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The Concept of *'Ubūdiyyah*
in the Theology of Ibn Taymiyyah:
the Relationship between Faith, Love and Actions
in the Perfection of Worship

by

James Pavlin

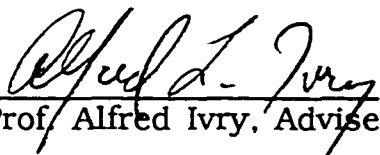A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Middle Eastern Studies

New York University

May, 1998

Prof. Alfred Ivry, Adviser

To the Memory of
My Parents

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Acknowledgements

It is well-known by those who have reached this stage of their formal education that it is impossible to acknowledge all the people who have helped them along the way. To those many unnamed friends and colleagues I say thank you. Of those whom I shall mention, I want to start by thanking my advisor, Prof. Alfred Ivry of New York University, who accepted the difficult task of directing my research after my first advisor was obliged to withdraw from the position. Prof. Ivry's insightful suggestions and patient concern to see this project to completion were important factors for its success. The departure of my former advisor, Prof. Michael G. Carter, now at the University of Oslo, as disappointing as it was at the time, thus proved to be a blessing in disguise. And although the final outcome is quite different from what I had started with Prof. Carter, my debt of gratitude to him for guiding me through the subtleties of Arabic grammar can never be truly expressed. I can only dissolve him of any blame for my shortcomings as a grammarian. I also want to thank Prof. Philip Kennedy and Prof. Susan Spectorsky for reading through my first drafts and helping me fine tune some very unarticulated passages. I am grateful to Prof. Peter Chelkowski, who tried so hard to get me to learn Persian, for his good council over the years. And I have a special thanks for Prof. Bernard Haykel, who agreed to sit on the defence committee at a last minute request. I need also to acknowledge the tremendous help I received in understanding Mamluke culture from Prof.

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Related to my particular interest in Ibn Taymiyyah's *Risālat al-'Ubūdiyyah*, two people deserve special mention. The first is Abdallah Mekkaoui, with whom I began the process of reading and translating the text. The other is Omar Tresize, with whom I spent countless hours reading and discussing the text, as well as many other concerns of the heart and mind.

As for the ever present needs of daily life that are often neglected by "career" students, I want to thank my sisters, Diane and Elaine, my brother, Thomas, and their respective families, for always being there when I had my hand out for assistance. And the last words of thanks go to my dear wife, Umm Zakariya, and my two beautiful children, Safiya and Zakariya, for providing the unquestioning love one needs to keep all things in perspective.

May Allah bless all who have helped me to reach this point.

Preface

I was first introduced to the works of Ibn Taymiyyah in 1984, a year after my entry into Islam through my initial contacts with a Sufi order. As a self-proclaimed seeker of the truth, my acquaintance with Sufism seemed to be one more step on a journey whose goal I had vaguely conceptualized as "finding God." Almost fifteen years after beginning that phase of my journey, I find myself completing an academic dissertation, the process of which has given me surprising insights into "Sufism" and "Orthodoxy" in Islam. I cannot claim to have resolved completely for myself the paradoxes of spirit which result from a commitment to obey religious law and a desire to experience a personal relationship with God. Hence, this dissertation represents my own attempts to approach God by understanding revelation through reason and achieving spirituality through discipline. And if the mystical union sought by many Sufis has been confirmed for me to be a delusion, their yearning for God remains inspirational. Likewise, if the use of the rational faculties by the philosophers has been confirmed for me to be severely limited in seeking out spiritual truth, their skepticism in analyzing truth, even revealed truth, remains sobering. Thus, if I dare to call myself a kindred spirit with Ibn Taymiyyah, it is because I see in him a rational mind seeking a spiritual nearness to God.

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Abstract of the Dissertation

The Concept of *'Ubūdiyyah* in the Theology of Ibn Taymiyyah:
the Relationship between Faith, Love and Actions
in the Perfection of Worship

by James Pavlin

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Middle Eastern Studies, New York University
May, 1998

Adviser: Prof. Alfred Ivry

Taqî-l-Dîn Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) was a *Hanbalī*
theologian and dogmatic follower of the *Ahl al-Hadīt* (the people of
the Prophet's traditions). Seeking to reform Muslim society beset by
various turmoils, he maintained the need for Muslims to purify their
beliefs and actions. This invariably meant for him that a Muslim's
worship must be in conformity with that of the Prophet and his
Companions as taught by the Righteous Predecessors (*al-salaf al-
sālih*). Within this context, he argues that a Muslim's worship must
stem from strict monotheism (*tawhīd*), which is based on God's
absolute distinction from His creation, combined with pietism,
which grows out of the love and fear of God. In his essay entitled
Risālat al-'Ubūdiyyah (*An Essay on Worship*), the translation of which
is the basis of this dissertation, Ibn Taymiyyah develops this "*salafī*"
concept of worship based on what he refers to as the "pure"
methodology of the earliest Muslims, which includes the Quran, the
Sunnah, the practice of the *salaf* and the Arabic language. He

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describes the way of the Righteous Predecessors as a "mediating position" (*wasat*) between what he sees as the extreme opinions of other Muslim groups, whom he attacks in a consistent and methodic manner by referring all controversies back to the Quran and Sunnah as interpreted by the *Ahl al-Hadīt*. Ibn Taymiyyah singles out three groups for having particularly deviant beliefs: the speculative theologians (*mutakallimūn*), whose theology relies on the rational sciences to interpret the Quran and the Sunnah, the philosophers (*falāsifah*), who have elaborated metaphysical constructs based on philosophical doctrines of Ancient Greek and Hellenic thinkers, and the mystical Sufis, who maintain beliefs about God based on pantheism and monism (*wahdat al-wujūd*).

Ibn Taymiyyah uses his theology of worship to revive a "*salafī* spiritualism*" in which he integrates the concepts of faith, love and actions, into a unified theology for perfecting man's relation to God. By focusing on his beliefs in the uniqueness of God and the interpretation of His names and attributes without questioning (*bi-lā kayf*) the nature of their existence in His essence, I shall argue that Ibn Taymiyyah denounces his opponents for having deviated from the belief and practices of the Prophet and his Companions but is willing to adapt some of the terms and arguments they use to his own body of beliefs. In particular, I shall describe how he responds to the mystical notion of the annihilation of self (*fanā'*) by bringing it into the realm of *Hanbalī* pietism as practiced by "orthodox" Sufis such as 'Abd-Allāh al-Ansārī al-Harawī and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī.

Introduction

Taqî-l-Dîn Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah (661/1263–728/1328) is one of the most controversial scholars of Islam, a man who up to the present has inspired deep love in his followers and bitter hatred in his opponents. A *Hanbalî* theologian and dogmatic follower of the *Ahl al-Hadît,* Ibn Taymiyyah reaches across the centuries through his call to reform Muslim society in accordance with the idea of the pristine Islamic community of Medina at the time of the Prophet and his Companions. But more than being a social or political reformer, his efforts to revive Muslim society is only a consequence of the greater goal of his theology. For Ibn Taymiyyah, social and political reform can only result from a community of believers who are sincerely worshipping God. Thus, before everything else, Ibn Taymiyyah seeks to purify the belief and actions of each worshipper. His theological writings indicate that he saw no other way for the Muslims to go than to follow the teachings of the Righteous Predecessors (*al-salaf al-sâlih).*

In order to clarify his views on worship, it is the aim of this dissertation to present an annotated translation of Ibn Taymiyyah's *Risâlat al-'Ubûdiyyah* (*An Epistle on Worship).* This *Risâlah* is presented as Ibn Taymiyyah's exegesis of the Quranic Sura al-Baqarah 2:21.[1] Its significance is that it represents an encapsulation

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[1]Throughout this work, the Quranic Suras will be identified by the name of the Sura and its number followed by a colon and the verse number.

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of Ibn Taymiyyah's views on methodological and theological issues in Islam. In *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, he discusses what he sees as the major components of Islamic religious belief and practice, explaining how each of these aspects of Islam interrelates in a process leading to the perfection of worship. This concept of worship can be described as Ibn Taymiyyah's "organic" view of religion,[2] for he weaves his beliefs on predestination and free will, faith and disbelief, obedience to Islamic Law,[3] and the nature and role of love, fear and patience in relation to God, into an interdependent lattice of theological concepts, which in turn dictate his overall view of worship.

However, while building his theory of worship based on the interrelation of these components, Ibn Taymiyyah is forced to confront some of the most historically controversial theological issues in Islam. Never shying from such controversies, Ibn

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[2]Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:160) uses the term "organic" to describe Ibn Taymiyyah's beliefs concerning his concept of the unity of the divine essence. Laoust states that Ibn Taymiyyah substitutes "une conception organique" for the philosophers' "conception arithmétique." Makari (1976:41), following Laoust, uses the term in the same context, describing Ibn Taymiyyah's view of the relationship between the divine essence and the divine attributes by stating that "he substitutes the mathematical conception of unity with an organic one." In a slightly expanded use of the term, Swartz (1973:115) identifies Ibn Taymiyyah's concept of holding a mediating position (*wasat*) between extremes with his "...notion that divine truth is an organic whole." I shall use this term to describe Ibn Taymiyyah's view of the relationship between God's essence and attributes and of the nature of divine truth.

[3]I shall refer to the *sharî'ah* as Islamic Law or simply the Law. However, one should be aware that this is a poor translation of the concept contained in the Arabic term. According to Weiss (1992:1-9), there are inherent inadequacies in the term "law" when it is used as a translation for *sharî'ah*. He states that the *sharî'ah* is both a legal code as well as a moral code, a dual concept that is not included in the Western notion of law.

Taymiyyah readily discusses the genesis and nature of these controversies and how, in his view, various Muslim groups deviated from the pure revelation embodied in the Quran and the Sunnah. In general, he identifies three basic groups which represent differing modes of deviation. The first group is the speculative theologians (mutakallimūn),[4] among whom are the Jahmiyyah, the Mutazilites, and the Ash'ariyyah. The second group is the Muslim philosophers, who adopted the logic and philosophy of the Ancient Greeks. Finally, there are the mystical Sufis,[5] who are the individuals and groups adhering to any of the varying degrees of belief in the unity of all being in the Godhead.

In opposition to these "deviant sects," Ibn Taymiyyah promotes the idea of a pure Islam which was revealed to the Prophet and preserved for all time. The first generations of Muslims, composed of the Companions (sahābah) and the Followers (tābi'ūn), safeguarded the Quran and the Prophet's teachings from all types of corruption. These earliest Muslims form the body of

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[4]Throughout the dissertation, kalām will be translated as "speculative theology" and mutakallimūn as "speculative theologians." This is one of the expressions used to translate the term, others being "rational theology" and "philosophical theology" (Watt, 1985:42). It seems to be the best term for distinguishing this form of theology from that of the Ahl al-Hadît.

[5]I shall refer to Sufism along the lines suggested by Schimmel (1975:5-6). She distinguishes between a "Mysticism of Infinity," or "gnostic" Sufism, and a "Mysticism of Personality," or "voluntaristic" Sufism. The former is the mysticism based on the Neoplatonic concepts of emanation and Absolute Being as fully developed by mystics such as Ibn 'Arabî. I shall refer to this as mystical Sufism. The latter form of Sufism is based on traditional monotheistic concepts of an absolute distinction between the Creator and creature and the idea of creatio ex nihilo. These points will be discussed in Chapter 3, Part B, section 2.

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believers known as the Righteous Predecessors (al-salaf al-sâlih). The teachings of the salaf were then preserved and transmitted to later generations of Muslims by the scholars of the hadith, known as the Ahl al-Hadīt. Thus, for Ibn Taymiyyah, the earliest generations of Muslims and all those who follow their beliefs and practices make up the larger body of true believers, known as the Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l-Jamā'ah. From this general division of Islamic groups into well defined sects with clearly identifiable beliefs, Ibn Taymiyyah proceeds to interpret the history of beliefs and practices in Islam as a battle between the "pure community" and the "deviant sects." This view of history as a battle between good and evil places Ibn Taymiyyah into the position of being a "dogmatic historian"[6] who develops a theology based on the concept of a necessarily preserved "true religion." In al-'Ubūdiyyah, Ibn Taymiyyah presents his arguments for the correctness of the beliefs of the salaf as representing that true religion and for the legitimacy of his claim that the worship of God can only be perfected within the boundaries of the beliefs and practices of the Ahl al-Sunnah.

In order to place the Risālat al-'Ubūdiyyah in its historical and theological context, I shall precede it with three introductory chapters. Chapter 1 will deal with significant aspects of Ibn Taymiyyah's biography; Chapter 2 will present a review of the

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[6] I derive this description of Ibn Taymiyyah as a "dogmatic historian" from Laoust (Essai, 1939:107): "Son histoire est une histoire dogmatique; c'est celle d'un théologien et d'un juriste qui juge toujours de la réalité en fonction d'une norme canonique..."

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sources and methodology he uses in formulating his theology of worship; and Chapter 3 will describe his position relevant to the prevalent trends of thought in Islam concerning the theological issues raised in *al-'Ubūdiyyah*. In the biographical sketch of Ibn Taymiyyah, the following issues will be highlighted. I shall begin with some basic biographical data on Ibn Taymiyyah and his family. Then I shall review the trials and periods of imprisonment which Ibn Taymiyyah endured, with special emphasis on the years 705/1305-6–712/1312-3. The purpose of this discussion is to bring to light the significant social and political circumstances that affected Ibn Taymiyyah's personal life. For although he preached what he believed to be the eternal message of God to humanity, the historical circumstances surrounding his life forced him to express his beliefs in a manner relevant to his times. Thus the Mameluke society of the late 7th/13th and early 8th/14th centuries, which witnessed the on-going institutionalization of both Sufism[7] and the legal schools of thought, forms the background for Ibn Taymiyyah's reform-minded beliefs. The fact that he spent a large part of his adult life either on trial or in prison because of his religious views indicates the profound effect they had on society. Ibn Taymiyyah saw the political and social turmoil of the times as a warning that the Muslims had drifted from the proper worship of God and that

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[7] In this dissertation I shall not be dealing directly with the history of the institutionalization of Sufism. On this topic, see Trimingham (1971), *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, and Femandes (1988), *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution in Mamluk Egypt*, Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag.

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religious reform was needed to bring the Muslims back to the beliefs and practices of the first Islamic community at Medina.

Chapter 2 deals with the discussion of Ibn Taymiyyah's sources and methodology. I shall present his approach in using the revealed texts which are for him manifested in both the Quran and the Sunnah. Particular attention will be placed on his concept of an Islam derived from the pure, orthodox[8] community embodied in the notion of the Righteous Predecessors. Ibn Taymiyyah's theology stems from four principle sources which form a methodological framework utilized by the *Ahl al-Sunnah*. These sources arranged in their proper order are 1) the Quran, 2) the Sunnah of the Prophet, 3) the statements and practices of the Companions, and 4) the opinions of the Followers. In addition to these principles, I am treating the Arabic language as Ibn Taymiyyah's "fifth principle" in order to clarify his use of Arabic in his methodology. Thus Ibn Taymiyyah outlines the boundaries in which he believes the discussion of worship must take place based on the methodic use of these five principles.

In Part A of Chapter 2, I shall present his methodology by focusing on his exegesis of the Quran. It is his contention that a Muslim's approach to, and understanding of, revelation is the basis from which all beliefs flow.[9] More precisely, I shall discuss his

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[8]Throughout this dissertation, I shall use the concept "orthodox" in reference to the beliefs and practices of the Righteous Predecessors. The idea of the *salaf* as the original theological school of thought in Islam has been identified by Wolfson (1976:3) and by Makdisi (1981:251-262).

[9]This point has been made by Abû Zahrah (no date:220).

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hermeneutics, for this provides the best means of observing how Ibn Taymiyyah utilizes this methodology. Within this discussion of exegesis, I shall also link his role as interpreter of the Quran with his role as dogmatic historian. Ibn Taymiyyah constantly classifies individuals and groups according to what he perceives as their affiliation with the *Ahl al-Sunnah*. Thus, as he discusses the exegesis of the Quran, he distinguishes between the "correct" exegetes and the "incorrect" exegetes, and he explains the reasons for his classifications. Through his definition of hermeneutics, he is able to restrict the ranks of those capable of properly interpreting the Quran by insisting that an exegete be a scholar of the hadith (*muhaddiṯ*).

After establishing Ibn Taymiyyah's methodology in Quran interpretation, I shall show in Part B of Chapter 2 how he extends his methodology and classification system to a broader discussion of affiliation with the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l-Jamā'ah*. He portrays Medina at the time of the Companions as the geographical and spiritual center of the Prophet's religious community (*ummah*). Then he describes various types of innovations from the Sunnah and the places from which they sprouted. The main focus of this section is Ibn Taymiyyah's belief that a unity exists amongst the *salaf* as to the core beliefs and principles of Islam. He argues that the four Imams, to whom the four accepted schools of jurisprudence in Sunni Islam trace their origin, agreed on the principles (*usūl*) of Islam while differing on certain particular rulings (*furū'*). It will be shown that this position allows Ibn Taymiyyah a certain interpretational

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flexibility to forge a concept of unity in accordance with his own notion of the need for that unity.

Finally, in Part C, I shall focus on Ibn Taymiyyah's use of the Arabic language. He includes in his methodology the idea that the Arabic language is the means by which God's final revelation comes to humanity. However, in his discussion of Arabic, Ibn Taymiyyah is confronted with the terminology, arguments and beliefs of the *mutakallimūn*, philosophers and Sufis. In response to this, I shall show that he engages in a form of adaptation of certain terms and arguments from his opponents while maintaining the body of his beliefs. Thus, for Ibn Taymiyyah, the verses of the Quran, the wording of the hadiths, and the Arabic language, while conforming in principle to the speech and practice of the Prophet and the Righteous Predecessors, can accommodate a limited influx of new interpretation.

In Chapter 3, which will be a review of the various Muslim positions concerning the theological issues raised in *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, I shall focus in particular on two issues. These are the names and attributes of God and predestination and free will. This choice reflects Ibn Taymiyyah's belief that all theological debates can ultimately be reduced to these two points. He traces the origin of theological debates back to the extreme ideas related to the anthropomorphizing of God's names and attributes (*tashbīh*), to stripping all meaning from God's names and attributes (*ta'tīl*), and to the earliest controversies concerning free will and predestination. In order to show that Ibn Taymiyyah maintains the

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same beliefs as those of the *salaf* concerning these issues, I shall compare his creed (*'aqīdah*) with that of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who is for him more than just the eponym of the *Hanbalī madhab*. Ibn Taymiyyah sees him as embodying the *salafī* creed itself, which he insists is the creed of all the Righteous Predecessors, including the eponyms of the other three *madāhib*. The main purpose for explaining the creed will be to emphasize Ibn Taymiyyah's firm belief in the absolute distinction between the Creator and the created. This belief then forms the basis on which he develops his theology of worship.

After the outline of his creed, I shall analyze how this creed affected Ibn Taymiyyah's view of the nature of worship. Starting with a summation of his critique of speculative theology (*kalām*), I shall show how Ibn Taymiyyah relates all degrees of deviation to the idea that the Quran and the Sunnah are in need of support from arguments based on pure reason. Whether related to jurisprudence or to creed, the concept that the Quran and the Sunnah do not contain the necessary principles for their interpretation is extremely abhorrent to Ibn Taymiyyah, for through his "organic" view of revelation he maintains that it is a self-contained whole. Within this context, the remainder of the chapter will focus on how Ibn Taymiyyah applies his methodology and creed to the various components of worship. In particular, I shall explain Ibn Taymiyyah's criticisms of the Sufi concepts of ecstatic expressions (*shatahāt*), love (*mahabbah*) and annihilation (*fanā'*). Accordingly, he interprets the exaggerations of the mystical Sufis as being a

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deviation from the *salafī* creed because of their reliance on principles and beliefs foreign to the Islam of the Companions and Followers. This affects their understanding of spiritual states, which he explains as being real experiences falsely interpreted by the Sufis. Thus, for example, Ibn Taymiyyah excepts the idea of the *fanā'* as a form of perfection of worship, but this *fanā'* must occur within the boundaries of *salafī* beliefs and interpretations. In the process of adapting new terminology to *salafī* beliefs, he extends the perimeters of reform to include the exigencies of the society in which he lived. This is in full accord with his concept of reconciliation, which is based on the Quranic concept of *wasat*, the mediating position between extremes.

The presentation of the annotated translation will cover the last five chapters of the dissertation. Chapter 4 will be a brief introduction to the *Risālat al-'Ubūdiyyah*, including an explanation of my method used in translation. Chapters 5-8 correspond to my four part division of *al-'Ubūdiyyah*. Part A of the translation (Chapter 5) corresponds to Ibn Taymiyyah's first chapter (*fasl*), in which he defines the topic of worship, explains the terms related to it, and introduces the concepts needed to understand it properly. Parts B-D (Chapters 6-8) actually comprise Ibn Taymiyyah's full discussion of worship, which he treats as one chapter. I have, however, divided his discussion into the three main topics on which he elaborates. Part B focuses on the issue of predestination (*al-qadā' wa-l-qadar*). Part C deals mainly with the different aspects of love for God. In Part D, Ibn Taymiyyah describes what he sees as the perfection of

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worship, which is the conformity of the believer's will in all matters with the will of God. I shall then end the dissertation with a short conclusion.

Technical Details

Translations: Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Arabic, French and German into English are my own. This includes all Quranic verses. However, in making the translations of the Quran, I relied heavily on several English translations (Arberry, 1955; Pickthall, no date; and Yusuf Ali, 1410/1989), the glossary of Penrice (1987), and two short exegetical works (Jalālayn, no date; and Shawkānî, 1406/1985).

Transliteration: The transliteration system is as follows:

w و	gh غ	r ر	a ا
y ي	f ف	z ز	b ب
â ى	q ق	s س	t ت
' ء	k ك	sh ش	t ث
long vowels	l ل	s ص	j ج
ū	m م	d ض	h ح
â	n ن	t ط	kh خ
ī	h ه	z ظ	d د
	h/t ة	' ع	d ذ

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When a quoted source contains a different transliteration system, that system will be maintained within the quote. All transliterated words will appear in italics. Arabic words which have entered the English language will be spelt according to *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, 2nd Edition, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979. Some of the more frequently appearing words are: caliph, hadith, imam, jinni (pl. jinn), Kaaba, Mameluke, Mutazilite, shaitan, sheikh, Shiah/Shiite, Sunnah/Sunni and sura.

Dates: The Islamic and Christian calendar dates will be given in the following manner: Islamic date/Christian date. All dates are based on Freeman-Grenville (1995), *The Islamic and Christian Calendars AD 622-2222 (AH 1-1650): A complete guide for converting Christian and Islamic dates and dates of festivals*, Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing Ltd. In most cases only the years will be given. However, when more accurate dating is necessary the month, and perhaps the date, will be given. If the Islamic year straddles two Christian years, both Christian years will be given, e.g. 700/1300-1. If more than ten Islamic months fall in one Christian year, then only one year will be given, e.g. 695/1296. (The year 695 began on 10 November 1295, thus more than ten months fell in 1296.) When both dates are given in the sources I am using, I simply copied the dates as given. If only one date is used in the sources, I calculated the second date accordingly.

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Chapter 1: A Biographical Sketch of Ibn Taymiyyah

The purpose of this chapter is to sketch some of the historical circumstances and significant events which helped shape Ibn Taymiyyah's life. Far from establishing a cause and effect relationship between particular incidents in his life and his doctrinal positions, I am merely piecing together an overall picture of the life of a man who still incites such extreme reactions from friend and foe alike. His most fervent supporters raise him to a level beyond that which the greatest scholars, such as Abū Hanīfah, Mālik, al-Shāfi'ī and Ibn Hanbal, had reached, while his most bitter detractors have declared him a disbeliever. Although the majority on either side fall short of these extremes, their opinions of Ibn Taymiyyah tend toward the ends rather than the middle. This is ironic in itself, considering his emphasis on following a "mediating position" (wasat) between extremes. Hence, my main goal is to present a biographical sketch that gives relevancy to his beliefs and opinions, especially those related to the concept of worship.

In order to accomplish this task, I am drawing my information from a few of the major biographies on Ibn Taymiyyah and histories of the time period. My bibliography for this chapter is certainly not exhaustive, but it is selective enough for the purpose I intend. More information has been left out than included, but I feel I have painted a background sketch which includes major events and anecdotes and which points out Ibn Taymiyyah's virtues and his faults.

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Part A: General Biographical Data on Ibn Taymiyyah and his Family

Abū-l-'Abbās Taqī-l-Dīn Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah was born in Harrān in northern Syria on 10 Rabī' al-Awwal 661/22 January 1263.[1] He was the oldest son of Shihāb al-Dīn 'Abd al-Halīm ibn Taymiyyah (627/1230–682/1283-4)[2] and the newest member of a famous and well respected family of *Hanbalī* scholars. In order to sketch the history of the Banū Taymiyyah,[3] and the scholarly reputation of this family, we must begin with the paternal uncle of Ibn Taymiyyah's grandfather.

Fakhr al-Dīn Muhammad ibn al-Khadir Abī-l-Qāsim ibn Muhammad ibn Taymiyyah (542/1147-8–622/1225)[4] was one of the foremost scholars and ascetics of the *Hanbalī madhab*. After completing his initial studies in Harrān, he traveled to Baghdad where he mastered the sciences of exegesis (*tafsīr*), hadith and jurisprudence (*fiqh*). During this time he became a close follower of

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[1]This date is given by Ibn Rajab (no date:v.2, p.387), Safadī (1974:v.7, p.16) and Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:11); Laoust also mentions the 12th as a possible date.

[2]For the biography of 'Abd al-Halīm, see Ibn Rajab (no date:v.2, p.310) and Safadī (1974:v.18, p.69).

[3]The origin of the name "Taymiyyah" is reported by Ibn Rajab (no date:v.2, p.161) and Ibn Khallikān (1961:v.3, p.97). They tell us that Fakhr al-Dīn ibn Taymiyyah (d. 622/1225) said that his father or grandfather went on the pilgrimage to Mecca and had left his pregnant wife at home. When he reached the town of Taymā', which lies in the desert of Tabūk between Khaybar and Syria, he saw a little girl who attracted his attention. When he returned home, he learned that his wife had given birth to a girl. Upon seeing his daughter, she so reminded him of the little girl from Taymā' that he called out "yā Taymiyyah yā Taymiyyah." The daughter was thus called Taymiyyah, which then became the family patronymic.

[4]For the biography of Fakhr al-Dīn, see Ibn Rajab (no date:v.2, pp.151-162), Safadī (1974:v.3, p.37) and Ibn Khallikān (1961:v.3, pp.96-97).

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the famous *Hanbalī* scholar Abū-l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200-1).
When Fakhr al-Dīn returned to Harrān he was appointed as prayer
leader (*imām*) and preacher (*khatīb*). As one of the prominent
Hanbalī scholars of his time, he remained in contact with other
leading figures of the *madhab*. In particular, he kept up
correspondence with the *Hanbalī* scholar Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn
Qudāmah (d. 620/1223) in Damascus (Laoust, *Essai,* 1939:8-9). With
his roots firmly established in *Hanbalī* traditionism, he would pass
on to his descendants a corpus of learning based on the orthodoxy of
the Righteous Predecessors as embodied in the Quranic exegesis,
hadith transmission and pietistic attitude associated with this
madhab.

However, besides his scholarly reputation, Fakhr al-Dīn also
had certain affiliations with Sufism. According to the various
reports, either Fakhr al-Dīn or his father was considered to be one
of the forty *abdāl* of the Sufi hierarchy of saints.[5] This more
apparent Sufi affiliation notwithstanding, a much more significant
role that Fakhr al-Dīn plays is in the transmission of the pietistic

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[5]Laoust (*Essai,* 1939:8) states that Fakhr al-Dīn was one of the *abdāl.* However,
Ibn Rajab and Ibn Khallikān state that it was Fakhr al-Dīn's father who was one
of the *abdāl.* Safadī makes no mention of this Sufi connection. As for the
hierarchy of Sufi saints, Schimmel (1975:200-202) explains that the highest
spiritual authority is the "pole" (*qutb*) or the "help" (*ghawt*). He is surrounded
by three "substitutes" (*nuqabā'*), four "pillars" (*awtād*), seven "pious" saints
(*abrār*), forty lesser "substitutes" (*abdāl*), three hundred "good" saints
(*akhyār*) and four thousand hidden saints. For variations of this order, see also
de Slane's comments in Ibn Khallikān (1961:v.3, p.98). As for Ahmad ibn
Taymiyyah, he completely rejects the idea of a Sufi hierarchy and declares that
all hadiths related to such beliefs are weak or fabricated; see, for example, *al-
Furqān bayna Awliyā' al-Rahmān wa Awliyā' al-Shaytān,* pp.13-14.

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and ascetic literature condemning desire (*hawā*) and passion ('*ishq*), which is to be expected of *Hanbalī* pietists. From this early stage in the history of the Banū Taymiyyah, there emerges a clear trend toward the anti-mystical asceticism of the *Hanbalīs*. A brief look at some of the issues related to the education of Fakhr al-Dīn will help distinguish the type of Sufism in which he was involved.

There are two important connections that deserve to be mentioned concerning this issue of asceticism in order to highlight the traditionist teachings passed down from generation to generation among the Banū Taymiyyah. In Baghdad, Fakhr al-Dīn studied with two of the most famous pietists and transmitters of literature censuring desire and passion, namely, Shuhdah bint Ahmad ibn al-Faraj ibn 'Umar (d. 574/1178-9)[6] and Ibn al-Jawzī. Shuhdah was a student of Abū Muhammad Ja'far ibn Ahmad al-Husayn al-Sarrāj al-Qārī (d. 500/1106-7), who wrote the *Masāri' al-'Ushshāq*.[7] This famous female scholar of sixth century Baghdad was instrumental in transmitting the *Masāri' al-'Ushshāq*, which she received directly from al-Sarrāj. She thus plays a prominent role in

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[6]For a biography of Shuhdah bint Ahmad, see Ibn Khallikān (1961:v.1, p.625). As for her Sufi connections, he states that she was married to Abū-l-Hasan 'Alī ibn Muhammad ibn Yahyā al-Duraynī, who "built a college for Shafites on the bank of the Tigris, at the gate of al-Ajz, and erected close by it a convent for Sūfīs."

[7]Al-Sarrāj is a key figure in the development of ideas concerning the topic of love and the censure of desire and passion. According to Giffen (1971:25-27), al-Sarrāj's work plays a major role in the transmission of love theory within the *Hanbalī madhab*. He is an important link between the early ascetic traditionists and later *Hanbalī* scholars, such as Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn al-Qayyim. For a detailed account of the chain of narrators and the contents of the narrations reported by al-Sarrāj, see Bell (1971:24-58).

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Ibn al-Jawzī's _Damm al-Hawā._ In his chapter entitled "Accounts of Those Whom _'Ishq_ Killed," he relates about half of the stories directly from Shuhdah bint Ahmad.

Thus the Sufism of both Shuhdah and Fakhr al-Dīn seems more likely that which Schimmel (1975:5-6) calls "voluntaristic" Sufism, that is, an asceticism devoid of mysticism. The traditionist education of Fakhr al-Dīn points in this direction. The links between the censure of passionate love and mystical love is brought out, for example, in the _Masāri' al-'Ushshāq._ for al-Sarrāj reports on those who were "smitten by mystical rapture" (Giffen, 1971:25-27). It is also important to keep in mind Ibn al-Jawzī's fierce opposition to mysticism while propagating piety and asceticism. Giffen (1971:76) points out that Ibn al-Jawzī drew heavily from two earlier works, the _I'tilāl al-Qulūb_ of al-Kharā'itī[8] and the _Masāri' al-'Ushshāq._ Throughout his _Damm al-Hawā._ Ibn al-Jawzī expounds on the "...evils and dangers of passionate cravings for anything and unbridled sexual lust in particular." He also speaks of the superiority of the intellect (_'aql_) over _hawā_ and of the need to control the soul (_nafs_). As a student of Ibn al-Jawzī, Fakhr al-Dīn was also most

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[8] Abū Bakr Muhammad ibn Ja'far al-Kharā'itī al-Sāmarrī (d. 327/938) wrote the _I'tilāl al-Qulūb._ By strongly condemning _hawā,_ he represents an early orthodox reaction against the idealization of the notion of the martyrs of love as it appears in writers such as Ibn Dāwūd al-Zāhirī (d. 297/909-10), the author of the _Kitāb al-Zahrah._ Al-Kharā'itī was also the first to base his book on the standards of authenticating hadiths as put forth by the hadith scholars who had compiled the six canonical collections of traditions; see Giffen (1971:15-16).

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assuredly familiar with his famous work *Talbīs Iblīs*,[9] which has a lengthy section on the condemnation of mystical Sufism. Thus, it is safe to say that Fakhr al-Dīn's education and training was in the traditional *Hanbalī* school of pietism and asceticism.[10] The legacy of Fakhr al-Dīn to his descendents was thus a reputation as

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[9]The *Talbīs Iblīs* was translated by D.S. Margoliouth (1936-1937) and appeared in various issues of *Islamic Culture* in the late 1930s and 1940s. The relevant sections on ascetics and Sufis can be found in the following issues: July 1936, vol.10, pp.339-368 and pp.633-647; April 1937, vol.11, pp.267-273, pp.393-403 and pp.529-533. Also, W. Braune (1940:305-313) offers significant remarks concerning Ibn al-Jawzī's opposition to mystical Sufism. In particular, he points out that the *Hanbalīs* emphasized the destructive effects of not taking seriously the concept of the world as a creative act of God and that a person must function within the limits of a created world (p.313).

[10]The relationship between the *Hanbalīs* and the Sufis goes back to a common origin in the early ascetics of the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries. The asceticism of this period was marked by a stress on "...divine transcendence and obedience to God's commands." From these beginnings "...emerged a new mystical tradition whose adherents still practiced austerities but stressed divine immanence and communion with God;" see Melchert (1995:2). Thus it is at the time of Ibn Hanbal that the ascetic and mystical trends began to part and develop along the lines of a transcendence-based Sufism and an immanence-based Sufism. The conflict between the pietists and the newly emerging Sufis is first evidenced by Ahmad's dislike for some of the beliefs and practices of the Sufis al-Muhāsibī (d. 243/857) and Sarī al-Saqatī (d. 251/865). However, other Sufis such as Abū Hamzah al-Baghdādī (d. 269/882-3) sat in the circle of Ibn Hanbal. There are many ascetic Sufis related to the *Hanbalī madhab*. These include Bishr al-Hāfī (d. 227/841), of whom Ahmad spoke highly, and al-Junayd (d. 297/910); see Melchert (1995:4-7). Another connection exists in the relation between the famous *Hanbalī* scholar al-Barbahārī (d. 329/941) and one of his teachers, the Sufi Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) (ibid.). One of the best known representatives of the early *Hanbalī* Sufis is 'Abd-Allāh al-Ansārī al-Harawī. Farhadi (1996:11) points out that, like Ibn Hanbal before him, al-Harawī opposed the rationalism of the *Kalām*, believed in the uncreatedness of the Quran, and was persecuted for his beliefs. His Sufism was based on the hadiths and the Sunnah, to which he actively invited other Sufis. Al-Harawī also exerts a certain influence on Ibn Taymiyyah (see below Chapter 3, section 2), who refers to him as *shaykh al-islām*; see *Istiqāmah* (v.1, pp.94, 107-8, 110 and 186). Finally, this same attitude toward traditionism is found in the famous *Hanbalī* Sufi 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1167), whom Ibn Taymiyyah also respects; on al-Jīlānī's traditionism, see Braune (1933:28-46).

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preeminent upholders of orthodox Islam as founded on the concept of the Righteous Predecessors.

The next member of the Taymiyyah family to gain a reputation as a great scholar of the *Hanbalī madhab* was Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah's grandfather, Majd al-Dīn 'Abd al-Salām ibn Taymiyyah (590/1194-652/1254).[11] Although it is reported that Fakhr al-Dīn wrote many books,[12] it is Majd al-Dīn who left the first tangible legacy of important works in various fields of the Islamic sciences. According to Brockelmann,[13] there are six manuscripts attributed to him: 1) *Kitāb Usūli-l-Fiqh* (also called *al-Musawwadah fī Usūli-l-Fiqh*), 2) *Kitāb al-Muharrar* (also called *al-Muharrar fī-l-Fiqh*), 3) *Kitāb al-Muntaqā fī-l-Ahkāmi-l-Shar'iyyah min Kalām Khayri-l-Bariyyah* (also called *al-Muntaqā min Ahādīti-l-Ahkām*), 4) *Kitāb fī-l-Ahādīt al-Mawdū'ah allatī Yarwīhā-l-'Ammah wa-l-Qussas 'alā-l-Turuqāt*, 5) *al-Muntaqā min Akhbāri-l-Mustafā*, and 6) *al-Makhzan fī-l-Fiqh*.[14] These books by Majd

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[11]For the biography of 'Abd al-Salām, see Ibn Rajab (no date:v.2 p.249) and Safadī (1974:v.18, p.482). According to Ibn Rajab, Majd al-Dīn married his cousin, Badrah bint Fakhr al-Dīn. Fakhr al-Dīn also had two sons, Abū Muhammad 'Abd al-Halīm (d. 603/1206-7) and Sayf al-Dīn Abū Muhammad 'Abd al-Ghanī (d. 639/1241-2); see Ibn Rajab (no date:v.2, p.39 and p.222, respectively).

[12]See Ibn Rajab (no date:v.2, p.153).

[13]Majd al-Dīn is listed in the *GAL*, I:504 and in the *Supp.*, I:690.

[14]Other titles attributed to Majd al-Dīn are: 1) *al-Ahkām al-Kubrā*, 2) *Atrāf Ahādīti-l-Tafsīr*, 3) *Muntahā-l-Ghāyah fī Sharhi-l-Hidāyah*, 4) *al-Arjūzah fī 'Ilmi-l-Qirā'āt*, 5) *al-Muntaqā min Ahādīti-l-Mustafā*, and 6) *al-Musawwadah fī-l-'Arabiyyah*. Brockelmann's first title above was an uncompleted book on which both Shihāb al-Dīn and Taqī-l-Dīn continued to work. His third title above, which is an abridgement of *al-Ahkām al-Kubrā*, was used by al-Shawkānī (d. 1250/1834-5) as the basis for his *Nayl al-Awtār*. In the *Kashf al-Zunūn* (1938:vol.5, p.419), Hājjī Khalīfah attributes a *Muharrar* to Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah, which would most likely be the *Muharrar* of Majd al-Dīn. For further information on Majd al-Dīn's life and works, see Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:9)

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al-Dîn represent some of the most important works of the *Hanbalî madhab* and were well appreciated and utilized by the students of this *madhab* (Laoust, *Essai*, 1939:9).

Ahmad's father, Shihâb al-Dîn, continued in the tradition of the Banû Taymiyyah. While residing in Harrân, he would have two more sons, Zayn al-Dîn and Sharaf al-Dîn.[15] However, the Banû Taymiyyah were not to spend much more time in their ancestral homeland. The family was forced to flee Harrân in 667/1268-9 in advance of the invading Mongol army. They settled in Damascus which had long been the home of a strong *Hanbalî* tradition.[16]

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and the introductions to two published books of Majd al-Dîn (1369/1950:11-15) and (no date:3-7).

[15]Zayn al-Dîn was born in 663/1264-5 and died in Dû-l-Qa'dah 747/February 1347. Although he was a *Hanbalî* scholar, he seems to have paid more attention to his business affairs. In his biographical notice on Zayn al-Dîn, Ibn 'Imâd (1414/1994:v.6, p.152) mentions that he was detained with his brother Ahmad in Alexandria and Damascus out of love for him and to serve him. Ibn Katîr (1407/1987:v.14, p.233) also refers to him as *al-shaykh* and mentions (ibid:v.14, p.40) that Zayn al-Dîn was imprisoned briefly in Egypt along with Ahmad and his other brother in 705/1305-6. Sharaf al-Dîn was born in Muharram 666/September 1267. He became a well respected scholar and ascetic known for his expertise on the hadith and the biographies of the *salaf*. He died in Jumâdâ-l-Ulâ 727/April 1327, a year before Taqî-l-Dîn's death; see Ibn Rajab (no date:v.2, p.382).

[16]According to Laoust (1971:S.V. "Hanâbila"), one of the earliest Hanbalî teachers at Damascus was Abû Sâlih Muflih (d. 333/941-2), who founded a mosque. The first *madrasah* was founded by 'Abd al-Wahhâb (d. 536/1141-2), whose father, Abû-l-Faraj al-Shîrâzî (d. 486/1093), was instrumental in spreading *Hanbalism* in Syria and Palestine. Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:12-18) also mentions that the prestige of the *Hanbalî madhab* in Damascus was greatly enhanced when the Banû Qudâmah migrated to the city in 551/1156. On the development of the *Hanbalî madhab*, see Laoust (1959) "Le Hanbalisme sous le califat de Baghdad (241/855-656/1258)," *Revue des Études Islamique*, vol.27, pp.67-128 and (1960) "Le Hanbalisme sous les Mamlouks Bahrides (658/1260-784/1382)," *REI*, vol.28, pp.1-71. For a recent discussion of the Sâlihiyyah quarter of Damascus, the traditional home of the *Hanbalîs* in that city, see Miura (1995) "The Sâlihiyya Quarter in the Suburbs of Damascus: its

There Shihâb al-Dîn became the director of the *Hanbalî* school of hadith, al-Sukkariyyah (Laoust, *Essai*, 1939:10). Although a great scholar in his own right, Shihâb al-Dîn was to be overshadowed in the history of the *Hanbalî madhab* by both his father, Majd al-Dîn, and his son, Taqî-l-Dîn.[17]

Part B: Review of Ibn Taymiyyah's Conflicts and Trials

In this section, I shall explore some of the issues related to Ibn Taymiyyah's conflicts with the Mameluke authorities and the religious leadership of his day. The purpose of this is to highlight a few important factors surrounding his trials that occurred between 698/1298-9 and 709/1310-1. These years witnessed the development of many of his ideas, which he would elaborate later, after returning to Damascus in 712/1312-3. This period thus represents his transition from the role of a young lecturer and scholar in a *madrasah* to one of social activist and reformer. Forced by historical events and the strength of his convictions, Ibn Taymiyyah would leave much more than a legacy of scholarly writings as did his forefathers. Instead, he would be viewed by history as a sharp critic of religious beliefs, social customs and

formation, structure and transformation in the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods," *Bulletin d'Études Orientales*, vol.47, pp.129-169. Similarly, many *Hanbalî* scholars had traveled to Egypt prior to the 7th/13th century. Leiser (1981:155-181) has documented the activities of many of these scholars.
[17]Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:11), quoting al-Dahabî, states that Shihâb al-Dîn's "...luster would pale between the moon, who was his father, and the sun, who would become his son."

political policies which deviated from the Islam that he felt reflected the Islam of the Companions. His ideas of a pure Islam were confronted by a multitude of complex historical circumstances that worked both in his favor and against him. Within the context of Mongol invasions and Mameluke court intrigue, on the one hand, and the popularity of mystical Sufism and the institutionalism of the four schools of jurisprudence,[18] on the other, Ibn Taymiyyah challenged his fellow Muslims to reform society along the lines of the orthodoxy of the Righteous Predecessors. Through his activities and writings, he would emerge as a vital player in shaping both Mameluke and Islamic history. This compels us to gain a better understanding of the man and his beliefs.

Probably the earliest controversy in which Ibn Taymiyyah became a target of attack was prompted by a lecture he gave at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus in 690/1291.[19] We know only that

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[18]The institutionalization of the *maḏâhib* in Damascus in the three centuries prior to Ibn Taymiyyah is outlined by J.E. Gilbert (1980) in her article "Institutionalization of Muslim Scholarship and the Professionalization of the *'Ulama'* in Medieval Damascus," *Studia Islamica*, vol.52, pp.105-134. In her conclusion (p.131) she states: "The rulers of late eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth-century Damascus, who generally failed to achieve political or administrative continuity, took advantage of the opportunity to help shape social institutions. These rulers and their households institutionalized international scholarship and professionalized the *'ulama'* in Damascus and then sought to bureaucratize, hierarchize, and further dominate the *'ulama'* by making areas once in the hands of scholars dependent on government." For an overall view of the role of the *'ulamâ'* under the Mamelukes, see Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:41-42).

[19]Up to this time, Ibn Taymiyyah seems to have followed the standard training of the *'ulamâ'* class. According to Murad (1968:74), Ibn Taymiyyah "was licensed to give *fatâwâ* by a Shâfi'î muftî, Sharaf al-Dîn al-Maqdisî (d. 694), before he was twenty years of age." Ibn Kaṯîr (1407/1987:v.13, p.361) mentions the licensing under al-Maqdisî's funeral notice of 694/1295 without

"some opponents" tried to stop him from speaking on the attributes of God. The incident came to a quick end after the *Shāfiʿī* chief judge Shihāb al-Dīn al-Khuway (d. 693/1294) supported his position (Murad, 1968:75). This isolated event was, however, a portent of things to come.

The next occurrence came in 693/1294 and created a much more volatile situation. It involved accusations that a Christian secretary to an influential emir of the family of ʿAlī had insulted the Prophet.[20] Ibn Taymiyyah and the *Shāfiʿī* sheikh of the Dār al-Hadīt, Zayn al-Dīn al-Fāriqī, led a crowd to the viceregal palace demanding the Christian's execution.[21] Although assurances were given by the

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indicating that it was given in that year; Laoust (1942:118), translating Ibn Katîr, concludes that the licensing took place in 694. However, a point that gives weight to Murad's opinion is that Ibn Taymiyyah had already given his first public sermon in Muharram 683/March 1285 when he was only twenty-two years old, which was shortly after the death of his father. It was attended by the most prominent scholars of Damascus such as the *Hanbalî* sheikh Zayn al-Dîn ibn al-Munajjâ, the *Shāfiʿī* chief judge Bahâ' al-Dîn ibn al-Zakî and the *Shāfiʿī* sheikh Tâj al-Dîn al-Fazârî. The lecture was received with enthusiastic acclaim and established Ibn Taymiyyah's reputation as a precise and powerful defender of the orthodox tradition. See Ibn Katîr (1407/1987:v.13, p.320), Laoust (1942:117) and Nadwi (1977:25). (Note: Laoust's biography (1942) of Ibn Taymiyyah gives the date of his first lecture as 682 instead of 683. I have noticed that many of the dates in that article are incorrect, and the reader is advised to check the dates in that article carefully.)

[20]There is some confusion concerning this incident and the people involved in it. Ibn Katîr (1407/1987:v.13, p.355) reports that the Christian's name is ʿAssâf and the emir is Ibn Ahmad ibn Hajjî, which is what Laoust (1942:118) likewise reports. However, Murad (1968:75) states that the emir's name is ʿAssâf ibn Ahmad ibn Hajjî and that the Christian's name is not known. He bases this on one other source and on the fact that Ibn Katîr (ibid:360) later reports that the emir ʿAssâf ibn Ahmad ibn Hajjî, who had freed the Christian, was killed.

[21]It is the general opinion of most Muslim jurisprudents that anyone, even non-Muslims, should be executed for insulting the Prophet; see, for example, al-Tarâbulusî (1393/1973), *Muʿîn al-Hukkâm*, p.192. Also, Ibn Taymiyyah discusses this matter in detail in his book *al-Sârim al-Maslûl ʿalâ Shātimi-l-*

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governor, 'Izz al-Dîn Aybak al-Hamawî, that the matter would be handled according to Islamic Law, no action was taken after the emir had complained to the governor of attacks against himself and his home. There followed a week of scattered violence that was blamed on Ibn Taymiyyah and al-Fâriqî, who were then imprisoned and beaten. Meanwhile, the governor sought the sultan's advice and obtained a legal ruling from some of the Shāfi'ī judges that the Christian would be safe upon his conversion to Islam (Murad, 1968:76). This brought the incident to an end because the leaders of the four schools of jurisprudence could not arrive at a unanimous decision.

One more incident occurred before the period of Mongol invasions that indicates the complexities of the relations between the 'ulamā', including Ibn Taymiyyah, and the ruling elite. In this case, during an interregnum between permanently appointed governors of Damascus, Ibn Taymiyyah's close relationship with the interim governor, Jâghân,[22] disturbed his opponents enough that they initiated a series of actions against him. In Rabî' al-Awwal 698/December 1297, a group of jurists accused Ibn Taymiyyah of

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Rasūl, which he wrote in response to this incident. Ibn Katîr (1407/1987:v.13, p.355) gives the title as al-Sârim al-Maslūl 'alâ Sâbbi-l-Rasūl.

[22]Jâghân was the temporary governor in Damascus after Sayf al-Dîn Qibjaq defected to the Mongols. Jâghân had supported the emir Lâjîn in his bid to become sultan in 696/1296-7, and both he and Lâjîn's governor in Egypt, Mankûtamur, plotted against Qibjaq. However, after Lâjîn's brief reign, which ended with his murder in Rabî' al-Tânî 698/January 1299, al-Nâsir Muhammad returned to the sultanate for the second time. He replaced Jâghân, who suffered only a short imprisonment, with Aqûsh al-Afram, who also became a supporter of Ibn Taymiyyah. For Jâghân's biography, see Laoust (Essai, 1939:114); for the general history of the reign of Lâjîn, see Irwin (1986:90-100).

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anthropomorphism because of statements he made in his recently written creed, *al-'Aqīdah al-Hamawiyyah al-Kubrā*.[23] They insisted that he appear before the *Hanafī* chief judge Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī (d. 739/1338-9). Ibn Taymiyyah responded to an invitation to appear before the *Hanafī* chief judge by saying that initiating an investigation into points of creed is not within the jurisdiction of a *qāḍī*. Worded in such a way as to indicate that Jalāl al-Dīn was incompetent to judge such matters, Ibn Taymiyyah's response caused the *Hanafī* chief judge to publicly declare that the *Hamawiyyah* creed was heretical. In order to stop the impending street demonstrations by supporters of both sheikhs, Jāghān had the announcer of Jalāl al-Dīn's decision beaten. Ibn Taymiyyah then met with the *Shāfiʿī* chief judge Imām al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī, the brother of Jalāl al-Dīn, to discuss the *Hamawiyyah*. After a daylong meeting, the *Shāfiʿī* chief judged declared that the *Hamawiyyah* was sound. The affair ended when Imām al-Dīn said that whoever slanders Sheikh Ibn Taymiyyah would become his enemy, and Jalāl al-Dīn added that they would punish whoever speaks badly of the sheikh.[24]

During the years 699/1299-1300–704/1304-5, Damascus and all of Syria were under a continual threat of attack by the Mongols under the leadership of the Ilkhan Ghazan (d. 704/1304-5), a descendant of Genghis Khan through his grandson, Hūlāgū

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[23]Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:115) states that Ibn Taymiyyah's opponents fabricated statements concerning his beliefs as explained in the *Hamawiyyah*.
[24]The details of this event are reported by Ibn Kaṯīr (1407/1987:v.14, p.5), Ibn Hajar, *Durar* (no date:v.1, p.155), Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:111-117) and Murad (1968:77-78).

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(Grousset, 1970:378). Since Ibn Taymiyyah's attention, as well as that of almost everyone, was turned toward the Mongol threat, there is little to report in the way of his conflicts with the authorities. It is clear, however, that he was very much involved in defending Damascus and in negotiating with the Mongols. A brief review of some of his major actions will suffice to show that his defence of Islam was in action as well as in word, and that he did not hesitate to jeopardize his life to defend Islam and the Muslims. In the first of Ghazan's incursions into Syria (Rabi' al-Awwal 699/December 1299), the Egyptian forces under Sultan al-Nâsir Muhammad were badly defeated.[25] Damascus was left to defend itself, and a delegation which included Ibn Taymiyyah met with Ghazan to sue for peace in Rabi' al-Tânî 699/January 1300. When they were brought before Ghazan, Ibn Taymiyyah boldly chastised the Mongol khan who had recently accepted Islam. His bravery greatly impressed Ghazan who granted amnesty to the city (Laoust, 1942:121-125; Nadwi, 1977:30-31). Damascus was placed for a very short time under the military governorship of the Mongol generals, Sayf al-Dîn Qibjaq and Qutlughshâh. However, by Jumâdâ-l-Ulâ 699/February 1300, Ghazan

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[25] According to Irwin (1986:100), the Mameluke army was caught off guard by the winter invasion. After a forced march, which was interrupted by a revolt of the Mongol mercenaries, the *Wâfidiyyah*, the Mamelukes met the Mongol army at Wâdî-l-Khazindâr north of Homs. Besides the defeat itself, two other factors would come to play a role in Ibn Taymiyyah's life. One was that the leader of the Mongol army was Sayf al-Dîn Qibjaq, who had been the Mameluke governor of Damascus in 698/1298-9. His defection to the Mongols would later be used against Ibn Taymiyyah in a conspiracy charge. Also, the retreating Mameluke army was harassed by the various Shia sects of the Kasrawân region of Lebanon, against whom Ibn Taymiyyah would later call for a *jihâd*.

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returned to Persia and the Mamelukes quickly reoccupied Syria (Grousset, 1970:382)

After the Mamelukes reestablished their control in Syria, the governor of Damascus, Jamāl al-Dīn Aqūsh al-Afram, led a successful expedition against the inhabitants of Kasrawān who had aided the Mongols and attacked the retreating Egyptian and Syrian armies. Ibn Taymiyyah preached on the merits of this *jihād* against the Shia sects by indicating the corruptions of their intentions and beliefs. He also accompanied the army on this campaign which lasted from Shawwāl until Dū-l-Qa'dah 699/July-August 1300.[26] However, the jubilation of this victory did not last long, for a second Mongol invasion occurred from Safar to Jumādā-l-Ulā 700/October 1300-February 1301. During this invasion, Ibn Taymiyyah went to Egypt to demand that the sultan, who was reluctant to get involved in another war with the Mongols, send troops to Syria. But by the time the sultan conceded to Ibn Taymiyyah's demands, the Mongols had already retreated from Syria.[27]

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[26]According to Ibn Kaṭīr (1407/1987:v.14, p.13), Ibn Taymiyyah met with the leaders of the Shias of Kasrawān, demanded their repentance, explained the correct beliefs of Islam to them, and forced them to return any booty they had taken from the retreating armies. See also Laoust (1942:125) and Nadwi (1977:33).

[27]For the details of Ibn Taymiyyah's activities during this incursion, see Laoust (1942:126-127) and Nadwi (1977:34). This was a second winter campaign by the Ilkhan Ghazan in an attempt to recoup his position in northern Syria. However, the Mongols were forced to retreat because of heavy rains that year. Also, Ibn Taymiyyah's efforts appear to have been somewhat superfluous, for neither Ghazan nor the Mameluke Sultan al-Nāsir Muhammad were interested in fighting. By the spring of 700/1301, they agreed to exchange embassies and establish peaceful commerce; see Irwin (1986:101).

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In spite of his efforts to defend Damascus, there were a few attempts to condemn Ibn Taymiyyah. Actually, his growing popularity with all levels of society were countered by an atmosphere of rising hostility toward him by his enemies. This most likely encouraged some of them to move against him. One such incident occurred in Jumādā-l-Ulā 702/December 1302 when some of his enemies forged a letter implicating him in a conspiracy against the governor of Damascus and accusing him of corresponding with the Mongols. The letter stated that Ibn Taymiyyah, the *Hanafi* judge Shams al-Dīn al-Harīrī, the *Shāfiʿī* sheikh Ibn al-Zamlakānī, Kamāl al-Dīn ibn al-ʿAttār and several emirs were plotting to overthrow al-Afram and bring back the deposed emir Qibjaq. The truth was discovered, however, and the guilty persons, two mendicants (*faqīr*),[28] al-Yaʿfūrī and Ahmad al-Ghanārī, and a scribe, al-Tāj al-Munādīlī, were severely punished (Laoust, 1942:129-130; Murad, 1968:80). According to Ibn Katīr (1407/1987:v.14, p.23), this event occurred shortly after the death of the *Shāfiʿī* chief judge of Egypt, Ibn Daqīq al-ʿId. This caused a period of uncertainty as the religious leadership in Egypt and Syria underwent changes. The chief judge of Damascus, Ibn Jamāʿah, was called to Cairo to serve as the new *Shāfiʿī* chief judge.[29] He was

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[28]The use of the term *faqīr* refers to members of a Sufi order and should not be taken in its literal meaning. As yet, I have not been able to find any biographical information on these co-conspirators.

[29]Ibn Daqīq al-ʿId was a famous traditionist with whom Ibn Taymiyyah had studied; see Ibn Katīr (1407/1987:v.14, p.29). As for Ibn Jamāʿah, he was respectful toward Ibn Taymiyyah but not outwardly supportive of him (Laoust, 1942:129).

accompanied by the governor, al-Afram. Meanwhile, in Damascus, Ibn Sasari,[30] who strongly opposed Ibn Taymiyyah, was appointed to replace Ibn Jamā'ah. This change in the religious leadership began a series of appointments to high office by people antagonistic toward Ibn Taymiyyah.[31]

Any efforts to condemn Ibn Taymiyyah were disrupted by a third invasion of the Mongols, which occurred in Ramadān 702/April 1303. It was at the Battle of Shaqhab on the plain of Marj, near Damascus, that the combined armies of Syria and Egypt decisively defeated Ghazan's army headed by his general Qutlughshāh, thus ending any further incursions into Mameluke territory (Irwin, 1986:101; Grousset, 1970:382). Before personally accompanying the army to battle, Ibn Taymiyyah issued an important ruling (*fatwā*) that, although Ghazan had converted to Islam, it was

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[30]This is Najm al-Dîn ibn Sasari (or Sasrâ, d. 723/1323). According to Jackson (1994:46), he belonged to one of the powerful families of Damascus and was inclined toward *Ash'arî* beliefs. Although he had bitter arguments with Ibn Taymiyyah, the latter supported him after his resignation as chief judge following the events of the third Damascus council, which I shall describe shortly.

[31]Al-Bazzâr (1396/1976:85-87) compiled a list of Ibn Taymiyyah's main opponents. The more prominent figures of the twelve people listed are: al-Jâshangîr (d. 709/1309-10), a Mameluke emir who usurped the sultanate in 709; Safî-l-Dîn al-Hindî (d. 715/1315), a leading *Shâfi'î* sheikh of Damascus; Taqî-l-Dîn al-Subkî (d. 756/1355), a *Shâfi'î* chief judge of Damascus; Taqî-l-Dîn ibn al-Ikhnâ'î (d. 732/1331-2), a *Mâlikî* chief judge of Cairo; Sadr al-Dîn ibn al-Murahhil (d. 716/1316), a *Shâfi'î* *muftî* of Damascus; Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Iskandarî (d. 709/1309-10), a leading Sufi sheikh of Cairo; Nasr al-Manbijî (d. 719/1319), a leading Sufi sheikh of Cairo who followed the teachings of Ibn 'Arabî and who was the spiritual guide of al-Jâshangîr; and Zayn al-Dîn ibn Makhlûq (d. 718/1318), a *Mâlikî* chief judge of Egypt and a close friend of al-Manbijî. There are many others, of course, some of whom will be mentioned below in this chapter. For further information on some of Ibn Taymiyyah's opponents in Damascus, see Jackson (1994:43-48).

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still a duty to fight him because he was acting similar to the _Khawārij_ by oppressing and abusing Muslims.[32] His efforts in bringing about this great victory and his prominent role in defending Damascus had brought Ibn Taymiyyah the renewed love and respect of the people and many of the ruling and religious elite throughout Egypt and Syria. But at the same time, it only further increased the hostility of his enemies toward him. Thus it was after the Mongol threat had passed that his most critical controversies with the authorities occurred.

In the year before his trials began, Ibn Taymiyyah had supplied his enemies with several reasons to convince them that he was becoming too influential. He had increased his polemical activities against the adherents of mystical Sufism by stopping many of their public displays[33] and by writing against the monism of Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240-1).[34] However, his influence with government authorities

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[32]The details are given by Ibn Kaṯîr (1407/1987:v.14, p.25). This is one example of the way Ibn Taymiyyah uses particular groups known historically to the Muslims as heretics to crystallize his arguments on a certain issue. It reflects his belief that all religious controversies are related to the deviations and schisms that occurred in the first two centuries of Islam. For the effects of this ruling on Muslim thinking in modern times, see Sivan (1990:94-107). On the history of the _Khawārij_, see Levi Della Vida (1978: S.V. "Khâridjites").

[33]Ibn Kaṯîr (1407/1987:v.14, p.36) reports various actions taken by Ibn Taymiyyah against the innovations and antinomian activities of certain Sufi sheikhs. For example, he forced a certain sheikh Mujâhid Ibrâhîm al-Qattân, who was accused of using hashish, to remove an enormous turban, cut his hair, nails and moustache, and to conform to the _sharîʿah_ in all his public affairs; see also Laoust (1942:133).

[34]It was at this time that Ibn Taymiyyah wrote an important letter to Nasr al-Manbijî about the errors of Ibn ʿArabî's monism. The letter appears in the _Majmûʿat al-Rasâʾil wa-l-Masâʾil_, v.1, pp.161-183, and in the _Majmûʿ Fatâwâ_, vol.2, pp.452-479. The date of 704 is based on a manuscript listed in the _Fihrist al-Makhṭûṭât_ (Cairo: Matbaʿat Dâr al-Kutub, 1382/1962, v.2, p.249).

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was greatly enhanced in Ḍū-l-Hijjah 704/June 1305, when he had accompanied the governor al-Afram on a second expedition against the Shia of Kasrawān, which resulted in their complete capitulation. Concerning the newly reconquered areas, Ibn Taymiyyah began requesting that the sultan and the governor follow Islamic Law more closely in matters ranging from the subdivisions of the provinces to the appointment of the *mu'addin* (Laoust, *Essai*, 1939:124-125). This level of influence proved too much for his opponents to bear.

It is perhaps best to look at the events of 705/1305-6–709/1309-10 as a whole, that is, as a connected series of trials. The apparent cause of these events began in Jumādā-l-Ulā 705/November 1305, when a group of mystics (*fuqarā'*) of the *Rifā'iyyah* order came to the governor, al-Afram, demanding that Ibn Taymiyyah stop his attacks against them. This led to a debate at the viceregal palace where he denounced their beliefs and practices.[35] Their leading sheikhs, al-Ṣāliḥ and al-Munaybi', claimed that it was merely a matter of legal opinion because they were *Shāfi'ī* and Ibn Taymiyyah was a *Hanbalī*. On hearing this argument, Ibn Taymiyyah

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Although he does denounce certain aspects of Ibn 'Arabî's beliefs, his harshest attacks in this letter are directed at some of the followers of Ibn 'Arabî such as al-Tilimsânî (d. 690/1291) and Ibn Sab'în (d. 669/1270-1). According to Murad (1968:83), Ibn Taymiyyah wrote the letter after his first reading of Ibn 'Arabî's *Fusûs al-Hikam* in 703/1303-4. Murad also states that Ibn Taymiyyah wrote a refutation of Ibn 'Arabî around this time entitled *al-Nusûs 'alâ-l-Fusûs*.

[35]On this occasion, Ibn Taymiyyah challenged their claims of sainthood based on their performance of miraculous deeds such as fire walking. Knowing that they coat their skin with oil, he demanded that they bathe and then perform the fire walking. The mystics, of course, refused this offer. See Ibn Kaṯîr (1407/1987:v.14, p.38).

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got a leading Shāfiʿī scholar, Ibn al-Zamlakānī, to denounce them also. The governor ruled in Ibn Taymiyyah's favor and the mystics had to curtail their activities (Laoust, 1942:135; Murad, 1968:81-82).

Shortly thereafter, in Rajab 705/January 1306, Ibn Taymiyyah was called before a council of judges from the four schools of jurisprudence in Damascus to answer questions concerning his creed. Apparently, this was initiated from Cairo by his main opponents, Nasr al-Manbijī (d. 718/1318-9) and Ibn Makhlūf (d. 719/1319), who had the support of the Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian army, Baybars al-Jāshangīr. The interposition of these two men in Damascene affairs seems to have been prompted by the letter Ibn Taymiyyah wrote to al-Manbijī in 704/1304-5 and by certain points of his creed (Murad, 1968:83). The letter of 704 was part of Ibn Taymiyyah's doctrinal attacks that he had recently initiated against the monism of Ibn ʿArabī, of whom al-Manbijī was an adherent. As for Ibn Taymiyyah's creed, his work known as al-ʿAqīdat al-Wāsitiyyah, became the focal point of the trials (Swartz, 1973:99; Jackson, 1994:49-51). The ʿAqīdah is a short treatise outlining the fundamentals of the salafī creed. He wrote it in 698/1298-9 in response to questions posed by some judges of the city of Wāsit; the details of the creed will be discussed below in Chapter 3. At this first council, Ibn Taymiyyah defended the ʿAqīdah by arguing that what he said concerning the attributes of God were

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in fact the beliefs of the *salaf* and not just of Ibn Hanbal.[36] Unable to respond to his claims, the judges suggested that he write his answers down and present them at a second council (Murad, 1968:85).

The first council was followed by two others, with the eventual outcome that there was reluctant agreement among the judges that Ibn Taymiyyah's creed was orthodox.[37] As for the second trial, the reports are very conflicting and differ to the extent that some versions claim that Ibn Taymiyyah converted to *Ash'arism* while others state that he was carried off victoriously from the council.[38] The confusion most likely prompted the third council which seems to have been more decisive but no less confrontational. For example,

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[36] According to Murad (1968:84), Ibn Taymiyyah used this creed at the first Damascus council to prove that his beliefs had not changed over the years. He was prompted to do this because a forged creed was in fact sent to Baybars al-Jâshangîr.

[37] During these trials, the governor, al-Afram, was not always present in the city. On these occasions, the *Shâfi'î* chief judge Ibn Sasarî interrogated some of Ibn Taymiyyah's supporters and had them imprisoned, including the *Shâfi'î* sheikh and traditionist Jamâl al-Dîn al-Mizzî (d. 741/1340-1). Eventually, al-Afram had them released and ordered a stop to doctrinal discussions; see Laoust (1942:137).

[38] The second council revolved around a lengthy discussion between Ibn Taymiyyah and Safî-l-Dîn al-Hindî, who was not at the first trial. Within the context of proving that all the great scholars of the past eventually came to accept the *salafî* creed as formulated by Ibn Hanbal, which denounces *ta'wîl*, *tahrîf*, *ta'tîl*, *takyîf* and *tamtîl* (these terms are defined in Chapter 3), Ibn Taymiyyah produced a copy of Ibn 'Asâkir's *Tabyîn Kadibi-l-Muftarî fî-mâ Nusiba ilâ-l-Imâm Abî-l-Hasan al-Ash'arî* to prove that al-Ash'arî accepted the beliefs of Ibn Hanbal; see Jackson (1994:51-53). Ibn Taymiyyah's agreement with many points in the *Tabyîn* might well account for the confusion which resulted after the second council. As for the extremes to which people went after the second council, see Murad (1968:126 n18). Murad (ibid:88-89) also states that there was much disorder on the streets of Damascus and that some of Ibn Taymiyyah's supporters were imprisoned. All this was going on while al-Afram was again out of the city on a hunting trip.

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the _Shāfi'ī_ sheikh Sadr al-Dīn ibn al-Murahhil (d. 716/1316-7) reluctantly admitted that Ibn Taymiyyah was correct in stating that al-_Shāfi'ī_ believed that the Quran is the literal word of God (_kalām lafzī_) and that whoever rejects this is a disbeliever. This caused an uproar among some of the _Shāfi'ī_ sheikhs because it implied that the famous _Shāfi'ī_ scholar al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) was a disbeliever, for he had maintained that the Quran is an expression of the meaning of God's essential knowledge (_kalām nafsī_).[39] However, in spite of some dissenting opinions, the matter of Ibn Taymiyyah's creed was settled by default. His arguments that his beliefs were those of the Righteous Predecessors of Islam (_al-salaf al-sālih_) and not just those of Ibn Hanbal were neither whole-heartedly accepted nor clearly refuted. His enemies could prove nothing against him at this time, and so he was freed for the time being. This status changed quickly when he was called to Cairo in Ramadān of the same year on the insistence of Ibn Makhlūf, the _Mālikī_ chief judge (Murad, 1968:91).

At the first council in Cairo (Ramadān 705/April 1306), Ibn Taymiyyah was kept from speaking except to give direct answers to specific questions.[40] Pointing out that Ibn Makhlūf was both his

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[39]According to Murad (1968:90), the _Shāfi'ī_ sheikh Ibn al-Zamlakānī vigorously objected to this implication and sought the support of Ibn Sasarī. However, he refused to take a stance and, realizing he could not support the _madhab_'s position, immediately resigned his post as chief judge; see also Laoust (1942:138). It is at this time that Ibn Taymiyyah came to the support of Ibn Sasarī.

[40]The specific charges were related to "...Ibn Taymiyyah's belief that God is really above the throne, and that He speaks by letter and sound, and that he can be pointed at in a physical sense..." (Murad, 1968:92).

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accuser and judge, he refused to answer any questions. On hearing this, Ibn Makhlūf became furious and had him imprisoned for the first time (Nadwi, 1977:43). He would remain under arrest for about a year and a half. During this time, the *Shāfiʿī* chief judge Ibn Jamāʿah made public what he viewed as an official *Shāfiʿī* doctrine, in which everyone had to acquiesce. Part of this statement was that the creed of Ibn Taymiyyah was officially condemned and that everyone, particularly the *Hanbalīs*, had to denounce him and his creed. This decree was effective in Egypt and Syria (Murad, 1968:92-93).

It was a year later, in Shawwāl 706/April 1307, that a second council was called by the efforts of the governor of Egypt, Sallār, who wanted to have Ibn Taymiyyah freed.[41] Ibn Taymiyyah was not at this council when it was decided that he could be freed if he denounced his own creed. Six offers were made to him to come and discuss the matter, but he refused to attend so long as they insisted on this condition (Ibn Katīr, 1407/1987:v.14, p.44). Sallār persisted in his efforts, and finally a third council was called in Safar 707/August 1307, in which Ibn Taymiyyah met with the *Shāfiʿī* chief judge Ibn Jamāʿah.[42] After a lengthy conversation between them,

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[41] In the brutal struggles between various Mameluke emirs, as each attempted to claim the sultanate for himself, there were frequent, and at times confusing, shifts in allegiances. However, it seems clear that Sallār was engaged in a long power struggle with al-Jāshangîr. Thus, although Sallār fulfilled his religious duties as a Muslim, it is not clear that his motives for supporting Ibn Taymiyyah were purely for religious reasons. See Irwin (1986:85-95).

[42] A couple of months before this meeting, in Dū-l-Hijjah 706/June 1307, Sallār arranged a meeting between Ibn Makhlūf and Ibn Taymiyyah's two brothers who were imprisoned with him at that time. According to the reports,

Ibn Taymiyyah stuck to his original demands and refused to leave the prison (Ibn Katîr, 1407/1987:v.14, p.47). Thus Sallār's intervention on behalf of Ibn Taymiyyah ended without success.

However, a second effort to free him turned out more successful. In Rabî' al-Awwal 707/September 1307, the Syrian Emir Husâm al-Dîn Muhannâ ibn 'Isâ (d. 735/1335)[43] secured the sultan's permission to have Ibn Taymiyyah released (Laoust, 1942:141; Murad, 1968:96). However, his release was immediately followed up by three more councils. These were basically discussions between the governor and various scholars without the participation of the judges, who felt these talks were useless because the sultan had already released Ibn Taymiyyah. At the second council, for example, the judges actually sent excuses for not coming, some stating that they were sick. After the third council in Rabî' al-Tânî/October, Ibn Taymiyyah was free to lecture once again.[44]

But this freedom would not last long. In Shawwâl 707/April 1308, a group of Sufis led by the chief sheikh of Khânqâh Sa'îd al-

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their arguments were more convincing than Ibn Makhlûf's but to no avail (Laoust, 1942:141; Murad, 1968:95).

[43]Ibn Katîr (1407/1987:v.14, p.47) refers to him as a king of the Arabs (malik al-'arab). In his obituary notice (ibid:182), Ibn Katîr reports that Husâm al-Dîn had a great love for Ibn Taymiyyah, who was honored amongst the tribes of Syria. See also Irwin (1986:81), who indicates that Muhannâ ibn 'Isâ had his own difficulties with the ongoing power struggles between the Mamelukes, having been treacherously imprisoned in 692/1293.

[44]It seems that Ibn Taymiyyah had given consent to an interdiction against public speaking. However, on Friday, 30 Rabî' al-Awwal, he was pressed to give a talk after the Jum'ah prayer. He answered the request by "...speaking until the evening on the meaning of 'ibâda and isti'âna" (Murad, 1968:97). This most likely had led to the third council on 6 Rabî' al-Tânî.

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Su'adā', Karīm al-Dīn al-Amūlī (d. 710/1310-11), and the Sufi sheikh Ibn 'Atā'-Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309-10), demonstrated at the Cairo citadel against Ibn Taymiyyah's denouncements of various forms of pantheism (literally, *ittihād*), especially that of Ibn 'Arabī. This led to a new trial again headed by Badr al-Dīn ibn Jamā'ah. Although nothing could be proved against him,[45] numerous complaints eventually forced the authorities to do something with Ibn Taymiyyah, who was given the offer to go to Alexandria, to Damascus or to prison. When no judge was willing to issue an order against him, however, he volunteered to return to prison for the benefit of all (*maslahah*).[46] He was detained for a short time and then released on the request of various sheikhs. During this detention, as with the previous ones, Ibn Taymiyyah was permitted to have a servant as well as visitors. He also continued lecturing and

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[45]The main complaint against him was that he claimed that seeking aid (*istighātah*) and intercession (*tawassul*) could not be sought from the Prophet, for he, as with anyone who has died, cannot benefit the living. The Prophet's intercession will only occur, says Ibn Taymiyyah, on the Day of Resurrection. Although his arguments could not be denied, Ibn Jamā'ah reprimanded him for sounding disrespectful to the Prophet (Laoust, 1942:143). In 711/1311-2, Ibn Taymiyyah wrote a letter on the topic of the Prophet's intercession, which he later incorporated into his book *Qā'idah fī-l-Tawassul wa-l-Wasīlah* (pp.313-358).

[46]Ibn Taymiyyah originally chose to return to Damascus and had set out for Syria when Ibn Makhlūq called him back to stand trial; see Ibn Katīr (1407/1987:v.14, p.48) and Murad (1968:99). All this occurred on 18 Shawwāl 707. Note: Murad (ibid:99-101 and 130 n31) contends that Ibn Taymiyyah was detained continuously from Shawwāl 707 to Safar 709, including his transfer to Alexandria, and that Ibn Katīr is wrong in stating that he was released in 707 and only sent to Alexandria when al-Jāshangīr came to power. His claim will need further investigation, for it is not reported elsewhere, as far as I know; see Laoust (1971:952) who maintains the events as depicted by Ibn Katīr. I shall report the events according to Ibn Katīr's version.

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writing from his cell. This was one reason why his enemies felt it better to have him out of Cairo altogether. This was accomplished when political turmoil brought his adversary, Baybars al-Jāshangīr, to the sultanate in Shawwāl 708/April 1309.

Ibn Taymiyyah's Alexandrian exile coincided with the short reign of al-Jāshangīr, who supported Nasr al-Manbijī and Ibn Makhlūf. But in spite of his opposition to Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Jāshangīr still sought his approval, along with that of the other *'ulamā'*, for the legitimacy of his reign. However, Ibn Taymiyyah's reply was that "his days are numbered, his leadership is finished and his rule is drawing to a close."[47] Because of this and his continued attacks against the monism of Ibn 'Arabī, he was sent to Alexandria in Safar 709/August 1309. He was detained at the sultan's palace in a room with one window overlooking the sea and one opened to the city, the hope being that someone there would expedite his demise.[48] Such hopes on the part of his enemies notwithstanding, the eight months he spent there were actually very productive, for he was able to meet with visitors and to write numerous letters and essays. He held various meetings with leading *Mālikī* and *Zāhirī* scholars and with Sufi followers of Ibn 'Arabī and Ibn Sab'īn (d. 669/1270-1),[49] some of whom he was able to gain as supporters. In

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[47]See Ibn Katīr (1407/1987:v.14, p.52), Laoust (1942:144) and Irwin (1986:96).

[48]Ibn Katīr (1407/1987:v.14, p.52) states that Ibn Taymiyyah's friends and family were extremely anxious about his stay in Alexandria because he had no close supporters there, and the various Sufi groups were very popular; see also (Laoust, 1942:145).

[49]For a brief biography of Ibn Sab'īn, see Faure (1971: S.V. "Ibn Sab'īn").

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the meantime, events were progressing toward the downfall of Baybars al-Jāshangîr and Nasr al-Manbijî. Al-Nâsir Muhammad regained control of Damascus in Shaʻbân 709/January 1310 and returned victoriously to Cairo in Shawwâl/March of that year. On returning to power, al-Nâsir invited Ibn Taymiyyah to the royal court and treated him as a honored guest.[50] A brief period in which he enjoyed the favor of the sultan meant that he was no longer in direct confrontation with the authorities but not that he was free of opposition.

Ibn Taymiyyah remained in Cairo for a few years during which time he continued teaching. But trouble and controversy were never far behind, and there were several incidents in which he was accosted and beaten by angry mobs (Nadwi, 1977:49). One particular incident in Rajab 711/December 1311 almost caused a riot as Ibn Taymiyyah's supporters came to his rescue. The fact that he forgave his attackers and that he ordered no revenge be taken against them brought the turmoil to an end. Finally in Shawwâl 712/February 1313, Ibn Taymiyyah left Egypt, returning to Damascus on 1 Dū-l-Qaʻdah/2 March. He remained there until his death in Dū-l-Qaʻdah 728/September 1328.

During these final years in Damascus, Ibn Taymiyyah concerned himself mostly with teaching and writing. However,

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[50]Ibn Taymiyyah's good treatment by al-Nâsir Muhammad was most likely in return for his resistance to al-Jāshangîr. If al-Nâsir had hoped to gain Ibn Taymiyyah as a loyal supporter, his hopes were soon disappointed. Ibn Taymiyyah acted as an advisor to al-Nâsir for some time, but refused to sanction any action that he felt contradicted Islamic Law and did not hesitate to chastise the sultan on a number of occasions; see Murad (1968:101-102).

there were two more episodes of bitter conflict with his opponents that led to his imprisonment on both occasions. The first incident concerned his ruling against the oath of divorce (*hilf bi-l-talāq*). Once again a major problem arose because Ibn Taymiyyah differed from the contemporary thinking of the four schools of jurisprudence on this issue.[51] He refused to accept that a man could divorce his wife based on an oath unrelated to the marriage situation. In what had become a common practice, a man would declare that if he did a certain action or failed to do something, he would divorce his wife. For Ibn Taymiyyah, this was nothing less than wagering one's marriage in pursuit of a particular goal.[52] Influenced by Ibn Taymiyyah's opponents, Sultan al-Nāsir ordered him to stop giving *fatāwā* on this topic. As is to be expected, his beliefs on this matter outweighed all consequences, and so he refused to remain quiet. Three councils were convened over a two year period to discuss his

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[51]Although his contemporaries accepted the validity of the oath of divorce, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, there is a difference of opinion on this matter. Abū Hanīfah ruled that a divorce based on an oath should not take place, but Ibn Hanbal said it should. Also, some *Shāfi'ī* and *Mālikī* scholars said it should take place. See Makari (1976:109).

[52]Ibn Taymiyyah's legal reasoning related to *hilf bi-l-talāq* can be summarized as follows: 1) a pronouncement of divorce must be intentional and unconditional; 2) a divorce oath does not have divorce as the ultimate end and so is ineffectual; 3) although the divorce oath is not valid, atonement for breaking the oath is required. For a complete discussion concerning Ibn Taymiyyah's position concerning *hilf bi-l-talāq* as well as for his opponents counterarguments, see Makari (1976:107-112) and Abū Zahrah (no date:414-436).

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position. Finally, at the third council the governor, Tankiz,[53] ordered Ibn Taymiyyah's arrest for his persistent disobedience. He was imprisoned for six months between Rajab 720/August 1320 and Muharram 721/February 1321.[54]

The second incident was related to Ibn Taymiyyah's views on the visitation of graves (ziyārah).[55] The populace of Syria and Egypt were in turmoil when some of his enemies circulated a ruling he had written seventeen years earlier strictly prohibiting the visitation of graves for the purpose of worship. In this case, the opposition was led by the Mālikī chief judge Muhammad ibn Abī Bakr al-Ikhnā'ī (d. 732/1331-2), who had been the protégé of Ibn Taymiyyah's former opponent in Egypt, Nasr al-Manbijī (d. 718/1318). Al-

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[53]Sayf al-Dîn Tankiz al-Husâmî was the powerful, almost semi-independent, governor of Syria from 712/1312-3 until 740/1339-40. However, he remained quite loyal to Sultan al-Nâsir Muhammad. He established a period of calm in Syria that witnessed various reconstruction projects. He kept a neutral stance toward Ibn Taymiyyah, occasionally intervening on his behalf. But his main concern was keeping order. When the sultan fell ill in 740, he feared that Tankiz would revolt, and so he had him tortured and killed; see Irwin (1986:121). Al-Nâsir died in 741/1340-1.

[54]According to Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:144-145), the first council took place on 1 Jumâdâ-I-Ulâ 718/2 July 1318, the second on 29 Ramadân 719/14 November 1319, and the last on 12 Rajab 720/19 August 1320. He was released by order of the sultan on the 10th of Muharram, the day of 'Ashûrâ'.

[55]The details of Ibn Taymiyyah's rulings on the visitation of graves and the act of supplicating to the dead are presented by Memon (1976:263-297). To summarize, he allows Muslims to visit graves as a reminder of death and to supplicate to God on behalf of the dead. But he forbids Muslims to make pilgrimages to graves with the intent that the deceased can intercede for the living or grant favors for the living or that supplications at the graves of prophets and saints are more likely to be answered. All such acts that Ibn Taymiyyah forbade were in common practice during his time and had received the approval of many 'ulamâ'. For a comparison of Ibn Taymiyyah's views with those of al-Ghazâlî, who permits pilgrimages to graves but with similar restrictions as mentioned by Ibn Taymiyyah, see Taylor (1989:120-137).

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Ikhnā'ī had become one of Sultan al-Nāsir's close advisors and pressed for a strong response against the *Hanbalī* sheikh. Although Ibn Taymiyyah accused al-Ikhnā'ī of intentionally spreading lies about his opinion on this matter, the public disturbances forced the sultan to order Ibn Taymiyyah's imprisonment in Sha'bān 726/July 1326. He obligingly entered the citadel, which would become his final abode until his death.

During this last imprisonment there was a great outpouring of support for Ibn Taymiyyah. Scholars from Baghdad and other cities outside the Mameluke empire had petitioned the sultan to release him (Nadwi, 1977:56). But the situation worsened as Ibn Taymiyyah's enemies became increasingly frustrated by his relentless attacks written from his comfortable cell in the citadel. By Jumādā-l-Akhirah 728/April 1328 the sultan was persuaded to forbid him from having any books or writing materials; this action was carried out in Shawwāl/August.[56] By Dū-l-Qa'dah, Ibn Taymiyyah had fallen ill, and on the 20th of the month (27 September) the 65 year old *Hanbalī* scholar departed from this life. After the announcements were made from the minarets that Ibn Taymiyyah had died, the gates of the city were opened to accommodate the crowds coming in to participate in the funeral. In spite of the

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[56]This move was instigated by the *Mālikī* chief judge al-Ikhnā'ī, who had in the meantime become the target of a harsh refutation from Ibn Taymiyyah concerning the visitation of graves. As for the material that was taken from him, Ibn Katīr (1407/1987:v.14, p.140) reports that 60 volumes and 14 packages of notes were confiscated and brought to the 'Adiliyyah library. The works were reviewed by various sheikhs and judges, who divided them amongst themselves.

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controversies surrounding his final imprisonment, the funeral procession of this beloved sheikh turned out to be one of the largest ever in Damascus.[57]

Part C: A Personal Profile of Ibn Taymiyyah

The purpose of this section is to give the reader a broader view of Ibn Taymiyyah's personality and to place his human strengths and frailties within the context of his beliefs and actions. Behind the clash of convictions concerning dogma and the role of social and religious institutions, there lies the drama of conflicting individual characteristics and temperaments. In this section, I shall suggest some possible influences that Ibn Taymiyyah's personality had on his trials and tribulations. It might well be that the causes of Ibn Taymiyyah's trials, periods of detention and his overall conflicts with the political and religious authorities of his time will never be fully satisfactorily explained. The complex issues associated with the interaction between a highly motivated and creative individual and a conservative society intent on defending the status quo are but one factor needed to be understood in explaining Ibn Taymiyyah's role in Mameluke society. The added factor of religious sensibilities, the fact that Mameluke society existed within the immediacy of the religious world of Islam, raises the intensity of this conflict between

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[57]Descriptions of the events surrounding Ibn Taymiyyah's funeral are given by Ibn Katîr (1407/1987:v.14, pp.141-146), Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:147-150), ibid. (1942:159), and Nadwi (1977:59-60).

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the individual and society because almost every issue of debate became a matter related to true belief and eternal salvation. Within this complex of competing Islamic world views, Ibn Taymiyyah pushed his point of view to the extreme.

Since Henri Laoust's monumental study of Ibn Taymiyyah's social and political doctrines, scholars of Ibn Taymiyyah, of whom there are too few, have sought to understand the dynamics of his doctrines within the social setting of the times.[58] Moreover, Laoust's work on the *Hanbalī maḏhab* in general has added significantly to our understanding of the role of the traditionists in the history and development of Islamic thought. This has led another scholar, G. Makdisi, a student of Laoust, to state that it is the *Hanbalīs* who are "...in the vanguard of the traditionalist movement." This movement, he claims, is challenging us to rethink "...our idea of Muslim orthodoxy," which he defines as "...Sunni orthodoxy, represented since the third/ninth century by the four schools of Sunni law...."[59] The particular views of these scholars of

[58]Laoust's *Essai sur les Doctrines sociales et politique de Takî-d-Dîn Ahmad b. Taimîya*, which appeared in 1939, overturned many of the opinions about Ibn Taymiyyah held at that time. He also set the agenda for future studies on the *Hanbalī* scholar. Makari's study entitled *The Social Factor in Ibn Taymiyyah's Ethics*, for example, follows Laoust by focusing on Ibn Taymiyyah's ability to reconcile diverse opinions in his attempt to retrieve the spirit of unity and harmony that he saw in the community of the Companions. As for the matter of his conflicts with the religious and political authorities, D. Little (1973) in his article "The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol.4, no.3 (July), pp.311-27, has made many valuable observations.
[59]These quotes are from Makdisi (1981:264). In his critique of certain Orientalist attitudes toward the *Hanbalīs*, Makdisi, in his article "Hanbalite Islam" (in *Studies on Islam*, trans. by Merlin Swartz, New York: Oxford University Press), identifies five Orientalists, Patton, Juynboll, Schreiner,

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the *Hanbalī madhab* notwithstanding, there is still a need to correct a lingering negative image of the *Hanbalīs* and of Ibn Taymiyyah, and, more importantly, to proceed with more focused research on the contributions of traditionists like Ibn Taymiyyah to the development of Islamic thought.

The problems facing the scholars willing to embark on this path are no less daunting than when Laoust was working on his thesis more than a half century ago. This only highlights the need for more serious studies on Ibn Taymiyyah. For example, the lack of a clearer view of the chronology of his writings is still hindering attempts at better understanding the development of his thinking.[60] Only when this initial task begins to move toward completion, can we begin to analyze more clearly how political and social issues affected Ibn Taymiyyah's thinking and vice versa. Also, there are still some paradoxes concerning Ibn Taymiyyah's trials that remain unresolved. Most notably, for example, is that although theological

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Macdonald, and Goldziher, as the leading scholars of the *Hanbalīs*. Of these five, he states that two of them, Goldziher and Macdonald, contributed the most in establishing an anti-*Hanbalī* bias in Orientalism, for both of them "...went to some lengths to discredit this school" (1981:220). Their bias, he states, was in favor of a "quasi-romantic" notion that the great fifth/eleventh century scholar al-Ghazālī and the Seljuk vizier Nizâm al-Mulk established *Ash'arism* as the new state-sponsored orthodoxy (p.222). They formulated this notion, in part, because of their reliance on pro-*Ash'arī* sources such as al-Subkî (d. 771/1370). Makdisi places this bias in a framework of nineteenth century Orientalism, which, he states, was "...the great enemy of Hanbalite studies" (p.219). One proof of this, he says, is that Brockelmann in his *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur* (*GAL*, 1:181 and *Supp.*, 1:308) considers the *Hanbalīs* as "...one of the 'insignificant' (unbedeutend) schools" (p.219).

[60]Laoust (1942:150) remarks that it would be very interesting to establish a rigorous chronology of Ibn Taymiyyah's works, for although his doctrines were formed very early on, they were not lacking in development and increased nuances.

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debates were always in the forefront during the trials and were of deep importance, their actual significance on the final outcome of the trials can be questioned on the grounds that Ibn Taymiyyah could have avoided much controversy by admitting that his beliefs were those of Ibn Hanbal, and thus of the *Hanbalī madhab*. Thus it remains open to interpretation whether it was the beliefs themselves that were the real issue or the maintenance of the authority of the *madāhib*. I am inclined to think that the latter issue was more important for his opponents because some of his greatest controversies revolved around his insistence that his creed (*'aqīdah*) was the creed of the Righteous Predecessors. This insistence aimed at undermining the permissibility of divergent beliefs that were sanctioned under the name of the authority of the *madāhib*. His constant attacks against any deviation from his interpretation of the creed of the *salaf* threatened to upset the status quo of the four schools of jurisprudence.[61] It is extremely important, however, to clarify that his attacks were in fact against the institutionalization of the legal schools and not against the legitimacy of the schools

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[61] This point has been made by Murad (1968:85-86). Concerning Ibn Taymiyyah's emphasis on the *salafī* doctrine and his belief that it must be the basis for Muslim society, Curtis (1989:17-20) identifies Ibn Taymiyyah as the one who spearheaded an eighth/fourteenth century *salafī* movement that opposed the *Ash'arī-Shāfi'ī* religious bureaucracy of the Mameluke state. The conflict was actually between the traditionists and the *Ash'arī* rationalists, for there were many *Shāfi'ī* traditionists who supported Ibn Taymiyyah and carried on with his teachings. Curtis brings this point out very clearly in his analysis of the exegetical work of the great *Shāfi'ī* scholar and student of Ibn Taymiyyah, Abū-l-Fidā' Ismā'īl ibn Kaṭīr (d. 774/1372-3).

themselves.[62] His attacks were against the complacency towards, or the outright cooperation with, innovations and false practices by religious leaders who were attracted to the prestige and wealth associated with social customs such as the cult of saints.[63] This in fact becomes a key issue in the life of Ibn Taymiyyah, for it must be remembered that his doctrinal stance on various points of creed were never successfully challenged. His defense of certain theological beliefs as the only acceptable beliefs for all Muslims greatly disturbed many of the 'ulamā' who defended the religious foundations upon which Mameluke society was based. He challenged the political and religious powers and refused to sacrifice his concepts of proper Islamic beliefs and practices in order to appease the defenders of the status quo.

Within the context of these debates over creed, Ibn Taymiyyah's own personality must be viewed as an additional factor that had further aggravated the 'ulamā' who most strongly embraced the religious conservatism of the times.[64] Motivated by his own

[62]Based on Ibn Taymiyyah's own writings, it is clear that he considered himself a follower of Ibn Hanbal and a jurisprudent of the *Hanbalī madhab*. However, he maintains that although it is permissible for the common man ('*āmmī*) to follow one *madhab* (*taqlīd*), it is a necessity for those capable of it to seek the truth even if it lies outside one's juridical affiliation. I shall discuss this point further in Chapter 2, section 2. For a detailed review of Ibn Taymiyyah's juridical beliefs, see Makari (1976:85-112), and for a lengthier discussion of his views on *fiqh, usūl al-fiqh* and *ijtihād*, see Abū Zahrah (no date:350-508).

[63]The dangers of leadership positions, social status and wealth, are important themes appearing in Ibn Taymiyyah's theology of worship. He views these issues as means that lead to the enslavement of a soul to created beings; see below Chapter 5, section 3.

[64]Makari (1976:14-19) states that intellectual and theological thought had become stagnant in spite of the great quantity of works produced during this

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beliefs and the circumstances of the age in which he lived, Ibn Taymiyyah felt compelled to defend the Islam of the *salaf* in the face of attacks from invading armies and from corrupt beliefs that he saw creeping into the thinking of all Muslims, the scholars as well as the masses. As Hallaq (1993:xii) has pointed out, Ibn Taymiyyah was committed to protecting "...the Sunni Weltanschauung that was dictated by the letter of the Quran and the Sunna of the Prophet." This awareness of a unique and important mission to preserve a pure Islam has been part of the attitude of the traditionists going back to the first century of the Hijrah.[65] Faced with the various innovations of theological, philosophical and mystical speculations on the interpretation of the Quran and Sunnah, Ibn Taymiyyah utilizes the orthodox tradition of the "Hadith folk" as his main

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period. Also, the social passivism of the Sufi orders added to a general lethargy in matters of public affairs. These two points particularly inspired Ibn Taymiyyah to call for religious reforms.

[65]Flück (1981:106) states that the early traditionists did not see themselves in "a missionary capacity" to spread traditionism into the new frontiers of the expanding empire. Their task was "...that of combatting 'innovation' (*bid'a*) opposed to the *sunna.*"

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weapon against deviation and heresy.[66] Thus Hallaq (1993:1) correctly identifies a key factor influencing Ibn Taymiyyah's writings, namely, that his unique mission is to "dissuade Muslims from the heretical beliefs of the Sufis, philosophers, speculative theologians, the Shī'īs, and a score of other groups." For Ibn Taymiyyah, this unique mission was nothing less than a divinely-inspired mission in which he felt compelled to engage. This point is made clearer upon inspection of a letter he wrote to his mother while he was in Egypt.[67]

In his biography of Ibn Taymiyyah, Abū Zahrah (no date:63-64) states that after the Emir Muhannā ibn 'Isā secured his release from detention in Rabī' al-Awwal 707/September 1307, Ibn Taymiyyah wrote a letter to his mother in Damascus stating his reasons for

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[66]Hodgson (1974:385-395) uses the term "Hadith folk" as a direct translation of the Arabic *ahl al-hadīt*. These are the people who hold that the narrations "...about the Prophet formed the chief source of religious authority" (p.386). Besides distinguishing them from the rationalists, the Shiites and the Sufis, Hodgson states that they also opposed "traditionalism." Here he is using the term tradition in its lexical meaning of a long-established custom or practice. He associates traditionalism with local traditions that were often incorporated into the development of Islamic Law. The hadiths in many cases contradicted these local traditions (pp.252-256). As for the term "traditionist," I am using it in reference to those who study the hadith in order to abstract beliefs and practices from the Sunnah. This concept of "traditionism" is closely related to the idea of orthodoxy in the sense that it stems from the statements and activities of the Righteous Predecessors. The development of a traditionist and orthodox school of thought that eventually crystallized in the teachings and actions of Ahmad ibn Hanbal has been documented by Fück (1981:99-108). I shall elaborate on this point in Chapter 2.
[67]I became aware of the issue of Ibn Taymiyyah's motivation in connection with his letter to his mother when reading Hallaq (1993:1), who alludes to Ibn Taymiyyah's desire to seek a double reward in the hereafter by "...exposing the heresies of those whom he believed to be the enemies of Islam...."

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staying in Cairo.[68] In this letter he states that conditions necessitate his stay, for if he were to leave, the affairs of the world and the religion would deteriorate. He emphasizes that it is not by choice that he stays, for he would rather be with her and his friends and supporters in Damascus. Also, he states that his intention is to stay a short while, but he must supplicate God about this, for He knows and determines all things. He stresses that it is not worldly matters that keep them separated, but the affairs of the religion. For he fears a dual harm would come about if he neglects his religious duties. In commenting on this letter, Abū Zahrah states that in following the Prophet and the Righteous Predecessors, Ibn Taymiyyah felt a need to teach and explain the truth about Islam to the Muslims and to protect them from deviations. This would aid in preventing the first harm, which is that the Muslims would persist in following false beliefs. As for the second harm, Abū Zahrah relates it to Ibn Taymiyyah's position as a scholar by stating that he had to prove that the accusations against him were unfounded. The second harm would befall him personally, for as a scholar he would have failed in his duties and would be accountable for this on the Day of Resurrection.

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[68]According to Ibn Katîr (1407/1987:v.14, p.81), Ibn Taymiyyah's mother, Sitt al-Mun'im bint 'Abd al-Rahmân ibn 'Alî ibn 'Abdûs al-Harrâniyyah, died in Shawwâl 716/December 1316. This means that Ibn Taymiyyah was with his mother in Damascus during the last years of her life. Her death left him with only his two brothers, for one curious aspect of his life is that he did not marry or have concubines. Thus he had no family of his own. On the issue of Ibn Taymiyyah's celibacy, which is forbidden according to orthodox tradition, the biographical sources have little to say; see Little (1975:105).

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It is probable that Ibn Taymiyyah was concerned with clearing his name and protecting his reputation as well as being concerned about his fate in the hereafter. However, there are various aspects of his personal life that must be to taken into consideration in determining just what that reputation was. It is well attested to by friends and enemies alike that Ibn Taymiyyah lived an extremely pious and austere life.[69] It is known that he lived a life of poverty and immediately gave away any money he received.[70] Also, he never accepted any gifts from the sultan, the emirs, or any wealthy patrons (Laoust, *Essai*, 1939:115). Except for his teaching positions at various *madāris*, he also never accepted any official appointment or government position such as judge (*qādī*) or guardian of public morals (*muhtasib*). In general, Ibn Taymiyyah remained outside religious and state bureaucratic circles. This point obviously frustrated some of his opponents who saw him as the pest that flies about annoying everyone. This might well explain Sāfī-l-Dīn al-Hindī's comment at the council of 698/1298-9: "I consider you, O Ibn Taymiyyah, as nothing but a sparrow, when I want to catch you at one place, you fly off to another."[71] If this was the attitude of his

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[69]Many of the descriptions of Ibn Taymiyyah's lifestyle are reported by al-Bazzâr (1396/1976:37-52). He discusses Ibn Taymiyyah's acts of worship, his austere practices, his complete disinterest in even the simplest comforts of this life, his life of poverty, and his manner of dressing. A less detailed review of some of these aspects of Ibn Taymiyyah's personal life are reported by Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:115).

[70]Eventually, his brothers took over the management of his financial affairs; see Little (1975:105). Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:115) reports that he never engaged in any commercial or business transactions.

[71]See the editors note in al-Bazzâr (1396/1976:85 n3).

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opponents in 698, one can only imagine how they felt as his influence on society increased in the years leading up to the trials of 705.

Ibn Taymiyyah's attitude concerning the correctness of his beliefs and the need to propagate them obviously did not fare well with many of the religious elite of his day. However, there is another aspect of his personality that compounded the controversies resulting from the doctrinal debates. When tied in with the intricacies of his attacks against the beliefs and practices permitted by many religious scholars, Ibn Taymiyyah's own aggressive attitude seems to have exacerbated the situation. The issue of a mutual, personal enmity between Ibn Taymiyyah and his opponents is referred to by many contemporary historians and biographers (Little, 1973:323). As for Ibn Taymiyyah himself, even his closest supporters and students faulted him on his anger and vanity. For example, al-Dahabi criticized his pride and vanity while Ibn Rajab reports that his anger turned him into a "raging lion" (Little, 1975:105). One can only guess how different the situation might have been if he was less extreme, especially when his opponents, such as Ibn Makhluf, attested to his piety and virtue. Yet, as Little (1975:112) points out, it was most likely this extremeness of attitude that made him such a vital figure in his time as well as today.

The anger and frustration of many of the religious leaders toward Ibn Taymiyyah could be explained as stemming from their inability to prove him wrong on doctrinal issues and from a simple

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dislike of the man himself. Thus his opponents often resorted to accusations based on the idea that he was upsetting not only the traditional religious scholarship of the *maḏāhib* but also affairs of state. This would explain some of the charges leveled against him:[72] 1) he was a threat to the government along the lines of the sixth/twelfth century North African rebel Ibn Tūmart and the Muwahhidūn,[73] 2) he corrupted the minds of many emirs in Syria, and 3) he collaborated with the Mongols and later with groups of Mamelukes to unseat the sultan's representative in Damascus. Although Sultan al-Nāsir Muhammad did not seem to have taken these charges too seriously, many of the ruling elite did. In any case, it was Ibn Taymiyyah's propensity to disrupt the social order, regardless of whether he could justify his beliefs or not, that drove the state authorities to move against him.

Throughout the latter half of his life, Ibn Taymiyyah was confronted by opponents from a wide range of social classes. Likewise, his supporters came from many of the same segments of society. His calls for a reform of society according to the beliefs and practices of the *salaf* represent his reaction to a society that he believed was being pushed further from that ideal. For Ibn Taymiyyah, Islam meant only one thing: the proper worship of God according to the earliest community of Muslims. A harmonious society, he felt, could only flourish from a basis in that idea of

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[72]I am summarizing these points based on the observations of Little (1973:322).

[73]Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:128) indicates that this charge was brought before al-Jāshangīr by Ibn Makhlūf and al-Manbijī.

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worship. With this in mind, I shall now discuss the sources and methodology Ibn Taymiyyah uses in formulating his theology of worship.

Chapter 2: The Major Aspects of Ibn Taymiyyah's Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the major sources which form the basis of Ibn Taymiyyah's religious views and to explain how he uses these sources in formulating his beliefs. In reading through Ibn Taymiyyah's writings, one soon realizes that there are five elements that form the foundation of his religious thought. These are the Quran, the Sunnah of the Prophet, the practice and statements of the Companions, the opinions of the Followers and the Arabic language. Using these sources, Ibn Taymiyyah expounds an understanding of Islam which is for him the only understanding identifiable with the beliefs and practices of the Prophet. Although there is nothing unique in using these sources as the basis of Muslim theology,[1] the particular methodology abstracted from these sources, which he claims is in accordance with the methodology of the *salaf*, places his discourse on theology within a clearly defined historical trend and distinguishes it from the discourse of other Muslim groups. In attempting to define the "legitimate" boundaries of theological discourse, Ibn Taymiyyah utilizes a traditionist approach to these sources. He follows the methodology of the *Ahl al-Hadīt*, in general, and of the *Hanbalī madhab*, in particular. However, he not only adheres to this traditionist methodology of the *salaf* but stands out as its

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[1] Ibn Taymiyyah is well aware that every Muslim group claims to be following the Sunnah and that each group views the others as engaging in innovations. See his comments in *al-Istiqāmah*, v.1, p.13.

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preeminent spokesman at the beginning of the 8th/14th century.[2]
His arguments supporting his interpretation of the revealed texts,
which for him means both the Quran and authentic hadiths, are
based on this orthodox tradition, and, as he repeatedly points out,
represent the methodology and beliefs of the four Imams and other
great scholars of early Islam.

For Ibn Taymiyyah, the faith, knowledge and practice derived
from these five sources constitute the beginning and end of Islam.
His position is that Muslims, in general, and the scholars, in
particular, must utilize the methodology of the *salaf* in matters of
creed and practice. As we saw in Chapter 1, this stance placed him
in opposition to those jurisprudents of the four *madāhib* who sought
to codify the Law based on the dialectical arguments of *usūl al-fiqh*
as borrowed from the *kalām*, and to the *Ash'arī* theologians who
sought to promote *kalām* arguments concerning *'aqīdah*.[3]

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[2] Curtis (1989:18 and 259 n111) identifies a "*salafī* movement" that
crystallized around Ibn Taymiyyah at the beginning of the 8th/14th century
and ended unofficially with the death of Ibn Taymiyyah's student, the great
Shāfi'ī traditionist Abū-l-Fidā' ibn Katīr (d. 774/1373).

[3] Besides his conflicts with the *Ash'arī* theologians and the *fuqahā'* of the three
other *madāhib*, Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:76-80) points out that Ibn Taymiyyah
criticizes earlier *Hanbalī* scholars who deviated from Ahmad ibn Hanbal's
insistence on relying solely on the revealed texts. Ibn Taymiyyah considers
anyone who accepts speculative theology and logic as being equal, or superior,
to revelation to have deviated from Ahmad's position. Also, those *Hanbalī*
scholars involved with the *kalām* or with objectionable Sufi practices were
censured for these particular faults. His criticism in these matters is directed
at certain scholars of the *Hanbalī madhab* such as Ibn 'Aqīl (d. 513/1119-20)
for his use of the *kalām* and Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāmah (d. 620/1223) for
his compliance with the Sufi cult of saints. It must be noted, however, that his
criticism is limited to only those points that he finds objectionable in the
writings of these scholars, for he had studied and continued to utilize the
works of these and other *Hanbalīs*.

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Moreover, Ibn Taymiyyah's writings on legal and theological issues are based on the principle that revelation and methodology are necessarily and intricately linked together.[4] His premise is that within revelation itself is to be found the means to understand, interpret and practice that revelation; thus, no sources or methods outside the totality of Islamic revelation are permitted to be utilized to interpret and practice that revelation. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, the Quran is manifested in the statements and actions of the Prophet, and it is his Sunnah that is scrupulously followed by the Companions (sahābah). Their manifestation of Islam ultimately represents the highest attainable religious state for which any Muslim could hope. Thus the Companions and, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, the Followers become the model by which all other groups are judged.

In explaining Ibn Taymiyyah's position relative to these sources and the methodology abstracted from them, I shall divide

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[4]This is Ibn Taymiyyah's guiding principle in reference to all aspects of the Islamic sciences. Thus he uses the concept of "kalām" in a broader sense to describe any principles and methodologies falling outside his "salafī principles." The division of Islamic knowledge into the two categories of "legal" (fiqh) and "theological" (kalām, in a restricted sense) occurred gradually during the end of the first century and the beginning of the second century of the Hijrah. Wolfson (1976:1-5) identifies this division as part of the development of kalām in its pre-Mutazilite stage. Briefly stated, after the death of the Prophet the Muslims began discussing matters related to law and practice. At that time some scholars started using analogy (qiyās) to help solve novel problems that arose. As the early community began differing over the concepts of faith and the nature of God, some of the Muslims started using analogy to answer these problems. Thus kalām, which in general strives to arrive at a solution through reasoning, came to be solely associated with issues of faith and belief, in contradistinction to fiqh, which is the discussion of practical legal issues. As we shall see below, pp. 135-137, Ibn Taymiyyah uses kalām in its broader meaning when he describes its influence on fiqh.

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this chapter into three parts. Part A will deal with his approach to understanding the first mentioned source, the Quran, which will include a discussion of his hermeneutics. Part B will focus on the second, third and fourth sources by describing the role of the Companions and the Followers as the transmitters of the true beliefs and practices of the Prophet. Their role as unquestionable authorities, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, presupposes their trustworthiness in practicing as well as transmitting the Prophet's Sunnah. The last section of this chapter, Part C, will detail the manner in which he uses the fifth source, the Arabic language, as a further means of defining the scope of theological discourse.

Part A: The Quran

1 Hermeneutics

For Ibn Taymiyyah, in accordance with the unanimous agreement of Muslims, the Quran is the actual word of God that was revealed directly to the Prophet by way of the archangel Gabriel. It was written down during his lifetime and has been transmitted without corruption and in its totality by an uninterrupted chain of reciters.[5] As God's final revelation, the Quran, as viewed by Ibn

[5]Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:231) presents this view in connection with his discussion of Ibn Taymiyyah's use of the Quran as a source for legal opinions. For a recent discussion on the fidelity of the text of the Quran, see Brockett (1988:31-45). On page 44 he indicates the existence of a preserved Quran text since the time of Muhammad in both an oral and a written tradition: "There must have been a parallel written transmission limiting variation in the oral transmission to the

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Taymiyyah, must necessarily contain the complete body of religious knowledge necessary for a Muslim. It provides him with practical guidance to carry out his worldly needs in accordance with a spiritual guidance that elevates and perfects his soul for its return to its Lord. However, Ibn Taymiyyah clarifies this understanding of the Quran by explaining that the Quran must be placed in a proper perspective relative to the Sunnah of the Prophet and the statements of the earliest Muslims. His view is made clear by looking at his discussion of exegesis (*tafsīr*).[6]

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graphic form, side by side with a parallel oral transmission preserving the written transmission from corruption. The transmission of the Qur'ân after the death of Muhammad was essentially static, rather than organic."

[6]Although the term *tafsīr* is identifiable with "exegesis," in the following discussion I shall actually be describing Ibn Taymiyyah's methodology of *tafsīr*, or hermeneutics. This distinction between exegesis and hermeneutics is defined by McAuliffe (1988:47) in her discussion of these terms in relation to Christian theology: "The practice of interpretation was equated with what we would now term 'exegesis', while the term 'hermeneutics' was used to denote the aims and criteria of that practice. In conventional theological usage, then, hermeneutics was the enterprise which identified the principles and methods prerequisite to the interpretation of texts." Thus, more specifically, I shall look at Ibn Taymiyyah's *usûl al-tafsīr*.

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In his essay *Muqaddimah fī Usūli-l-Tafsīr*,[7] Ibn Taymiyyah explains that the first thing a Muslim scholar must know in order to understand the Quran properly is that the Prophet explained (*bayyana*) its meaning fully and completely (p.331). This is Ibn Taymiyyah's fundamental position relative to the principles of the Islamic sciences, whether *tafsīr*, *fiqh* or *kalām*.[8] As proof of this he mentions that the Prophet's mission is defined in the verse "...in order to explain to people what has been sent down to them" (al-Nahl 16:44). He further explains that the Companions used to learn ten verses from the Prophet but would not learn more until they also learned what the verses contained as to knowledge and action

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[7]Curtis (1989), in his dissertation on Ibn Katîr's introduction to his *Tafsîr al-Qurân al-Karîm*, has shown that Ibn Katîr (d. 774/1373) not only used Ibn Taymiyyah's *Muqaddimah fī Usûli-l-Tafsîr* in his own discussion of hermeneutics, but that Ibn Taymiyyah had written his work specifically for Ibn Katîr (see especially Chaps. V and VI). However, Ibn Katîr does not mention Ibn Taymiyyah as the source of the *usûl* section because, as Curtis points out (pp.17-20), the opposition of the "official" *'ulamâ'* to the deceased *Hanbalî* scholar remained quite strong. The fact that Ibn Katîr did not credit Ibn Taymiyyah for the exposition on hermeneutics could explain why McAuliffe (1988:55) mentions only that Ibn Katîr was influenced by Ibn Taymiyyah without detailing the depths of that influence. Thus, although she is correct in identifying the clear links between al-Tabarî (d. 310/923) and Ibn Katîr concerning hermeneutics, she overlooks the fact that Ibn Taymiyyah established that link through his formulation of *usûl al-tafsîr*. This point will be discussed further in this section. For an opposing point of view concerning Ibn Katîr's position relative to prior *tafsîr* works, see Calder (1993:101-140), who argues that Ibn Katîr, and thus Ibn Taymiyyah by implication, deviated significantly from a *tafsîr* tradition started by al-Tabarî.

[8]Laoust (*Contribution*, 1939:55 n2) comments that Ibn Taymiyyah uses this formula to incorporate into his doctrines the views expressed in dogmatic theology (*kalâm*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*, *furû'*), the literalism of the *Zâhiriyyah*, and the esotericism of the *Bâtiniyyah*. For Laoust, this represents Ibn Taymiyyah's syncretistic approach to the divergent views in Islam. However, this formula is also historically the belief of the traditionists.

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(al-'ilm wa-l-'amal).[9] This brief presentation of evidence[10] links Ibn Taymiyyah's methodology to a fundamental principle of the traditionists' hermeneutics, namely, that the Prophet fully explained the Quran. This concept is used by Ibn Taymiyyah, as it was used by al-Tabarī (d. 310/923) before him, to refute the claims of the *ahl al-ra'y* that human reason is needed to explain the Quran. These "people of opinion" hold the view that the Prophet explained very little of the Quran and thus developed a form of exegesis that became known as *tafsīr bi-l-ra'y*. They are opposed by those scholars who maintain that the Prophet's exegetical role was all-encompassing. The main role of the exegete then is to relate the authentic statements associated with each verse. Thus their method of exegesis became known as *tafsīr bi-l-ma'tūr*.[11] Thus, Ibn Taymiyyah's association with *tafsīr bi-l-ma'tūr* becomes the first step in his process of defining the boundaries of exegesis.

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[9]This narration is reported by al-Tabarī (1373/1954:vol.1, p.35) in his discussion of hermeneutics. It is the statement of the *tābi'ī* Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī (d. 72/691-2). Dahabī (1396/1976:v.1, p.49 n3) points out that this al-Sulamī should not be confused with the famous 4th/10th century Sufi with the same name. The Sufi al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021-2) is also quoted by Ibn Taymiyyah, who criticizes him for the many errors he makes in his exegesis of the Quran entitled *Haqā'iq al-Tafsīr*; see the *Muqaddimah*:362.

[10]As Curtis (1989:222, 250) points out, the lack of details and explanations in Ibn Taymiyyah's *Muqaddimah* is most likely related to the fact that it is written for a like-minded scholar. Thus his usual style of presenting extensive evidences from the Quran and hadiths to prove his point is not utilized here.

[11]The development of the concept of the Prophet's exegetical role from al-Tabarī to Ibn Katīr is traced by McAuliffe (1988:48-62), who, as already mentioned, incorrectly attributes its final form to Ibn Katīr, and by Speight (1988:63-68), who also overlooks Ibn Taymiyyah's influence. Dahabī (1396/1976:v.1, pp.49-51) presents the arguments of the two groups as to whether the Prophet explained all, or just a little, of the Quran.

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After indicating that the Prophet was the preeminent exegete, Ibn Taymiyyah clarifies the most correct (asahh) way to proceed with an exegesis of the Quran. Of the four steps that he mentions, the first two steps forge the initial link between the Quran and the Sunnah and further serve to define the ranks of those capable of performing tafsīr. Steps three and four reinforce the limitation he establishes with steps one and two.[12] The first step, he says, is to "explain the Quran by the Quran," for what is not mentioned in one spot will be explained in another (Muqaddimah:363). He says little else on this point because it is not a controversial issue. One limitation presupposed here is that an exegete should have memorized most of the Quran if not all of it, which in itself is a minor factor considering that the memorization of the Quran was a common aspect of a scholar's training. However, another assumption he holds in connection with the tafsīr of the Quran by the Quran is that an exegete must also know the "causes of revelation" (asbāb al-nuzūl) and the science of "abrogation" (al-nāsikh wa-l-mansūkh).[13] These sciences relate to both the Quran and the hadiths and are necessary for an exegete to know so that he gives

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[12]Relative to methodology (minhâj), in general, and concerning tafsîr, in particular, Curtis (1989:247) has shown that Ibn Taymiyyah faithfully follows Ahmad ibn Hanbal's minhâj as to sources and order of precedence.

[13]On the use of the hadith to determine the causes of revelation for the purpose of tafsîr, see Speight (1988:68-72). One significant point that he brings to light is that tafsîr is not limited to the genre of tafsîr-works only. The books of the great muhadditûn contain important contributions for the understanding of the development of Quranic exegesis. See, for example, the "Kitâb al-Tafsîr" in the Sahîh of al-Bukhârî. On Imam al-Shâfi'î's theory of abrogation in relation to the Quran, see Khadduri (1987:123-130), and to the hadith, see (ibid:195-202).

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the proper preference to various evidences related to one issue. This assumption points to Ibn Taymiyyah's intention to link exegesis to the sciences of hadith, a point more fully brought out in his second step.[14]

Ibn Taymiyyah's second step goes much further in defining the skills needed by an exegete. He states that if the first step is not sufficient to produce an answer, then a Muslim exegete must look to the Sunnah of the Prophet, for that is the commentator (*shārihah*) and clarifier (*muwaddihah*) of the Quran. He supports this view by first quoting the verse "...We did not send the book down to you except that you explain to them about which they differed, for it is a guidance and a mercy to people who believe" (al-Nahl 16:64). He then mentions a hadith in which the Prophet said that he was given the Quran and its similitude.[15] For Ibn Taymiyyah, the similitude is the Sunnah, which, when combined with the Quran, constitutes the idea of revelation (*wahy*) in its entirety. This, he

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[14]For the references to the terms and techniques of the hadith scholars, I am relying on M.A. Sâlih's book, *Lamahât fî Usûli-l-Hadît*, Beirut and Damascus: al-Maktab al-Islâmî, 1405/1985. Also, the vast differences of opinion between the Muslim position concerning hadith studies and the general Orientalist view represented by Goldziher and Schacht notwithstanding, I am relying on the research of M.M. Azami (1978), *Studies in Early Hadith Literature*, Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, as the basis for my acceptance of the Muslim point of view. I am also taking this position because it is well beyond the scope of this dissertation to enter into this highly debated topic. Furthermore, as far as Ibn Taymiyyah is concerned, the hadiths as authenticated by the *muhaddithûn* represent the actual statements of the Prophet and his Companions.

[15]See *Muqaddimah*:363. This is the opening statement of a lengthier hadith which reads "*a-lâ innî ûtîtu-l-qurân wa mitlahu ma'ahu....*" For the full hadith, see Tibrîzî (1405/1985:v.1, p.57) and the translation by Robson (1975:v.1, p.43).

says, is the opinion of al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/819-20) and other scholars.[16] This second step presupposes that an exegete must also be an expert on the hadiths (muhaddiṯ) in order to be able to know the authentic hadiths from the weak or fabricated ones.[17] Ibn Taymiyyah further emphasizes an exegete's need to be skilled in the sciences of hadith with his third step.

When an exegete is not able to find the answer he is looking for in the Quran and the Sunnah, Ibn Taymiyyah says that as a third step he must turn to the statements of the Companions. They are the best informed Muslims concerning exegesis, for they witnessed the Quran, were distinguished by their spiritual states (ahwāl), and had a complete understanding of Islam in terms of correct knowledge and righteous deeds (Muqaddimah:364). He mentions in particular that Muslims should follow the statements of the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs and the most knowledgeable Companions such as 'Abd-Allāh ibn Mas'ūd (d. 32/652-3), who knew when each verse was revealed and with whom it was concerned. Ibn Taymiyyah then makes special mention of 'Abd-Allāh ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687-8),

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[16]On al-Shāfi'ī's views concerning the relationship between the Quran and the Sunnah and on the need to obey the Prophet, see Khadduri (1987:109-122). In commenting on Sura al-Baqarah 2:146, in reference to the Prophet's teaching "the Book and Wisdom" (al-kitāb wa-l-hikmah), al-Shāfi'ī says that "...it is not permissible for Wisdom to be called here [anything] save the sunna of the Apostle of God" (ibid:111).

[17]A muhaddiṯ is actually the one holding the middle rank in the three-tiered classification of the scholars of the hadith. The lowest rank is that of the musnid, and the highest rank is that of the ḥāfiz. There is a fourth category known as amīr al-mu'minīn fī-l-hadīṯ, which has been given to only a few scholars over the centuries such as Ibn Hanbal (d. 241/855-6) and al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870). See M. A. Sālih (1405/1985:103-109).

for whom the Prophet had supplicated to God to give him "understanding in religion and knowledge of interpretation (ta'wīl)."[18] It is obvious that this third step further emphasizes Ibn Taymiyyah's insistence that an exegete must either be a *muhaddit* or at least rely on them when presenting a *tafsīr* of the Quran. In order to know the authentic statements of the *sahābah*, one is required to have the same skills needed to know the authentic hadiths of the Prophet. With this step and the following fourth step, Ibn Taymiyyah clearly intends to put the proponents of *tafsīr bi-l-ra'y* on the defensive in the methodological and ideological struggle concerning exegesis.

Ibn Taymiyyah's fourth step refers to what he sees as the last generational group having sound knowledge of the Quran, that is, the Followers of the Companions (*tābi'ūn*). In particular, he mentions Followers such as Mujāhid ibn Jabr (d. 102/720-1), who studied with Ibn 'Abbās, and 'Ikrimah (d. 107/725-6), who was a client of Ibn 'Abbās. He also mentions 'Atā' ibn Abī Rabāh (d. 114/732-3), Sa'īd ibn Jubayr (d. 95/713-4), al-Hasan al-Basrī (d. 110/728-9), Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab (d. 92/710-1 or 94/712-3), Abū-

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[18]See *Muqaddimah*:365. Some other authorities of *tafsīr* transmission according to Ibn Taymiyyah are the Companions Ubayy ibn Ka'b (d. 22/643), Ibn 'Umar (d. 74/693-4), Jābir ibn 'Abd-Allāh (d. 78/697-8), Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī (d. 74/693-4), and Abū Hurayrah (d. 59/678-9). Al-Bukhārī reports two hadiths about Ibn 'Abbās's knowledge of the Quran. In one the Prophet said "*allahumma 'allimhu-l-hikmah*," and in the other "*allahumma 'allimhu-l-kitāb*." See Ibn Hajar (*Fath al-Bārī*, no date:v.7, p.100). In another hadith, al-Bukhārī reports that the Prophet said, "Learn (*istaqri'ū*) the Quran from four people: 'Abd-Allāh ibn Mas'ūd, Sālim, the client of Abū Hudayfah, Ubayy ibn Ka'b, and Mu'ād ibn Jabal." See Ibn Hajar (ibid:101). These authorities and others are also reported by al-Suyūtī (*al-Itqān*, no date:v.2, p.187).

l-'Aliyyah (d. 106/724-5 or 93/711-2), al-Rabi' ibn Anas, Qatādah ibn Di'āmah (d. 117/735), al-Dahhāk ibn Muzāhim (d. 102/720-1) and Masrūq ibn al-Ajda' (d. 63/682-3).[19] However, Ibn Taymiyyah does not regard the *tābi'ūn* as an independent source for Quranic exegesis, for their statements must be understood in context with the prior three steps. Now, with the integration of his fourth step into the first three steps, the full effects of Ibn Taymiyyah's hermeneutics comes to light as he resolves internal conflicts resulting from this integration.[20] As he explains away apparent contradictions, an important step in understanding Ibn Taymiyyah's concept of hermeneutics comes to light. His fourth step expands the scope of allowable exegesis while further limiting the ranks of the exegetes. And although in the *Muqaddimah* he is writing to a sympathetic audience, he must still carefully define the rules of *tafsīr* by drawing a clear distinction between sound knowledge and personal opinion.

When faced with the fact that the Followers sometimes use different terms than the Companions to explain the meaning of a verse, Ibn Taymiyyah must reconcile an obvious contradiction to his

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[19]See *Muqaddimah*:368-370. Ibn 'Atiyyah (1413/1993:41-42) has a comparable but less extensive list.

[20]Throughout this chapter, I shall present various ways by which Ibn Taymiyyah resolves conflicting statements from earlier scholars. On this topic, in general, Curtis (1989:82) summarizes Ibn Katīr's procedure for resolving such conflicts: "When source materials disagree, it is the duty of the exegete to relate (a) all the information, (b) evaluate its authenticity and tenableness, and (c) point out its benefits and consequences." For Ibn Katīr, these three points refer to the sciences of the hadith, particularly *asbāb al-nuzūl* and *al-nāsikh wa-l-mansūkh*. An exegete needs to know these sciences, rather than relying on *ra'y*, in order to justify why one statement is preferred over another.

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belief in faithfully following the statements of the Prophet and his Companions. He does this by first dismissing those who report these apparent discrepancies as real contradictions by saying that they are people without knowledge, i.e. of the hadith sciences. He then begins this process of reconciling different terminology by clarifying that "some of them [the Followers] explained a matter by its connotative meaning or by what is similar to it. Others stipulated a matter by its denotative meaning."[21] This statement has a two fold affect on Ibn Taymiyyah's exegesis. It allows for limited variations of explanation ('*ibārah*) on the part of the *tābi'ūn* and establishes their opinions as a form of evidence (*hujjah*) in formulating *tafsīr*. Thus in the *Muqaddimah* he is compelled to explain his use of the *tafsīr*-statements of the *tābi'ūn* in light of Shu'bah ibn al-Hajjāj's claim that the opinions of the *tābi'ūn* are not to be used as evidence in jurisprudence, therefore how can they be used as evidence in exegesis.[22] His answer seeks to justify his position while defining the meaning and use of personal opinion, which will then form the guidelines for the exegete.

Ibn Taymiyyah restricts the use of the statements of the *tābi'ūn* by saying that their opinions must conform to the understanding of a verse as elaborated in steps one to three. This

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[21]See *Muqaddimah*:369, which reads: *fa-inna min-hum man yu'abbiru 'an al-shay' bi-lāzimihi aw nazīrihi wa min-hum man yanussu 'alā-l-shay' bi-'aynihi.* Curtis (1989:102) translates this passage as "Some of them may express something by its intrinsic nature or by comparison to something else; some may describe an entity precisely."

[22]Shu'bah ibn al-Hajjāj (d. 160/776-7) was a prominent student of many of the *tābi'ūn* such as Qatādah and Hammād ibn Abī Sulaymān; see Azami (1978:165).

means that an exegete may not establish one of their opinions as an evidence (*hujjah*) over another in the case of differences. But the statements of the *tābi'ūn*, he explains, can be used as an evidence when they agree on an issue. Thus Ibn Taymiyyah widens the circle of sound knowledge (*'ilm*) by including unanimous opinions of the *tābi'ūn* with the other sources, which are the Quran, the Sunnah, the statements of the Companions, and the Arabic language. His assumption again is that in order to accurately assess the validity of the statements of the *tābi'ūn*, an exegete must be a fully competent *muhaddit*. Otherwise, he must at least rely on the judgements of the hadith scholars concerning the authentication of traditions. With this proviso of a knowledge of the hadith sciences reiterated, he can now delimit knowledge and opinion. If an exegesis of a verse of the Quran is not based on the *'ilm* of the traditionists, it falls into the category of "mere opinion," which Ibn Taymiyyah says is strictly forbidden.[23] As evidence for this, Ibn Taymiyyah quotes a hadith in which the Prophet states that whoever talks about the Quran without sound knowledge will take his place in the hellfire. He also mentions several hadiths indicating that if an exegete were to give the correct explanation of a verse, reaching this explanation

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[23]He states: *fa-amma tafsîr al-qurân bi-mujarradi-l-ra'y fa-harâm* (*Muqaddimah*:370). Curtis (1989:82) defines *ra'y* as including "...personal opinion, intuition, observation, or any reasoning devoid of substantiation by approved sources..."

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without recourse to sound knowledge, he will still be in the hellfire.[24]

The hermeneutics involved in his fourth step allows Ibn Taymiyyah to successfully limit the ranks of those who are genuinely capable of doing *tafsīr* by insisting that the exegete be a *muhaddit.* At the same time, he allows for a narrow door to *ijtihād*, which must conform to the "*salafī* principles" as outlined above, in exegesis by citing the use of personal opinion as strictly carried out by the Followers. By defining these four steps of *usūl al-tafsīr*, Ibn Taymiyyah accomplishes his goal of casting doubt on other hermeneutical approaches to the Quran, if not making them completely insignificant. With these principles of *tafsīr* in hand, he

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[24]Ibn Taymiyyah presents examples of some Companions who did not interpret a verse or even a single word because they did not know of an authentic statement of the Prophet. Abū Bakr did not comment on the word *abb*[an] in Sura 'Abasa 80:31 because he did not know what it meant (*Muqaddimah*:372). Likewise, Ibn 'Abbâs refused to interpret the meaning of "a day whose measure is a thousand years" (al-Sajdah 32:5) or "a day whose measure is fifty thousand years" (al-Ma'ârij 70:4), his reason being that the knowledge of these two verses is with God and he would not say a thing about the Quran without knowledge (p.373).

The hadiths that Ibn Taymiyyah mentions are discussed by Speight (1988:66) in connection with the objections of the hadith scholars to the spread of *tafsīr* by use of personal opinion. He points out the use of these hadiths by the hadith scholars to establish a distinction between '*ilm* and *ra'y*. Curtis (1989:82-84) discusses them in connection with Ibn Katîr's similar position against the use of *ra'y* when it is not based on sound *ijtihād*, which can only be derived from the Quran, hadiths and statements of the Companions. In an explanation which misses this point, Calder (1993:131-133) discusses the same hadiths as presented by al-Qurtubî (d. 671/1272-3) and Ibn 'Atiyyah (d. 546/1151). He attempts to show that their understanding of these hadiths differed significantly from that of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Katîr. However, Calder clearly misrepresents the views of the latter two by indicating they even rejected opinions based on sound *ijtihād*. He also does not deal with the fact that Ibn Taymiyyah holds the *tafsīrs* of both al-Qurtubî and Ibn 'Atiyyah in high esteem. This point will be discussed below in Section 2.

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can now judge the authenticity of various exegeses. In the process of doing this, he also moves into the role of dogmatic historian as he classifies individuals and groups according to his notion of Islamic sects.

2 Classifying the Exegetes

The four steps of Ibn Taymiyyah's hermeneutics—the Quran, the hadiths of the Prophet, the statements of the Companions and the opinions of the Followers—form the basis of his thinking in all fields of the Islamic sciences. Curtis (1989:248-259) has shown that these are the principles of the *Hanbalī madhab* in matters of *'aqīdah* and *fiqh* as well as *tafsīr*. Lamotte (1994:4-5) presents an argument that these four principles are the basis of Ibn Taymiyyah's epistemology, for they represent a movement from the absolute certainty of the Quran to a lesser state of certainty to be found in the opinions of the Followers. Although the details of the way in which Ibn Taymiyyah applies these principles to the various Islamic sciences is extremely interesting, I shall have to limit my discussion to his use of them in the classification of various Muslim groups. I shall show that adherence to these principles is the criterion Ibn Taymiyyah uses to judge the "authenticity" of the beliefs of known historical sects and of individual scholars. In this section I shall focus on the exegetes (*mufassirūn*). Then in Part B of this chapter, I shall expand the topic of classification to include a discussion of his judgements of who belongs to the *Ahl al-Sunnah*

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wa-l-Jamā'ah. The ultimate purpose of this discussion is to identify for the reader the criteria used by Ibn Taymiyyah in the *Risālat al-'Ubūdiyyah* to classify the ranks of worshippers.

Ibn Taymiyyah begins his discussion in the *Muqaddimah fī Usūli-l-Tafsīr* (pp.347-350) on the various ranks of exegetes by stating that the most knowledgeable Muslims on this topic are the scholars of Mecca who were the companions of Ibn 'Abbās.[25] After reconfirming the preeminent position of Ibn 'Abbās as an exegete, Ibn Taymiyyah identifies the next tier of exegetes as being the scholars of Kufa, who were the companions of Ibn Mas'ūd, and the scholars of Medina, especially those associated with Zayd ibn Aslam (d. 136/753-4), the client of Ibn 'Umar.[26] Up to the time of the Followers, Ibn Taymiyyah is able to neatly arrange the *tafsīr* specialists around the famous Companions. However, the task of classification becomes more complicated after the time of the Followers. As we have seen above in Section 1, for Ibn Taymiyyah exegesis becomes intricately linked to the sciences of hadith

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[25]The geographical aspect of classifying the exegetes seems to be a particular point on which Ibn Taymiyyah focuses. As yet, I have not come across an earlier discussion which draws such attention to locations. This is a continuous issue with Ibn Taymiyyah who elaborates on it in his discussion about affiliations with the *Ahl al-Sunnah*; see below pp.80-82. However, Ibn Taymiyyah's geographical classifications are used by some later scholars. Suyūtī (*Itqān*, no date:v.2, p.190) quotes directly from Ibn Taymiyyah's *Muqaddimah* on this issue, and he even credits Ibn Taymiyyah for this! See also Dahabī (1396/1976:v.1, p.101).

[26]Ibn Taymiyyah's list of reliable transmitters from the Followers is rather lengthy, for it includes many of the well-known figures of that time. Besides the scholars already mentioned here and above in Section 1, there are Abū Sālih al-Sammān (d. 101/719-20), 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Hurmūz al-A'raj (d. 117/735), Sulaymān ibn Yasār (d. 107/725-6), Muhammad ibn Sīrīn (d. 110/728-9) and al-Aswad ibn Yazīd al-Nakha'ī (d. 75/694-5).

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criticism (*usūl al-hadīṯ*) after the time of the *tābi'ūn*. Based on this hadith connection, he explains that two groups of exegetes began to deviate from the traditionist methodology in *tafsīr*, the best practioner of which is al-Tabarī.[27] But before elaborating on the "deviant exegetes," it is necessary to point out two issues regarding Ibn Taymiyyah's loyalty to al-Tabarī's methodology.

As mentioned above in Section 1, McAuliffe (1988) and Speight (1988) have argued for the continuity of hermeneutics between al-Tabarī and Ibn Kaṯīr (d. 774/1373) without crediting Ibn Taymiyyah for the articulation of the principles of *tafsīr bi-l-ma'ṯūr*. Curtis (1989), on the other hand, has shown that Ibn Taymiyyah is indeed the architect of the "*salafī* principles" of exegesis and that Ibn Kaṯīr is his direct heir. I shall add here that Ibn Taymiyyah's high estimation of al-Tabarī helps to highlight two important aspects of his own approach to methodology in the Islamic sciences. The first point is his disdain for the use of *ra'y* which is not grounded in the ordered principles of the "*salafī* methodology." The second point is that adherence to this methodology supersedes any loyalty to an established *maḏhab*.

Concerning the first point, both al-Tabarī and Ibn Taymiyyah must be seen as conservative hadith scholars who were appalled by what they considered the spread of personal opinion in the matter of *tafsīr* as well as in other Islamic sciences; al-Tabarī was

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[27]This is Muhammad ibn Jarîr al-Tabarî (d. 310/923), and his exegesis is known as *Jâmi' al-Bayân 'an Ta'wîl Ay al-Qurân* (1373/1954) Cairo: Maktabah wa Matba'at Mustafâ al-Bâbî al-Halabî. For a brief description of this scholar and his exegesis, see Ayoub (1984:v.1, p.3).

responding to the Mutazilites and Ibn Taymiyyah primarily to the *Ash'ariyyah*. Building on the juridical arguments of al-Shāfi'ī, which establish the role of the Sunnah as embodied in the hadiths as necessarily explaining the Quran, al-Tabarī incorporates the idea that the Prophet as an exegete explained everything in the Quran. In discussing some statements narrated from the Companions and Followers, which indicate that they did not talk about the Quran, he clarifies that they did not speak about a verse unless they knew an authentic statement from the Prophet.[28] Ibn Taymiyyah, in opposing the arguments of the *Ash'arī* theologians that the Quran is in need of logic in order to be understood,[29] advances al-Tabarī's claim that the Prophet explained the entire Quran. Also both scholars meet the challenge to traditionism posed by the use of personal opinion by arguing for the need to rely on the statements of the *tābi'ūn* in explaining the Quran.

As for the second point, Ibn Taymiyyah's allegiance to the exegesis of al-Tabarī placed him in opposition to many of his fellow

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[28] In order to strengthen his claim, al-Tabarī (1373/1954:39) argues that the hadith of 'A'ishah, in which she says that the Prophet did not explain the Quran except for certain verses taught to him by Gabriel, is a weak hadith. It therefore cannot be used as an evidence because one of its narrators, Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Zubayrī, is not known to the scholars of hadith. See also Syafruddin (1994:108). However, Ibn 'Atiyyah (d. 546/1151-2), whom Ibn Taymiyyah also holds in high esteem, accepts the hadith of 'A'ishah but explains it in relation to the hadith in which the Prophet states that whoever uses *ra'y* to discuss the Quran has erred, even if his answer is correct. His conclusion is similar to that of al-Tabarī, i.e., that the hadith of 'A'ishah is not an evidence, but for a different reason; see Ibn 'Atiyyah (1413/1993:41).

[29] This point will be discussed in Chapter 3.

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Hanbalīs who did not care much for al-Tabarī.[30] Thus, adhering to what he believed to be religious truth was more important to Ibn Taymiyyah than adhering to the opinions of his madhab affiliation. According to Abū Zahrah (no date:358-361), Ibn Taymiyyah held that it is not permissible for a "student of the truth" (tālib al-haqq) to prefer the ruling of his own madhab when he knows that the truth lies elsewhere. On a more practical basis, however, he divided Muslims into three groups concerning the issue of following a madhab. The first group is made up of those who "know the detailed evidences" (al-adillat al-tafsīliyyah) needed to judge particular issues. For this group, following the truth instead of a madhab is obligatory. The second group is made up of those who are "incapable of extracting rulings for themselves" (laysa la-hu qudrah 'alā-l-istinbāt) because they do not know all judgements (al-ahkām) related to a particular issue or all the sciences needed to make judgements, such as the science of abrogation (al-nāsikh wa-l-mansūkh). This group includes the majority of Muslims, who must refer to more knowledgeable people and follow their opinions. The Muslims in this group can differ from their madhab when they

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[30]Laoust (Essai, 1939:73 n2) indicates that Ibn Taymiyyah differed from the majority of Hanbalīs by his high estimation of al-Tabarī. Related to this issue, Melchert (1995:14-15) discusses the conflicts between the Hanbalīs and al-Tabarī in connection with the activities of Abū Bakr ibn Abī Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, the son of the famous traditionist who compiled one of the six canonical hadith collections. On one particular occasion, for example, Abū Bakr led a group of Hanbalīs in blockading al-Tabarī in his house and preventing people from studying hadiths with him. Although there are no definitive reasons for the overall antagonism, it must have been a serious situation, for the Hanbalīs and the followers of al-Tabarī were in conflict with each other for a number of years after his death.

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become convinced by the arguments of a particular case. The third group is made up of those who go from *madhab* to *madhab* looking for an opinion suitable to their desires. This is, of course, forbidden, and these people are sinners.

Returning to the issue of the two groups of exegetes who deviate from *tafsīr bi-l-ma'tūr*, Ibn Taymiyyah identifies one group as those who are weak in the hadith sciences and who do not rely on the hadith scholars, drifting away therefore from authentic transmissions (*naql*). The second group is those who place deduction (*istidlāl*) based on human reason (*ra'y*) over authentic transmissions. As examples of the first group, he mentions that al-Ta'labī[31] was a good and religious man, but blindly recorded everything he found in the books of *tafsīr*, whether it was authentic, weak or fabricated (*Muqaddimah*:354). Likewise, he states that al-Wāhidī[32] is far from being a safe transmitter and far from following the *salaf*. On the other hand, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Baghawī[33] has produced an abridged exegesis of al-Ta'labī's work

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[31]This is Ahmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ta'labī (d. 383/993). His exegesis is known as *al-Kashf wa-l-Bayān 'an Tafsīri-l-Qurān*. See Brockelmann (1987:S.V. "Tha'labī").

[32]This is Abū-l-Hasan 'Alī ibn Ahmad al-Wāhidī (d. 468/1076), and his exegesis is known as *Asbāb Nuzūli-l-Qurān*. See Ayoub (1984:v.1, p.4).

[33]This is Hasan ibn Mas'ūd al-Baghawī (d. 510/1116), and his exegesis is known as *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*. He is a well-known traditionist who compiled the *Sharh al-Sunnah* and the *Masābih al-Sunnah*, the latter of which was revised in 737/1337 by Walī-l-Dīn Muhammad al-Tibrīzī under the more famous title *Mishkāt al-Masābih*, (1405/1985), Beirut and Damascus: al-Maktab al-Islāmī. For a biography of al-Baghawī and al-Tibrīzī, see the translation of the latter work by Robson (1975:v.1, pp.xii-xiv), who gives al-Baghawī's name as Husayn and an alternative date of death as 516.

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which is safeguarded from fabricated hadiths and innovated opinions because al-Baghawī was a scholar of *usūl al-hadīt*. This ranking indicates that the error of the first group in the eyes of Ibn Taymiyyah is primarily their weakness as *muhadditūn* and not any particular error in their *'aqīdah*.

The second group of exegetes whom Ibn Taymiyyah criticizes is composed of those who have an error in their *'aqīdah*. Thus they interpret the Quran according to their own reasoning which is not based on authentic transmission. In this connection he refers to Islamic groups such as the *Jahmiyyah*, the Mutazilites, the *Qadariyyah* and the *Murji'ah*.[34] These groups, he says, err in the matter of "evidence" and "indicated meanings" (*al-dalīl wa-l-madlūl*), that is, they either disregard the sound knowledge contained in the hadith or they apply it in a manner contradicting that of the *muhadditūn*.[35] Thus they hold beliefs that are in

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[34]In reference to Quranic exegesis, Ibn Taymiyyah also mentions the Shiites (*al-rāfidah*), philosophers, and Karmathians (*al-qarāmitah*) but views them as separate groups outside Sunni Islam. He says they are astray and interpret the Quran in astonishing ways. He then lists various interpretations of verses attributed to the Shiites. For example, he states that the Shiites interpret Sura al-Masad 111:1 "Perish the two hands of Abū Lahab" as referring to Abū Bakr and 'Umar. He also states that any such interpretations referring to people are fabricated, even if they support a Sunni position. Thus, for example, he equally rejects the interpretation of Sura al-Tīn 95:1-4 in which it is said that *al-tīn* refers to Abū Bakr, *al-zaytūn* refers to 'Umar, *wa tūri sīnīn* refers to 'Utmān and *wa hādā-l-baladi-l-amīn* refers to 'Alī. See *Muqaddimah*:359-360.

[35]See *Muqaddimah*:356. In the context in which Ibn Taymiyyah is speaking here, the term *dalīl* refers to the statements of the Prophet and the Companions and the term *madlūl* refers to the traditionists' interpretations derived from these statements. The basis for this understanding comes from Ibn Taymiyyah's definition of *'ilm* given in his opening remarks of the *Muqaddimah* (p.329). He says that knowledge is either a trustworthy transmission from an infallible source or a statement drawn from known evidence. Everything else is either a spurious report which must be rejected or

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opposition to the truth which the earliest generations of scholars followed. By following their own school of thought (*madhab*) and their own opinions, they interpret verses without sound evidence or by distorting the meanings of words. In particular, Ibn Taymiyyah focuses on the Mutazilites as the best example of the deviation of the people of opinion. In connection with Mutazilite exegesis, he mentions the works of 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Kaysān al-Asamm, Ibrāhīm ibn Ismā'īl ibn 'Aliyyah (d. 218/833), Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī (d. 303/915), al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār ibn Ahmad al-Hamadānī (d. 415/1025), 'Alī ibn 'Isā al-Rummānī (d. 384/995), and Abū-l-Qāsim al-Zamakhsharī (d. 539/1144).

The Mutazilites, says Ibn Taymiyyah, are known for five principles (*al-usūl al-khamsah*), their explanation of which becomes the cause of their deviation.[36] These are their concepts of "oneness" (*tawhīd*), "justice" ('*adl*), "the position between the two positions" (*al-manzilah bayna-l-manzilatayn*), "executing the punishment" (*infād al-wa'īd*), and "commanding good and forbidding evil" (*al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar*). From these five principles, Ibn Taymiyyah discusses the concepts of "oneness," "justice" and "executing the punishment" in relation to

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an ambiguous statement about which one does not know whether it is spurious or has been proven false.

[36]Ibn Taymiyyah's arguments against the Mutazilites are from *Muqaddimah*:357-358. The Mutazilites figure prominently in Ibn Taymiyyah's thinking, for they represent an extreme case of the dangers of using personal opinion in explaining revelation. In this section, I shall present a general overview of their more significant theological positions as they relate to the exegesis of the Quran. In the *Risālat al-'Ubūdiyyah*, he presents a more detailed refutation of their beliefs concerning free will and predestination; see Chapter 5, section 11.

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the exegesis of the Quran.[37] As for the Mutazilite concept of *tawhīd*, Ibn Taymiyyah says that this is the "oneness" of the *Jahmiyyah*, for it is a denial of all God's attributes. He says that they claim that God does not see, that the Quran is created and not above (*fawqa*) the creation, and that knowledge, power, life, hearing, seeing, speech, will and other attributes are not established in God's essence.[38] Ibn Taymiyyah then explains that their principle of *'adl* stems from their denial that God creates all things. In particular, the Mutazilites do not believe that God creates the actions of people, neither their good deeds nor their bad.[39] The consequence of this doctrine is the advocacy of the absolute free will of a person to obey or disobey God, who then is obliged to reward or punish accordingly. Ibn Taymiyyah relates this doctrine to the principle of

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[37]These five principles of Mutazilite thought are discussed by Watt (1985:46-55). The two points that Ibn Taymiyyah does not discuss are "the position between the two positions" and "commanding good and forbidding evil." The former refers to the Mutazilite concept that grave sinners are neither believers nor disbelievers, but will nonetheless be in the hellfire. The latter refers to the concept of maintaining justice and opposing injustice by word and by action if one is able to do it.

[38]See *Muqaddimah*:357. Watt (1985:49) states that the Mutazilites considered the idea of attributes as "...introducing an element of multiplicity into the unity of God's nature or essence (*nafs, dhāt*)..." He says, for example, that according to Mutazilite belief, God does not know "...by any hypostatic Knowledge." This is diametrically opposed to Ibn Taymiyyah's organic concept of *tawhīd* in which God's attributes describe His eternal essence; this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

[39]See *Muqaddimah*:358. In connection with this issue of free will and justice, Ibn Taymiyyah also mentions that this is the belief of the Twelver Shiites as represented by Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022) and Abū Ja'far al-Tūsī (d. 460/1067). These two Shiite scholars represent the ascendency of the rationalist trend in Shiite thinking centered in Baghdad as opposed to the traditionalist school of Qom. On this aspect in the development of Shiite thought, see Madelung (1988:82-83) and Arjomand (1984:28). For a review of Shiite hermeneutics and exegesis, see Ayoub (1988:177-198).

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infād al-wa'īd, which He explains in association with the doctrines of the *Khawārij*. Thus the Mutazilites accept the notion that God will not allow intercession on behalf of grave sinners and that He will not remove them from the hellfire.[40] Ibn Taymiyyah rejects these beliefs because they are in opposition to the beliefs of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l-Jamā'ah*.[41] In his classification system, the Mutazilites, as proponents of *tafsīr bi-l-ra'y*, are associated with those exegetes who hold erroneous doctrines that have no basis in the beliefs and practices of the Companions and the Followers. He sees their beliefs as being mere opinion, which in turn distorts their interpretation of certain verses and hadiths. The *salaf* and the Mutazilites, or *Jahmiyyah*, represent for Ibn Taymiyyah the origin of correct and incorrect *tafsīr*, respectively, based on '*aqīdah*.

As examples of exegetes who have a correct and incorrect creed, Ibn Taymiyyah mentions the soundness of the exegesis of Ibn 'Atiyyah,[42] who follows the Sunnah, as opposed to the false exegesis

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[40]See *Muqaddimah*:358. According to Watt (1985:52) this is a minor principle of Mutazilite thought after the concepts of "oneness" and "justice." He refers to it as the doctrine of "the promise and the threat" (*al-wa'd wa-l-wa'īd*) and mentions that the Mutazilites remained close to the *Khawārij* on this point in opposition to the *Murji'ah*.

[41]It is a well-known position of the *Ahl al-Sunnah* that all Muslims, even grave sinners, will eventually be taken out of the hellfire. See, for example, Tibrīzī (1405/1985:v.1, p.14), who relates a hadith from al-Bukhārī and Muslim that even the fornicator and thief will eventually enter Paradise if they die on the belief of *tawhīd* (and the translation in Robson, 1975:v.1, p.11). On the many hadiths about the Prophet's intercession, see Ibn Hajar (*Fath al-Bārī*, no date:v.11, pp.414-444). Ibn Taymiyyah deals extensively with this topic in "Qā'idah fī-l-Tawassul wa-l-Wasīlah" in *Majmū' Fatāwā*, v.12, pp.142-368.

[42]This is 'Abd al-Haqq ibn Abī Bakr Ghālib ibn 'Abd al-Mālik al-Muhāribī al-Ghamātī ibn 'Atiyyah (d. 546/1151), and his Quran exegesis is known as *Kitāb al-Jāmi' al-Muharrar al-Sahīh al-Wajīz fī Tafsīr al-Qurān al-'Azīz*

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of al-Zamakhsharī, who interprets the Quran according to the innovations of his Mutazilite principles. Likewise, the speculative theologians (ahl al-kalām), who are closer to the salaf than the Mutazilites, vary in their interpretations according to whether they follow the statements of the Companions and Followers or the principles (usūl) of their school of thought.[43] Thus, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, the methodology and conclusions of the Companions and the Followers function as the sole criteria in judging the soundness of any exegesis, which ultimately determines the soundness of theological doctrines. The sahābah and the tābi'ūn are the most knowledgeable Muslims concerning the meaning of the Quran (Muqaddimah:362). Thus whoever differs from their statements has erred "in the matter of evidence and indicated meanings" and has mentioned something by way of "rational confusion" (shubhah 'aqliyyah) or by way of misunderstanding authentically transmitted texts (shubhah sam'iyyah).[44] Finally, although it is an infrequent occurrence, one other possibility that Ibn Taymiyyah mentions in relation to tafsīr is to err in the matter of "evidence" (dalīl) but still have the correct "indicated meaning" (madlūl). This refers to the hadith about the punishment of an exegete who gives the correct tafsīr but without having recourse to sound knowledge. Without elaborating on this point, he states that

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(1413/1993) Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah. See also Brockelmann, GAL I:412, Supp. I:732.

[43]See Muqaddimah:361. The details of Ibn Taymiyyah's arguments against the mutakallimūn will be dealt with in Chapter 3.

[44]Cf. Ghazālī's statements on the confusion and "false ra'y" of the Mutazilites in McCarthy (1980:327).

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this is what occurs to some of the Sufis such as Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021-2) in his *Haqā'iq al-Tafsīr*.

In summary, Ibn Taymiyyah sees four different possibilities in the matter of the exegesis of the Quran. One of them follows correct hermeneutics and the other three are deviations from the first. The first possibility means that the exegete follows the "*salafī* principles" as elaborated by the *muhadditūn*. He will have the correct "evidence" that leads to the proper "indicated meanings." In other words, this exegete will arrive at the authoritative interpretation based on authoritative statements of the Companions and the Followers. The second possibility refers to the exegete who does not know the sciences of hadith or ignores them. This type of exegesis is the reporting of all narrations without discrimination, and this exegete necessarily mixes truth and falsehood. The third possibility is the exegesis of "*ahl al-ra'y*." This means that the exegete begins from a basis of incorrect *'aqīdah* and thus places personal opinion above authentic transmissions. He uses incorrect "evidence" and arrives at incorrect "indicated meanings." Ibn Taymiyyah's fourth possibility, which occurs less frequently than the first three, is when the exegete uses incorrect "evidence" but arrives at a sound interpretation. Although the interpretation might be correct in its conclusions, a danger exists because he confuses people by spreading weak or fabricated narrations from the Prophet and his Companions. Thus, on a verse by verse basis, an exegete can be judged as to the "soundness" of his statements.

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Part B: The Prophet and his Companions

It becomes clear from the previous discussion of Ibn Taymiyyah's understanding of the exegesis of the Quran that he relies completely on the hadiths of the Prophet and on the statements and practices of the earliest generations of Muslims for the development of his exegesis. This represents what he sees as the sound exegesis, which is based on "*salafī* principles" and is accordingly restricted to the scholars who rely on the sciences of the hadith. Ibn Taymiyyah then allows for these scholars to make use of a very limited form of *ijtihād*, similar to that which was practiced by the *tābi'ūn* (as described above pp.67-69). By applying these same "*salafī* principles" to *'aqīdah*, Ibn Taymiyyah is able to develop his entire theology based on two traditionally fundamental concepts: the existence of a "clear revelation" and the unaltered transmission of that revelation within the Muslim community. The Quran and the Sunnah represent the totality and completeness of Islam, and the Righteous Predecessors represent the safeguarding of their transmission to future generations. In particular, it is the Companions who are deemed responsible for receiving Islam from the Prophet, manifesting it on a personal and communal level, and passing it on to the next generation. Thus, for Ibn Taymiyyah, those Muslims who adhere to these aspects (understood as the Islam of the Prophet and his Companions) become the truest and most perfect members of the Prophet's religious community (*ummah*). These people make up the group known as the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l-*

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Jamā'ah, and their views form the foundation of Islamic orthodoxy.[45] The core of his ideas concerning the existence of an orthodox community revolves around his understanding of the hadiths describing the three earliest generations of Muslims.

Ibn Taymiyyah bases his concept of the Righteous Predecessors on various authentic hadiths in which the Prophet said that his generation was the best, then the following generation, and then the following generation.[46] These three generations are referred to as the Companions (*sahābah*), the Followers (*tābi'ūn*) and the Followers of the Followers (*tābi'ū-l-tābi'īn*). Although not mentioned by Ibn Taymiyyah in this context, further justification for identifying an orthodox community is found in the hadith about the *ummah* of Muhammad dividing into 73 sects, all of which are in the hellfire except "the saved sect" (*al-firqat al-nājiyah*). There is a difference of opinion amongst the *muhadditūn* as to which groups

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[45]Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:204) also stresses Ibn Taymiyyah's complete dependence on the *salaf* ("*les pieux Anciens*") for the development of every aspect of his beliefs and doctrines. He also points out (pp.220-225) that for Ibn Taymiyyah the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l-Jamā'ah*, known also as the *Ahl al-Sunnah* or *Ahl al-Hadît*, is the moderate group that mediates between the diverse opinions of the Muslims. Ibn Taymiyyah maintains that just as Islam takes the correct position between the two religions of the *Ahl al-Kitâb*, so the *Ahl al-Sunnah* takes the correct position on every issue within Islam. See also Swartz (1973:115) for Ibn Taymiyyah's comments on this issue in the *Wâsitiyyah*.

[46]Ibn Taymiyyah has a detailed discussion of these hadiths in his book entitled *Sihhat Usûl Madhab Ahli-l-Madînah* (p.27-30). He says there are two variations in the *Sahîh* collections of al-Bukhârî and Muslim. One version mentions the first three generations and the other version mentions the first four generations. In the version mentioning four generations, the narrators express some doubt as to whether the Prophet said three or four generations. Thus in discussing the best generations, Ibn Taymiyyah refers to the first three while accepting that the fourth generation might well be included in the Prophet's statement.

constitute the other 72 sects and whether any or all of them will remain eternally in the hellfire or eventually be saved. However, the one "saved sect" is associated with the more common term *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l-Jamā'ah*, or "the People of the Sunnah and the Congregation."[47] As with the exegetes, Ibn Taymiyyah also classifies on a larger scale the various Muslim groups according to their adherence to the Sunnah of the Prophet.

In his book *Sihhat Usūl Madhab Ahli-l-Madīnah*, Ibn Taymiyyah identifies the groups he believes to be most protective of the Sunnah and the places from which innovations began. Differing slightly from his classifications of the exegetes,[48] he states that the people of Medina hold the highest rank in the matter of following the Prophet's teachings. He says that the behavior (*madhab*) of the people of Medina is more authentic than that of all other towns.[49] For Ibn Taymiyyah, Medina is the geographical and spiritual center of Muhammad's religious community. He thus feels free to contrast Medina to other places in which Muslims settled but from which arose various types of innovations (*Sihhat*:34). These places are

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[47]Ibn Taymiyyah clearly associates *al-firqat al-nâjiyah* with the *Ahl al-Sunnah*; see Swartz (1973:104 n1). For a fuller discussion of the hadith of the 73 sects, see Baghdâdî's *al-Farq bayna-l-Firaq* (1408/1987:4-11) and the translation by K.C. Seelye (1966:21-24).

[48]See my comments on Ibn Taymiyyah's geographical classification system above pp.71-2. For the exegetes he places the people of Mecca at the highest rank.

[49]See *Sihhat*:31. Related to this issue, Ibn Taymiyyah says that this does not mean that the consensus (*ijmâ'*) of the people of Medina is a proof (*hujjah*) that all other Muslims must follow. I shall discuss his views on this topic in more detail below.

Kufa, Basra and Syria (al-sham).[50] His accusation is that from the places where the Companions and Followers had settled various types of innovations diverted some people from following these knowledgeable scholars. Curiously, although he includes Mecca in his list of the places of knowledgeable people, he does not discuss either the virtues or the innovations associated with it. As for the other regions, Kufa, he says, is the origin of the Shiites (tashayyu') and the Murji'ah. Basra is the place of origin for innovations concerning predestination (qadar) as related to the Mutazilites. It is also the place of origin for innovated acts of worship (al-nask al-fasid).[51] As for Syria, it is the place of origin for the rise of the hatred of 'Alī (al-nasb) and of fatalism (al-qadar).[52] In addition to these three places, Ibn Taymiyyah mentions that the Jahmiyyah

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[50]On this issue of Medina as the geographical "center" for the practice of the Sunnah, see Schacht (1959:8-9, 21-35, 172) and Azami (1985:36-69).

[51]This refers to a false piety and corrupt asceticism. In his book al-Sufiyyah wa-l-Fuqarā' (p.13), Ibn Taymiyyah clearly associates Basra with the rise of Sufism and all extreme forms of worship and devotion. He claims that some of the Muslims in Basra began making independent judgements (ijtihād) concerning acts of worship, which is absolutely forbidden according to the Quran and the Sunnah.

[52]Ibn Taymiyyah is referring here to the concept of God's determining all events, including a person's acts, which was used by the Umayyads to legitimate their claims to the caliphate. This concept of predestination is the way qadar was originally used. After the Mutazilites, whose origins he locates in Basra, began to argue that God does not create the acts of human beings, and does not even know them until they occur, the term "qadar" was applied to those Muslims who held such a view. Thus they became known as the Qadariyyah. Those who continued to support the concept of predestination to the total exclusion of any choice on the part of the individual became known as the Jabriyyah. See Watt (1985:25-31). As will be explained in Chapter 3, Ibn Taymiyyah believes that the mediating position of the Ahl al-Sunnah rejects both of these extreme positions.

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first appeared in the region of Khorasan.[53] In commenting on these regions and the innovations associated with them, he explains that the innovations become worse the further one goes from Medina. Also, these innovations first began to appear in the last years of the time of the Companions, that is, during the last years of Ibn 'Umar, Ibn 'Abbās and Jābir.[54]

The classification of these "regions of innovations" in relation to the purity of Medina is the geographical counterpart of the exegetical innovations in relation to the pure *salafī* hermeneutics. This represents a fundamental aspect of Ibn Taymiyyah's "dogmatic history" in which the pure community is besieged by deviant sects. He then continues to build on his theory of a physical and spiritual "center" of Islam by describing the various levels of adherence to the Sunnah. For this purpose, he argues that the soundness of the beliefs of the Companions, and of the people of Medina in particular, is the view of the four Imams, who affirmed the superiority of the first three generations of Muslims.

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[53]According to Ibn Taymiyyah (*Sihhat*:35), the *Jahmiyyah* first appeared in the last years of the generation of the Followers, after the death of the Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz and during the caliphate of Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Mālik. The originator of this group was Jahm ibn Safwān, but the more famous propagator of his ideas was Ja'd ibn Dirham. He sees them being responsible for the ideas related to *ta'tīl* or "stripping" God of all His names and attributes. To highlight the enormity of this deviation from the understanding of the *salaf*, he relates the story of how Khālid ibn 'Abd-Allāh al-Qasrī, the governor of Iraq, sacrificed (*dabbaha*) Ja'd on the '*īd al-adhā* because he claimed that God did not take Abraham as an intimate friend (*khalīl*) and that He did not speak directly to Moses. The same story is related by Baghdādī (1408/1987:262).

[54]Baghdādī (1408/1987:15) says that these three Companions, as well as others such as Abū Hurayrah and Anas ibn Mālik, refused to greet or to pray the funeral prayer over those known to hold the beliefs of the *Qadariyyah*.

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In the *Sihhat Usūl Madhab Ahli-l-Madīnah*, Ibn Taymiyyah discusses the position of the four Imams, Abū Hanīfah (d. 150/767), Mālik (d. 179/795-6), al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/819-20) and Ibn Hanbal (d. 241/855-6), concerning the Sunnah of the Prophet and the practice of the Companions in relation to the issue of the consensus of the people of Medina. His lengthy discussion cannot be fully repeated here, but I shall present his main points in order to highlight his view that the scholars of the *Ahl al-Sunnah*, particularly those of the earlier centuries as opposed to those of his own time period, were in full agreement concerning principles of belief (*'aqīdah*) and methodology (*minhāj*). They maintained this agreement concerning principles even though they differed on rulings related to specific cases (*furū'*). His claim that there is an agreement amongst the four Imams on methodological principles is very useful to Ibn Taymiyyah's overall view of the *salaf* because it allows him to focus on the idea of unity without being too distracted by particular differences. Thus it is relatively easy for him to argue that there are four levels of authority concerning the consensus of the people of Medina (*Sihhat*:36).

Ibn Taymiyyah's first level is the acceptance of customary practices of the Prophet as related by the people of Medina. As examples of this he cites the size of dry measures (*sā' wa mudd*) and the fact that *zakāh* is not collected on vegetables (*khadrawāt*) or endowed property (*ahbās*). There is complete agreement on this, says Ibn Taymiyyah, according to the four Imams. This is actually a generalized view based on his assertion that the four Imams agreed

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on the principles of *fiqh*. His emphasis on principles is made clear by the special care he takes to show that Abū Hanīfah did not prefer analogy (*qiyās*) over authentic hadiths, thus enabling him to maintain his claim of agreement. As proof of this, he states that when Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798), the preeminent student of Abū Hanīfah, met with Mālik and heard hadiths from him, he changed many of his opinions which he had held in accordance with the teachings of Abū Hanīfah.[55] Abū Yūsuf is then quoted as saying that if his master had heard what he had heard, he would have changed his opinion also.[56]

Ibn Taymiyyah's second level of authority of the people of Medina refers to their actions before the death of ʿUṯmān (*Sihhat*:42). The leading role of Medina in propagating the Prophet's Sunnah is based on his belief that the Rightly-Guided Caliphs would not have allowed false practices or beliefs to spread among the Muslims. In holding this opinion, Ibn Taymiyyah is following the classical Sunni theory of the early caliphate as first

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[55]According to al-Sayyid Sābiq in his *Fiqhu-l-Sunnah* (see the translation by Khokhar et al. (1412/1991:23), Abū Hanīfah maintained that *zakāh* is due on "...every type of produce of the land including vegetables..." He continues by saying that Abū Yūsuf and Muhammad al-Shaybānī (d. 189/805) differed from their teacher, for they maintained that produce that "...does not last a whole year, such as...cucumbers and watermelons.." have no *zakāh* due on them.

[56]See *Sihhat*:37. In connection with formulating opinions in opposition to authentic hadiths, Ibn Taymiyyah says there are about twenty valid excuses for doing this. He refers the reader to his book *Rafʿ al-Malām ʿan al-Aʾimmati-l-Aʿlām* for a full discussion of this point. In the *Sihhat* he mentions a few points, such as that a scholar does not know of a particular hadith, that he knows of the hadith only through a weak chain of narrators, that he does not believe the hadith is an evidence in judging a particular case, that he thinks another hadith is a stronger evidence in judging a case, or that he thinks that the hadith has been abrogated.

formulated by preeminent *tābi'ūn* such as al-Hasan al-Basrī (d. 110/728-9) and Ibn Sirīn (d. 110/728-9). The theory states, in brief, that the *ijmā'* of the Companions, and the *ijtihād* of the foremost among them, takes precedence over all later opinions put forth by other scholars. This lofty opinion of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs functions for Ibn Taymiyyah as a pillar of his Sunni world view. Consequently, it is a critical factor in his efforts to undermine the Shiite theories of the Imamate.[57] However, his polemics against the Shiites forces him to do a historical balancing act in his treatment of 'Alī (d. 40/660-1), whose caliphate creates problems for Ibn Taymiyyah's theory of the consensus of the people of Medina. In the *Sihhat*, he is able to side step the issue by pointing out that 'Alī is not included in the second level of authority because the seat of his caliphate was in Kufa not Medina. This manner of deferring judgement seems to be typical of the way Ibn Taymiyyah deals with this extremely sensitive issue. In forging a "mediating position" concerning the fourth caliph, he must defend 'Alī from certain Sunni opinions, in which 'Alī is judged to be an incompetent and unjust caliph, and from Shiite claims that he was denied his prophetically appointed right to the caliphate by apostatizing Companions.[58] In doing this, Ibn Taymiyyah commends 'Alī for the way he handled the turmoil (*fitnah*) of his caliphate while using that *fitnah* to separate 'Alī from the first three caliphs

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[57]See Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:205-206).

[58]The details of Ibn Taymiyyah's views on 'Alī are presented by Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:213-218) as part of the chapter entitled "*les Salaf.*"

for the purpose of maintaining the authority of the people of Medina at the second level.

At the third level of authority, which refers to the time after 'Uṯmān, Ibn Taymiyyah admits that the agreement on principles amongst the *Ahl al-Sunnah* begins to falter. A difference of opinion occurs concerning whether a jurisprudent must give the preponderance of evidence to the hadiths transmitted from the people of Medina and to their *fiqh* rulings based on analogy (*qiyās*) when alternative indicators exist for resolving a case (*Siḥḥat*:43). Ibn Taymiyyah states that at this point the four Imams differ as to the use of the hadiths and opinions of the people of Medina as elements in the principles of jurisprudence (*usūl al-fiqh*). He says that Mālik and al-Shāfi'ī accept giving preponderance to the evidence transmitted by the people of Medina whereas Abu Ḥanīfah does not. The *Hanbalīs* are divided on this point, he says. The majority claim that Ahmad preferred giving preponderance to the statements of the people of Medina while Abū Ya'lā (d. 458/1066) and Ibn 'Aqīl (d. 513/1119-20) said that no preponderance should be given to them.

The final level of authority refers to the actions of the people of Medina from later times (*Siḥḥat*:44). Ibn Taymiyyah is not specific as to which time period he is referring, but I assume he means after the time of the Companions. In any case, he states that there is again an unanimous opinion amongst the four Imams, but this time the agreement is that these later actions are no longer to

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be taken as constituting legal proof (*hujjah shar'iyyah*).[59] Thus, in Ibn Taymiyyah's understanding of the early Muslim community, the *Ahl al-Sunnah* of the first three centuries, i.e., up to and including the four Imams, formed a coherent group with common beliefs and only minor differences in methodology. These differences notwithstanding, he portrays the *Ahl al-Sunnah* as the representatives of a "pure" Islam standing against emerging sects such as the *Khawārij*, Shiah, *Murji'ah*, *Jahmiyyah* and Mutazilites. In order to indicate the implications of Ibn Taymiyyah's view of the *Ahl al-Sunnah*, I shall present some of his opinions which correspond to the Sunnah as laid down by the Companions and the Followers but oppose the accepted practices of the Muslims of his day.

Discussing Ibn Taymiyyah's relentless campaign against innovations in the beliefs and practices of the Muslims is a formidable task which can only be hinted at here. Many of his opinions on the topic of innovation are contained in his work *Kitāb Iqtidā' al-Sirāti-l-Mustaqīm li-Mukhālafat Ashābi-l-Jahīm*, which has been translated by M. U. Memon (1976) with the title *Ibn Taimīya's Struggle against Popular Religion*. Intending to focus on Ibn Taymiyyah's insistence on following the way of the *salaf*, I shall mention a few points brought out in this book. According to Memon

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[59]Ibn Taymiyyah makes a special note in reference to Imam Mâlik's opinion by stating that this is what is reported by the most reliable followers of Mâlik such as al-Fâdil 'Abd al-Wahhâb (d. 422/1031) He goes on to say that the followers of Mâlik in North Africa (*ahl al-maghrib*) hold the opposite opinion, but they have no authentic evidence for this and are simply people of blind imitation (*ahl al-taqlîd*). He does not mention, however, whose opinion they are following.

(1976:24), "...the test of all practice and ideal is, according to Ibn Taimīya, its compatibility with Islam of the Koran, the *Sunna*, and the conduct of the *Salaf*." In regards to festivals, for example, this means that practices by Muslims can become un-Islamic. For Ibn Taymiyyah, there are three elements involved in the definition of a festival: time (*waqt, zamān*), location (*makān*) and rites (*a'māl*). To deviate or innovate on any of these points constitutes an unacceptable or sinful act (Memon, 1976:11). One example of this is that the Prophet and his Companions never practiced or recommended acts such as congregational supererogatory prayers.[60] This, he says, is venerating a time period not mentioned in the *sharī'ah* and specifying the manner in which it must be prayed.

Likewise, the *salaf* never celebrated the Prophet's birthday (Memon, 1976:13). This, says Ibn Taymiyyah, is elevating a memorable day to the level of a festival with accompanying rites and practices. Adhering to the way of the *salaf* also includes not venerating places that are not hallowed by the Law, such as the alleged tombs of prophets and saints.[61] First of all, this makes no

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[60]Memon (1976:12) mentions two prayers in particular, the *salāt al-raghā'ib* offered in Rajab and the prayers of mid-Sha'bân. Ibn al-Jawzî (1403/1983:123-130) discusses the various fabricated hadiths related to offering special prayers in these two months.

[61]A very concise review of Ibn Taymiyyah's opinions on the visitation of graves (*ziyârah*) is given by Taylor (1989:126-132). It is a good example of how Ibn Taymiyyah bases his arguments on evidence from the Quran, Sunnah and the practice of the *salaf*. In brief, his opinion is that visiting a local graveyard in order to supplicate God on behalf of the dead is permissible. However, to journey (*safar*) to a particular grave in order to supplicate or pray there, thinking that one's prayer is more likely to be accepted because of the alleged

sense, he says, for often the exact location of a tomb is not known. Even when it is known, there is nothing in the Law or in the practice of the Companions to indicate a benefit from carrying out devotions at the grave of a prophet or saint. In fact, the behavior of the Companions indicates the exact opposite (Memon, 1976:14-17). As for visiting the Prophet's grave, both Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Mâlik state that only salutations may be given and that when one has a personal prayer to make, he must not face the tomb but should turn and face the Kaaba. These few examples must suffice to show how Ibn Taymiyyah used the practice of the Righteous Predecessors as a litmus test for everything a Muslim should do. Also, he claims that no consensus or ruling can ever overturn the statements and habits of the Companions and Followers. On this point, Ibn Taymiyyah refers to a statement by Imam Mâlik who said: "Later Islam can approve only what early Islam did approve" (Memon, 1976:19). For Ibn Taymiyyah, approving what early Islam approved includes the proper use of the Arabic language, to which I shall now turn.

Part C: The Arabic Language

In addition to the four methodological principles around which Ibn Taymiyyah builds his exegesis and his definition of the

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piety of the deceased, is strictly forbidden. In fact, he says that the Companions not only never prayed at the Prophet's grave, but went out of their way to stop any such activities by others.

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Ahl al-Sunnah, he considers the correct use of the Arabic language as a fifth indispensable tool for interpreting the Islam of the Prophet and the Companions. By taking such a stance, he aligns himself squarely with the classical grammarians, of whom al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad (d. 175/791) and Sībawayh (d. 188/804) are his authoritative references in the *Risālat al-'Ubūdiyyah*.[62] Although Ibn Taymiyyah did not write a single work specifically on grammar, just as he did not write a complete *tafsīr*, his views on the Arabic language can be assembled from various discussions throughout his works, especially those dealing with the Quran. In *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, he twice refers to specific aspects of Arabic in relation to worship.[63] In both cases he is using Arabic as a means to define the proper boundaries of worship in accordance with the language of the Quran and the hadiths. This use of Arabic presupposes the authority of the first four principles and indicates that the language itself is an established aspect of revelation. Thus it is not hard to imagine that Ibn Taymiyyah would have fully accepted the notion that "language control is 'worship' control."[64] In reference to *tafsīr*, it seems safe to say that his use of Arabic is meant to serve the same purpose as his use of the four prior principles, namely, to restrict the ranks of

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[62]On the early history of the grammatical tradition in Islam, see Bernards (1997), *Changing Traditions: Al-Mubarrad's Refutation of Sībawayh and the Subsequent Reception of the* Kitāb (Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill).

[63]See the translation below, Chapter 5, section 16, and Chapter 8, sections 6-7. Ibn Taymiyyah refers to Sībawayh as his authority on the definition of a meaningful sentence in Arabic in the two latter sections.

[64]This is my paraphrase of the title of Carter's article (1983) "Language Control as People Control in Medieval Islam: the Aims of the Grammarians in their Cultural context" *al-Abhath*, vol.31, pp.65-83.

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the exegetes and to limit the range of flexibility for *ijtihād* and *ra'y*.

In order to facilitate the presentation of Ibn Taymiyyah's views on the Arabic language, I shall focus on two main issues. The first is his overall view of Arabic in reference to its origin and special role as the means by which God revealed His final revelation. The second issue deals with his understanding and usage of a few key linguistic terms and grammatical points which are essential to his theology.

For Ibn Taymiyyah, human speech is a created act similar to the creation of a person's deeds. In the matter of reciting the Quran, there is no comparison between God's speech, which is one of His eternal attributes, and the utterances a person makes at the time of recitation.[65] God inspires *(alhama)* human beings with language and understanding just as He inspires animals with their

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[65]In his book *al-Kaylâniyyah* (pp.324-326), Ibn Taymiyyah presents several reports related from Ahmad ibn Hanbal that there is total agreement amongst the *Ahl al-Sunnah* that the actions and speech of human beings are created *(makhlûq)* and not eternal *(qadîm)*. Ibn Taymiyyah's arguments in this context are directed against a group which Ibn Hanbal had referred to as the *Lafziyyah*, who claimed that a person's recitation of the Quran is not created *(ghayru makhlûq)*. Thus, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, the *Lafziyyah* deny that the recitation of Quran is created human speech. This is a different description of the *Lafziyyah* than that given by van Ess (1982:S.V. "Ibn Kullâb"), who says that Ibn Hanbal attacked the *Lafziyyah* as "...people who believed in the createdness of the pronunciation *(lafz)*, i.e. the recitation of the Kur'ân." As yet, I have not found much information about this particular group, which makes it difficult to resolve these two contradictory statements. Thus assuming both statements of Ibn Hanbal about the *Lafziyyah* are accurate, he might have used the term in reference to two different groups. However, it could be that both statements are directed against a group holding beliefs similar to those espoused by Ibn Kullâb who held that the eternal speech of God is, in van Ess's words, a "reproduction *(hikâya)* in historical reality, especially in a Holy Scripture...." This complicates the issue, for Ibn Kullâb talks about both the eternal speech of God and about "*khalq al-Kur'ân*." I shall discuss Ibn Hanbal's and Ibn Taymiyyah's beliefs concerning God's speech in

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own form of language and understanding.[66] Thus, for Ibn Taymiyyah, God is the "Positor" of language, for all human languages are with Him eternally.[67] As for the issue of a written language, Ibn Taymiyyah states that there was no writing until the time of the Prophet Idrîs, as is reported by many of the *salaf*. The family of Adam could neither read nor write. God taught Adam the names of all things by speaking to him with ordered speech (*kalâm manzûm*). Although there are several theories purporting to explain the origin of the Arabic script, Ibn Taymiyyah says that there are no authentic reports from the Prophet indicating how the script originated.[68] He places these stories in the same category as the stories about the exegesis of the meaning of the letters appearing before certain Suras, that is, they are baseless. What is important for Ibn Taymiyyah, however, is that Arabic is the language chosen by God to be the vehicle for His final revelation.

Ibn Taymiyyah considers the proper understanding and use of Arabic to be vital for Muslims. Specifically, knowing the Arabic of

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[66]In his *Kitâb al-Imân* (pp.82-83), Ibn Taymiyyah refers to verses such as al-Naml 27:16 and 18 to show that God gave birds and ants speech (*mantiq*). He says that God does the same for humans as is indicated in verses al-Rahmân 55:1-4 and Fussilat 41:21.

[67]The term "Positor" is used by Gully (1995:33) in relation to his discussion of the Muslim theory of language ('*ilm al-wad'*). He places Ibn Taymiyyah with the Zâhirîs and the Hanbalîs who "...assert the ultimate belief in the divine origin of language..." As for all languages being with God, Ibn Taymiyyah states in his *K. al-Imân* (p.86) in reference to Turkish, Hebrew and Arabic that they are all the speech of God (*al-jamî' kalâmu-llâh*).

[68]Ibn Taymiyyah deals with the issue of writing and the Arabic script in his essay *Mas'alat al-Ahruf allatî Anzala-llâhu 'alâ Adam* (pp.56-59). He mentions, for example, the stories related to the creation of the Arabic script by the Bedouins known as Abû Jâd, Hawwaz and Huttî. Cf. the reports given by Ibn al-Nadîm in the *Fihrist* (see the translation by Dodge, 1970: v.1, pp.6-9).

the Quran, and the way in which the Prophet and his Companions used it, will help save the Muslims from the hellfire. This is contrary to the Arabic of the pre-Islamic period, which by itself, he says, will lead to the hellfire. In encouraging the Muslims to study Arabic, which he sees as a collective duty (*fard kifāyah*),[69] he says that when the people of the Arabic language (*ahl al-'arabiyyah*) turn away from its foundation (*asl*) they are at the level of the pre-Islamic poets, the companions of the Seven Odes, who are wood for the fire.[70] With such a statement, Ibn Taymiyyah is clearly saying that, as with every issue related to Islam, the role of the Prophet and the Companions in using Arabic and defining the boundaries of discourse is of utmost importance. It is not enough to know Arabic, a Muslim must know the Arabic of the *salaf*.

One clear example of how Ibn Taymiyyah sides with the statements of the *sahābah* and *tābi'ūn*, as opposed to the statements of some of the later lexicographers, is in regards to the definition of the word *samad* in Sura al-Ikhlās 112:2. According to Ibn Taymiyyah in his *Tafsīr Sūrati-l-Ikhlās* (pp.3-4), the *sahābah*, the *tābi'ūn* and the lexicographers give two basic meanings for *samad*: "a being with no interior" (*lā jawfa la-hu*)[71] and "the lord on whom all depend in times of need" (*al-sayyid alladī yusmadu ilayhi fi-l-hawā'ij*). He continues by saying that the first meaning is used by

[69]According to Carter (1983:80), this is the view expressed by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Râzî (d. 606/1209-10) and implied by earlier grammarians such as al-Zajjâjî (d. 337/948-9) and Ibn al-Anbârî (d. 577/1181-2).
[70]See "al-Furqân bayna-l-Haqq wa-l-Bâtil" (1386/1966:207).
[71]He also reports that some of the *salaf* said that *samad* means "*laysa la-hu ahshâ*'; see *Tafsîr Sûrati-l-Ikhlâs* (p.7).

most of the *salaf*, and a group of lexicographers, in reference to this Sura. The second meaning is used by most of the lexicographers and a group of the *salaf*.[72] His list of the *salaf* who favored the first definition includes many of the familiar names from the Companions and Followers, such as Ibn Mas'ūd, Ibn 'Abbās, al-Hasan al-Basrī, Mujāhid, Sa'īd ibn Jubayr, 'Ikrimah, al-Dahhāk, Qatādah and Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab. With this evidence, Ibn Taymiyyah uses the concept of *lā jawfa la-hu* as the basis for his *tafsīr* of this Sura, in which he also clarifies that the two definitions complement each other.[73] By referring to these statements of the Righteous Predecessors about the definition of *samad*, Ibn Taymiyyah is using the "*salafī* principles" to define the acceptable boundaries in which the Arabic language is to be used in the discussion of this term. He applies the same methodology when he discusses other aspects of Arabic.

The role of Arabic grammar in Ibn Taymiyyah's methodology conforms to his use of the *salafī* principles. Thus he insists that certain linguistic terms such as "literal meaning" (*haqīqah*), "figurative speech" (*majāz*), "unqualified" (*mutlaq*), "qualified"

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[72]See Ibn Manzūr, *Lisân al-'Arab*, S.V. "*smd*." He states that *lâ jawfa la-hu* is not allowed to be used in reference to God.

[73]Ibn Taymiyyah reports most of the hadiths to support his claim from the *tafsîr* of Ibn Abî Hâtim. As a comparison, al-Bukhârî mentions only the hadiths which give the meaning of *samad* as *al-sayyid alladî yusmadu ilayhi fî-l-hawâ'ij*; see Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bârî* (no date:v. 8, pp.739-740). On Ibn Taymiyyah's exegesis of this Sura, see also the comments by Syafruddin (1994:88-97).

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(*muqayyad*), "general" (*'āmm*) and "specific" (*khāss*).[74] must be understood in accordance with the grammar and usage of the earliest generations of Muslims. Nevertheless, Ibn Taymiyyah allows for the use of the technical terminology of the grammarians, as he does with the technical terminology used in the other Islamic sciences, even though it developed after the time of the Companions and Followers. This acceptance manifests itself in the erudite manner in which he was able to discuss every aspect of thought in the Islamic world of his time in the language of the specialists, whether jurisprudents, philosophers or Sufis.[75] Based on the broad range of his studies, it seems that he accepted the use of technical terminology but then sought to restrict, and at times redefine, those terms within the boundaries of the "*salafī* principles." This point will be made clearer in the following discussion on some important grammatical terms, as well as in the discussion of theology in Chapter 3, and in his treatment of Sufi terms in *al-'Ubūdiyyah* in Chapter 8.

One of the most prominent issues of Arabic grammar with which Ibn Taymiyyah deals is that of literal and figurative meanings. Following the traditional *Hanbalī* position that the Quran and

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[74]For the translation of these and other grammatical terms, I am following the translations used by Gully (1995) in his *Grammar and Semantics in Medieval Arabic*, Surrey: Curzon Press. Alternative translations for *mutlaq* and *muqayyad* are "absolute" and "conditional," respectively, which are used by Izutsu (1967:71).

[75]Makari (1976:26) mentions that even Ibn Taymiyyah's opponents acquiesced in his superior skills as a debater and in mastering all sciences.

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hadiths contain almost no figurative (*majāz*) meanings.[76] Ibn Taymiyyah clearly states in his *Kitāb al-Imān* (pp.79-81) that this division of expressions into a *haqīqah-majāz* dichotomy first occurs in the speech of the scholars after the third century of the Hijrah. Furthermore, this dichotomy is merely a "terminological convention" (*istilāh hādit*), for the terms are not used by either the early Imams, such as Mālik, al-Awzā'ī, Abū Hanīfah and al-Shāfi'ī, or by the early grammarians, such as Abū 'Amr ibn al-'Alā' (d. 154/770), al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad (d. 175/791), and Sībawayh (d. 188/804).[77] The first person to use the term *majāz*, says Ibn Taymiyyah, was Abū 'Ubaydah Ma'mar ibn al-Mutannā (d. 209/824-5), who did not use it as a counterpart to *haqīqah.* Rather, he used it in reference to explaining one verse by use of another.[78] It was the Mutazilites and other *mutakallimūn*, he says, who started using *majāz* as a technical term in order to explain their innovated

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[76]Ghazālī (1983:16-17) informs us that Ibn Hanbal allowed for a non-literal interpretation of only three hadiths and that the Ash'arīs are the closest to the Hanbalīs in avoiding *majāz* interpretations. See also McCarthy (1980:155-156).
[77]The expression "terminological convention" is taken from Heinrichs (1984:115), who summarizes the same passage from Ibn Taymiyyah's *K. al-Imān*. Ibn Taymiyyah also refers to this dichotomy as being *min 'awārid al-alfāz.* Concerning Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Taymiyyah says that he does use the expression *min majāzi-l-lughah* in reference to certain statements in the Quran. However, he says that according to the earliest followers of Ahmad, this means what is allowable in the Arabic language (*min-mā yajūz fī-l-lughah*). The vast majority of the *Hanbalīs* agree that there is no *majāz* in the Quran or the hadiths, except for what is mentioned in the above note. See *K. al-Imān,* p.81, and Heinrichs (1984:116).
[78]Gully (1995:40) makes the same reference to Abū 'Ubaydah's use of the term *majāz.* He says that his use of the term might "...constitute a 'prefiguration' of its later acceptance as figurative speech." On Abū 'Ubaydah's use of the term *majāz,* see Heinrichs (1984:117-130).

beliefs. This explanation corresponds well with Ibn Taymiyyah's "dogmatic" view of history, for it allows him to maintain the idea of the "purity" of the early *salaf* in opposition to the innovative practices of deviant sects.[79]

As for the use of a word for other than that for which it was originally posited, Ibn Taymiyyah says that this occurs only by way of an "associative indication" (*qarīnah*). His use of this term, although still a "terminological convention," indicates his preference for the language of the legal scholars over that of the rhetoricians.[80] His theological and legal affiliations influence both his choice of terms and his use of language. Thus for Ibn Taymiyyah an allowable *qarīnah* occurs when one uses the words "lion" or "donkey" in reference to a brave or stupid man, respectively. In such cases, he says, first a

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[79]Heinrichs (1984:117) associates Ibn Taymiyyah's account of the history of the *haqīqah-majāz* dichotomy with his "*salafī* view-point," and suggests that his use of *istilāh hādit* to describe this dichotomy is very close to the meaning of *bid'ah*. On the issue of whether language is merely the result of human convention, Gully (1995:33) states that Ibn Taymiyyah "...believed that the conventionalist view of language had been invented to justify the concept of figurative (extended) usage (*majāz*)." See also the comments by Gully (1995), especially pp.40-41 and p.69 n21. In a related issue, Hallaq (1993:xvii) points out that Ibn Taymiyyah argues that to claim a distinction between essence and accident is merely based on convention (*wad'*) which "...is nothing but the result of what a group of people invents (*takhtari'*) and agrees to use or accepts as a norm."

[80]In tracing the development of the use of the terms *haqīqah* and *majāz*, Heinrichs (1984:114) narrows down the discussions in the later Middle Ages to the use of the terms by legal scholars in *usūl al-fiqh* works and rhetoricians in *'ilm al-bayān* works. The discussions include the differences in the way that the *bayāniyyūn* and the *usūliyyūn* use the term *qarīnah*, which helps to explain Ibn Taymiyyah's position. The *bayāniyyūn* see the *qarīnah* as an integral part of the *majāz* and use it in ways that are irrelevant to the *usūliyyūn*, who limit the *qarīnah* to being only a condition for the soundness of *majāz*.

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word has been posited for a specific meaning, for which it is commonly used. Then the use of the word is carried over to another meaning for which it was not originally posited. For this reason, he says, it is well-known that every figure of speech must necessarily have a literal meaning, but every literal meaning does not necessarily have a figurative use (*Imān*:81). Thus, when a word appears alone, one first thinks of its literal meaning. Only when there is an "associative indication" does one think of its figurative meaning (*Imān*:87). Thus Ibn Taymiyyah is limiting the use of *qarīnah* to the narrowest applications of definition and grammar. A few examples will suffice to show his point.

One such case of referring to a word in the Quran as *majāz* occurs with the word "taste" (*dawq*). Ibn Taymiyyah says (*Imān*:98-100) that some people say that taste can only refer to the physical sensation in the mouth. Thus they say that when God says that the unbelievers will taste His punishment, as in al-Qamar 54:37 and 39, it must be a figure of speech. Ibn Taymiyyah refutes this by saying that this is a "qualified" (*muqayyad*) definition, for taste indicates any type of physical sensation (*yadullu 'alā jinsi-l-iḥsās*). In support of his definition, he mentions that al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad defines *dawq* as "finding the savor of a thing" (*wujūd ta'mi-l-shay'*). He then says that the various uses of the word *dawq* in the Quran indicate this broader meaning of savoring anything through the senses. Besides referring to "tasting punishment" (3:106, 32:21, 65:9), the Quran refers to believers who will "not taste death except the first death" (al-Dukhān 44:56) and to disbelievers who will "not taste coolness or

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any drink except boiling water and paralyzing cold" (al-Naba' 78:24-25). This definition of *dawq*, which, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts, includes all physical sensation, is an important part of his views on faith and worship, for he believes that these aspects of religion can be experienced in this life. In *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, for example, he refers three times to a hadith in which the Prophet mentions those believers who will "find the sweetness of faith" (*wajada halāwata-l-īmān*). In one instance, he interprets "finding" (*wujūd*) as "tasting" (*yadūq*).[81] However, this definition of *dawq* clearly goes against the accepted usage of the word as reported by the later generations of lexicographers.[82] But for Ibn Taymiyyah, it is more important to derive definitions from the Quran, the hadiths and the statements of the *salaf*. Thus in deriving his definition of *dawq*, he also refers to another hadith in which the Prophet mentions those Muslims who will "taste the savor of faith" (*dāqa ta'ma-l-īmān*),[83] the usage of which clearly resembles the definition of *dawq* given above by al-Khalīl. Thus he is able to draw an analogy between "tasting" and "finding" based on the usage of the words "tasting" and "finding" in the Quran and the hadiths. For Ibn Taymiyyah, there is then no reason to assume that a figurative meaning for *dawq* is necessary. By

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[81]The hadith on "finding the sweetness of faith" appears in the translation below in Chapter 5, section 13, Chapter 6, section 5, and Chapter 7, section 5. It is in the second appearance of the hadith that Ibn Taymiyyah associates "finding" with "tasting."

[82]See Ibn Manzūr (*Lisān al-'Arab*, S.V. "*dwq*"), who uses al-Dukhān 44:48-49 "Then pour on his head the torment of boiling water. Taste! (*duq*)..." to argue that the use of "taste" is *majāz*.

[83]Ibn Taymiyyah refers to this hadith in *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, Chapter 5, section 13, along with the hadith on "finding the sweetness of faith."

including all physical senses in the meaning of "taste," he can maintain the experiential character of the word and avoid recourse to a *majāz* meaning that is not supported by an "associative indication."

The previous example refers to what Ibn Taymiyyah sees as a misuse of *majāz* because of a "qualified" definition used by certain scholars. Another example of a misuse of *majāz*, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, involves a misunderstanding of Arabic grammar. This example occurs with the word "village" in Sura Yūsuf 12:82 (*Imān*:101-102). Although it states "ask the village," Ibn Taymiyyah says that this is not a figurative use of the word village. It is simply the elision of the full genitive construction which should read "ask the people of the village."[84] Thus regarding any claims that there are examples of figurative speech in the Quran, Ibn Taymiyyah uses similar lexical or grammatical explanations to refute such notions. He therefore conforms with Ibn Hanbal's claim that there are no examples of *majāz* in the Quran. His views on other aspects of Arabic grammar follow a similar line of argumentation, for he uses the concepts "general" and "specific," and "qualified" and "unqualified," within the framework of his "*salafī* principles."

Ibn Taymiyyah's understanding of the terms "general" and "specific" are clarified in his explanation of the concepts of *islām*, *īmān* and *ihsān*. In his *Kitāb al-Imān* (p.11), he states that based on

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[84]Cf. a similar argument concerning this verse in Gully (1995:41).

the well-known hadith of Gabriel,[85] these three terms must be understood in the context of "general" and "specific." As connotative terms, *ihsān* is in-itself more general than *īmān*, and *īmān* is in-itself more general than *islām*. However, as to the people denoted by these terms the reverse is true. That is, *ihsān* is more specific than *īmān*, and *īmān* is more specific than *islām*. Thus he is able to claim that every *muhsin* is necessarily a *mu'min*, and every *mu'min* is necessarily a *muslim*; but every *muslim* is not necessarily a *mu'min*, and every *mu'min* is not necessarily a *muhsin*. Through this use of "general" and "specific" meanings, he is able to conclude that when a term such as *īmān* is used in an absolute sense (*mujarrad*), it connotes all the characteristics denoted by the term *islām* but not by the term *ihsān*.[86] According to Ibn Taymiyyah, the concepts of "general" and "specific" must be kept in mind whenever one is trying to understand the Quran and the hadiths. However, these terms must also be used in connection with the concepts "unqualified" and "qualified."

Ibn Taymiyyah elaborates on the concepts of "unqualified" (*mutlaq*) and "qualified" (*muqayyad*) statements in relation to his theory of coordinating ('*atf*) a "specific" term to a "general" one.[87] A very precise explanation of Ibn Taymiyyah's ideas concerning this matter is given by Izutsu (1965:71). He explains Ibn Taymiyyah's

[85]For the hadith as reported by al-Bukhārī, see Ibn Hajar (*Fath al-Bārī*, no date:v.1, p.114).

[86]See *K. al-Imān*:15; and see Izutsu's (1965:59-60) discussion.

[87]Ibn Taymiyyah discusses the implications of '*atf* in relation to the exegesis of various verses of the Quran in *al-'Ubūdiyyah*. See below, Chapter 5, section 16.

theory by giving the example of term *A* connoting five basic elements, *a, b, c, d* and *e*. When the word is used in an "unqualified" manner, it must include all five elements. But words are often used in a "qualified" manner in which one or more of the basic elements are mentioned with the connotative term. Thus there might occur a statement such as [*A* and *a* and *d*]. This happens, says Ibn Taymiyyah (*Imān:*142-151), with the use of "good" (*ma'rūf*) and "evil" (*munkar*) as connotative terms. In Suras al-A'rāf 7:156 and Al 'Imrān 3:110, *ma'rūf* connotes every type of good (*khayr*) and *munkar* connotes every type of evil (*sharr*). However, in al-Nisā' 4:114, God mentions that there is no value to people's conversations unless they "...command the giving of charity (*sadaqah*), *ma'rūf* and reconciling (*islāh*) between people." Likewise, in al-'Ankabūt 29:45, God mentions that prayer prevents "...blatant sins (*fahshā'*) and *munkar*." In the first case, charity and reconciliation are part of *ma'rūf*. Thus *ma'rūf* is the connotative term *A* and *sadaqah* and *islāh* are the elements *a* and *b*. In the second case, blatant sins are part of *munkar*. Thus *munkar* is the connotative term *A* and *fahshā'* is the element *a*. The specific elements are mentioned along with the connotative terms to focus the believers attention on the particular benefit or harm of a given action. Ibn Taymiyyah goes on to explain that the coordination of "specific" terms to "general" terms occurs for different reasons depending on the issue involved.

Some other examples are as follows. As for acts of worship, when *'ibādah* is used in an "unqualified" way (*mutlaq^{an}*), it connotes

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concepts such as reliance on God, seeking aid from Him, and doing everything He and His Messenger have commanded. But in a verse such as al-Fâtihah 1:5, "seeking aid" is explicitly associated (*yuqranu*) with worship, or as in Hûd 11:113, "reliance" is explicitly associated with it. This highlights the importance of seeking aid only from God and relying only on Him. Likewise, in al-Hadîd 56:7, God's statement "...they believe in Allah and His Messenger..." connotes that they believe in all of the earlier scriptures and prophets. This is made clear when God associates the earlier scriptures and prophets with belief in Him as in al-Baqarah 2:255. Thus it can be seen that Ibn Taymiyyah's use of Arabic grammar conforms to his methodology of interpreting "the Quran by the Quran." By adding the Arabic language to the "*salafi* principles," he is able to draw the boundaries of exegetical and theological discourse, within which the "true" scholar, that is, the *muhaddit*, can operate.

In summary, Ibn Taymiyyah has developed his theology based on a very precise understanding and use of sources and methodology. The Quran, the Sunnah and the practices of the Righteous Predecessors constitute both source and methodology. Ibn Taymiyyah accepts this to the point that any discourse concerning religion must come from these sources and be used in a manner consistent with that of the *salaf*. Even the Arabic language is utilized by him as a clearly defined tool for understanding revelation. To speak on religion by using words out of context with the speech of the *salaf*, or to use new terminology in a way that

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opposes their clear statements, leads to unacceptable innovation. With this in mind, I shall now turn to the discussion of the major theological points relative to the *Risālat al-'Ubūdiyyah.*

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Chapter 3: Theology

In the previous chapter, I have shown that Ibn Taymiyyah aligned himself with the *Ahl al-Hadīt* in his approach to the Quran and the Sunnah and in his methodology for understanding these revealed sources. I have also indicated in my discussion of his exegesis and his concept of the *Ahl al-Sunnah* that this "*salafī*" methodology had a tremendous influence on his understanding of history, the development of jurisprudence, and the emergence of "deviations" in creed (*'aqīdah*). In this chapter, I shall further develop the connection between Ibn Taymiyyah's use of "*salafī* principles" and his theology, with particular reference to matters related to his concept of worship as presented in the *Risālat al-'Ubūdiyyah*. In order to accomplish this, I shall focus on two main themes which exemplify this connection.

Part A of this chapter will be a review of the most important issues of creed, which Ibn Taymiyyah traces back to the Quran, the Sunnah and the beliefs of the Companions. The means by which he establishes his "orthodoxy" ultimately goes through the eponym of his *madhab*, namely, Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241/855-6). Thus I shall present a comparison of Ibn Hanbal's creed with Ibn Taymiyyah's to show that the latter was quite faithful to the earlier theologian's position. Using the creed as elaborated in Part A, I shall show in Part B of this chapter how Ibn Taymiyyah uses this creed to formulate his description of worship in *al-'Ubūdiyyah*. The main theme of this section will be to explain the manner in which Ibn

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Taymiyyah elaborated a "mediating position" between the *mutakallimūn* and the mystical Sufis concerning the nature of God and the worship of Him. In order to formulate this mediating position, Ibn Taymiyyah had to reconcile the simpler statements of the *salaf* with the sophisticated arguments which had developed within *kalām* and mystical Sufism. I shall show that his process of reconciliation proceeds from two premisses. He argues that a Muslim must accept as a matter of faith the necessity of the *salafī* principles and beliefs. His second premiss is that the theological positions of his opponents are untenable because they conflict with this "orthodox" creed and ultimately lead to self-contradictory beliefs. This explanation of Ibn Taymiyyah's theology of worship will thus serve as a means to place *al-'Ubūdiyyah* in its proper perspective.

Although Ibn Taymiyyah wrote several works which can be described as creeds, I shall focus on one in particular. In his creed of 698/1298-9, known as *al-'Aqīdat al-Wāsitiyyah*,[1] Ibn Taymiyyah claims that the points he describes are in fact the beliefs of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l-Jamā'ah*, also referred to as *al-firqat al-nājiyah*. The major portion of the creed, and the points that concern us directly, are related to the issues of God's names and attributes and to how God interacts with His creation.

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[1] For quotations from the *Wāsitiyyah*, I am using Swartz (1973), "A seventh-century (A.H.) Sunnī creed: The 'Aqîda Wâsitîya of Ibn Taymîya," *Humanoria Islamica*, vol.1, pp.91-131.

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Part A: The Creed of Ibn Taymiyyah

1 The Principles of the Creed of the *Ahl al-Sunnah*

Ibn Hanbal[2] states that his creed is based on the belief that
God is one with no additions, parts or divisions. He is one from
every aspect, and there is nothing other than He that is one.
However, God is to be described exactly as obligated by authentic
transmission (*sam'*) and consensus,[3] and this forms the evidence
which confirms Him in His existence. As proof of this general
principle, Ibn Hanbal refers to Sura al-Shūrā 42:11 which states
"there is nothing like unto Him, He is the All-Hearing, the All-
Seeing." For him, this verse confirms that God and His Messenger
have described Him with specific attributes and that there are no
alterations of meanings, anthropomorphism, or additions to, and
detractions from, God's attributes (*al-'Aqīdah*:42). Thus Ahmad[4]
says that the one who says that God was not described with
attributes until those who describe Him began describing Him with
them has left the religion. To say such a thing, he declares, is
tantamount to denying God's eternal oneness because it is as if one
says that God was not one until others began describing Him as one,

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[2]The specific points of Ahmad ibn Hanbal's creed are taken from *al-'Aqīdah
li-l-Imâm Ahmad ibn Hanbal bi-Riwâyat Abî Bakr al-Khallâl* (1408/1988), ed.
by al-Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azîz 'Izz al-Dîn al-Shîrawân. Damascus: Dâr
Qutaybiyyah. (Hereafter: *al-'Aqîdah*.)
[3]According to Ibn Hanbal (d. 241/855-6), consensus (*ijmâ'*) refers to the
consensus of the Companions; see *al-'Aqîdah*:123.
[4]My use of the name Ahmad in this section will refer only to Ibn Hanbal.

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and this is false.[5] Thus, according to Ahmad, God's attributes are eternal (*qadīm*). In response to the question whether the one being described with attributes is one eternal being and an attribute is another eternal being, Ahmad says that the question itself is a mistake, for is it not allowable to separate the True One (*al-haqq*) from His attributes (*al-'Aqīdah*:112). He thus confirms the concept of the oneness of God's names and attributes, for to attribute a self, and essence or a will to God is no different than attributing a hand or a face to Him.[6]

Ibn Taymiyyah restates Ibn Hanbal's principles by confirming that faith concerning God's names and attributes must be based on accepting "what God has ascribed to himself in the Scripture as well as what his Messenger ascribed to him."[7] He further states that this means that a Muslim must approach the names and attributes of God without altering the meanings of the texts (*tahrīf*), without stripping God of His attributes (*ta'tīl*), without questioning how the attributes exist in God's essence (*takyīf*), and without making analogies to any part of creation (*tamtīl*). The manner in which a Muslim accepts the names and attributes of God, declares Ibn Taymiyyah, is based on the belief that God uses both negation and affirmation in reference to Himself. Just as the assertion of God's

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[5] See *al-'Aqîdah*:102. The text reads: ...*man qâla inna-llâha 'azza wa jalla lam yakun mawsûf*[an] *hattâ wasafahu-l-wâsifûn fa-huwa bi-dâlika khârij 'an al-dîn wa bayân dâlika an yalzimahu an lâ yakûna wâhid*[an] *hattâ wahhadahu-l-muwahhidûn wa dâlika fâsid.*

[6] The concept of *tawhîd al-asmâ' wa-l-sifât* is a pillar of the *salafî* creed; see al-Sîlî (1417/1995:219-228).

[7] See Swartz (1973:105).

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oneness is based on a negation, "there is no deity," followed by an affirmation, "except Allah," so too does God employ this method in the verses in which He describes Himself. Ibn Taymiyyah refers to the above mentioned verse of Sura al-Shūrā 42:11, which he uses in relation to God's attributes to show that a Muslim must accept the attributes as they are described in the Quran and the hadiths. Thus for Ibn Taymiyyah, as for Ibn Hanbal before him, this verse represents the mediating position which the *Ahl al-Sunnah* follows between the extremes of stripping God of His attributes (*ta'til*) and anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*).

2 The Proofs for God's Names and Attributes

Ibn Hanbal and Ibn Taymiyyah refer to many verses which they believe confirm their understanding of God's names and attributes. These verses confirm God's attributes such as His infinite knowledge, omnipotence, love, wrath, face, hands, hearing, seeing, transcendence and divinity, His exaltedness above creation, and His speech. Ibn Hanbal begins his discussion in his *'Aqīdah* by referring to the attributes of omnipotence, living and knowledge. He confirms that God is powerful (*qādir*), living (*hayy*), and knowing (*'ālim*) based on God's verses in the Quran which describe Him as such. For example, God says that "He is the living, there is no deity other than He" (Ghāfir 40:65), "Allah has power over all things" (al-Kahf 18:45), and "Allah knows all things" (al-Ahzāb 33:40) (*al-'Aqīdah*:102). On the issue of God knowing with knowledge, Ahmad

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states that God attributes knowledge (*'ilm*) to Himself. God says in the Quran, for example, "they encompass nothing of His knowledge" (al-Baqarah 2:255) and "if they do not answer your prayer, then know that it is revealed only in the knowledge of Allah" (Hūd 11:14). God's knowledge, Ahmad says, as with His other attributes, is different from any created knowledge. Thus it does not change, is not prone to forgetfulness, and is not situated in a place such as a heart (*al-'Aqīdah*:105).

Ibn Taymiyyah confirms these attributes in the *Wāsitiyyah* and presents other verses such as "put your confidence in the Living One who does not die" (al-Furqān 25:58), "no female bears (a child) or brings (it) forth except by His knowledge" (Fātir 35:11), and "if Allah had so willed they would not have fought one another, but Allah does what he wills" (al-Baqarah 2:253) (Swartz, 1973:107-108). However, after confirming that God exists eternally with all His names and attributes, both theologians found it necessary to explain to some extent what they both claimed to be beyond human comprehension. In the face of beliefs that deviated from those of the *Ahl al-Hadīt*, Ibn Hanbal and Ibn Taymiyyah sought to describe the manner in which God's attributes exist in His essence.

3 God's Will

On the issue of God's will, Ibn Hanbal and Ibn Taymiyyah distinguish between His volition (*irādah*) and His creative will (*mashī'ah*). In his *'Aqīdah*, Ibn Hanbal confirms that God never

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ceases to be a willer (*murīd*) and that His volition (*irādah*) is an attribute in His essence. Volition, he says, is an attribute of praise because an essence (*dāt*) that does not will does not know that it exists, which is a defect. It is known, says Ahmad, that God wills because He says in the Quran "but His command, when He wills (*arāda*) a thing, is that He says to it 'Be' and it is" (Yā'Sīn 36:82) (*al-'Aqīdah*:106). This volition is, for Ahmad, related to, but not the same as, God's creative will (*mashī'ah*), which is directly associated with His omnipotence. Ibn Hanbal states that if God so wills (*shā'*), He could stop a person from committing an act that He dislikes. Also, if He so wills, He could gather all creation together on one belief. For his proof, he refers to what God says in the Quran: "If We had so willed (*law shi'nā*), We could have given every soul its guidance..." (al-Sajdah 32:13) and "...if Allah had so willed (*law shā'a-llāh*), He could have gathered them all on guidance..." (al-An'ām 6:35). In other words, God can will (*shā'*) into existence whatever He wants, and it is through His volition (*irādah*) that He chooses a certain thing at a certain time. Thus, for Ahmad, God's will cannot be defeated or conquered, and there is no fault or weakness in it. Also, when God withholds a thing from someone, it is not out of greed or stinginess (*bukhl*), for this is a defective attribute. God is so eminently gracious (*mutafaddil*) that He bestows his favors as He wills, based on His perfect knowledge (*al-'Aqīdah*:114-115).

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In the *Wāsitiyyah*, Ibn Taymiyyah discusses God's will in the context of determinism (*qadar*).[8] He sees two aspects of determinism, each of which contains two points. The first aspect of determinism refers to God's eternal foreknowledge, which itself consists of two points. The first point is that God knows in advance what His creatures will do, whether they will be obedient or not, and whether they will be blessed with good fortune or suffer ill-fortune. All of this has been recorded in the "Guarded Tablet" (*lawh mahfūz*). The second point of God's eternal foreknowledge is that it encompasses the universal (*jumlah*) and the particular (*tafsīl*). Ibn Taymiyyah's second aspect of determinism refers to God's creative will, which he specifies as His "effective will" (*mashī'ah nāfidah*). The first point he makes is the belief that what God wills, will be, and what He does not will, will not be. The second point refers to God's volition (*irādah*). Ibn Taymiyyah also maintains that God uses His volition to bring a certain thing into existence at a particular time.[9] The problem which logically follows from a belief in God's

[8]For the purpose of this translation, I have chosen to use "determinism" for *qadar* and "predestination" for *qadâ'* in order to reflect a basic lexical distinction in meanings. Lane (*Lexicon*, S.V. "qdr") distinguishes between *qadâ'* and *qadar* by referring to the former term as a general and the latter term as a particular decree, predestination, fate or destiny. Gardet (1978:S.V. "al-Kadâ' wa 'l-Kadar") explains the difference as being the "eternal Decree" (*qadâ'*) and the "Decree given existence in time" (*qadar*). Elsewhere, however, Gardet and Anawati (1970:37) use "prédétermination" for *qadâ'* and "décret" for *qadar*. Watt (1985:25-31) uses both "predetermination" and "determinism" interchangeably for *qadar*.

[9]The discussion of God's will in the *Wâsitiyyah* can be found in Swartz (1973:121-122). For a general review of Ibn Taymiyyah's beliefs concerning God's will, see Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:165). He states that Ibn Taymiyyah distinguishes between "...la volonté créatrice au sens large (*mashî'a*) et la volonté normative (*irâda*)." In the *Risâlat al-'Ubûdiyyah*, Ibn Taymiyyah also

absolute will to determine all things is the question of human will, which for each theologian means a person's ability to choose either faith and obedience or disbelief and disobedience.

4 Human Volition

God's omnipotence and creative will, according to Ibn Hanbal, do not conflict with the application of His justice concerning the reward and punishment of a worshipper. A person's actions are created by God, yet each individual is responsible for performing his actions under the promise of reward and the threat of punishment. A close look at his arguments shows that Ahmad maintains this position without attempting to explain the nature of the relationship between God's will and human volition. Unencumbered by *Ash'arī* arguments related to the "acquisition" (*kasb*) of a person's deeds, to which Ibn Taymiyyah would later have to respond, Ibn Hanbal needed only to craft a strong argument to counter the claims of the *Jabriyyah* and the *Qadariyyah*. By deriving his arguments from what appears in the revealed texts, his conclusion is that although God's will is absolute, a Muslim must still believe that he has a volition the exercise of which will be judged by God.

In his discussion on human volition, Ibn Hanbal begins with a refutation of the *Qadariyyah*, whose beliefs he dismisses with a

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associates God's volition with the concept of religious law, to which a Muslim must voluntarily conform; see below Chapter 5, sections 6-8.

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short argument. This refutation, however, places him in a more difficult position relative to his arguments against the fatalism of the *Jabriyyah*. To prove that God creates the actions and conditions for his creatures, Ahmad refers to verses such as "the Creator of all things" (al-An'ām 6:102), "We made compassion and mercy in the hearts of those who followed him" (al-Hadîd 57:27), and "it may be that God will make friendship between you and those with whom you have enmity" (al-Mumtahanah 60:7) (*al-'Aqîdah*:113). These verses, he says, show that it is not allowable to specify God's creative omnipotence for certain things but not for others, for this would mean that He is the deity for certain things but not for others. In other words, the concept of an absolute free will, which makes man the creator of his actions, means that God would not be the creator of these actions and thus would not be the deity over them. But whereas these verses prove for him that God creates the inner and outer conditions of a person's experiences, Ahmad is not ready to accept any concept of fatalism which denies human volition, and thus responsibility, because these verses must be reconciled with the fact that God also refers to man's capability (*istitā'ah*) to perform an action.

More precisely put, the Quran speaks in terms of man not having capability. Ahmad refers to verses which state that a person's lack of capability means the nonperformance of an action: "see how they give parables to you, but they go astray, not capable of finding a way" (al-Furqān 25:9), "that is the interpretation of what you were unable to be patient about" (al-Kahf 18:82), and "you will not be

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capable of dealing justly with women, even if you were to desire this" (al-Nisâ' 4:129). This incapacity to act, he says, indicates that created beings are impotent ('ajz) and have no power over things except through a capability that God gives them. Thus he believes that capability is given for each action (al-'Aqîdah:114), a belief that suggests a similarity to that of the Mutazilite concept of istitâ'ah, but with an important distinction.[10] Ahmad's concept of istitâ'ah still subjects the individual to God's will, for it is God who grants or withholds the istitâ'ah.

In order to strengthen his argument against the fatalism of the Jabriyyah, Ibn Hanbal must refer to the concept of God's justice. He maintains that reward and punishment are part of God's justice, which cannot be comprehended by the rational faculties ('uqûl) (al-'Aqîdah:116). He uses this concept of the inability of created beings to understand the nature of God as the basis for his claim that God's justice ('adl) does not allow for us to describe Him with injustice (jawr), for He is above such things. This point indicates that Ibn Hanbal ultimately relies on the formula "bi-lâ kayf" in reference to the issue of God's will and human volition. His authority in this matter comes from a narration from 'Alî ibn Abî Tâlib (d.40/660-1). Ahmad reports that 'Alî was asked about the actions of created beings for which they deserve God's reward or punishment. 'Alî answered by saying, "Actions are acts from the worshippers and

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[10]The Mutazilite belief in man's receiving istitâ'ah is connected with their belief that "...God has no will in men's actions and men's actions are not created by God" (Wolfson, 1976:622-623). This point, as we have seen, is rejected by Ibn Hanbal.

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creations from God, and do not ask anyone about this after having asked me" (al-'Aqīdah: 113).

In formulating his discussion on human volition, Ibn Taymiyyah adds to Ibn Hanbal's arguments by emphasizing the moral nature of free will. He confirms that there is evidence for human volition and responsibility as well as for God's omnipotence in the Quran and the hadiths. God creates all things, he says, but human volition is required for moral behavior, for God "has called upon mankind to render voluntary obedience to him and his messengers, and discouraged disobedience" (Swartz, 1973:122). Also, in what must be seen as his reaction to antinomian Sufism, Ibn Taymiyyah stresses the relationship between love for God and obedience to Him by observance of the sharī'ah. God, he says, loves the pious and righteous but does not love unbelievers and those who are corrupt. Thus God rewards the believers and punishes the disbelievers without ever being unjust.[11] But as with Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Taymiyyah ultimately believes that a Muslim must accept as a matter of faith that God's omnipotence and human volition are both active qualities affecting the human condition. Thus he states that "[m]en are actors in the genuine sense of that term; however, God is the creator of their actions."[12] His position is that a person is an active

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[11]The role of moral arguments in Ibn Taymiyyah's theology will be further developed in this chapter, Part B, section 2. For Ibn Taymiyyah's discussion of human volition in relation to those whom God loves, see the translation of al-'Ubūdiyyah, Chapter 5, sections 13, and Chapter 7, sections 8-9.

[12]See Swartz (1973:123). Ibn Taymiyyah discusses determinism (qadar) and free will in relation to the Mutazilites and the Jabriyyah in al-'Ubūdiyyah; see Chapter 5, sections 11-12.

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agent who will be held responsible before God, even though He is the Creator of each person's acts. This must be accepted "*bi-lā kayf*," for created beings simply cannot comprehend the manner in which God's omnipotence and justice are manifested in creation. Thus, Ibn Taymiyyah rejects the A*sh'arī* concept of the acquisition of one's actions (*kasb*, *iktisāb*) because it is an attempt to explain the nature of this manifestation.

Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:165-7) is correct in pointing out that Ibn Taymiyyah opposes the concept of *kasb* as formulated by the speculative theologians, particularly al-A*sh*'arī (d. 323/935). For Ibn Taymiyyah, this concept is "pointless and futile."[13] In particular, he rejects the A*sh'arī* distinction between God's creation (*khalq*) of an act and man's acquisition (*kasb*) of it, claiming that it amounts to a denial of man's power over his acts. For Ibn Taymiyyah, to claim that a person merely "acquires" an act comes too close to the idea of fatalism. He insists that man must be a "true agent (*fā'il*)."[14] But instead of simply relying on *bi-lā kayf*, it seems as if Ibn Taymiyyah allowed himself to get drawn further into this theological debate. In response to the A*sh'arī* theory of *kasb*, he formulates a description of human acts in terms of causes (*asbāb*) and potentialities (*quwā*), both of which are created by God. In an example taken from *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, he states that hunger is the cause for a person to eat, and through his volition, which is the potentiality in him, he then

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[13]See Gardet (1978:S.V. "Kasb").
[14]See Madjid (1984:144-145). For a recent analysis of the problems associated with the concept of acquisition, see Burrell (1993:79-83).

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acts on this cause by actually eating.[15] Yet, the cause and the potentiality are created by God. Therefore, he says, a person only realizes his acts through a "preponderant factor (*murajjih*)" or a "particularizer (*mukhassis*)," which is the divine volition (*irādah*). In other words, "God creates the act that man chooses consciously."[16] This theory, of course, does not "solve" the paradox of God's will and human volition, for it still leaves man totally dependent on God's will in order to perform an action. But this, I believe, is Ibn Taymiyyah's intention. Through his theory, he is simply trying to maintain that God's omnipotence and His justice are compatible in His essence, but unknowable to human understanding. But then, this is Ibn Taymiyyah's position concerning all of God's names and attributes.

5 God's Face and Hands

In dealing with specific attributes of God, both scholars include a discussion of those attributes which have caused the most controversy in terms of *ta'ṭīl* and *tashbīh*. For Ibn Hanbal, the confirmation of God's attributes as they appear in the Quran and the authentic hadiths, as determined by the *Ahl al-Hadīṯ*, extends to

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[15]See Chapter 5, section 10. On the necessity of man having a will, see Chapter 7, section 2, and on God as the creator of all causes, see section 3.

[16]See Madjid (1984:143-144). The idea that man "chooses" the act must be qualified, for the choice is not independent of God's will. This explanation is Ibn Taymiyyah's way of maintaining a mediating position between the absolute free will of the *Qadariyyah* and the fatalism of the *Jabriyyah*, which in his time manifested itself in the passive *tawakkul* of the Sufis.

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every description He gives of Himself. He accepts the fact that God has a face based on the verse "everything will perish except His face" (al-Qasas 28:88). Although relying on the doctrine of *bi-lā kayf* concerning God's attributes, Ahmad offers some explanations about this attribute of God. He says that God's face is not a body (*jism*) and is not like any formed shapes (*al-suwar al-musawwarah*) or defined particulars (*al-a'yān al-mukhattatah*). It is an everlasting face that has a reality (*haqīqah*) befitting God and is not to be interpreted metaphorically or allegorically (*dūna-l-majāz*). Thus he says that whoever alters the meaning of face has disbelieved (*alhada, kafara*), and whoever transfers the meaning of it to the meaning of "self" (*nafs*) has also disbelieved (*alhada*) (*al-'Aqīdah*:103). Likewise, Ibn Hanbal confirms the existence of God's hands in a similar fashion. He says that His two hands are an attribute in His essence (*fī dātihi*). They are not limbs, extensions, or compound bodies. Also, he says that one cannot make any statements about them that are not in the Quran and authentic hadiths. For example, no analogies may be drawn (*lā yuqās*) such as that God has an elbow or upper arm. But, for example, the Muslims know from an authentic hadith that the Messenger said that God's two hands are both right hands (*al-'Aqīdah*:104).

By reference to verses in the Quran, Ibn Taymiyyah also confirms that God has a face and hands. For example, he mentions verses such as "the face of the Lord of might and glory will remain" (al-Rahmān 55:27), "everything will perish except His face" (al-Qasas 28:88), "what prevents you from prostrating before what I

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have created with My Own hands" (Sâd 38:75), and "but Allah's hands are spread wide open in bounty" (al-Mâ'idah 5:64) (Swartz, 1973:109). Ibn Taymiyyah also mentions some authentic hadiths referring to God's laughing and His leg (*rijl*). These attributes, he says, as well as any others mentioned in the Quran and the hadiths, must be accepted without *tahrif, ta'til, takyif,* and *tamtil.* This is the means by which Ibn Taymiyyah defends the "mediating position" (*wasat*) of the *Ahl al-Sunnah* concerning the attributes of God. He considers it as the only safe position between the extremes of those who deny God's attributes and those who engage in anthropomorphism.

6   God's Hearing and Seeing

As part of his creed on the attributes of God, Ahmad repeatedly confirms that there are attributes that can only be known through revelation. The knowledge of them is not obtainable through intellectual inquiry. God's hearing and seeing are just such attributes. He points out that God says in the Quran that "He is All-Hearing and All-Seeing" (al-Shûrâ 42:11). According to Ibn Hanbal, such verses are easily accepted by the believers because God informs the Muslims about Himself only through that in which rational minds (*'uqûl*) can believe. And a rational mind knows that attributes such as hearing and seeing cannot be compared with any type of perception that exists in creation. Furthermore, he says, a Muslim must confirm that God hears with hearing and sees with

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sight just as He knows with knowledge (al-'Aqīdah:102-103). Ibn Hanbal then mentions that all of God's attributes are specific attributes that cannot share the same meaning. He rejects, for example, the claim of those who say that the attribute "All-Hearing" actually means "All-Knowing" because God says in the Quran "and if they decide on divorce, then Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing" (al-Baqarah 2:227). Ahmad's argument is that God uses both terms together in one verse, therefore the terms must carry separate meanings (al-'Aqīdah:102-103).

Concerning God's attributes of hearing and seeing, Ibn Taymiyyah presents numerous verses in the Wāsitiyyah to confirm these attributes (Swartz, 1973:109). For example, he refers to "patiently wait on your Lord's decree for you indeed are in Our sight" (al-Tūr 52:48), "Allah has heard the saying of the one who disputes with you concerning her husband and complains to Allah; indeed, Allah hears the discussion between you" (al-Mujādalah 58:1), and "Lo, I am with you, I hear and I see" (Tā'Hā' 20:46). Elsewhere, he mentions the verse "He is with you wherever you are, for Allah sees what you do" (al-Hadīd 57:4) (Swartz, 1973:117). But this verse brings with it a new set of problems and leads Ibn Taymiyyah into a more detailed discussion of the relation between God's essence and attributes and His creation. This discussion is prompted by God's statement "He is with you wherever you are," which can be used to justify the concept of God's immanence in the world if it is not understood according to the "salafī" principles. Ibn Taymiyyah states that this verse does not mean that God is "diffused

throughout (mu_kh_talit) his creation."[17] To believe otherwise, he says, is contradicting what the *salaf* have confirmed about the manner in which God manifests Himself to creation.

7 Transcendence

God's transcendence is one of the pillars of the creed of the *Ahl al-Sunnah* and is vigorously defended by the scholars of the *Ahl al-Hadīt*.[18] On this issue, Ahmad states that God in His essence and His attributes is completely different than His creation. He declares that God knows everything and controls all things without intermixing (mu_kh_ālatah) with them or interpenetrating (muwālajah) with them. He further rejects any concept of immanence by stating that God is exalted ('ālī) above all things and detached (munfarid) from them. He supports his belief in God's "aboveness" (fawqiyyah) by referring to verses such as "He is the Conqueror above His worshippers" (al-An'âm 6:18, 61), "to Him good words ascend, and He raises up the pious deed" (Fâtir 35:10), and "they fear their Lord above them and do what they are commanded" (al-Nahl 16:50) (al-'Aqīdah:108-109). But of all the

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[17]See Swartz (1973:117). Ibn Taymiyyah unyieldingly defends the idea of God's complete distinction from His creation, which forms the basis of his attacks against the idea of *wahdat al-wujûd*; see below Part B, section 2. In *al-'Ubûdiyyah*, Ibn Taymiyyah refers to God's distinction from creation in various contexts. The most clearly developed arguments are in Chapter 5, section 10.

[18]According to Ibn Hajar in *Fath al-Bârî* (no date:vol.13, pp.344-346), al-Bukhârî added the last "Kitâb" to his *Sahîh*, entitled "Kitâb al-Tawhîd," in order to defend the creed of the *Ahl al-Sunnah* against the *ta'tîl* of the Mutazilites and the *tashbîh* of the anthropomorphists.

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verses indicating God's transcendence, the most convincing proof for Ibn Hanbal are those verses indicating that God is risen above His throne.

In discussing God's "rising above the throne" (*istawā 'alā-l-'arsh*), which appears, for example, in Sura Yūnus 10:3, Ibn Hanbal says that "rising" means "transcendence" (*'ulūw*) and "ascendency" (*irtifā'*). However, as with all God's attributes, He has never ceased being lofty (*'ālī*), which has been one of His eternal attributes even before the creation of the throne. Ahmad explains that the throne holds a special position over all creation and that God praises Himself by being above the throne. Furthermore, it is not allowable to say that the "rising above the throne" occurs by way of touching (*mumāssah*) or encountering (*mulāqāh*). God undergoes no change or alteration, and no boundaries (*hudūd*) have ever confined Him, neither before the creation of the throne nor after it. Thus Ahmad rejects the idea that God is in any particular place by His essence (*bi-dātihī*), for a place is necessarily limited (*al-'Aqīdah*:107-108). Nevertheless, God is a unique entity who has described Himself as being an individual "self" or "soul" (*nafs*).

For Ibn Hanbal, the issue of God's complete transcendence must be understood in terms of the affirmation of the attribute of "self" (*nafs*) and the denial of any form of body (*jism*). Ahmad states that God has a *nafs* that is unlike the *nafs* in bodies. God's *nafs* is an eternal attribute in His essence. He supports this view with verses such as "God warns you of His 'self'" (Al 'Imrān 3:28, 30) and "your Lord has written mercy upon His 'self'" (al-An'ām 6:12). Also, to

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prove the distinction between God's "self" and the self of others, Ahmad refers to Jesus's statement in the verse "You know what is in my 'self' but I do not know what is in Your 'self'" (al-Mā'idah 5:116). He then states that Ibn 'Abbās explains that "my self" means the "created self" (al-nafs al-makhlūqah) and "Your self" means "Your divine self" (nafsuka-l-malakūtiyyah) (al-'Aqīdah:110). As for the concept of God having or being a body (jism), Ahmad rejects the use of this term in relation to God because it does not appear in the lawful texts (sharī'ah). According to the Law and the Arabic language, he says, the term "body" is used for everything possessing extension, accidents, thickness, and image (sūrah), and being compound and formed. God is far removed from such things and is outside the meaning of "corporeality" (jismiyyah). Thus, he says, it is not allowable that God be named jism.

Ibn Taymiyyah upholds God's transcendence in a very similar manner. In the Wāsitiyyah, he presents verses describing God's rising above the throne to confirm His "aboveness." For example, he refers to "the Infinitely Merciful has risen above the Throne" (Tā'Hā' 20:5) and "your Lord is Allah who created the heavens and the earth in six days and then rose above the throne" (Yūnus 10:3). Ibn Taymiyyah also confirms God's "aboveness" by verses such as Fātir 35:10 mentioned above (Swartz, 1973:110). Further confirmation of God's transcendence is found in various authentic hadiths, as determined by the Ahl al-Hadīt, in which God and His Messenger attribute to Himself the motions of ascent and descent. Ibn Taymiyyah presents the hadith of God's descent (nuzūl) to the

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lowest heaven in the last third of the night to prove this point (Swartz, 1973:112). For Ibn Taymiyyah, however, there is no contradiction in believing that God is transcendent yet near, above the throne yet descending and ascending. "Every facet of what God has said regarding himself," he states, "corresponds to his reality and has no need of being altered....It is necessary to add, however, that what the Quran and the *Sunna* affirm regarding God's proximity to (*qurb*), and presence with (*ma'iya*), mankind in no way contradicts their emphasis on his transcendence ('*uluw*) and otherness (*fawqiya*), for his qualities can be compared to nothing that exists. He is transcendent ('*aliy*) in his nearness (*dunuw*) and near (*qarib*) in his transcendence ('*uluw*)."[19]

In another important issue related to God's essence, transcendence and self, both Ibn Hanbal and Ibn Taymiyyah uphold the belief in the beatific vision. In his creed, Ibn Hanbal confirms that God will be perceived by the inhabitants of Paradise. The beatific vision means actually seeing the face of God and not just awaiting the effects of His mercy and compassion. Ahmad confirms this meaning by applying the very methodology that I described in Chapter 2 as the "*salafi*" principles. He first refers to the verse

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[19]See Swartz (1973:117). In his book *al-Istiqâmah* (p.70), written about ten years after the *Wâsitiyyah*, he confirms God's movement (*harakah*) in relation to the attributes of motion and states that it is confirmed by the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l-Hadît* but is denied by groups of jurisprudents and the *mutakallimûn*. He adds that "...it is well-known amongst the companions of Ahmad that they do not interpret (*ta'wîl*) the attributes in the genus of movement such as arrival (*majî'* or *ityân*), descent (*nuzûl* or *hubût*), and nearness (*dunûw* or *tadallî*)" (p.76).

"faces that day will be glowing, towards their Lord looking".[20] He then says that if God did not mean "vision with the eye" (*al-nazar bi-l-'ayn*), He would not have associated it with a direction (*mā qaranahu bi-l-wajh*). By this use of Arabic grammar, Ibn Hanbal rejects the meaning of "waiting" or "anticipating (*intizār*) to explain *nāzirah* in this verse because the use of the preposition *ilā* excludes the possibility of the idea of waiting or anticipating. He then employs the hermeneutics of "explaining the Quran by the Quran" by comparing this verse to other verses which use a form of the root "*nazara*" without the preposition "*ilā*" in the meaning of "waiting" or "anticipating."[21] To further support his interpretation, Ibn Hanbal states that the beatific vision is confirmed by many hadiths related to the verses that mention seeing God in the hereafter. It is just such hadiths that Ibn Taymiyyah uses to confirm the beatific vision. He asserts that "the faithful will see God with their very eyes on the day of resurrection just as they see the sun when the sky is clear, or the moon when it is full....Later they will

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[20]See Sura al-Qiyâmah 75:22-23 which reads: *wujûh^{un} yawma'id^{in} nâdirah ilâ rabbihâ nâzirah*. Ibn Hanbal's discussion is in *al-'Aqîdah*:111.

[21]He uses Suras Yâ'Sîn 36:49 (*mâ yanzurûna illâ sayhat^{an} wâhidat^{an}*) and al-Naml 27:35 (*...fa-nâzirat^{un} bi-ma yarji'u-l-mursalûn*).

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see him again when they enter paradise in accordance with God's will."[22]

8 God's Speech

One final issue of the points of 'aqīdah that is critical for both theologians is God's speech (kalām). As is to be expected, according to Ibn Hanbal God's speech (kalām) is an attribute in His essence. He points to the fact that God praises Himself with speech in opposition to false deities that are dumb and speechless. Ahmad says that God faults those who worship idols that cannot speak when He says "did they not see that it did not speak to them nor guide them to any way; they chose it and became wrong-doers" (al-An'ām 6:148). As for the issue of the Quran itself, Ahmad refers to the exegesis of Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās concerning the verse "an Arabic Quran containing no crookedness, perhaps they will become pious" (al-Zumar 39:28), which they said means that it is not created. According to Ibn Hanbal, the Quran cannot be described as an "explanation" ('ibārah) of God's speech or a "reproduction" (hikāyah) of it, which is clearly meant as a refutation of the theory of

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[22]This quote is from the translation of the Wāsitiyyah by Swartz (1973:118). Elsewhere in the Wāsitiyyah (p.114), Ibn Taymiyyah presents a hadith from the two Sahīhs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim which states "[On the day of judgement] you will see your Lord as clearly as you see the moon when it is full, and you will not need to crowd together in order to see him...." Al-Bukhārī has collected many of the hadiths about the beatific vision under the chapter on Sura 75:22-23 in the "Kitāb al-Tawhīd" of his Sahīh; see Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bārī (no date:v.13, pp.419-434).

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Ibn Kullāb (d. 241/855).[23] Thus, he says, that when God says in the Quran that He spoke to Moses (al-Nisā' 4:174), a Muslim must follow the belief of the Companions and their Followers who believed in God's speech without mentioning anything about it being revealed as 'ibārah or hikāyah (al-'Aqīdah:106-107).

In Chapter 2, we have already discussed Ibn Taymiyyah's views concerning the Quran as the eternal speech of God and the Arabic language as the created speech of humans. Thus I shall briefly review his position on the speech of God as presented in the Wāsitiyyah. Ibn Taymiyyah confirms through numerous verses that God attributes speech to Himself. In his presentation of the verses he is affirming that God speaks and that the Quran is the word of God. Some of the verses he refers to are "who is more true than Allah in discourse (hadīṯ)" (al-Nisā' 4:87), "who is more true than Allah in speech (qīl)" (al-Nisā' 4:122), "when Moses arrived at the time appointed by Us, his Lord spoke to him (kallamahu)" (al-A'rāf 7:143), and "recite what was revealed to you of the Book of your Lord, no one can change His word" (al-Kahf 18:27) (Swartz, 1973:111). Ibn Taymiyyah goes on to confirm that "the Quran is the

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[23]I am using of the term "reproduction" for hikāyah as it is used by van Ess (1982:S.V. "Ibn Kullāb"). In discussing the controversies over the Mutazilite doctrine of the createdness of the Quran, van Ess explains that Ibn Kullāb presented the idea of "a distinction between the speech of God (kalām Allāh) and its realization." Accordingly, the Quran becomes "the 'trace' (rasm) of God's speech [and] its reproduction (hikāya) in historical reality." Also, the term "reproduction" coincides well with Ibn Manzūr's definition in Lisān al-'Arab (no date: S.V. "hky"): hakaytu fulān^an wa hākaytuhu fa'altu miṯla fi'lihi aw qultu miṯla qawlihi sawā'^an lam ujāwizhu wa hakaytu 'an-hu-l-hadīṯ hikāyat^an.

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word of God, revealed but uncreated, having its origin in him and that this Quran is the very same one which he revealed to Muhammad." He also states specifically that "it is not permissible to characterize this word as a reproduction (*hikāya*) of the original word of God, or an explanation (*'ibāra*) of it" (Swartz, 1973:118). In both recitation and transcription, says Ibn Taymiyyah, the Quran never ceases to be the Word of God, "for a statement can only be attributed to the one who originally uttered it." The Quran is "the word of God in respect both of its letters (*hurūf*) and of its meaning (*ma'ānī*). The word of God does not consist of letters without meaning, or meaning without letters" (ibid.).

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Part B: The 'Aqīdah and Ibn Taymiyyah's view of worship

Based on the fundamental creed outlined above, Ibn Taymiyyah literally spent the rest of his life defending these beliefs as God's truth revealed to the Prophet. Any thoughts or concepts that he felt infringed upon these basic beliefs became the target of his attacks. Although it is clear that Ibn Taymiyyah knew exactly what beliefs he needed to defend, the manner in which he presented his arguments developed over the course of his lifetime. As mentioned above (Chapter 1, Part C), Ibn Taymiyyah's most productive years as an author occurred in Damascus after returning from Egypt in 712/1312-3. Thus, his most sophisticated arguments were finally laid out during the last fifteen years of his life. In the section that follows, I shall present Ibn Taymiyyah's arguments against the claims of those whom he felt were deviating from the orthodoxy which he understood as deriving from the Righteous Predecessors in relation to the time period of his years in Egypt. For this purpose, I shall focus on one of his major works of that period, al-Istiqāmah, which represents a major link in the development of his arguments.[24] Also, presenting the arguments in

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[24]Considered by his students to be one of his most important works (see Ibn 'Abd al-Hādî [1975:29]), Ibn Taymiyyah probably wrote the Istiqāmah while in Egypt between the years 705/1304-5 and 709/1309-10; see the comments by Muhammad Rashâd Sâlim in his introduction to al-Istiqâmah (1409/1988-9:5). Ibn Taymiyyah's arguments in the Istiqâmah are an important link for his more detailed work on the reconciliation between pure reason and revelation in his Dar' Ta'ârud al-'Aql wa-l-Naql, which he wrote in Damascus between 713/1313-4 and 717/1317-8. On the dating of this work, see also the comments by M.R. Sâlim in his introduction (1399/1979:7-10).

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the *Istiqāmah* will clarify many of the points raised in the *Risālat al-'Ubūdiyyah*. Although a precise chronological relationship between the two works cannot be established with certainty at this time, the ideational relationship between them will become quite clear. Also, in order to clarify certain points, I shall refer to some of his works from the later Damascus period.

In the *Istiqāmah*, Ibn Taymiyyah begins by stressing the obligation to follow the Quran and the Sunnah in matters of belief (*i'tiqād*), action ('*amal*) and acts of worship ('*ibādah*). As clarified in Chapter 2, his position is that the Quran and the Sunnah contain the principles on which the religion is based and that there is no need to utilize other systems of thinking such as *kalām* and Greek logic.[25] Reliance on these outside sources, he claims, is responsible for deviation in jurisprudence and beliefs. Ibn Taymiyyah states that innovated opinions concerning the principles (*usūl*) of jurisprudence or the practical rulings (*furū'*) are a result of the influence of the *kalām* on *usūl al-fiqh*. The innovated opinions in matters of worship are related to a form of Sufism which adopted a similar use of the *kalām* (*Istiqāmah*, v.1, p.3). Although Ibn

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[25]Ibn Taymiyyah's continual claim is that any religious question must be referred back to the Quran, the authentic Sunnah of the Prophet and the opinions of the Companions. This is clearly stated, for example, in his response concerning the *turuq* of the Sufis: "It is for the Muslim to know that the best word is the Word of Allah, and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad, and the best of the centuries is the one in which he was sent to them, and the most preferable of the paths (*turuq*) and the ways (*subul*) to Allah is that which was with him and his Companions." See *al-Sūfiyyah wa-l-Fuqarā'*, p.20. Elsewhere he states that the Quran and the Sunnah contain the fundamentals of religion including proofs, signs, and arguments; see Laoust (*Contribution*, 1939:72).

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Taymiyyah does not discuss the *kalām* in the *Risālat al-'Ubūdiyyah*, he does make certain generalizations about the *mutakallimūn* in reference to free will and predestination. His discussions on *qadar* are, however, an important stepping stone in his development of ideas concerning love and worship. Thus I shall present an overview of Ibn Taymiyyah's thoughts on *kalām* in order to provide sufficient background information for his generalizations.[26]

1 Ibn Taymiyyah's Critique of *Kalām*

In the opening pages of his book *al-Istiqāmah*, Ibn Taymiyyah refutes the *mutakallimūn* who think that the Quran and the Sunnah do not alone suffice to articulate the principles of religion or that the principles of religion benefit from *qiyās 'aqlī* and *dalīl 'aqlī*. This does not mean, however, that Ibn Taymiyyah is anti-rational, for he seeks only to keep the intellect subsumed under what he sees as the greater religious truths of revelation.[27] He thus particularly objects to statements such as "*qiyās* is necessary for

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[26]For Ibn Taymiyyah's remarks concerning predestination and the views of the *mutakallimūn* in *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, see below, Chapter 6, sections 11-14.

[27]Ibn Taymiyyah holds a dual view of the intellect (*'aql*). Attempting to maintain a mediating position between extremes, he rejects the superior position given to the intellect by the philosophers and speculative theologians, on the one hand, while advocating the necessity to preserve the intellect and faculties of discernment in opposition to the Sufi claim of a mystical annihilation of the self, on the other. The intellect, or reason, for him, is to be used in the service of revelation. Thus, in his discussions on *kalām* and *falsafah*, I find it better to translate terms related to the intellect as "rational, non-religious" concepts as suggested by Hallaq (1993:liii), who refers to *dalīl 'aqlī* as "a rational, non-religious argument."

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most of the _sharī'ah_ because there is limited textual evidence for legal judgements (_al-ahkām al-shar'iyyah_)."[28] Ibn Taymiyyah first makes a general objection to the excessive use of _qiyās_ by claiming that every scholar is ultimately compelled to return to the Quran and the Sunnah. This is apparent, he says, because every group claims to be based on the Sunnah while accusing other groups of practicing innovations. But even the groups most apparently following innovations, he says, such as the _Khawārij_ and the _Rawāfid_, do not fall into such claims about _qiyās_. To further push his point, Ibn Taymiyyah states that Imam al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/819-20) did not resort to _kalām_ and was in fact one of the _fuqahā' al-hadīt_ who followed the mediating position of the _Ahl al-Sunnah_.[29] More specifically, he offers three points of refutation against the claim that the _sharī'ah_ is in need of _qiyās 'aqlī_.

Ibn Taymiyyah's first point is that the revealed texts necessarily indicate the solutions to new cases which do not originate in the texts themselves. His second point is that if a scholar misses this first point, he will proceed in deciding new cases based on "corrupt" principles as used in the _kalām_, which often lead to decisions that oppose the Law as understood by the _Ahl al-Hadīt_. His third point results from his observation of the

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[28]Ibn Taymiyyah attributes this statement to the _Shāfi'ī_ scholar Abū-l-Ma'ālī al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) (_Istiqāmah_:v.1, p.6). He also quotes a similar statement from al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111-2); see Madjid (1984:116).
[29]See _Istiqāmah_:v.1, p.13. Ibn Taymiyyah claims that al-Shāfi'ī held the opinion that those who use _kalām_ should be beaten. He also claims that some _mutakallimūn_, such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), repented on their deathbeds for having engaged in _kalām_. See Madjid (1984:124-125).

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practical aspects of the first two points, for he says that whoever attempts to give hundreds of rulings in the course of a day will find that ruling according to the revealed texts (nusūs) will benefit the Muslims much more than relying on opinion (ra'y). His proof for this third point is that the rulings of the "people of opinion" from Kufa are of less value to the Muslims in spite of the large number of Kufian scholars.[30] The direct cause of this over-reliance on qiyās, in his opinion, is that the sound methodology and rulings of the early scholars, such as Mālik (d.179/795-6), al-Shāfi'ī, Ibn Hanbal, Ibn al-Mubārak (d.181/797-8), Hammād ibn Zayd (d.179/795-6) and al-Awzā'ī (d.157/774), were mixed with innovative principles and beliefs so that what the earlier scholars condemned became

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[30]See *Istiqāmah*:v.1, pp.9-13. In *al-Sūfiyyah wa-l-Fuqarā'* (p.22), Ibn Taymiyyah distinguishes between a Kufian school of jurisprudence and a Basrian school of worship. He says that just as certain scholars gathered in Kufa to exercise independent judgment (*ijtihād*) concerning legal matters, so too did certain scholars practice *ijtihād* in Basra concerning issues of piety and asceticism. Although practicing *ijtihād* concerning a particular issue is not wrong in jurisprudence, it is forbidden in worship. He also warns that caution must be exercised, for any scholar can make a mistake, and that some later followers of a sheikh might elevate him above the Prophet and his Companions. The particular problem of *ijtihād* in worship is mentioned in *al-'Ubūdiyyah*; see below, Chapter 7, section 3.

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accepted as part of the Sunnah by later scholars.[31] The underlying cause for the prevalent use of the *kalām* by scholars of the later generations, however, is the spread of misconceptions about prophethood.

For Ibn Taymiyyah, the misunderstanding of prophecy stems from the philosophers' claim that prophets, although knowing "the essence of universal theological science (*al-'ulūm al-ilāhiyyah al-kulliyyah*)," spoke to the masses in symbolic language (Madjid, 1984:114). He objects to their characterization of prophecy as being based on the faculty of imagination (*takhayyul*), by which the prophets communicate philosophical truths received from the Active Intellect to the masses allegorically. Although recognizing the subtle distinctions between the philosophers themselves, such as between al-Fārābī (d. 339/950-1) and Ibn Sīnā (d. 429/1037-8), he condemns their claim that the literal meaning of the Quran is merely a metaphorical device to explain reality to those incapable of understanding philosophy. Ibn Taymiyyah then traces the influence of this general concept of the allegorical nature of prophecy to the

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[31] Ibn Taymiyyah gives three examples of this in the *Istiqāmah* (v.1, p.14-16). The first is that Mālik defended the belief in God's rising above the throne, His speech and the beatific vision against the beliefs of the *Jahmiyyah*. However, some later *Mālikī* scholars came to accept the denial of these beliefs. The second example is that al-Shāfi'ī denounced the people of *kalām*, but some of the later adherents of the *Shāfi'ī madhab* came to embrace the principles of the *kalām*. The third example is that the beliefs of Ibn Hanbal concerning the createdness of a worshipper's attributes as opposed to the uncreatedness of God's attributes were reversed by some of his later followers on two issues. Some *Hanbalīs*, says Ibn Taymiyyah, came to believe that a worshipper's recitation of the Quran is uncreated and that God's attributes of movement are to be rejected.

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speculative theologians, who are misled into thinking that the Prophet did not explain all aspects of the religion in detail. He mentions in particular how al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111-2) allows for a wide range of interpretation from the literalism of the Hanbalīs to the laxity of the philosophers.[32] Thus he says that the *mutakallimūn* seek proofs for the religion from a base of knowledge not originating in the revealed texts because they believe that all necessary proofs are not contained within the texts themselves. For Ibn Taymiyyah, this means that they no longer have a claim to certainty.

The next phase of Ibn Taymiyyah's arguments against the *kalām* in the *Istiqāmah* concerns the relation between religion and knowledge. His point is that the revealed texts offer the only sound knowledge on which one can rely for deducing the principles of law and belief. Resorting to the *kalām* is for Ibn Taymiyyah the same as arguing about religion without revealed knowledge, which is forbidden. Not relying on revealed knowledge, he says, means that one is arguing based on doubts, by which he means the sources of knowledge of the logicians such as "conclusions based on pure

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[32]A brief presentation of Ibn Taymiyyah's critique of the philosophers and speculative theologians is in Laoust (*Essai*, 1939:179-186, and *Contributions*, 1939:55-58). Ibn Taymiyyah's beliefs on prophecy are laid out in his *Kitāb al-Nubuwwāt* and his critique of philosophical-mystical cosmologies is in his *Kitāb Bughyat al-Murtād*. Al-Fārābī's and Ibn Sīnā's theories of prophecy are described by Fakhry (1983:142-145). For Ibn Sīnā's views on prophecy, see his "Fī Iṭbāti-l-Nubuwwāt" in *Tis' Rasā'il fī-l-Hikmat wa-l-Tabī'iyyāt* (Cairo, 1326/1908:120-132), and the translation by Marmura in *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (New York, 1963:112-121). Al-Ghazālī's five grades of allowable interpretation are presented in his *Faysal al-Tafriqah* (1983:8-11), and see the translation by McCarthy (1980:150-152).

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reason" (ma'qūlāt), "demonstrative proofs" (barāhīn) and "syllogisms" (aqyisah). Ibn Taymiyyah objects to relying on these types of arguments, which are drawn from the purely rational sciences, because those who use such devices claim that revelation does not provide evidences which can either validate or invalidate the proofs drawn from pure reason. For Ibn Taymiyyah, this means that revelation must take an inferior position to pure reason (Hallaq, 1993:122). Another consequence of not relying on revealed knowledge is that one might end up relying on personal feelings, by which he means traditional Sufi "sources" of knowledge such as "unveilings" (mukāshafāt), "ecstatic experiences" (mawājīd) and "mystical tastings" (adwāq). Although the Sufis claim that the knowledge they receive in these states is more certain than that obtained through dialectics, Ibn Taymiyyah dismisses these claims as being merely false interpretations.[33] Ultimately, whether in reference to the proofs of the logicians or the Sufis, he argues that they are used without authority from the Quran and the Sunnah. Ibn Taymiyyah leads up to this conclusion by presenting numerous verses of the Quran that condemn arguing about God without authority sent down by Him. He states that knowledge ('ilm) can

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[33]This point will be detailed in section 2 below. For a general description of the Sufi states leading to mystical knowledge, see Nicholson (1975:59) and Schimmel (1975:178-192).

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only come from revealed texts and that those who argue from other sources do so without authority (sultān) from God.[34]

Ibn Taymiyyah then presents his own "proofs" that the principles of the kalām do not lead to certainty. He first says that the mutakallimūn differ concerning statements and actions in regard to both principles and case law. They also differ in their judgements about fundamental issues of belief such as the status of various Muslim sects, the modes of argumentation used in declaring other Muslims to be disbelievers (takfīr), and the permissibility for the cursing of, and the mutual hatred between, Muslims.[35] To disagree on fundamental issues is an important point for Ibn Taymiyyah because differences of opinion are a clear sign of deviation from God's path. He indicates this in the Istiqāmah (v.1, p.25) by referring to the verse "do not be like those who divided into sects and differed with each other after the clear signs came to them, they will have a tremendous punishment" (Al 'Imrān 3:105). After arguing that disagreement on principles is a deviation from what the Prophet brought by way of the Quran and the Sunnah, Ibn

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[34]Some of the verses he refers to are: "those who argue (yujādilūn) concerning the verses of Allah without authority that came to them" (Ghāfir 40:35), "have We revealed any authority that speaks about what they associate (with Him)" (al-Rūm 30:35), and "do you have a clear authority; then bring forth your book, if you are truthful" (al-Sāffāt 37:156-157). Ibn Taymiyyah further develops this concept of authority in argumentation in his work Dar' Ta'ārud al-'Aql wa-l-Naql, written about six years after the Istiqāmah; see Dar' (1399/1979:v.1, p.57, v.5, p.207).

[35]See Istiqāmah:v.1, p.24. Ibn Taymiyyah often raises the point that the groups whom he opposes are not in agreement on even the principles to be applied in forming judgements. In Hallaq (1993:xlv, 122), for example, Ibn Taymiyyah observes that the philosophers constantly attack each other's theories.

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Taymiyyah brings up a moral argument against Muslims who take a rigid stance in the matter of differences of opinion.

In what may well be a reference to his own difficulties with his fellow scholars and with the authorities, Ibn Taymiyyah argues for a more tolerant attitude on the part of Muslims in their relations with those who hold opposing opinions. This is necessary, he says, in order to avoid leveling accusations of disbelief against other Muslims.[36] Thus he states that two of the most important reasons for disagreements on principles are injustice and transgression (baghy). People are prone to err and to forget, he says, and so God does not make undue restrictions (haraj) on the Muslims in religion. Thus if there is a difference among Muslims, says Ibn Taymiyyah, and both groups strive to resolve the problem (ijtihād), one being right and one being wrong, then this is a forgivable difference. But only injustice leads to turmoil, takfīr or accusations of sinful deviation (tafsīq) (Istiqāmah:v.1, p.31).

In the Istiqāmah, Ibn Taymiyyah concludes his arguments against the mutakallimūn by stating that kalām is dangerous because it makes jurisprudence a matter of opinion (zunūn) and not that of the sound religious sciences ('ulūm).[37] This occurs, he says,

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[36]It has been noted that Ibn Taymiyyah actually held a tolerant position toward many of his opponents regarding accusations of takfīr and tafsīq, in spite of his harsh criticisms of them. See Goldziher (1910:200) and Makdisi (1981:252-253). On this point he is paralleling al-Ghazālī's views as presented in his Faysal al-Tafriqah bayna-l-Islām wa-l-Zandaqah (Casablanca: Dār al-Nasr al-Maghribiyyah, 1983); see also the translation by McCarthy (1980:145-174).

[37]In relation to this belief concerning jurisprudence, Ibn Taymiyyah is referring to Ash'arī scholars such as Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 304/916), al-

because the *mutakallimūn* claim that Islamic jurisprudence is based on the judgements of singularly transmitted hadiths (*khabar al-wāhid*), analogy (*qiyās*), generalizations (*'umūm*) and literal meanings (*zawāhir*), which they hold to be inferior to the methods of the logicians. Of these four principles, the use of the singularly transmitted hadiths in *fiqh* is clearly the most controversial. Ibn Taymiyyah's defense of their use as sound evidences can be traced back to the arguments of al-Shāfi'ī and Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889-90). Schacht (1959:41) points out that al-Shāfi'ī referred to those who rejected the hadiths altogether as the *Ahl al-Kalām* or the Mutazilites.[38] As the *mutakallimūn* came to find it more difficult to reject the hadiths outright, a distinction developed between the extremists, who rejected all hadiths, and a moderate group of the *Ahl al-Kalām*, who rejected only the *khabar al-wāhid* hadiths. Eventually, even some of the *mutakallimūn* of the later generations, such as al-Amidī (d. 631/1233-4), came to accept the use of the singularly transmitted hadiths with certain restrictions.[39] But for Ibn Taymiyyah, the authenticity of the *khabar al-wāhid* hadiths, as

Juwaynî (d. 478/1085), al-Ghazālî, Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî (d. 606/1209), and al-Amidî (d. 631/1233-4); see *Istiqâmah*:v.1, p.49-51.

[38]For a more detailed discussion of the role of hadith in the development of *fiqh*, see also Azami (1985:72-95).

[39]For al-Amidî's discussion of the *khabar al-wâhid*, see Weiss (1992:291-328). According to al-Amidî, "Ahmad ibn Hanbal, 'certain Zâhirîs' and 'certain *hadîth* specialists'" are among those who maintain that the *khabar al-wâhid*, "yields the knowledge that it [the report] is true" (ibid:294). According to Weiss (ibid:306), al-Amidî did not base the authority of the *khabar al-wâhid* directly on revelation, i.e. at the level of the Quran and Sunnah, but on the *ijmâ'* of the community, which itself is derived from divine revelation. Thus the *khabar al-wâhid* did not yield certainty but only probability, which, for al-Amidî, is acceptable in making legal judgements.

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determined by the *Ahl al-Hadīṯ*, is undeniable. Thus they become part of his argument that analogy in Islamic jurisprudence leads to certainty in particular cases, for one proceeds from the sound evidences of revelation, which include all authentic hadiths. His particular argument on this issue is that the syllogism of the logicians is not a more formidable means of arriving at certainty than analogy as used by the *fuqahā'* of the *Ahl al-Hadīṯ*.[40] Finally, Ibn Taymiyyah refutes the claim of the *mutakallimūn* by again referring to judgements in actual cases. He says that the number of *fiqh* issues which have been clearly determined by reference to the revealed texts and *ijmā'* far exceed those which have been resolved by individual opinion (*ijtihād*) or have resulted in differences of opinions (*Istiqāmah*:v.1, pp.59-60).

In summary, Ibn Taymiyyah's critique of the *kalām* stems from his unwavering acceptance of the "*salafī* principles" as detailed in Chapter 2. At the core of these principles lies the belief that the Prophet explained the entire religion of Islam, its operating principles (*usūl*) and its general beliefs. From this point, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that only revealed knowledge leads to certainty and that the methods of the logicians are unnecessary for a Muslim

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[40]Ibn Taymiyyah states elsewhere that "those who draw a distinction between analogy and the categorical syllogism attempt to show that analogy leads to probability when it is formed of a particular subject-matter" (Hallaq, 1993:127-128). Ibn Taymiyyah contends that a subject-matter which leads to certainty will do so through both analogy and the categorical syllogism. Thus, he does not deny the "validity of the deductive process" when the two premisses of the syllogism are "conceived and structured in a proper way." However, he does attack the validity of the syllogism in deducing conclusions in metaphysics by denying the existence of universals outside the mind. See Madjid (1984:190-191).

scholar. However, the real danger of the *kalām* lies in its application in the areas of belief and worship. Concerning these issues, it leads to beliefs about God which differ from the creed of the *Ahl al-Sunnah* and to acts of worship not practiced by the *salaf*. But before we move on to this issue, one final point needs to be addressed in order to show the continuity of Ibn Taymiyyah's thinking when it comes to classifying groups and individuals.

As with the exegetes and the relation of various groups to the *Ahl al-Sunnah*, Ibn Taymiyyah classifies the speculative theologians.[41] In this case, he sees a stronger deviation the nearer they are to the philosophers, which also corresponds to being further in time from the earliest generations of Muslims. Thus he places Ibn Kullāb (d. 241/855) closest to the *salaf*. He is followed by al-Ashʿarī (d. 323/935), who in turn is followed by al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013). Al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085-6) goes even further in his deviations stemming from the *kalām*. Finally, al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) and al-Amidī (d. 631/1233) are placed nearest to the philosophers. But in keeping with his "tolerant" attitude, Ibn Taymiyyah still refers to the *mutakallimūn* as people of "oneness" (*tawhīd al-rubūbiyyah*), who faltered on certain aspects of understanding "divinity" (*ulūhiyyah*) in relation to God's names and attributes. They are, in any case, better than the philosophers for not accepting "philosophical cosmologies." But so as not to leave anything unclassified, Ibn Taymiyyah also states that the philosophers from

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[41]For the discussion in this paragraph, see Madjid (1984:147-149).

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the People of the Book and the Muslims are better than the pagan philosophers.

2   Ibn Taymiyyah's Critique of the Sufis

After his initial comments on the errors of *kalām*, Ibn Taymiyyah dedicates a large portion of the *Istiqāmah* to a criticism of mystical Sufism, which he also sees as being influenced by the principles of speculative theology. His criticisms concerning issues of creed focus in particular on the *Risālat al-Qushayriyyah*, which he claims contains weak and fabricated statements concerning controversial issues of belief. Using the *Istiqāmah* as a means of further detailing Ibn Taymiyyah's statements in the *Risālat al-'Ubūdiyyah*, I shall present what he sees as the major issues related to the perfection of worship.[42]

Ibn Taymiyyah's major criticism of the *Risālat al-Qushayriyyah* is that al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072-3) follows the beliefs of the *mutakallimūn*, in particular, the *Kullābiyyah* and the *Ash'ariyyah*.[43] This establishes for him an important link between *kalām* and Sufism. To support his contention, he also mentions that al-Qushayrī received his knowledge of the *kalām* from Ibn Fūrak (d.

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[42]The order of issues as developed in the *Risālat al-'Ubūdiyyah* differ only slightly from that of the *Istiqāmah*, mainly because of the more extensive treatment of ideas in the latter work. The presentation of ideas in this chapter will follow the arrangement of topics found in the *Istiqāmah*. I shall make reference to the corresponding discussions in *al-'Ubūdiyyah*.

[43]See *Istiqāmah*:v.1, pp.82-85.

406/1015) and Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyînî (d. 418/1027).[44] However, says Ibn Taymiyyah, the great Sufi sheikhs were those who agreed with what the *salaf* taught. According to his "*salafî*" standards for classifying people and groups, Ibn Taymiyyah develops a hierarchy for the Sufis. The best Sufis in his opinion were al-Fudayl ibn 'Iyâd (d. 187/803), Abū Sulaymân al-Darânî (d. 215/830), Yūsuf ibn Asbât (d. 199/814-5 or 196/811-2), Hudayfah al-Mar'ishî, Ma'rūf al-Karkhî (d. 200/815-6), al-Junayd ibn Muhammad (d. 297/910 or 298/911) and Sahl ibn 'Abd-Allâh al-Tustarî (d. 283/896 or 273/886-7) (*Istiqâmah*:v.1, pp.82-83). They condemned *kalâm* and opposed the *Kullâbiyyah* and the *Ash'ariyyah* (v.1, pp.83-89). According to Ibn Taymiyyah, the statements of these Sufis are collected in the most reliable books of the Sufis such as the works of al-Kalâbâdî (d. 380/990 or 384/994), Mu'ammar ibn Ziyâd al-Asfahânî (d. 418/1027) and Abū 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Sulamî (d. 412/1021).[45]

In opposition to these "orthodox" Sufis, Ibn Taymiyyah mentions the Sufis who succumbed to an ecstatic experience (*wajd*) and thus lost sight of the truth. This is what occurred to al-Hallâj

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[44]Ibn Fūrak and al-Isfarâyînî studied along with al-Bâqillânî under Abū-l-Hasan al-Bâhilî in Baghdad. Afterwards, Ibn Fūrak and al-Isfarâyînî went to Nîshâpūr to establish the *Ash'arî* theology. It was there, according to Watt (1971:S.V. "Ibn Fūrak"), that Ibn Fūrak secured "the adoption of the Ash'arite theology by a group of mystics," which included al-Qushayrî (d. 465/1072-3).
[45]Ibn Taymiyyah's list of orthodox Sufis in *al-'Ubûdiyyah* appears near the end of the essay; see Chapter 8, section 3. Of the three authors mentioned here, Ibn Taymiyyah states that Kalâbâdî, the author of *al-Ta'arruf li-Madhab Ahli-l-Tasawwuf*, is "the best, the most correct, and the closest to the *madhab* of the *salaf*." See *Istiqâmah*:v.1, p.83.

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(d. 310/922-3) and Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/944-5). Ibn

Taymiyyah says that they tried to differentiate between the creator

and the creation, but after being overcome by an ecstatic

experience, they were never able to differentiate between truth and

falsehood. Thus, he says, it is not allowable to accept their

statements without reference to the sound views of the righteous

sheikhs (*Istiqāmah*, v.1, p.115). This leads Ibn Taymiyyah to a

lengthy discussion of some of the statements attributed to al-

Hallāj[46] and of al-Ghazālī's comments on ecstatic expressions

(*shatahāt*).

Ibn Taymiyyah quotes certain portions of al-Ghazālī's

discussion in the *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* concerning ecstatic

expressions.[47] After mentioning that al-Ghazālī identifies two types

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[46]It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to review Ibn Taymiyyah's
detailed analysis of the many statements attributed to al-Hallāj (d. 310/922-
3). In the *Istiqāmah* (v.1, pp.115-141), he scrutinizes each statement according
to its chain of narrators (*isnād*) and the contents of the narration. In general,
Ibn Taymiyyah tends to give al-Hallāj the benefit of the doubt; that is, when
the *isnād* is weak or missing he says one cannot attribute the statement to al-
Hallāj and when it is a corrupt statement known to be from him, Ibn Taymiyyah
says that it stems from the influence of the ecstatic experience. Any
sympathies notwithstanding, Ibn Taymiyyah's overall opinion is that al-Hallāj
was an unrepentant sinner who deserved to be executed for heresy (*zandaqah*).
If he did repent, it is a matter between him and God; see Massignon (1982:v.2,
pp.46-48). However, in the *Istiqāmah* (v.1, p.116), he does have this to say
about al-Hallāj: "The best of what is said about him by his supporters is that
he was 'a righteous man on a correct path but was overcome by an ecstatic
experience and state so that he spoke confusedly because he did not know what
he was saying.' The speech of the intoxicant is set aside and not transmitted,
for the one executed is a martyr and the executioner is a fighter (*mujāhid*) in
the cause of Allah..." The assumption, of course, is that the executed one is a
martyr if his repentance is sincere.
[47]Ibn Taymiyyah presents only al-Ghazālī's initial criticisms about the *shath*
in the *Istiqāmah*:v.1, pp.119-121. Al-Ghazālī's full discussion of the *shath* in
the *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (1316/1898-9, 4 vols.) can be found in v.1, pp.31-32.

of ecstatic expressions innovated by some Sufis, he quotes: "The first type are protracted claims about passionate love (*'ishq*) for God and about a lover's union (*wisāl*) that frees him from acts of external obediences (*al-a'māl al-zāhirah*). This eventually results in claims of union with God (*ittihād*), of lifting the veil between God and man, of witnessing a vision of the divine, and of oral expressions about the experience.... By making these claims, they imitate al-Hallāj, who was crucified because he blurted out words of this type." Ibn Taymiyyah skips over al-Ghazālī's short discussion about some of the *shatahāt* attributed to Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī (d. 261/875) and continues quoting from al-Ghazālī's second type of *shath*. "[This] consists of incomprehensible statements which are outwardly impressive but contain appalling explanations (*'ibārāt hā'ilah*). There is nothing useful behind such statements. This type of *shath* is either incomprehensible to the speaker himself, who produces it out of madness and derangement because there is a paucity of meanings in the speech which has reached his ears, and this is the most common type, or it is understandable to him, but he is incapable of making it understood and citing it with explanations to indicate what is in his mind." After these quotes, Ibn Taymiyyah expresses his agreement with al-Ghazālī by saying that ecstatic expressions contain falsity, ambiguity, distorted and useless

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Ibn Taymiyyah does not mention the term *shath* in *al-'Ubūdiyyah*. However, his discussion of exaggerated claims of love (*man inbasata fī da'wā-l-mahabbah*) corresponds to the discussion of ecstatic expressions; see below, Chapter 6, sections 6-8.

statements, and truth. But the best and surest way to follow this truth, he says, is to avoid the way of al-Hallâj.

Ibn Taymiyyah's warnings echo the position of the orthodox community concerning the _shatahât_. A brief discussion of the implications of these expressions must suffice to clarify this point. The ecstatic expressions of the Sufis are intricately linked to what they claim is the experience of the annihilation of self (_fanâ'_). During the _fanâ'_, according to Sufi doctrine, "a transfiguring occurs which gives one an intermittent divine investiture, thus consenting forever to a dialogue of love between God and man," that is, between "Thee and me" (Massignon, 1987:S.V. "_Shath_"). What then occurs is the "divinely inspired utterance which this supernatural commotion extracts from the subject" (ibid.). From Ibn Taymiyyah's point of view, it is easy to judge the statements themselves to be heretical. In fact, Sufis such as al-Hallâj and 'Ayn al-Qudat al-Hamadânî (d. 525/1131) actually realized the need of their own executions.[48] I shall present some of the major ecstatic expressions to indicate the danger they posed for the orthodox community.

Abû Yazîd al-Bistâmî (d. 261/875) is reported to have said: "My 'I am' is not 'I am,' because I am He, and I am 'he is He' (_huwa huwa_)." Also attributed to him is the statement: "...I saw Him in

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[48]This is reported by Ernst (1985:79). Nicholson (1975:132) records an anecdote from Jalâl al-Dîn al-Rûmî's _Masnavî_ in which he writes that Abû Yazîd al-Bistâmî, after being told of what he said in an ecstatic state, ordered his followers to stab him if ever he said such offences again. However, when they obeyed his command and tried to stab him during his next ecstatic state, the knife blows were deflected from him, and he remained unharmed.

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every state, to such a degree that it was as if I were He."[49] Similarly, al-Hallâj is quoted as saying: "My spirit mixes with Your spirit, in nearness and in distance, so that I am You, just as You are I" (Ernst, 1985:27). Finally, there is the well known statement of al-Hallâj, which is also attributed to al-Bistâmî, "I am the Truth" (anâ-l-haqq) (ibid:44). These expressions contain a complete denial of the orthodox belief in the distinction between Creator and created. In essence, all that is held as normal or proper by the orthodox theologians is turned inside out and upside down by the mystical Sufis.[50] The main problem arising from these ecstatic expressions is the heretical content which they contain as viewed by those who have not experienced the state of ecstasy and intoxication of the Sufis. The shatahât are alleged to be expressions of a spiritual state "in which the speaker is God, testifying to His own unity on the tongue of His lover" (ibid:48). But in analyzing such expressions, the element of "intoxication" could not be explained in a "sober" state; thus it became unavoidable "...that a literal understanding of ecstatic expressions would lead to heresy..." (ibid:49). This was realized by later Sufis who warned against uttering comments about one's experiences. Al-Hujwîrî (d. 464/1071) warned that "...expression only produces an unreal notion and leads the student mortally astray" (ibid:50). 'Ayn al-Qudat explained the problem as

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[49]These two quotes are from Ernst (1985:26). Schimmel (1975:47-50) discusses the impact of al-Bistâmî's shatahât, which she calls "theopathic locutions," on the development of Sufism.
[50]This is the view of Rahman (1966:146).

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"...the lover and the beloved are one in divine reality, but separate on the level of discursive thought."[51] These last two statements express the idea that if the experience is ineffable, then the mystic should remain silent. These types of warnings do not deny the experience, but caution that the moment the mystic speaks, his statements enter into the domain of scrutiny and investigation. In other words, what he claims to be reality is open for others to analyze.[52]

Ibn Taymiyyah obviously felt compelled to investigate the ecstatic expressions with the intention of showing that what the mystical Sufis claim to be reality is in opposition to the Quran and the Sunnah. The heretical aspect of ecstatic expressions, he contends, is the concept of the elimination of the ego in a state in which the mystic believes he attains to a self-identity with God.[53] Based on the acceptance of the creed of the *salaf* that God in no way intermixes with His creation, Ibn Taymiyyah has no choice but to

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[51]This quote is also from Ernst (1985:74). Schimmel (1975:64) refers to the sin of the mystic as being "a lover's greatest sin: to divulge the secret of his love."

[52]This sentiment is also mentioned by the Anatolian Sufi, Jalâl al-Dîn al-Rûmî (d. 672/1273), who is quoted as saying: "When you say, 'words are of no account,' you negate your own assertion through your words. If words are of no account, why do we hear you say that words are of no account? After all, you are saying this in words." This quote is from Katz (1992:3), who summarizes the problem of mystical language in this way: "Mystics do not say what they mean and do not mean what they say."

[53]Memon (1976:29-34) presents various comments of Ibn Taymiyyah concerning statements from al-Hallâj, Ibn Sab'în (d. 669/1270-1) and al-Tilimsânî (d. 690/1291). I have summarized Ibn Taymiyyah's arguments in this paragraph.

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condemn ecstatic expressions as stemming from a false belief.[54] He thus associates the exaggerated claims of some Sufis with the concept of the mystical annihilation of self. However, before he enters into his discussion of the *fanā'*, he must deal with two major issues which he believes are critical for avoiding deviation in religious experiences. One point is the proper understanding of the distinction God makes between good and evil, which Ibn Taymiyyah relates to the concepts of predestination and free will. The other point is the proper understanding of the role of love in relation to worship and obedience. Besides his theological convictions about the nature of God, his arguments concerning these points are also based on a moral issue.

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[54]In the *Istiqâmah*, Ibn Taymiyyah criticizes some specific statements that oppose the well-known beliefs of the *Ahl al-Sunnah*. One of these statements concerns the testimony of faith (*shahâdah*). It focuses on Ibn Taymiyyah's belief that both testimonies must be uttered in order for someone to become a Muslim. The criticism stems from a claim by al-Qushayrî that al-Shiblî (d. 334/944-5), after saying the call to pray, said: "If only You had ordered me not to mention another with You" (v.2, p.15). (See also Schimmel, 1975:79.) The obvious implication is that the statement "Muhammad is the Messenger of God" in the testimony of faith somehow detracts from the concept of God's oneness. Ibn Taymiyyah rejects this on the basis that testifying only to "there is no deity but God" does not make one a Muslim because rejecting Muhammad as Messenger is a rejection of God's revelation and *sharî'ah* (v.2, p.20). Ibn Taymiyyah also refutes a claim of al-Qushayrî that Abû Sulaymân al-Darânî said that contentment (*ridâ*) is not to ask God for paradise and not to seek refuge with Him from the hellfire (v.2, p.65). According to Ibn Taymiyyah, the righteous Sufi sheikhs agreed with the *salaf* concerning contentment, which means to accept the calamities of this life with patience (v.2, pp.65-95). To prove that seeking paradise is part of the religion, he presents evidence from the Quran and the Sunnah for the reality of the beatific vision in the hereafter (v.2, pp.96-100). A final point he makes on this topic is that God loves and is loved based on what He revealed in the Quran and the Sunnah of Muhammad. Those whom He loves are described in many verses and hadiths as to their beliefs, statements and actions (v.2, pp.100-104).

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Ibn Taymiyyah objects to the concept of mystical union because the Sufi falls into unbelief by abandoning God's Law while being so absorbed in the thought of the beloved that he loses his consciousness.[55] The loss of consciousness means that the lover no longer knows how to approach the beloved. For Ibn Taymiyyah, this means the Sufi no longer knows how to follow the Sunnah.[56] This act of disbelief, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, is indicated by Sufis who reject the authority of the Quran and the Sunnah, thinking that there is some greater truth or reality than these two revealed sources. This false assumption, says Ibn Taymiyyah, is the basis on which Sufis such as Abū Ya'qūb al-Maghribī said: "Being is One, and that is God. I don't see the One, I don't see God;" and "the Koran and Sunna speak about Duality of Being, while Being is One, without dualism" (Memon, 1976:33). Also, al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291) said: "The Koran, all of it, is polytheism (shirk), with no element of monotheism (at-Tauhīd) whatsoever; at-Tauhīd is but in our utterances...The Koran, at best, leads to Paradise, but our utterances to God Himself."[57] Such statements indicate that truth,

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[55]On the issue of moral decay in al-'Ubūdiyyah, see below Chapter 5, section 9.
[56]On the issue of losing consciousness in al-'Ubūdiyyah, see below, Chapter 8, section 3. In his al-Sūfiyyah wa-l-Fuqarā' (p.14), Ibn Taymiyyah mentions that some famous scholars fainted from hearing the recitation of the Quran. For example, he relates a story from Ahmad b. Hanbal that a certain Yahyā ibn Sa'īd fainted upon hearing a recitation of the Quran. But Ahmad noted that Yahyā was a most reasonable man and if anyone was able to resist fainting, it would be he. The point Ibn Taymiyyah is emphasizing is that a Muslim must resist losing consciousness.
[57]This quote is from Memon (1976:33). See also Nicholson (1975:93). Based on such statements, Ibn Taymiyyah directs his most vicious attacks against the Sufis who continually expressed these views in a sober state of mind. He did not consider them to be ecstatic expressions, rather, they were carefully

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or some aspect of it, lies outside or beyond the Quran and the Sunnah. From his view of the all-encompassing nature of God's revelation, it is easy to understand Ibn Taymiyyah's outrage over these types of claims.

Ibn Taymiyyah continues with his moral arguments by insisting on the necessary distinction between good and evil and on the necessity of repentance for acts of disobedience.[58] His position concerning good and evil revolves around the fact that God has made a clear distinction between good and evil deeds and between those who obey Him and those who disobey Him. This distinction is permanent and cannot be breached by the attainment of spiritual states. This is the crux of his moral argument which he uses as a form of "reductio ad absurdum"[59] to show that anything other than the belief in the distinction between the Creator and the created leads to a denial of the clear statements of the Quran and the Sunnah, and thus to moral decay. As Ibn Taymiyyah points out in *al-*

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thought out beliefs. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, Sufis such as Ibn Sab'în, al-Sadr al-Rûmî al-Qûnawî (d. 672/1273-4), al-Balyânî (d. 686/1287) and al-Tilimsânî are the worst offenders of the orthodox beliefs. Ibn 'Arabî (d. 638/1240-1) is associated with the others as denying the distinction between the Creator and the created but is placed by Ibn Taymiyyah in a rank closer to the beliefs of Islam because he maintained the need to follow the Quran and the Sunnah. See *Risâlah ilâ Nasr al-Manbijî*, pp.469-474.

[58] Ibn Taymiyyah's lengthy discussion of the distinction between good and evil deeds appears in the *Istiqâmah*, v.2., pp.168-198. This is followed by his discussion of the need for commanding good and forbidding evil, *Istiqâmah*, v.2, pp.198-311. A similar but less detailed discussion of these two topics appears in *al-'Ubûdiyyah*; see below, Chapter 5, sections 8-11. In this paragraph, I shall present Ibn Taymiyyah's major concerns on this topic in relation to his definition of proper worship.

[59] Bell (1979:64) uses this expression to explain Ibn Taymiyyah's arguments in support of a "moral purpose of creation."

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'Ubūdiyyah.[60] it is the polytheists and innovators who attempt to evade God's commands and obscure what He has defined as good or evil. Thus the distinction between good and evil, says Ibn Taymiyyah, also indicates the importance of commanding good and forbidding evil. In reference to this topic, Ibn Taymiyyah begins a lengthy discussion on commanding good and forbidding evil in the *Istiqāmah* (v.2, pp.216-311). His emphasis on this topic is a direct reflection of his polemics against the antinomian Sufi groups which were in existence in the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries. These extreme antinomian tendencies in Sufism were Ibn Taymiyyah's "proof" concerning the dangers resulting from deviations in creed and practice.

Even a short review of the history of the antinomian Sufi groups prior to and during the time of Ibn Taymiyyah is not feasible within the scope of this dissertation. However, I feel it is necessary to identify some of the major groups which most clearly represent antinomianism and with which Ibn Taymiyyah had direct contact.[61] It is these antinomian groups who are the living example of everything that the *Hanbali* theologian sees wrong in mystical Sufism.

Ibn Taymiyyah was involved in confrontations with fanatical groups which practiced extreme forms of unconventional behavior

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[60]See below, Chapter 5, sections 12-14.

[61]For a history of the antinomian Sufi groups, see Karamustafa (1994), *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550*, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press. Ibn Taymiyyah discusses antinomianism in *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, see below Chapter 5, sections 7-9.

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ranging from a complete disregard for Islamic Law to body piercing, fire walking and other similar practices. The *Rifā'iyyah* in particular were famous for these latter practices (Bosworth, 1995:S.V. "Rifā'iyya"). Memon (1976:57-66) details some of the actions Ibn Taymiyyah took against them and explains that he was incensed by their claims to be able to perform miracles because of their overwhelming love for and closeness to God. Two other Sufi groups that engaged in unconventional behavior were the *Qalandariyyah* and the *Malāmatiyyah*.[62] The premiss of their beliefs is that in order to focus all their attention on God they must intentionally draw public censure on themselves. They accomplish this by renouncing everything in this world, including the Law and social norms, which allows them to fulfill what they believe is the true meaning of worshipping only God. Although these two groups have common origins in the third/ninth century, and at times have been viewed as indistinguishable from each other, their approaches to renunciation are different. The *Qalandariyyah* seek to deviate publicly from the Law by the nonperformance of religious rituals and the performance of well-known prohibitions. The *Malāmatiyyah*, on the other hand, performed the obligations of the Law in order to hide their true spiritual state. But they would at times intentionally commit blameworthy acts so that people would

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[62]See Yazici (1978:S.V. "Kalandariyya"), and de Jong and Algar (1991:S.V. "Malāmatiyya"). For a more detailed discussion of these groups, see also Martin (1984:258-283). Memon (1976:57-60) also mentions some of Ibn Taymiyyah's confrontations with the *Qalandariyyah*.

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censure them and shun them.[63] For Ibn Taymiyyah, these deviations stem not only from corrupt beliefs but from misguided love.

Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah incorporates his theory of the relationship between the love for God and God's oneness (tawhīd) into his moral and theological arguments for the distinction between God and creation, and between good and evil. This theory includes the idea that the love for God must evoke a desire in the worshipper to follow the Prophet. As evidence for this he refers to the verse of the Quran: "Say: If you love (tuhibbūn) Allah then follow me, Allah will love you (yuhbibkum) and forgive you your sins" (Al 'Imrān 3:31). Ibn Taymiyyah explains that the meaning of this verse is that God has made the love of the worshiper for Him a cause for following the Prophet, which in turn brings God's love to His worshiper.[64] As for the connection between a worshipper's love for God and the concept of tawhīd, Ibn Taymiyyah contends that this love occurs between two separate beings with no possibility of existential or ontological union between them. He believes this is confirmed by the opening Sura of the Quran. According to an authentic hadith, God has divided Sura al-Fātihah into two parts. The first part is the praises of the worshiper for his Lord and the

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[63]These intentional acts of disobedience are defended by the supporters of the Malāmatî form of Sufism. Al-Hujwirî (d. 464/1071) traces the belief of drawing blame on oneself back to the Prophet, who takes on the role of the "proto-type of the malāmatî" (Martin, 1984:258). For the exact quote in al-Hujwirî, see Nicholson (1976:62).

[64]For the use of this verse in al-Istiqāmah, see v.1, pp.261, 265. Ibn Taymiyyah makes the same point in his Risālah ilā Nasr al-Manbijî, p.453.

second part is the seeking of guidance by the worshiper.[65] Based on this, Ibn Taymiyyah argues that all activities of a worshiper, such as obedience, humility, love and hope, must be directed to God. For this reason, he says, a believer worships God and seeks aid from Him by continually saying "It is You alone we worship and from You alone we seek help" (al-Fâtihah 1:4). Ibn Taymiyyah's argument is that the love which the Quran and the Sunnah evoke distinguishes itself from the love stemming from polytheism. Thus he concludes that there is a "polytheistic" love, in which the identity of the lovers unite, which is related to polytheism in the matter of belief. Such beliefs compromise *tawhīd*.[66] He elaborates this point through his discussion of intimate love (*khullah*).

Ibn Taymiyyah sees the fulfillment of worship and love in the realization that God, in His essence, must be the focus of one's love. The process of loving God is a movement that parallels the process of worshiping God alone and without associating partners with Him. He explains this as a process of moving from an unqualified love (*mahabbah mutlaqah*) to an exclusive, intimate love (*khullah*). Ibn Taymiyyah describes this intimate love in al-'Ubūdiyyah: "Intimacy (*khullah*) is the perfection of the love (*mahabbah*) required from a worshiper and the perfection of worship for Allah; and from the Lord, glorified be He, it is the perfection of lordship toward His worshipers whom He loves and who love Him.... This highest level

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[65]See his *Risâlah ilâ Nasr al-Manbijî*, p.455. For the hadith, see Ibn Kaṯîr (1402/1981:v.1, p.15).
[66]*Risâlah ilâ Nasr al-Manbijî*, p.456.

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of perfection occurred to Abraham and Muhammad, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon them. For this reason, he (Muhammad) did not have an intimate friend from the people of the earth, for intimacy cannot bear partnership...."[67] Ibn Taymiyyah's conclusion is that for a Muslim love, worship, and *tawhīd* form an organic whole, whatever occurs to one will necessarily affect the others. Thus the realization of faith relies on the exclusive nature of a Muslim's love and worship for the one deity. Ibn Taymiyyah argues that intimacy is exclusive and does not allow for a share to be given to another beloved. Intimacy is a specific aspect of love, for it is a complete or perfect love. The lover would be permeated by intimacy to the point that what he loves would be loved for itself and not for any other thing. Thus the Prophet loved (*ahabb*) other people but <u>kh</u>ullah was meant for God. In this way, the intimacy for God must be for His essence and not for anything else. Thus, for a worshiper, love must be for God and for His sake. Ibn Taymiyyah stresses this point in no uncertain terms. In order to worship God one must love Him, for love and worship are necessarily connected, and intimacy is the perfection of this process.

This link between love, worship and *tawhīd* is also reflected in the language of supplications.[68] According to Ibn Taymiyyah, the

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[67]For the full discussion on intimate love, see below, Chapter 7, sections 4-5.
[68]The wording of supplications is a very important issue for Ibn Taymiyyah. The prayers that are in the Quran or that were taught by the Prophet indicate for him the correct relationship between God and a worshipper. In *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, Chapter 8, sections 6-7, he presents some linguistic arguments for the distinction between the Creator and the creation. See also *Risālah ilā Nasr al-Manbijī*, p.456.

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shari'ah came to establish the proper guidelines for worship and the proper concepts of _tawhīd_. The Prophet taught the believers to remember God with such statements as "Allah is great," "Glory be to Allah" and "All praise is for Allah." Likewise, he taught the believers to supplicate Him with statements such as "O Lord, I have wronged myself, forgive me." These statements, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, are based on the distinction between the Creator and His creation. If a Muslim's concept of love and _tawhīd_ does away with this distinction, then he is being led astray. This is the basis of Ibn Taymiyyah's criticism of those who claim that their love for God has done away with all distinctions. For him, this is a misguided love which stands in opposition to the perfection of love.

In the _Risālat al-'Ubūdiyyah_, Ibn Taymiyyah explains what he sees as the erroneous statements concerning love in the following way: "[S]ome sheikhs say that 'love is a fire that burns everything in a heart except a desire for the beloved.' They mean that Allah wills the existence of the whole universe, and thus they imagine that the perfection of love is that a worshipper should love everything including disbelief, depravity, and rebellion. But it is impossible for someone to love everything that exists. On the contrary, a person loves what suits him and benefits him and hates what is incompatible to him and harms him. However, from this error (_dalāl_) they take advantage of following their passions (_ahwā'_), for they love what they desire, such as images, leadership, excess wealth and misleading innovations. All the while, they maintain that these are part of love of Allah, but love of Allah includes the hatred

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of what He and His Messenger hate and the striving of His people with soul and wealth."[69]

Ibn Taymiyyah associates erroneous notions about love with the mystical Sufis who see only God's creative will and neglect His religious decrees. The confusion of the mystics, he contends, is that they fail to apprehend a distinction between God's will and the thing willed. They see the existence of the universe as being the same as the existence of God. But for Ibn Taymiyyah, only by following the legislation of God as pertaining to both practices and beliefs could one truly be considered a lover and worshipper of Him. Ibn Taymiyyah explains that God clearly makes a distinction between good and evil and between obedience and disobedience and that the believer must likewise maintain this distinction.[70]

The loss of consciousness, the ecstatic expressions that result from it, and erroneous ideas about love are, for ibn Taymiyyah, directly related to the experience of the *fanā'* or annihilation of self. The mystical *fanā'* "culminates in the belief that contemplation of God's pure essence, stripped of all attributes, constitutes the highest degree of witnessing (*shuhūd*)" (Memon, 1976:33). For al-Hallāj (d. 310/922), the Sufi goal is the *fanā'* of humanity (*nāsūt*) into the divinity (*lāhūt*). He sees the reality of the World of Being in

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[69]This quote is from *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, see below, Chapter 7, section 8.
[70]Ibn Taymiyyah deals extensively with the issue of love in *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, and so the details of this topic are presented in the translation. The relevant sections on love are in Chapter 5, section 13, Chapter 6, sections 5-7, and Chapter 7, sections 4-9.

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terms of "two different natures, one of which aspires to attain the other" (Memon, 1976:28).

In both the *Istiqāmah* and *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, Ibn Taymiyyah discusses the issue of annihilation by presenting his explanation of three types of *fanā'*. He describes them in terms of a praiseworthy type, a defective type, and a condemnable type.[71] With this conception of the *fanā'*, Ibn Taymiyyah subtly diverges from the traditional manner of describing the *fanā'* in Sufi literature. This provides us with a good example of how Ibn Taymiyyah attempts to redefine Sufi terminology in line with his *salafī* beliefs. A brief review of the standard Sufi discussions on the *fanā'* will help to highlight Ibn Taymiyyah's reformulations.

Qushayrī describes the *fanā'* as a progressive three-stage development toward what he sees as a more profound spiritual experience.[72] The concept of three stages of development within the stations (*maqāmāt*) of the Sufis is a common enough theme that occurs throughout the literature on Sufism. This most likely explains Ibn Taymiyyah's adoption of three types of *fanā'*, even though he alters the schematization of the experience. Thus Qushayrī, following traditional Sufi concepts, talks about the

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[71] In *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, Ibn Taymiyyah discusses the three types of *fanā'* in Chapter 8, sections 1-4. His discussion on this topic in the *Istiqāmah* is in vol.2, pp.142-148. The only other similar descriptions of the three types of *fanā'* that I know of appear in his *Ibṭāl Wahdati-l-Wujūd* (1976:82-84) and his *Risālat al-Tadmuriyyah* (1387/1967-8:69-70). Ibn Taymiyyah apparently maintained this belief in three types of *fanā'* throughout his life, for he makes reference to them in one of the last books he wrote before died; see *al-Furqān bayna-l-Haqq wa-l-Bāṭil* (1403/1983:218).

[72] See Qushayrī (1382/1962:61-63), and Gramlich (1989:121-123).

annihilation of the blameworthy self and attributes of the worshipper by his subsisting in the attributes of the truth, i.e. in the universal, eternally true attributes of God. He then mentions the annihilation of the attributes of the truth by witnessing the truth, i.e. the essential oneness of God. Finally, he refers to the annihilation of the witnessing of the annihilation by perishing (*istihlāk*) in the existence (*wujūd*) of the truth, i.e. a union with God.

Another variation of this three-stage hierarchy is that of al-Harawī (d. 481/1089). Al-Harawī is important because this fellow *Hanbalī* had such a clear influence on both Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim, although they did not accept his statements unconditionally.[73] In his *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*, al-Harawī discusses the three stages of the *fanā'*. He refers to the first stage as "the *fanā'* of cognition in the thing cognized," i.e. an annihilation of a subject in an object. The second stage is "the *fanā'* of the witnessing of seeking because the thing thought is eliminated," i.e. the annihilation of the object. His third stage is also "the *fanā'* of the *fanā'*." Although al-Harawī does not indicate that the third stage is equated with an annihilation of existence into the one divine existence, Ibn al-Qayyim nonetheless rejects this stage as an error in al-Harawī's explanation of the *fanā'*. He states that this use of the *fanā'* is associated with the people of union with the divine (*ahl al-*

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[73]'Abd-Allāh al-Ansārī al-Harawī wrote the *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn* (1962); for the section on the *fanā'*, see the Arabic text, p.104, and the French translation, p.129. This work forms the basis of Ibn al-Qayyim's *Madārij al-Sālikīn* (no date, 3 vols.) in which he also quotes extensively from Ibn Taymiyyah. His commentary on al-Harawī's discussion of the *fanā'* is found in v.3, pp.385-400.

ittihād). It stems from their misinterpretation of the *fanā'*, which, he says, is merely the annihilation of a thing in a worshipper's intellectual and mental "existence." The *ahl al-ittihād*, however, interpret it as an annihilation of a worshipper's existence in the existence of God. This third stage of the Sufi concept of the *fanā'* thus becomes a point of departure for Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim. This rejection of the traditional Sufi conception of annihilation is reflected in Ibn Taymiyyah's reformulation of the experience of the *fanā'*.

Instead of three progressive stages ending in the *fanā'* of the *fanā'*, or the *istihlāk*, Ibn Taymiyyah categorizes the experience of annihilation according to his own notion of perfect worship. The praiseworthy *fanā'* becomes for him that of the prophets, messengers and saints. It is an annihilation of the will for other than God, not an annihilation of it in an absolute sense.[74] The one who attains to this level has brought himself into complete conformity with God's will while remaining conscious and maintaining a discernment between God and His creation, i.e. a

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[74]Ibn Taymiyyah's description of the *fanā'* is more closely related to that of Kalābādî, who also refers to three stages of the *fanā'*, for Kalābādî does not talk about a *fanā'* of the *fanā'*, or about the *fanā'* of existence, as is indicated by Qushayrî's reference to *istihlāk*. See Kalābādî (1389/1969:147-157), and Arberry's translation (1977:120-132). Thus when Ibn Taymiyyah speaks of the "annihilation of the will for other than God," he is reflecting Kalābādî's thinking on this topic. Kalābādî's first stage is "a state in which all passions pass away." He then mentions a *fanā'* from "the very consciousness of discord (with God)." (The quotes are taken from Arberry.) Kalābādî's annihilation of "passions" and "discord" is Ibn Taymiyyah's annihilation of "the will for other than God."

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discernment, but not a desire, for other than God.[75] The defective type of *fanā'* falls short of the perfection of the first type, but is still suitable for the righteous. At this level, the seeker loses his witnessing (*shuhūd*) for other than God, i.e. his awareness of God's creation, by concentrating only on God. As Ibn Taymiyyah explains in *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, this is a state similar to that of Moses' mother when she became devoid (*fārigh*) of all thoughts except for her son.[76] The danger of the defective *fanā'* is that a seeker of the truth can become confused by his experiences, believing that his loss of witnessing for other than God brings him into a selfsame identity with God. This leads to the condemnable *fanā'*, which is the level of those who follow Pharaoh, that is, they believe themselves to be a god.[77] At this level, the seeker is completely misled by his experiences and believes that God in His essence and existence is the only existence, the seeker being included in it. The multiplicity of particulars are merely an extension of God's being, with no reality outside God's existence. For Ibn Taymiyyah, "this is the *fanā'* of the

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[75]Ibn Taymiyyah's belief in attaining to "complete conformity with God's will" is comparable to Kalābādī's last stage of the *fanā'*, which is described as "being absent from human qualities in (undertaking) the fearful burden of the divine qualities." As part of his own particular notion of *fanā'*, Ibn Taymiyyah seems to include Kalābādī's three stages in his first stage, although I have not read anything to indicate that he did this intentionally. In fact, Ibn Taymiyyah is less concerned with what constitutes the praiseworthy *fanā'* per se than with what leads to the blameworthy type.

[76]See below Chapter 8, section 2.

[77]On the role of Pharaoh as leader of those who believe they are part of the godhead, see below, Chapter 6, section 11.

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unbelievers, for it makes the existence of things to be the selfsame existence as the True One."[78]

In comparison with the traditional Sufi descriptions of *fanā'*, the purpose of Ibn Taymiyyah's reformulation is clear. He is seeking to discredit the role of falling unconscious during the *fanā'*, which he sees as the outward manifestation of the purported mystical union with God, by emphasizing the sober qualities of worship as depicted in *Hanbalī* pietism. In line with the teachings of al-Junayd, whom Ibn Taymiyyah respects as an "orthodox" Sufi, sobriety must win out over intoxication.[79] Thus the first stage of the Sufi experience, which typically refers to the annihilation of passions and desires, is elevated by Ibn Taymiyyah to a complete annihilation of a worshipper's will for other than what God wills. It is a state of consciousness and total submission. The second stage described by the Sufis relates to either an annihilation of witnessing or a loss of consciousness concerning one's attributes. It is at this stage that Ibn Taymiyyah warns about the dangers of the annihilation of witnessing (*shuhūd*), which is for him a less perfect state which could lead to a permanently weakened intellect and discernment.

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[78]This quote is from *al-Istiqāmah*, v.2, p.142: *huwa fanā'u-l-kāfirīn wa huwa ja'l wujūdi-l-ashyā' huwa 'ayn wujūdi-l-haqq.*

[79]The sobriety and orthodoxy of al-Junayd is the picture commonly portrayed in the accounts of him, and Ibn Taymiyyah accepts this view. However, David L. Martin (1984) challenges this view; see his *al-Fana' and al-Baqa' in the work of Abu al-Qasim al-Junayd al-Baghdadi* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California). On p.2 he writes: "Nonetheless, the 'safe' orthodoxy of al-Junayd is perhaps more attributable to ignorance of al-Junayd's comprehensive theosophy than to his actual 'orthodoxy,' which we shall see is, at base, heterodox." Nonetheless, it is also important to note that al-Junayd held to the belief in three levels of *fanā'*; see Martin (1984:48-49).

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This condition prepares the way for a worshipper to fall into the deceptions associated with the third stage of *fanā'*. Thus what is praised by the mystical Sufis as *istihlāk*, or the *fanā'* of the *fanā'*, is for Ibn Taymiyyah nothing more than a means of succumbing to the falsities of the notion of an union with the divine (*ittihād*). The importance which Ibn Taymiyyah places on the role of consciousness in worship culminates in his theory concerning the Sufi term *baqā'* (subsistence).[80]

Although Ibn Taymiyyah does not mention the Sufi term *baqā'* in *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, he does have a short discussion of the Sufi concepts of *farq* and *jam'*, which are directly related to the *fanā'* and the *baqā'*.[81] Also, his theory of *baqā'* can be derived from one of his later works and from statements made by his student, Ibn al-Qayyim, on this topic. In Sufi descriptions, the *jam'* is associated with the *fanā'*, and the *farq* with the *baqā'*. As the Sufi perishes from himself, he concentrates on the Divine Reality. Likewise, as he separates from this experience, he subsists, albeit transformed, in

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[80]In the texts of Qushayrî, Kalâbâḏî and Harawî, *baqâ'* is discussed either in the same chapter of *fanâ'* or in the chapter immediately following it. The term itself is directly related to the *fanâ'* and has been described as a "...'persistence' or 'subsistence' in God..." after the *fanâ'* (Schimmel, 1975:143). Martin (1984:passim) also uses "subsistence" for *baqâ'*. Nicholson (1975:61) defines it as "continuance" or "abiding."

[81]For the descriptions of *farq* and *jam'*, see Qushayrî (1382/1962:208-210), Gramlich (1989:121-125), Kalâbâḏî (1389/1969:57-58), Arberry (1977:114-117), Harawî (1966:Arabic 109, French 135). *Farq* is translated as "Trennung" by Gramlich, as "separation" by Arberry, and as "dispersion" by de Beaurecueil, who is translating Harawî's use of *tafriqah* instead of *farq*. *Jama'* is translated as "Vereinigung," "concentration," and "concentration," respectively.

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his former state.[82] For Ibn Taymiyyah, as is to be expected, the need to maintain a knowledge of the distinction between Creator and created form the basis for his ideas of subsistence. The assumption drawn from his discussions is that the *fanā'* and the *baqā'* occur simultaneously, which is another reflection of al-Junayd's theory (Martin, 1984:145-157). Ibn Taymiyyah states in *al-Furqān bayna-l-Haqq wa-l-Bāṭil* (p.218) that the correct *fanā'* is conjoined with the *baqā'*. This takes place within what he understands as the fulfillment of the testimony of faith. It is the realization of the *shahādah*, of the belief that there is no deity but God. This point is confirmed by the way Ibn Taymiyyah concludes his discussion of correct witnessing in *al-'Ubūdiyyah*. He states that it is the negation in the heart for the divinity of everything other than God and, simultaneously, the confirmation in the heart for the divinity of the Truth (*ulūhiyyat al-haqq*). Ibn al-Qayyim explains *fanā'* in similar terms within this meaning of *tawhīd*. He says it is a confirmation of the divinity of God and a negation of the divinity of everything else. He then states that the negation is the *fanā'* and the confirmation is the *baqā'*.[83] For Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim, the perfection of worship becomes the perfection of the *fanā'-baqā'* experience, that is, the annihilation of the worshiper's will and desires so that he subsists in conformity with God's will while never losing knowledge of God's distinction from His

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[82]This process is described by Schimmel (1975:143-144).

[83]Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārij al-Sālikīn* (no date:v.3, p.504): *fa-l-nafy huwa-l-fanā' wa-l-iṯbāt huwa-l-baqā'*.

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creation. As mentioned above, it is a path of complete sobriety and yet complete submission.

At the heart of the *fanâ'*, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, lies the conflict between intoxication *(sukr)*[84] and sobriety *(sahw)* in relation to religious experiences. Losing consciousness, or intoxication, he says, is not praiseworthy, for it means the presence of delight *(laddah)* and the absence of distinction *(tamyîz)*. This is blameworthy because God praises knowledge *('ilm)*, intellect *('aql)*, and understanding *(fiqh)* while censuring the absence of these qualities.[85] Thus regarding sobriety and intoxication, the guiding principle for Ibn Taymiyyah is adherence to the Quran and the Sunnah as literally understood. In this matter, the best path is that of the prophets and saints who maintained sobriety in worship. Then the next state in superiority is that of the Companions, who strove to remain sober while worshipping God in the best manner.

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[84]The concept of intoxication for Ibn Taymiyyah is related to a Muslim's mental and spiritual state. Anything that interferes with the normal, healthy functioning of the mind is considered an intoxicant. He considers passions and ambitions as well as insanity *(janîn)* to be in the category of *sukr*; see *al-Istiqâmah*, v.2, pp.147-148. In *al-Sûfiyyah wa-l-Fuqarâ'* (p.16), he defines *sukr* and *fanâ'* as being anything that diminishes or impairs the intellect against the will of the individual. Here he uses the analogy of imbibing in alcohol and hashish. Although a person intentionally takes these intoxicants, he is acting against his own will toward remaining healthy. Thus, for Ibn Taymiyyah, engaging in any ritual that leads to a state of intoxication is forbidden.

[85]Ibn Taymiyyah bases this on the numerous verses in the Quran that mention the superiority of *'ilm*, *'aql* and *fiqh*. For example, he quotes the following: "Say: Are those who know the same as those who do not know?" (al-Zumar 39:9), "they have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear, they are like the cattle" (al-A'râf 7:179), "then know that there is no deity except Allah" (Muhammad 47:19), and "Say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge" (Tâ'Hâ' 20:114). See *al-Istiqâmah*, v.2, pp.157-159.

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Ibn Taymiyyah also classifies the type of people who fall into some state of unconsciousness. The blameless ones, he says, are those who are afflicted naturally and cannot resist. The next group are those who are afflicted but are able to resist, the resistance itself being a good deed even if one slips into a temporary loss of consciousness. Finally, the best is the one who is afflicted but does not lose his consciousness. As for those who seek the *sukr* or *fanā'*, they are actually being punished, whereas those who resist and retain consciousness are closest to the condition of the Prophet and his Companions.[86] As proof of this, he relates the hadith of how Muhammad was raised to heaven, experienced what no man can imagine, yet remained conscious, whereas Moses had fallen unconscious when God spoke to him and revealed Himself to the mountain. Although Moses's position is lofty, the Prophet's position is superior.[87] Thus by redefining the *fanā'*, Ibn Taymiyyah has taken a Sufi term and described it within the boundaries of *Hanbalī* pietism.

One underlying theme behind Ibn Taymiyyah's discussion of worship in *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, as we have already seen, is a rejection of the concepts of "union with the divine" (*ittihād*), "incarnation" (*hulūl*) and "the unity of being" (*wahdat al-wujūd*). Although he makes some direct references to these concepts in *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, he does not offer a detailed formulation of these doctrines with a

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[86]See *al-Sūfiyyah wa-l-Fuqarā'*, p.18.
[87]This example is given in *al-Sūfiyyah wa-l-Fuqarā'*, p.18, and is referred to in *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, see below, Chapter 8, section 3.

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subsequent refutation.[88] Nonetheless, the implications of these doctrines are present within the text. Thus some general commits on Ibn Taymiyyah's understand of the unity of being are in order.

When discussing the concept of union with the divine, Ibn Taymiyyah uses the terms *ittihād* and *hulūl* while referring to *wahdat al-wujūd* as a particular aspect of the more general topic. Although he does perceive subtle differences between the various aspects of these beliefs, he uses the terms interchangeably when not discussing the concepts in detail. Also, he refers to the mystics as a group by using the terms *ahl al-ittihād* or *ahl al-wahdah*. Thus he generally defines the principles of the mystics as being "incarnation and union and whatever comes near to that, as in the statement of the unity of being, as those who say that existence is one and that the necessary existence of the creator is the possible existence of the created."[89] This definition summarizes Ibn Taymiyyah's belief that the Avicennian concept of *wājib al-wujūd*, and the Mutazilite concept of *ta'tīl*, lie at the basis of the philosophy of the mystical Sufis. He sees a close connection between the philosophers' description of God, on the one hand, and that of the Sufis, on the other. As Michel (1983:11) explains, Ibn Taymiyyah

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[88]For his criticisms of *wahdat al-wujūd*, see Ibn Taymiyyah's essay entitled "Ibtâl Wahdati-l-Wujûd" in *Majmû'at al-Rasâ'il wa-l-Masâ'il*, vol.1, pp.61-120.
[89]This statement is from the *Ibtâl* (p.66): *al-hulûl wa-l-ittihâd wa mâ yuqâribu dâlika ka-l-qawl bi-wahdati-l-wujûd ka-lladîna yaqûlûna inna-l-wujûd wâhid fa-l-wujûdu-l-wâjib li-l-khâliq huwa-l-wujûdu-l-mumkin li-l-makhlûq.* Ibn Taymiyyah associates this general statement with the well-known mystics such as Ibn 'Arabî, al-Sadr al-Rûmî al-Qûnawî, Ibn Sab'în, Ibn al-Fârid (d. 633/1235-6), al-Tilimsânî and al-Balyânî.

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knows that the philosophers view God as the "First Principle from which all existence flows whose only activity is eternal self-contemplation...." From this belief, he associates the concept of the One Absolute Reality devoid of all positive attributes with the philosophical mysticism as professed by the Sufis. In particular, he sees a close relationship between Ibn Sīnā's definition of God and Ibn 'Arabī's. Ibn Taymiyyah draws this conclusion from Ibn 'Arabī's conception of God as the absolute existence. On this point, Hallaq (1993:xxii) states that in following Ibn Sīnā, Ibn 'Arabī conceives God as the "absolute existence (al-wujūd al-mutlaq)...[which is] existence in itself, unconditioned and unaffected by anything (lā bi-shart shay')." From this concept of an Absolute Being devoid of attributes, Ibn 'Arabī develops a metaphysical system in which the "Perfect Man" becomes a mirror of the Divine Names, which are for him distinct from the Absolute Being yet flowing out of it.[90] Likewise, for Ibn 'Arabī, all creation, including man, is distinct from the Absolute Being yet flowing out of it. For Ibn Taymiyyah, who

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[90]The concept of the "Perfect Man" is a common Sufi notion which Ibn 'Arabī incorporates into his philosophical mysticism. For the Sufis, the Prophet is the model of the Perfect Man, who "...is necessary to God as the medium through which He is known and manifested" (Schimmel, 1975:272). In relation to the Divine Names, the Perfect Man "...is he who has realized in himself all the possibilities of being... (ibid:273). As for Ibn 'Arabī's concept of the Divine Names, Chittick (1989:25) explains that he views them as "a kind of barzakh between Oneness and manyness. There is but a single Being, yet the names represent a multiplicity of the faces that Being assumes in relation to the created things. The Essence Itself, or Being considered without the names, is what Ibn al-'Arabī sometimes calls the Unity of the One (ahadiyyat al-ahad) in contrast to Being considered as possessor of the names, which is the Unity of Manyness (ahadiyyat al-kathra). God as such, taking both perspectives into account, is the 'One/Many' (al-wāhid al-kathīr)."

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believes in God's complete distinction from creation, such a philosophical mysticism cannot be tolerated. He could only view it as deviating from the *salafī* concept of God's nature based on *bi-lā kayf*.

The belief in the distinction between the Creator and the created (*al-tamyīz bayna-l-khāliq wa-l-makhlūq*), as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, is the ultimate truth according to Ibn Taymiyyah. Also, the interrelation between God's essence, names and attributes, forming a holistic or "organic" oneness as opposed to the philosophers' mathematical oneness, is an equally vital aspect of that truth.[91] Thus any belief based on a denial of God's distinction from creation, and on a denial of His attributes in the manner of *ta'tīl*, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, is related to a belief in the eternity of the universe through emanation from God. Ibn Taymiyyah's refutation of any form of unity of being is based on the fact that the holders of such beliefs do not affirm "to the Creator an existence dissimilar to the existence of the creature" (Michel, 1983:3). For Ibn Taymiyyah, maintaining this "dissimilar" nature of God means that a Muslim must maintain His uniqueness without demeaning Him through the concepts of *wahdat al-wujūd, ittihād* or *hulūl*. But this is exactly what Ibn 'Arabī is doing when he professes that God is both the Real (*al-haqq*) and the creation (*al-khalq*).[92] In

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[91]For the explanation of my use of the term "organic, see above, Introduction, p.1 n1.

[92]Fakhry (1983:252) says the following about Ibn 'Arabī's conception of the Real and the creation: "The two, however—the one and the many, the first and the last, the eternal and the temporal, the necessary and the contingent—are essentially one and the same reality."

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the end, of course, Ibn Taymiyyah supports his position concerning God's difference from creation by relying on the tradition of this belief amongst the *salaf*. And it is this belief which is passed on through the *Ahl al-Hadīt*, who are Ibn Taymiyyah's primary affililiation and sources of justification.

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Chapter 4: Preliminary Comments to the Translation

The next four chapters constitute the annotated translation of Ibn Taymiyyah's *Risālat al-'Ubūdiyyah*. As mentioned in my Introduction, the essay is considered an exegesis of Sura al-Baqarah 2:21. In this connection, Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī (1975:43) refers to *al-'Ubūdiyyah* as a "principle statement concerning the discourse on this verse and a most significant statement on predestination." The use of verse 2:21 as the basis of Ibn Taymiyyah's discourse on worship is very fitting. It is considered by Sunni exegetes to be an important statement indicating God's Oneness, the creation of all things out of nothingness, and the obligation of people to worship only the one true God.[1] As al-Kisā'ī (d. 189/804) points out, this verse is the only one in the Quran in which the phrase "*yā ayyuhā-l-nās*" is followed by the command "*u'budū rabbakum*."[2] Ibn 'Atiyyah (1413/1993:v.1, p.105) points out the significance of this wording when he states that this verse calls on people to "single out their Lord" (*wahhidūhu*) and to "specify Him for worship" (*khassūhu bi-l-'ibādah*). He goes on to say that the use of *rabbakum* refers to God's attribute as "Creator," which the pagan Arabs confirmed, but they then did not respond to Him with exclusive worship. This particular theme is used by Ibn Taymiyyah in *al-'Ubūdiyyah* (Chapter 5, section 12) to condemn those who follow innovations (*bida'*). Ibn

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[1]These are the main issues referred to in the standard Sunni exegeses of this verse; see Ibn Kaṯīr (1402/1981:v.1, pp.38-40).

[2]The passage from al-Kisā'ī is taken from Wansbrough (1977:213).

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'Atiyyah continues by saying that verse 2:21 is a call to the "natural disposition" (*fitrah*) of humans, for by worshipping God they will stay on the *fitrah* and become pious (*muttaqīn*).[3] A further significance of this verse for *salafi* exegetes such as Ibn Taymiyyah is that it is preceded by a description of believers, disbelievers and hypocrites in the first twenty verses of al-Baqarah. Thus Ibn Taymiyyah, with his penchant for classifying all groups and individuals, has a starting point from revelation for his division of humanity into a hierarchy based on the issue of worship.[4]

In preparing this translation of *Risālat al-'Ubūdiyyah*, I chose to follow the text of a published edition from al-Matba'at al-Salafiyyah (Cairo, 1387/1967). This will be referred to as Edition 1 in the footnotes to the translation. There are four other published editions of the text, which I used in comparison with the Salafiyyah edition. Listed chronologically according to publication date, they are: Edition 2: "Risālat al-'Ubūdiyyah fī Tafsīr Qawlihi Ta'ālā yā Ayyuhā-l-Nās U'budū Rabbakum" in *Majmū' Rasā'il* (1323/1905) ed. by al-Sayyid Muhammad Badr al-Dīn Abū Firās al-Na'sānī al-Halabī. Cairo: al-Matba'at al-Husayniyyat al-Misriyyah, pp.2-44. Edition 3: *al-'Ubūdiyyah* (1367/1947) ed. by Muhammad Hāmid al-Fiqī. Cairo: Matba'at al-Sunnati-l-Muhammadiyyah. Edition 4: "al-'Ubūdiyyah fī-l-Islām" in *Majmū' Fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah*,

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[3]For Ibn Taymiyyah's views on the *fitrah*, see Hallaq (1991) "Ibn Taymiyyah on the Existence of God," *Acta Orientalia*, v.52, pp.49-69.
[4]For a full discussion of this three-way division of humanity in relation to the historical development of the concept of faith, see Izutsu (1965). He discusses Ibn Taymiyyah's theory of faith in detail on pp.50-56.

37 vols. (1386/1966) Riyâd: Matba'at al-Hukûmah (vol. 10, Kitâb 'Ilmi-l-Sulûk, pp.149-237). Edition 5: *al-'Ubûdiyyah.* (1399/1979) introduction by 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Bânî. Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islâmî.

The basis for choosing the Salafiyyah edition was somewhat arbitrary, for in the process of comparing the texts, I found only minor differences in wording. Without having access to any manuscripts, which I shall discuss shortly, the main criteria for following the Salafiyyah edition was actually the lack of editorial features. Since none of the published texts are critical editions, I preferred not to be influenced by the punctuation and paragraph divisions found in the other edited versions. The Salafiyyah edition has few paragraph breaks and only very sporadic punctuation marks. However, the Quran verses are all identified as to Sura and verse number, which was an appreciable help. Also, again without knowing the exact reason because of the unavailability of manuscripts, the Quran verses and the hadiths in the Salafiyyah edition are in many cases more completely written out than in the other versions. Thus, lacking any solid criteria for chosing a base text for the translation, I preferred working with the Salafiyyah edition.

As I already mentioned, there are some minor differences in the wording of the texts. For the most part, these differences have been noted in the footnotes. I do, however, overlook what I feel are insignificant differences in relation to a translation made from published versions of a text, for I am not preparing a critical edition from manuscripts. These overlooked variations include the phrases

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in glorification of God and the honorifics mentioned after the Prophet and the Companions. For example, I do not indicate if a "*subhāna-llāh*" or a "*sallā-llāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*" is added or missing from the base text in comparison with the other texts. Also, I do not indicate variations in the use of the plural of "*rasūl*" when another text has the singular, or vice versa, for I believe these differences do not aid in understanding the sentence. Also, I overlook some instances in which there is a variation in the use of the perfect and imperfect tenses, or a variation in the use of a verb and a verbal-noun. Again, the reason being that there is no significant change in the meaning of the sentence.

When indicating the textual differences in the footnotes, my primary intention simply is to let the reader know that there is a difference from the Salafiyyah edition. Then, if the different wording alters the meaning of the sentence, I give an alternative translation. Occasionally, I choose either to insert an additional word or phrase found in a comparison text or to replace the version in the Salafiyyah edition for that cf the comparison text. In either case, the insertion or replacement will be between brackets, and an explanation for the alternative version will be given. Also, if I have inserted an implied word or phrase in order to make the translation more explicit, I have placed this insertion between parentheses. One last point in reference to the variations in the published editions needs to be made concerning the text edited by Muhammad Hâmid al-Fiqî. His edition contains numerous, and sometimes lengthy, insertions that do not appear in any of the

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other published editions. Although I make reference to these insertions, I often do not translate or comment on them because they do not specifically enhance the understanding of the text in any significant way.

As for any extant manuscripts, the only reference I have come across is from al-Fiqī's edition. At the end of the text he states that the manuscript he used was copied by Muhammad ibn 'Abd-Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Muhsin in the year 947/1540, thus 212 years after the death of Ibn Taymiyyah. Although Brockelmann (*Supp.*, II:120) lists *al-'Ubūdiyyah*, his reference is to the earliest published edition which is found in the *Majmū' Rasā'il* edited by al-Sayyid Muhammad al-Halabī (my Edition 2). Unfortunately, al-Halabī does not mention the source he used for the publication of the text. Two other brief statements attributing *al-'Ubūdiyyah* to Ibn Taymiyyah are found in Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī's *al-'Uqūd al-Durriyyah* (1975:43) and Ibn al-Qayyim's *Asmā' Mu'allafāt Ibn Taymiyyah* (1372/1953:10). Neither of these give any details about the work. Thus we have virtually no information about the historical circumstances surrounding the text, for there is also nothing in the text itself to indicate a possible date for *al-'Ubūdiyyah* or for whom it was written. My guess at this point, as I mentioned above in Chapter 3, Part B, is that it most likely was written during his years in Egypt or very shortly thereafter.

The division of the translation into four parts is based on the layout of the work itself and on a need to break up the text into manageable sections. All of the published editions have the text

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divided into two sections, an introductory section (about one third of the entire text) and a more detailed discussion separated from the introduction with the title *Fasl* (chapter). I assume that this is Ibn Taymiyyah's original layout. I have further divided each of the four parts of the translation into shorter subsections that encompass one particular theme or argument. Each subsection will be introduced by a short commentary. The commentary and following translation will be numbered 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, etc.

Part 1 is divided into 17 subsections, which is by far the longest of the four parts. I consider this Ibn Taymiyyah's introductory chapter because all of the topics touched on in this part are dealt with in more detail in the remaining three parts, that is, Ibn Taymiyyah's second chapter. The purpose of Part 1 is to bring out all of the issues that Ibn Taymiyyah considers vital for a proper understanding of worship. In the process of explaining worship in light of the Quran and the Sunnah according to orthodox interpretation,[5] Ibn Taymiyyah mentions particular groups and individuals who, in his opinion, have either followed orthodoxy or have erred. However, polemical refutation is not the main purpose of al-*'Ubūdiyyah*. In this text the refutation of particular groups falls to the background (but definitely not out of sight), and a more positive elaboration of beliefs comes to the forefront. It would be best to consider al-*'Ubūdiyyah* as a balance between an explanation of *salafī* beliefs and polemical attacks. The key factor which holds

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[5]For the meaning and usage of the term "orthodox," see Chapter 2.

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the work together is Ibn Taymiyyah's concern to help each worshipper actualize what he sees as the beliefs and practices of the Prophet and his Companions. However, for him, this invariably includes the notion of defending Islam from deviant ideas, even though a point by point refutation of particular groups or individuals is precluded from this text. Thus, polemics notwithstanding, my approach in commenting on this work will focus on how Ibn Taymiyyah uses the Quran, the hadiths, and the Arabic language to development arguments in support of his interpretation of Sunni Islam.

Before presenting the translation, it is appropriate here to discuss some of the basic meanings related to the concepts of worship (*ubudiyyah*), worshipping (*ibadah*) and worshipper (*abd*), and to explain the English terms I have used in the translation. According to the *Lisan al-'Arab*,[6] an *abd* refers to any human being, whether freeman or slave, for everyone is a servant who is owned by his Creator. As we shall see, this is a basic definition that Ibn Taymiyyah not only accepts but uses as the basis for his hierarchy of worshippers. The term has a more specific meaning, however, in the sense of a person owned by someone else (*mamluk*).[7] But Ibn Manzur relates a hadith from Abu Hurayrah stating that the Prophet said not to call your slave *abd*. Thus, the meaning derived from this

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[6]Ibn Manzur has a very lengthy discussion of the words derived from the root "*bd*." I shall summarize only the main points related to the concept of worship; see *Lisan al-'Arab*, S.V. "*bd*."

[7]This is the only context in which the term "*abd*" is discussed by Brunschvig (1960: S.V. "'abd") in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam.*

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hadith is that *'abd*, with the plurals *'abīd* or *'ibād*,[8] is to be used only in reference to serving and worshipping God. Thus I shall translate *'abd* as worshipper and indicate under the appropriate circumstances when I translate it as slave. As for the term *'ubūdiyyah*, Ibn Manzūr says that the origin of its meaning is subjection and self-abasement (*tadallul*). I consider this as a state or condition of a person and shall translate it as "worship" or a "state of worship." As for *'ibādah*, Ibn Manzūr says that its basic meaning is obedience. Thus I shall translate it as "worshipping" or "acts of worship." With this in mind, I present the translation of *al-'Ubūdiyyah*.

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[8] In the context of worshipping God, the term *'abd* has two plurals, *'ibād* and *'abīd*. When the term is used in the context of obeying false deities, other forms of the plural are used. Ibn Manzūr refers to Sura al-Mā'idah 5:60, which reads *wa man 'abada-l-tāghūta*, in order to present various plurals by offering alternative readings such as: *'abuda-l-tāghūti*, *'ābidū-l-tāghūti*, *'ubuda-l-tāghūti*, and *'ubbāda-l-tāghūti*. Ibn Taymiyyah seems to hold strictly to this classification of plurals.

The Definition of Worship

1A   In this opening section, Ibn Taymiyyah presents us with what will be the framework and content of his essay on worship. The questions posed to Ibn Taymiyyah concerning the issue of worship directs our attention to the totality of the term and to whether or not there is any state or condition qualitatively superior to it. Ibn Taymiyyah's opening response explains that worship is the name for every saying and action that God loves and approves of, that is, the term includes the appropriate guidelines for evaluating every external and internal phenomenon of human experience.

1B   In the Name of Allah, the Infinitely Merciful, the Mercy-Giving[1]

The Sheikh, Imam, Scholar, and Guide-post, Abû-l-'Abbâs Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halîm ibn Taymiyyah, a reviver of the Sunnah and a destroyer of innovation (*bid'ah*), may Allah be pleased with him and make him

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[1]The usual translations of the *basmalah* include "the Beneficent, the Merciful" (Pickthall, no date), "the Gracious, the Merciful" (Yusuf Ali, 1410/1989), and "the Compassionate, the Merciful" (Arberry, 1955). Burrell and Daher (1992:52) have chosen "the Infinitely Good, the Merciful" in an attempt to reflect the specific nature of the name al-Rahmân in its restricted use for God just as Allah is used only for God. Also, al-Rahmân refers to God's mercy before creation and al-Rahîm refers to His mercy directed at creation. Thus I have chosen "the Infinitely Merciful" as the translation of al-Rahmân and "the Mercy-Giving" for al-Rahîm, which will be used throughout the text.

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contented,[2] was asked the following about this verse of Allah, the Mighty and Sublime:

O people! worship your Lord...[3] [al-Baqarah 2:21]

What is worshipping, and what are its branches? Is the whole of the religion (dîn) included in it, or not? What is the reality of worship? Is it the highest attainable station (a'lâ maqâmât) in this world and in the hereafter, or is there any station above it? Please expound on this.

Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah be pleased with him, replied: All praise is for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds! "Worshipping" is a term that comprises every apparent and hidden saying and deed which Allah loves and approves of such as: prayer (salâh); legislated almsgiving (zakâh); fasting (siyâm); pilgrimage (hajj); truthfulness in speech; trustworthiness; honoring parents; maintaining kind relationships with relatives; fulfilling pledges; enjoining good and forbidding evil; striving against disbelievers and hypocrites; beneficence to neighbors, orphans, the poor, wayfarers, and slaves and animals;[4] supplication; remembrance (dikr) of Allah; recitation of the Quran; and all similar acts.[5] Likewise, the following actions are acts

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[2]The texts have various honorifics describing Ibn Taymiyyah, which need not be listed here.

[3]For the purpose of this translation, the use of three dots (...) in Quran quotes will indicate that an incomplete verse is being quoted or that whole verses are omitted from lengthier passages. The Salafiyyah edition does not always indicate that parts of verses are quoted. However, some lengthy Quran quotes are broken up with the phrases ilâ qawlihi (to His verse) and ilâ-l-âyah (to the verse) or with the phrase ilâ âkhiri-l-sûrah (to the end of the Sura).

[4]Literally: wa-l-mamlûk min al-âdamiyyîn wa-l-bahâ'im (human and animal possessions). Editions 3 and 4 insert wa ibn al-sabîl before "slaves and animals."

[5]The actions mentioned in this sentence generally refer to the outer acts of worship while the points mentioned in the following sentence refer to inner

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of worship for Allah: love of Allah and His Messenger, apprehension before Allah, turning repentantly to Him, sincerity of religion for Him, patience with His judgement, thankfulness for His bounties, contentment with His decree, reliance on Him, hope for His mercy, fear of His punishment and all similar states. In fact, worshipping Allah is for Him the most beloved and pleasing purpose for which He created the creation as He, the Exalted One, says:

> And I created jinn and humankind only that they should worship Me (alone).[6] [al-Ḏāriyāt 51:56]

A Description of Worshippers

2A   Having introduced the concept that worship governs all phases of a Muslim's life, from the outer (zāhir) to the inner (bāṭin), Ibn Taymiyyah presents examples from the Quran to show that the prophets, angels and pious people are described as worshippers. For Ibn Taymiyyah, these verses indicate that worship in its linguistic and Quranic usage necessarily leads to the concept that the whole religion, and therefore the only acceptable explanation of a Muslim's relation to God, is included in the term worship.

states of worship. Ibn Taymiyyah ultimately does not see a distinction between acts of worship and states of worship (al-zāhir wa-l-bāṭin), for both aspects are inherently united in his concept of the perfection of worship.

[6]The use of this verse in his opening statements indicates that Ibn Taymiyyah views worship as the ultimate purpose of creation. There are two main points that Sunni exegetes raise concerning this verse. The first is that God created humans and jinn with the purpose of ordering them to worship Him, not out of any need that He has for them. The second point is that the test of their worship is whether they do it willingly or unwillingly. Within this framework, Ibn Taymiyyah is implying that people are not coerced by God to worship only Him. See Ibn Kaṯîr (1402/1981:v.3, p.387).

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Keeping in mind his polemics against various groups, Ibn Taymiyyah is building arguments by which he will show that the discourse of the speculative theologians, philosophers, and Sufi mystics concerning the nature of God and the universe is not in accord with the manner of speech of the Righteous Predecessors.

2B   He (Allah) sent all the messengers with this beloved purpose as Noah said to his people:

...Worship Allah! The only deity for you is He... [al-A'râf 7:59]

Similarly Hûd, Sâlih, Shu'ayb and other prophets said this to their people as He, the Exalted One, says:

> We have certainly sent to every nation a messenger (with this command): Worship Allah and avoid all false deities. Then Allah guided some of them, while others deserved to be led astray... [al-Nahl 16:36]

> We did not send any messenger before you (Muhammad) but that We revealed to him: There is no deity except I, therefore worship Me alone. [al-Anbiyâ' 21:25]

> This (religion of Islam) is certainly your religion, a single religion, and I am your Lord, therefore worship Me alone. [al-Anbiyâ' 21:92]

> O messengers! eat good, allowable foods and do righteous deeds, for I am well-acquainted with all that you do; and this (religion of Islam) is certainly your religion, a single religion, and I am your Lord, therefore act piously out of fear of Me. [al-Mu'minûn 23:51-52]

Allah has made worshipping imperative on His messengers until death, as He says:

Worship your Lord until the certainty (of death) comes to you.[7] [al-Hijr 15:99]

By this special characteristic of worshipping, Allah describes His angels and prophets as He says:

Everything in the heavens and on earth belongs to Him. Those (angels) who are in His very presence are not too proud to worship Him and do not weary (of worship). They exalt Him night and day, never slackening to do so. [al-Anbiyâ' 21:19-20]

Surely those (angels) who are in the very presence of your Lord are not too proud to worship Him; they celebrate His praises, and prostrate before Him. [al-A'râf 7:206]

Allah disgraces those who are disdainful of worshipping as in His verse:

...Those who are too proud to worship Me will surely enter hell in humiliation. [Ghâfir (al-Mu'min) 40:60]

Allah also describes the best of His creation with worship for Him as He, the Exalted One, says:

The pious worshippers shall surely drink from a cup containing a mixture from kâfûr, a fountain from which the worshippers of Allah will drink, making it flow in unstinted abundance. [al-Insân (al-Dahr) 76:5-6]

The worshippers of the Infinitely Merciful are those who walk on earth with reverence, and when ignorant ones address them, they say: Peace! [al-Furqân 25:63]

When Satan said:

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[7] Ibn Taymiyyah is giving the standard Sunni interpretation of the word *yaqîn* in this verse as meaning death (*mawt*). He discusses this point in more detail below (section 11) in his refutation of some Sufi interpretations of *yaqîn* as meaning the attainment of certainty in knowing the truth and thus also obtaining a waiver from performing religious obligations. For a further review of the Sunni exegesis of this verse based on other verses and hadiths, see Ibn Kaṯîr (1402/1981:v.2, p.320).

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...O my Lord! because You sent me astray, I will surely make (disobedience) appear pleasing to them on earth,[8] and I will lead them all astray—except Your purified worshippers among them [al-Hijr 15:39-40]

Allah replied:

You do not have any power over My worshippers, only over the erring ones who follow you. [al-Hijr 15:42]

Also, in describing the angels with worship He says:

They say: The Infinitely Merciful has taken a son (from the angels). Glorified be He! They are only honored worshippers.[9] They do not speak prior to Him, and they act by His command. He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot intercede except for him with whom He is pleased; and they tremble apprehensively in awe of Him. [al-Anbiyâ' 21:26-28]

They say: The Infinitely Merciful has taken a son. Indeed you have brought forth a terrible thing by which the heavens are almost torn apart and the earth is split asunder and the mountains fall in utter ruin—that you ascribe a son to the Infinitely Merciful. But it is not suitable for the Infinitely Merciful that He takes a son. Everything in the heavens and on earth comes to the Infinitely Merciful as a humbled servant. He has taken them all into account and has numbered them accurately. Each of them will come alone to Him on the Day of Resurrection. [Maryam 19:88-95]

Concerning the Messiah, about whom there are claims of divinity and the sonship[10] of the deity, Allah says:

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[8]For the translation of this part of the verse, see: Penrice (1987:64).
[9]The Sunni interpretation of the verse is that the attribute of worship ascribed to the angels negates the attribute of sonship, see Ibn Katîr (1402/1981:v.2, p.505). In his more detailed discussion below (section 10) directed at the Christians, Ibn Taymiyyah indicates that their claims of loving God, and hence worshipping Him, are also negated when God says that He will punish them. The underlying premises are that sonship is incompatible with deity and that the lovers and worshippers of God will receive His mercy and forgiveness.
[10]Editions 2 and 4 have *al-nubuwwah* instead of *al-bunuwwah*.

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He (Jesus) was only a worshipper to whom We granted Our favor (of prophethood), and We made him a paradigm for the Children of Israel. [al-Zukhruf 43:59]

For this reason the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said in an authentic hadith: "Do not flatter me as the Christians have flattered Jesus, the son of Mary, for I am only a worshipper (*'abd*); therefore say: the worshipper of Allah and His Messenger (*'abd-allâh wa rasûluh*)."[11] Allah also describes him being in a state of worship during his most perfect state; He says concerning the Night Journey:

> Glorified be the One who took His worshipper (Muhammad) for a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque (of Mecca) to the Farthest Mosque (in Jerusalem), the vicinity of which We have blessed so that We might show him Our signs. He (Allah) is surely the All-Hearer, the All-Seer. [al-Isrâ' (Banî Isrâ'îl) 17:1]

He says concerning the conveyance of revelation:

> Thus He (Allah) revealed to His servant (Gabriel) what he then revealed (to Muhammad).[12] [al-Najm 53:10]

Also, concerning the act of inviting to Islam, He says:

> When the worshipper of Allah (Muhammad) stood up, calling to Him, they (the jinn) crowded around him.[13] [al-Jinn 72:19]

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[11]Bukhârî, anbiyâ' 48; Dârimî, raqâq 68; Ahmad, I:23, 24, 47, 55, 60. All references to the hadiths, unless otherwise noted, are taken directly from Wensinck's *Concordance* (1988). Although I cross-referenced each hadith by searching various key words, I cannot guarantee that every listing is given.

[12]The referents of the pronouns are not specified. This interpretation is taken from *Jalâlayn*:697. An equally acceptable interpretation could be: Thus he (Gabriel) revealed to His worshiper (Muhammad) what He (Allah) had revealed, see: Shawkânî:700 and Ibn Katîr (1402/1981:v.3, p.398).

[13]Two interpretations are given for this verse: 1) some jinn gathered around Muhammad to hear the recitation, 2) some jinn and people jostled the Prophet to try to stop him; see Shawkânî:772 and Ibn Katîr (1402/1981:v.3, p.559).

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Regarding the challenge to those who doubt the mission of the Prophet,

He says:

> If you are in doubt concerning what We have sent down to Our worshipper (Muhammad), then produce a Sura like this one... [al-Baqarah 2:23]

The Component Parts of Worship

3A   This sampling of verses is used by Ibn Taymiyyah to indicate that the preferred status of human beings, in fact of all creation, before God is one of a worshipper. His task in this next section is to define the key terms that he considers essential to understand the concept of worship as presented in the Quran and authentic hadiths. His purpose is to establish the boundaries in which his discussion of religion and worship will take place. By referring to the well-known hadith of Gabriel, he identifies perfect devotion (*ihsān*) as the highest level in the stages of worshipping God.[14] This is preceded by the lower stage of faith (*īmān*), which is itself preceded by the lowest, or entry level, stage of submission (*islām*). Within this context, Ibn Taymiyyah sees religion (*dīn*) as a comprehensive term that includes the three levels of perfect devotion, faith and submission as well as subjection (*khudū*) and

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[14]Ibn Manzūr (*Lisān al-'Arab*, S.V. "*hsn*") defines the term *ihsān* within the context of this hadith as *ikhlās*. He then states that "*ihsān* is a condition for the soundness of both faith and submission because one can express a statement and perform an action without sincerity (*ikhlās*.). Thus he is not a perfect devotee even though his faith is correct." On the issue of *ihsān* as a theological concept in relation to *islām* and *īmān*, Izutsu (1965:58-59) states that *ihsān* was never "elaborated theoretically by the theologians."

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humility (*dull*). By referring to the interrelated meanings of *ihsān*, *īmān*, *islām*, *khudū'* and *dull* Ibn Taymiyyah is using these terms within the context of his linguistic theory (see above Chapter 2, Part C) to build his argument that religion and worship as defined in the Quran and the Sunnah represent the most perfect experience in a Muslim's relation to God.

3B   Therefore, the whole of the religion is included in worshipping. It has been confirmed in the *Sahīh*[15] that when Gabriel came to the Prophet in the guise of a bedouin to ask him about *islām*, *īmān* and *ihsān*,[16] he said: "Islam is that you testify that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and that you establish prayer, pay the legislated almsgiving, observe the fast of Ramadan, and perform the pilgrimage to the Kaaba if you are able to bear the journey." Gabriel then said: "What is faith (*īmān*)?" He replied: "That you believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the resurrection after death, and that you believe in determinism (*qadar*), for good and evil." Gabriel then said: "What is perfect devotion (*ihsān*)?" He replied: "That you worship Allah as if you see Him, for though you do not see Him, He surely sees you." He (Muhammad) remarked at the end of this hadith: "This was Gabriel. He came to instruct you about your religion." Thus, he made all of this part of the religion.

The word "religion" necessarily includes (*yatadammanu*) the meaning of subjection and humility. It is said: "I subjugated him (*dintuhu*)

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[15]Bukhārī, īmān 37, tafsīr sūrah 31:bāb 2.
[16]Edition 4 has only *islām*.

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and he became subjugated (*fa-dâna*)," that is, I humbled him (*adlaltuhu*) and he became humble (*dalla*); and it is said: "We obey Allah (*nadînu-llâh*) and submit to Him (*nadînu li-llâh*)," that is, we worship Allah, we obey Him and subject ourselves to Him. Therefore, the religion of Allah is worshipping Him, obeying Him and subjecting oneself to Him.[17]

Love Completes the Concept of Worship

4A   Up to this point, Ibn Taymiyyah has defined religion as a process of spiritual development progressing through the three stages of submission, faith and perfect devotion. He then incorporates into these stages the concepts of subjugation, obedience and humility. Thus, religion, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, is synonymous with worshipping, which he also explains as having the root meaning of humility. However, this description of religion and worship is still incomplete, for it is missing the aspect of love (*mahabbah*). Without a foundation of love, says Ibn Taymiyyah, the combination of subjugation, obedience and humility does not reach the status of worship, and thus a Muslim's religion is defective. He

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[17]The translation of the term *dîn* and its derivatives in this paragraph depends on the various levels of meaning to which Ibn Taymiyyah is referring. In a general sense, *al-dîn* means *al-islâm*, that is, the concept of religion as a way of life. Within the context of his definition of worship, Ibn Taymiyyah is using the term *dîn* in its well-known meaning of *dull* and *ta'abbud*; see Ibn Manzûr's *Lisân al-'Arab*: S.V. "*dyn*." The specific understanding of his explanation of religion revolves around his use of three basic terms to express the foundation of worship: *dîn*, in the sense of subjugation and obedience, *dull*, in the sense of humility, and *khudû'*, in the sense of subjection. For the definitions of these terms, see also Lane's *Lexicon*, S.V. "*khd'*", "*dyn*" and "*dll*."

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sees the fulfillment of worship in the realization that God, in His essence, must be the object of one's love.[18]

But love is not a singular concept for Ibn Taymiyyah, who discusses it in terms of what he sees as the five basic levels of love. In explaining his theory for these levels of love, he borrows a schematic view of love found in the writings on profane love. However, Ibn Taymiyyah does not appear to have ever developed his own theory of love beyond the general terms used in this genre.[19] The important point of this section is that he makes love an essential aspect of worship. However, another point which he brings up, and which he will develop in later sections, is that love can also be corrupt, for it is not purely good in-itself. He thus qualifies this essential relationship between love and worship by emphasizing that love alone without obedience and submission is not worship.

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[18]Bell (1979:48) points out that the erroneous concept that Ibn Taymiyyah only emphasized the love of the law and not the love of God has been perpetuated by Laoust, Anawati and Gardet. As will become apparent in this text, Ibn Taymiyyah clearly stresses the utter necessity of loving God for Himself (li-ḏātihi).

[19]See Giffen (1971:83-96) for the terms used in the works on profane love. Ibn Taymiyyah presents a slightly more detailed discussion concerning various concepts of love in relation to states of psychological and emotional dependence in Chapter 6, sections 1 and 4. In contrast to Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim (1402/1982) wrote extensively on the terms and concepts related to love theory in his book *Rawdat al-Muhibbīn*. On pp.23-55, Ibn al-Qayyim discusses over sixty terms related to the category of love. For a detailed discussion of Ibn Taymiyyah's beliefs on love theory within the context of the *Hanbalī* thinking on this topic, see Bell (1979:54-89).

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4B   Worshipping in its original meaning is also humility. It is said that a beaten path (*tarîq mu'abbad*) is the path that has been trodden by the trampling of feet. But the worshipping that is commanded necessarily includes the meaning of humility and love (*hubb*), for it necessarily includes extreme humility before Allah with extreme love for Him. The final level of love is enslavement by love (*tatayyum*),[20] and its initial level is attachment (*'alâqah*) because the heart is first attached to the beloved. (After attachment comes) deep affection (*sabâbah*) because the inclination of the heart is toward the beloved. This is followed by ardent desire (*gharâm*), which is an unavoidable love in the heart. Then comes passionate love (*'ishq*), and finally enslavement by love.[21] Thus it is said that "the loving servant of Allah" (*taym-allâh*) means "the worshipper of Allah" (*'abd-allâh*) because the enslaved lover is the one who yields completely to his beloved.

One who submits to a person with hatred is not worshipping him. Also, if he were to love something without submitting to it, he would not be a worshipper of it; this is like a man who loves his son and friend. For this reason neither love nor submission alone are sufficient in worshipping Allah. Rather, it is obligatory that Allah is more beloved for a worshipper than everything else and that He is greater for him than all things. Furthermore, nothing deserves love and complete humility[22]

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[20]Lane defines *taym* as enslavement because of love and as a vehement love that deprives one of reason; see his *Lexicon*, S.V. "tym."

[21]This same schematic view of love is found in *al-Tuhfat al-'Irâqiyyah fî-l-A'mâl al-Qalbiyyah* (pp.70-71). In *al-'Ubûdiyyah*, the term *'ishq* is discussed in particular in Chapter 6, section 4. Ibn Taymiyyah also has a lengthy discussion of *'ishq* in *Amrâd al-Qulûb wa Shifâ'uhâ* (pp.131-132).

[22]Edition 5 has *al-khudû'* instead of *al-dull*.

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except Allah. For if one's love for something is for other than the sake of Allah, then his love is corrupt; and if one's reverence of something is without the command of Allah, then his reverence is false. The Exalted One says:

> Say: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your kindred, the wealth that you have gained, the commerce in which you fear a decline, and the dwellings in which you delight are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger, and striving hard in His Cause, then wait until Allah brings about His command (of punishment). Allah does not guide rebellious people. [al-Tawbah 9:24]

The Classification of Emotions

5A   Ibn Taymiyyah has described the basic spiritual states related to worship in terms of the three qualitatively ascending levels through which a worshipper progresses. The passage from *islām* to *ihsān* requires the attributes of subjugation, humility, obedience and love. But these attributes are not at a worshipper's disposal to use as he sees fit. In this section, Ibn Taymiyyah explains the manner in which these terms relate to one another and how they are to be directed toward God and His Messenger. He also introduces other emotional states of a worshipper such as contentment (*ridā'*) and fear (*khawf*), which are related to the primary attributes already mentioned. He divides the terms into two categories: those states which are for God alone, such as the worship of a thing for itself, reliance, sufficiency and fear, and those which are for God and His Messenger together, such as love, obedience, and contentment with judgements. In this section, Ibn Taymiyyah begins to clarify

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the difference between love and worship, the latter being exclusively for God.

5B   Thus, generic love (*jins al-mahabbah*)[23] is for Allah and His Messenger. Likewise, obedience is for Allah and His Messenger, and the act of pleasing (*irdâ'*) another is for Allah and His Messenger:

> ...But it is more fitting that they please Allah and His Messenger, if they are believers. [al-Tawbah 9:62]

Also, the distribution of provisions (*îtâ'*) is for Allah and His Messenger:

> If only they had been content with what Allah and His Messenger gave them... [al-Tawbah 9:59]

However, worshipping and what is related to it, such as reliance and fear, must be only for Allah as the Exalted One says:

> Say: O People of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)! come to a proper agreement between us and you—that we worship none but Allah, and that we associate nothing in worship with Him, and that none of us shall take others as lords besides Allah. Then if they turn away, say: Bear witness that we are Muslims. [Al 'Imrân 3:64]

> But if only they had been pleased with what Allah and His Messenger gave them and had said: Allah suffices for us; Allah and His Messenger will give us of His bounty; we are surely directing our wishes toward Allah alone. [al-Tawbah 9:59]

Thus the distribution of provisions is the right of Allah and His Messenger as He says:

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[23]This refers to the general feelings of love that someone has for another. In Chapter 6, sections 4 and 5, Ibn Taymiyyah describes the important distinction between love (from the root *hbb*) and intimate friendship (from the root *khll*), which he sees as a qualitatively superior kind of love.

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...Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it, and whatever he forbids you, avoid it; and act piously out of fear of Allah. Allah is certainly severe in punishment. [al-Hashr 59:7]

As for sufficiency, which is being adequate (*kâfî*) for any purpose, it is Allah alone (who suffices) as the Exalted One says:

(The believers are) those to whom people said: Men are surely gathering against you, so fear them. But this increased them in faith and they said: Allah suffices for us, and how perfect a protector He is. [Al 'Imrân 3:173]

O Prophet! Allah suffices for you and for any believers who follow you. [al-Anfâl 8:64]

That is, Allah suffices for you (Muhammad) and He suffices for those [Muslims][24] who follow you. Whoever thinks that the meaning is "the sufficer for you (Muhammad) is Allah and the believers together" is surely making a tremendous error. We have explained this elsewhere.[25] Also, the Exalted One says:

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[24]This insertion is from Edition 3. It explicitly states the intention of Ibn Taymiyyah's exegesis of this verse (see n25).

[25]The only other reference to this verse that I have been able to find is in "Qâ'idah fî-l-Tawassul wa-l-Wasîlah" in *Majmû' Fatâwâ*, vol.1, p.306, which also does not go into details. However, it is clear that in the present context Ibn Taymiyyah is interpreting al-Anfâl 8:64 within the limits of his dogmatic stance concerning the concept of sufficiency, which he categorizes as one of duties that are only for God. Thus he rejects the notion that the believers suffice for Muhammad. A fuller explanation of this stance is given by Ibn al-Qayyim in *Zâd al-Ma'âd*, vol.1, pp.35-36, in which he gives four interpretations of the verse based on the usages of the conjunction *wa* in the phrase *hasbuka-llâhu wa man ittaba'aka*. Three of them, he states, are acceptable: 1) if *wa* links *man* to the *ka* in a genitive construction, 2) if *wa* has the meaning of *ma'a* and *man* is in the accusative case, as in the statement: *hasbuka wa zayd^{an} dirham^{un}*, and 3) if *man* is the subject of a nominal sentence (*mubtada'*) and is predicated by reconstruction (*taqdîr*) with *fa-hasbuhum allâhu*. The fourth possibility is rejected, says Ibn al-Qayyim, because the meaning is pure error: if *man* is in the nominative case and linked to the noun *allâh*. In support of this interpretation, Ibn Kathîr (1402/1981:v.2, p.117) also states that this is the position of Ibn Abî Hâtim, who reports it from the Follower al-Shu'bî (d. 104

Is not Allah sufficient for His worshipper?... [al-Zumar 39:36]

Predestination and the Classification of Humanity

6A   After describing the relationship between religion and worship with the component psychological and emotional aspects, Ibn Taymiyyah shifts his focus to the concept of predestination. His discussion of God's creative will (*mashi'ah*), which is introduced for the first time, forms the background for his classification of human beings. He categorizes human beings in relation to "slavery" and worship as follows: the first division of humanity is comprised of those who know they are slaves and those who are ignorant of this; the second division, stemming from those who know they are slaves, is comprised of those who refuse to worship and those who accept it; and the third division, stemming from those who accept their status of worshipper, is comprised of those who worship with disobedience and those who worship purely. Ibn Taymiyyah uses this simple categorization, which is clearly related to the Quranic division of humanity into believers, disbelievers and hypocrites, to establish archetypal groups that will function as his basic points of reference in determining the "orthodoxy" of various historical and contemporary groups of Muslims.

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or 107/722-3 or 725-6). However, other exegetes accept the interpretation that is rejected by Ibn Taymiyyah. Tabari (1373/1904:v.6, p.48-49) and Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî (no date:v.15, pp.191-192) explain that one can say that the believers are sufficient for Muhammad so long as it is understood that they are a means by which God grants victory to him. This interpretation is also mentioned in *Jalâlayn*:244 and Shawkânî:236.

The concept of predestination, as discussed in Chapter 3, necessitates Ibn Taymiyyah to discuss fate and free will. He begins this discussion by stating that God wills all things and that no one can step outside of His will (mashī'ah). However, he conceives of God's creative will as functioning in conjunction with His legislation. God's all-encompassing creative will, he states, applies to an existential reality (al-haqīqah al-kawniyyah),[26] that is, all existent beings are affected by it. But for Ibn Taymiyyah, this reality does not form the basis on which a Muslim must pattern his life. He explains that disbelievers and hypocrites, who are led astray by Satan, treat the existential reality as the only truth. Thus they derive their beliefs and practices from a distorted view of God's revelation, which, Ibn Taymiyyah insists, includes both an existential reality and legislative decrees.

6B   The clarification of this is that the term slave ('abd) refers to the subjugated one whom Allah subjugates, humbles, controls, and disposes.

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[26]The term haqīqah in a theological and philosophical context has been translated as "truth," "reality" and "essence." A few examples must suffice to show the various uses of this term. In reference to Ibn Taymiyyah's empirical view of particulars in the external world, Hallaq (1993:xxii) states that individuals exist "...in the context of a reality (haqīqah) that is different from other realities." Elsewhere (p.87), concerning Ibn Taymiyyah's discussion of the conditional hypothetical syllogism, Hallaq refers to the essence (haqīqah) of an inference remaining unchanged. Nasr (1996:29) discusses haqīqah in terms of an inner truth that lies at the heart of the Quran, in opposition to its external dimension which is related to Islamic law. Chittick (1989:37) translates haqīqah as reality in reference to Ibn 'Arabī's conception of "...the Divine Essence considered in respect of a particular relationship which It assumes with the creatures." The haqīqah is the descriptive term for this relationship. As for my purposes, I shall translate haqīqah as "reality" unless otherwise noted.

In this respect all created beings are actually slaves of Allah, the pious and the impudent, the believers and the unbelievers, the inhabitants of heaven and the inhabitants of hell, for He is the Lord of them all and their Owner. They cannot escape from His creative will (*mashī'ah*), His determinism,[27] and His perfect words which no man, pious or sinner, can transgress. Whatever He wills is, even though they did not will that; and whatever they will is not, if He has not willed it, as the Exalted One says:

> Do they seek other than the religion of Allah while all that is in the heavens and on earth have submitted to Him, willingly or unwillingly? And to Him all shall be returned. [Al 'Imrân 3:83]

He, glorified be He, is the Lord of the Worlds, their Creator, the Provider of their sustenance, the One bestowing life to them and the One causing them to die, the Controller of their hearts and the Disposer of their affairs. He is the only Lord they have; they have no owner nor creator[28] other than He. (This is true) whether they acknowledge it or deny it, and whether they know it or are ignorant of it. But the faithful believers among them know[29] it and acknowledge it.[30] This is contrary to the one who is ignorant of it or who disavows it while being arrogant towards his Lord. He neither confirms (his status as slave) nor submits to Him, although he knows that Allah is his Lord and his Creator. For cognizing

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[27]Editions 3 and 4 have *qudratihi* instead of *qadarihi*.
[28]Edition 3 inserts *li-kulli shay'in wa mudabbiruhu wa musakhkhiruhu.*
[29]Editions 2, 3 and 4 have *'alimū* instead of *'arafū*.
[30]Edition 3 has *âmanū* instead of *i'tarafū*, and then inserts *wa shakarūhu bi-'ubūdiyyati-l-âlihiyyah raghaban wa rahaban*.

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the truth while arrogantly disdaining to accept it, and even disavowing it,

is a great torment to man as the Exalted One says:[31]

> They disavowed them (Allah's signs) unjustly and arrogantly, though their souls were convinced by them. Then see what was the end of those who acted corruptly. [al-Naml 27:14]

> Those to whom We gave the Scripture (Jews and Christians) recognize him (Muhammad) as they recognize their sons. But a group of them knowingly conceal the truth. [al-Baqarah 2:146]

> ...But they do not deny you (Muhammad), rather the transgressors disavow the signs of Allah. [al-An'âm 6:33]

Therefore, if a slave cognizes[32] that Allah is his Lord and his

Creator and that he is poor without Him and in need of Him, then he

cognizes that his worship is directly related to the lordship of Allah. Such a

slave asks for things from his Lord, beseeches Him and relies on Him.

Nevertheless, he still might obey His command or he might disobey it,

and he still might worship Him while worshipping Satan and idols. This

type of worship does not distinguish between the people of paradise and

the people of hell. With this type of worship a man does not become a

believer as Allah, the Exalted One, says:

> Most (people) only believe in Allah as polytheists. [Yûsuf 12:106]

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[31] In this paragraph, knowledge is being contrasted with ignorance and cognizance is being contrasted with denial. The terms being used are translated as follows: *'alima* = to know, *'arafa* = to cognize, *i'tarafa* = to acknowledge, *ma'rifah* = cognizance, *ankara* = to deny, *jahada* = to disavow, and *jahala* = to be ignorant of. These translations will be maintained throughout the text. In his classification of human beings and his description of the development of a worshipper, Ibn Taymiyyah indicates a constant tension between ignorance and knowledge and between cognizance and denial. Intricately linked to this is the concept of arrogance. Thus, as a Muslim progresses toward perfection in worship, he must overcome obstacles such as arrogance, denial and disobedience.

[32] Editions 3, 4 and 5 have *i'tarafa* instead of *'arafa*.

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Indeed, the pagan Arabs used to confirm that Allah was their Creator and

Provider while worshipping other than Him. Allah says:

> Certainly, if you ask them: Who created the heavens and the earth?
> They will say: Allah (has created them)... [al-Zumar 39:38]

> Say: To whom belongs the earth and whatever is on it, if you know?
> They will say: To Allah! Say: Will you then not be admonished? Say:
> Who is the Lord of the seven heavens, and the Lord of the Great
> Throne? They will say: Allah! Say: Will you then not fear Allah? Say:
> In whose Hand is the sovereignty of everything and He protects all
> while against Him there is no protector, if you know? They will say:
> Allah! Say: How then are you deceived (about the truth)? [al-
> Mu'minûn 23:84-89]

Most of those who speak about reality, and bear witness to it, bear

witness to only this reality—the existential reality (*al-haqîqat al-

kawniyyah*)—in which the believer and the disbeliever, the upright and

the impudent, participate. They share in the witnessing of it and the

cognizance of it. Even Iblîs (Satan) and the people of hell are cognizant of

this reality:

> (Iblîs) said: My Lord! Give me respite then till the day they (the dead)
> are resurrected. [Sâd 38:79]

> He said: O my Lord! because You sent me astray, I will surely make
> (disobedience) appear pleasing to them on earth, and I will lead them
> all astray. [al-Hijr 15:39]

> He said: I swear by Your might (O Allah) that I will lead them all
> astray. [Sâd 38:82]

> He said: Do You (O Allah) see this one whom You have honored
> above me? If You give me respite until the Day of Resurrection, I will
> surely bring his posterity under my authority,[33] all but a few! [al-Isrâ'
> (Banî Isrâ'îl) 17:62]

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[33]For the translation of *la-ahtanikanna durriyyatahu*, see Penrice (1987:39).

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There are many similar statements in which Iblîs confirms that Allah is his Lord and his Creator and the Creator of all others. Similarly, the people of the hellfire will say:

> ...Our Lord! our misfortune overwhelmed us, and we were an erring people. [al-Mu'minûn 23:106]

Allah says:

> If you could see when they (the disbelievers) will be detained in front of their Lord! He will say: Is not this (resurrection and the taking of accounts) the truth? They will confirm: Yes, by our Lord!... [al-An'âm 6:30]

Predestination and Religious Obligations

7A   In the previous section Ibn Taymiyyah explained that the status of slavery to God is the natural condition of human beings. He draws this conclusion from the concept of an universal reality which affects all created beings. Ibn Taymiyyah describes this reality as an existential reality related to predestination. However, a Muslim's moral, ethical and religious life must conform to a legislated truth which he associates with the "religious reality" (al-haqîqat al-dîniyyah). For Ibn Taymiyyah, the existential reality is subsumed under God's Lordship and is only part of the meaning of the declaration of tawhîd.[34] To focus on the existential reality and

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[34]For Ibn Taymiyyah, the concept of tawhîd (oneness) consists of two aspects which he refers to as verbal oneness (tawhîd qawlî) and active oneness (tawhîd 'amalî); see "Qâ'idah fî-l-Tawassul wa-l-Wasîlah" in Majmû' Fatâwâ, vol.1, p.367. In this translation, I shall distinguish between these two different aspects of tawhîd only when necessitated by the context of particular passages. In such cases, the concept of "verbal oneness" will be rendered as the

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raise it above the religious law is for him a tremendous distortion and falsehood. He relates this distortion of the religious reality to the belief of Satan and those destined for the hellfire. Ibn Taymiyyah highlights his case for the supremacy of the religious reality by mentioning that al-Khadir[35] was not freed of

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"declaration of *tawhîd*," and the concept of "active oneness" will be rendered as the "application of *tawhîd*."

[35]Khadir (or Khidr) is the name of the servant (*'abd*) whom Moses accompanied as mentioned in Sura al-Kahf 18:60-82. Although unnamed in the Quran, the Prophet spoke of him at length as reported in authentic hadiths, giving his name along with other details of his encounter with Moses. A full discussion of him would be much too lengthy to go into here, especially if one attempts to abstract the authentic reports from the numerous fabricated stories. For a review of the general information concerning Khadir, see Wensinck (1978, S.V. "al-Khadir"). Also, Ibn Hajar has a lengthy discussion of the authenticity of the reports related to Khadir in *Fath al-Bârî* (Kitâb al-Tafsîr), (no date:v.8, pp.409-425). For our purposes, some important issues concerning his status need to be discussed. Ibn Taymiyyah mentions Khadir because he figures very prominently in the belief system of many Sufi mystics as the example of a man who attained "cognizance" (*ma'rifah*). (See Schimmel, 1975:passim.) He becomes the basis and justification for their claims of mystic knowledge. In this context, the statements of Ibn Hajar concerning Khadir's status and the level of his knowledge will go a long way in explaining the *salafî* view of him. In the *Fath* (Kitâb al-'Ilm), v.1, pp.217-220, Ibn Hajar discusses the *salafî* view of Khadir while refuting many of the Sufi claims concerning him. In summary, he states: 1) Khadir was a prophet but not a messenger, and only the people of falsehood (*ahl al-bâtil*) call him God's saint (*walî*), 2) Khadir did not have complete knowledge of the Unseen (*ghayb*), for prophets only receive limited knowledge, 3) human intelligence is deficient and incapable of comprehending the secrets of Lordship (*asrâr al-rubûbiyyah*), and 4) it is an act of disbelief to claim secret knowledge by making statements such as: A) there is a path of knowledge that necessitates the abandonment of the Law (*sharî'ah*), B) the judgements of the Law are for the masses, but God's saints have no need for revealed texts, for they can judge according to their hearts and minds (*khawâtir*) because their purification and renunciation brings them divine knowledge (*al-'ulûm al-ilâhiyyah*) and divine truths (*al-haqâ'iq al-rabbâniyyah*), and C) one should not take knowledge from the dead (i.e. from transmitted sources), but take it directly from the Living One who never dies. These points and others that Ibn Hajar discusses reflect Ibn Taymiyyah's stance concerning Khadir.

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responsibility for obeying God's laws. With this point Ibn Taymiyyah is indicating that obedience always has been and always will be a necessary part of worship and drawing near to God. This position represents Ibn Taymiyyah's opposition to the extremist Sufis such as the *Rifā'iyyah*, the *Qalandariyyah* and the *Malāmatiyyah*, who believe in various degrees that sin and disobedience are aspects of worship.[36]

The distinction between the "existential reality" and the "religious reality" are part of Ibn Taymiyyah's belief in the distinction between God's creative will and His legislated commands and prohibitions. Thus he deems it necessary for a Muslim to turn his heart with love and obedience to God. Without this distinction, a worshipper will "deify" the existential reality, which includes disobedience and disbelief, by turning his heart with love and exaltation toward an object in creation. This seems to be the only viable understanding of Ibn Taymiyyah's statement that "a deity is that which a heart deifies...." The obvious circularity of this statement is explained by Ibn Taymiyyah's description of *tawhīd* as moving from being a mere slave to being an *'abd* in the sense of a worshipper. Thus he associates worship with the understanding and practice of *tawhīd* based on the requirements that he sees as being inherent in the idea of God as the only true deity. The more completely a worshipper embraces the religious reality, he says, the more fully he enters into the only type of worship that God loves.

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[36]See Chapter 3, Part B, section 2, for a discussion of these antinomian Sufi groups.

7B   Thus, whoever limits himself to this existential reality and the witnessing of it and does not perform the religious reality (*al-haqîqah al-dîniyyah*) that he is commanded to do—which includes worshipping Him as related to His divinity and obeying His command and the command of His messengers—will be in the same category as Iblîs and the people of the hellfire. Moreover, if he thinks that he is one of Allah's special elite and one of the possessors of cognizance and realization,[37] those who believe that the legislated commands and prohibitions have been waived for them, then he is one of the most evil unbelievers and an apostate. Whoever thinks that al-Khadir and others had the legislated commands waived for them because of witnessing the divine will (*irâdah*) and things of this sort is saying something more evil than the statements of the disbelievers in Allah and His messengers. He will remain (a disbeliever) until he enters into the second type of meaning of *'abd*, that is, a slave who is a worshipper. Then he will be a worshipper of Allah, not worshipping anything other than Him; he will be obeying His command and the command of His messengers, acting loyal to the believing, pious saints of

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[37]Literally: *ahl al-ma'rifah wa-l-tahqîq*. This is a clear reference to the well-known Sufi concepts of gnosis and realization. As I explained above (p.186 n32), I will translate *ma'rifah* as cognizance. In the classical Sufi understanding, as explained by Chittick (1989:148-149), *ma'rifah* is a "gnostic science" which is at a higher level than *'ilm*. He also states that the term can be rendered as "true knowledge" or "to recognize." My use of "realization" for *tahqîq* is based on its use by Ernst (1985:59) and Beaurecueil (1962:132), who uses the French "réalisation." The Sufi concept of realization, for which Chittick (1989:166-168) prefers "verification," is a "station of the great gnostics, those who have verified the truth of their knowledge through unveiling and direct vision."

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Allah and having enmity for the enemies of Allah.[38] This worshipping is related to the divinity of Allah. For this reason the declaration of *tawhîd* is "there is no deity except Allah." This stands in contrast to the one who confirms Allah's Lordship but does not worship Him or worships another deity alongside Him. For a deity is that which a heart deifies with perfect love, glorification, exaltation, respectfulness, fear, hope, and the like.[39] This worshipping is what Allah loves and approves of, and by which He describes His chosen worshippers, and with which He sent His messengers. As for the other meaning of slave, regardless of whether one admits that status or denies it, it is a meaning which refers to both the believer and the disbeliever.

By differentiating between these two types of *'abd* one can recognize the difference between the religious realities, on the one hand, and the existential realities, on the other. The religious realities include worshipping Allah, His religion, and His legislated commands. Allah loves these realities and approves of them, and He grants His protection to the people of these realities and honors them accordingly.[40] The existential realities are those in which the believer and disbeliever, the upright and impudent, participate. Whoever is satisfied with the existential realities without following the religious realities is one of the

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[38]Editions 3 inserts *al-kâfirîn wa-l-fâsiqîn.*
[39]Ibn Taymiyyah's statement reads: *fa-l-ilâh alladî yu'allihuhu-l-qalb.* As he explains below in Chapter 6, section 1, a heart must worship something, that is, it must direct its love, hope and fear toward something. Thus, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, false deities are created by people when they direct their worship toward a thing that is in itself unworthy of that worship, for only God is truly worthy of worship.
[40]Editions 3, 4, and 5 have *yukrimuhum bi-jannatihi* instead of *bi-hasabihi.*

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followers of the cursed Iblis and one of the rejectors of the Lord of the Worlds. Also, whoever is satisfied with them (the religious realities) in certain matters but not in others, or in a certain situation or circumstance but not in another, will have a diminished faith and friendship to Allah in accordance with the diminishment of the religious realities. This is a serious situation in which many erring persons have been mistaken. Many seekers of the truth have been confused by this to the point that even great scholars associated[41] with realization, *tawhîd*, and cognition (*'irfân*),[42] have slipped because of it. No one can count their number except Allah, who knows the concealed and revealed matters.

Predestination, Free Will and the Hadith of Adam and Moses

8A   The concepts of an existential reality and a religious reality necessitate Ibn Taymiyyah to begin his discussion of the issue of predestination in relation to free will. Based on his discussion of the hadith about the conversation between Adam and Moses, which occurs in this section, it appears that Ibn Taymiyyah associates predestination with the existential reality and free will with the religious reality. However, he must resolve a paradox that stems from his belief that a Muslim's choice is nonetheless subsumed under God's will. Expressed in a manner understandable to the

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[41]Editions 3 and 4 have *al-mudda'în* instead of *al-muntasibîn*.

[42]I have chosen to use the meaning of "to cognize" for words derived from the root *'rf*. The word *'irfân* is usually translated as gnosis, which in Sufi terminology means "a form of knowledge which can be achieved only through spiritual practice, not by book learning or study with a teacher" (Chittick, 1989:149).

modern mind, with its focus on "the individual," one can say that Ibn Taymiyyah rejects the concept of human freedom as absolute "autonomy" but allows some "room" for human freedom "...in the face of a creator of all."[43] Thus, the first point he makes is that God has absolute power over all things. Ibn Taymiyyah confirms this doctrine through a statement from 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī[44] which clarifies that religious reality is to be used to combat existential reality. In other words, the "room" of human freedom is to fight the *qadar* of the existential reality by the *qadar* of the religious reality. Ibn Taymiyyah explains that the proper attitude and practice of a Muslim in relation to predestination is to obey God at all times. The "choice" of the worshipper must be to favor the religious reality over the existential reality. Thus, he states that those who err concerning predestination focus on the existential reality and ignore the religious reality.

Ibn Taymiyyah further develops his theory of free will within the context of predestination by explaining the relationship between sin, repentance and the consequences of sin. He presents the hadith of Adam and Moses to clarify this relationship. He uses this hadith and the verses quoted at the end of this section to indicate that God's absolute power to determine all things still allows for a limited free will which necessitates the legal and moral

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[43]I am borrowing this analogy from Burrell (1993:75), who does not use it in reference to Ibn Taymiyyah.

[44]'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī was born about 470/1077 and died in 561/1166. He was a leading *Hanbalī* scholar who followed the Sufi path. For a review of the biographical material about al-Jilānī, see Margoliouth (1907:267-310).

responsibilities of the worshipper vis-à-vis the Law. This is the basis of his moral arguments in understanding fate and free will. Ibn Taymiyyah confirms the doctrine of free will and the idea of a religious reality by explaining the obligation of a sinner to repent and by pointing out that God makes clear a distinction between the pious people and the sinners.

8B   Sheikh 'Abd al-Qâdir, may Allah have mercy on him, had pointed to this matter as is reported from him: "Many people, when they reach the subject of predestination (al-qadâ' wa-l-qadar), hold back, but not I. A window has been opened to it for me. I fight the determinations of the truth by the truth for the truth. A man is the one who fights determinism, not the one who conforms to it."[45]

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[45]The last two sentences of this quote read: *fa-nâza'tu aqdâra-l-haqq bi-l-haqq li-l-haqq wa-l-rajul man yukûnu munâzi'^{an} li-l-qadar lâ man yakûnu muwâfiq^{an} li-l-qadar*. As yet, I have not been able to find this quote reported from 'Abd al-Qâdir. There is a similar statement in Kalâbâdî (1388/1969:116) which reads: *al-tawâdu' qabûlu-l-haqq min al-haqq li-l-haqq*; see also Arberry (1977:88). In his review of Ibn Taymiyyah's *Sharh Futûhi-l-Ghayb*, which is a commentary on 'Abd al-Qâdir's famous work, Michel (1981:6-7) indicates that 'Abd al-Qâdir teaches an antivoluntarist view of religion. That is, he speaks "...of annihilation of the will and surrendering to the predetermined decrees of God rather than to His command to active obedience..." This statement, however, does not do justice to 'Abd al-Qâdir's insistence on obedience to Islamic law. As Braune (1933:38-40) points out, 'Abd al-Qâdir maintained the traditional *Hanbali* position in regards to religious duties. Braune also states that 'Abd al-Qâdir intentionally stressed obedience to the *sharî'ah* in opposition to the widespread antinomian beliefs of many Sufis. Thus, Ibn Taymiyyah's view that it is impossible to cease willing at any state and that patience and resignation must be balanced with an active embrace of commanding good and forbidding evil coincides with the position of earlier *Hanbali* Sufis such as 'Abd al-Qâdir.

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What the sheikh, may Allah have mercy on him, has mentioned is that which Allah and His Messenger have commanded. But many people have erred concerning it. Those who err might witness acts of disobedience and sins that have been determined for one of them or that have been determined for others, even if it is disbelief. They witness that this is occurring through the will (mashī'ah) of Allah, His predestination and determinism, entering into the judgment of His lordship and the requirement of His will. They think that submitting to this sin, conforming to it and being pleased with it, etc., is a religion, a path, and an act of worship. Thus they resemble the polytheists who said:[46]

> ...If Allah had willed, neither we nor our fathers would have associated partners with Him, and we would not have forbidden anything... [al-An'âm 6:148]

> ...Shall we feed those whom, if Allah so willed, He could feed?... [Yâ' Sîn 36:47]

> ...If the Infinitely Merciful had willed, we would not have worshiped them (the angels)... [al-Zukhruf 43:20]

If they were truly rightly guided, they would know that determinism commands us to be content and patient, despite its being the cause of calamities that afflict us, such as poverty, sickness, and fear. The Exalted One says:

> Calamities occur only with Allah's permission, and He guides aright the heart of whoever believes in Allah... [al-Taghâbun 64:11]

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[46]In his usual style of presenting verses of the Quran or hadiths to support his opinions, Ibn Taymiyyah is using these verses to equate the statements of those who resign themselves to sin with the statements of the polytheists. After he indicates the analogy of statements and meanings, he then claims that these people are condemned in the same way that the polytheists are.

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Concerning this, some of the righteous predecessors said: "It is the man who has been afflicted with a calamity, but knowing it is from Allah, he is therefore content and at peace with it." The Exalted One says:

> No calamity occurs on earth or in yourselves but that it is recorded in a book before We bring it forth into existence. That is easy for Allah. (He informs you of) this in order that you do not grieve over matters that pass you by, nor rejoice over matters that come to you... [al-Hadîd 57:22-23]

It is reported in the two Sahîhs[47] that the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said: "Adam and Moses had an argument. Moses said: 'You are Adam whom Allah created with His hand, into whom He breathed by His spirit, to whom He made the angels prostrate, and to whom He taught the names of everything, so why have you expelled us and yourself from paradise?' Adam replied to him: 'You are Moses whom Allah favored with His message and His words, have you not found that it had been determined for me before I was created?' Moses said: 'Yes, indeed.'" He (Muhammad) said: "So Adam got the better of Moses in the argument."

Adam, peace be upon him, did not prove his argument against Moses by means of determinism, thinking that a sinner can use determinism as an argument. Neither a Muslim nor any intelligent person ('âqil) would say that. If it were an excuse, it would be an excuse for Iblîs as well as for Noah's people, Hûd's people, and every disbeliever. Also, Moses did not blame Adam, peace be upon him, for the sin itself, for

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[47]Bukhârî, anbiyâ' 31, tawhîd 37; Muslim, qadar 13, 15.

Allah accepted the repentance of Adam,[48] favored him and guided him. But he blamed him for the calamity which afflicted them because of the mistake. For this reason he said to Adam: "Why have you expelled us and yourself from paradise?" Adam replied that this had been written before he was created. Thus an action and the calamity resulting from it are determined, and one is obliged to submit to determined calamities. This is a completion of contentment with Allah as Lord. But as for sins, the worshipper should not be sinful; but if he does sin, he should ask forgiveness from Allah, repent all his faults and be patient with calamities as the Exalted One says:

> And so be patient (Muhammad), for the promise of Allah is surely true, and ask forgiveness for your sin... [Ghâfir (al-Mu'min) 40:55]

> ...But if you remain patient and pious, their cunning will not harm you at all... [Al 'Imrân 3:120]

> ...And so remain patient and pious, for these are surely aspects of fixed determination. [Al 'Imrân 3:186]

Also, Joseph said:

> ...As for the one who acts piously and is patient, then surely Allah does not neglect the reward of those who do good. [Yûsuf 12:90]

As for the sins of the worshippers, it is obligatory that a worshipper command right conduct and forbid evil in accordance with his ability. He must strive in the cause of Allah against disbelievers and hypocrites, give allegiance to Allah's closest friends and have enmity for Allah's enemies, and love and hate for Allah, the Exalted One, as the Exalted One says:

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[48]Editions 3 and 4 have *fa-inna âdama qad tâba ilâ rabbihi* instead of *fa-inna âdama tâba-llahu 'alayhi.*

O you who believe! do not take my enemies and your enemies as allies, offering them friendship while they disbelieve in the truth that has come to you and drive out the Messenger and yourselves (from Mecca) because you believe in Allah, your Lord—if you have come forth to strive in My way and to seek My good pleasure. You secretly offer them friendship while I am fully aware of what you conceal and what you reveal; any of you who does that has gone far astray from the right path. If they gain an advantage over you, they would behave as enemies toward you, striking out at you, cursing you with evil, and desiring that you should also become disbelievers. Neither your relatives nor your children will benefit you on the Day of Resurrection when He will judge among you. Allah sees all that you do. There is surely an excellent example for you in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people: We completely disown you and whatever you worship besides Allah, we reject you, and there will always be hostility and hatred between you and us until you believe in Allah alone... [al-Mumtahanah 60:1-4]

You will not find any people who believe in Allah and the last day offering friendship to those who oppose Allah and His Messenger even though they are their fathers, or their sons, or their brothers or their kindred. These are the ones in whose hearts He has written faith and whom He strengthened with a spirit from Himself... [al-Mujâdalah 58:22]

Shall We then treat the submitting Muslims the same as the criminals? [al-Qalam 68:35]

Or shall We treat those who believe and do good deeds the same as those who act violently on earth? Or shall We treat those who act piously the same as the wicked? [Sâd 38:28]

Or do those who seek to do evil deeds think that We shall treat them the same as those who believe and do good deeds, that their present life and after their death (will be the same)? What an awful judgement they make. [al-Jâtiyah 45:21]

The blind and the seeing are not alike. Darkness and light are not alike. The shade and the sun's full heat are not alike. The living and the dead are not alike... [Fâtir 35:19-22]

Allah puts forth a parable: a man belonging to many partners disputing with one another, and a man belonging entirely to one master. Are these two equal in comparison?... [al-Zumar 39:29]

Allah puts forth a parable: a slave who has no power over anything and a man on whom We have bestowed good provisions from Ourselves and who spends some of it secretly and openly. Can they be

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equal? Praise be to Allah! No! and most of them do not know. Allah puts forth a parable of two men: one of them dumb, having no power over anything and being a burden to his master. Whichever way he directs him, he brings no good. Is such a man equal with one who commands justice and is on a straight path? [al-Nahl 16:75-76]

The dwellers of the fire and the dwellers of paradise are not equal; the dwellers of paradise will be successful. [al-Hashr 59:20]

Antinomianism and the Unity of Being

9A   Having pointed out that a distinction between good and evil, and between pious people and sinners, has been established by God in the Quran, Ibn Taymiyyah proceeds to link moral decay and false beliefs to the concept of the "unity of being" (*wahdat al-wujūd*). For Ibn Taymiyyah, the concept of *wahdat al-wujūd* is the end result of confusing the distinctions between the existential reality and the religious reality. To blur or negate the distinctions that God has established eventually leads to the worst form of disbelief, that is, not to witness that one is a slave (*'abd*). In this matter, Ibn Taymiyyah's understanding of human nature[49] is the framework for his belief that the one who is going astray proceeds from lesser, or minor, evils and progresses to greater evils. The main vehicle for this movement is the desires of the human heart, which, he believes, are ultimately responsible for motivating a person toward certain beliefs and actions. The desire of a heart causes a person to rationalize and justify sin. Thus, for Ibn Taymiyyah, the antinomian

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[49]It has been suggested that Ibn Taymiyyah maintains an "empirical judgement about human nature" (Michel, 1981:7). This seems to be a valid observation given his overall empirical view of the universe and his denunciation of metaphysics.

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Sufis, like the polytheists of the Quran, have invented lies about God and have legislated a new religion for themselves based on their desires. Through this combination of desires and innovated legislation, Ibn Taymiyyah concludes that antinomianism leads to the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd*, which in turn becomes the rationalization for antinomianism. He is fully convinced that the two concepts are intricately linked to one another.

9B   There are many similar verses in which Allah makes a distinction between the people of truth and falsehood, the people of obedience and disobedience, the people of righteousness and rebellion, the people of guidance and misguidance, the people of transgression and straightforwardness, and the people of truthfulness and lies. Therefore, the one who witnesses the existential reality without the religious reality will equate these types of people between whom Allah has made an ultimate distinction until he reaches the point that he equates Allah with idols, as the Exalted One says about them:[50]

> By Allah, we were truly in manifest error when we held you (false deities) as equals with the Lord of the Worlds. [al-Shu'arâ' 26:97-98]

Moreover, with them the matter reaches the point that they equate Allah with every existing being. They render the worshipping and obedience that He deserves a right for every existing thing because they make Him to be

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[50]The Arabic expression for "until he reaches the point that" is *hattâ yu'awwila bi-hi-l-amra ilâ an*. In this phrase, Edition 3 has *hâdihi-l-taswiyah* instead of *al-amra*. I am using the verb *awwala* in its original meaning which Lane says is to cause a thing to come to such a state or condition, to bring or reduce it thereto; see his *Lexicon*, S.V. "'wl".

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the existence of created things. This is the greatest disbelief and apostasy, and it is disbelief in the Lord of the slaves.[51] Disbelief with them reaches the point that they do not even bear witness that they are slaves, neither in the meaning of a subjected one nor in the meaning of a worshipper, because they witness that they themselves are the truth (*al-haqq*). Their false idols (*taghâwît*) such as Ibn 'Arabî, who wrote *al-Fusûs*, and other slandering apostates such as Ibn Sab'în and those like him, have made this unambiguously clear.[52] They also witness that they themselves are both the worshippers and the ones being worshipped.

Witnessing Determinism as an Excuse for Disobedience

10A In the following section, Ibn Taymiyyah elaborates on the moral implications of the unity of being by focusing on the concept of witnessing determinism. He first restates that worshipping God properly and obeying His commands includes necessarily commanding good deeds, forbidding evil ones, and struggling in His cause against the people of disbelief and hypocrisy. This, he insists, can only result from maintaining the distinctions that God has

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[51]I am reading '*ubbâd* instead of '*ibâd*, which is one of the plurals of '*abd* in the meaning of worshipper. Edition 3 has instead *al-'âlamîn*.

[52]Although he often mentions the various Sufi sheikhs together, Ibn Taymiyyah clearly recognizes the differences between them. This is made clear in his *Risâlah ilâ Nasr al-Manbijî* (p.470), in which he credits Ibn 'Arabî for insisting on obedience to the *sharî'ah* and states that many people benefited from him because of this. The antinomianism related to the concept of the unity of being is more directly attributed to the followers of Ibn 'Arabî. Thus, Landolt (1973:51) informs us that 'Izz al-Dîn Mahmûd-i Kâshânî (d. 735/1334) claimed that when one cognizes (erfährt) that all acts come from God, then the difference between good and evil becomes baseless.

established. For Ibn Taymiyyah, the one who blurs the distinctions between the existential reality and the religious reality, will eventually blur the distinction between the Creator and the created. The falsehood of this concept is confirmed for him by reference to the Christian belief in the incarnation of Jesus, which, he points out, is a belief that has been condemned by God in the Quran.[53]

Ibn Taymiyyah vigorously attacks the ideas of incarnation and witnessing determinism because they undermine what he sees as a necessarily active role on the part of the worshipper to implement the religious law, which is equally part of God's will. Thus he claims that no state or experience can excuse a Muslim from obeying the Law and that the idea of witnessing the existential reality is merely a product of corrupt desires. His evidence for the corrupt desires of those who speak of this witnessing is that they are constantly contradicting themselves as to what is acceptable behavior. When an action pleases them, they do it claiming it is *qadar*, but when someone seeks to harm them, they protest against an injustice. On the other hand, he says, some of those who claim to have truly witnessed the existential reality allow for the removal of legal responsibilities only people like themselves. All others must obey the religious Law. Ibn Taymiyyah mentions that these people want to differentiate between common people and an elite group which claims to have experienced God's divine will. This differentiation

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[53]See, for example, Sura al-Mâ'idah 5:72-76.

clearly irritates Ibn Taymiyyah's sense of equality by which he holds all Muslims to the same standards of the Law.

10B   But this is not the witnessing of reality, either the existential one or the religious one. Rather, it is deviation and blindness with regard to the witnessing of existential reality, for they have made the existence of the Creator the same as that of the created. They made every blameworthy and praiseworthy quality as an attribute of both the Creator and the created, for they consider the existence of the former as being the same as the existence of the latter. But the believers in Allah and His Messenger, both ordinary and elite, are the people of the Quran, as the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said: "Allah certainly has favored people amongst mankind." He was asked: "Who are they, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied: "The people of the Quran, they are the people of Allah and His elite."[54]

These people (of the Quran) know that Allah is the Lord, the Owner, and the Creator of everything and that the Creator, glorified be He, is different (mubâyin) than created beings. He does not have a mode of existence in them,[55] he is not united with them, and His existence is not

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[54]Ibn Mâjah, muqaddimah 12; al-Dârimî, fadâ'il al-qurân 1; Ahmad, III:167, 168, 242.

[55]The phrase Ibn Taymiyyah uses here is *laysa huwa hâl*^{an} *fî-hâ*. I understand *hâl* in this context in its lexical meaning of changing or moving from one state or condition to another; see Lane's *Lexicon*, S.V. "*hwl*". That is, neither God nor any aspects of His names and attributes reside in the creation in any possible way. This is just one of the ways Ibn Taymiyyah expresses the complete distinction between God and the creation. This statement has certain overtones to statements made by Ibn 'Arabî concerning his understanding of the relation between God and the cosmos in the *Barzakh*, or what Ibn 'Arabî calls the realm of "Nondelimited Imagination" where, according to his interpretation, God

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the same as a created being's existence. In fact, Allah has declared the Christians to be disbelievers because they speak of an incarnation (hulûl) and unity (ittihâd) with the Messiah in particular; how is it then for the one who does this generally with every creature? In spite of this they[56] know that Allah orders obedience to Him and to His Messenger and forbids disobedience to Him and to His Messenger. They know that Allah does not love corruption and does not approve of disbelief for His worshippers; and they know that it is incumbent on creation to worship Him, obey His commands and ask for His help in fulfilling them as He says:

You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help. [al-Fâtihah 1:5]

Commanding good, forbidding evil, and striving for the sake of Allah against the people of disbelief and hypocrisy as much as possible are part of worshipping Allah and obeying His command. They (the believers) strive to establish His religion, seeking help from Him in this. In this way, they are repelling and eliminating (dâfi'în muzîlîn) any evil that has been determined, removing any fearful consequences of that evil. This is the same as the one who removes actual hunger by eating and thereby drives away future hunger. Also, when he alleviates coldness, he repels it by

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comes to be (kâna); see Chittick (1989:125). The Barzakh is also considered by Ibn 'Arabî to be the ontological locus for anthropomorphism (tashbîh) where "...the Real [al-haqq] undergoes fluctuation in states to make manifest our entities...;" see Chittick (1989:181-186).

[56]The subject of the verb ya'lamûna is not clearly identifiable here. The beginning of the sentence reads wa ya'lamûna ma'a dâlika anna-llâha. In Edition 3, the noun "the elite of Allah" (khâssatu-llâh) appears before the verb, thus referring back to "the people of the Quran." My understanding is that the subject refers to those who generalize incarnation and unity for every creature, which seems to be in agreement with the adverbial phrase ma'a dâlika.

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wearing proper clothing. Likewise, he uses every means to drive away any harm just as they (the Companions) said to the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him: "What do you think of the medicines we use to cure ourselves, and the invocations we say as remedies, and the shields we use to protect ourselves, do they thwart any of Allah's determinism?" He replied: "They are aspects of Allah's determinism."[57] Also, in another hadith, he said: "Supplications and afflictions confront each other and struggle between heaven and earth."[58]

This, then, is the state (hâl) of the believers in Allah and in His Messenger and of the worshippers of Allah. All of this is part of worshipping. Those who witness existential reality, i.e., the lordship of Him, the Exalted One, over everything, and make it an obstruction (mâni') to following His legislated religious commands are at different levels of being astray. The most extravagant ones use it unqualifiedly and generally. They use determinism in arguing against anything they oppose in the Law (sharî'ah). The discourse of these people is more evil than the discourse of the Jews and the Christians and it is the same type as the discourse of the polytheists who said:

> ...If Allah had willed, neither we nor our fathers would have associated partners with Him, and we would not have forbidden anything... [al-An'âm 6:148]

> ...If the Infinitely Merciful had willed, we would not have worshiped them (the angels)... [al-Zukhruf 43:20]

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[57]Tirmidî, tibb 21, qadar 12; Ibn Mâjah, 1.
[58]I have not been able to find a hadith in the *Concordance* with this wording. However, there is a similar hadith reported by al-Tirmidî (salâh 482, witr 21) which reads: A supplication is suspended between heaven and earth, and nothing of it ascends any further until you make prayers for your Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him.

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These people are the most self-contradictory (*tanâqud*) people on earth. Moreover, anyone who argues using determinism is self-contradictory. It is impossible for him to approve of all actions of all people. It is necessary that a person, when a tyrant oppresses him and other people, spreads corruption through the land, starts shedding the blood of people, allows adultery, destroys civilization and humanity, or practices any such types of harm which people cannot bear, to repel aggression[59] and punish the aggressor by resisting his acts of aggression. It should be said to this person: "If determinism is an evidence (*hujjah*) in arguing, then let anybody do to you and to others whatever he likes. If, rather, it is not an evidence in arguing, then the origin of your utterance is proven false." The people of this kind of discourse who argue by way of existential reality are not consistent in their arguments and do not fully adhere to them. Rather, they act in accordance with their own whims and desires just as a certain scholar said about them: "As regards obedience you are a free willer and as regards disobedience you are a fatalist. Whatever approach (*madhab*) fits your desires you take as your approach."

Another group of them[60] makes claims of realization and cognizance. They assert that commanding and forbidding is only necessary for the one who witnesses for himself a capability to act (*fi'l^{an}*) and confirms for himself a creative power (*san'^{an}*). But as for the one who witnesses that his actions are created, or that he is compelled to perform them and that Allah is the Disposer concerning him just as He moves all

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[59]Editions 3 and 4 have *al-qadar* instead of *al-'udwân*.
[60]This is referring to those who use determinism as a proof in arguing.

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other moving things, then commanding and forbidding and the promise and the threat (al-wa'd wa-l-wa'îd) are removed from him. They might say that whoever witnesses the divine will (irâdah) has been freed of legal responsibilities.[61] They allege that al-Khadir was freed of legal responsibilities because of his witnessing the Divine will. These people differentiate[62] between the common people and the elite who have witnessed the existential reality. Thus they witness that Allah is the Creator of the actions of the worshippers and that He is the willer[63] for all beings (kâ'inât). They might differentiate between the one who knows that intellectually ('ilm^{an}) and the one who has experienced it through witnessing.[64] They do not allow the suspension of legal responsibility for the one who believes in the witnessing of the existential reality and only knows about it, but they suspend it for the one who witnessed it and thus sees no action originating from himself. In this way, these people make[65] fatalism (jabr) and the affirmation of determinism a waiver of legal responsibility.

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[61]The Arabic reads: saqata 'an-hu-l-taklîf. Weiss (1992:108) defines taklîf as charging someone with something, or making someone responsible for something. This is the standard Islamic term referring to a person's full liability relative to the Law.

[62]Edition 4 has lâ yufarriqûn, which does not make sense because Ibn Taymiyyah is pointing out how certain antinomian groups distinguish between the common folk and an elite. The same reasoning applies to the last sentence in this section, in which Editions 3 and 4 have lâ yaj'alûna-l-jabr....

[63]Edition 3 has mudabbir and Edition 4 has yudabbir instead of murîd.

[64]The Arabic reads: man yarâhu shuhûd^{an}. One of the definitions given by Lane for the root "r'y" is to experience something. This fits in with the concept of a profound state of knowledge beyond intellectual understanding.

[65]Editions 3, 4 and 5 have lâ yaj'alûna, which contradicts the point of the previous statement.

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11A   Ibn Taymiyyah now brings up the issue of understanding the relationship between free will and predestination. Maintaining both of these, he says, are prerequisites for avoiding the abrogation of the religious Law. He sees two extreme trends among the Muslims concerning these two realities. The Mutazilites affirm the legislated commanding and forbidding, but they reject predestination and determinism, which refer to God's unconditional will concerning creation, particularly His creation of a worshipper's deeds. But the error of the Mutazilites is not as bad as the other extreme trend, which is the denial of free will, as propagated by the *Jabriyyah*. For this, he states, leads to using determinism as an excuse for committing sin. Thus the position of those who claim to have witnessed determinism is similar to the fatalists, for they exempt themselves from following religious commands and prohibitions. Referring back to the Righteous Predecessors, Ibn Taymiyyah states that belief in an absolute free will or in fatalism was not held by any of the Companions and their followers.

11B   Many sects associated with realization (*tahqiq*), cognizance, and *tawhid*[66] have faltered concerning this matter. The reason for this is that their extent of understanding contracted[67] concerning the state of a worshipper who has been commanded to act contrary to what has been

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[66]Edition 3 has *al-islâm* instead of *al-tawhîd*.
[67]The Arabic phrase is: *dâqa nitâquhum*.

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determined for him. The extent of understanding of the Mutazilites and the rest of the *Qadariyyah* contracted in such a way concerning this matter. Thus, the Mutazilites affirmed the legislated commands and prohibitions while rejecting[68] predestination (*al-qadâ' wa-l-qadar*), which is the general will of Allah and His creation of a worshipper's deeds. The others affirm predestination but negate commands and prohibitions on behalf of the one who witnesses determinism, for it is impossible for them to negate it unqualifiedly. Their statement is worse than the statement of the Mutazilites. For this reason, no such people existed amongst the *salaf*. These people make commands and prohibitions incumbent for unenlightened people (*mahjûbûn*) who have not witnessed the existential reality. Thus they absolve the one who reaches this truth from the responsibilities of commands and prohibitions, for he is one of the elite. They frequently interpret His verse, may He be exalted, for this purpose:

> Worship your Lord until the certainty (of death) comes to you. [al-Hijr 15:99]

They interpret certainty (*yaqîn*) as the cognizance of this reality. The statement of these people is clear disbelief although some sects succumbed to this without knowing that it was disbelief. However, it is known by necessity that according to the religion of Islam commands and prohibitions are incumbent on every worshipper until he dies so long as he is in possession of his intellect. Commands and prohibitions cannot be waived for him because of his witnessing determinism or for any other reason. Thus, whoever does not recognize that must have it made known

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[68]Editions 3 and 4 have *dûna* instead of *wa raddat*.

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to him and explained for him. But if he persists in believing in the waiver of commands and prohibitions, he should be executed (*qutila*).[69]

Statements such as these have become quite numerous amongst later generations. But such statements were not known amongst the earlier generations of this religious community (*ummah*), for these utterances are in opposition to Allah and His Messenger, an act of hostility towards Him, an obstruction on His path, an abandonment of Him, a denial of His messengers, and a contradiction to Him in His judgement. Even if one used to say these utterances while being ignorant of this and believing that what he is following is the path of the Messenger and of the saints of Allah, the verifiers of truth, he would still be at the level of the one who believes that prayer is not incumbent on him because of his dispensing with it by way of the spiritual states (*al-ahwâl al-qalbiyyah*) that occur to him, or that wine (*khamr*) is allowable for him because he is one of the elite who cannot be harmed by drinking it, or that adultery (*fâhishah*) is allowable for him because he has become as a sea that cannot be spoiled by sin, etc..

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[69]Al-Ghazâlî (1983:28) makes the same judgement concerning the Sufi who claims that "he has attained a state of intimacy with God Most High which dispenses him from the canonical Prayer and permits him to drink wine and to commit sins and to accept the largesse of the Sultan." His opinion is that such a one "ought to be killed [*lâ shakka fî wujûbi qatlihi*], even though his status regarding eternity in the Fire may be debatable." The two translations in quotes are from McCarthy (1980:163); I added the transliteration to the second quote.

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12A For Ibn Taymiyyah, the claim of witnessing *qadar* is clear disbelief and is responsible for the exaggerated claims that oppose God's legislation. He draws his argument from the verses of the Quran which refer to polytheism, which he states is rooted in innovation in religion. He then defines innovation as the means by which one follows his desires instead of the religious Law. Thus he claims that every innovator has similarities to the idolators. Furthermore, he sees the rationale behind the claims of the innovators as stemming from the methodological system of the speculative theologians who insist on the superiority of logical proofs over the revealed texts (see above Chapter 3). That is, they use *ta'wīl* to explain away the literal meaning of a verse or hadith if it contradicts their notions of reason and logic. But whereas the *mutakallimūn* continue to uphold the shari'ah, idolators, innovators and those who claim to witness the Divine will use the concept of *ta'wīl* to avert the Law.

12B There is no doubt that the polytheists who denied the messengers fluctuated between innovation (*bid'ah*), which opposes the legislation of Allah, and using determinism as an argument to oppose the command of Allah. Thus, these types of people resemble the polytheists, whether they innovate or use determinism as an argument or combine the two matters, as the Exalted One says about the polytheists:

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When they commit a blatant sin, they say: We found our fathers doing it, and Allah has commanded us to do so. Say: No! Allah never commands blatant sins. Do you say of Allah what you do not know? [al-A'râf 7:28]

And as the Exalted One also says about them:

Those who associate partners with Allah will say: If Allah had willed, neither we nor our fathers would have associated partners with Him, and we would not have forbidden anything... [al-An'âm 6:148]

What is being mentioned is that the polytheists have introduced innovations in religion such as permitting prohibitions and acts of worship that Allah did not legislate as, for example, in His verse:

They say of their own accord that these cattle and crops are forbidden and that none will eat of them except those whom we allow, and that there are cattle forbidden to use for burden, and cattle on which (at slaughtering) the Name of Allah is not pronounced. These are lies attributed to Him (Allah)... [al-An'âm 6:138]

Also, in Sura al-A'râf 7:27-33, there are the verses of the Exalted One:

O children of Adam! do not let Satan deceive you in the way he led your parents out of paradise...When they (the polytheists) commit a blatant sin, they say: We found our fathers doing it, and Allah has commanded it for us. Say: Allah does not command blatant sins; do you say of Allah what you do not know? Say (O Muhammad): My Lord has commanded justice and has ordered you to direct yourselves (to Him) in every place of prayer, invoking Him only and being sincere to Him in religion, for as He made you, so too you will return (to Him)...O children of Adam! wear your finest clothes to every mosque, and eat and drink but do not be wasteful. Certainly Allah does not like extravagant wasters. Say (O Muhammad): Who has forbidden the adornments and the delightful provisions which Allah has produced for His worshippers? Say: These things are for those who, in this life, believe with sincerity concerning the Day of Resurrection. In this way we explain our signs to a people who know. Say (O Muhammad): However, my Lord has forbidden blatant sins in public or private, disobedience, transgressions without just cause, and that you associate partners with Him for which He has given no authority and that you say things about Allah of which you have no knowledge.

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These people frequently call what they innovate "truth" just as they call the determinism they witness "truth." The path of truth according to them is a course of conduct (*sulūk*) the follower of which is not restricted to the Legislator's commands and prohibitions. Instead, he restricts himself to whatever he sees, tastes, finds, etc.[70] These people do not use determinism as an argument unqualifiedly. Rather, their basis is to follow their own opinions and desires, rendering what they see and desire as true. Their command is to follow these without following the commands of Allah and His Messenger. This is similar to the innovations of the speculative theologians, such as the *Jahmiyyah* and others, who render the statements which they innovate, which are opposed to the Book and the Sunnah, as rational truths (*haqā'iq 'aqliyyah*) necessitating firm conviction without regard to what the transmitted revelation (*sam'iyyāt*) indicates. As for the Book and the Sunnah, they either alter them from their proper meaning or totally shun them. They do not endeavor to understand them properly (*tadabbara*) or study them intelligently. Rather, they say, "We entrust their meanings to Allah," while believing the contrary of what is indicated by them. When the statements of these people are ascertained, the rational arguments (*'aqliyyāt*) that they maintain in opposition to the Quran and the Sunnah turn out to be ignorant arguments (*jahliyyāt*) and corrupt beliefs.[71] Likewise, when their statements regarding truths about

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[70]Edition 3 has the following insertion: *fī qalbihi-l-dāll al-ghāfil min allāh*; and Edition 5 inserts: *fī qalbihi ma'an mā fī-hi min ghaflah 'an allāh jalā wa 'alā.*

[71]In this paragraph, Ibn Taymiyyah is contrasting the two branches of knowledge recognized by Medieval Muslim scholars, namely, reason and revelation. As explained above in Chapter 3, he maintains that favoring reason over revelation, when that reasoning contradicts the clear statements of

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the saints of Allah, which are opposed to the Quran and the Sunnah, are ascertained, they are found to be vain desires which the enemies of Allah follow, not His saints.

Tasting Faith as Opposed to Loving One's Own Desires

13A Ibn Taymiyyah is now speaking of a worshipper in terms of a lover who might follow the path of faith or who might become lost on a path of misguided love. The first step toward misguided love, he says, is to place human reasoning above God's revealed texts. Then, referring to a hadith, Ibn Taymiyyah indicates that each lover has a taste and passion according to what he loves, the believers loving God and His Messenger and the innovators loving their desires. He uses these two points to explain that Muslims become confused by an unqualified love that is shared by everyone, a love common to sinner and saint alike. This unqualified love, which ignores revelation and pursues desires, says Ibn Taymiyyah, causes the innovators to act on their passions without guidance from God. Their preference for innovation over legislation leads them to argue against legislation by using *qadar* as an excuse for their actions.

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revelation, leads to misguidance. Gardet (1960, S.V. "'Akliyât" and 1978, S.V. "al-Kadâ' wa'l-Kadar") states that traces of the term *'aqliyyât* can be found in the Mutazilite disputations over religious knowledge (*'ilm dînî*). The Mutazilites divided religious knowledge into knowledge drawn from reason (*'ilm 'aqlî*) and knowledge drawn from revelation (*'ilm shar'î*). In the terminology of speculative theology (*kalâm*) the term *'aqliyyât* refers to all subjects amenable to reason even if transmitted by revelation.

13B   The origin of misguidance of the one who errs is the prioritizing of his reasoning (*taqdîm qiyâsihî*) above the text sent down from Allah and his choosing desire (*hawâ*) over following Allah's commandment. For things such as taste (*dawq*) and passion (*wajd*) are proportionately related to what a worshipper loves, and every lover has a taste and passion related proportionately to his love. Thus, the people of faith have a taste and passion in accordance with what the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, explained by his statement in an authentic hadith: "There are three qualities existing in the one who has found the sweetness of faith: He is the one to whom Allah and His Messenger are dearer than all else, who loves a person only for the sake of Allah, and who abhors returning to disbelief after Allah has rescued him from it as he abhors being cast into fire."[72] Also, he, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said in an authentic hadith: "The one who has tasted the savor of faith is the one who is well-pleased with Allah as Lord, with Islam as a religion, and with Muhammad as a prophet."[73] As for the people of disbelief, innovation, and lusts, each acts accordingly. It was said to Sufyân ibn 'Uyaynah:[74] "What has happened to the people of desires that they have a strong love for their desires?" He replied with these words or something similar to them: "Did you forget the saying of Allah: ...Their

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[72]Bukhârî, îmân 9, 14, ikrâh 1; Muslim, îmân 66, 67; Abû Dâwud, zakâh 5; Tirmidî 'ilm 10; Nasâ'î, îmân 2 and 3; Ibn Mâjah, fitan 23; Ahmad, II:298, 560.
[73]Muslim, îmân 56; Tirmidî, îmân 10; Ahmad, I:208.
[74]Sufyân ibn 'Uyaynah (107/725-6—198/813-4) was originally from Kufa but lived and died in Mecca. He was a famous traditionist and ascetic; see Reinert (1968:322)

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hearts absorbed the calf because of their disbelief... [al-Baqarah 2:93]." Thus the worshippers of idols love their false deities as the Exalted One says:

> Some people set up rivals of Allah; they love them as they love Allah. But those who believe love Allah more (than those others love their idols)... [al-Baqarah 2:165]

> But if they do not answer you, then know that they follow only their own lusts. Who is more astray than one who follows his own lusts without guidance from Allah?... [al-Qasas 28:50]

> ...They follow only a guess and what their souls desire; and yet guidance from their Lord has already come to them! [al-Najm 53:23]

For this reason, these people incline towards listening to poetry[75] and melodious voices[76] that stimulate an unqualified love (*mahabbah mutlaqah*) that is not appropriate for people of faith. Rather, all these people share in it: the lover of the Infinitely Merciful, the lover of idols, the lover of the cross, the lover of nations, the lover of the brethren (*al-ikhwân*), the lover of beardless youths, and the lover of women. These are the ones who follow their own tastes and passions without taking into account the Book, the Sunnah, and the way of the Righteous Predecessors of this religious community (*ummah*). Thus the one who opposes that with which Allah has sent His messengers, which includes worshipping Allah, obeying Him and obeying His messengers, is not following a religion legislated by Allah as He says:

> Then We have put you (O Muhammad) on the right path in this matter. Follow it and do not follow the desires of those who do not know. They will never benefit you against Allah, for the unjust

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[75]Editions 3 and 5 insert *wa yughramûna bi* between *yamîlu hâ'ulâ'i ilâ* and *samâ'i-l-shi'r*.

[76]Edition 3 inserts *wa-l-âlât al-mûsiqiyyah* after *al-aswât*.

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disbelievers are protectors to one another; but Allah is the protector of those who act piously. [al-Jâṯiyah 45:18-19]

He is actually following his own desire without any guidance from Allah as The Exalted One says:

Or do they have partners who have legislated for them in religion what Allah has not allowed?... [al-Shûrâ 42:21]

A Description of the Groups that Err Concerning *Qadar*

14A   In the matter of deviation, Ibn Taymiyyah describes three different modes of error. The differences in the manner of deviating from the Sunnah, he says, depends on the way one manipulates reason and desire. One group, he says, errs in aspects of worship, thinking that *qadar* allows them to abandon the means of worship such as reliance and supplication. A second group abandons recommended deeds, that is, they perform obligatory acts only. These two groups are deficient in love and worship because they abandon acts that draw them closer to God. Finally, a third group, he says, has been deceived by unusual events such as the immediate answer to a supplication or experiencing some form of supernatural occurrence. These three points represent well-known Sufi beliefs concerning the abandonment of the shari'ah, which they believe is a secondary cause. Thus for the Sufi gnostics, religious law leads one away from knowing God. Nicholson (1975:72), in discussing the teachings of the 4th/10th century Egyptian mystic Niffarî, explains that "Niffarî bids the gnostic perform only such acts of worship as are in accordance with his vision of God, though in

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doing so he will necessarily disobey the religious law which was made for the vulgar." In this section, Ibn Taymiyyah is refuting such beliefs.

14B   In following desires, one time they are following an innovation that they call truth and that they prioritize above Allah's law, and another time they use determinism as related to existence (*al-qadar al-kawnî*) as an argument against Allah's law, as He, the Exalted One, has mentioned above about the polytheists. One group of these people is of the highest rank because they hold fast to the religion[77] in the performance of well-known obligations and the avoidance of well-known prohibitions.[78] However, they err greatly by abandoning the means (*asbâb*) which they were commanded to carry out and which are themselves acts of

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[77]Edition 3 has *mustamsikûna bi-mâ ikhtârû bi-hawâhum min al-dîn* for *mustamsikûna bi-l-dîn*.

[78]Ibn Taymiyyah is referring to the obligations and prohibitions based on the five categories of actions recognized by the Muslim jurisprudents. These are obligatory actions (*wâjib*), recommended actions (*mandûb* or *mustahabb*), neutral actions (*mubâh*), disliked actions (*makrûh*) and forbidden actions (*harâm*). In Islamic jurisprudence, these categories refer to both legal and moral responsibilities as reflected in actions that will be rewarded or punished in this life and in the hereafter. As far as the Muslim jurisprudents are concerned, it is the compliance with the categories of obligations and prohibitions that result in the implementation of punitive actions in this life as well as God's rewards and punishments in the hereafter. The moral categories of recommended, neutral and disliked actions are, strictly speaking, out of the hands of the jurisprudents, and are left for God to reward or punish in the hereafter. For a complete discussion of these categories and the consequences related to them, see Weiss (1992:92-113). As for the specific groups to which Ibn Taymiyyah is referring in this section, they are various Sufi orders that fall under the descriptions of the *Malâmatiyyah* and other groups mentioned above in this chapter, section 7.

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worship.[79] They think that the cognizant one, when witnessing determinism, turns away from these means as, for example, the one who consigns reliance, supplications and all such means to the stations (*maqâmât*) of the common people but not to those of the elite; understanding that whoever witnesses determinism knows that what has been determined will be, and so there is no need for these (actions). This is a tremendous error, for Allah has determined things by their causes just as He has determined happiness and misfortune by their causes, as the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said: "Allah has created a people for paradise, having created it for them while they were still in their fathers' loins, and so they do the work of the people of paradise; and He has created a people for hell, having created it for them while they were still in their fathers' loins, and so they do the work of the people of hell."[80] Also, when the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, informed them (the Companions) that Allah has recorded the determined measures of all things (*kataba-l-maqâdîr*), they said: "O Messenger of Allah! Should we not abandon work and just rely on the Book." He replied: "No! Work! For everyone is facilitated toward that for which he was created. The one who is of the people of happiness, will be facilitated toward the work of the people of happiness, while the one who

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[79]Reinert (1968:141-162) discusses the relationship between the *asbâb* and *tawakkul* in Sufi thinking. In classical Sufi doctrine, the "*asbâb*" (Mittel) are set in opposition to "*tawakkul*" (mit Gott ohne Bindung zu Leben); see Reinert, pp.145-146. Ibn Taymiyyah is arguing that *tawakkul* is to live in conformity with the means that God revealed. Ibn Taymiyyah also discusses this point below, Chapter 7, section 3.

[80]Muslim, qadar 31; Abû Dâwud, sunnah 17; Nasâ'î, janâ'iz 58; Ibn Mâjah, muqaddimah 10; Ahmad, VI:41, 208. The second half of the hadith is omitted from Editions 3 and 4.

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is of the people of misfortune, will be facilitated toward the work of the people of misfortune."[81] Thus, the means which Allah has ordered for His worshippers are acts of worship, and reliance is associated with worshipping as in the verses of the Exalted One:

...So worship Him (O Muhammad) and rely on Him... [Hûd 11:123]

...Say: He (Allah) is my Lord! there is no deity but He! I rely on Him, and my repentance is to Him. [al-Ra'd 13:30]

And there is the statement of Shu'ayb:

... I rely on Him (Allah) and I repent to Him. [Hûd 11:88]

There is another group that abandons recommended actions but not obligations. Therefore they are diminished (in faith) in accordance with that.

There is yet another group that becomes deceived by the extraordinary events that occur to them such as an unveiling (mukâshafah) or an answer to a supplication contrary to general custom, etc..[82] Hence, a

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[81]Bukhârî, qadar 4.

[82]The reference here is obviously to certain Sufi beliefs related to the mystic experience. In particular, the concept of unveiling is the basis for the mysticism and gnosticism of the Sufis. The term kashf, from which is derived mukâshafah, is translated into terms such as "revelation," "uncovering" or "disclosure," and is synonymous with other Sufi terms such as fath, futûh or 'ilm al-futûh. (See Ernst, 1985:139 and 151.) In describing the difference between unveiling and reflection (fikr or tafakkur) in Ibn 'Arabî's critique of the intellect, Chittick (1989:63) explains that reflection is "...a peculiar mental process...which is the domain of the proponents of Kalâm and the philosophers." As for unveiling, he explains that the position of Ibn 'Arabî and the great Sufis is that kashf refers to "...knowledge given to them by God without the interference of that rational ('aqlî) or considerative (nazarî) faculty known as reflection." This point highlights Ibn Taymiyyah's mediating position concerning the intellect, for he rejects the role of the intellect as described by the mutakallimûn (see above, section 12), while upholding the need for the intellect in opposition to a mystic knowledge, which he claims is mere deception.

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person of this group becomes distracted from acts of worship, gratitude and similar things which he is commanded to perform. These matters frequently occur to the "people of traversing and confrontation."[83] A worshipper can only save himself from these matters by adhering in each moment[84] to Allah's command with which He sent His Messenger, as al-Zuhrî said: "Those of our predecessors who have passed on used to say that clinging to the Sunnah is a salvation." This is so because the Sunnah, as Mâlik, may Allah be pleased with him, had said, is like the ark of Noah, for whoever rides it will be rescued and whoever misses it will drown.

The Two Principles of Perfect Worship

15A Deviation, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, results from either ignorance of the foundations of worship or simply neglecting them. Thus the preceding arguments about preferring reason to revelation

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[83]The Arabic phrase is *ahl al-sulûk wa-l-tawajjuh*. These are technical terms used by the Sufis to describe their passage from one state or station to another. I have taken the translations of the terms from Ernst (1985:3, 58), who does not refer to them in one combined phrase. The *sulûk* is the wayfaring of the Sufi in pursuit of the cognizance of the Divine Reality whereas the *tawajjuh* is a concentration or attentiveness to a particular thing. In Ibn 'Arabî's metaphysics, *tawajjuh* is God's attentiveness directed "...toward someone [meaning] that He manifests His reality to that person through self-disclosure" (Chittick, 1989:280).

[84]Ibn Taymiyyah uses the expression *fî kulli waqt*, which simply means "in each moment." However, in the present context it suggests further references to Sufi terminology. Ibn 'Arabî, for example, uses the term *waqt* in reference to a servant's nearness to certain names of God. Concerning his metaphysical doctrine on this matter he states that "in each moment" a "...servant must be the possessor of nearness to one divine name and the possessor of distance from another name which, at that moment, has no ruling property over him." (See Chittick, 1989:151) Ibn Taymiyyah is clearly implying here that the Sunnah as transmitted through the *salaf* must guide a worshipper in every apparent deed and inner state.

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and following desires leads him to a clarification of the two principles that he sees as the basis of proper worship: that one worships only God and that he worships Him according to His command and legislation. These two criteria for worship, states Ibn Taymiyyah, refer to sincerity in religion, which is doing deeds only for God's sake, and to the righteous deed, which is doing the good deeds that God loves. To support his point, he presents definitions and examples of sincerity and correctness from verses of the Quran and statements of the *salaf*.

15B There is only one meaning (*maqsûd*) for terms such as worshipping, obedience, uprightness, and holding fast to the straight path, but they have two main principles. The first is that only Allah is to be worshiped, and the second is that the worshipper must worship Him in the way that He commanded and legislated. He should not worship Him based on any other principles such as desires and innovations.[85] The Exalted One says:

> ...and so whoever hopes for the meeting with his Lord, let him do righteous work and not associate anyone in worshipping his Lord. [al-Kahf 18:110]

> Certainly, whoever submits himself fully to Allah as a perfect devotee has his reward with his Lord; no fear will come to them, and they shall not grieve. [al-Baqarah 2:112]

> Who is better in religion than one who submits himself fully to Allah as a perfect devotee and who follows the way of Abraham as a sincere worshipper of Allah? Indeed, Allah took Abraham as an intimate friend. [al-Nisâ' 4:125]

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[85]Edition 3 inserts *wa-l-zunûn*, and Edition 4 mentions only *al-bida'*.

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The righteous deed is perfect devotion (al-ihsân), which is the performance of the best deeds; and the best deeds are those that Allah and His Messenger love. These are the obligatory acts and recommended acts which have been commanded by Allah and His Messenger and which are not some unlegislated innovation in religion,[86] for Allah and His Messenger do not love these. They are not the best deeds nor righteous deeds. This is similar to what is known to be rebellious acts[87] such as blatant sins and injustice. These matters are never considered as good or righteous deeds.

As for His statements "and not associate anyone in worshipping his Lord" [18:110] and "who submits himself fully to Allah" [2:112 and 4:125], they refer to the sincerity of religion for Allah alone. 'Umar ibn al-Khattâb, may Allah be pleased with him, used to say: "O Allah! Make the whole of my deed righteous, and make it pure for Your Countenance, and do not give anyone else a share of it." al-Fudayl ibn 'Iyâd[88] said the following about His verse ...that He (Allah) may try you as to which of you is the best devotee as to deeds... [al-Mulk 67:2], "(The best deed) is the most sincere and the most proper." They asked: "O Abû 'Alî! What is the most sincere and the most proper deed?" He said: "A deed that is sincere but not proper

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[86]Edition 3 inserts *laysat fî-l-kitâb wa lâ fî sahîhi-l-sunnah fa-inna-hâ wa in qâla man qâlahâ wa 'amila bi-hâ man 'amila.*

[87]Editions 3, 4 and 5 have *man ya'malu mâ lâ yajûz* instead of *mâ yu'lamu anna-hu fujûr.*

[88]Abû 'Alî al-Fudayl ibn 'Iyâd ibn Mas'ûd ibn Bishr al-Tamîmî al-Yarbû'î was from the tribe of Tamîmî and was born in Samarqand in 105/723. It is said that in his early years he was a brigand but was converted to a religious life. He became a disciple of Sufyân al-Tawrî, studied hadith in Kufa and lectured at the court of the Abbasid Caliph Hârûn al-Rashîd. He died in Mecca in 187/803. See Reinert (1968:302) and Brockelmann, *GAS* 1:636.

is not accepted, and one that is proper but not sincere is not accepted. (There is no acceptance of deeds) until they are both sincere and proper. Sincerity means to be for Allah alone, and proper means to be in compliance with the Sunnah."

A Grammatical Analysis of the Commands to Worship

16A At this point, Ibn Taymiyyah anticipates certain questions concerning the grammar and syntax of the verses that indicate the manner of worshipping God. As discussed in Chapter 2, Ibn Taymiyyah views the Arabic language as the vehicle of revelation, thus obliging a Muslim to understand all aspects of the language and how God uses Arabic to convey the meaning of the revealed texts. This relationship between language and worship is another example of his "organic" view of worship. His purpose is to indicate that God has left nothing to the whims of the worshipper. This point is more forcefully emphasized at the end of *al-'Ubūdiyyah* (see below Chapter 8, section 7).

In this section, he gives examples of the coordination of specific terms to general terms, the reasons for coordination, and the specific aspects of it. By giving these examples, he explains that the purpose of the coordination of specific terms to general terms is to single out special characteristics of the specific terms that are not apparent in the general terms. For this reason, God may speak about the prophets in general and then mention certain ones by

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name, or He may speak about good deeds and mention specific ones such as praying and giving charity.

16B   Now, if it is said that if all that Allah loves is included in the term "worshipping," why did He coordinate ('atafa) other terms to it, such as in His verses:

> You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help. [al-Fâtihah 1:5]

> ...So worship Him (O Muhammad) and rely on Him... [Hûd 11:123]

And in the statement of Noah:

> Worship Allah and act piously out of fear of Him, and obey me. [Nûh 71:3]

There are similar statements of other messengers.

The response is that this occurs frequently (in the Quran), as in the verses of Allah:

> ...Verily, prayer prevents blatant sin and reprehensible deeds... [al-'Ankabût 29:45]

> Allah surely commands justice and perfect devotion, and giving to relatives; and He forbids blatant sin, reprehensible deeds and transgression... [al-Nahl 16:90]

In this verse, "giving to relatives" is a part of justice and perfect devotion, just as "blatant sin" and "transgression" are aspects of reprehensible deeds. Also, there is His verse:

> As to those who hold fast to the Book and are constant at prayer... [al-A'râf 7:170]

But being constant at prayer is one of the greatest forms of holding fast to the Book. Also, there is His verse:

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...They used to rush to do good deeds and to call on Us with hope and fear... [al-Anbiyâ' 21:90]

The supplication with hope and fear is part of doing good deeds. Examples similar to these are numerous in the Quran.

This topic of coordination sometimes occurs when one of the two terms is considered as a part of the other; thus it is coordinated to the other term as a specification apropos of the need to seek a general meaning and a specific meaning. Other times, the indication of the term varies according to the conditions of separation or association. When the term is separate, its meaning is general, but when it is in association with another term, it has a specific meaning. For example, this occurs with the terms *faqîr* (the poor) and *miskîn* (the needy) as in these verses of the Exalted One:

(Charity is) for the poor (*fuqarâ'*), who in Allah's cause are restricted (from travel)... [al-Baqarah 2:273]

...Feeding ten needy persons (*masâkîn*)... [al-Mâ'idah 5:89]

When one of them is used separately the meaning of the other is included in it. But when they are associated with each other as in this verse of the Exalted One:

Charity is only for the poor (*al-fuqarâ'*) and the needy (*wa-l-masâkîn*)... [al-Tawbah 9:60]

they have two distinct meanings.

It is said that when a specific term is coordinated to a general one, the condition of association is not included in the meaning of the general term. Rather, it is part of this (condition of separation). But the truth is that this is not necessarily so. The Exalted One says:

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Whoever is an enemy to Allah, His angels, His messengers, Gabriel and Michael... [al-Baqarah 2:98]

(Remember) when We made the covenant with the prophets, and with you (Muhammad) and with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, the son of Mary. [al-Ahzâb 33:7]

Mentioning the specific with the general can be for a variety of reasons. Sometimes a specific term might have a unique quality which does not exist in the rest of the components of the general, as in the case of Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Other times, the general term might be indefinite, and one cannot understand the details of its generality, as in His verse:

...A guidance to those who act piously. Who believe in the unseen, are constant at prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them; who believe in what has been sent down to you (Muhammad) and in what was sent down before you... [al-Baqarah 2:2-4]

His statement "Who believe in the unseen" comprises all the unseen in which one should believe. However, it is undefined. There is no indication that a part of the unseen includes things such as "in what has been sent down to you (Muhammad) and in what was sent down before you." (The statement "Who believe in the unseen") might also mean that they believe in that which is reported, which is the unseen, and in the act of reporting about the unseen, which is "what has been sent down to you (Muhammad) and what was sent down before you." Also under this topic are the verses of the Exalted One:

Recite what is revealed to you from the Book, and be constant at prayer... [al-'Ankabût 29:45]

Those who hold fast to the Book and are constant at prayer... [al-A'râf 7:170]

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The recitation of the Book clearly means following it.[89] This is just as Ibn Mas'ûd said concerning His verse "Those to whom We have given the Book recite it with a true recitation..." [al-Baqarah 2:121], "They allow what it allows, they forbid what it prohibits, they believe in its obscure passages, and they implement its firm commands." Therefore, following the Book includes prayer and other duties. However, He specifically mentions prayer because of its distinguishable qualification. Likewise, there is His statement to Moses:

> In truth! I am Allah, there is no deity but I, so worship Me and be constant at prayer for My remembrance. [Tâ' Hâ' 20:14]

Here being constant at prayer for the remembrance of Him is one of the most exalted forms of worshipping Him. Also, there is the verse of the Exalted One:

> ...Act piously out of fear of Allah and always say what is righteous. [al-Ahzâb 33:70]

> ...Act piously out of fear of Allah and seek the means of approach to Him... [al-Mâ'idah 5:35]

> ...Act piously out of fear of Allah and be with the truthful ones. [al-Tawbah 9:119]

All these matters are part of the perfection of acting piously out of fear of Allah (taqwâ). Also, there is His verse:

> ...So worship Him (O Muhammad) and rely on Him... [Hûd 11:123]

Reliance and seeking help are aspects of worshipping Allah. However, they are specifically mentioned so that the worshipper (muta'abbid) may

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[89]Edition 3 inserts wa-l-'amal bi-hi.

strive to attain them because of their special qualifications. This is so because they are the means of assistance (in performing) all other aspects of worshipping, for He cannot be worshiped without His help.

Summarizing the Description of Perfect Worship

17A Ibn Taymiyyah closes this introductory chapter by focusing on the manner in which perfection in worship is achieved. Up to this point, he has integrated the various components of worship into an "organic whole." He has explained the terms and concepts related to worship such as submission, humility, faith, love, reliance and fear. He has explained in his fashion the relationship between predestination and free will and how a worshipper is to respond to God with repentance after committing a sin. He has mentioned the most grievous errors committed by misguided groups and individuals, in particular how passion and desire lead people to innovation by abusing the concept of predestination. He has outlined the foundations of correct worship based on the two principles of religion: acting for the sake of God and acting in accordance with the Sunnah. Finally, he has indicated that the Arabic of the Quran conveys the proper meaning of all aspects of the religion. Ibn Taymiyyah now states that the perfection of the created being is the realization of his worship of God and that increasing the reality of worship proportionately increases the perfection of worship. This proposition is followed by a review of the verses related to worship. In the main body of the text

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(Chapters 6-8), he will expand on these themes, detail the specific aspects of worship and deviation, and explain how love, passion and desire overwhelm people and lead them into innovation and polytheism.

17B   If all of this is clear, then the perfection of the created being lies in the realization of his worship to Allah. The more a worshipper increases the realization of worship the more his perfection will increase and his rank will rise. Whoever imagines that a created being can escape from worship by any means, or that departing from it is more perfect, will be one of the most ignorant and erring of all creation. The Exalted One says:

> They say: The Infinitely Merciful has taken a son (from the angels). Glorified be He! They are only honored worshippers. They do not speak before Him, and they act by His command. He knows what is before them, and what is behind them, and they cannot intercede except for the one with whom He is pleased; and they tremble apprehensively in awe of Him. [al-Anbiyâ' 21:26-28]

> They say: The Infinitely Merciful has taken a son. Indeed you have brought forth a terrible thing by which the heavens are almost torn apart and the earth is split asunder and the mountains fall in utter ruin—that you ascribe a son to the Infinitely Merciful. But it is not suitable for the Infinitely Merciful that He takes a son. Everything in the heavens and on earth comes to the Infinitely Merciful as a humbled servant. He has taken them all into account and has numbered them accurately; and each of them will come alone to Him on the Day of Resurrection. [Maryam 19:88-95]

The Exalted One says concerning the Messiah:

> He (Jesus) was only a worshipper to whom We granted Our favor (of prophethood), and We made him an example for the Children of Israel. [al-Zukhruf 43:59]

The Exalted One also says:

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(Chapters 6-8), he will expand on these themes, detail the specific aspects of worship and deviation, and explain how love, passion and desire overwhelm people and lead them into innovation and polytheism.

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> He (Jesus) was only a worshipper to whom We granted Our favor (of prophethood), and We made him an example for the Children of Israel. [al-Zukhruf 43:59]

The Exalted One also says:

Everything in the heavens and on earth belongs to Him (Allah). Those (angels) who are in His very presence are not too proud to worship Him, and do not weary (of worship). They exalt Him night and day, never slackening (to do so). [al-Anbiyâ' 21:19-20]

The Messiah will never be disdainful of being a worshipper of Allah, and neither will the angels who are near (to Him). As for the one who is disdainful of worshipping Him and too proud for it, He will gather them all together to Himself. Then as for those who believe and do righteous deeds, He will give them their rewards and increase His Bounty to them. But as for those who are disdainful and too proud (to worship Him), He will punish them severely, and they will not find any protector or helper for themselves besides Allah. [al-Nisâ' 4:172-173]

Your Lord said: Invoke Me, and I will respond to you. Those who are too proud to worship Me will surely enter hell in humiliation. [Ghâfir (al-Mu'min) 40:60]

Some of His signs are the night and the day and the sun and the moon. Do not prostrate to the sun and the moon, but prostrate to Allah Who created them, if you worship only Him. But if they are too proud for this, then those (angels) who are with your Lord glorify Him night and day, and they never tire. [Fussilat 41:37-38]

Remember your Lord with your soul, humbly and fearfully, without loudness in words, in the morning and in the evening; and do not be one of the neglectful ones. Surely those who are near to your Lord are not too proud to worship Him, they glorify Him and prostrate themselves before Him. [al-A'râf 7:205-206]

Verses in which worshipping is ascribed to the best of creation, and in which those who deviate from it are condemned, are numerous in the Quran. In fact, Allah states that He had sent all the messengers with it. The Exalted One says:

We did not send any messenger before you (Muhammad) but that We revealed to him: There is no deity except I, therefore worship Me alone. [al-Anbiyâ' 21:25]

We have certainly sent to every nation a messenger (with this command): Worship Allah and avoid all false deities. Then Allah guided some of them, while others deserved to be led astray... [al-Nahl 16:36]

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The Exalted One said to the Children of Israel:

O My worshippers who believe! My earth is certainly spacious. Therefore worship Me alone. [al-'Ankabût 29:56]

...and act piously out of fear of Me. [al-Baqarah 2:41]

O people! worship your Lord Who created you and those who were before you, perhaps you will act piously. [al-Baqarah 2:21]

I created jinn and humankind only that they should worship Me alone. [al-Dâriyât 51:56]

Say (O Muhammad): I have certainly been commanded to worship Allah, making religion pure for Him only; and I have been commanded to be foremost amongst the Muslims. Say: I surely fear, if I should disobey my Lord, the torment of a great day. Say: I worship Allah, making my religion pure for Him. Then worship what you like besides Him... [al-Zumar 39:11-15]

Every messenger began his mission with the invitation to worship Allah as the statement of Noah and those who came after him:

...Worship Allah! there is no other deity for you but He... [al-Mu'minûn 24:32 and al-A'râf 7:59]

Also, in the *Musnad*[90] it is reported from Ibn 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, from the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, who said: "I was sent with a sword just before the last hour so that Allah will be worshiped alone, with no partner. My sustenance was made under the shadow of my spear; and humiliation and lowliness were made for those who disobey my order." He has shown that His worshippers are those who will find safety from Satan.[91] Satan says:

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[90]Ahmad, II:50, 96.

[91]Edition 3 inserts *al-sayyi'ât allatî zayyanahâ al-shaytân*, and Edition 4 has *al-sayyi'ât* instead of *al-shaytân*.

...O my Lord! because You sent me astray, I will surely make (disobedience) appear pleasing to them on earth, and I will lead them all astray—except Your purified worshippers among them. [al-Hijr 15:39-40]

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Allah, the Exalted, replies:

You do not have any power over My worshippers, only over the astray ones who follow you. [al-Hijr 15:42]

Also, he (Satan) says:

...I swear by Your might (O Allah) that I will lead them all astray except Your chosen worshippers amongst them. [Sâd 38:82-83]

He says concerning the truth of Joseph, peace be upon him:

...(We did this so) that We might turn evil and blatant sin away from him. Surely he was one of Our chosen worshippers. [Yûsuf 12:24]

He also says:

Glory be to Allah (Who is exalted) above what they ascribe (to Him), but the chosen worshippers of Allah (do not ascribe falsities to Him). [al-Saffât 37:159-160]

He (Satan) certainly has no power over those who believe and rely on their Lord. His power is only over those who take him as a friend and those who associate partners with Him (Allah). [al-Nahl 16:99-100]

He describes those whom He has chosen from His creation as in the verses

of the Exalted One:

Remember Our worshippers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, men of strength and understanding (in religion). We purified them for a special purpose—the remembrance of the hereafter. [Sâd 38:45-47]

...and remember Our worshipper David, a man of strength (in worship); he was a sincere penitent. [Sâd 38:17]

He says concerning Solomon:

...how excellent a worshipper; he was a sincere penitent. [Sâd 38:30]

(He says) concerning Job:

...how excellent a worshipper; he was a sincere penitent. [Sâd 38:44]

Remember Our worshipper, Job, when he invoked his Lord... [Sâd 38:41]

He says concerning Noah, peace be upon him:

The offspring of those whom We carried (in the ark) with Noah; he certainly was a grateful worshipper. [al-Isrâ' (Banî Isrâ'îl) 17:3]

He also says:

Glorified be He Who took His worshipper (Muhammad) for a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque (of Mecca) to the Farthest Mosque (in Jerusalem)... [al-Isrâ' (Banî Isrâ'îl) 17:1]

When the worshipper of Allah (Muhammad) stood up, calling to Him.... [al-Jinn 72:19]

If you are in doubt concerning what We have sent down to Our worshipper (Muhammad)... [al-Baqarah 2:23]

Thus He (Allah) revealed to His servant (Gabriel) what he (then) revealed (to Muhammad). [al-Najm 53:10]

A fountain from which the worshippers of Allah will drink... [al-Insân (al-Dahr) 76:6]

The worshippers of the Infinitely Merciful are those who walk on earth with reverence... [al-Furqân 25:63]

There are many verses which are similar to these in the Quran.

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The Slavery of a Heart

1A   This chapter marks the beginning of the main body of the text which Ibn Taymiyyah separates from the introduction with the subtitle *fasl.* In this chapter, he develops two main themes: 1) how a person's initial attachment to created beings develops into the slavery of his heart to created beings, and 2) how having the correct type of love for God and His Messenger leads to the perfection of worship. Ibn Taymiyyah explains to his readers various aspects of the slavery of a soul to created beings by pointing out the connection between interpersonal relationships and the desires for the rewards and pleasures stemming from them. As a soul grows more dependent on others or on material benefits, he contends, it enters deeper into a ruinous spiritual state from which it is almost impossible to escape. Freedom from this condition, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts, can only be found in slavery to God, that is, in directing one's love and worship to the Lord who is solely capable of bringing tranquility to a soul. The path of proper worship is a straight path with indicators and instructions leading to perfection. Although there are many pitfalls to be avoided, it is an ascent toward nearness to God.

Ibn Taymiyyah's first task is to show that slavery is a necessary condition of a heart. By presenting hadiths and statements of the Companions, he indicates various modes of attachment to created

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beings and the ill effects that result from this. He mentions, for example, that the Prophet cursed the slaves of wealth and luxury. For Ibn Taymiyyah, these two things represent the tip of the ice berg in relation to the many emotional and psychological states of dependency to which a person can succumb in pursuit of these goals. He highlights the emotional states of slavery by discussing the ambitious desire on the part of the one seeking wealth. Obtaining that wealth becomes his criteria for joy or sorrow; if he gets what he wants he is happy, and if he does not get it he becomes angry. Quoting a statement of 'Umar, Ibn Taymiyyah points out that only by renouncing something can one free himself from it. In this way a worshipper can avoid the state of dependency on created beings and avoid becoming like the one whose desire for wealth has replaced his desire for God, putting him in a state of need to acquire wealth.

FASL

1B   Now that this has been clarified for you,[1] it should be known that people[2] differ greatly concerning this topic of worship. Their differences are according to the reality of faith, and in this they are divided into general and specific types. For this reason, with regard to the lordship[3] of the Lord, glorified be He, people have generality, specificity, and variety.[4]

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[1]Ibn Taymiyyah is referring to all that he explained in the first chapter.
[2]Edition 4 is missing *al-nâs*.
[3]Editions 3 and 5 have *ulûhiyyah* instead of *rubûbiyyah*.
[4]Editions 1 and 2 have *wa durûb* after *'umûm wa khusûs*, which does not appear in the other editions. I assume that Ibn Taymiyyah means that people vary in

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Thus, in this religious community (*ummah*) polytheism (*shirk*) is more hidden than the crawling of an ant.[5] It is narrated in the *Sahîh*[6] from the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, that he said: "May the slave ('*abd*) of the dirham be wretched; may the slave of the dinar be wretched; may the slave of velvet cloth be wretched; may the slave of embroidered cloth be wretched. May he be wretched and degraded, and if such a one is pierced with a thorn, let it not be extracted. When he is granted his desires he is pleased and when he is denied them he is angered."

The Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, labeled this person a worshipper of the dirham, a worshipper of the dinar, a worshipper of velvet cloth and a worshipper of embroidered cloth. In this hadith he mentioned a supplication and a description by saying, "May he be wretched and degraded, and if such a one is pierced with a thorn, let it not be extracted." Extraction is the act of removing a thorn from a man,[7] and a tweezer is the means by which a thorn is removed. This hadith refers to the condition of the one who, when evil afflicts him, does not escape it and is not successful because he is wretched and degraded. Thus he has neither attained his goal nor avoided harm. This is the state of the slave of wealth. He is so described because "when he is granted his desires, he is pleased, and when he is denied them, he is angered," as the Exalted One says:

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their understanding of the meaning of "lordship," and thus also in their beliefs about the Lord.

[5]This example is taken from a hadith mentioned below in Chapter 7, section 10.

[6]Bukhârî, jihâd 70, raqâq 10.

[7]I am reading *min al-rajul* instead of *min al-rijl*.

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Some of them accuse you (Muhammad) concerning the matter of distributing alms, for if they are given something, they are pleased; but if they are not given anything, they suddenly are enraged! [al-Tawbah 9:58]

Thus their contentment is for other than Allah, and their rage is for other than Allah. This is the state of the one who is attached to positions of leadership, to an image or to similar desires of the self. If he attains them, he is pleased, and if he does not attain them, he is angered. Therefore, he is a worshipper of what he desires and a slave (*raqîq*) to it. For slavery (*riqq*) and worship (*'ubûdiyyah*) are in reality the slavery and worship of a heart. Thus one is a worshipper to whatever enslaves his heart and subdues it. For this reason it is said:

The slave is a free man as long as he is content,
And the free man is a slave as long as he is greedy.

Also, a poet said:

I obeyed my desires, thus they subdued me;
And if I had been content, I would have been free.

It is said that greediness is an iron collar around the neck and a fetter around the leg. If the iron collar vanishes from around the neck, the fetter will also vanish from around the leg. It is narrated that 'Umar ibn al-Khattâb, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "Greediness is poverty, and renunciation is richness. If one of you renounces a thing, he will become rich because of it."[8]

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[8]This is a literal translation of *al-tama' faqr wa-l-ya's ghinan wa in ahadukum ya'isa min shay' istaghnâ 'an-hu*. The "poverty" and "richness" intended here is a heart's enslavement by, or independence from, created beings.

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This is a matter that a person finds within himself. For it is certainly so that he will not seek after or desire anything he has renounced. His heart will not remain in need of it or the person who might supply it. However, when a person has a desire concerning a certain matter and hopes for it, his heart becomes attached to it. Then he becomes in need of attaining it and whomever he believes might be the cause of attaining it. This is the case for things such as wealth, fame and images (*suwar*). Al-Khalīl (Abraham), the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said:

> ...therefore seek your provisions from Allah alone, worship Him, and be grateful to Him, for you will be returned to Him. [al-'Ankabūt 29:17]

The Meaning of Reliance on God

2A At this point Ibn Taymiyyah brings up the issue of requesting things from created beings. He presents several hadiths to show that it is forbidden to rely on others and to ask them for provisions unless one is in a state of dire poverty. The hadiths indicate the need to rely on God and to work for whatever provisions He may have allotted for you. It is clear that Ibn Taymiyyah is using these hadiths to refute the claims of some Sufi groups that a Muslim must renounce working for provisions as well as wealth itself. In his discussion of reliance (*tawakkul*), Ibn Taymiyyah firmly states that begging is not a sign of reliance on God but one of abandoning His legislation.[9]

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[9]The issue of reliance (*tawakkul*) in Sufi thinking has been dealt with in detail by B. Reinert (1968). See especially his discussion of *Das Nichterwerb*, pp.170-190. Reinert also mentions (p.220) that Ibn Hanbal emphasized the need for both *tawakkul* and work. On the same page he states that 'Abd-Allah

2B   An *'abd* must have provisions, for he is in need of them. Thus when he seeks his provisions from Allah, he becomes a worshipper of Allah and in need of Him. But when he seeks them from a created being, he becomes a worshipper of that created being and in need of him. For this reason, requesting (*mas'alah*) things from a created being has been forbidden in principle and is only allowed under necessity. There are many hadiths in the *Sihâh, Sunan,* and *Masânîd* on the prohibition of requests. He, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said: "Some of you will continue begging (*mas'alah*) so that on the Day of Resurrection you will come without a bit of flesh on your faces."[10] He said: "Whoever begged from people while having enough (provisions) will have scratches on his face because of his begging."[11] He said: "Begging is only allowable when there is horrendous debt, debilitating injury, or emaciating poverty."[12] This meaning is in the *Sahîh,* which also contains: "It is better for one of you to take his rope and go to chop wood (for his livelihood) than to beg from people, whether they give him anything or deny him."[13]

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ibn al-Mubârak's position was that working does not hinder a Muslim from *tawakkul,* but there is a risk that he might corrupt it. Reinert (p.170) identifies S̲h̲aqîq al-Balkhî (d. 194/809-10) as the classical representative of the concept of abandoning work.

[10]Buk̲h̲ârî, zakâh 52; Nasâ'î, zakâh 83; Ahmad, II:15, 88.

[11]Tirmid̲î, zakâh 22, 23; Ibn Mâjah, zakâh 16, 26; Abû Dâwud, zakâh 24; Dârimî, zakâh 15; Ahmad, I:388, 441.

[12]Abû Dâwud, zakâh 26; Tirmid̲î, zakâh 23; Ibn Mâjah, tijârât 25; Ahmad, III:114, 127.

[13]Buk̲h̲ârî, zakâh 50, 53, buyû' 15, musâqâh 13; Tirmid̲î, zakâh 38; Nasâ'î, zakâh 85; Ahmad, I:124, II:243, 257, 300, 395, 418, 475, 496.

He said: "Whatever wealth comes to you without begging for it or aspiring to it, you may take. But do not let your soul follow any other wealth."[14]

Thus, the Prophet disliked the taking of money based on a request of the tongue or an aspiration of the heart. He said in an authentic hadith: "Allah shall enrich whoever dispenses (with riches). Allah will make chaste the one who seeks chastity. Allah will grant surety to whoever is patient. No one has been given a gift better and more ample than patience."[15] He also commanded his special companions not to request anything from people in principle. It is reported in the *Musnad* that when Abû Bakr al-Siddîq, may Allah be pleased with him, used to drop [a whip][16] from his hand, he would not ask anyone to give it to him, but would say, "My intimate friend commanded me not to ask people for anything." It is reported in *Sahîh Muslim*[17] and elsewhere from 'Awf ibn Mâlik that when the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, accepted the pledge of allegiance from him and others, he whispered to them a secret word: "Do not ask people for anything." Thereafter, when a person of that group used to drop a whip from his hand, he would not say to anyone: "Give it to me." Thus the texts have indicated in many places that the commandment is to ask the Creator and the prohibition is to ask the created being as His verse states:

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[14]Bukhârî, zakâh 51; Muslim, zakâh 110, 111; Dârimî, zakâh 19; Nasâ'î, zakâh 94; Ahmad, II:99.

[15]Bukhârî, zakâh 18, 50, raqâq 20; Muslim, zakâh 124; Abû Dâwud, zakâh 28; Tirmidî, birr 77; Dârimî, zakâh 18; Muwatta', sadaqah 7; Nasâ'î, zakâh 85; Ahmad, III:12, 44, 47, 93, 403, 434.

[16]The word *al-sawt* is missing from Edition 1.

[17]As yet, I have not found the specific reference for this hadith.

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And so when you finish your obligations, persist in supplications; and make humble requests of your Lord. [al-Inshirâh (al-Sharh) 94:7-8]

The Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said to Ibn 'Abbâs: "When you ask for something, ask it of Allah; and when you seek help, seek it from Allah."[18] The same thing appears in the statement of al-Khalîl (Abraham), upon whom be peace:

...therefore seek from Allah alone your provisions... [al-'Ankabût 29:17]

He did not say "seek your provisions from Allah" because the pre-positioning of an adverb implies particularization and restriction.[19] The meaning of the verse is the same as saying, "Do not seek provisions except from Allah." He, the Exalted, says:

...ask Allah for a portion His bounty... [al-Nisâ' 4:32]

A person must acquire the provisions he needs and he must prevent what harms him. It has been legislated for him that these two matters are to be supplicated from Allah. Thus, he should direct his requests to Him and complain only to Him[20] as Jacob said:

...I complain of my grief and sorrow only to Allah... [Yûsuf 12:86]

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[18]Tirmidî, qiyâmah 59; Ahmad, I:293, 303, 307.

[19]The issue here refers to the Arabic syntax of the verse in question: fa-btaghû 'inda-llâhi-l-rizq. Ibn Taymiyyah is saying that the change from the normal word order, i.e., verb-object-adverb, by means of pre-positioning of the adverb (taqdîm al-zarf) brings the added meaning of particularization (ikhtisâs) and restriction (hasr) to the sentence.

[20]Edition 3 has fa-lâ yas'alu rizqahu illâ min allâh wa lâ yashtakî illâ ilayhi.

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Patience and Renouncement

3A   Ibn Taymiyyah insists that reliance and requesting aid and assistance must be directed to God alone. He sees these matters as being related to the concept of patience (*sabr*). In the face of adversity, he says, a Muslim must rely on God, request help from Him and complain of hardships to Him. These matters are actions of the heart and will determine one's relationship to God. For Ibn Taymiyyah, reliance, patience and requesting help are aspects of worship which determine the type of enslavement a heart acquires; they are the basis upon which reward and punishment are given out. He goes on to say that if a Muslim directs these matters to God alone, then he will be rewarded, but if he directs them to created beings, then he will be punished. He points out that the inner reality of a Muslim is more important than outward appearances and that enslavement of the heart is worse than that of the body. For Ibn Taymiyyah, the outward appearances cannot be used to indicate the reality of a Muslim's spiritual state. Someone may have material wealth, social status and political authority but be in a state of spiritual enslavement because he is dependent on those around him. He may be the commander of an army, but his desire for that position may force him to ignore God's Law and do things to please those under him who help to maintain him in that position. On the other hand, says Ibn Taymiyyah, someone may be a servant or a slave but be in a state of spiritual freedom. He may take orders from

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his master, but he does his work for the sake of God based on his love for Him.

3B   Allah, the Exalted, mentions in the Quran an honorable leaving, an honorable patience, and an honorable forgiveness.[21] It is said that an honorable leaving is a leaving without hurting anyone, an honorable forgiveness is a forgiving without blaming anyone, and an honorable patience is a patience without complaining to any created being. For this reason, it was mentioned to Ahmad ibn Hanbal during his sickness that Tâwûs[22] used to hate the moaning of a sick man and used to say it is a complaint. Thereafter, Ahmad ibn Hanbal did not groan until he died. But as for complaining to the Creator, glorified be He, it does not contradict a honorable patience, for Jacob, peace be upon him, said:

...Then a honorable patience (is best for me)... [Yûsuf 12:18, 83]

...I complain of my grief and sorrow only to Allah... [Yûsuf 12:86]

'Umar ibn al-Khattâb, may Allah be pleased with him, used to recite the Suras Yûnus, Yûsuf and al-Nahl in the dawn prayer. When he passed this verse,[23] he cried so that his sobbing[24] was heard in the last rows. There is also the supplication of Moses, peace be upon him: "O Allah! All

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[21] These references are to *hajr jamîl* in al-Muzzammil 73:15, *sabr jamîl* in Yûsuf 12:18, 83, and *safh jamîl* in al-Hijr 15:85. Ibn Taymiyyah discusses these terms in a separate essay which appears in *Majmû'at al-Rasâ'il wa-l-Masâ'il,* v.1, pp.2-9.

[22] Abû 'Abd al-Rahmân Tâwûs ibn Kaysân was a Follower who died in 106/725. He was known for excessive acts of worship and an asceticism based on a strong fear of the Hellfire; see Reinert (1968:323).

[23] Editions 3 and 4 insert *fî qirâ'atihi.*

[24] Edition 3 has *tashannujuhu* for *nashîjuhu.*

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praises are for You; all complaints are directed to You. You are the One from whom help is sought, from whom succor is sought, and on whom is all reliance. There is no strength nor power except with You."[25]

There is also the supplication the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, made when the people of al-Tā'if acted against him: "O Allah! To You alone I complain of my helplessness, the paucity of my resources and my insignificance before mankind. O most Merciful One, You are the Lord of the oppressed and You are my Lord! O Allah! To whom would You entrust me? To a stranger who would scowl at me? To an enemy whom You have given control over my affairs? But if Your wrath does not fall upon me, I am not concerned about it. For Your pardon is enough for me. I seek refuge with the light of Your countenance, by which all darkness is illuminated and due to which all affairs in this world and in the hereafter are right, should Your anger descend upon me or Your wrath afflict me. To You alone belongs the right of censure until You are pleased, for there is no power nor strength except with You."[26]

The more a worshipper's desire is strengthened concerning Allah's graciousness, mercy and pleasure in order to fulfill his need and prevent harm from reaching him, the more his worship of Him and his freedom from others increases. Similarly, his desire for a created being necessitates his worship of it, and his dispensing with it necessitates the renouncement of his heart for it. And so it is said: "Dispense with whomever you will and you become his equal, have graciousness for whomever you will and

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[25] As yet, I have been unable to find any reference for this supplication.
[26] I have not been able to find this hadith in the *Concordance*. However, Ibn Kaṯîr (1407/1987:v.3, p.134) mentions it in his report on the Prophet's mission to al-Tā'if.

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you become his master, and have a need for whomever you will and you become his captive." Likewise, the desire of a worshipper for his Lord and his hope in Him necessitates his worship of Him, and the aversion of his heart from asking Allah[27] and hoping in Him necessitates the diversion of his heart from the worship of Allah. This is particularly so for the one who has hope in a created being and not in the Creator. It occurs in such a way that his heart is dependent on his leadership position, his soldiers, his followers and his possessions, or on his family and friends, or on his wealth and treasures, or on his leaders and nobles such as his master, king, sheikh, employer, or any of those who have died or will die. He, the Exalted, says:

> Rely on the Living One who will never die, and celebrate His praise; and it suffices that He is well informed about the sins of His worshippers. [al-Furqân 25:58]

Whoever attaches his heart to created beings in order that they render him victorious, provide him with provisions or guide him, has a heart that surrenders to them. It becomes engaged in worship to them according to the level of that submission, although in appearance he is the master, manager[28] and administer over them. But a thinking person looks at realities and not at appearances. Thus, when a man's heart becomes attached to a woman, even though she is lawful for him, it

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[27]Edition 4 has *min ghayri-llâh* instead of *min allâh*, which does not make sense in the context of necessitating a heart to turn away from worshipping God.

[28]Editions 1 and 5 have *mudîr^{an} la-hum*, Edition 3 has *mudabbir^{an} li-umûrihim*, and Editions 2 and 4 have *mudabbir^{an} la-hum*.

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remains her captive; she has control over him[29] and manipulates him as she wills. In appearance he is her lord because he is her husband,[30] but in reality he is her captive and is possessed by her. This is particularly so when she is aware[31] of his need and passion (*'ishq*) for her, and that he will not substitute another women for her. Therefore she controls him in the same way a conquering, oppressive master (has his way with) a conquered slave who cannot escape from him. It is even worse than this because the captivity of a heart is more severe than the captivity of a body, and the subjugation of a heart is more severe than the subjugation of a body. For whoever is [physically][32] subjugated, enslaved and captured[33] would not care when[34] his heart finds rest and serenity from that. Moreover, there exists the possibility for escape.

But when a heart, which is master [of the body],[35] is subdued, enslaved and enthralled by love for other than Allah, then this is pure humiliation, captivity and [degrading][36] worship to what has subdued the heart. The state of worship of a heart and its captivity form the basis on which reward or punishment will be established. If a Muslim is captured by an unbeliever or is unjustly enslaved by a profligate, it will not harm him so long as he can fulfill the obligations required of him. And whoever

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[29]Edition 3 has *tatahakkamu fī-hi* instead of *tahkumu fī-hi*, which is more appropriate with the preposition *fī*. *Tahkumu* should be used with *'alā*.
[30]Edition 3 inserts *aw mālikuhu*.
[31]Edition 3 has *'alimat* for *darat*.
[32]This insertion is from Editions 3, 4 and 5, which have *badanahu*. The term *bi-dūnihi* in Editions 1 and 2 does not make sense here.
[33]Only Editions 1 and 2 have *wa asara*.
[34]Edition 3 which has *mā dāma* instead of *idā kāna*.
[35]This insertion is from Edition 3, which has *malik al-jasad*.
[36]In Edition 3, the adjective *al-dalīlah* is added to *al-'ubūdiyyah*.

is justly subjugated while continuing to fulfill the rights of Allah and the rights of his master will be rewarded twice. Even if he is forced to proclaim disbelief, pronouncing it while keeping faith secure in his heart, that will not harm him. But the one whose heart is subdued, thus becoming a slave for other than Allah, will be harmed[37] by that even if outwardly he were a king over the people. For freedom (*hurriyyah*) is the freedom of the heart, and slavery (*'ubûdiyyah*) is the slavery of the heart. Similarly, richness (*ghinan*) is the richness of the heart. The Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said: "Richness is not how much wealth you have but the richness of the soul (*nafs*)."[38]

Freedom and Passionate Love

4A   Thus true freedom or enslavement, says Ibn Taymiyyah, are in a heart. It is an attachment to created beings that eventually leads to the worst state of spiritual poverty which is passionate love (*'ishq*). For Ibn Taymiyyah, *'ishq* is exclusively a negative term resulting in extreme attachment and obedience to a created being. As he explains elsewhere, it is not a term that can be used to describe the love between man and God because it is by definition an extreme love that goes beyond all limits.[39] Thus ascribing *'ishq* to

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[37]Edition 3 inserts *kullu-l-darar*.

[38]Bukhârî, raqâq 15; Muslim, zakâh 120; Tirmidî, zuhd 40; Ibn Mâjah, zuhd 9; Ahmad, II:243, 261, 315, 390, 438, 443, 539, 540.

[39]See *Amrâd al-Qulûb wa Shifâ'uhâ* (pp.131-133). Ibn Taymiyyah states that *'ishq* is an excessive love (*mahabbah mufritah*) that goes beyond limits without itself being limitless and thus cannot refer to God whose love has no limits. Also, he states that *'ishq* is related to willful actions (*min bâbi-l-irâdât*) and

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a worshipper, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts, is an error because everything a person does in relation to worshipping God must occur within the limits that He and His Messenger have set.

4B   This hadith, by my life,[40] is when a person's heart is subjugated by an allowable image. As for the one whose heart is subjugated by an unlawful image, a woman or a youth, then this is a torment which has no recompense.[41] These people are amongst the least rewarded and the most

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imagination (*min bâbi-l-tasawwurât*). Thus, for Ibn Taymiyyah, '*ishq* becomes a corruption in forming ideas (*takhyîl*), for one imagines the object of passionate love to be other than what it actually is. By maintaining the distinction between *hubb* and '*ishq*, Ibn Taymiyyah is following the *Hanbali* tradition of censuring passionate love; see Giffen (1971:15-29) and Bell (1971:52-58). Somewhat ironically, the *Hanbalîs* seem to have borrowed the definitions and concepts of *hubb* and '*ishq* from their theological rivals, the Mutazilites. Al-Jâhiz, who was one of the earliest scholars to speak in detail on this topic, explains that '*ishq* is more than simple love (*hubb*), for "'*ishq* is the name for what exceeds that which is called *hubb* and every *hubb* is not called '*ishq*, for '*ishq* is the name for what exceeds that degree..." (Giffen, 1971:85). Al-Jâhiz also sees passionate love as a disease, which is another concept picked up by the *Hanbalîs*. He states in the *Risâlat al-Qiyân* in reference to profane love: "Now I will describe for you the definition of the passion of love ('*ishq*), so that you may understand what exactly it is. It is a malady which smites the spirit (*rûh*), and affects the body as well by contagion...Passion is compounded of love (*hubb*) and infatuation (*hawâ*) and natural affinity (*mushâkalah*) and habitude of association (*ilf*). It begins with a growing intensity, reaches a climax, and then falls off by natural progression to the stage of complete dissolution and the point of positive revulsion...'Love' (*hubb*) is a term applied to the concept which [linguistic] convention prescribes [as its meaning], and there is no other descriptive term for this. One can say, 'a man loves God', 'God loves the believer', 'a man loves his child', 'a boy loves his father' or 'loves his friend' or 'his country' or 'his people', and his love can tend in any direction he likes; but none of this can be called passion. One understands therefore that the term 'love' is not adequate to express the idea of 'passion'; the latter needs the addition of the other factors..." (Beeston, 1980:28-30). The *Hanbalîs* used these same arguments in a moral context to refute the Sufi concept of having '*ishq* in relation to God.

[40]Edition 3 has *la-'amru-llâhi* instead of *la-'amrî*.
[41]Editions 3 and 4 have *lâ yudânîhi 'adâb* instead of *lâ tawâb fî-hi*.

severely punished. Thus the one who is passionate (*'āshiq*) toward an image, and remains[42] attached to it and subdued by it, will be surrounded by all kinds of evil[43] and corruption, which only the Lord of all slaves can count, even if he were safeguarded from committing the greatest blatant sin. For the continuous attachment of a heart to (an image) without committing a blatant sin is more harmful for him than committing a sin and then repenting of it, thus removing its trace from his heart. These people are similar to drunkards or to the insane as it is said:

A drunkard becomes intoxicated on passion or on wine,
But try he to recover from the first, he is still out of his mind.

Elsewhere it is said:

They said you were driven insane by what you have a passion for; I replied: Passion is more powerful than what affects the insane.

As for passion, the obsessed one will never overcome this fate; Whereas at times only do the insane succumb to their insanity.

<u>The Will to Act Leads to Tasting Faith</u>

5A   In this section, Ibn Taymiyyah begins to explain what he sees as the correct forms of worship and love and the effects stemming from them. Referring to the story of Joseph in the Quran, for example, he points to the ways in which God saves his worshippers from sin and error. In this context, he introduces the concepts of goals and means in a religious framework. Worship is the goal for which one strives, and defending oneself from harm is a means. Ibn

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[42]Editions 3 and 4 change the subject of the verb to *qalbuhu*.
[43]Edition 3 inserts *wa-l-khasrān*.

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Taymiyyah states that the nature of every heart is to move toward what will benefit it and move away from what will harm it. Thus the heart of a Muslim becomes pure by knowing what God approves of and moving toward it, and by knowing what He hates and moving away from it. Thus, for Ibn Taymiyyah, the reality of worshipping a created being puts one in opposition to worshipping God. If a Muslim wants something and believes that it is other people who have the power to give it to him, then he will say and do that which he thinks will please the others. But it is only God, asserts Ibn Taymiyyah, who has the power to grant something or take it away, thus a Muslim should say and do only what will please God. Therefore, he states accordingly, it becomes necessary to love and hate, give and restrain from giving for the sake of God. This becomes a central issue in the matter of perfecting faith. For Ibn Taymiyyah, the completion of faith in, and love for, God becomes a matter of conforming one's desires to be completely compatible with His will.

5B   One of the greatest afflictions[44] is a heart's turning away from Allah. For when a heart tastes the savor of worshipping Allah and sincerity towards Him, then nothing will ever be sweeter, more delightful[45] and more enjoyable than that. A person will only leave a beloved thing for another beloved thing that is more beloved to him than

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[44]Edition 4 inserts *asbâb*, thus the translation reads: "One of the greatest causes of this affliction...."
[45]Edition 3 inserts *wa amta'*; and Edition 4 reverses *lâ atyab wa lâ adall*.

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the former or out of fear of a disliked thing. Therefore, a heart will only turn away from a corrupt love because of a righteous love or because of a fear of harm. The Exalted One says concerning the truth of Joseph, peace be upon him:

> ...thus (We showed him proof) in order to divert evil and blatant sin from him; he was certainly one of Our sincere worshippers. [Yûsuf 12:24]

Thus, Allah turns away from His worshipper any inclination for, and attachment to, an image that could be evil for him. He also turns blatant sin away from him by replacing it with sincerity toward Allah. For this reason, before he tastes the sweetness of worship for Allah and sincerity toward Him, a worshipper's soul (*nafs*) must gain mastery[46] over following its desires. Once he tastes the savor of sincerity, and it grows stronger in his heart, his passion will submit to him without any effort. Allah, the Exalted, says:

> ...prayer certainly prevents blatant sins and reprehensible deeds, and the remembrance of Allah is greater... [al-'Ankabût 29:45]

Prayer has the means to repulse harmful things, such as blatant sins and evil deeds, and it has what leads to the attainment of a beloved thing,[47] that is, the remembrance of Allah. The attainment of this beloved thing is greater than the repulsion of that harmful thing, for the remembrance of Allah and a heart's worship of Allah[48] are goals in

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[46]Editions 1 and 2 have *bi-ghalabati nafsihi*, and Editions 3, 4 and 5 have *taghlibuhu nafsahu*.

[47]Edition 3 has *li-khayri-l-mahbûb* instead of just *al-mahbûb*.

[48]Editions 3, and 4 have *fa-inna dikra-llâh 'ibâdatu-llâh wa 'ibâdatu-l-qalb li-llâhi*.

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themselves (*maqsûdah li-ḏâtihi*). However, repulsing evil from oneself is a goal for other than itself, as a matter of (logical) subordination.[49] A heart is a creature that loves the truth, wants it and seeks it. But when a desire for evil confronts it, a heart seeks the repulsion of that because a heart becomes corrupt just as cultivated land becomes corrupt with thicket. For this reason, He, the Exalted, says:

> He who sanctifies it (his soul) surely succeeds; and he who corrupts it surely fails! [al-Shams 91:9-10]

> He who sanctifies himself, remembers the Name of his Lord and performs prayer shall surely achieve success. [al-A'lâ 87:14-15]

> Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and preserve their chastity, that is purer for them... [al-Nûr 24:30]

> ...And had it not been for Allah's favor and His mercy on you, not one of you would have ever been purified... [al-Nûr 24:21]

Thus He, glorified be He, has made lowering the gaze and preserving chastity the best means of purification of the soul (*nafs*).[50] He also has explained that avoiding blatant sins is part of the purification of the souls (*nufûs*). The purification of souls necessarily includes the cessation of all evils such as blatant sins, injustice, polytheism, and lying. Likewise, the heart of the seeker of leadership and domination on earth is a slave (*raqîq*) to those who help him. Although outwardly he is their leader and the one who is obeyed by them, in reality he has hope in them and fears them. Thus he offers them wealth and governorships and pardons them,[51] so that they will obey him and assist him. Therefore he

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[49]The Arabic reads: *fa-huwa maqsûd li-ghayri-hi 'alâ sabîli-l-taba'*.
[50]Edition 3 has *aqwâ tazkiyah* instead of *azkâ li-l-nafs*.
[51]Edition 3 has *ya'fû 'ammâ yajtarihûnahu* instead of *ya'fû 'an-hum*.

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appears to be an obeyed leader while in fact he is their obedient slave (*'abd*). The fact is that both groups manifest worship of each other, and both have strayed from the reality of worshipping Allah. When their mutual help is for an unjust domination on earth, then they are on the level of those who mutually help each other to commit blatant sins or to obstruct the path (of worship). Hence, each of them desires that which subjugates him and enslaves him[52] to the other.

This is also the case of the seeker of wealth, for this [wealth][53] subjugates and enslaves him. These matters are of two types: The first type of wealth is that for which a worshipper has a need such as for food, drink, housing and marriage. He seeks these from Allah and requests them of Him. Thus he uses this wealth for his needs just as he uses his donkey, which he rides, or his mat, on which he sits. Furthermore, he should use it just as he uses a bathroom, in which he satisfies his need without becoming subjugated to it. For he is in a state of anxiety, and acts niggardly when good touches him.[54]

The second type of wealth is that for which a worshipper does not have a need. It is not befitting for him to attach his heart to this type of wealth, for if his heart becomes attached to it, he becomes subjugated by it. Perhaps he will become dependent on other than Allah concerning it.

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[52]Edition 4 inserts *yasta'biduhu li-l-âkhar*, and Edition 3 inserts *musta'bid li-l-âkhar*. These insertions are in addition to *ista'badahu*, which is in all the texts.

[53]Edition 3 inserts *al-mâl*.

[54]This is a paraphrase of Sura al-Ma'ârij 70:19-21, which states: *inna-l-insâna khuliqa halû'an idâ massahu-l-sharr jazû'an wa idâ massahu-l-khayr manû'an*. Editions 1 and 3 state: *fa-yakûnu halû'an idâ massahu-l-khayr manû'an*. Editions 2, 4 and 5 state: *fa-yakûnu halû'an idâ massahu-l-sharr jazû'an wa idâ massahu-l-khayr manû'an*.

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Then nothing of the reality of worshipping Allah and of the reality of relying on Him will remain with him. Nay, there is in this a portion of worshipping other than Allah and a portion of relying on other than Allah. This person is one of the most deserving of the Prophet's statement: "May the worshipper of the dirham be wretched; may the worshipper of the dinar be wretched; may the worshipper of velvet cloth be wretched; may the worshipper of embroidered cloth be wretched."[55] This person is certainly a worshipper of these objects; for even if he had sought them from Allah, he would have been pleased only if Allah had granted them to him but displeased if Allah had denied him them. However, the worshipper of Allah is one who is pleased with that with which Allah is pleased, is displeased with that with which Allah is displeased, loves what Allah and His Messenger love, hates what Allah and His Messenger hate, makes alliances with the saints of Allah, and takes as enemies His enemies.

Perfecting Faith and Love

6A   In the following section, Ibn Taymiyyah discusses in more detail the relationship between faith and love. Using a hadith of the Prophet, he shows that to realize the true experience of faith, to taste (_dawq_) the sweetness of faith, a Muslim must perfect his love for God and His Messenger and come to love what God loves. The manner in which he completes his love is expressed by Ibn

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[55]See above p.234 n5.

Taymiyyah in the statement "love for the beloved things of the beloved one is an aspect of completing the love of the beloved one." For Ibn Taymiyyah, this means that abandoning any of the allowable things (halāl) or recommended deeds is a sign of a diminished or corrupted love for God, and thus of a diminished faith. On this point, Ibn Taymiyyah opposes certain Sufi groups that follow a path of purgation of even the allowable acts. Likewise, he asserts that perfecting faith also includes hating what God and His Messenger hate. This becomes for him the essence of jihād, a Muslim's striving to bring his will into conformity with God's will. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, these two signs of loving God, that is, following His Messenger and striving in His cause, are the ultimate expressions of faith for all Muslims to emulate.

6B   This is the person who has perfected faith, as in the hadith: "Whoever loves for Allah, hates for Allah, gives for Allah and denies for Allah has indeed perfected faith."[56] The Prophet said: "The most reliable bonds of faith are love for the sake of Allah and hate for the sake of Allah."[57] In the Sahīh[58] it is reported from him, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him: "There are three qualities existing in the one who has attained the sweetness of faith: He is the one to whom Allah and His Messenger are dearer than all else, who loves a person only for the sake of

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[56]Abû Dâwud, sunnah 15; Tirmidî, qiyâmah 60; Ahmad, III:438, 440.
[57]The exact wording of this hadith appears in Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bârî (no date:v.1, p.47). For similar hadiths, cf. Abû Dâwud, sunnah 2; Ahmad, IV:286, V:146.
[58]See above Chapter 5, p.214 n68.

Allah, and who abhors returning to disbelief after Allah has rescued him from it as he abhors being cast into fire."

This worshipper agrees with his Lord in what He loves and dislikes, for Allah and His Messenger are more beloved to him than anything else; and he loves a created being for the sake of Allah and not for the sake of any other,[59] for this is an aspect of the completion of his love for Allah. Indeed, the love for the beloved things of the beloved one is an aspect of the completion of the love for the beloved one. When a worshipper loves the prophets and saints of Allah because they uphold the beloved things of the True One (*al-haqq*), and for no other reason, then he is loving them for the sake of Allah, and not for the sake of any other. He, the Exalted, says:

> ...then Allah will bring forth a people whom He loves and who love Him, they being humble toward the believers and stern toward the disbelievers... [al-Mâ'idah 5:54]

> Say: If you love Allah then follow me, Allah will love you... [Al 'Imrân 3:31]

The Messenger certainly commanded what Allah loves and forbade what He hates. He did what Allah loves and informed about what Allah loves in all truthfulness (*al-tasdîq bi-hi*). Therefore, whoever loves Allah must necessarily follow the Messenger, truthfully relate what he conveyed, obey him in what he commanded, and find solace in emulating what he did. Whoever does this is doing what Allah loves, and so Allah, the Exalted, will love him. Allah has established two signs for the people who love Him: following the Messenger and striving (*jihâd*) in His path. This is so because *jihâd* is the reality of endeavoring to obtain the faith and

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[59]Editions 3 and 4 have *lâ li-gharadi âkhar* instead of *lâ li-wajhi âkhar*.

righteous deeds that Allah loves, and to repulse the disbelief, rebellion and disobedience that Allah hates. He, the Exalted, says:

> Say: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your kindred, the wealth that you have gained, the commerce in which you fear a decline, and the dwellings in which you delight are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving hard in His cause, then wait until Allah brings about His command (of punishment); and Allah does not guide a rebellious people. [al-Tawbah 9:24]

Thus He threatens with this punishment[60] the one whose family and wealth are more beloved to him than Allah, His Messenger, and striving in His cause. Moreover, it is confirmed in the *Sahîh*[61] from him, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, that he said: "By Him in whose hand is my soul, none of you will truly believe until I have become more beloved to him than his children, his parents and all mankind together." Also, it is reported in the *Sahîh*[62] that 'Umar ibn al-Khattâb, may Allah be pleased with him, said to the Prophet: "O Messenger of Allah,[63] you are more beloved to me than everything else except my own soul (*nafsî*)." Then he said: "No! O 'Umar, not until I have become more beloved to you than your own soul." 'Umar replied, "Then, by Allah, you are more beloved to me than my own soul." Then the Prophet said: "Now, O 'Umar."

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[60]Edition 3 has *bi-hâdâ-l-wa'îd al-shadîd* instead of just *bi-hâdâ-l-wa'îd*.
[61]Bukhârî, îmân 8; Muslim, îmân 70; Nasâ'î, îmân 19; Ibn Mâjah, muqaddimah 9; Dârimî, raqâq 29.
[62]Bukhârî, aymân 3. On the relation of this hadith to the previous one, see also Ibn Hajar (no date:v.1, p.59).
[63]Editions 2 and 4 inserts *wa-llâhi* here, which does not appear in the version reported by Bukhârî.

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Love and Hate for the Sake of God

7A   Ibn Taymiyyah continues his discussion of the two signs of loving God by relating them to the perfection of the different aspects of love as a component of worship. Striving in God's cause is defined by Ibn Taymiyyah as exerting one's capabilities in obtaining the beloved things of God and diverting the detested things. This second point is of equal importance in his discussion of the reality of love because for him the idea of hating what God hates is the necessary corollary to loving what He loves. He develops this idea in more detail in the following chapter in relation to those Sufi groups that claim that loving God means loving everything in the existential reality, including sin. For Ibn Taymiyyah, loving and hating for the sake of God stem from the concept of having complete love for the Prophet, as indicated by the previous two hadiths about loving the Prophet more than anything else. Referring back to the two criteria of worship, i.e. doing an action for the sake of God and in accordance with the Sunnah, Ibn Taymiyyah states that reward is based on the intention to do things for the sake of God and the capability to follow the Prophet. Thus he sees it as a sign of weakness of love and faith if a Muslim does not do what he is capable to perform. Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyyah sees love as the motivating force in a Muslim's movement toward God or away from Him. He says that increasing a heart's love for God is to increase worship for Him and to free oneself from other than Him. However, in closing out this section, Ibn Taymiyyah states that the path of

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perfecting love and faith necessarily includes the endurance of hardships and sacrifices.

7B   Hence, the reality of love is only completed through friendship (*muwâlâh*) with the beloved, which is compliance with Him in loving what He loves and hating what He hates. Allah loves faith and piety and hates [disbelief],[64] rebellion and disobedience. Also, it is known that love stirs the will of a heart. The stronger love grows in a heart, the more it seeks to do beloved things. Then, when love becomes complete, it necessitates a decisive will toward obtaining beloved things. When a worshipper is capable of accomplishing them, he will achieve them, but if he is not capable of accomplishing them, thus missing[65] (the beloved things) which have been determined for him, he will have the same reward as that of the one who accomplished them. It is just as the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said: "Whoever calls toward guidance will have a reward similar to the reward of those who follow him, without diminishing any of their reward; and whoever calls toward misguidance will have a burden similar to the burdens of those who follow him, without diminishing any of their burden."[66] Also, he said:

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[64]Editions 3, 4 and 5 add *al-kufr* to *al-fusûq wa-l-'isyân*.

[65]Editions 1, 2, and 3 have *fa-faqada mâ yuqdaru 'alayhi*, and Editions 4 and 5 have *fa-fa'ala*. The sense of this latter wording is that a worshipper does what he is capable of doing while missing that which he is incapable of doing. The point Ibn Taymiyyah is trying to make is that a worshipper will be rewarded according to his intention so long as he exerts all efforts to complete his action even if he fails in doing this.

[66]Muslim, zakâh 70, 'ilm 15; Tirmidî, 'ilm 16; Ibn Mâjah, muqaddimah 14, 15; Dârimî, muqaddimah 44; Muwatta', qurân 41; Ahmad, II:505, 521, III:357, 359-362, V:378.

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"Verily, there are men in Medina who never embarked on a journey nor passed through a valley, but they are with you." They said: "And they are still in Medina?" He said: "They are still in Medina, for legitimate excuses prevented them (from traveling)."[67]

Striving (jihâd) is an exertion of effort and[68] a capability to achieve the beloved of the Truth (al-haqq) and to repulse what the Truth dislikes. Thus if a worshipper abandons the jihâd that he is capable of doing, it is an indication of the weakness of love in his heart for Allah and His Messenger. It is known that beloved things are most often attained only by enduring hateful consequences, regardless of whether the love is righteous or corrupt. The lovers of leadership, wealth and images (suwar) only attain their goals by bearing any harm that comes to them in this life, and in spite of any harm that might afflict them in this life and in the hereafter. Therefore, if the lover of Allah and His Messenger does not endure what sensible people who love other than Allah consider (worthy of enduring) in obtaining their beloved object,[69] it indicates the weakness of his love for Allah. And what these people follow is a path to which the intellect points.[70] But it is known that a believer is stronger in love for Allah as He, the Exalted, says:

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[67] Bukhârî, jihâd 35; Abû Dâwud, jihâd 19; Ibn Mâjah, jihâd 6; Ahmad, III:103, 160, 214, 341.

[68] Edition 3 inserts *huwa kullu mâ yamliku min*.

[69] Editions 1, 2 and 5 have *idâ lam yahtamil mâ yurâ dû-l-ra'y min al-muhibbîn li-ghayri-llâh fî husûli mahbûbihim*. Edition 4 read the same except with *mim-mâ yahtamilûn* inserted after *li-ghayri-llâh*. Edition 3 reads: *idâ lam yahtamil mâ yurâ min tahammuli-l-muhibbîn li-ghayri-llâh mâ yahtamilûn fî sabîli husûli mahbûbihim*.

[70] Editions 1, 2 and 5 have *idan kâna mâ salakahu ûlâ'ika huwa-l-tarîq alladî yasîru bi-hi al-'âqil*. Edition 4 read: *idan kâna mâ yaslukuhu ûlâ'ika huwa-l-*

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Some people set up rivals of Allah; they love them as they love Allah. But those who believe love Allah more (than those others love their idols)... [al-Baqarah 2:165]

To be sure, a lover might follow a path by which he will not obtain the desired goal because of a weakness of his intellect and a corruptness of his imagination. Such a path is not praiseworthy even if the love itself is righteous and praiseworthy. Then how would it be if the love is corrupt, and the path leads nowhere, as with reckless people who seek leadership, wealth and images concerning the love of affairs which cause them harm and hinder the attainment of their goal.[71] However, the objective for any intelligent person[72] is to follow paths that lead to the attainment of his goal.

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tarîq alladî yushîru bi-hi al-'aql. Edition 3 reads the same as 4 except it has id for idan and inserts fî nazarihim after ûlâ'ika.

[71]Editions 3 and 4 have matlûb instead of maqsûd.

[72]Editions 1 and 5 have al-'âqil, Editions 2 and 4 have al-'aql, and Edition 3 has dû-l-'aql al-salîm.

The Interaction of Love, Worship and Reliance

1A   In this chapter, Ibn Taymiyyah discusses the idea of the dependency of a heart on a being other than itself. Once a Muslim realizes the necessity of dependency, he can strive to attain to a state of awareness of his total dependency on God. Ibn Taymiyyah points out two aspects of a heart that indicate its state of dependency. The first is a heart's need to worship, which he considers to be a final cause, and the second is the need for reliance and seeking help, which he says is an efficient cause. For Ibn Taymiyyah, the idea of dependency is so complete that a worshipper can obtain peace only through God's help. It is not his own actions or efforts that necessarily must be rewarded. Thus achieving the reality of *tawhīd* and worship, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, requires a Muslim's constant awareness of his dependency on God for the states of worship he experiences.

1B   Now that this is clear, it follows that the more a heart increases as to love for Allah, the more it increases as to the worship of Him and the freedom from everything other than Him;[1] and the more it increases as to the worship of Him, the more it increases as to the love of Him and the

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[1]The statement "and the freedom...Him" is missing from Editions 3 and 4.

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freedom from everything other than Him. A heart is [inherently][2] in need of Allah in two aspects: in the aspect of worship, which is the final cause (*al-'illah al-ghâ'iyyah*), and in the aspect of seeking help and reliance, which is the efficient cause (*al-'illah al-fâ'iliyyah*). For a heart can become righteous, successful, rejoicing, delighted,[3] cheerful, peaceful and tranquil only by worshipping its Lord, loving Him and repenting to Him. Even if it were to obtain every created thing that delights it, a heart would never become tranquil and peaceful because there is an essential need in it for its Lord[4] in regard to Him being its object of worship, love and longing. In this way a heart obtains joy, contentment, delight, grace, peace, and tranquility. However, this occurs to it only by the help of Allah, for only Allah is capable of providing this for it.[5] Thus a heart is always in need of the reality of "It is You alone we worship, and it is from You alone we seek help" [al-Fâtihah 1:5].

If a heart were helped to obtain whatever it loves, seeks, desires and wants while not obtaining acts of worship for Allah[6] in regard to Him being its ultimate desire and final intention—for He is a heart's beloved as primary intention, and it loves everything else because of Him, loving

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[2]Editions 1, 2 and 5 have *al-qalb faqîr bi-l-dull ilâ-llâh*. I prefer the reading in Editions 3 and 4, which have *bi-l-dât* for *bi-l-dull*. One of Ibn Taymiyyah's most fundamental beliefs is that the soul and all creation is dependent on God.
[3]Edition 3 has *yan'amu* instead of *yaltaddu*; and Edition 4 reverses *yasurru* (rejoicing) and *yaltaddu* (delighted).
[4]Edition 3 has *bi-l-fitrah* inserted after *ilâ rabbihi*.
[5]Edition 3 has *al-surûr wa-l-sukûn* instead of *dâlika la-hu*.
[6]Edition 3 inserts *fa-lan yahsula illâ-l-alam wa-l-hasrah wa-l-'adâb wa lan yakhlusa min âlâmi-l-dunyâ wa nakadi 'îshihâ illâ bi-ikhlâsi-l-hubb li-llâh* (Therefore, it will obtain only pain, grief and punishment, and it will only free itself from the torments of this world and the misfortune of this life by the sincerity of love for Allah).

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nothing for itself except Allah—then, when it did not obtain (acts of worship), it would not have realized the reality of "there is no deity except Allah" nor the reality of the application of *tawhîd*, worship (*'ubûdiyyah*) and love (*mahabbah*). This heart has a deficiency and a fault.[7] Furthermore, it has a proportional amount of pain, remorse and torment. If it were to work for these sought after objects while not seeking help from Allah, relying on Him, and being in need of Him to obtain them, then it would never obtain them. For what Allah wills is, and what He does not will is not.

A heart[8] is in need of Allah in regard to Him being the sought after goal, the beloved, the intended and the worshipped. Also, He is the one from whom things are requested, help is sought, and on whom is all reliance. Thus He is (a heart's) deity, there being no deity for it but He, and He is its Lord, there being no lord for it but He; and (a heart's) worship of Allah is only completed through these two aspects. Thus when it is a lover of a thing for itself other than Allah, or turns to other than Allah for help, then it is a worshipper of what it loves and a worshipper of that for which it hopes in accordance to the love and hope it has for that thing. But when (a heart) loves nothing for itself except Allah, loving another only for His sake, and hopes for nothing except Allah, and practices the means (*al-asbâb*) and obtains (worship) through them, witnessing that Allah is the

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[7] Edition 3 has *naqsu-l-tawhîd wa-l-îmân* instead of *al-naqs wa-l-'ayb*.

[8] There is a difference in the texts concerning the subject of this sentence, which affects the translation of this paragraph. Editions 1, 2, 4 and 5 begin the sentence with *fa-huwa*, which refers back to *al-qalb*. Edition 3 begins the sentence with *fa-l-'abd*, which would change the reference of the pronouns. For the sake of continuity, I have kept *al-qalb* as the subject. The references to "heart" in parentheses in this paragraph appear as the pronouns "*huwa*" or "*hu*" in the texts.

One who created and determined them,[9] and that whatever is in the heavens and on earth has Allah as its Lord, Possessor and Creator,[10] and that he is in need of Him, then it has obtained a completeness in its worship for Allah according to what He destined for it.

Arrogance and Polytheism Inhibit the Will to Worship

2A   Ibn Taymiyyah's concerns in this section revolve around what he sees as those conditions that diminish or negate worship. After clarifying that love for God and reliance on Him are part of worshipping Him, the opposite of this, he explains, is arrogance, which is itself the basis of polytheism. The reality of Islam according to Ibn Taymiyyah is that a Muslim engages willfully in submitting himself to God alone, for otherwise he is falling into polytheism. Arrogance, says Ibn Taymiyyah, is the opposite of faith and negates the worship of God, for a polytheist is not rewarded for acts of worship that he might perform for God. But the one who refuses to recognize any form of dependency or submission is completely deluded from the truth of his human condition. A person is motivated to worship something, says Ibn Taymiyyah, because he must have a will (*irādah*) and he must have an object of his will (*murād*). He concludes from this that an increase in arrogance in regards to worship leads to an increase in the level of polytheism. Ibn Taymiyyah sees a converse relation between

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[9]Edition 3 inserts *wa sakhkharahā la-hu.*
[10]Edition 3 has *musakhkhiruhu* instead of *khāliquhu.*

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arrogance and polytheism, on the one hand, and Islam and worship, on the other. To stress his point, he uses examples of prior religious communities to show that they deviated on the issues of arrogance and polytheism.

2B   In this regard, people are on different levels, and only Allah can count their paths.[11] Thus, from this point of view, the most perfect created beings, the most preferred, the highest and closest to Allah, the strongest and most guided are those who are most complete in their worship of Allah. This is the reality of the religion of Islam with which Allah sent His messengers and revealed His books. (The reality is that) a worshipper should submit only to Allah and not to others. Thus, the one who submits to Him and to others is a polytheist (mushrik); and the one who refuses to submit to Him is arrogant (mustakbir). It is confirmed in the Sahîh from the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, that he said: "Whoever has in his heart an atom's weight of arrogance (kibr) will not enter paradise. Likewise, whoever has in his heart an atom's weight of faith will not enter the fire (eternally)."[12]

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[11]Editions 3 and 4 have *tarafayhâ* instead of *turuqahâ*.

[12]Bukhârî, îmân 33, manâqib 28, tawhîd 19, 24, raqâq 35, 51. Edition 3 has *lâ yakhludu fî-hâ* instead of *lâ yadkhuluhâ* in reference to entering the fire. There are many hadiths which convey this meaning through various terms and expressions; see Tirmidî, jahannam 9, 10; Ibn Mâjah, muqaddimah 9, zuhd 37; Ahmad, I:416, 458, III:116, 173, 248, 276, IV:118. For a discussion of the hadiths related to the Prophet's intercession and the order in which the sinful believers will be removed from the Hellfire, see Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bârî* (no date:v.14, pp.392-399, 419-434).

Thus, he has made arrogance the opposite of faith, for arrogance negates the reality of worship as is confirmed in the *Sahîh*[13] from the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, that he said: "Allah says: 'Majesty is My loincloth and grandeur (*kibriyâ'*) is My garment. Thus, I shall punish whoever challenges Me concerning either of them.'" Hence, majesty and grandeur are the particularities of lordship; and grandeur is higher than majesty, for He put it at the rank of a garment just as He put majesty at the rank of a loincloth. For this reason, the signal (*shi'âr*) for prayer, for the call to prayer and for the festivals is "Allah is great" (*takbîr*). This *takbîr* is favored on high places, such as on the hills of *Safâ* and *Marwah*, and when a person ascends to an elevated place or mounts an animal. Likewise, a fire could be extinguished by *takbîr*, no matter how big it is. Also, Satan will run away when the call to prayer is made. Allah, the Exalted, says:

> ...call on Me, and I shall respond to you. Those who are too proud to worship Me will surely enter hell in humiliation! [Ghâfir (al-Mu'min) 40:60]

Whoever is too haughty to worship Allah must necessarily worship other than Him[14] because a person is naturally sensitive (*hassâs*) to being stirred by desire (*irâdah*). It is confirmed in the *Sahîh*[15] from the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, that he said: "The most

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[13]As yet, I have not found this hadith in Bukhârî. See Abû Dâwud, libâs 25; Ibn Mâjah, zuhd 16; Ahmad, II:376, 414, 427, 442.

[14]Edition 3 inserts *wa yadillu la-hu.*

[15]As yet, I have not found this hadith in Bukhârî. See Abû Dâwud, adab 61; Ahmad, II:345.

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trustworthy names are Hâri_t and Hammâm." Hâri_t refers to an active earner, and Hammâm is a doer based on intention, for intention is the beginning of will (irâdah). Thus a person always has a will, and every will must necessarily have an object (murâd) toward which it aims. Therefore, every worshipper necessarily has a beloved object which is the aim of his love and will. Hence, whoever does not have Allah as the object of his worship (ma'bûd) and the aim of his love and will—nay, being too haughty for this—must necessarily have a beloved object besides Allah which subjugates him.[16] For he is a worshipper of that beloved object whether it is wealth, fame, or images; or whether it is anything he takes as a deity besides Allah such as the sun, the moon, the planets, idols, and the graves of prophets and righteous people; or the angels and prophets,[17] whom he takes as lords; or anything which he worships besides Allah. When a person is a worshipper of other than Allah, then he is surely a polytheist; and every arrogant person is a polytheist. For this reason, Pharaoh was one of the greatest of all as to arrogance in worshipping Allah, and he was a polytheist. Allah, the Exalted, says:

> Indeed We sent Moses with Our signs and a clear demonstration to Pharaoh, Hâmân and Qârûn, but they called him a sorcerer, a liar! But when he came to them with the truth from Us they said: Kill the sons of those who believe with him and keep their women alive. But the plotting of the disbelievers is surely astray. And Pharaoh said: Let me kill Moses while he calls on his Lord, I surely fear that he will change your religion or bring about corruption in the land. But Moses said: I truly seek refuge with my Lord and your Lord from every arrogant one who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning...Thus Allah seals every arrogant, tyrannous heart. [Gh_âfir (al-Mu'min) 40:23-27, 35]

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[16]Edition 3 inserts wa yasta_dillu la-hu.

[17]Edition 3 inserts wa-l-awliyâ'.

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And (We destroyed) Qârûn, Pharaoh, and Hâmân. Moses came to them with clear signs, but they were arrogant in the land, and yet they could not escape Us. [al-'Ankabût 29:39]

Pharaoh surely exalted himself on the earth and broke up its people into sects, oppressing a group among them, killing their sons and leaving their women alive; surely he was one of the corrupters. [al-Qasas 28:4]

But when Our signs came openly to them, they said: This is clearly magic. They denied them (those signs) wrongfully and arrogantly, though their souls were convinced by them. Then see what was the end of the corrupters. [al-Naml 27:13-15]

There are many examples like this in the Quran. Also, Pharaoh has been described as a polytheist in His verse:

The chiefs of Pharaoh's people said (to him): Will you allow Moses and his people to spread corruption in the land, and to abandon you and your gods... [al-A'râf 7:127]

Moreover, investigating this matter indicates that the greater a man's arrogance is as to worshipping Allah, the greater his polytheistic beliefs will be concerning Allah. This is so because the more he haughtily disdains worshipping Allah, the more his need and want increases for a beloved object, which then becomes the aim of his heart as a primary intention. Thus he becomes a polytheist by becoming subjugated to that object. A heart will never dispense with all created beings until Allah becomes its only guardian which it worships exclusively. This heart will seek help only from Him and rely only on Him. It will be joyous only with what He loves and approves of and dislike only what the Lord hates and dislikes. This heart will befriend only the ones whom Allah has befriended and take as enemies only the ones whom Allah has taken as enemies. It will love only for the sake of Allah and hate only for the sake

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of Allah, give only for the sake of Allah and refrain from giving only for the sake of Allah. Thus the stronger the sincerity of his religion[18] for Allah becomes, the more perfect his worship of Allah and his independence of created beings become. The perfection of his worship of Allah frees him from arrogance and polytheism. For polytheism is dominant among Christians and arrogance is dominant among Jews. Allah, the Exalted, says concerning the Christians:

> They took their priests and their monks, and the Messiah, the son of Mary, as lords besides Allah, but they were commanded to worship only one deity—there is no deity except He. Glorified is He above what they associate (with Him). [al-Tawbah 9:31]

He says concerning the Jews:

> ...Is it that whenever a messenger comes to you with what you yourselves do not desire, you become arrogant? Then some of them you deny and some you kill. [al-Baqarah 2:87]

He also says:

> I shall turn away from My signs those who behave arrogantly on the earth without right. Even if they see every sign, they will not believe in it; and if they see the way of righteousness, they will not take it as a way. But if they see the way of error, they will take it as a way... [al-A'râf 7:146]

Whereas arrogance necessitates polytheism, and polytheism is the opposite of Islam and the sin that Allah will never forgive, Allah, the Exalted, says:

> Allah surely will not forgive that partners are associated with Him, but He will forgive whomever He pleases sins other than that; and

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[18]Edition 3 inserts *wa hubbuhu.*

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whoever associates partners with Allah has strayed far away. [al-Nisâ'
4:116][19]

Abraham as the Model for Combating Polytheism

3A   Returning to the idea of the true nature of worship, Ibn
Taymiyyah now focuses on the role of Abraham as the manifestation
of perfected worship. He begins by stating that everyone actually
submits to God willingly or unwillingly. His explanation of this
revolves around the idea that God creates everything through causes
and He creates the causes that act on other causes. Therefore, says
Ibn Taymiyyah, everything is in need of something else which will
help it and protect it. His emphasis is on the fact that humans are
created, contingent beings that need to use various means to
sustain themselves. One must use the means God has created in the
way He prescribed their use while always remembering that God is
the Creator who should be loved and praised. The use of the means,
he states, is subsumed under the goal of worship. For this reason,
polytheism is considered the greatest injustice because one is
diverting his worship from God to created beings who in reality can
neither harm nor benefit another. To highlight how a Muslim must
act, Ibn Taymiyyah points to Abraham as the model of perfected
love and worship. As for those who deserve to be associated with
Abraham, he declares that it is not the Jews or Christians per se,
but rather whoever follows Abraham's example, i.e., Muhammad and
the righteous Muslims.

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[19]Editions 2, 3, 4 and 5 also include al-Nisâ' 4:48.

3B   All of the prophets were sent with the religion of Islam, for it is the only religion which Allah accepts from humankind, from the first of them and the last of them. Noah, peace be upon him, said:

> If you turn away, (then know that) I have not asked you for a reward, for my reward is only with Allah; and I have been commanded to be one of the Muslims. [Yûnus 15:72]

Concerning Abraham, the Exalted One says:

> Who dislikes the religion (*millah*) of Abraham except the one who fools himself? For We had chosen him in this world, and in the hereafter he will surely be one of the righteous. Remember when his Lord said to him: Submit! He said: I submit to the Lord of the Worlds. Abraham advised his son and Jacob with this: O my sons! Allah has chosen a religion for you, therefore, do not die except that you are Muslims. [al-Baqarah 2:130-132]

Joseph, peace be upon him, said:

> ...take me as a Muslim and let me join the righteous. [Yûsuf 12:101]

Moses, peace be upon him, said:

> ...O my people, if you believe in Allah, then rely on Him, if you are truly Muslims. Then they said: We rely on Allah... [Yûnus 10:84-85]

The Exalted One says:

> We certainly revealed the Torah, in which is guidance and light, and by which the prophets, who submitted, judged the Jews... [al-Mâ'idah 5:44]

Bilqîs (the Queen of Sheba) said:

> ...O my Lord, I have indeed been unjust to myself; now I submit myself with Solomon to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. [al-Naml 27:44]

The Exalted One says:

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When I inspired the disciples to believe in Me and My Messenger, they said: We believe, and so bear witness that we are Muslims. [al-Mâ'idah 5:111]

The religion before Allah is Islam... [Al 'Imrân 3:19]

Whoever seeks other than Islam as a religion will not have it accepted from him... [Al 'Imrân 3:85]

Then do they seek other than the religion of Allah while all that is in the heavens and on earth submits to Him, willingly or unwillingly, and they will be returned to Him. [Al 'Imrân 3:83]

Thus He mentions the submission (islâm) of existent beings as being willing or unwilling because all created beings are subjugated to Him by a universal subjugation (al-ta'abbud al-'âmm), whether one confirms it or denies it. They are under His authority and control,[20] for they submit to Him willingly or unwillingly. Not a single created being can evade what He has willed, determined and decreed, for there is no might and power except with Him. He is the Lord of the worlds and their Owner, managing them as He wills. He is the Creator of all of them, their Designer and Shaper. Anything other than Him is possessed, produced, brought forth, disposed,[21] poor, wanting, subjugated and conquered while He is the One, the Conqueror, the Creator, the Designer and the Shaper.

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[20]Editions 1, 2, 4, and 5 have *wa hum madînûna mudabbarûn*. Edition 3 has *mamlûk la-hu* instead of *madînûn*. The term *madînûn* appears twice in the Quran, at al-Sâffât 37:53 and al-Wâqi'ah 56:86. Yusuf Ali translates it in the sense of being held accountable on the Day of Judgement, and Pickthall translates it in this sense for 37:53 but uses the sense of being in bondage for 56:86. Lane (*Lexicon*, S.V. "*dyn*") gives both meanings and states that it can be synonymous with *mamlûk la-hu*. This latter meaning is more suitable in the context of this passage.

[21]Edition 4 is missing *ma'tûr*.

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Although Allah creates things through causes, He is the Creator and Determiner of each cause. (Every cause) is in need of Him just as the need of (any effect for a cause).[22] There is not a cause among created beings that is independent of action[23] or capable of deflecting harm. Rather, every cause is in need of another cause which helps it and repels any harm[24] opposing it and working against it. Only Allah, glorified be He, is fully free from what is other than He, there being no partner to help Him and no opposition to challenge Him or resist Him. The Exalted One says:

> ...Say: Do you think that the things you invoke besides Allah, if Allah intended some harm for me, could remove His harm, or if He intended some mercy for me, could stop His mercy? Say: Allah is sufficient for me! The trusting ones rely only on Him. [al-Zumar 39:38]

> If Allah touches you with harm, none can remove it but He, and if He touches you with good—but then He is able to do all things. [al-An'âm 6:17]

The Exalted One says concerning the intimate friend (Abraham):

> ...O my people, I am indeed innocent of what you associate (with Allah). I have surely turned my face with sincerity towards the One who has created the heavens and the earth, and I am not one of the polytheists. His people disputed with him. He said: Do you dispute with me concerning Allah while He has guided me? I do not fear those whom you associate with Him, for only my Lord can will something. My Lord comprehends all things with full knowledge. Will you not be admonished? How should I fear what you have associated (with Allah) while you do not even fear that you are

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[22]Editions 1, 2 and 4 have *fa-huwa khâliqu-l-sabab wa-l-muqaddir la-hu wa hâdâ muftaqir ilayhi ka-iftiqâr hâdâ*. Edition 3 has two insertions in the latter part of the sentence, making the meaning more explicit: *...wa hâdâ-l-sabab muftaqir ilayhi ka-iftiqâri-l-musabbab*. Edition 5 has the insertion *al-sabab* but not *al-musabbab*. On the topic of *sabab* as a means of worship in relation to *tawakkul*, see above, Chapter 5, section 14.

[23]Edition 3 has *bi-fi'l khayr* instead of *bi-fi'l*.

[24]Editions 3 and 4 have *al-didd* instead of *al-darar*.

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associating partners with Allah without any authority being sent down to you? Thus, which of the two groups has more right to security, do you know? It is those who believe and do not obscure their faith with injustice. These are the ones who have security and are guided. This is Our evidence that We gave to Abraham against his people... [al-An'âm 6:78-83]

It is reported in the two *Sahîhs*[25] from 'Abd-Allah ibn Mas'ûd, may Allah be pleased with him, that when this verse came down the Companions of the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, trembled in fear of it and said to him: "O Messenger of Allah! Which one of us does not obscure his faith with injustice?" He said: "No, it is polytheism! Have you not heard the saying of the righteous worshipper: Polytheism (*shirk*) is surely a great injustice?" [Luqman 31:13]

Abraham, the intimate friend, the leader of sincere monotheists (*al-hunafâ' al-mukhlasîn*), was sent at a time when the earth was overwhelmed by the religion of the polytheists. Allah, the Exalted, says:

> Remember when his Lord tested Abraham with certain commands which he fulfilled. He (Allah) said: I am going to make you a leader for mankind. He said: And from my offspring also? He said: My covenant does not include unjust people. [al-Baqarah 2:124]

Thus He made it clear that His covenant of leadership will not be extended to an unjust person, for He, glorified be He, never commanded that an unjust person should be a leader; and the greatest injustice is polytheism (*shirk*). The Exalted One says:

> Abraham was a model, obedient to Allah, a monotheist (*hanîf*ᵃⁿ), and he was not one of the polytheists. [al-Nahl 16:120]

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[25]Bukhârî, anbiyâ' 41, tafsîr 31:bâb 13, istitâbah 1. As yet, I have not found this hadith in *Sahîh Muslim*.

A model is [the teacher of good who is then imitated just as any good example is imitated].[26] Allah established prophethood and scripture among Abraham's offspring and then sent prophets after him with his religion (bi-millatihi). The Exalted One says:

> Then We inspired you, (Muhammad, saying): Follow the religion (millah) of Abraham with sincerity, and he was not one of the polytheists. [al-Nahl 16:123]

> The people most deserving to be with Abraham are those who followed him, this Prophet and those who believe; and Allah is the protecting helper of the believers. [Al 'Imrân 3:68]

> Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, rather he was pure in faith, a Muslim, and he was not one of the polytheists. [Al 'Imrân 3:67]

> They say: Be a Jew or a Christian, then you will be guided. Say (O Muhammad): No! (follow) the religion of Abraham with sincerity, and he was not one of the polytheists. Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and in what has been sent down to us and what was sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and what Moses and Jesus received, and what the prophets received from their Lord. We make no differences amongst them, and we have submitted ourselves (as Muslims) to Him. [al-Baqarah 2:135-136]

Intimate Love and Intimate Friendship

4A   After having discussed mahabbah, Ibn Taymiyyah introduces the concept of intimate, exclusive love (khullah) through several hadiths about Abraham as the intimate friend (khalil) of God. Ibn

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[26]This version is from Editions 3 and 4 which reads al-ummah huwa mu'allimu-l-khayr alladî yu'tammu bi-hi kamâ anna-l-qudwah alladî yaqtadî bi-hi. Editions 1, 2 and 5 have al-ummah huwa-l-qudwah bi-fi'li-l-khayr alladî yatimmu bi-hi kamâlu-l-qudwah alladî yaqtadî bi-hi (A model is the example for good action by which the perfection of the example is completed, itself [then] being imitated). This wording is altered slightly in Edition 2, which has ka-mâ-l-qudwah instead of kamâlu-l-qudwah. In this case, the version in Editions 3 and 4 seems more precise.

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Taymiyyah reiterates that worship includes the perfection of humility and love, and that the highest level of love is intimate, exclusive love. He continues using the idea that Abraham is established as the perfect model for the process of distinguishing between correct and false love. Ibn Taymiyyah's purpose in this is to show that love progresses from an unqualified love, common to all beings, to an exclusive love, accessible only to the most devoted worshippers of God. To support his claim, he presents hadiths and verses that describe the specific types of people God loves. His contention is that it is only these who are favored by God's love.

4B   It is confirmed in the *Sahîh*[27] from the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, that "Abraham is the best of creation." Thus he is the most preferred prophet after the Prophet (Muhammad), the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, and he is an intimate friend (*khalîl*) of Allah. It is also confirmed in the two *Sahîhs*[28] from multiple reports that the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said: "Allah has taken me as an intimate friend just as He took Abraham as an intimate friend." He also said: "If I were to take an intimate friend from the people of the earth, I would take Abû Bakr as an intimate friend. But your companion is an intimate friend of Allah." He means himself; and he said: "There shall be no open door in the mosque except the door of

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[27]As yet, I have not found this in Bukhârî or elsewhere.
[28]Editions 2, 3 and 4 have *Sahîh* instead of *Sahîhayn*. I have not found this hadith in either Bukhârî or Muslim. However, it does appear in Ibn Mâjah, muqaddimah 11. Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bârî* (no date:v.7, pp.14, 23) mentions this hadith in connection with the following two hadiths, which appear in Bukhârî.

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Abû Bakr."[29] He also said: "Those who came before you used to take graves as places of prostration (masâjid). So do not take graves as places of prostration. I forbid you from doing that."[30] Each of these hadiths is reported in the Sahîh. It is also reported in it that he made these statements a few days before his death. This is part of the perfection of his message.

This (message) contains the perfection of realizing his intimacy with Allah,[31] the origin of which is the love of Allah, the Exalted, for a worshipper,[32] contrary to the claims of the *Jahmiyyah*.[33] This (message) also contains the veritable *tawhîd* of Allah, and that nothing is to be worshipped but Him, refuting those who resemble the polytheists. There is herein also a refutation of the *Râfidah* who deprive Abû Bakr al-Siddîq of his right and who are the most extreme of those facing the *Qiblah* (Mecca) in the matter of polytheism.[34]

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[29]This narration and the previous one are part of one hadith; see Bukhârî, salâh 80, fadâ'il al-sahâbah 3, 5, farâ'id 9; Muslim, masâjid 28, fadâ'il al-sahâbah 6, 7; Tirmidî, manâqib 14-16; Dârimî, farâ'id 11; Ahmad, I:270, 359, III:18, 478, IV:4, 5, 212.

[30]Although the wording is not exactly as it appears in the hadith, see Bukhârî, janâ'iz 62, 96, anbiyâ' 50; Muslim, masâjid 13, janâ'iz 106, Muwatta', safar 85, madînah 17; Ahmad, V:204.

[31]The Arabic reads: *tamâm tahqîq mukhâllatihi li-llâh*. Edition 4 reverses *tamâm* and *tahqîq*.

[32]Editions 3 and 4 insert *wa mahabbat al-'abd li-llâh* (and the love of a worshipper for Allah). This more explicitly states Ibn Taymiyyah's view on the mutual relationship of love between God and a worshipper.

[33]Ibn Taymiyyah's use of the term *Jahmiyyah* is a reference to the beliefs of the Mutazilites, for he uses the terms interchangeably; see his "Risâlat al-Jahmiyyah" (pp.61-72). He explains that they deny the reality of love because they say that "love cannot exist except by affinity (*li-munâsabah*) between the lover and the beloved, and that there is no affinity between the Eternal One and the temporal one which could necessitate love." On the Mutazilite theory of love, see Bell (1979:74). On the Mutazila in general, see Goldziher (1910:87-111) and Nyberg (1987:S.V. "al-Mu'tazila").

[34]The Arabic reads: *ishrâk^an bi-l-bashar*; and Edition 3 has *ishrâk^an bi-'ibâdat 'alî wa ghayrihi min al-bashar*. Ibn Taymiyyah's statement seems to be

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Intimacy (_khullah_) is the perfection of the love (_mahabbah_) required of a worshipper and the perfection of worship for Allah; and from the Lord, glorified be He, it is the perfection of lordship toward His worshippers whom He loves and who love Him. The term worship (_'ubûdiyyah_) necessarily includes the perfection of humility and the perfection of love (_hubb_). Thus they say that an enthralled heart (_qalb mutayyam_) occurs when a heart becomes enslaved (_muta'abbad_) to the beloved. Enthrallment is enslavement, and the enthralled of Allah (_taym-allâh_) is the worshipper of Him (_'abduhu_). This highest level of perfection occurred to Abraham and Muhammad, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon them. For this reason, he did not have an intimate friend among the people of the earth, for intimacy cannot bear association. This is similar in meaning to (this verse of poetry):

> You penetrated the deepest recesses of the spirit in me,
> And therefore the dear friend is now called intimate.[35]

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a generalization incorporating two aspects of Shiism. The reference to the _Râfidah_ is the common Sunni term for the Shiah, who claim that 'Alî was divinely designated as the successor to the Prophet. The reference to _ishrâk^{an} bi-l-bashar_ could mean either the belief of various _ghulûw_ (extremist) groups, who believed in the divinity of 'Alî, or the belief in the Occultation of the Twelfth Imam. On the early history of the Shiah, see Madelung (1988:77-92) and Arjomand (1988:25-65).

[35] All the texts have the same wording for this verse of poetry: _qad takhallalta maslaka-l-rûhi min-nî wa bi-dâ summiya-l-khalîlu khalîl^{an}_. This verse is also used by Ibn 'Arabî (1966:80) in the _Fusûs al-Hikam_, the only difference being _bi-hi_ instead of _bi-dâ_. Both scholars use the verse in reference to their respective views on the importance of Abraham in the Islamic tradition. Although the verse appears in Ibn Taymiyyah's and Ibn 'Arabî's text without vowel marks, only the reading of _takhallalta_, which I am using, is liable to be read differently. Thus Austin (1980:91) reads _takhallaltu_ in Ibn 'Arabî and translates the verse as: "I have penetrated the course of the spirit within me, And thus was the Intimate [of God] so called." The brackets are Austin's. The different translations clearly expose the opposing theologies of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn 'Arabî. Whereas Ibn Taymiyyah is using this verse in the context of

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(The meaning of this verse) is contrary to basic love (asl al-hubb), for he, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said in an authentic hadith about Hasan and Usâmah:[36] "O Allah! I love them. May You love them and may You love whoever loves them!" 'Amr ibn al-'As asked him: "Who is the most beloved person[37] to you?" He replied: "'A'ishah." 'Amr asked: "Who among the men?" He said: "Her father (Abû Bakr)."[38] Also, he said to 'Alî, may Allah be pleased with him: "I shall give the flag to a man who loves Allah and His Messenger and whom Allah and His Messenger love."[39] There are many examples of this.

The Exalted One informs us that He loves the pious, the perfect devotees, the just, the penitent, the ones who purify themselves, and the ones who fight in His cause in close ranks as if they were a solid structure.[40] He says:

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his belief in the ultimate distinction between God and creation, Ibn 'Arabî is writing from his perspective of the unity of being. Thus he precedes this verse with the statement: li-takhallalahu wa hasarahu jamî'a mâ ittasafat bi-hi-l-dâtu-l-ilâhiyyah. Regarding this statement, Austin writes that Abraham was the Intimate of God "because he had embraced [takhallala] and penetrated all the Attributes of the Divine Essence." The brackets are Austin's.

[36]This hadith refers to al-Hasan ibn 'Alî (d. 50/670) and Usâmah ibn Zayd (d. 54/674). The hadith is reported by al-Bukhârî in his Sahîh under the chapter "Bâb Manâqibi-l-Hasan wa-l-Husayn;" see Ibn Hajar (no date), Fath al-Bârî, v.7, pp.94-99. Ibn Taymiyyah is using this hadith to highlight the difference between khullah and hubb, for a person's hubb can be associated with many people at various levels of intensity, whereas khullah can be associated with only one other. From a religious point of view, this other must, of course, be God.

[37]Edition 3 has al-nisâ' for al-nâs.

[38]Bukhârî, fadâ'il al-sahâbah 5.

[39]Ibn Mâjah, muqaddimah 11.

[40]This grouping of the types of people whom God loves is taken from various verses of the Quran. The translated word, the Arabic term and one or two verses in which each appears is as follows: "the pious," al-muttaqûn, in 3:76; "the perfect devotees," al-muhsinûn, in 2:195 and 5:13; "the just," al-muqsitûn, in 49:9 and 60:8; "the penitent," al-tawwâbûn, and "the ones who

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...then Allah will bring forth a people whom He loves and who love Him... [al-Mâ'idah 5:54]

He has informed us about His love for His believing worshippers and the love of the believers for Him to the point that He says:

...but those who believe love Allah more... [al-Baqarah 2:165]

However, intimacy is very specific. Yet some people say that Muhammad is the beloved (*habîb*) of Allah and Abraham is the intimate friend of Allah, imagining that love is above intimacy. But this statement is weak because Muhammad is also the intimate friend of Allah, as is confirmed in many authentic hadiths. Furthermore, any narration stating that al-'Abbâs (the Prophet's uncle) will be placed between a *habîb* and a *khalîl*, and anything similar to this, is one of the fabricated hadiths[41] that are unsound and not to be relied on.

Tasting the Sweetness of Faith

5A   For Ibn Taymiyyah, one of the results of loving God is tasting the sweetness of faith. In this section he presents his discussion of the process of perception and its relation to tasting the sweetness

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purify themselves," *al-mutatahhirûn*, in 2:222; and "the ones who fight in His cause in close ranks as if they were a solid structure," *alladîna yuqâtilûna fî sabîlihi saff^{an} ka-anna-hum bunyân marsûs*, in 61:4.

[41]The technical term is *ahâdît mawdû'ah*, which is used by the *Ahl al-Hadît* in reference to the lowest level of weak (*da'îf*) hadiths. See Sâlih (1405/1985:305-322) and Ibn al-Jawzî's Introduction to his *Kitâb al-Mawdû'ât*, 3 vols. (1403/1983), Beirut: Dâr al-Fikr. Ibn al-Jawzî mentions several fabricated hadiths which state that al-'Abbâs will be between Muhammad and Abraham in Paradise in v.2, pp.30-37.

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of faith. His main argument is that in order to actually taste or savor what one desires, the desired thing must be fully obtained, i.e. the worshipper must acquire real faith. The desire itself, he says, and the mere perception of the thing desired, do not allow one to taste or enjoy the object of desire. In the matter of faith, this means it is not enough to perceive intellectually that faith exists. There seems to be two reasons for his focusing on this issue. Firstly, Ibn Taymiyyah wants to emphasize that the love for God is a real experience, which one can attain in this life and the results of which one can taste. It is an experience comparable to the Sufi claims of ecstasy with some important qualifications. These are related to the second reason for the discussion of perception. Ibn Taymiyyah wants to clarify the process one goes through to attain enjoyment of a thing in order to give the reader the "proper" knowledge of perception so he can avoid being deceived by his own experiences. Thus in reference to loving God, he explains that there are three aspects involved in achieving this love: perfecting it, distinguishing it and repelling its opposite. By strictly following these three steps, he contends, a worshipper is equipped to proceed on the path of love without being diverted by false interpretations of his experiences.

5B   We mentioned previously that the love for Allah is [the love of Him and][42] the love of what He loves just as it is narrated in the two

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[42]This insertion is from Edition 3. It makes explicit Ibn Taymiyyah's belief that God is beloved for Himself (*li-dātihi*); see above, Chapter 5, section 4.

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Sahīhs[43] from the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, who said: "There are three qualities existing in the one who has attained the sweetness of faith: He is the one to whom Allah and His Messenger are dearer than all else, who loves a person only for the sake of Allah, and who abhors returning to disbelief after Allah has rescued him from it as he abhors being cast into fire." He, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, informed us that the one possessing these three characteristics will find the sweetness of faith because the existence[44] of the sweetness of a thing follows the love of it. Thus whoever loves and desires a thing will find the sweetness, delight and enjoyment of it only after obtaining his intended object. Delight (*laddah*) is a matter occurring after attaining the favored object which is beloved or desired. Therefore, whoever says that delight is the actual attainment of the favored object, as do some philosophizers and doctors,[45] has clearly erred in this matter, for attainment mediates between delight and love. For example, a person desires food. Delight will occur to him only after he eats it. Also, delight follows the sight (*nazar*) of a thing. A person first sees a thing, then he delights in it. Delight follows the sight of a thing, it is not the same as sight itself, and it is not the vision (*ru'yah*) of a thing. Rather, delight occurs after envisioning it. The Exalted One says:

> ...all that souls desire is in it (Paradise), and all that eyes delight in...
> [al-Zukhruf 43:71]

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[43]See above Chapter 5, p.220 n68.

[44]Edition 3 has *wijdān* instead of *wujūd*, and Editions 2 and 4 have *wajd*. These two alternative words convey the meaning of a "passion or ardor for the sweetness of a thing."

[45]The Arabic terms are *al-mutafalsifah wa-l-atibbā'*. As yet, I have not been able to identify to whom Ibn Taymiyyah is referring.

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This is the case for all delights and pains that occur to a soul, such as enjoyment and sadness, for these occur by way of the perception of the beloved or disliked object. Perception itself is not the same as enjoyment or sadness. Thus the sweetness of faith necessarily includes the delight in it and the enjoyment of what a believer finds as part of the sweetness of faith following the perfection of the love of the worshipper for Allah. This occurs through three matters: perfecting this love, distinguishing it,[46] and repelling its opposite.

"Perfecting" this love means that Allah and His Messenger must be more beloved to a worshipper than all else. The love (*mahabbah*) of Allah and His Messenger is not satisfied by basic love (*asl al-hubb*). Rather, it must necessarily be that Allah and His Messenger are more beloved to him than all else, as has already been mentioned. "Distinguishing" this love means that a worshipper must love a person only for the sake of Allah. "Repelling the opposite" of this love means that he detests the opposite of faith to a greater extent than hating to be thrown into a fire. Consequently, the love for the Messenger and the believers is an aspect of the love for Allah. Thus the Messenger of Allah, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, used to love the believers whom Allah loved because he was the most perfect person as to loving Allah and the worthiest person, for he loved what Allah loves and hated what Allah hates.

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[46]Edition 3 has *tafrīgh* for *tafrī'*. The same reading occurs in the next paragraph.

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Love in Balance with Hope and Fear

6A   In this section, Ibn Taymiyyah emphasizes the idea of keeping love in balance with other emotions. In particular, love must be balanced with hope and fear. Quoting from the Righteous Predecessors, he states that worshipping God based on love alone, on hope alone, or on fear alone, will lead to some form of heresy. But, he says, the one who worships Him with a balance of all three emotions is a true believer. Ibn Taymiyyah uses this assertion to begin his explanation of the exaggerated claims of love by those who were overwhelmed by emotions and lost a firm hold on knowledge. He develops the notion of exaggerated love as being the cause of a psychological imbalance that leads a worshipper into foolish imaginations. In particular, a person succumbing to exaggerated love feels free of all restraints, which further promotes conceptual confusion in relation to the religious Law. In an abbreviated discussion, Ibn Taymiyyah indicates that such a worshipper first abandons the Law and then makes claims of self-deification. He then immediately relates this conceptual confusion to what is for him a common point of reference, that is, to prior religious communities. He states that the exaggerators are comparable to the Christians and Jews who have strayed from the correct meaning of love for God, which, for Ibn Taymiyyah, means loving what He loves and hating what He hates. The possibility for such a comparison is his proof that certain Muslims can follow a form of misguided love.

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6B   But no portion of intimacy (khullah) is for other than Allah. Thus the Messenger said: "If I were to take an intimate friend from among the people of the earth, I would take Abû Bakr as an intimate friend."[47] He knew the higher rank intimacy has over unqualified love (mutlaq al-mahabbah). The intention of this hadith is that intimacy and love for Allah are the veritable worship of Him. Also, those who err in this matter do so from the point of supposing that worship is mere humility and submission, without any love, and that love consists of an extension or freeing of passions, which the concept of lordship cannot bear.[48] For this reason it is mentioned about Dû-l-Nûn that some people spoke about the problem of love in his presence and he said: "Stay away from this matter. Souls should not hear of it, for they would curse it."[49] Also, the people of cognizance and knowledge disliked attending the gatherings of those who spoke much about love without apprehension. Some of the Righteous Predecessors said: "Whoever worships Allah with love only is indeed a heretic (zindîq); and whoever worships Him with hope only is indeed a Murji'; and whoever worships Him with fear only is indeed a Harûrî.[50] But

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[47]See above p.273 n27.

[48] The Arabic in Editions 1, 2, 4 and 5 reads: wa anna-l-mahabbah fî-hâ inbisât^{un} fî-l-ahwâ' aw idlâl^{un} lâ tahtamiluhu-l-rubûbiyyah. Edition 3 has idlâl for idlâl.

[49]This is the famous Sufi Abû-l-Fayd ibn Ibrâhîm al-Ikhmîmî Dû-l-Nûn al-Misrî (d. 245/860); see Reinert (1968:301). This quote is recorded almost word for word in Qushayrî (1382/1966:253). The only difference is Ibn Taymiyyah begins with amsikû instead of kaffû.

[50]According to Hodgson (1974:v.1), "zindîq" refers to "anyone suspected of cloaking an esoteric faith beneath his profession of Islam" (p.291); "Murji'" refers to one who allowed Muslims the "benefit of a doubt" concerning sinful deeds and "insisted that what counted was the inner conscience, which only God could judge" (p.264); and "Harûrî" refers to one of the earliest defectors

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the one who worships Him with love, fear and hope is indeed a believer, an affirmer of the Divine Oneness (*muwahhid*)."

For this reason there are some people of more recent generations who have extended the claim of love to the point that this led them to a certain type of foolishness and to a claim that precludes worship and leads the worshipper to (attribute to himself) a kind of lordship befitting only Allah. Some of these people make claims that exceed the limits set for the prophets and messengers. Or, they seek from Allah that which in all ways is befitting only to Him, not even befitting to the prophets and messengers.[51] Many sheikhs[52] have fallen concerning this topic.

The cause of this (error) is a weak (understanding) of the veritable worship which the messengers clarified and which they accurately explained through the commandments and prohibitions they brought. Furthermore, it is a weakness of the intellect by which a worshipper knows his true self (*haqîqatahu*). When the intellect is weak, and the knowledge of religion diminishes while love[53] remains in the soul (*nafs*), the soul entertains itself with its own foolishness in this matter. This occurs to a soul just as it does to a person who entertains himself foolishly and ignorantly with the love of another person and who then says, "I am a lover! Thus I cannot be blamed[54] for anything I do that may be injurious and ignorant." This is the essence of error. It is similar to the statement of

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from 'Alî's supporters who first gathered at Harûrâ near Kufa, this group later became known as the *Khawârij* (p.215).

[51] Edition 3 inserts *fadlan 'an-man hum dûnahum*.

[52] The Arabic term is *shuyûkh*, which in this context refers to Sufi sheikhs.

[53] Edition 3 has *mahabbah tâ'ishah jâhilah* instead of just *mahabbah*.

[54] Editions 1, 2 and 5 have *fa-lâ âkhadu*, the other editions have *fa-lâ u'âkhadu*.

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the Jews and the Christians who say, "We are the sons of Allah and His beloved."[55] But Allah, the Exalted, says:

> ...Say: Then why does He punish you for your sins? But no! you are people from those whom He created. He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills... [al-Mâ'idah 5:18]

Love is United with Obedience

7A   Having presented his examples of exaggerated love, Ibn Taymiyyah focuses on the notion that a lover of God is the one who follows the Prophet, for obeying him and following him is the essence of worship. In this sense, Ibn Taymiyyah brings to fulfillment his belief that Muhammad has taken on the role of the last and best example of a worshipper, replacing Abraham as the model for love and worship. Ibn Taymiyyah then mentions the suffering and hardships experienced by all prophets in order to clarify the relation between love and obedience. Their example, he says, is the attainment of perfect love through obedience and without exaggerations. In the closing of this section, Ibn Taymiyyah identifies the exaggerated claims of love with a loss of consciousness on the part of a worshipper, who experiences the exaggerations of love because of intoxication, rapture and perishing. These experiences cause confusion about love and the breakdown of sound knowledge. They are in opposition to the example of the Prophet, who is the unsurpassable model of perfection. Therefore,

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[55]This is taken from the beginning of al-Mâ'idah 5:18, which is then completed in the following statement.

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Ibn Taymiyyah claims that the exaggerators depart from the Law and the Sunnah.

7B   Thus His punishment of them for their sins necessitates that they are not beloved and are not related to Him through the relation of sonship. Rather, it necessitates that they are subservient creatures. For the one whom Allâh loves practices that which his [Beloved loves],[56] and he does not do anything which the True One (al-haqq) hates or with which He is displeased such as disbelief, corruption or disobedience. Allah hates the major sins that a person commits and continues to do without repenting, just as He loves the good deeds which he does,[57] for His love toward a worshipper is commensurate with his faith and piety. The one who imagines that sins do not harm him because Allah loves him, even though he persists in doing them, is at the level of the one who claims that taking poison does not harm him even though he continues to take it without taking its antidote for the sound health of his constitution. Were this fool to reflect on the stories that Allah has narrated in His book about the prophets, about how they sought repentance and forgiveness, and about the kinds of trials to which they were subjected and by which they

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[56]Edition 1 reads: *fa-man kâna-llâhu yuhibbuhu ista'malahu fî-mâ yuhibbuhu wa mahbûbuhu lâ yaf'alu...* The *wa* before *mahbûbuhu*, which does not appear in the other editions, does not make sense here because it forces *mahbûbuhu* to be the subject of *lâ yaf'alu*. Thus I am following the majority reading.

[57]Edition 3 has two insertions indicating that God not only hates the sins of a sinner and loves the good deeds of a worshipper but that He also hates the sinner and loves the worshipper. The text reads as follows with the insertions of Edition 3 between the brackets: *wa man fa'ala-l-kabâ'ir wa asarra 'alayhâ wa lam yatub min-hâ fa-inna-llâha [yabghuduhu wa] yabghudu min-hu dalika kamâ yuhibbu ['abdahu-l-mu'min wa yuhibbu] min-hu mâ yaf'aluhu min al-khayr....*

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were cleansed and purified according to their circumstances, then he would know some of the harms which sins impart to sinners, even if they were people raised to high stations. Indeed, if a lover of a created being is not cognizant of his welfare[58] and is not aspiring to it, but rather is acting in accordance with love, and is ignorant and oppressive, then this is reason for the beloved to hate and shun him, even to punish him.

Many seekers of the truth (*sâlikîn*) have followed various aspects of ignorance in religion concerning the claim of loving Allah. Such ignorance includes exceeding the limits set by Allah, neglecting the rights of Allah, or assuming false claims which have no truth, such as the statement of one of them: "I am innocent in regards to any novice[59] of mine who forsakes a person in the fire." Another has said: "I am innocent in regards to any novice of mine who forsakingly allows a believer to enter the fire." The first one made his novice responsible for removing all those who are in the fire; and the second one made his novice responsible for preventing those believers who committed major sins from entering the fire. Another says: "On the Day of Resurrection I will extend my tent over Hell so that no one will enter it."[60] There are many similar sayings which

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[58]Edition 3 has *bi-muhâbbihi* instead of *bi-maslahatihi*.

[59]The term is *murîd*, which is also translated as "adept" or "disciple" (Schimmel, 1975:100-104). It refers to the special relationship between a Sufi Master and his student.

[60]As yet, I have not been able to find a source for the three quotes mentioned in this paragraph. Nicholson (1975:137) reports a similar claim made by the Persian Sufi Abû-l-Hasan al-Khurqânî (or Kharaqânî) (d. 424/1033), through whom 'Abd-Allâh al-Ansârî al-Harawî entered the Sufi path: "If any one does not believe that I shall stand up at the Resurrection and that he shall not enter Paradise until I lead him forward, let him not come here to salute me." Al-Khurqânî's alleged power of intercession stems from his belief that he will be resurrected as a martyr, for he asserts that he has been "killed by the sword of longing" for God (Schimmel, 1975:90).

are traceable to some famous sheikhs, but these are either lies told against them or errors of theirs.

Such errors might stem from being in a state of intoxication (*sukr*), rapture (*ghalabah*), or annihilation (*fanâ'*), during which a person's discernment vanishes or weakens so that he does not know what he is saying. Intoxication is actually delight without discernment. For this reason, when any of these people regained his consciousness, he sought forgiveness for such statements. But those sheikhs who listen profusely to poems which include love, passion, reproach, reproof, and infatuation (*gharâm*), have this as their original intention. For this reason, Allah revealed a test for love through which He tests the lover. Thus He says:

> ...if you love Allah then follow me, Allah will love you... [Al 'Imrân 3:31]

Therefore, the lover of Allah is only the one who follows His Messenger, for obeying the Messenger and following him is the verity of worship. Many of those who claim love stray from his Law and his Sunnah, and make claims of fantasies (*khayâlât*) which cannot be detailed here. Eventually, one of these people imagines for himself the removal of commands, allowance of prohibitions, and other things which oppose the Law of the Messenger, his Sunnah, and obedience to him. On the contrary, however, He has made the love of Allah[61] and the love of His Messenger a struggle (*jihâd*) for His sake. This struggle necessarily includes the perfection of loving what Allah has commanded and the perfection of

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[61]Edition 3 has *asâs mahabbatihi* instead of *mahabbata-llâh*.

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hating what Allah has prohibited. For this reason, He gives a description of those whom He loves and who love Him:

> ...humble towards the believers, unbending towards the unbelievers, and they struggle for the sake of Allah... [al-Mâ'idah 5:54]

The Criteria of Love

8A   According to Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad's religious community has reached perfection concerning love for God. For this reason, he says, the undeniable aspects of loving God are loving what He and the Messenger love, hating what He and the Messenger hate, and the struggle of His people with their souls and their wealth. This becomes the criteria which Ibn Taymiyyah uses for judging the statements of sheikhs and scholars. Thus he says that any statement about love made by a well-known, reliable sheikh must be understood in this perspective. If the statement is open to various interpretations, then the sound interpretation based on these criteria must be preferred, and the others rejected.

Ibn Taymiyyah uses his criteria for correct love to indicate that the Christians are an example of a prior religious community going astray in the matter of love. Referring to a passage of the Gospel that states that one must love God with all his heart, mind and soul, he argues that their acts of asceticism and worship, which are based on this verse, are mistaken because they abandoned obedience to God and His messengers. While stressing the relationship between love and obedience, Ibn Taymiyyah points out

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that a necessary corollary to this is the issue of forgiveness and punishment, for the obedient lover will be forgiven, not punished. But God says that He will punish the Christians, which, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, means that their claims of love are false.

8B   For this reason, the love of this religious community (*ummah*) for Allah is more perfect than that of anyone before them, and their worship of Him is more perfect than that of anyone before them. The most perfect people of this *ummah* in this regard are the Companions of Muhammad, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, and whoever more closely imitates them has this matter more perfected in himself. Then where does this position stand in comparison to the claim of love by some people and to the statement of some sheikhs that "love is a fire that burns everything in a heart except the intention of the beloved (*murâd al-mahbûb*)."[62] They mean that Allah wills the existence of all being, and thus they imagine that the perfection of love is that a worshipper should love everything including disbelief, depravity and rebellion. But it is impossible for someone to love everything that exists. On the contrary, a person loves what suits him and benefits him and hates what is incompatible to him and harms him.[63] However, from this error they take advantage by

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[62]Schimmel (1975:134-135, 178) discusses several statements with very similar meanings. She explains that in this common Sufi metaphor, the "fire of love" is symbolic for the spiritual purification needed to approach the beloved. In this paragraph Ibn Taymiyyah mentions what he understands as the incorrect interpretation of this statement. In the following paragraph he mentions what he understands as its correct interpretation.

[63]Edition 3 has *yabghudu mâ fî-hi darrarahu* instead of *yabghudu mâ yunâfîhi wa yadurruhu*.

following their passions (*ahwâ'*),[64] for they love what they desire, such as images, leadership, excess wealth and mistaken innovations. All the while, they maintain that these are included in the love of Allah,[65] but the love of Allah includes the hatred of what He and His Messenger hate and the striving of His people with soul and wealth.

The origin of their erring position is that they say "love is a fire that burns everything in a heart except the intention of the beloved." (If) he means that the intention of Allah, the Exalted, is[66] the religiously legislated will, which in itself means the love of Him and contentment with Him, then it is as if he says that it burns everything from a heart except what is beloved by Allah. This is a correct meaning, for he says that part of the completion of love[67] is to love only what Allah loves. For when I love [what He does not love],[68] this love is deficient. As for His

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[64]Edition 3 inserts *tumma zâdahum inghimâs^an fî ahwâ'ihim wa shahawâtihim.*
[65]Edition 3 inserts *wa kaddabû wa dallû fa-inna.*
[66]This passage poses some difficulties. Editions 1, 2, 4 and 5 read: *asl dalâlihim anna hâdâ-l-qâ'il alladî qâl anna-l-mahabbah nâr tuharriq mâ sawâ murâdi-l-mahbûb qasada bi-murâdi-llâh ta'âlâ....* However, what follows is a description of what Ibn Taymiyyah sees as correct love, not an error. I have inserted the "if" in order to coordinate the following statement with the presumed conditional clause *fa-ka-anna-hu qâl...* (then it is as if he says...). Edition 3 avoids this difficulty with this insertion after *mâ sawâ murâdi-l-mahbûb: qasada bi-murâdi-llâh ta'âlâ al-irâdat al-kawniyyah fî kulli-l-mawjûdât amma law qâl mu'min bi-llâh wa kutubihi wa rusulihi min ghayri hâ'ulâ'i-l-sûfiyyah mitla hâdihi-l-maqâlah fa-inna-hu yaqsidu....* The full translation now reads: The origin of their erring position is that they say "love is a fire that burns everything in a heart except the intention of the beloved," meaning that the intention of Allah, the Exalted, is the existential will, which affects all existing things. But were a believer in Allah, His Books, and His Messengers, who is not one of these Sufis, to say a similar statement, he would mean....
[67]Edition 3 inserts *li-llâh.*
[68]Editions 2, 3 and 4 have *mâ lâ yuhibbu* instead of *al-mahbûb,* which accords better with the sense of the statement.

predestining and determining what He hates, despises, detests, and forbids, if I would not agree with Him in His hatred, despising and detesting, I would not be a lover of Him but a lover of what He hates.

Therefore, adhering to the Law (_sharî'ah_) and striving to implement it are part of the major distinctions between the people who love Allah, His saints, those whom He loves and who love Him, and those who claim love for Allah while observing (only) the universality of His Lordship or following certain innovations which contradict His Law. For the claim of this love for Allah[69] is the sort of claim which the Jews and the Christians make about[70] love for Allah. Moreover, the claim of these people is surely worse than the claim of the Jews and the Christians, for they have hypocrisy by which they will (land) in the lowest level of the fire. Likewise, the claim of the Jews and the Christians will be worse than their claim if they have not reached that sort of disbelief (through their claims).

There are (statements) in the Torah and the Gospel[71] about the love of Allah on which the Jews and the Christians agree. They even say that the love of Allah is one of the greatest commands of the Law (_al-nâmûs_).[72]

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[69]Edition 3 has _hâdihi-l-mahabbah_ _kalimah_ instead of _hâdihi-l-mahabbah_ _li-llâh_.

[70]Edition 3 inserts _al-bunuwwah_ _wa_.

[71]Edition 3 inserts _al-targhîb_ _fî_.

[72]According to Lane's _Lexicon_ (S.V. "_nms_"), the word _nâmûs_ refers originally to a secret message told to someone. From this meaning, it is related to revelation in the sense of a secret told by God to a prophet. Thus it also means "the law of God." Finally, the expression "_al-nâmûs_ _al-akbar_" refers to Gabriel as the deliverer of the secret message. Lane rejects the connection of _nâmûs_ with the Greek _nomos_. This connection is discussed by Plessner (1993: S.V. "Nâmûs"). Ibn Taymiyyah also recognizes that _nâmûs_ is a Greek loan word, which he says the Greek philosophers, such as Aristotle, define as _al-siyâsah_ _al-kulliyyah_ _li-l-madâ'in_. See _Tafsîr_ _Sûrati-l-Ikhlâs_, p.79.

Thus, in the Gospel, the Messiah says[73] that one of his greatest commandments is that you love Allah with all your heart and all your mind and all your soul.[74] The Christians claim that they implement this love and that the asceticism and worshipping they practice is part of this. However, they are dissociated from the love of Allah because they do not follow what He loves. Instead, they follow what angers Allah and they hate what pleases Him. Thus He makes their deeds of no avail.

How to Approach God Through Love

9A   According to Ibn Taymiyyah, drawing near to God occurs through submission and love. Thus, whoever is obedient to other than God also has love for other than Him. The whole issue of love, for Ibn Taymiyyah, revolves around the two conditions for a deed's acceptance: proper intention and correct actions. Every love which is not for God's sake is false love, and every deed which is not intended for God is a false deed. He interprets this to mean that any deed not in accord with the Law is not for God. Therefore, he subjects the Sufi and the Christian to the same criteria because he sees the deviations of the two groups stemming from the same root. Ibn Taymiyyah's emphasis is that everyone is subject to the Sunnah of Muhammad and that no deviation from it is allowed.

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[73]In Edition 3 the reference to the Messiah is missing.
[74]This reference is to Mark 12:29-30.

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9B   Allah hates disbelievers, He abhors and curses them. However, He, glorified be He, loves those who love Him; it is not possible that a worshipper is a lover of Allah while Allah, the Exalted, does not love him. On the contrary, the love of Allah for a worshipper is commensurate to the love of a worshipper for his Lord; but, the reward of Allah for His worshipper is much greater just as it is reported in an authentic divine hadith from Allah, the Exalted, who said: "Whoever approaches Me by the span of a palm, I will approach him by the span of an arm; whoever approaches Me by the span an arm, I will approach him by the span of his outspread arms; whoever comes to Me walking, I will hasten to him."[75] He, glorified be He, has informed us that He loves those who are pious, perfectly devout, and patient, and that He loves those who repent and purify themselves. Moreover, He loves the one who performs the obligatory and recommended deeds that He commanded just as it is narrated in an authentic hadith: "My worshipper continually approaches Me by performing voluntary deeds until I love him. Then once I love him, I become his hearing by which he hears and his sight by which he sees..."[76]

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[75]Bukhârî, tawhîd 15, 50; Muslim, dikr 2, 3, 20-22, tawbah 1; Tirmidî, da'awât 131, Ibn Mâjah, adab 58; Ahmad, II:251, 316, 413, 435, 480, 482, 500, 509, 524, 534, 535, III:40, 122, 127, 130, 138, 272, 383, V:153, 155, 169.
[76]This is the first part of a longer hadith; see Bukhârî, raqâq 38; Ahmad, IV:256.

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Many mistaken[77] people, who follow [(certain) Sheikhs][78] in asceticism and acts of worship,[79] have subscribed to some of that to which the Christians have subscribed, claiming love for Allah while contradicting His Law, abandoning the struggle in His way and other similar things. These people hold on to a religion by which they approach Allah[80] in the way that the Christians are attached to ambiguous statements and stories in which the narrator's truthfulness is not known. Even if the narrator were truthful, he would not be infallible. Thus these mistaken people make their leaders (matbû'îhim)[81] legislators for them in religion just as the Christians made their priests and monks legislators for them in religion. Then they diminish worship by claiming that the elite can transgress it, just as the Christians claim concerning the Messiah.[82] They even affirm for their elite a certain association with Allah, similar to what the Christians affirm for the Messiah and his mother.[83] The extent of the various claims would require a lengthy commentary at this point.

However, the religion of truth (dîn al-haqq) is the veritable worship of Allah in every aspect and the veritable love for Allah at all levels. Commensurate with the perfection of worship is the perfection of the love of a worshipper for his Lord and the perfection of the love of the Lord for

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[77]Edition 3 has al-dâllîn for al-mukhti'în.

[78]This insertion is from Editions 4 and 5, which have ashyâkh^an. In the context of following mistaken leaders, it seems more appropriate than ashyâ' of Editions 1 and 2 and ashyâ'a-l-mubtada'ah of Edition 3.

[79]Edition 3 inserts 'alâ ghayri 'ilm wa lâ hud^an wa lâ nûr min al-kitâb wa-l-sunnah.

[80]Edition 3 has rabbihim instead of allâh.

[81]Edition 3 inserts wa shuyûkhahum.

[82]Edition 3 inserts wa-l-qasâwisah.

[83]Edition 3 inserts wa-l-qasîsîn wa-l-ruhbân.

His worshipper. Likewise, commensurate with the diminishing of the former is the diminishing of the latter. Accordingly, whenever love is in a heart for other than Allah, worship will exist in it for other than Allah. (Similarly,) whenever worship is in a heart for other than Allah, love will exist in it for other than Allah.[84] Any love that is not devoted to Allah is false; and any deed that is not intended for the Face of Allah is false.[85] Thus the world (*dunyâ*) is cursed, (in the sense that) everything in it is cursed except what is for the sake of Allah; and nothing is for the sake of Allah except what Allah and His Messenger love, which means that which is legislated. Any deed that is intended for other than Allah is not for Allah; and any deed that does not comply with Allah's legislation is not for Allah. Moreover, nothing is for Allah except what these two characteristics encompass: an action must be for the sake of Allah and be in compliance with the love of Allah and His Messenger, which means all obligatory (*wâjib*) and recommended (*mustahabb*) deeds, just as the Exalted One says:

> ...and so whoever hopes for the meeting with his Lord, let him do righteous deeds while associating none as a partner in the worship of his Lord. [al-Kahf 18:110]

Therefore, it is necessary that it is a righteous deed, which is obligatory or recommended; and it is necessary that it is purely and sincerely for the Face of Allah. The Exalted One says:

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[84]This entire sentence is missing from Edition 3.
[85]Edition 3 inserts *kamâ anna kulla 'amal lâ yakûnu 'alâ-l-sahîhi-l-sarîh min hadyi rasûli-llâh fa-huwa bâtil.*

No! whoever submits himself entirely to Allah and is a perfect devotee, his reward is with his Lord; they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve. [al-Baqarah 2:112]

The Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said: "Whoever performs a deed that is not in accordance with our affairs has it rejected."[86] He, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, also said: "Deeds are based only on intentions. Each person shall be rewarded according to what he intends. Therefore, the one whose migration is to Allah and His Messenger shall have his migration be to Allah and His Messenger; and the one whose migration is to this world, to gain it, or to a woman, to marry her, shall have his migration be to that to which he migrated."[87]

Hidden Polytheism and Desires

10A   After presenting verses and hadiths that indicate for him the necessity of the two conditions for a deed's acceptance, Ibn Taymiyyah brings up the issues of hidden polytheism (_shirk khafi_) and hidden desires (_shahawât khafiyyah_). The implication is that people can hold beliefs or be engaged in activities that are forms of polytheism but not be aware that they are committing this unforgivable sin. He mentions one example of this from a statement

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[86]Bukhârî, bad' al-wahy 1, îmân 41, nikâh 5, talâq 11, manâqib al-ansâr 45, 'atiq 6, aymân 23, hiyal 1; Muslim, imârah 155; Abû Dâwud, talâq 11; Tirmidî, fadâ'il al-jihâd 16; Nasâ'î, tahârah 59, talâq 24, aymân 19; Ibn Mâjah, zuhd 26; Ahmad, I:25, 43.

[87]Bukhârî, i'tisâm 20, buyû' 60, sulh 5; Muslim, aqdiyyah 17, 18; Abû Dâwud, sunnah 5; Ibn Mâjah, muqaddimah 2; Ahmad, VI:146, 180, 256.

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of Shadâd ibn Aws: "O you Arabs! The things I fear the most for you are hypocrisy and hidden desire." Ibn Taymiyyah then refers to a commentary of Abû Dâwud in which he defined hidden desire as leadership. Referring to another hadith, he states that nothing is more corrupting to one's religion than the desire for wealth and fame. After reviewing the desires that could destroy a Muslim's love for God, Ibn Taymiyyah immediately brings up the issue of tasting the sweetness of worship and reminds us that it means avoiding the worship of others. This is followed by a reminder that God protects a worshipper from evil and sin. Conversely, he says, God enlivens and attracts to Himself a heart already inclined toward worship. The result Ibn Taymiyyah draws is that worshipping others means distorting the truth and that these transgressors are the friends of Satan, for any deviation from the Sunnah of the Prophet is movement in the direction of Satan. Thus he sees two paths that are clearly identified: one moves toward God and one moves away from Him.

10B   This principle (asl) is the fundamental principle of the religion of Islam to the extent that the realization of it entails the realization of the religion. Allah sent the messengers with this principle and revealed the Scriptures (based on it). The Messenger, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, called to it, struggled for it, commanded by it and desired it. This principle is the pole of the religion around which its millstone turns. Polytheism, however, dominates souls, as is narrated in a hadith: "It (shirk) is more hidden than the crawling of an ant." In another hadith, Abû Bakr

said: "O Messenger of Allah, how can we save ourselves from it while it is more hidden than the crawling of an ant?" The Prophet said: "O Abû Bakr, shall I not teach you a word which you can say[88] to save yourself from both the smallest and greatest (aspects of it). Say: 'O Allah, I seek refuge with You from knowingly associating any partner with You, and I seek Your forgiveness for that which I do not know.'"[89] Also, 'Umar ibn al-Khattâb used to say in his supplications: "O Allah, make all my deeds righteous, and make them pure and sincere for Your Face, and do not allow any share of them to be for another."

There are many hidden desires (*shahawât*) that intermingle with souls,[90] corrupting them in the realization of their love and worship for Allah and in the sincerity of their religion for Him. Shadâd ibn Aws said: "O you Arabs! The things I fear the most for you are hypocrisy (*riyâ'*) and hidden desire." It was said to Abû Dâwud al-Sijistânî: "What is hidden desire?" He replied: "The love of leadership." Ka'b ibn Mâlik reported that the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said: "The greed of a man for wealth and honor is more destructive to his religion than the damage of two hungry wolves amongst a flock[91] of sheep." Al-Tirmidî said that this hadith is "*sahîh hasan*."[92] The Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, explained that greed for wealth and honor is no less destructive of religion than the destruction of two hungry wolves to a flock of sheep. Likewise, he explained that the secure religion does not

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[88]Edition 3 has *qabaltahâ* for *qultahâ*.
[89]These two hadiths are reported by Ahmad, I:307, II:325, 430, IV:402, 403.
[90]Edition 3 adds the adjective *al-jâhilah* to *al-nufûs*.
[91]Editions 3 and 4 have *zarîbah* instead of *hazîrah*.
[92]Tirmidî, zuhd 43; Dârimî, raqâq 61; Ahmad, III:456, 460.

include this greed and that when a heart tastes the sweetness of its worship and love for Allah, nothing will be more beloved to it than that, and so he will prefer it. In this way, evil and blatant sin will be diverted from the people of sincerity to Allah, as the Exalted One says:

> ...(We did this so) that We might turn evil and blatant sin away from him. Surely he was one of Our chosen worshippers. [Yûsuf 12:24]

The one who has sincerity for Allah has tasted the sweetness of his worship of Allah, which prevents him from the worship of others, and has tasted the sweetness of his love for Allah, which prevents him from loving others. For there is nothing sweeter, tastier, more delightful, more tender and more favorable to a heart[93] than the sweetness of faith, which necessarily includes its worship of Allah, its love for Him and the sincerity of religion for Him. This necessitates the attraction of a heart to Allah, for a heart becomes repentant to Allah and fearful of Him (with a balance of) hope and anxiety, just as the Exalted One says:

> The one who feared the Infinitely Merciful, not having seen Him, and brought a repentant heart to Him. [Qâf 50:33]

This is so because a lover fears either the cessation of that which he seeks or the attainment of that which he dreads.[94] Thus he could only be a worshipper and lover of Allah by having both fear and hope. The Exalted One says:

> Those on whom they call are themselves seeking a means of access to their Lord as to which of them is nearer. They hope for His mercy and fear His punishment; surely the punishment of your Lord is to be feared. [al-Isrâ' (Banî Isrâ'îl) 17:57]

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[93]Edition 3 adds the adjective *al-salîm* to *al-qalb*.

[94]Editions 3, 4 and 5 have *wa husûl marghûbihi* instead of *aw husûl marhûbihi*.

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When a worshipper is sincere towards Allah, his Lord chooses him and revives his heart. He attracts his heart to Himself, thus diverting from it any evil and blatant sin which contradicts this attraction. (This heart) is then fearful of contradicting that attraction[95] in opposition to a heart that is not sincere to Allah, for it has an unqualified desire, will and love. Thus an insincere heart desires whatever occurs to it and clings to whatever it desires, just as a branch bends in the direction[96] of the wind. Sometimes forbidden and non-forbidden images attract it, and it thus remains a captive slave to one who, were he to take it as a slave, would make that to be shameful, disgraceful, and blameworthy. Other times nobility[97] and leadership attract an insincere heart, and thus one word pleases it and another word angers it. The one who praises an insincere heart, even if it is false praise, enslaves it; and the one who criticizes it, even if it is the truth, becomes its enemy. Yet other times dirhams, dinars and similar types of wealth are among the matters that enslave hearts, which in turn desire these things. Thus (a worshipper with an insincere heart) takes his desire as his deity and follows his desire without any guidance from Allah. Whoever is not sincere to Allah and worshipping Him—such that his heart is enslaved to its Lord, the One who has no partners, so that He is more beloved to him than anyone else and he is humble and submissive to Him—and if not, created beings enslave him, and devils overwhelm his heart. He will be one of the tempters and the brethren of devils. Evil and blatant sin will occur in him to an extent only Allah knows. This is a

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[95]Editions 3 and 4 have *yakhâfu min husûli diddi dâlika* instead of *yakhâfu min diddi dâlika*.

[96]Edition 3 has *ayyu nasîm^{in} marra bi-hi 'azmah* instead of *marra bi-'atfihi*.

[97]Edition 2 has *shawq* instead of *sharaf*.

necessary matter from which there is no escape. For if a heart is not a monotheist (*hanif*), turning to Allah and turning away from all others, it will be a polytheist:

> So set yourself entirely towards the religion with sincerity (*hanif*[an]), according to the true nature upon which He created all people—there is no altering the creation of Allah. That is the straight religion, but most men do not know it. Turn to Him, fear Him, be constant in prayer, and do not be one of the polytheists—one of those who split up their religion and become sects, each party rejoicing in what it has. [al-Rūm 30:30-32]

The Two Ways: Abraham's and Pharaoh's

11A   Ibn Taymiyyah begins this section by presenting the way of Abraham and the way of Pharaoh as the examples of those who move toward God and those who move away from Him. Having already established that Abraham is the leader of the pure worshippers, Ibn Taymiyyah must explain why Pharaoh is the leader of the polytheists. The ultimate sin and error of the polytheists, he says, is that they do not distinguish between the Creator and the created being. This is the result of not distinguishing between what God loves and what He has predestined. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, Pharaoh saw himself as a lawgiver and as a controller of how and what people worship. This usurpation of God's names and attributes led him to call himself a god, thus confusing his existence with the existence of God.

Ibn Taymiyyah has up to this point presented his major arguments concerning the correct and positive understanding of worship and its component parts. At the end of this section, he

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introduces the issue of the final goal in the experience of worship—the perfection of worship, or the "*fanā'*," usually understood as the mystical annihilation of the Sufis. But for Ibn Taymiyyah, the *fanā'* is either the completion of one's Islam or the means by which one succumbs to the sin and deception of Pharaoh and Satan. He explains that there are the three types of *fanā'*: one praiseworthy, one blameworthy, and one between them which can lead in either direction.

11B Allah, glorified be He, has made Abraham and the progeny of Abraham leaders for those pure worshippers who are sincerely devoted, the people of love and worship for Allah who have sincerity of religion for Him. In the same way, He has made Pharaoh and the progeny of Pharaoh leaders of the polytheists, who follow their own desires. Allah, the Exalted, says concerning Abraham:

> We bestowed on him Isaac, and also Jacob as a grandson; We made each one righteous. We made them leaders, guiding others by Our command. We inspired them to do good deeds, to be constant in prayer and to give charity; and they were Our worshippers. [al-Anbiyā' 21:72-73]

He says concerning Pharaoh and his people:

> We made them leaders who invite to the Fire, and on the Day of Resurrection they will not be helped. We made a curse to follow them in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be among the abhorred. [al-Qasas 28:41-42]

For this reason, the followers of Pharaoh[98] are foremost amongst those who do not discriminate between what Allah loves and approves of and what He determines and predestines. Moreover, they see only the comprehensive, unqualified will of Allah. Then, ultimately, they do not discriminate between the Creator and the created being. Rather, they make the existence of the former the same as the existence of the latter. Those of them who have (attained) "realization"[99] say that the _sharî'ah_ contains obedience and disobedience, that reality (_haqîqah_) contains disobedience without obedience, and that realization (_tahqîq_) contains neither obedience nor disobedience. This is the realization of the path (_madhab_) of Pharaoh and his people who denied the Creator and His speaking to His worshipper, Moses, and denied the commandments and prohibitions with which He sent him. But as for Abraham and his people, the pure worshippers and the prophets, they know that there has to be a distinction between the Creator and the created, and between obedience and disobedience. They know that the more a worshipper increases in "realization"[100] the more his love for Allah increases as well as his worship of Him, his obedience to Him, and his avoidance of worshipping, loving and obeying anything else. However, these errant polytheists equate Allah with His creation, whereas Abraham said:

> ...Have you not looked at what you have been worshipping, you and your forefathers, they are surely enemies to me, save the Lord of the worlds. [al-Shu'arâ' 26:75-77]

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[98]Edition 3 inserts _shuyûkh_ al-sûfiyyah before atbâ' fir'awn.
[99]I understand _muhaqqiqûhum_ to be a reference to those Sufis who claim to have reached the state of _tahqîq_, as described above in Chapter 5, p.195 n37.
[100]Edition 3 inserts _li-hâdâ-l-farq_.

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These people hold on to the ambiguous statements of the sheikhs just as the Christians had done. An example of this is the term annihilation (fanâ'), which is of three types.[101] One type of fanâ' is for the prophets and saints (awliyâ') who have reached perfection. Another type is for those who [aim to reach the level of] the saints and righteous people.[102] Yet another type is for the apostatizing hypocrites who spread confusion.

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[101]The editor of Edition 3, Muhammad Hâmid al-Fiqî, states that Ibn Taymiyyah erred in the matter of defining fanâ' and classifying it into three types.

[102]The insertion is from Editions 3, 4 and 5, which have *li-l-qâsidîn min al-awliyâ' wa-l-sâlihîn*. Editions 1 and 2 have *li-l-qâsirîn...*, in which case the translation reads "fall short of the level of...." The majority reading seems to better explain the striving of those seeking the highest level of *fanâ'*.

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<u>The *Fanā'* of the Prophets and Saints</u>

1A   The discussion of *fanā'* is Ibn Taymiyyah's attempt to redefine this Sufi term according to his *salafī* understanding of the meaning of Islam. Thus it becomes for him the application of revealed knowledge concerning faith, love, free will and predestination in the life of the worshiper. His definition of the first type of *fanā'*, that of the angels, prophets and righteous worshipers, is expressed as the highest achievable act of worship. Here a worshiper only desires, loves and is content with what God wants, loves and is content with. It is a complete annihilation of personal wants and opinions inextricably linked with the realization that God is the Lord and Creator of all things. It is the secure heart (*qalb salīm*) that has been saved from worshiping, desiring and loving other than God in any way, shape or form.

1B   As for the first type of *fanā'*, it is the annihilation of [the will for][1] everything other than Allah to the extent that one loves only Allah, worships only Allah,[2] relies only on Him and seeks only Him. This is the meaning which must necessarily be the intention of the saying of Sheikh

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[1]Editions 3, 4 and 5 have *'an irādat mā* instead of *'an-mā*.
[2]Editions 3 and 4 have *iyyāhu* instead of *allāh*.

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Abû Yazîd:[3] "I want not to want other than what He wants." That is the pleasing, beloved object, and that is the object of the religious will. The perfection of the worshipper is not to want, love and be contented other than with what Allah wills, is pleased with and loves; and this is what He has ordered either as an obligatory act or a recommended act. (The worshipper) does not love other than what Allah loves, as do the angels, prophets and righteous people.[4] This is the meaning of what has been said about His verse:

Except he who comes to Allah with a secure heart. [al-Shu'arâ' 26:89][5]

It is said that it is secure (salîm) from everything other than Allah, or from everything other than worshiping Allah, or from everything other than the will of Allah, or from everything other than the love of Allah. These expressions have one meaning. This meaning, whether you call it annihilation or not, is the beginning and end of Islam, it is the inner truth of religion (bâtin al-dîn) and its outer appearance (zâhiruhu).

The *Fanâ'* of Witnessing

2A   Ibn Taymiyyah's definition of the second type of *fanâ'* is an annihilation of a worshiper's witnessing other than God. Falling

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[3]This is the well-known Sufi Tayfûr ibn 'Isâ ibn Surûshân al-Bistâmî (or al-Bastâmî) (d. 261/875). As yet, I have not found this quote in the sources I am using on Sufism.

[4]Cf. this description with Qushayrî's (1382/1962:61-63) description in his section on *fanâ'* and *baqâ'*; see also Gramlich (1989:121-123). For my discussion of the *fanâ'*, see above Chapter 3, Part B, section 2.

[5]Abû Nasr al-Sarrâj discusses this verse in his *al-Lumâ' fî-l-Tasawwuf*; see Gramlich (1990:132, 152).

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short of complete alignment of one's will with the will of God, a worshipper in this state is focusing on God to the exclusion of all else. Ibn Taymiyyah describes this state in reference to Moses' mother who had become void (*fārigh*) of all thoughts except that of her son. However, this state is also a dangerous state because of the high likelihood of error. The one undergoing this *fanā'* can fall into error because he can come to believe that an actual ontic union with God has occurred. In the process of annihilating his witnessing of created beings, explains Ibn Taymiyyah, a worshiper comes to believe that he has vanished from his act of witnessing by becoming the one being witnessed; or, he has vanished from his existence into the other's existence. If the experience of annihilation is strong, the one undergoing this *fanā'* has his discernment destroyed. For Ibn Taymiyyah, this means that he merely imagines that he has become his beloved. It is a tremendous emotional and psychological event that overwhelms his intellect and reasoning. It is ultimately a delusional experience because reality, explains Ibn Taymiyyah, is grounded in the knowledge that God is unique and differentiated from His creation.

2B   As for the second meaning[6] of *fanā'*, it is [annihilation] of the witnessing of other (than Allah).[7] This has occurred to many seekers (*sālikīn*), who have an attraction in their hearts that proceeds quickly

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[6]Editions 1, 2 and 5 have *ma'nā*, and the others have *naw'*.

[7]The insertion is from Editions 3, 4, and 5, which have *al-fanā' 'an shuhūdi-l-siwā*, instead of *al-ghinā 'an shuhūdi-l-siwā*. The majority reading better expresses the context of the discussion.

toward the remembrance of Allah, the worship of Him and the love of Him, while their hearts weaken in the matter of witnessing other than what they worship or of seeing other than what they intend. No thoughts other than of Allah come to their hearts. Moreover, they are not aware of such things. It is as what is said about His verse:

> The heart of the mother of Moses became void, she would have exposed him had We not strengthened her heart so that she was one of the believers. [al-Qasas 28:10]

They say that her heart was void (*fârigh*) of everything except of the remembrance of Moses. This often happens to the one for whom a matter becomes critical,[8] whether it is related to love, fear or hope. His heart remains diverted from everything except from what it loves, fears or seeks to the extent that, as it becomes absorbed in the thing, it perceives nothing else. As the experience becomes stronger for the one undergoing this annihilation, his existence disappears before His existence, his being witnessed before His witnessing, his remembrance before His remembrance and his being known before His knowledge.[9] Thus the one

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[8]Editions 1, 2 and 3 have *dahamahu*, and the others have *faqimahu*.

[9]The Arabic of all the texts reads: *fa-idâ qawiya 'alâ sâhibi-l-fanâ' hâdâ fa-inna-hu yaghîbu bi-mawjûdihi 'an wujûdihi wa bi-mashhûdihi 'an shuhûdihi wa bi-madkûrihi 'an dikrihi wa bi-ma'rûfihi 'an ma'rifatihi*. In his *Risâlah ilâ Nasr al-Manbijî* (p.459), Ibn Taymiyyah explains this experience as "an annihilation of comprehending the other" (*fanâ' 'an idrâki-l-siwâ*). In this context, he is explaining three stages of *tawhîd*. He predictably places this experience in the second stage and refers to it as the "annihilation of the incapable ones" (*fanâ' al-qâsirîn*). In his *Madârij al-Sâlikîn* (no date:v.1, p.169), Ibn al-Qayyim explains the same process. In reference to knowledge (*ma'rifah*), he says that one's knowledge disappears and vanishes into the thing that has become known. This occurs to all aspects of a person, e.g., witnessing, remembering, loving, etc. Ibn al-Qayyim then clearly states that this annihilation is defective and in no way leads to perfection, which is exemplified by Abraham and Muhammad. He also places this annihilation as a

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who does not exist perishes, that is, the other subjugated created beings, while He who does not cease to exist remains, that is, the exalted Lord.[10] The objective is the annihilation of created beings in the witnessing and remembrance of the worshiper, and his annihilation from comprehending them or witnessing them. When this (process) grows stronger, the lover becomes weaker until he becomes confused in his discernment. Then he thinks that he is his beloved. This is just as is mentioned about a man who throws himself into a river, and then his lover throws himself after him. Then the man says: "I fell in, but what caused you to fall in after me?" He says: "I disappeared into you so that I thought you were I."

Many people slipped[11] concerning this topic, for they thought that this is unity (*ittihâd*) and that the lover so unites with the beloved that there is no difference between them in the selfsame existence of the two. But this is a mistake.[12] For surely nothing whatsoever ever unites with the Creator.[13] Moreover, a thing does not unite with another thing except when there is alteration, corruption, or the occurrence of a third thing

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stage prior to the annihilation of the witnessing of annihilation, which is for him an even more erring state. Ibn Taymiyyah makes no mention here of the annihilation of the witnessing of annihilation, but it is mentioned by Qushayrî (1382/1962:61-63), and see also Gramlich (1989:121-123).

[10]This is the beginning of the process in which one believes he has become the other. The end result is that one believes that all created beings have perished and that only God is left with whom to identify.

[11]Editions 1, 2 and 4 have *zalla fî-hi aqwâm*, and Editions 3 and 5 have *zallat fî-hi aqdâm*.

[12]Edition 3 has *dalâl baʿîd* instead of *ghalat*.

[13]Cf. the statement attributed to al-Junayd in Gramlich (1989:30). Edition 3 has the following insertion: *li-anna laysa ka-mitlihi shay'[un] wa huwa-l-samîʿu-l-basîr wa huwa-l-ahadu-l-samad alladî lam yalid wa lam yûlad wa lam yakun lahu kufuw[an] ahad.* (This is a paraphrase of 42:11 and 112:1-4.)

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from the union of the two, which is neither this nor that. This happens, for example, when water unites with milk or wine. However, there is union in objects of will, (both) beloved things and hated things, the two agreeing in the type of will (*irâdah*) and aversion (*karâhah*) (involved). This one loves and hates what that one loves and hates, is pleased with what the other is pleased with, displeased with what the other is displeased with, detests what the other detests, allies himself with whom the other allies himself and has enmity for whom the other has enmity. However, all this (kind of) annihilation has a deficiency in it.[14]

The Struggle to Remain Conscious in Worship

3A   According to Ibn Taymiyyah, maintaining the correct *fanâ'* must occur within the context of being aware of the truth, which is discerning the difference between the Creator and created. This, he says, is the experience of the Companions who were the most perfect, strongest and firmest in the states of faith. They did not lose their consciousness, were not overcome by fainting spells, weakness, intoxication, annihilation, rapture or insanity. After explaining the conditions of the Companions, Ibn Taymiyyah can begin to discuss the causes of the false *fanâ'*. He claims that certain

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[14]Although the unity of objectives and will mentioned here is similar to the annihilation of the will in the first type of *fanâ'*, there is an important difference in this context because Ibn Taymiyyah is talking about a union of wills that includes a level of unconsciousness or unawareness of the union. The annihilation of witnessing is considered a deficiency or shortcoming on the part of the worshiper. As he explains below, maintaining awareness in every state of worship is the mark of the best worshipers. This view is echoed by Ibn al-Qayyim in *Madârij al-Sâlikîn* (no date:v.1, p.169).

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aspects of unconsciousness during worship began among some of the Followers of the Companions in the city of Basra. He then lists two groups of early Sufis who struggled against losing consciousness. The first group were those who succumbed to intoxication but recovered from it and denounced what they said during the experience. The second group were those who experienced *fanā'* without any loss of consciousness. Thus maintaining consciousness and discernment during the *fanā'* keeps one on a safe path and is actually comparable to the example of the Prophet who remained conscious when he was taken on his Night Journey.

3B   The greatest saints such as Abū Bakr and 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with them, and the outstanding leaders of the Emigrants and the Helpers,[15] did not experience this annihilation, not to mention those prophets who were above them in rank. However, something of this did occur after (the time of) the Companions. Likewise, all aspects of this manner (of annihilation), in which there is a loss of intelligence (*'aql*) and discernment in the stages of faith (*ahwāl al-îmān*)[16] that occur to a heart, (did not affect) the Companions, who were more perfect, stronger[17] and firmer in the stages of faith than to undergo a loss of their intellect or to experience fainting, weakness,[18] intoxication, annihilation, rapture or

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[15]This refers to the two groups of the Companions, i.e., the Emigrants (*muhājirūn*) and the Helpers (*ansār*).

[16]Edition 3 has only *ahwāl*.

[17]Edition 3 inserts *'uqūlan*, and thus the translation would read: "more perfect and stronger as to rational faculties and firmer...."

[18]Editions 1, 2 and 5 have *du'f*, and Editions 3 and 4 have *sa'q*.

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madness. But the beginnings of these matters first occurred amongst the Followers of the Companions who were worshiping in Basra, for there were some of them who fainted when listening to the Quran and some who died, such as Abū Juhayr al-Darīr and Zurārah ibn Abī Awfā, the judge of Basra.[19]

Likewise, annihilation and intoxication occurred to some Sufi sheikhs, weakening their discernment to the point that in this state they said things they recognized as being wrong when they recovered. Such stories have been related about Abū Yazīd, Abū-l-Hasan al-Nūrī,[20] Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/946), and others. This is contrary to those who remained master of their intellect and discernment in their states such as Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. 215/830), Ma'rūf al-Karkhī,[21] Fudayl ibn 'Iyâd (d. 187/803), and especially al-Junayd.[22] They did not succumb to states such as annihilation and intoxication. Moreover, the whole matter[23]

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[19]I have not found any information about Abū Juhayr al-Darīr. As for Zurārah ibn Abī Awfā (Editions 4 and 5 have ibn Awfā), this report is mentioned again by Ibn Taymiyyah in al-Sūfiyyah wa-l-Fuqarā'. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī in Tahdīb al-Tahdīb (1325/1907:v.3, p.322) gives his name as Zurārah ibn Awfā. He reports the same story and gives his death as occurring in 93/711-12.

[20]All the editions of al-'Ubūdiyyah have Abū-l-Hasan, however, his name is commonly given as Abū-l-Husayn; see Kalābādī (1389/1969:42) and Reinert (1968:317). He was also known as Ibn al-Baghawī and died in 295/907-8.

[21]This is the common name used in reference to Abū Mahfūz ibn Fayrūz (or Fayrūzān); see Reinert (1968:313). He is also referred to as Abū Sa'īd; see Kalābādī (1389/1969:40). He died in 200/815-16.

[22]This is the famous Sufi Abū-l-Qâsim ibn Muhammad, who died in 297/910 or 298/911; see Reinert (1968:303).

In Edition 3 of al-'Ubūdiyyah (p.67), al-Fiqī adds a footnote in which he denounces all the Sufis and states that Ibn Taymiyyah did not understand the truth about Sufism and its relation to Indian, Persian and Greek thought.

[23]Edition 3 inserts min al-muslimīna-lladīna lā yahtadūna illā bi-hadyi-l-kitāb wa-l-sunnah.

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concerning their [hearts][24] is that they are concerned with nothing other than the love of Allah, His will and His worship while maintaining a capacity for knowledge and discernment by which they witness affairs as they actually are. Indeed, they witness created beings as existing by Allah's command, controlled by His will, [complying with Him][25] and devoted to Him, for they have vision and remembrance. They witness this as being a confirmation and support in their hearts for the purity of religion, the abstraction of *tawhîd*,[26] and the worship of Him alone, who has no partners. This is the truth to which the Quran invites, and with which the people of veritable faith, and all of the people of knowledge, stand; and our Prophet is the leader of them and the most perfect of them. For this reason, when he was taken up to the heavens and viewed the signs, and his Lord revealed to him various confidential matters, he returned to them (i.e., the people on earth) in the morning with his state unaltered, and that event did not overwhelm him. This is contrary to the unconsciousness that had overwhelmed Moses.[27]

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[24]Edition 1 and 2 have '*uqûlihim*, and the other editions have *qulûbihim*.
[25]Editions 1 and 2 have the word "*msbhh*," which appears to be an error. The other editions have *mustajîbah la-hu*.
[26]Ibn Taymiyyah uses the term *tajrîd al-tawhîd*. I have chosen to translate *tajrîd* as "abstraction" in the sense that the active oneness (*tawhîd 'amalî*) is a process of removing false deities from one's heart and worshiping only Allah. The term *tajrîd* and its passive participle *mujarrad* have been translated by others in various ways depending on the context. Hallaq (1993:147) uses "abstraction" in the context of philosophy and logic. Chittick (1989:115, 120) uses "disengagement" in reference to Ibn 'Arabî's discussion of imagination and dreams. Gully (1995:162) uses "absolution" in a grammatical context.
[27]This is a reference to al-A'raf 7:143.

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The *Fanā'* of Existence

4A   Ibn Taymiyyah begins his definition of the third type of *fanā'* by discussing how delusion in the second state of *fanā'* leads to a belief in the unity of being (*wahdat al-wujūd*). The third type of *fanā'* is the annihilation that overwhelms a person. In this state a worshiper loses discernment and never recovers it. It is the error and heresy of incarnation (*hulūl*) and unity with the divine (*ittihād*). Reminding us again of the correct understanding of *fanā'*, Ibn Taymiyyah explains that the height of worship is to do everything with the light of God, that is, to respond to created beings in a way pleasing to God. The concept of the *fanā'* of existence, however, is the way of Pharaoh and is based on his understanding of *tawhīd*. The Pharaoh's rejection of God as Lord and his claims of being a god represent the height of arrogance and annihilation of discernment. Ibn Taymiyyah then uses the issue of discernment to explain that the righteous sheikhs made their statements with the understanding that nothing of God's essence is in His creation and nothing of the creation is in God's essence.

4B   As for the third type of what is called annihilation, it is to witness that there is no existence (*mawjūd*) except Allah and that the being (*wujūd*) of the Creator is the being of the created beings, without any difference between the Lord and the slave (*'abd*). This is the *fanā'* of the people of

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[disbelief],[28] misguidance (dalâl) and heresy (ilhâd), those who have succumbed to (beliefs of) incarnation and unity with the divinity (al-hulûl wa-l-ittihâd).[29] When one of the sheikhs of the straight path[30] says something such as "I do not see other than Allah" or "I do not look at other than Allah," then the intention of that is: I do not see a Lord other than Him nor a Creator or a Controller other than Him; and there is no deity other than Him; and I do not look at other than Him, loving it, fearing it or hoping in it. For the eye looks toward that to which a heart is attached. Thus whoever loves a thing and hopes in it, or fears a thing, will (either) turn toward it (or away from it).[31] But when one has no love for it in his heart, no hope in it, no fear of it, no hatred for it, nor any attachment of the heart for it, then his heart does not intend to turn toward it, look at it or see it. But if by chance he sees something briefly, it is as if he had seen a wall.[32] And so it is with whatever is not attached to his heart.

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[28]Edition 3 inserts wa-l-kufr.

[29]Edition 3 inserts wa hâdâ yabra'u 'an-hu.

[30]Edition 3 inserts 'alâ hadyi-l-kitâb wa-l-sunnah ka-l-sahâbah wa-l-a'immati-l-muhtadîn.

[31]The Arabic sentence in all the texts reads: fa-man ahabba shay'an aw rajâhu aw khâfahu iltafata ilayhi. Obviously, one would not turn toward a thing one fears. I understand this to mean turning toward what one loves and away from what one fears.

[32]This passage is very similar to statements reported by Kalâbâdî (1389/1969:147-148). He describes the fanâ' as an experience in which one has "...no feelings towards anything whatsoever...." In this context he reports that 'Amir ibn 'Abd-Allah, who died during the caliphate of Mu'âwiyah (41/661-60/680), said: "I do not care whether I saw a woman or a wall." Kalâbâdî states that for the worshiper all things become one, but that this "does not imply that disaccord is in him accord, or that prohibition is for him the same as commandment...." All quotes are taken from Arberry (1977:120-121).

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The righteous sheikhs, may Allah be pleased with them, mention something about the abstraction of *tawhîd* and the real purity of the whole religion (*tahqîq ikhlâsi-l-dîn kullihi*) in the sense that the worshiper is not turning toward other than Allah and not looking at other than Him, having no love for it, no fear of it, and no hope in it. Moreover, a heart will be void of created beings, isolated from them, not looking at them except by the light of Allah. Thus by the truth he hears, by the truth he sees, by the truth he grasps, and by the truth he walks. Then he loves those created beings whom Allah loves and hates those of them whom Allah hates, and he allies himself with those whom Allah has protected and has enmity for those whom Allah holds as enemies, and he fears Allah concerning them and does not fear them concerning Allah.[33] This is the pure, secure heart which applies *tawhîd*; the submitting, believing heart which is cognizant and applies *tawhîd* according to the knowledge of the prophets and messengers based on their realization and application of *tawhîd*.[34]

As for the third type, which is the annihilation in being (*al-fanâ' fî-l-wujûd*), this is the very essence of the people of Pharaoh, their application of *tawhîd* and their knowledge. They are similar to the Karmathians

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[33]Editions 3 and 4 have the following insertion: *wa yarjû-llâha fî-hâ wa lâ yarjûhâ fî-llâh.*

[34]The word order varies slightly in some of the editions. The only major differences are in Edition 3, which inserts *al-muhaqqiq al-muwahhid* after "believing heart," and in Edition 4, which inserts *al-muhaqqiq* after "cognizant." Also, both of these editions have *bi-haqîqatihim* for *tahqîqihim*, which I have translated as "their realization."

(*qarâmitah*) and others like them.[35] (But) the type of annihilation which

the followers of the prophets are on is the praiseworthy annihilation,[36]

whose practitioner is one of those whom Allah extols, His pious saints,

His successful party, and His victorious army.

In using these statements (mentioned above), it is not the intention

of the sheikhs and righteous people to say that (any of) the created beings I

see with my own eyes is the Lord of the earth and the heavens. No one

would say this except one who is in (a state of) extreme error and

corruption, either corruption of the intellect or corruption of conviction.

Thus he wavers between insanity and heresy.[37] Every sheikh who

emulates them (the righteous sheikhs) in religion is in agreement with

that on which the Righteous Predecessors and leading scholars (*a'immah*)

of this religious community agree. That is, that the Creator, glorified be He,

is set apart (*mubâyin*) from the created beings; that nothing of His essence

(*ḏât*) is in His created beings, and nothing of His created beings is in His

essence;[38] and that it is necessary to separate the Eternal One (*qadîm*) from

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[35]Edition 3 inserts *min kulli man yadînu bi-wahdati-l-wujûd alladîna nataqa 'an-hum al-hallâj wa ibn 'arabî wa ibn al-fârid wa ibn sab'în wa-l-'afîf al-tilimsânî.*

[36]Edition 3 has *al-tahqîq al-mahmûd* instead of *al-fanâ' al-mahmûd.*

[37]This is an important point which Ibn Taymiyyah upholds in line with traditional *Hanbalî* thinking. A Muslim's knowledge of God and his understanding of his relationship to God must be based on the sound knowledge of revelation as it appears in the Quran and the authentic Sunnah. This revealed knowledge then becomes the criterion by which internal experiences can be judged. On this topic see *Madârij al-Sâlikîn* (no date:vol.1, p.531) where Ibn al-Qayyim states that tastes, states and passions cannot be the judge (*hâkim*) but must be judged (*mahkûm 'alayhi*) by Allah's revelation.

[38]Ibn Taymiyyah refers to the same statement in his *Istiqâmah* (v.1, p.115) where he mentions that it is from Abû Tâlib al-Makkî. The following quote appears in al-Makkî's *Qût al-Qulûb* (1351/1932:v.3, p.122): "*laysa fî ḏâtihi*

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the innovated (*ḥādiṯ*) and to distinguish the Creator from the created. Their statements concerning this are more numerous than is possible to mention here.[39]

The Meaning of *Farq* and *Jam'*

5A   After clarifying the *salafī* belief in the distinction between God and creation, Ibn Taymiyyah shifts his discussion to other Sufi terms, which he sees as being related to *fanā'*. He begins this new topic by first mentioning that diseases of the heart lead to conceptions of unity with the divine because these diseases cause a corruption of discernment. In relation to the second type of *fanā'*, Ibn Taymiyyah explains the Sufi terms "separation" (*farq*), "joining" (*jam'*) and "second separation" (*al-farq al-ṯānī*). Ibn Taymiyyah says that these terms are related to the second type of *fanā'* because they carry the same danger, that is, in the state of *jam'* one can lose discernment and not recover it. This section of *al-'Ubūdiyyah* gives

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siwāhu wa lā fī siwāhu min ḏātihi sẖay' laysa fī-l-kẖalq illā-l-kẖalq wa lā fī-l-ḏāt illā-l-kẖāliq." See also Gramlich (1992:v.3, p.10).

[39]The necessity of maintaining God's distinction from His creation is the foundation of the belief of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l-Jamā'ah*. This point is clearly explained by Ibn Hajar in *Fath al-Bārī*, (no date:v.13, p.344), who defines Allah's Oneness in terms of repudiating anthropomorphism (*tasẖbīh*) and negation (*ta'ṭīl*) in reference to the names and attributes of Allah. He then quotes from Qusẖayrī that al-Junayd defined *tawḥīd* as separating the Eternal One from the innovated one (*muhdaṯ*). The terms Qusẖayrī (1982/1962:5, 233) uses are *qidam* and *hadaṯ;* see also Gramlich (1989:25, 414). Similar statements are found in Kalābāḏī (1389/1969:25); the following quote is from Arberry's (1977:1) translation: "Whose essence, being unique, does not resemble the essence of created beings, and whose qualities are far removed from the qualities of creatures born in time."

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one of the best examples of Ibn Taymiyyah's attempt to co-opt some of the most controversial Sufi terms in relation to the concept of annihilation and the unity of being. Thus as mentioned in Chapter 3, it is one reason that al-Fiqī, the editor of Edition 3, denounces Ibn Taymiyyah for using and explaining these Sufi terms.

5B   They (the sheikhs) have spoken about the illnesses and doubts (*al-amrād wa-l-shubuhāt*) that occur to hearts, and that a certain person might witness the existence of created beings and think it is the Creator of the earth and heavens because there is no discernment and criterion (*al-tamyīz wa-l-furqān*) in his heart. Such a person is on the same level as one who sees the rays of the sun, thinking that it is the sun in the sky. They have also spoken about "separation" (*farq*) and "joining" (*jam'*);[40] and the various explanations[41] included in this are similar to what is included in annihilation. When a worshiper witnesses "separation" (*tafriqah*) and "multiplicity" (*katrah*) amongst created beings, his heart remains attached (*muta'alliq*)[42] to them, observing them in diversity,[43] and attached to them with love, fear and hope. But when he moves toward "joining," his heart concentrates on (*mujtami' 'alā*) the *tawhīd* of Allah and the worshiping of

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[40]The terms *farq*, or *tafriqah*, and *jam'* have been translated as "separation" and "concentration," respectively, by Arberry (1977:114). Gramlich (1989:118) translates them as "*Trennung*" and "*Vereinigung*." The particular context in which they are used allows for a variety of English terms. For the purpose of this translation, I shall render *farq* as "separation" and *jam'* as "joining."

[41]Editions 1 and 3 have *al-'ibārāt al-mukhtalifah*, and the Editions 4 and 5 have *al-'ibārāt al-mulaffatah*. Edition 2 has *al-'ibādāt* instead of *al-'ibārāt*.

[42]Edition 2 has *mutafarriq*.

[43]Edition 1 has *mushattit^{an} nazar^{an} ilayhā*, the others have *mutashattit^{an} nāzir^{an} ilayhā*, with Edition 2 having *nazar^{an}* instead of *nāzir^{an}*.

Him alone, without partners; his heart turns toward Allah after being turned toward created beings. Thus his love comes to be for his Lord, his fear is of his Lord, his hope is in his Lord and his seeking help is from his Lord. In this state his heart may not be capable of viewing (*nazar*) a created being in order to separate between the Creator and the created; he is concentrating on the Truth (*al-haqq*), being diverted from creation as to vision and intention. This is similar to the second type of annihilation.

However, after that there is the "second separation" (*al-farq al-ṯānī*), which is that he witnesses that the created beings are dependent on Allah (*qā'imah bi-llah*) and controlled by His command; he witnesses that their multiplicity is absent from in the Oneness of Allah (*ma'dūmah bi-wahdāniyyati-llāh*), glorified and exalted be He, and that He, glorified be He, is the Lord of produced beings (*rabb al-masnū'āt*), their Deity, Creator, and Owner.[44] Thus he views the difference (*farq*) between the Creator and the created, distinguishing between this and that, while his heart concentrates on Allah with purity, love, fear, hope, request for help, reliance on Allah, making alliances by Him, making enemies by Him, and all such examples of that. He witnesses the separation of created beings and their multiplicity

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[44]In this passage, Ibn Taymiyyah is explaining the experience of *farq* and *jam'* while maintaining the ontological difference between God and the creation. The joining that unifies the multiplicity in creation is the realization that all things exist by God's act of creation. Thus the only hope for created beings is to turn toward God and away from other beings. However, if one becomes lost in this state, he will believe that this vision of unity in the act of creation is the same as the unity of the Creator's essence. The "second separation" is what saves the worshiper from ontological confusion and thus from polytheism. In his *Risālah ilā Nasr al-Manbijī* (p.459), Ibn Taymiyyah summarizes this point: "It is witnessing "separation" in "joining" and "multiplicity" in "oneness," for he witnesses the existence of beings (*qiyām al-kā'ināt*) with their differences as occurring through the existence of Allah (*bi-iqāmati-llāh*), alone, exalted be He, and His Lordship."

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while testifying that Allah is the Lord, Owner and Creator of everything, and that He is Allah, there being no god other than He. This is the authentic, straight witnessing; and this is incumbent in the knowledge of a heart, in its testimony, remembrance, and cognition, and in the state of a heart, its worshiping, intending, willing, loving, alliance making, and obedience.

This is the essence of the testimony that there is no deity except Allah, for this negates the divinity of everything other than the True One (al-haqq) in a worshiper's heart and confirms the divinity of the True One in his heart. Thus he will negate[45] the divinity of every created being and confirm the divinity of the Lord of Creation (rabb al-'âlamîn), the Lord of the earth and the heavens. This necessarily includes the concentration of a heart on Allah and its forsaking everything other than Him, for then a worshiper will be separating between the Creator and the created in his knowledge ('ilm) and his intention, in his testimony and his will, and in his cognizance (ma'rifah) and his love so as to be a knower ('âlim) of Allah, a rememberer (dâkir) of Him and a cognizer ('ârif) of Him. With all of this he will know the dissimilarity of Allah from His creation, His isolation from them, and His uniqueness over them (tawahhuduhu dûnahum). He will be a lover of Allah, a glorifier of Him, a worshiper of Him, hoping in Him, fearing Him, loving for His sake,[46] making alliances and enemies by Him, seeking help from Him, and relying on Him. He will avoid worshiping other than Him, relying on the other, seeking help from another, fearing him, hoping in him, making alliances and enemies by

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[45]Edition 2 has *fanâ'* instead of *nâfiy^{an}*.
[46]This attribute appears in only Edition 1, which reads *muhibb^{an} fî-hi*.

him, being obedient to his command, or doing anything (concerning another) that is specific to the divinity of Allah, glorified and exalted be He. His confirmation of the divinity of Allah over anything other than Him necessarily includes separating[47] Him (from the other) in His Lordship, for He is the Lord of everything, its Owner, Creator and Controller. At that time he will become a (true) believer in Allah's Oneness (*muwahhid li-llah*).

The Grammar of *Dikr*

6A   To help prove his case against the conceptual errors he associates with the second type of *fanā'*, Ibn Taymiyyah turns to a discussion of the language of supplication. The implication here is that the words and phrases one uses in reference to God are a reflection of one's beliefs. He begins by telling us that the preferred remembrance is to say "there is no deity except Allah," and that the preferred supplication is to say "all praise is for Allah." He compares these statements of the Prophet to what he sees as the error of remembering God by uttering a single noun, which had become the practice of some Sufis. Ibn Taymiyyah uses this reference to various hadiths to explain that remembrance (*dikr*) by a single noun or pronoun is not a practice stemming from the Sunnah. Thus whoever claims to be remembering God through statements such as "O he, O he" (*yā huwa, yā huwa*) or "He, he" (*huwa, huwa*) is using a

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[47]Editions 1 and 2 have *mutadammin li-ifrâdihi*, the other editions have *yatadammanu iqrârahu*.

pronoun that refers to nothing except what his heart is conceptualizing. Therefore, says Ibn Taymiyyah, remembrance by a single noun is a misunderstanding of the Sunnah and of the role intention plays in the spiritual life of a believer. On this latter point, he explains that a certain sheikh, who was afraid of dying between the negation and the affirmation of the testimony of faith, uses this fear as an excuse for calling on God by uttering only His name or the pronoun "he." Ibn Taymiyyah's response is that the Prophet taught a dying man to say "there is no deity except Allah," which indicates the superiority and the necessity of the testimony. And this testimony is a meaningful statement in Arabic. In this section, Ibn Taymiyyah is presenting his evidence from the Quran and the hadiths to show the untenable position of those who prefer remembrance by a single noun. Faithfully following his own methodology, he will use the evidence presented here to support his grammatical arguments in the next section.

6B   It is clear that the preferred remembrance (_dikr_) is "there is no deity except Allah" just as al-Tirmidî, Ibn Abî-l-Dunyâ[48] and others have reported as attributable to the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, who said: "The preferred remembrance is 'there is no deity except Allah,' and the preferred supplication is 'all praise belongs to

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[48]Abû Bakr 'Abd-Allah ibn Abî-l-Dunyâ was a traditionist best known for his collections of hadiths on ethical and moral behavior. He died in 281/894. See Reinert (1968:306).

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Allah.'"[49] In the *Muwatta'* and elsewhere it is reported from Talhah ibn 'Ubayd-Allah[50] that the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said: "The preferred statement that I and the prophets before me have said is 'there is no deity except Allah, alone and without partners, to Him belongs all dominion and praise, and He has power over all things.'"

Whoever maintains that this is a remembrance for the masses, and that the remembrance of the elite is a single name and the remembrance of the very special elite is a pronoun, are erring and mistaken.[51] The argument of some of them concerning this is His statement: "...Say Allah! Then leave them playing in their vain discourse." [al-An'âm 6:91] This argument is a clear error on their part,[52] for the noun ("Allah") that is mentioned in this matter is in answer to a question in His previous verse: "Say: Who has sent down the book that Moses brought as a light and guidance for people?" [That is, Allah has sent down the book that Moses brought.][53] Thus the noun ("Allah") is the subject of a nominal sentence

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[49]The *Concordance* lists only Ibn Mâjah, adab 55. Tibrîzî, *Mishkât al-Masâbîh* (1405/1985:v.2, p.9) reports that it is also narrated by Tirmidî.

[50]This is the name appearing in Editions 1 and 2. Editions 3, 4 and 5 have Talhah ibn 'Abd-Allah ibn Katîr, with Edition 2 also having ibn Katîr. The hadith appears in Imam Mâlik's *Muwatta'* (1986) in the chapters *mass al-qurân*, hadith #32, and *hajj*, #246. In both hadiths the name appears as Talhah ibn 'Ubayd-Allah ibn Karîz. He was a famous Companion who died in 36/656.

[51]Edition 3 has *dâllûn mudill* instead of *dâllûn ghâlitûn*. On the various forms of Sufi *dikr* using a single noun or pronoun, see Schimmel (1975:72, 172, 270, 385, 420, 422).

[52]Edition 3 inserts *bal min tahrîfihim li-l-kalim 'an mawâdi'ihi.*

[53]This sentence is from Editions 3, 4, and 5. I include it here in order to clarify the argument.

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and its predicate has been indicated by the question. This is similar to being asked "Who is coming?" and you answer "Zayd."[54]

As for a single noun, whether substantive or pronoun, it is not a complete statement or a meaningful sentence. Faith, disbelief, commandment or prohibition are not attached to a single noun. None of the predecessors of this religious community (*salaf al-ummah*) has mentioned this, the Messenger, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, did not legislate this, and a heart does not receive in itself any meaningful cognizance or beneficial state (*hâl*) from this. However, a single noun will give (a heart) an unqualified concept[55] on which no judgement of negation or of confirmation can be based. For if the cognition and condition of a heart is not attached to what is meaningful in itself, then there is nothing meaningful in that heart.[56] The Law (*shari'ah*)

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[54]Editions 1 and 2 have *man jâ'*, which is not a nominal sentence. Editions 3, 4, and 5 have *man jâruhu*. Ibn Taymiyyah digresses from his explanation of Sura 6:91 by discussing the topics of legitimate supplications and Arabic grammar. The explanation of 6:91 resumes two pages below.

[55]Edition 2 has *qusûr* instead of *tasawwur*.

[56]Ibn Taymiyyah is in effect denouncing a common practice in all forms of mysticism. It is an accepted practice for mystics to meditate while repeating a simple word or phrase. In this way the mystic seeks to empty his heart or soul of all meaning so that the ultimate reality can enter into him, or, in other words, the mystic becomes devoid of conscious thought in order to unite with the ultimate reality. An example of this is the *koan*, or riddles or meaningless expressions, used in Zen Buddhism; see Ellwood (1980:3). Ibn Taymiyyah's argument is that although the mystic experiences an emptiness that seems to leads to a union with ultimate reality, a union with God in the monotheistic interpretation, the meaninglessness in the heart simply allows the preexisting desires to dictate the interpretation of the experience. In his criticism of the mystical experience, Stace (1960:178) raises a similar objection: "Theistic mystics, having reached the experience of the undifferentiated unity and the merging of their own individualities in that unity, jump without further ado to the conclusion that what they have experienced is 'union with God.' We do not here question the use of the word 'union.' But it seems important to raise the question whether the word 'God' is appropriate."

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only legislates sayings of remembrance that are meaningful in themselves and not what obtains meaning through something else. Certain people who persist in this remembrance[57] have succumbed to various kinds of heresy and types of unification (*ittihâd*) as has been explained in another place.

It is mentioned that a certain sheikh said: "I fear dying between the negation and the affirmation, the one whose condition being such is not to be imitated."[58] But this statement is wrong, for it is obvious that if a worshiper were to die in this condition, he would die based on his aim and intention, for deeds are based on intentions. It is confirmed that the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, ordered the dictation (*talqîn*) to a dying person to be "there is no deity except Allah," and he said: "He whose last statement is 'There is no deity except Allah' will enter paradise." Now, if what he had mentioned were dangerous,[59] he would not have instructed a dying person to use (such) a statement, out of fear that he would die during it in other than a praiseworthy state of death. Rather, he would have instructed him with a remembrance consisting of a single noun.

The remembrance by way of a single noun or pronoun[60] is far from the Sunnah, nearer to innovation and near to the misguidance (*idlâl*) of Satan. For whoever says: "O he, O he (*yâ huwa, yâ huwa*)," or "he, he (*huwa, huwa*)," or anything like this, has used a pronoun that refers to only

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[57]Edition 3 inserts *bi-l-ismi-l-mufrad wa bi-huwa*.

[58]This refers to dying between the utterance of "there is no deity" and "except Allah." The implication is that one would die negating God's existence.

[59]Edition 3 has *mahzûr* instead of *mahdûr*.

[60]Edition 1 has *bi-l-ismi-l-mufrad aw al-mudmar*; Edition 2 has *bi-l-ismi-l-mufradi-l-mudmar*; the other editions have *bi-l-ismi-l-mudmar al-mufrad*.

what his heart has conceptualized. But a heart may be guided or misguided. Yet, the author of *al-Fusûs* wrote a book that he called *Kitâb al-Huwa*.[61] Now, some of them maintain that His statement: "And none knows its interpretation (*ta'wîlahu*) except Allah," [Al 'Imrân 3:7] means "And none knows the interpretation of this noun that is (the pronoun) 'he' (*al-huwa*)." They say this even though the Muslims, and for that matter all intelligent people, agree that it is clearly false. But they will think this way, though I once said to one of them who spoke about this: "If it were as you say it is, then the verse would be 'and none knows the interpretation of "he" (*ta'wîl huwa*),' with a disconnected pronoun."

Then a certain sheikh often mentions in argument the statement "Allah" in His verse "Say Allah! Then leave them," thinking that Allah ordered his Prophet to say a single noun. But this is a mistake[62] as is agreed on by the people of knowledge. For His statement "Say Allah" means Allah is the One who has sent down the book that Moses brought. This is in answer to His verse "Say! Who has sent down the book that Moses brought as a light and guidance for people? But you make it into separate sheets to show while hiding much of it, and yet you were taught what you and your fathers did not know. Say Allah!" That is, Allah is the One who sent down the book that Moses brought, thereby refuting the statement of the one[63] who said: "Allah does not send anything down to

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[61]According to Osman (1964:v.1, pp.278-179), Ibn 'Arabî has a book entitled *Kitâb al-Hû wa Huwa Kitâb al-Yâ'*. He gives alternative titles as: *Kitâb al-Yâ' wa Huwa Kitâb al-Hû; Kitâb al-Hû;* and *Kitâb al-Yâ'*. He also mentions a *Kitâb al-Huwiyya*. Brockelmann (*GAL* v.1, p.578) mentions a *Kitâb al-Yâ' wa Huwa Kitâb al-Huwa*.

[62]Edition 3 inserts *bal tahrîf*.

[63]Edition 3 inserts *min al-mukaddibîna li-rasûli-llâh*.

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man." Thus He asks: "Who has sent down the book that Moses brought?" Then He Himself answers with "Say Allah" sent it, then let those who deny revelation play in their vain discourse.

Meaningful Statements in the Arabic Language

7A   To support his position, Ibn Taymiyyah also refers to the authority of the Arab grammarians. In particular, he quotes Sībawayh's definition of a meaningful statement along with verses and hadiths to indicate that remembrance of God must be based on meaningful statements. Even phrases which appear to be incomplete sentences, such as saying "In the Name of Allah," are actually meaningful sentences when understood according to the rules of Arabic. The conclusion he draws is that a worshiper must always use complete sentences. Ibn Taymiyyah also alludes to the pre-Islamic poets, who understood this issue. He mentions that the Prophet said that the preferred statement of a poet is "Is not everything that is other than Allah false?" However, he is not satisfied that he has clarified the issue, and so he continues by emphasizing that a meaningful statement in the Quran, the Sunnah and the speech of the Arabs is expressed only as a complete sentence. This leads him into an explanation of the meaning and grammatical use of the terms "particle" (*harf*), "noun" (*ism*), "word" (*kalimah*) and "sentence" (*jumlah*). His ultimate purpose is to show that remembrance of God, and thus the worship of Him, is fulfilled

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by complete sentences and that the use of single nouns is an innovation related to the concept of the unity with divinity.

7B   A further explanation of the above mentioned passage is what Sîbawayh and other leading grammarians have said about the fact that the Arabs speak in terms of phrases (*yahkûna bi-l-qawl*) so long as (those phrases) are complete utterances (*kalâm*). They do not speak in such terms when (those phrases) are (merely) phrases (*qawl*), for phrases are not used in speaking unless they are complete utterances (*kalâm tâmm*), either nominal or verbal sentences. For this reason they say "*inna*"[64] (with *kasrah*, not "*anna*") when it occurs after the verb "*qâla*," for a phrase cannot be spoken as a single noun.[65] Also, Allah, the Exalted, does not command anyone with the mentioning of a single noun, and He does not legislate for the Muslims[66] with an isolated, single noun, for such a noun cannot benefit faith[67] by agreement of the Muslims; and no act of worship or proclamation has been ordered by way of a single noun.

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[64]The statement reads: *wa li-hâḏâ yaksirûna inna.*

[65]I am indebted to Prof. Michael G. Carter for the translation and explanation of the opening statements of the section. Ibn Taymiyyah is describing the distinction between *kalâm* (sentence) and *qawl* (phrase) accepted by most grammarians. The reference to Sîbawayh, although not an exact quote, seems to refer to his *Kitâb* (1881:v.1, pp.50 and 419-420). Talmon (1988:74-79), refers to these pages in the *Kitâb* to argue that later grammarians misunderstood Sîbawayh, thinking that he was using *kalâm* as a technical term. Talmon attributes the origin of this misunderstanding to al-Mubarrad (d. 285/898). The later grammarians' understanding of the *kalâm/qawl* distinction is clarified in Versteegh (1993:100), who quotes Ibn Jinnî (d. 392/1002): "...*kalâm* means every autonomous and meaningful expression...and *qawl* means in principle every utterance that is produced by the tongue."

[66]Edition 3 inserts *ḏikrᵃⁿ bi....*

[67]Edition 3 has *shay'ᵃⁿ min al-îmân* instead of just *al-îmân.*

Similar to the one who restricts himself to a single noun is what has been mentioned about an Arab who passed by a man calling to pray by saying: "I bear witness that Muhammad, Messenger of Allah." He placed both nouns in the accusative state, and thus the Arab said: "What is this he is saying? Here is the noun, but where is its predicate that will complete the sentence?"[68] In the Quran, there are other examples (of using complete sentences) such as:

> Mention the Name of your Lord, and devote yourself to Him completely. [al-Muzzammil 73:7]

> Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High. [al-A'lâ 87:1]

> But the successful one is he who purifies himself, and mentions the Name of his Lord, and prays. [al-A'lâ 87:14-15]

> Then glorify the Name of your Lord, the Supreme. [al-Wâqi'ah 56:74]

These verses preclude remembering Him by a single noun. Moreover, it is recorded in the *Sunan*[69] that when the verse "Then glorify the Name of your Lord, the Supreme" was sent down, the Prophet said: "Put this in your bowing (during the prayer)." And when the verse "Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High," was sent down, he said: "Put this in your prostration." Thus he legislated for them that they should say "Glory be to my Lord, the Supreme," in bowing and say "Glory be to my Lord, the Most

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[68]The understanding of this sentence in the text is dependent on the Arabic grammar, and so the translation is somewhat awkward. The Arabic text reads: *anna ba'da-l-a'râb marra bi-mu'addin yaqûlu ashhadu anna muhammad^{an} rasûla-llâh bi-l-nasb.* By putting a *fathah* at the end of the word *rasûl,* he made both nouns the subject of *anna,* thus uttering a meaningless statement. His response was: *mâdâ yaqûl hâdâ hâdâ huwa-l-ism fa-'ayna-l-khabar 'an-hu alladî bi-hi yatimmu-l-kalâm.*

[69]Abû Dâwud, salâh 147; Ibn Mâjah, iqâmah 20; Dârimî, salâh 69; Ahmad, IV:155.

High," in prostration. In the *Sahîh*[70] it is recorded that he used to say "Glory be to my Lord, the Supreme" in his bowing and "Glory be to my Lord, the Most High" in his prostration. This is the meaning of his statement "put this in your bowing and in your prostration" according to the agreement of the Muslims.

Thus glorifying the Name of his Lord, the Most High, and mentioning the Name of his Lord, and all such statements, are expressed in complete, meaningful sentences as it is recorded in the *Sahîh*[71] that the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said: "The four preferred statements after (the recitation of) the Quran are taken from the Quran: 'Glory be to Allah,' 'All praise is for Allah,' 'There is no deity except Allah,' and 'Allah is the greatest.'" In the *Sahîh*[72] it is recorded that he, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said: "There are two statements light on the tongue, heavy on the scale (of judgement), and beloved to Allah: 'Glory and praise be to Allah' and 'Glory be to Allah, the Supreme.'" In the two *Sahîhs*[73] it is recorded that he, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said: "As for the one who says one hundred times during the course of his day: 'There is no deity except Allah, alone and without partners, to Him belongs dominion and praise, and He has power over all things,' Allah has granted him protection from Satan

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[70]I have not found this in Bu<u>kh</u>ârî. See Abû Dâwud, salâh 147, 149, 150; Ibn Mâjah, iqâmah 20; Dârimî, saiâh 69; Ahmad, I:232, 371, V:382, 384, 389, 394, 397, 398, 400.

[71]Bu<u>kh</u>ârî, aymân 19; Ahmad, V:20.

[72]Bu<u>kh</u>ârî, tawhîd 58, da'awât 66, aymân 19; Muslim, <u>d</u>ikr 30; Tirmi<u>d</u>î, da'awât 59; Ibn Mâjah, adab 56; Ahmad, II:232.

[73]Bu<u>kh</u>ârî, bad' al-<u>kh</u>alq 11, da'awât 65; Muslim, <u>d</u>ikr 27; Tirmi<u>d</u>î, da'awât 59, 62; Ibn Mâjah, du'â' 14; Muwatta', qurân 20; Ahmad, II:2, 3, 375, IV:227.

during this day until the evening. No one has brought anything more preferable than this except a man who says what the other said and then adds more to it. As for the one who says one hundred times during the course of his day: 'Glory and praise be to Allah, glory be to Allah, the Supreme,' his sins will be taken from him, even if they were like the foam on the ocean." In the *Muwatta'*[74] and other books, it is recorded that he, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said: "The most preferred statement that I and the prophets before me have said is 'There is no deity except Allah, alone and without partners, to Him belongs all dominion and praise, and He has power over all things." In the *Sunan* of Ibn Mâjah[75] and other books, it is recorded that he, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said: "The most preferred remembrance is 'There is no deity except Allah,' and the most preferred supplication is 'All praise is due to Allah.'" There are many examples similar to these hadiths about the kinds of statements concerning remembrance and supplication. Further examples are in the Quran:

> Do not eat from that on which the Name of Allah has not been mentioned... [al-An'âm 6:121]

> ...Then eat from that which they catch for you and mention the Name of Allah on it... [al-Mâ'idah 5:4]

However, as for His statement "In the Name of Allah," it is a complete sentence in accordance with the two most distinct statements of the grammarians, for it is either a nominal sentence or a verbal sentence. The reconstruction is either "My sacrifice is in the Name of Allah" or "I

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[74]Muwatta', mass al-qurân 32, hajj 246.
[75]See above p.317 n45.

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sacrifice in the Name of Allah." This is similar to the Quran reciters saying "In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate," for the reconstruction is "My recitation is in the Name of Allah" or "I recite in the Name of Allah."[76]

Concerning this example, people suppress (the complete sentence), which is "My initiation (of an action) is in the Name of Allah" or "I initiate (an action) in the Name of Allah." The former is better because the whole action is the object of "In the Name of Allah," not just the onset of it. This is as with the apparent pronoun in His statements: "Read! In the Name of your Lord who created," [al-'Alaq 96:1] and "...In the Name of Allah (will be) its moving and its anchoring..." [Hûd 11:41]. This also occurs in the statement of the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him: "Whoever had slaughtered before the prayer, let him slaughter another in its place, and whoever has not slaughtered, let him slaughter in the Name of Allah."[77] Also related to this topic is the statement of the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, to his stepson, 'Umar ibn Abî Salamah, in an authentic hadith: "Pronounce the Name of Allah (sammi-llâh), eat with your right hand, and eat from what is nearest

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[76]In this section, Ibn Taymiyyah is clarifying that even apparent phrases such as *bi-smi-llâh*, which are legislated in the Quran and Sunnah, are actually complete sentences by way of reconstruction (*taqdîr*). His reasons for mentioning this are probably to cut off counter arguments that incomplete sentences, and therefore single nouns, are allowable as a form of remembrance. For the translation of *taqdîr* as "reconstruction," see Gully (1995:18).
[77]Bukhârî, 'îdayn 5, 10, 17, 23, ḍabâ'ih 17, adâhî 1, 4, 8, 11, 12; Muslim, adâhî 1-4, 10, 11; Nasâ'î, 'îdayn 8, 30, dahâyâ 4, 17, Ibn Mâjah, adâhî 12; Ahmad, III:113, 117, 364, 385.

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to you."[78] The intention here is to say "In the Name of Allah," it is not merely to mention a single noun. Likewise, there is a statement from him, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, to 'Adî ibn Hâtim in an authentic hadith: "When you send your hunting dog, mention the Name of Allah, and then eat."[79] Also, there is a statement from him, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him: "When a man enters his house and mentions the Name of Allah upon entering, upon leaving, and upon eating, Satan says: 'There is no overnight stay with you nor any dinner.'"[80] There are many examples of this.

Likewise, the legislated means for mentioning Allah, the Exalted, for the Muslims in their prayer, their call to prayer, their pilgrimage, and their celebrations is only by way of a complete sentence. For example, the saying of the caller to prayer is "Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest, I testify that there is no deity except Allah, and I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah." The sayings of those who pray are: "Allah is the Greatest; Glory be to my Lord, the Supreme; Glory be to my Lord, the Most High; Allah hears those who praise Him; My salutations are for Allah." The saying of a Pilgrim[81] is "Here I am at Your service, O Allah, here I am at Your service." Again, there are many examples of this. Thus all of the sayings of remembrance that Allah has legislated are in the form of

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[78]Bukhârî, at'imah 2; Muslim, ashribah 107-109; Abû Dâwud, at'imah 19; Tirmidî, at'imah 2, 47; Ibn Mâjah, at'imah 8; Dârimî, at'imah 1, 8, 15; Muwatta', sifat al-nabî 32.

[79]Bukhârî, wudû' 33, buyû' 3, dabâ'ih 2, 3, 7-10, tawhîd 13; Muslim, sayd 1-3; Abû Dâwud, adâhî 22; Tirmidî, sayd 1, 6; Nasâ'î, sayd 1-3, 5- 8, 18, 20, 21, dahâyâ 19; Ibn Mâjah, sayd 3; Ahmad, I:231.

[80]Muslim, ashribah 103; Abû Dâwud, at'imah 15; Ibn Mâjah, du'â' 19; Ahmad, III:346, 383.

[81]The term used is *al-mulabbî*, however, Edition 3 has *al-nabî*.

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complete sentences, not single nouns, whether explicit or pronoun. This is

what is called a (meaningful) statement (*kalimah*) according to the Arabic

language as in his saying: "There are two statements (*kalimatâni*) light on

the tongue, heavy on the scale (of judgement) and beloved to the

Infinitely-Merciful: ['Glory and praise be to Allah' and 'Glory be to Allah,

the Supreme'"].[82] There is also his saying: "The most preferred statement

spoken by a poet is the statement of Labîd: 'Is not everything other than

Allah false.'"[83] Also the verses of Allah, the Exalted, are part of this topic:

> ...Dreadful is the word (*kalimah*) that comes out of their mouths... [al-
> Kahf 18:5]

> Perfected is the word (*kalimah*) of your Lord in truth and justice... [al-
> An'âm 6:115]

There are many examples of the use of the term "word" (*kalimah*) in

the Quran, the Sunnah, and the rest of the speech of the Arabs, however,

the only thing meant by it is a complete sentence.[84] Similarly, the term

"letter" (*harf*) used to be used for a noun, for it is said: "This is a strange

word (*harf gharîb*)," that is, the expression of the noun is strange.

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[82]This insertion, which completes the full hadith as mentioned above p.324 n66, is from Editions 3, 4, and 5.

[83]Bukhârî, raqâq 29.

[84]In this statement, and in the next two paragraphs, Ibn Taymiyyah is presenting, in a very summarized manner, the general conclusions of the Arab grammarians concerning the definition of a complete sentence and the technical terms for the parts of a sentence. The discussion revolves around the terms "*jumlah*," "*kalimah*" and "*harf*." "*Jumlah*," in the meaning of sentence, first appears as a technical term in the works of al-Mubarrad (d. 285/898) (Versteegh, 1993:102). In the works of the grammarians of the second/eighth and early third/ninth centuries, "*kalimah*" is used for "sentence" and "word," while "*harf*" is used for "word" and "letter." Versteegh (1993:103-104) stresses that Sîbawayh attempted to establish the distinction between "*kalimah*" as sentence and "*harf*" as particle. For a more detailed discussion of these terms, see Fischer (1989:135-145).

Sîbawayh divided the sentence into nouns, verbs and particles (harf) which convey a meaning, not being a noun or verb.[85] He named each of these divisions a part of speech (harf), but the particularity of the third is that it is a particle "which conveys a meaning, not being a noun or verb." He (also) named the letters of the alphabet with the name "harf," which are names, and the expression of these letters include these names as well as others. This is similar to what the Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said: "Whoever reads the Quran with proper pronunciation (a'rabahu) will have ten good deeds for each letter (harf). But I am not saying that Alif, Lâm, Mîm is one harf, rather, Alif is a harf, Lâm is a harf, and Mîm is a harf."[86] Also, al-Khalîl [ibn Ahmad][87] asked his companions about the pronunciation of the letter (harf) "zây" in the word "Zayd." They said "zây," but he said, "You gave me the name, however, the letter is 'z.'"

Thus the grammarians are agreed that this expression referred to in language as a harf is also called a "word" (kalimah), and that the term "particle" (harf) is specifically used for a term "which conveys a meaning, not being a noun or verb," such as prepositions. As for the terms for the letters of the alphabet, sometimes they are designated as the sound of that particular letter (harf) and sometimes as the name of that letter. As this technical usage became preponderant, it is easily imaginable that people

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[85]This is from the opening sentence in Sîbawayh (1881:v.1, p.1) The definition of particle reads: harf^{un} jâ' li-ma'nan laysa bi-ism wa lâ fi'l. The translation of this definition in Carter (1981:15 n1.25) is "a bit which comes for a meaning." Gully (1995:116-118) uses the same translation. Fischer (1989:137) translates this as "das sprachliche Element, 'das Bedeutung hat, das aber weder Nomen noch Verbum ist....'"
[86]Dârimî, fadâ'il al-qurân 1.
[87]This insertion is from Edition 3.

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became accustomed to this (being the standard usage) in the language of the Arabs. Some people have made the linguistic expression "word" (*kalimah*) into a collective term (*mushtarak*) referring to either a noun or a sentence (*jumlah*). But the only known use of the term *kalimah* in the pure language is as a complete sentence (*jumlah tâmmah*).

The intention here is that the legislated means for the remembrance of Allah is the remembrance of Him by way of a complete sentence, which is called (meaningful) speech (*kalâm*) the unit of which is a sentence (*kalimah*). This *kalimah* is that which benefits hearts and by which reward and recompense, nearness to Allah,[88] cognizance of Him, love for Him, and apprehension of Him are obtained. These are some of the exalted goals and lofty intentions obtained through this *kalimah*. But restricting remembrance to a single noun, whether explicit or pronoun, has no basis, particularly as being the form of remembrance of the elite and the gnostics (*al-khâssah wa-l-'ârifîn*). Rather, this is a means toward various forms of innovations and types of error, and it is an expedient toward concepts of corrupt states which are the states of the heretics (*ahl al-ilhâd*) and of the monists (*ahl al-ittihâd*), as has been explained in another place.

The Summation of Correct Worship

8A   This analysis of the language of worship completes Ibn Taymiyyah's discussion of the errors related to his third type of

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[88]Edition 3 has *tajdîb al-qulûb ilâ-llâh* instead of *al-qurb ilâ-llâh.*

fanā'. He is now prepared to restate his belief that the whole of the religion is based on two principles: that a Muslim must worship only God and that he must worship Him only by what He legislated, not by what Ibn Taymiyyah refers to as innovations. This is the reality of worshiping God. Anything that breaches or compromises this reality, he contends, can only lead to error, delusion and disbelief. Even something as seemingly innocent as the form and manner of supplication has profound implications for Ibn Taymiyyah because he insists that Islam has to be taken in what he considers its entirety, or there is no real Islam. Drawing near to God is possible only through strict adherence to His Law in all its aspects, which were revealed in their final form to the Prophet. Ibn Taymiyyah emphasizes this point by repeating the many verses he used as proofs to support his claim concerning the basic principles of the religion. His final statements are a summary of the characteristics of a believer who worships God in the manner he considers as the only true way.

8B   The entire religion is based on two principles: that nothing is worshipped except Allah and that He is not worshipped[89] except according to what He legislated, He is not worshipped according to innovations. The Exalted One says:

> ...Thus whoever hopes on the meeting with his Lord, let him do righteous deeds and not associate anyone in worshiping his Lord. [al-Kahf 18:110]

[89]Editions 3, 4, and 5 have *an lā na'budu illā-llāh wa an lā na'buduhu illā...*, whereas Editions 1 and 2 expresses this with the passive *yu'badu*.

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This is the essential truth of the two testimonies of faith: the testimony that there is no deity except Allah and the testimony that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. The first one confirms that we worship only Him, and the second one confirms that Muhammad is His Messenger, the bearer of news from Him. Thus it is incumbent on us to affirm his message and to obey his command, for he has explained to us the way in which we worship Allah and has prohibited us from inventing matters, informing us that they are errors. Allah, the Exalted, says:

> No! But whoever submits himself fully to Allah while doing good has his reward with his Lord; there shall be no fear upon them and they shall not grieve. [al-Baqarah 2:112]

Similarly, we have been ordered to fear only Allah, to rely only on Him, to direct our wishes toward only Him, to seek help from only Him, and to have our worship for only Him. Likewise, we have been ordered to follow the Messenger, to obey him, and to imitate him, for the allowable is what he made allowable, the forbidden is what he forbade, and the religion is what he legislated. Allah, the Exalted, says:

> But if they had only been pleased with what Allah and His Messenger gave them and had said: Allah suffices for us; Allah and His Messenger will give us from His bounty; we are surely directing our wishes toward Allah. [al-Tawbah 9:59]

Thus He made the dispersing of goods a right of Allah and His Messenger just as Allah, the Exalted, says:

> ...whatever the Messenger gives you, take it; and from whatever he prohibits you, avoid it... [al-Hashr 59:7]

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And He made reliance on Allah a right of Allah alone by His statement: "and had they said: Allah suffices for us," for He did not say "and His Messenger." He also says:[90]

(The believers are) those to whom people said: Men are surely gathering against you, so fear them. But this increased them in faith and they said: Allah suffices for us, and how perfect a protector He is. [Al 'Imrân 3:173]

A verse similar to this is:

O Prophet! Allah suffices for you and for any believers who follow you. [al-Anfâl 8:64][91]

That is, He suffices for you and He suffices for the believers just as the Exalted One says:

Is not Allah sufficient for His worshiper... [al-Zumar 39:36]

...Allah and His Messenger will give us from His bounty... [al-Tawbah 9:59]

Thus He made the dispersing of goods a right of Allah and His Messenger, but He gave precedence to mentioning bounty because bounty is in Allah's hand and He gives it to whomever He wills, for Allah is the Possessor of great bounty. His bounty is over His Messenger and over the believers as He says: "...we are surely directing our wishes toward Allah." Thus He made wishing to be directed toward Allah alone just as in His verse:

And so when you are relieved, still toil; and to your Lord direct your wishes. [al-Inshirâh 94:7-8]

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[90]Edition 3 inserts *fî wasfi-l-sahâbah radiya-llâhu 'an-hum.*
[91]This verse is discussed above in Chapter 5, section 5.

The Prophet, the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, said to Ibn 'Abbâs: "When you ask, ask of Allah, and when you seek help, seek it from Allah."[92] The Quran indicates this point, and it is mentioned in other places. Thus He made worshiping, fearing, and pious acts (taqwâ) for Allah, and He made obedience and love for Allah and His Messenger. This is similar to what Noah said:

> That you worship Allah and act piously toward Him, and that you obey me. [Nûh 71:3]

> As for whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, and fears Allah and acts piously toward Him, these are the successful. [al-Nûr 24:52]

There are many examples of this. Thus the messengers ordered the worshiping of Him alone, the directing of wishes to Him, reliance on Him, but obedience [to Him][93] and themselves. Satan then led the Christians and others like them astray, for they associated partners with Allah and disobeyed the messengers. Thus they took their priests and monks, and the Messiah, the son of Mary, as rivals besides Allah. They began directing their wishes to them, relying on them, and asking of them while disobeying their commands and opposing their customs (sunnatihim).

Allah has guided the believers, the sincere worshipers of Allah, the people of the straight path, those who know the truth and follow it. Thus they are not the ones who have earned His wrath nor the ones who are astray. They have purified their religion for Allah, submitted themselves fully to Him, and turned repentantly to their Lord. They love Allah, hope in Him, fear Him, ask of Him, direct their wishes toward Him, entrust

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[92]Tirmidî, qiyâmah 59; Ahmad, I:293, 303, 307.
[93]This insertion is from Edition 3.

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their affairs to Him, and rely on Him. They obey His messengers, support them, respect them, love them, ally themselves to them, and follow them. They adhere to their teachings and are guided by their light.

This is the religion of Islam with which Allah has sent the former and latter messengers. It is the only religion which Allah will accept from anyone and it is the true worship of the Lord of the Worlds.

Thus we ask Allah, the Majestic, to make us and all our brother Muslims firm in Islam, to perfect it for us, and to let us die in it. All praise is for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. May His blessing and peace be upon our master, Muhammad, the seal of the prophets, and upon his family and companions.

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Conclusion

Al-'Ubūdiyyah fī-l-Islām is Ibn Taymiyyah's call to Muslims to correct their relationship with God by entering into a pure and sincere state of worship. Believing that worship is the only true concern of human beings, Ibn Taymiyyah takes the reader through various stages of faith, from the initial concept of *tawhīd* to the final experience of total submission. Between the entrance into Islam by way of the testimony that there is no deity other than God and the perfection of worship by conforming one's will completely to the will of God, Ibn Taymiyyah acts as a spiritual guide through the many theological misconceptions and psychological deceptions which he sees as obstacles on the path for the seeker of the truth. His own road map for this journey is the Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad. And his means for reading this road map correctly lies solely in the map legend written by the *Sahābah* and the *Tābi'ūn*. Strictly following the way of *al-salaf al-sālih* is the only means of salvation for Ibn Taymiyyah. His life long task was to explain this way of worship and defend it against those he considered misguided, and thus the misleading representatives of divergent points of view. For the time in which he lived, this meant distinguishing *salafī* beliefs and practices from those of mystical Sufis, speculative theologians, and philosophers. At the same time, however, he engaged the scholars of these respective groups, speaking to them in their own language of discourse.

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It is essential to understand this aspect of Ibn Taymiyyah, for trying to interpret his writings without starting from the basis of a theology of worship will leave the researcher with only a partial view of his legacy. This partial view can then turn out to be negative or positive. Thus over the centuries Ibn Taymiyyah has been called insane and a rebel, he has been ignored and glorified, and he has been viewed as a political activist and social reformer. Depending on where one steps into the world of Ibn Taymiyyah, any of the above views can be justified if one takes only a narrow view of the man and his works. Thus even Laoust's extensive researches on Ibn Taymiyyah, without negating their tremendous value, are prejudiced by his emphasis on social and political doctrines. Hence, it has been one of my goals in this dissertation to shift the focus of attention to Ibn Taymiyyah's writings on worship, which is for him the individual's only means to approach God. From this point, expanding out diamond-shaped, flow all of his writings on various topics. His views on the family, society, the economy, and government all stem from the idea that pious worshipers must make up the core of these institutions.

Perhaps his notion of the revival of the *ummah* based on a core of true believers is too idealistic, thus accounting in part for the nearly four centuries of neglect Ibn Taymiyyah's writings suffered until they were revived by the eighteenth century "reformer" Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhâb. However, on the same note, Ibn Taymiyyah's "idealism" remains a vital inspiration to subsequent generations of Muslim thinkers and reformers, such as Muhammad

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'Abduh and Rashīd Ridā. In this light, many scholars are apt to ask the question, "Has Ibn Taymiyyah been a success or failure in his efforts to reform his co-religionists?" Again, the answer depends on a host of assumptions regarding the criteria used to judge him. If we are looking for large scale social movements inspired by him or sovereign states founded on his teachings, then we can say that he failed in his efforts. But if we consider that almost 700 years after his death people are still discussing and debating his works, and that Muslims still turn to his teachings for personal insight and guidance, then we can say that his surviving legacy is a success. It is thus my hope that this dissertation contributes to establishing a broader and more accurate understanding of Ibn Taymiyyah.

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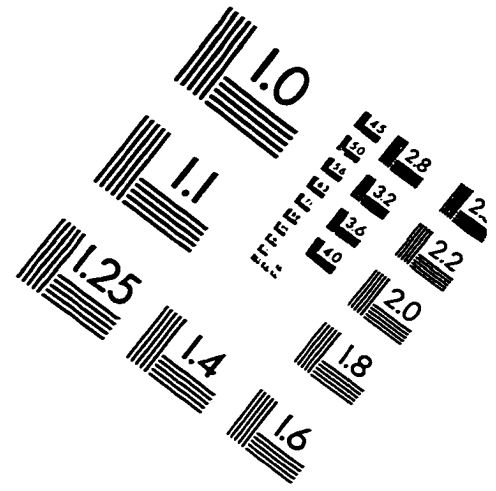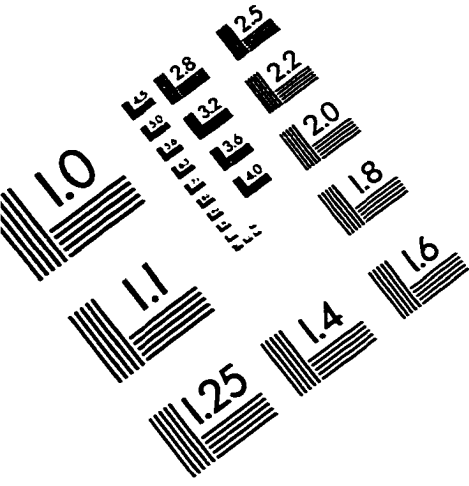
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