judge with justice. Besides, the verse orders the Prophet to declare that his and their lord is Allah and commands him to free himself from the deeds of the People of the Book if they do not follow him. So, the whole context testifies to the opposite of what the Christians have assigned to it. The Prophet as well as all people should believe in all the prophets indiscriminately. Moreover, the Quran is full of the commandments imposing on the Prophet to avoid the ways of the disbelievers—the pagans and the People of the Book—and to declare himself free from their beliefs. In short, they have no evidence in the verses they quote to support their allegations of the Quran legitimatizing their books.

2. Another verse is “argue not with the People of the Book except in a way that is better except the wrongdoers of them.” The Christians interpret the verse as to mean that the Prophet is ordered to argue with the Christians in good manners, and the wrongdoers are the Jews. The phrase ‘the People of the Book’ in Quranic terminology always refers to both the Christians and the Jews. To discriminate between them and claim the superiority of either is plainly an instance of garbling divine texts.

4.2.5 Christianity vs. Disbelief

The Quran contains many verses that declare the blasphemy of the Christians. Here are some of them:

1. “They indeed have disbelieved who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary. Say: Who then can do aught against Allah, if He had willed to destroy the Messiah son of Mary, and his mother and everyone on earth?”
2. They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary. The Messiah (himself) said: O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Lo! Who so ascribeth partners unto Allah, for him Allah hath forbidden Paradise. His abode is the Fire. For evildoers there will be no helpers.\(^{53}\)

3. They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the third of three; when there is no God save the One God. If they desist not from so saying, a painful doom will fall on those of them who disbelieve.\(^{54}\)

4. And when Allah saith: O Jesus, son of Mary! Didst thou say unto mankind: Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah? he saith: Be glorified It was not mine to utter that to which I had no right. If I used to say it, then Thou knewest it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in Thy mind. Lo! Thou, only Thou art the Knower of Things Hidden. I spake unto them only that which Thou commandedst me, (saying) : Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. I was a witness of them while I dwelt among them, and when Thou tookest me Thou wast the Watcher over them. Thou art Witness over all things.\(^{55}\)

Ibn Taymiyyah mentions many of such verses as proofs for the disbelief of the Christians along with any of those who reject the prophethood and message brought by Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

As all his discussions prove the verses they bring to substantiate their claim that the Quran acknowledges and adopts their altered doctrines, can be turned against them. The meanings they ascribe to the different verses are far removed from the meaning intended and made clear through the context. Therefore, this invalid approach cannot lead to truth. The ideal way to arrive at correct conclusions is to study the verses in context. Holistic rather than fragmentary approach will surely lead to sound facts unless blurred by bias. Ibn Taymiyyah is obvious in stating the response of the Quran to the Christian faith and followers. The tone is never apologetic. Secondly, his discussions of the verses they plucked from the Quran to substantiate their position as followers of the religion that is recognized and adopted by the heavenly scriptures of theirs and of the adversaries, adds to the opinion he advocates and which the title suggests, viz, the alteration of religion.
One of the allegations they made in the letter and which Ibn Taymiyyah sees as one of the cardinal issues he is very passionate to discuss is the nature of the prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Using the biblical as well as the Quranic evidences, the Christians struggle to prove that the message of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is not binding upon them to follow. It is exclusively for the Arabs. As they had a better religion, according to their estimations, the Quran itself acknowledges it as sound and probably superior to the Quran, the Christians had better follow their religion. In response to this, Ibn Taymiyyah devotes much of his treatise to proving the universality of the message of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the obligation upon the Christians who had merely corrupted vestiges of an abrogated scripture. This is what will be dealt with in the next chapter.
Chapter Four: Alteration in the Divine Message

Notes and References

1 Ibn Taymiyyah refers to the divisions of the Bible as the Torah (by which he means the Pentateuch) and the Gospels (by which he means the first four books).

2 His order and will which are necessarily impersonal


4 *Al-Qur’ān*: 9: 30

5 *Al-Jawāb*: vol. 2: pp.260-261

6 Although they have precedents in the apologies of the early Christians, a Trinitarian unity was never upheld by them. On the contrary, they believed in a tri-personal hierarchy as God.

7 Ibid. p. 261

8 The main charges levied against the Jew in the Quran are their disbelief in the signs of Allah, their aggression and transgression and their killing the prophets of Allah. See, for instance, *Al-Qur’ān*: 2: 61.


10 *Al-Jawāb*: vol. 2. P. 262

11 There is a big difference between what is beyond human mind to understand and what is impossible. Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that whereas religions may contain some things that are incomprehensible, they do not entertain unreasonable ideas.

12 See *Al-Qur’ān* 17: 1, 72: 19, etc.


14 The Jews denied the Christ and the Christians denied Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon them). See *Al-Qur’ān*: 4: 150-151 and 126.

15 As in Mathew: 5:17: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”


17 *Al-Qur’ān*: 3: 50.

18 *Leviticus*: 15: 19-33.

19 *Leviticus*: 7:23: Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Ye shall eat no manner of fat, of ox, or of sheep, or of goat.

20 As in *Deuteronomy*: 14:7: Nevertheless these ye shall not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the cloven hoof; as the camel, and the hare, and the coney: for they chew the cud, but divide not the hoof; therefore they are unclean unto you.

21 *Al-Qur’ān*: 5: 43

22 *Al-Qur’ān*:5:47

195
Chapter Four: Alteration in the Divine Message

23  Al-Qur‘ān: 7: 157

24  Al-Qur‘ān: 5: 48

25  Al-Qur‘ān: 57: 27. The translation would naturally differ according to the understanding of the translator. Anyone interested in knowing the original verbiage should refer to the Quran.

26  Al-Qur‘ān: 3: 157-8

27  In Hebrews: 1: 1, “God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.” ‘Diverse manners’ could have been dreams, visions, and many other ways. This opened vistas for people who did not even see Christ to claim that they have received revelation such as Paul, whose epistles have been canonised. This also made possible for the Christians to assign much weight to what their fathers said, let alone what had been attributed to the apostles, who were unfairly granted the title messengers of God.

28  Concomitance or tawātur in hadīth terminology means that a statement is narrated by a great number of people in a way that make it impossible for them to agree on error.

29  That is why we find the phrase “the Gospel, according to John, Mathew, John, etc.

30  The only difference is that the verbal traditions of the prophet Muhammad were preponderantly quoted verbatim. However, they are not attributed to God as being his words, but in the Quran it is stated that the prophet never speaks out of his own desires but is guided by Allah and based on this, (like other prophets), he is infallible.

31  Therefore it is stated that the name ‘Septuagint’ (Greek, originally Septuaginta, meaning seventy and as a term refers to the Greek version of the Torah) came from this propaganda. But how they extended this to include the whole Bible is quite strange. It may be a false claim they made or it may be due to Ibn Taymiyyah’s misquoting.

32  Ibn Taymiyyah had not known about the later division among the Christians themselves and the emergence of the Protestants who in turn divided into further sub-sects.

33  For example, the King James Version of the Bible (KJV) and the New International Version of the Bible (NIV) are different. There are whole verses deleted from the NIV after being acknowledged as divine in the KJV. Although it is certain information that Ibn Taymiyyah did not know about these changes, it adds further proofs to the proofs of the changes he witnessed.

34  It is traditionally believed that seventy men carried out the Greek rendering of the Old Testament.

35  This inter-Christian polemical literature provided much data in respect of the weaknesses and inefficiencies of Christianity. This provided fertile land for the polemics of Ibn Taymiyyah who uses their own arguments against each other to counterattac them.

36  In Hebraic Roots Bible p. 3 (Copyright Word of Truth Publications, 2012) the author wrote “I have studied and perceived that some translations are third and fourth generations away from the original language. Each translation strays farther from the original text and becomes watered down and more distant from the truth.” He also said in page 6: “There have been several areas where the translators of the Masoretic text purposely changed scripture to fit their own theology.”


38  He says that it is a known fact that the judgement which they [the Jew] are commanded to follow is such that is not abrogated in the Gospels and the Quran. In a similar manner, what they ordered in the
Chapter Four: Alteration in the Divine Message

Gospels to follow is such that is not abrogated in the Quran. The commandment in all these is to worship Allah, bid the thing he ordered and judge according to his judgement in any book as long as it is not abrogated in his later books.

39 This is his belief concerning the content of the Bible, not the actual laws and worships they are practicing. In the latter, they innovated a lot, and invented many rituals and festivals alien to the original teachings. This will be discussed in the alteration of religion.

40 *Al-Jawāb*: vol. 2, p. 324

41 *Ibid*. vol. 2, p. 318

42 This is to affirm to them that this rule applies to both but the Christians never acknowledge the Jew as being well guided people since they do not believe in the divinity of Jesus.

43 *Al-Qur’ān*: 3: 199. See also 29: 47.

44 *Al-Qur’ān*: 2: 62

45 *Al-Jawāb*: 3: 124

46 *Al-Qur’ān*: 9: 29. The succeeding verses clearly address the Christians who claimed Jesus to be Son Of God and the Jews who claimed Ezra to be Son Of God, in the literal sense of the word and states that by doing so they are like the disbelievers before them. In the very same verse he states the Christians took their bishops as gods apart from Allah whereas they were ordered to worship only one God with no partner.


48 *Al-Jawāb*: vol. 3, p. 125

49 *Al-Qur’ān*: 2: 213

50 This is taken from the verse (28:43), which reads: “And We gave Moses the Scripture (the Torah) after We had destroyed generations of the old.”

51 *Al-Qur’ān*: 29:46

52 *Al-Qur’ān*: 5: 17

53 *Al-Qur’ān*: 5: 72

54 *Al-Qur’ān*: 5: 73

55 *Al-Qur’ān*: 5: 116-7