

IBN TAYMIYYAH EXPOUNDS ON ISLAM

**Selected Writings of Shaykh al-Islam
Taqi ad-Din Ibn Taymiyyah
on Islamic Faith, Life, and Society**

**Compiled and translated by
Muhammad 'Abdul-Haqq Ansari
Edited By IslamFuture**

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من
ابن
تيمية
وقاوي

**IN THE NAME OF ALLAH
THE COMPASSIONATE THE MERCIFUL**

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FOREWORD

All praise and thanks belong to Allah, and may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon the Messenger of Allah.

The pride and honor of every nation is concentrated in two main principles: The first is the principle of upright and sound thought for the Muslims. The infallible Divine Revelation exemplifies this. The second is the principle of the carriers of the thought and its leaders. They are the scholars of Islamic law (Shari‘ah). For this reason praise of knowledge and its people came in the Noble Qur’ān and the pure prophetic Sunnah. Allah, the Exalted, said: “Allah bears witness that none has the right to be worshiped but He, and the angels and those having knowledge (also give this witness); He always maintains His creation in justice. None has the right to be worshiped but He, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise” [3:18]. He also said: “It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves who fear Allah” [35:28]. And in the authentic *ḥadīth*: “Truly the scholars are the heirs to the prophets. Truly the prophets did not leave behind dinars or dirhams (to be inherited); rather they left knowledge. So whoever takes it has taken an immense portion of good.”

Islamic thought, by which I mean the thought of the Muslims, has gone through many different stages with regard to remaining upright or deviating. Thus there were successive stages in which Islamic thought was pure and enlightened. We also notice other states in which Islamic thought had been struck with confusion and deviance.

One of the periods when Islamic thought was not enlightened was in the seventh and eighth centuries of the Hijrah. Blind zeal and weakness of thought were widespread in Islamic society, as

well as the strengthening of innovation (*bid'ah*) and superstition. There was also division in the community and empowerment of the external enemies of Islam.

In the shadow of these difficult conditions Imām Aḥmad Ibn 'Abdul-Ḥalīm Ibn 'Abdus-Salām Ibn Taymīyyah Al-Ḥarranī (d. 728 H.) appeared. He was brilliant of mind, sharply intelligent, pure of thought, strong in reasoning and encyclopedic in knowledge, all these coupled with his complete uprightness in religion and character. His supporters as well as his opponents all bore witness to these facts. This made him fit for the exploration of a distinguished school of thought that mirrored the Salafī school and its methodology in the first three generations of Islam. It is the same school of thought upon which Muḥammad Ibn 'Abdul-Wahhāb based his call to Islam and that which the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was based upon before and is based upon now.

This imām wrote on numerous fields of Islamic knowledge: in the fields of belief and thought, worship and social life, and character and good manners. He also wrote in other fields that assisted with the fundamental fields, such as logic, language, and the like. His works were elevated, with strong academic style, precise verification and objective arguments.

It is from this viewpoint that the University saw it appropriate to choose selections from his scholarly legacy and compile them into a single book. This was done to make it easy for the seekers of knowledge to obtain this information, also to make the noble reader aware of and turn his sights to this immense knowledge which has not ceased to be a minaret of light by which the reformists, scholars, callers to Islam and others are guided.

The University entrusted the selection process as well as the translation to Dr. Muḥammad 'Abdul-Ḥaqq Anṣārī, Researcher in the Deanery of Academic Research, who has put forth a great

effort that is well worth mentioning and for which he is to be thanked. The University then entrusted the final review process, the editing, printing and publication of the work to the Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences in America, which is a branch of the University.

I ask Allah to cause benefit to come through this book. I also thank the Deanery of Academic Research at the University for its great efforts in the field of authorship, translation and publication, and I thank the Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences in the Washington area for reviewing and publishing the book.

Allah is sufficient for us, and He is the best trustee.

Dr. Muhammad Ibn Sa`ad Al-Salem , Rector ,
Al-Imām Muḥammad Ibn Sa`ūd Islamic University

PREFACE

The history of Islam is a history of struggle between Islam and *jāhiliyyah*, ignorance. *Jāhiliyyah* invades Islam with its ideas and forces; it enters the body and the soul of Islam; it distorts its faith; it upsets its values; it changes its life style; it undermines its institutions; it weakens its impulse; and it alters its image. To counteract this invasion, people with clear perceptions of Islamic ideas, values, life and institutions have appeared at various periods in Islamic history. They have fought the *jāhiliyyah* on various fronts, defeated its forces, and revived and reinvigorated Islam. They are hailed as *mujaddid*, or renewer, of the religion, following a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet to that effect. Shaykh al-Islām Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Taymīyyah was one of those great personalities of Islam; he occupies a place of honor among them.

For various reasons the West has not been able to appreciate Ibn Taymīyyah's place in Islam. His criticism of Ash'arī *kalām*, Greek logic and philosophy, monistic Ṣūfism, Shī'ī doctrines, and Christian faith have proved great obstacles to appreciating his contribution. His way of writing has also been to an extent responsible. Most of his writings are short or long responsa (*fatāwā*) to particular questions, often recurring, put to him by different men at different times, rather than planned, systematic works on particular subjects. This makes the appreciation of his contribution somewhat difficult. Henri Laoust in France was the first to take serious notice of him. Since the publication of his *Essay on the Social and Political Doctrines of Ibn Taymīyyah* (1939), a few articles and books have appeared on Ibn Taymīyyah's thought, but they are far from giving any clear idea

of his overall contribution to Islam, even less of assessing his role in its revival and renewal (*tajdīd*). In fact, there has been little understanding of the concept of *tajdīd* in Islam.

This volume consists of selections from various writings of Ibn Taymīyyah included in the *Majmū‘ Fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām* (37 volumes) published in Riyadh, *Jāmi‘ ar-Rasā‘il* (2 volumes), published by Dr. Rashād Salīm in Cairo, as well as some of his major works, such as *Minhāj as-Sunnah an-Nabawīyyah*, *Dar‘ Ta‘āruḍ al-‘Aql wa An-Naql*, *Kitāb ar-Radd ‘alā al-Mantaqiyyīn*, *Al-Istiqāmah*, and *Iqtidā aṣ-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*.

These selections will, I hope, present in a single volume a clear and complete view of Ibn Taymīyyah’s concepts of Islamic faith, life and society. They are primarily intended to highlight his positive position and mention his criticisms and refutations of other positions only to the extent needed. I hope that, in going through these selections, the reader will also form an idea of the work of *tajdīd* that Ibn Taymīyyah undertook. In the Introduction to this volume I have discussed at length the notion of *tajdīd* in Islam and underscored the contribution of Ibn Taymīyyah in this regard. This will, I hope, help the reader understand the tremendous impact that his writings have exercised on all the efforts that are being made to revive and reinvigorate Islam in our times.

The idea to compile a selection of Ibn Taymīyyah’s vast corpus of writings, presenting in his own words his basic religious thought, was presented to me a few years ago to the then Director of the Research Center of Imām Ibn Sa‘ūd Islamic University, Riyadh, Dr. Muḥammad Ar-Rubay‘. He very much welcomed the idea and got the approval of the president of the University, His Excellency, Dr. ‘Abdullah ‘Abdul-Muḥsin At-Turkī. The

completion of this work was interrupted, due to engagement in another, no-less-important project, the translation into English of Ibn Abī Al-‘Izz’s voluminous *Commentary on the Creed of Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī*. After finishing that project, I returned to Ibn Taymīyyah. The present Director of the Center and Dean of Academic Research, Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabi ee, has consistently followed the progress of this work with great interest. Thank God it is now completed. Let me pray that this volume succeed in bringing Ibn Taymīyyah closer to the English-speaking world, as well as in promoting a better understanding of the pure, pristine Islam which he tried to expound in his writings.

Muḥammad ‘Abdul-Ḥaqq Anṣārī

INTRODUCTION

The Prophet, peace and blessings of God be on him, has said: “God will raise, at the head of each century, such people for this *ummah* as will renew (*ujaddidu*) its religion for it.”¹ This means that the history of Islam will not be smooth sailing; the forces of ignorance (*jāhiliyyah*) will continue to be at war with Islam. As a result, some far-reaching changes will occur over a century which will disfigure Islam and seriously endanger the faith and life of the *ummah*. When this happens God will raise from the community someone or some men who will fight the *jāhiliyyah*, right the wrong which it has caused, restore Islam to its own shape, and give the community a new lease on life.

The changes and distortions which the *ḥadīth* implies will not be something petty and superficial, happening only in a decade or two and affecting only a part of the *ummah* or some people in one geographical area, such that they could be rectified by small reformative efforts. They will be profound and far-reaching, colossal and widespread, and will require a Herculean effort to rectify them. They will affect the very basis of Islam, erode or compromise the validity of the revelation, subject it to reason or intuition. They may even do the opposite: negate or undermine reason or intuition and destroy the balance which Islam maintains between them. They will affect the faith of Islam. They will change the concept of God and His relation to the world, they will distort the idea of His *tawḥīd* and its meaning for human life, and compromise it in various ways, overt and covert, and smear it with *shirk*. They will change the view of prophethood and prophetic mission, the view of the life hereafter and its relation to the life in this world. They will also affect the Islamic system of values,

replace the ultimate good of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah with some other good, alter the order of priorities, make the lower higher and the higher lower, or just drop or ignore certain values and replace them with others which are alien to Islam. They will change the manner and the method which the Qur'ān and the Sunnah prescribe to affirm, strengthen and cultivate Islamic values and accomplish Islamic perfection, and replace partly or mostly the prophetic *sulūk* with a *sulūk* which draws upon foreign sources and is geared to different ends. They will affect Islamic society, weaken the bond of unity which binds it together, make it forget the mission which God has set before it, and replace it with another not approved by Him, shift power and authority from hands which are supposed to wield it to hands which are not supposed to wield it, alter the principles which are stipulated to integrate the Islamic society, and institute in their place those that are opposed to the faith and the values of Islam.

The *mujaddid* whom God raises to revive Islam is gifted with great talents. He perceives minutely all the changes which occur in the life of the *ummah*. He gauges the extent to which they have sapped its strength. He brings those changes to the knowledge of the people. He makes them aware of all the forms they appear in. And finally, he points out the factors which have caused them. He attacks those factors, assails the doctrines which are involved, exposes the methods by which they work, traces the process through which they have developed, demolishes the excuses which people have advanced, and destroys the justifications they have offered. He rejects all the compromises which have been made with respect to God's unity, and puts in the language of the time the pure undiluted concept of *tawhīd*.

He restates the mission and the way of the Prophet and restores his authority. He elaborates the Islamic system of values, puts

every element in its place, and defines their priorities. He demonstrates that Islam is the only religion which corresponds to the nature in which God has created man. He states the *ṭarīqah* which the Prophet taught his companions to serve God and perfect themselves, reviews the *ṭarīqah* which people have worked out by themselves and shows what is right and what is wrong in them. He defines the structure of Islamic society, the principles of its organization, the place men and women occupy in it, the rights which individuals have and the duties they are to fulfill, the hands which should wield power, the way they should exercise it, and the ends they should achieve thereby. He addresses himself to the new issues and problems which the society of his time faces, and, using the insight God has given him in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, he tries to solve them without ignoring either the tradition of the community or the demands of the new conditions.

This is the work that a *mujaddid* does on the plane of ideas. On the practical plane, he strives to correct the practices which *jāhīyyah* has introduced, and revives the ones which it has suppressed. He fights *shirk*, misguided innovations, and unlawful practices, and promotes true faith and real piety. He wages war against the forces that support unbelief, injustice and sin, and strengthens those that work for truth, justice and virtue. He tries to ensure that power is exercised not to secure personal, group, or class interests, but to establish the rule of the *shar'* and promote the good of each and every human being. He also stands up against the external forces which try to subdue the *ummah*, or check the fulfillment of its mission. In short, he strives to establish the religion of Islam and the rule of God in all its aspects. The *mujaddid* is the heir (*warīth*)² of the Prophet. He tries to do the job of a prophet though he is not a prophet.

This is the work which a *mujaddid* whom God raises to renew His religion is supposed to do. But what part of it he really succeeds in doing depends upon the powers he has and the conditions he works in. He may succeed in some areas and fail in others. He may also make mistakes and, as he is not a prophet, his mistakes need not be rectified by God. This means that in reviewing the work of a *mujaddid* one need not justify each and every idea which he has expounded, or commend every work which he has done. It should also be borne in mind that the *ḥadīth* which we quoted earlier does not mean that there is only one person at a time who deserves the title of *mujaddid*. God may raise more than one person at a time who strives to renew His religion. In fact, He has sent more than one prophet at a time to save some people.

Shaykh al-Islām Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Taymīyyah was one of those great men whom God raised to renew Islam. He occupies a place of honor among them. To call him an eminent Ḥanbalī jurist and theologian, or an outstanding Salafī scholar, or a great Sunnī reformer does not do his achievements justice. He was the *mujaddid* of Islam *par excellence*. In the following pages I will try to highlight some facets of the renovatory work which he undertook and successfully accomplished. I must confine myself to those facets which lie within the purview of this book, and I must leave out some non-related facets; I mean those which belong to the field of *fiqh*, or relate to Shī‘ism and Christianity.

Ibn Taymīyyah (661/1263-728/1328) was born in Harran, in northern Iraq, near present day Mosul, to a family known for its learning. His grandfather, Majd ad-Dīn Ibn Taymīyyah (d. 653/1255), the author of *Muntaqā al-Akhhbār*, a renowned compilation of legal *ḥadīth* and tradition, was the most outstanding

Ḥanbalī jurist of his time. His father, ‘Abdul-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymīyyah (d. 682/1284) was a distinguished scholar of *ḥadīth*. When Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Taymīyyah was seven, the family had to leave for Damascus, as the Mongols, who had overrun Baghdad five years earlier, were threatening to move north. In Damascus, his father was offered the post of professor of *ḥadīth* at the Sakkariyyah Madrasah where he gave lectures on *ḥadīth* and Ḥanbalī *fiqh* till the end of his life.

Ibn Taymīyyah studied with his father and with many famous scholars of his time. On the death of his father, Ibn Taymīyyah, who was twenty-one at the time, was called to teach *ḥadīth* at Sakkariyyah. He was also asked to give lectures on the Qur’ān at the Umayyad mosque. The rest of his time Ibn Taymīyyah devoted to the study of various branches of knowledge known in his age. Az-Zamalakānī, a contemporary scholar not favorably disposed to Ibn Taymīyyah, said - and his saying so is fully borne out by Ibn Taymīyyah’s writings - that whatever subject he discussed, he surpassed all the scholars of his times in that subject.³ In Arabic grammar, for example, he had acquired such proficiency that Abū Ḥayyān, the leading grammarian of the time, paid a visit to him and wrote an ode in his praise. As for *ḥadīth*, it was a popular saying that the *ḥadīth* which Ibn Taymīyyah did not know was not a *ḥadīth*. In *fiqh*, Ibn Taymīyyah rose to the status of a *mujtahid muṭlaq*, one who does not limit himself to any particular school but goes directly to the basic sources of the Shari‘ah to form his opinion.

By the time Ibn Taymīyyah appeared on the scene, most of the major developments in philosophy, *kalām* and *taṣawwūf* had taken place. To speak of philosophy first, thanks to the efforts of a number of thinkers, there had emerged a version of philosophy

which was in its essence neo-Platonic, but which they had projected, after some modifications, as Islamic philosophy, or at least not opposed to the Islamic faith. They had conceived of God as a self-existing necessary being, reflecting on Himself and on universal realities which were part of His essence. The world of particular things they had not considered to be worthy of His knowledge or His will. In fact, they had conceived of God's unity in a way which did not admit of any will or action on His part. They had reduced His authority either to negative epithets or to mere relations. The world, they believed, proceeded from Him of necessity through a series of beings in an ontologically regressive order from intelligences, spheres of material objects. It was an eternal, self-operating system of causes and effects supervised by the Active Intellect.

Man was a combination of matter and spirit, and his perfection lay in the subordination of his body to his reason, in reflection and action. His ultimate perfection, however, lay only in pure rational activity, in contemplation alone. In this way, man could imitate God, which is his ultimate happiness. After death, the material body would perish forever. Most of the philosophers believed that there would be no resurrection of the body. Paradise would be the abode of the spirit, and its inhabitants would be such as had perfected their reason and transformed it from potentiality into actuality.

In principle, human reason is competent to know God and all other realities, as it is competent to know good and evil. Revelation is needed for the common people, whose reason is overwhelmed by passions. It is for them that prophets are sent, and it is in their language that they speak, a language of parables and metaphors. When interpreted properly and put into non-figurative language, their ideas will never differ from those which the philosophers

discover through reason. For truth is one, whether taught by Plato and Aristotle, or by Moses and Muḥammad. Besides an extraordinary power of knowing truths, the prophets were given unusually strong imaginations which projected rational ideas in material forms, as well as the power to work wonders. However, those powers are also available to non-prophets to some degree.

Before Ibn Taymīyyah, Al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) had examined many of these ideas in his *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* and subjected them to searching criticism. He had tried to show that some of these doctrines were simply false, and others that were true the philosophers were not able to prove conclusively. Reason, he had shown, was not competent to reach the truth on theological issues. On three of their doctrines, namely that particular things are not the object of God's knowledge, that the world is eternal, and that resurrection would only be of the spirit, he had charged the philosophers with unbelief (*kufr*).

Extensive as it was, Al-Ghazālī's criticism did not cover many other parts of philosophy. He did not touch upon logic or ethics. On the contrary, he hailed logic as the epitome of all knowledge and made it part of the Islamic curriculum without realizing its epistemological and metaphysical implications. He also adopted the philosophers' view of human perfection and happiness. In his later writings, the authenticity of some of which is disputed, he reiterated some philosophical doctrines and revised some of his own earlier views. Reviewing Al-Ghazālī's criticism of philosophy, Ibn Rushd (d. 598/1201) partly agreed with his criticisms and admitted that cosmological or etiological arguments developed by Aristotle, or the argument from contingency advanced by Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1036) for God's existence were not convincing. On the other hand, with respect to the argument from design or creation of man which the Qur'ān states, he attacked the

theologians' doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, and said that it could not be supported by the Qur'ān. He also pointed out that the whole emanationist doctrine which Al-Ghazālī had criticized was not Aristotelian; it was only put forward by Farabī (d. 329/950) and by Ibn Sīnā. He found fault with other doctrines of Ibn Sīnā, and showed that Al-Ghazālī was not correct to attribute them to Aristotle.⁴

These developments, as well as the ideas which Ibn Sīnā in his later writings and Shihāb ad-Dīn Suhrawardī Al-Maqtul (d. 587/1191) in his philosophy of illumination (*ishrāq*) had expounded, demanded a more thorough criticism of philosophy and a better statement of Islamic concepts.

While philosophers were committed above all else to reason, or what they thought to be rational, the theologians (*mutakalimūn*) were supposed to be loyal first to revelation, but they paid little attention to it. They believed that the Qur'ān only stated the creed. As for arguments, it did not say much or, if it said anything, it was rhetorical. They underestimated Qur'ānic arguments regarding credal issues. On the other hand, they overestimated the efficacy of reason in theology and did not realize its limitations. They could not see that many of their arguments were inconclusive and unconvincing. Moreover, they had borrowed concepts from philosophy or had developed them by themselves, which led them to interpret the words of the Qur'ān in a metaphorical way, as opposed to how the Elders of Islam understood the Qur'ān. They even negated many attributes of God or rendered them inoperative. The Mu'tazilah, for example, represented the attributes of God as accidents (*a'rad*) that exist in a body, and on that account denied speech to God and asserted that the Qur'ān was something created. Similarly, on the grounds that vision can only be the vision of a

body in space, they denied that the believers would see God in the Hereafter.

On the other hand, the Asha‘irah, the dominant schools of theology at the time, reacting to the Mu‘tazilī view regarding the rationality of good and evil in the impression that it implied an obligation on God and limited His absolute power, denied that there was anything good or bad in itself or that its goodness or badness could be known through reason, independently of revelation. This led them to deny God’s wisdom and render His will completely arbitrary. They also did not realize that their doctrine left no grounds for morality and religion in man, and robbed them of all justification. It left man with nothing with which to judge a prophet’s claim to prophethood or to distinguish between a true prophet and an imposter. Their idea of an absolute, divine will led them to deny efficacy to human will, as well as causality in nature. They asserted that man was not the doer of his acts; he only acquired them. There is only one doer or actor there: God. Besides contradicting many statements of the Qur’ān, as well as the universal judgment of mankind, this doctrine paved the way for the much more damaging doctrine of the unity of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). From the oneness of the actor, Ṣūfīs and philosophers had only to take a small step to reach the oneness of being.

On the popular level, the Ash‘arī doctrine regarding the *ṣifat khabariyyah* caused greater alarm, and was regarded as being influenced by *I‘tizāl*. They denied reality to these attributes and treated them as metaphors. They said that the face (*wajh*) of God means His being, His hand means power or favor, His *istawā* on the Throne means His rule, and His descending (*nuzūl*) to the lowest heaven means His blessing.

A considerable section of the people, led by scholars of *ḥadīth* and some Ḥanbalīs, reacted to this and other doctrines very strongly. They condemned theology as such, failing to distinguish between right *kalām* and wrong *kalām*. They would not admit that it had ever served any good purpose. They took the *ṣifat khabariyyah* as literally true, completely anthropomorphized God and ascribed all the parts of the human body to Him. They thus smeared the good name of the Salaf, who had rightly abstained from such action. Among them, however, there were scholars like Ibn Al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) who condemned this extreme reactionary trend and pleaded for a more moderate view.

Like philosophy and *kalām*, *taṣawwūf* had stretched a long distance and had reached its climax before Ibn Taymīyyah. In its first phase, during the second century Hijrī, it was only a way of self-purification (*tazkiyat an-naḥs*). Ṣūfīs like Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham (d. 160/776) and Fuḍayl Ibn ‘Iyāḍ (d. 187/803) lived ascetic lives and devoted themselves to worship and *dhikr*. Their successors in the third century, like Abū Yazīd (d. 261/875), Junayd (d. 298/910), and others, developed definite *ṭarīqah* of their own to reach God, which consisted of stages and stations and culminated in the experience of God which they called *fanā’*, self-effacement, and *jam’*, union with God. They developed a whole terminology to describe various experiences through which the Ṣūfī passes on the path, which As-Sarrāj (d. 378/988) and Al-Qushayrī (d. 485/1072) have discussed in their works. Reflections on the way and the experience in this phase of Ṣūfism was in its early stages, as we find in the statements of Al-Junayd on *tawḥīd*, or in the description of Abū Yazīd of his own experience.

The third and final phase of *taṣawwūf* was marked by philosophical speculation in the light of mystical experience, as we

find in the doctrine of *ḥulūl*, in-dwelling of God in man, at the hand of Al-Ḥallāj (309/923), or of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, Unity of Being at the hand of Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240). Between Ibn ‘Arabī, who had also taken Damascus as his seat, and Ibn Taymīyyah, there was a gap of less than a century, but in that short span, the former’s doctrine had spread throughout the Islamic world, and different versions of it had been brought out by Ṣūfīs like Al-Qūnawī (d. 672/1273), Ibn Sab‘īn (d. 668/1269), At-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291) and others. Earlier in the fifth century, Al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), who had also developed a mystical philosophy in some sense similar to that of Ibn ‘Arabī in his *Mishkāt al-Anwār* and in a disguised form in some parts of his *Ihyā al-‘Ulūm* and other writings, to some that also interpreted religious concepts like *tawḥīd*, trust (*tawakkul*), patience (*ṣabr*), and love (*maḥabbah*) on Ṣūfī lines. He strongly advocated the Ṣūfī *ṭarīqah*, and underlined the need for Ṣūfī *kashf* as a means to comprehend ultimate realities and interpret theological truths.

These developments in *taṣawwūf* posed great problems for a *mujaddid*. He had first to define the place of *kashf* in theology and religion vis-à-vis revelation and reason. Second, he had to review the whole gamut of theosophical doctrines which Ṣūfīsm had put forward and show what parts of this were right and what were wrong. Third, he had to examine the *Sulūk* which the Ṣūfīs were advocating and point out what part of it was consistent with the Qur’ān and Sunnah. Fourth, he had to scrutinize the values of life which Ṣūfīsm had developed and the interpretation of moral and religious virtues which it had offered and show what part of it was acceptable and what was not.

This rapid survey of philosophy, theology and Ṣūfīsm will show what tasks Ibn Taymīyyah had before him. Let us see how he accomplished them.

It is time now to state the bases of Ibn Taymīyyah's approach to the renovation of Islam. First, he maintains that the Qur'ān and the Sunnah are not only the sources of Islamic law; they are also the sources of Islamic faith and belief. They tell how life is to be conducted, how society is to be organized, how economy is to be managed, and how government is to be administered. They further show the way (*ṭarīqah*) Muslims should purify themselves, cultivate piety and serve God best. The basic principles of all these areas have been laid down in the Qur'ān. They have been explained and elaborated further by the Sunnah of the Prophet. Hence, in all these matters one must look to them first; everything else comes next and can only be acceptable if it is consistent with them.

The correct procedure for understanding a Qur'ānic statement is first to refer to other relevant verses of the Qur'ān, for one part of the Qur'ān explains another. Then one should refer to the Sunnah of the Prophet, which is the authoritative explanation of the Qur'ān and should never diverge from it provided its authenticity is established. Third, one should look to the words and the practices of the Companions. In their understanding of the Qur'ān, and in their views on major issues of faith, values and conduct of life they had few differences; their words and practices have a normative value. Last, the comments of their successors (*at-ṭabi'ūn*) on the Qur'ān are also to be taken note of: one should not diverge from agreed-upon views; and where they differ one should adopt that which is closest to the Qur'ān and Sunnah. In their practice, too, the Successors were closest to the ideal of the Qur'ān

and Sunnah, and were little affected by foreign ideas, values and traditions.

Besides these two generations, Ibn Taymīyyah also refers to the views of the *a'immah* of Islam, whose knowledge and piety the *ummah* trusts. Among them he counts the four imāms, Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/667), Mālik (d. 179/795), Ash-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/819) and, above all, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbāl (d. 241/855), then the scholars of distinction within their schools, as well as independent thinkers like Al-Awzā'ī (d. 157/774) and Sufyān Ath-Thawrī (d. 160?771), leading critics and scholars of *ḥadīth* - such as Al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), Muslim (d. 261/875), and the rest of the great compilers of *ḥadīth* - occupy a place of honor on this list. All the people that we have so far mentioned are referred to by Ibn Taymīyyah as the Righteous Elders. Their understanding of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, as well as their interpretation of Islamic faith and values, he holds, must be honored and followed. The language of the Arabs does have a role in the understanding and interpretation of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, but it only comes after them. Moreover, the language that matters is what was used before Islam or in its early period when the language was not affected by new usage.

Reason is the next principle of Ibn Taymīyyah's innovative work. He says that God created man with a particular nature, *fiṭrah*. The beliefs, values and the principles of Islamic life and society have their roots in this *fiṭrah*. Islam is the religion of *fiṭrah*. and the whole purpose of Islam is the perfection of man on the lines of his *fiṭrah*. Reason is part of *fiṭrah*. Here there is and must be complete agreement between reason and revelation. This places two obligations on Ibn Taymīyyah. He has to show, on the one hand, that the beliefs, values and the principles of life and society that the Qur'ān, the Sunnah and the *Salaf* expound have their

rational justification; they are neither irrational nor arbitrary. He has to show, on the other hand, that whatever philosophers, theologians, or scholars of any field claim to be rational is not in reality rational if it goes against the Qur'ān, Sunnah and the views of the *Salaf*.

In addition to these principles, Ibn Taymīyyah also affirms a source of knowledge which may be called intuition. Commenting on the claim of Al-Ghazālī that piety is often the cause of an extraordinary knowledge which God imparts directly to the heart, Ibn Taymīyyah expresses his complete agreement and cites in support verse 8:29 and the *ḥadīth* which counts 'Umar among those who receive inspiration *muḥaddathūn*.⁵ But how this principle stands with respect to what Ṣūfīs call *kashf* or *mukāshafah* he does not discuss. He does, however, very seriously limit the efficacy of this principle, and completely subjects it to revelation, just as he does in case of reason.

There are two main sources of knowledge: one that is available to every human being in varying degrees - senses and reason; and the other which is for prophets and messengers - revelation. In the former category there is a part which is self-evident, such as two and two make four, or two things which are equal to a third thing are equal to each other. Mathematics is based on these axiomatic truths that need no argument to prove them. Another category of knowledge is what is gained through sense perception and experience. This knowledge is of particular things which exist in reality - this man or that man, this chair or that chair. There is no knowledge of man as such, or of chair as such, for universals, Ibn Taymīyyah says, have no existence in reality; they exist only in our minds. And there is no knowledge of things which do not exist out there. Like the Stoics before him, Ibn Taymīyyah is a

thoroughgoing nominalist; he opposes every doctrine which imputes any real existence to universals. All scientific knowledge, he says, proceeds from the perception of particular things from which reason forms ideas and concepts. This is the case for all physical and social sciences.

Logic, as a science dealing with the rules of correct reasoning, is not in itself opposed by Ibn Taymīyyah. His criticism of logic is directed against its formulation by Aristotle and against the efforts by Al-Ghazālī and others to make Aristotelian logic the major source of all correct knowledge. However, his criticism often degenerates into a denunciation of logic as a worthless science. In this he displays the influence of the earlier denouncers of logic, like Ibn Aṣ-Ṣalāh (d. 643/1245).

Nevertheless, there are many constructive aspects of significant importance in his review of logic. The first concerns the theory of definition. For Aristotle, the way to know the essence of a thing, what it really is, is to find out what genus it belongs to and what differentiates it from the rest of the members of that genus. A definition which comprises the genus and the differentia of a thing gives the essence of a thing. Ibn Taymīyyah argues in detail that defining a thing by pointing out its genus and differentia is not the proper way, let alone the best way. The proper and the best way to teach someone what a thing is is either to show him the thing itself, point out to him something similar to it, or describe to him its various qualities and properties. These are the ways by which we know things' common life, and not by definition as Aristotle suggests. To appreciate the value of Ibn Taymīyyah's criticism of Aristotelian definition it is enough to point out that the standard method which modern science has adopted in its quest for knowledge is the one which Ibn Taymīyyah suggests.

His second concerns syllogistic reasoning, which comprises a major and a minor premise and a conclusion which follows from them. He shows that the truth of a major premise (All As are Bs) is derived from the observation of individual cases of As and Bs. Since it is not possible to observe all the cases, the truth of the major premise is based on reasoning from analogy. It is strange, therefore, that syllogistic reasoning is said to produce certain knowledge, while analogy, on which it is based, is regarded as generating only possibility. Further, in syllogistic reasoning one moves from the general to the particular, whereas knowledge of things which exist must proceed from the particular, for only individual things exist in reality, not universals.

Last, with respect to God, syllogistic reasoning is absolutely not applicable, for God is not a member of a genus; He is one and unique in His existence as well as attributes. It follows that the logic which philosophers make use of in theology is not applicable there, and the ideas which they thereby come upon, contrary to their claim that they are true and certain, are no more than mere conjectures. The correct kind of reasoning in theological matters, Ibn Taymīyyah says, is not syllogistic, but reasoning by priority (*qiyās al-awlā*). He defines this concept in this way: Every perfection which we think of in the case of created beings, and which is free from all defects, is to be affirmed for the Creator first and foremost; similar, every imperfection which we think of in the case of created beings is to be negated of the Creator prior to anyone else.⁶

Besides the basic law of logic, there are certain ethical ideas which are also part of man's original make up (*fiṭrah*). The Qur'ān says that God has endowed every human soul with the knowledge of good and evil, as well as with the sense of responsibility that one should do good and avoid evil. These ideas are not simply

conventional ideas (*mashhūrāt*) whose validity is limited to the society in which they are prevalent, as philosophers think. They are part of man's *fiṭrah* and are universally true. We know of their truth prior to any revelation; in fact, they form part of the criterion on which the truth of revelation is judged.

Ibn Taymīyyah sides here with the Mu'tazilah and the Māturīdīyyah, and opposes the Asha'irah, who make the knowledge of good and evil completely independent of revelation. He says that things that are good or bad are of three kinds. First is those things which are known to be good or bad prior to their pronouncement by revelation, such as justice and truthfulness. We know the goodness of these things through reason; revelation only confirms that knowledge. Second is things that *become* good or bad after revelation has commanded or forbidden them. Third is things that God commands in order to see whether people will submit to or defy His commandments. Things that are thus commanded not to be done at all *become* good like those in the second category. An example of this kind is the command of God to Abraham to sacrifice his son. When Abraham submitted to God's command and proceeded to carry it out, the purpose of the command was served and Abraham was stopped from proceeding further, and was given a lamb to sacrifice instead. The Mu'tazilah failed to see this kind of good as well as the preceding category; they only saw the first category of good. The Asha'irah, on the other hand, thought every good to belong to the third category and negated the others.

Ibn Taymīyyah separates the question of knowledge of the good and the bad from the question of recompense in the Hereafter. Those who commit evil will not necessarily be punished by God in the Hereafter as the Mu'tazilah believe, unless God

sends, Ibn Taymīyyah says, His messengers to warn them against evil deeds. He quotes many verses and the *ḥadīth* on the point.

Ibn Taymīyyah is not opposed to theology (*kalām*) as such. He distinguishes between right and wrong theology. He even recognizes that theologians like the Mu‘tazilah have done service to the faith, have defended against the onslaught of other faiths and won a number of people from among them to the fold of Islam.⁷ His criticism of *kalām* can be summed up in three points. First, the theologians attend only to the statements of the Qur’ān and Sunnah on credal issues, and ignore or do not pay sufficient attention to the arguments which the Qur’ān advances. Two, the arguments which they themselves advance, though they do not realize it, are not convincing. They have too much faith in the efficacy of reason, and give it priority over revelation or its understanding by the *Salaf*. They are not aware of the limitations of reason in theology. Third, some of the premises on which they build their arguments are either taken from other sources or just put forth in reaction to their opponents without critical examination of their validity. These premises often lead them to wrong consequences, such as denying a text or interpreting it wrongly and making it inoperative. They even lead them to deny some common-sense ideas which are accepted by all. Ibn Taymīyyah’s effort was to work out a theology that is free from these shortcomings, is more faithful to the text of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah as understood by the *Salaf*, and is more rational and convincing.

About philosophy, Ibn Taymīyyah’s attitude is completely different; it is a thoroughly critical and completely negative attitude. He may agree with one or another minor philosophical idea, but he does not see any possibility for an Islamic philosophy. He does not discuss it as an issue, but this is the impression that

one gets from his criticism of philosophy and from the fact that he does not try to work out any philosophy, as he does in case of theology.

We have observed that Ibn Taymīyyah recognizes a third principle besides revelation and reason, and although he does not go into details as to how it stands with what the Ṣūfīs call *kashf* and mystical experience, he limits its efficacy and subjects it to the prophetic revelation. Ibn Taymīyyah's criticism of Ṣūfism is first in the area of doctrine, such as the doctrines of *ḥulūl*, in-dwelling of God in man, and *waḥdat al-wujūd*. In particular, he discusses the latter at length, refutes the premises on which it is based, and points out all its implications to Islamic faith and values. He reviews next the *ṭarīqah* which the Ṣūfīs developed and denounces the unauthorized innovations which they introduced in the forms of worship and remembrance of God (*dhikr*), and points out the effects which they exercise on Islamic life. It may be noted that he does not denounce the experience of *fanā* as such, which distinguishes the way of the Ṣūfī from the way of a simple ascetic (*zāhid*) and devotee (*'ābid*).⁸ He also examines the ascetic and mystical orientation which Ṣūfīs have given to virtues such as abstention, love, trust, sincerity and resignation, and points out what part of it is right and what is wrong. He himself explains and elaborates them in the light of the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth* and the practices of the *Salaf*.

On credal issues, neither reason nor mystical intuition can provide certain knowledge. The only correct source is the *waḥī* of the Prophet. A part of the prophetic *waḥī* is literally the word of God Himself, which the angel conveyed to the Prophet and is preserved in the form of the Qur'ān. Another part is an idea which God put in the Prophet's mind and which the Prophet articulated

and put as the word of God. A third part is what the Prophet said under the guidance and supervision of God. Its truth is guaranteed by God; and if on any occasion any mistake creeps in, it is immediately corrected by God. Reports on the actions of the Prophet, if they are correct and have come down to us through reliable channels, are also treated as part of revelation. His actions are supervised and their correctness is guaranteed by God in the same way as his words.

Reports of the Prophet's words or the reports on his life and actions, which are called *ḥadīth* or Sunnah, are the sources of faith, values and laws. Their statements regarding things unseen provide certain knowledge regarding them, and their prescriptions lay down certain rules to guide human life and action and are imperative. These rules are either obligatory and must be carried out, or commendatory and should be followed.

Some of the *aḥādīth* report the exact words of the Prophet, some only convey their ideas, and some report very faithfully the actions of the Prophet. If these *aḥādīth* are transmitted by a number of transmitters, honest and true and with reliable memories, they are called *mutawātir*; they provide certain knowledge for belief as well as action. The *aḥādīth* which are called *ḵabar āḥād*, reported by one or more transmitters, fewer than those required for a *mutawātir ḥadīth*, are also to be believed and acted upon, provided the transmitters are honest and of reliable memory. These *aḥādīth* are called *ṣaḥīḥ*. The best compilation of *ṣaḥīḥ aḥādīth* is that of Al-Bukhārī and then of Muslim. *Ṣaḥīḥ aḥādīth* and to a lesser degree the *ḥasan*, or the fairly good *aḥādīth*, may also be used as arguments in matters of faith. But the *aḥādīth* which are weak (*ḍa'īf*) must be avoided. Ibn Taymīyyah goes into the rational justification of this position in different writings.

The creed which Ibn Taymīyyah presents is well grounded in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, has the support of the majority of the Elders, is more reasonable and convincing, avoids the pitfalls into which the theologians, philosophers and Ṣūfīs had landed themselves, and is put in terms comprehensible to all.

Take, for example, the existence of God. The argument which the theologians had advanced for God's existence runs like this: The world consists of bodies, which are made of atomic substances (*jawāhir fardah*) and incidents (*a'rad*). Since no substance exists without incidents, and since incidents are contingents, and since whatever is infected by incidents is contingent, the world is contingent. And whatever is contingent needs a non-contingent cause to bring it into existence, and that cause can only be God. These various premises which make up the argument are obviously not self-evident; they have to be established. Ibn Taymīyyah examines them at length and shows how they lack certainty and how the argument as a whole is far from being conclusive.⁹ He also points out the consequences which follow from these premises and which conflict with the Qur'ān and Sunnah and go against common sense.

The arguments which the philosophers had advanced did not fare any better. One of the arguments which was put forward by Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā begins by distinguishing between necessary and possible existence. The underlying assumption is that the possible has an essence different from its existence, and that the essence is at one time qualified with existence and at another time with non-existence (*'adam*). But this very possibility needs to be established. Ibn Taymīyyah argues that it is far from the truth; essence is always one with existence, as the philosophers admit in the case of God.¹⁰ Their third argument, which Aristotle and Ibn

Miskawayh (d. 421/1030) advanced and which is based on the idea of movement, is also not convincing, as Ibn Sīnā had said.¹¹

The Qur'ān, Ibn Taymīyyah says, starts with the idea that the belief that the world is created is a part of the natural endowment (*fiṭrah*) of man. This is corroborated by the fact that there has been no community on the earth which has not believed in a Creator. As further support, the Qur'ān argues for the creation of man from dust, then from sperm, then from congealed blood, then from a lump out of which bones are formed which are next clothed with flesh (23:12-14). This argument is perfectly rational and convincing. Everyone knows that he is not self-born, that he is created, that at one time he did not exist and then came into existence, that his body is made of material that comes from earth, that he is produced from sperm and then from congealed blood, and then from a lump from which the bones are formed which are then clothed with flesh. Each part of this argument is open to perception and is well established. The strength of this argument is admitted by Ibn Rushd, the famous commentator on Aristotle. He hails it as the most natural argument which the prophets offer for the existence of God.¹²

As for the attributes of God, the philosophers started with the Greek idea that God must be absolutely one, simple and non-composite, that he has to be above all distinctions, mental and real. As a consequence, they interpreted His attributes negatively or reduced them to relations. All His names, they believed, only refer to His essence, of which either something is negated or of which some relation is asserted. Al-Ghazālī had examined this idea earlier and refuted it in his *Tahāfut*. Ibn Taymīyyah carries the criticism further. His point is that the existence of positive attributes like knowledge are not other than He: they are one with Him. Hence it is not right to say that God is dependent upon something other than

Himself. Further, a being devoid of all attributes is simply a mental abstraction, a void, a non-entity.

For the Mu'tazilah, the reason for denying the existence of attributes was different. They thought that it either implied plurality of eternal beings if the attributes are taken as eternal, or the existence of contingent things in God if they are taken as contingent, which would render God contingent. To avoid these circumstances, they reduced either the attributes to mere relations (e.g. knowledge as the relation of the Divine Essence with the object known), or the states of the Divine Essence like knowing (*al-'alimīyyah*), which were said to be neither existing nor non-existing. Ibn Taymīyyah refutes this argument by saying that to affirm the existence of attributes is not to posit in any sense the existence of independent entities other than God. Neither is it the hypostasization of attributes on Christian lines, which the Mu'tazilah wanted to avoid.

The Ash'arīs, Ibn Taymīyyah recognizes, developed a better concept of God's attributes. They affirmed of Him seven essential attributes: knowledge, power, will, life, hearing, sight and speech. They said that these attributes are not the same as the Divine Essence, for they have existence over and above the Essence, not reducible to mere relations or states. Nor are they different from the Essence, as they do not exist separately from the Essence, neither by themselves nor by anything other than the Essence. God is one single Being, one Essence qualified with attributes. We can only distinguish between Essence and the attributes in thought, not in reality. Out there there is no pure Essence devoid of all attributes, nor is there any attribute existing there by itself.

The Asha'irah, however, conceived of each one of these seven attributes of God as a single eternal attribute working independently of His will for fear that it would make them

contingent. They said, for example, that God knows everything past, present and future with one eternal will, and speaks every word with one eternal speech; for they thought that the alternative was to posit a plurality of contingent knowledges, wills, and speeches which would render the Divine Essence the locus of contingent things and jeopardize its eternity. Ibn Taymīyyah concedes that this is true only of God's life and existence, but not of His will, speech and other attributes, since that would imply the eternity of their objects, willed, spoken, seen, etc. Obviously, the subject of God's will, for example, which is all powerful, cannot be conceived to lag behind His will. It is also obvious that one will is not another will, and knowledge of one thing is not knowledge of another thing; even knowledge of the same thing before its existence is not same as knowledge after its coming into existence.

Ibn Taymīyyah says that the correct solution to this problem is to distinguish between an eternal will and contingent wills, between eternal knowledge and contingent knowledges, between eternal speech and contingent speeches. God's will as a class is one and eternal, but His individual knowledges are multiple and contingent; His speech as a class is one and eternal, but His individual speech acts are multiple and contingent, for all individual wills, knowledges, and speeches depend on one eternal will, and what depends on will is contingent. This solution to the problem is not free from difficulty, but it is certainly more reasonable.

As philosophers conceived of God as being obviously simple and beyond all distinctions, and denied as a result His will and action, they considered the world as proceeding out from God necessarily, without any non-being intervening. It was also eternal because there was not any time before the worlds came into existence, for time is the measure of movement and there was

nothing there to move before the world came into being. Al-Ghazālī had refuted in detail in his *Tahāfut* the argument of the philosophers for the eternity of the world; he had affirmed its contingency, and had shown that it was created by the will of God. But like the other Ash‘arīs he maintained that God creates everything with His eternal will. As to the question why God should create a thing at one particular time and not at another, when every time is equal for an eternal and all-powerful will, the answer that he and other Ash‘arīs gave was that an eternal, all-powerful will was sufficient in itself to create anything any time.

The Mu‘tazilah, in the opposite view, posited contingent wills for God not existing in any locus.¹³ They came out with the idea of a will without a locus to avoid the existence of contingent things in the Divine Essence. They also asserted that in the beginning God was not creative and only became creative afterwards. This implies, Ibn Taymīyyah says, either His inactivity for a time or His *inability*, neither of which is to be attributed to Him.¹⁴ His view on the subject is that God is and has ever been creative. His will as a class is eternal, and things of the world as a class are also eternal, but since they are the results of individual wills which are contingent, as individual things they are also contingent.

Both the philosophers and the Ash‘arīs were of the view that God does not act in order to achieve anything in... His actions are not motivated by any motive nor done with any purpose. For the Asha‘irah, things are produced by the eternal will of God, hence the world as it is could not have been different. For the philosophers, on the other hand, the world is the emergence of things in existence in their time according as they are in the knowledge of God from eternity. The difference between them may be stated as follows: The philosophers deny purpose because they do not attribute any will to God; they think that will implies

want, which cannot be ascribed to God. The Ash‘arīs deny purpose, not because God does not have will; they do attribute will to Him, but they think that to ascribe purpose to Him means attributing imperfection to Him that He seeks to overcome by producing the thing He has in mind. They think that God’s will is all-powerful and self-sufficient and needs no purpose or reason to move it.

Ibn Taymīyyah refutes the point that purpose necessarily implies want. He says that God’s actions are the expressions of His knowledge and power, and He loves to exercise them, but they do have a reason and a purpose. He quotes texts from the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, which affirm reason for God’s actions, and at the same time deny any want on His part, and affirm His complete self-sufficiency.

The Mu‘tazilah attribute reason and purpose to God’s will. They say that He has created men, and sent prophets and messengers to them with His messages and books so that they may live a good life and may be rewarded for their good deeds. Ibn Taymīyyah appreciates this point, but he says that it is not right to relate purpose to creatures alone. There are texts, he points out, which also relate purpose to God Himself. He does want people to remember Him, glorify Him, worship Him, and obey His commandments, as well as fear Him, love Him, and put trust in Him. And when they worship Him and obey Him, He is pleased with them and loves them, but this does not mean that He needs their worship, their praises, or their obedience. It also does not mean that He was incomplete without them; on the contrary, He does these things because He loves them.

One may point out that, although God sends the prophets for the good of mankind, and a number of them who believe in them and follow them benefit from this act of God, many others who do

not believe in them suffer. What wisdom (*ḥikmah*) is there in an action which causes colossal suffering besides immense good? The Mu‘tazilah tried to meet this objection by saying that the prophets are sent only to those who believe in them and obey them and not for those who do not believe in them and defy them. For God does not will anything which is evil, nor does He will anything which does not happen. This answer is obviously not correct, for if God has not sent the prophets to the disbelievers and the defiers, why should He punish them for their disbelief and disobedience? It is also not true that disbelief or disobedience occur without God’s will.

Ibn Taymīyyah affirms, on the contrary, that whatever good or bad happens in the world happens with God’s permission, and is brought out by His will and power. He points out that God’s will is of two kinds, creative and prescriptive. Sending the prophets, giving them a message and ordering them to follow it is part of His prescriptive will, which implies that what He commands is also loved by Him. However, man is free to submit to His prescriptive will. If he obeys His commands he will be rewarded; if he defies them he will be punished. And everything God commands is good and approved of and loved by Him. As for the creative will, its object may be good and may be evil, as it does not involve His approval or disapproval. All those who deny or defy the prophets are addressed by God’s message and are the objects of His prescriptive will, just as those who believe in the prophets and submit to them. God wills, in this sense of will, the good of each and every human being, believer and unbeliever, obedient and sinful. But the lack of faith and the misdeeds of the former are willed and created only by His creative will. Similarly, the suffering which is the recompense of lack of faith and misdeeds is also produced by His creative will.

It may, however, happen that God wills something good which involves some evil, as He sends rain for the good of the people but which may also cause suffering to some. But in such cases the good always outweighs the evil. Similarly, the good that follows from sending the prophets also outweighs the evil which may follow from it in the form of suffering for those who reject them.

The philosophers viewed bodies as consisting of matter and form, which is the sum of all the essential properties to which a thing inheres. They believed that the form of a thing is unalterable. Fir, for example, whose property is to burn, will never cease to burn, or water, whose property is to cool, will never cease to cool. They believed that there is a necessary connection between cause and effect. On that ground they rejected miracles except in appearance. Al-Ghazālī subjected this view of causality to scathing criticism in the *Tahāfut*. He denied that things in themselves have any fixed form, nature or property, and that one thing causes another. Everything, he said is caused directly by the will of God. What people call cause is only a condition, the only cause is the will of God.

Ibn Taymīyyah refutes both these doctrines, the doctrine of the philosophers that things have unalterable form, and the doctrine of Al-Ghazālī and the Ash‘arīs that things have no form or nature at all, and that nothing causes anything and is simply a condition for its existence. He affirms both form and causality, but only denies that form is unalterable. This makes miracles possible. The reason which he cites for affirming causality is the one which Ibn Rushd had pointed out earlier - that it would otherwise make knowledge impossible.¹⁵

As a consequence of their denial of will and knowledge of particular things to God, the philosophers also refused to attribute speech to Him. Instead, they attributed it to the Active Intellect,

which they identified with Gabriel. They also denied that the prophet's experience with Gabriel was an external experience. They said that prophets hear words and see figures inside themselves, not outside. On all these points, Ibn Taymīyyah shows, they go against the clear texts of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. The Mu'tazilah recognized only three attributes of God (life, knowledge and power) as real attributes, and treated the rest as relations, states or negative attributes. Therefore, they could not recognize speech as an attribute existing in the Divine Essence. They said that when God speaks, it only means that He creates speech in something other than Him.

Ibn Taymīyyah ridiculed this view, saying that this is not what we mean when we say X speaks, or X is the speaker. We say that only when words are spoken by X, or when it is X who is the speaker. We call X living or knowing or moving when X himself is alive or knows or moves, and not when he brings someone else to life, or produces knowledge in some being, or causes movement in some body; similar, we can only say that God speaks or that He is the speaker when it is He Who speaks, and not when He creates the speech in something else.

The Asha'irah recognized speech as a real and essential attribute of God. But they said, as they said in the case of His knowledge, will and power, that He speaks with His eternal speech. Since they did not distinguish between speech as a class, which is one and eternal, and individual speech acts, which are multiple and contingent, they said that God speaks with one eternal speech. It is one single speech, whether it is a command, prohibition or statement, and it is one single speech which when put in Hebrew was called Torah, when put in Syriac was called Gospel, and when put in Arabic was called Qur'ān. To justify these outrageous statements, they said that God's speech should be

understood as mental speech, without words or sounds, only as an idea or meaning.

Ibn Taymīyyah subjects this view to scathing criticism. His own view, which he says is the faith of the *Salaf*, begins with the description of speech as eternal and as contingent. He says that the speech of God as a class is eternal. God has been speaking from eternity when and as He has chosen to speak. But particular speech acts of His are not eternal. Further, as objects of His will they are contingent. However, they are not to be called created (*makhlūq*), for speech is related to the speaker in a way different from the way the sun, the moon, a lion, or a man whom God has created are related to Him. Speech exists in God, but the sun, moon, lion and man exist out there separate from God. The statement that the Qur'ān is neither eternal (*qadīm*) nor created, underscores this special relation which God's speech has with Him.

The Qur'ān is literally the word of God. Its meaning as well as its words are from God; and the Qur'ān in both essences is uncreated, though not eternal. Gabriel got it from God as such, and delivered it to the Prophet without adding anything to it or subtracting anything from it. And the Prophet likewise delivered it to his people without any change whatsoever. So the Qur'ān that we have is the word of God exactly as He spoke it to Gabriel. It was the same word of God which was written down in the *muṣḥaf* during the time of Abū Bakr and 'Uthmān, the same word of God which Muslims have been transcribing since then in their *muṣḥafs*. Similarly, the words of the Qur'ān that anyone recites and hears from any reciter are the words of God. In all these forms, the Qur'ān is the uncreated word of God. However, the ink and the paper which are used in writing, as well as the act of writing, are ours; they belong to man and are created. Similarly, the voice in

which the Qur'ān is read or recited, as well as the act of reading and reciting, are human voices and acts and are created.

Ibn Taymīyyah's general stand on divine attributes is that whatever attributes God and His Prophet have affirmed of God should be affirmed, and whatever they have negated of Him should be negated, and what they have neither affirmed nor negated should be analyzed first. Concerning the last category, if the affirmation implies something which agrees with what God and the Prophet have affirmed, it may be affirmed, otherwise not. However, regarding the names of God, only those names are to be affirmed which have been affirmed by God and the Prophet, even if the proposed name has nothing wrong with it.

Second, the attributes of God which are also predicated of His creatures are not to be compared with the attributes of the creatures. They are absolutely non-similar and unique. Creatures in no sense participate in the attributes of the Creator, just as they do not participate in His essence. There is nothing common between them except in name. Third, they should be taken on their *ẓāhir*; that is, they should be understood in the sense they ordinarily mean, or, as we say, they should be taken at face value; they should not be interpreted metaphorically. However, this does not mean that the Qur'ān does not use metaphors; it does. But whenever it does there is invariably an indication by its speaker to that effect. Hence, when, following such an indication, a word of the Qur'ān is interpreted in a non-literal or metaphorical sense, it is the *ẓāhir* of that word there.

The attributes of God which are called *aṣ-ṣifāt al-khabariyyah*, such as *istiwā*, descent (*nuzūl*), face (*wajh*), eye (*'ayn*), hand (*yad*), shank (*sāq*) or anger (*ghaḍab*), love (*ḥubb*), pleasure (*riḍā*) smile (*ḍaḥik*), and so on, which we know only through revelation, are

also to be taken on their *ẓāhir*, that is, as they are ordinarily understood. Similarly, when God is called Al-‘Ālī or Al-A‘lā, the Most High, or when He is said to be above (*fawq*) the heavens, His ‘*ulū* and *fawqīyyah*, transcendence or being-above should be understood in the sense they ordinarily mean (*ẓāhir*). However, their modality (*kayfīyyah*) should not be conceived on human pattern. What exactly God’s transcendence or being-above means, or what their mode is, is not known to us, even though we know what they ordinarily mean and know that they should be taken in that sense. The same applies to all the attributes which we have mentioned or which belong to their category. Apparently the sense in which Ibn Taymīyyah takes God’s *ma‘īyyah* being with man or any creature, seems to be inconsistent with his general stand, for he understands it in the sense of knowing, watching or helping. However, the truth is that it is fully consistent with his general stand, for as we have said, the interpretation of a word in a non-literal sense is also the *ẓāhir* meaning of the word if there is an indication by the speaker to that meaning. Ibn Taymīyyah shows that every time *ma‘īyyah* is mentioned in the Qur’ān, God has in some way indicated that He uses the word in the non-literal sense.

This is Ibn Taymīyyah’s position, not only with regard to the *ṣifat khabarīyyah*, but also with regard to all other attributes. It is one of the most important points of his creed. He has stated and defended it in many of his writings, and it was due to that that he was twice jailed. He argued that this was exactly the position of the *Salaf* and that he was only stating their faith. To support his claim, he quotes profusely from them. Generally, philosophers and theologians who interpret these attributes on metaphorical lines do so because, so they claim, they imply a body for God and

anthropomorphize Him. Ibn Taymīyyah discusses this charge at length and refutes it.

Let us now move to the second part of the creed, prophethood. God chooses men from different nations at a time of His choosing, reveals to them His message and sends them to their peoples to guide them to the right path. If He sends a person to his people who already believe in some prophet, but who do not act upon his teachings, he is a *nabī*, prophet. But if He sends one to a people who are unbelievers (*kāfir*) or polytheists (*mushrik*) he is *rasūl*, messenger. Scholars have distinguished between *nabī* and *rasūl* in various ways, but this is how Ibn Taymīyyah distinguishes between them.

Prophets and messengers are the best men of their communities, with the best powers of mind and heart, most righteous and very respectable in their society. But prophethood should not be treated as a natural gift, nor the prophet as one who has greater talents than others. Prophethood is a special gift from God to a person whom He chooses for some important task; He endows him with some special powers to accomplish those tasks and He helps him in supernatural ways. Al-Fārābī first, followed by Ibn Sīnā next, and then other philosophers, even some Ṣūfīs, conceived of prophethood as a natural phenomenon. They said that the prophet is only distinguished from other people in that he has a better and more powerful faculty to know things, an extraordinarily strong imagination which presents to him his idea in visible forms in waking or in dreams, and a highly developed psychic power which works wonders.

Ibn Taymīyyah reviews in detail this view of prophethood. He points out that, first, prophethood is not a natural phenomenon, that it is not something which the prophets earn; on the contrary, it is simply a divine gift. Second, his revelations are not the ideas

which he himself discovers or works out; they are given to him by God. Third, the angel that comes to him and the things of the *Ghayb* which appear in his vision are realities which exist outside his mind, not within it; they are not at all the creations of his imagination. And the miracles which he works are not the work of his psychic powers; they are brought by God with His Own powers. Further, they are not like the wonders of soothsayers, diviners, and magicians, which do not breach the ordinary laws of nature; they do in reality breach natural laws.

One way to distinguish a real prophet from an imposter is by looking into the wonders they work. Knowledge of things in the future which an imposter mentions are not free from elements that are false; the effects he produces on natural objects are superficial and hardly breach the laws of nature; and the extraordinary experiences he has are caused by Satan. They produce no good effect either on his life or on the lives of his people. On the other hand, the best proof of a true prophet is his life, his teachings, his work and his effect on human beings.

Ibn Taymīyyah has discussed the different forms of *wahī*, or revelation, which the prophet receives. One form is imparting an idea in the mind of the prophet while awake or asleep. This form is not confined to prophets; it is also given to non-prophets, men and women, who have faith and piety. The second form of *wahī* is that which is given only to the prophet by an angel, who delivers it either directly to the heart of the prophet or appears to him in human form or in his own angelic form and delivers the *wahī*. The third kind of *wahī* is the word of God which He directly addresses to the prophet, as He did to the Moses at Sinai or to Muḥammad during his ascension (*mi' rāj*),

The third article of faith is life hereafter. Philosophers have had various opinions on this subject. Al-Kindī (d. 247/861) affirmed

the resurrection of the body. Al-Fārābī (d. 329/950) had three opinions which he expressed in his different books. In *Al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah* (The Ideal City), he says that all human beings will survive death, the virtuous as well as the wicked. The former will enjoy eternal happiness and the latter will suffer eternal damnation.¹⁶ But in *As-Siyāsah al-Madanīyyah*, on the other hand, he says that only those souls which are perfect in knowledge and virtue will survive death and enjoy happiness thereafter, but the ones which are ignorant and wicked shall perish with death.¹⁷ The third view, which Ibn Taymīyyah also attributes to Al-Fārābī but which is not found in his extant writings, denies resurrection altogether, of the body as well as the soul. Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1036) affirms the resurrection of the body along with the resurrection of the soul¹⁸ in his *An-Najāt* and other writings,¹⁹ but in *Ar-Risālah al-Udhwīyyah* he affirms only the resurrection of the soul.²⁰ This is the view which most philosophers held.

The reason that the soul, or the rational soul, to be more precise, will survive death, whereas the body will perish forever, lies deep in the metaphysics which the philosophers borrowed from their Greek masters, according to which pure reason and the immaterial realities that are its object of contemplation are alone everlasting. However, the argument which Ibn Sīnā offers may be stated as follows: so far as the soul is concerned, everyone believes that it will survive death. The body, on the other hand, everyone knows decomposes and is mixed with other particles of the earth. From that part of the earth grow various crops which are eaten by men and animals and become part of their bodies. When they die their bodies again decompose and are assimilated into the earth, from which other crops grow which are again eaten by different men and animals and are assimilated into their bodies. This process

goes on. How then, he asks, are the original particles that constitute the body of the first man to be re-collected? They are no longer intact; they are scattered and assimilated in hundreds of bodies. Again, the particles which once formed part of one became part of a second man and then of a third man. Whose part will they be regarded as, and whose body will they form when resurrected?²¹

Ibn Taymīyyah says that it is not all difficult for God to recreate from the material into which one's body turns after decomposition. The Qur'ān cites cases which God has created from the material into which bodies have turned after decomposition. One such case is that of a person who died, and whose body decomposed and became part of the earth in a hundred years (2:259). The Qur'ān asks why people should wonder that God could create man once again from the earth. Did He not create him from dust in the beginning, and then from sperm, then turned the sperm into a clot of blood, then the clot into flesh, and from the flesh did He not create bones, and finally a perfect man? (23:12-14) If it was possible for God to transform dust into sperm, and the sperm into a clot of blood, and that into bones, and then clothe it with flesh, and finally form a man, why can He not create man from dust again? Every day God is creating innumerable things from other things by transforming one into another, such as the dried earth into green crops, and the dust into a variety of insects and animals on the earth, in the air and under the sea. It asks further why it should be difficult for God to create man again when it was not difficult for the One Who has created greater things like the heavens and earth to create a smaller thing like man. (37:257).

Further, it is not necessary that God create an individual from the same material into which his or her body has decomposed; He can create from similar material. After all, the body that an individual will have in the next life will not be the same body

which or she had earlier. It will be a body similar to the earlier body in some respects and different in others. In fact, it will be a body quite different in size, immensely larger than the former, able to live forever, not just a few years as it is now, a body which will not procreate, which will neither sweat nor pass urine or stool. To the objection that it will not then be the same body, the answer is that it will be in a sense the same body. Even our present bodies in old age is not exactly the same bodies that they were in our youth, or that they were in our infancy, or that they were when we were in the wombs of our mothers. But we do call them the same bodies, and consider them to be our bodies. In the same way the bodies that we will have in the Hereafter will be our bodies, though they will be different in some respects from our present bodies.

The first important idea of Ibn Taymīyyah's regarding man is that he has a particular *fiṭrah*. Drawing upon the verse, "Set your face steadily and truly to the faith, the handiwork of God on which He has created mankind" (30:30), and the *ḥadīth*, "Every child is born with the *fiṭrah*; it is their parents who thereafter turn him or her into a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian,"²² Ibn Taymīyyah asserts that human beings are born with a definite nature (*fiṭrah*) which provides the grounds for Islamic obligation. We have referred to this concept earlier. We have said that Ibn Taymīyyah finds rational justification for Islam in the original nature (*fiṭrah*) of man. There are some ideas which are, he says, part of the human mind, necessary and self-evident as Descartes calls them, or *a priori*, as Kant characterized them. Some of them were singled out by Aristotle and made part of logic; others lie at basis of the mathematical sciences; still others form the grounds on which the moral codes of man are based. Belief in the Creator, too, is part of *fiṭrah*.

We have already mentioned these ideas. We will now add that Ibn Taymīyyah's concept of *fiṭrah* is wider than this. He says that it is also part of *fiṭrah* that God is one, that He is qualified with all the perfection we can think of, that we should be thankful to God for the blessings He bestows on us, that we should glorify Him, worship Him, and submit to Him. *Fiṭrah* has also biological, social and psychological facets. When we say that man is a social being, that he has certain biological and psychological needs which are to be fulfilled in a proper way, we are referring to another part of *fiṭrah*. It is *fiṭrah* in this comprehensive sense which is the basis of Islam. Islam does not want to change this *fiṭrah*; it only wants to perfect it. No one before Ibn Taymīyyah had ever elaborated the concept of *fiṭrah* in the way he did.

The idea that man is free within certain limits, that his actions are his actions, that he is responsible for what he does and is accountable for it is also a part of his *fiṭrah*. Freedom within limits and responsibility for the deeds one does are inalienable parts of human conscience. They are not contradicted by the belief, which is also part of *fiṭrah*, that God is all-powerful. *Fiṭrah* is a harmonious whole; one part of it does not conflict with another, provided each is conceived of and pursued in the right way. This is the fact to which the Qur'ān refers when it says, "We have created man on the best of patterns (95:4). Ibn Taymīyyah explains at length that God's omnipotence and foreordainment of things are not inconsistent with man's freedom and responsibility. The belief of the determinist that man has no freedom of will at all has no basis in the *fiṭrah* nor in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Nor is there any reason for the Mu'tazilah, on the other hand, to limit God's omnipotence and place human acts outside His power and ordainment. There is no contradiction in saying that man is free to

choose and do his deeds, while their actual happening depends on the will of God and is brought out by His power. Man is the doer of his deeds while God is their Creator.

On this issue, the Asha‘irah also went wrong. They overemphasized God’s omnipotence and reduced the efficacy of human will. In addition to asserting that God is the Creator of human acts, they made Him their doer to a great extent. Some of them even said very clearly that there is only one agent there - God. Ibn Taymīyyah rejects this view and says that besides violating common sense, this doctrine goes against Qur’ānic statements. The Qur’ān unambiguously refers various actions to man and calls him their doer. Ibn Taymīyyah also points out that the doctrine of a single Divine Agency paves the way for monistic Şūfīs and philosophers to say that God alone exists. The correct view, Ibn Taymīyyah says, is to affirm the reality of both divine and human wills and show that there is no contradiction between them.

For the philosophers, the goal of human life and the ultimate happiness of man lie in the perfection of reason, in the comprehension of ultimate realities and contemplation of them. This is the way, they believe, to imitate God, whom they reduce to a self-thinking thought. For Şūfīs the goal of man and his ultimate happiness lie either in the direct knowledge (*ma‘rifah*) of reality (*ḥaqq*), self-annihilation (*fanā’*) in God and union (*jam‘*) with Him, or the realization that Being is one (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). The goal of the philosophers follows from their metaphysics, and the goal of the Şūfīs follows from their mystical experience.

Ibn Taymīyyah says that this question is not to be decided in the light of metaphysics or mystical experience, for neither reason nor experience is competent enough to pronounce a verdict on this

issue; and in fact, there is no need to invoke either. We have the Qur'ān and the Sunnah which give a clear answer to this question. The Qur'ān and Sunnah directly state that man is the servant (*'abd*) of God, and the purpose of his creation is to serve Him. It is in the service (*'ibādah*) of God, that is, in worshiping Him and obeying His commands, that man's happiness lies. Only by serving Him and working for His religion will man achieve the purpose of his life, not by knowing Reality, or losing himself in God, or realizing that Being is one.

Some people think that this *'ibādah*, which is the goal of man's life, only means to worship God, to glorify Him, to offer *ṣalāh*, keep the fast, perform *'umrah* and *ḥajj*, offer sacrifice, read the Qur'ān and recite God's names. These are certainly *'ibādah*, but not the whole of *'ibādah*. *'Ibādah* means to submit to God in humility and love. Everything which one says or does in submission to God with humility and love is *'ibādah*, whether it is worship, pursuit of virtue, or compliance with divine commandments in any part of life, individual or social, whether it concerns an action of the body, like *ṣalāh* and *jihād*, or action of the mind like faith and *dhikr*, or feelings of the heart like fear, love and trust.

Not only is the goal of man's life and his ultimate happiness to be derived from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, their details are also to be learned from the same source. How God is to be worshiped, what virtues are to be cultivated, what values are to be pursued, what norms are to be followed, what duties are obligatory, what acts are recommended, and what things are permitted - all these are to be learned from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. All questions regarding values, norms, and priorities are to be decided on the

basis of the *shar‘*, not on any other basis, be it social tradition or mystical experience.

Similarly, the way to serve God best, or how to be a perfect servant of God is also to be learned from the Qur’ān and Sunnah. The Prophet was sent to teach the way to God, the way to purify oneself, to cultivate virtues and piety, to seek God’s pleasure (*riḍā*) and nearness (*qurb*). That way (*ṭarīqah*) he fully explained. His companions, by following that *ṭarīqah*, did attain the goal of their lives, their ultimate happiness. Ibn Taymīyyah states all the principal elements of the prophetic *sulūk*: *ṣalāh*, fasting, reading the Qur’ān, *dhikr*, righteous living, loving mankind, preaching Islam, bidding the good and forbidding the evil, and *jihād* in the cause of God. He says that the details of all these elements as the Prophet taught them and the Companions practiced them have been fully preserved and are available to everyone.

Over centuries the Ṣūfīs worked out their own ways (*ṭarīqah*) and pursued their own *sulūk*. They took various elements from the prophetic *sulūk*, but added many things to it. Ibn Taymīyyah mentions two of them in particular. One was the practice of *khalwah*, to retire to a secluded place away from people, to a cave in the mountains or a place in the forest, or to a *zāwīyyah* or *khanqah* built for the purpose, to devote oneself to worship and devotion for a specific period, forty days, for example. Ṣūfīs set a high value on this practice and seek support for it from the retiring of the Prophet to the cave of Ḥira’ in his pre-prophetic period. This practice, Ibn Taymīyyah says, is a *bid‘ah*, an unjustified innovation. In principle, the actions of the Prophet in pre-prophetic days are not enough to prove that it is his *sunnah* or that we should follow it. It may be noted that during the whole prophetic period he never visited the cave of Ḥira’’, though he could have if he had so

wished, nor any other cave. Furthermore, none of his Companions retreated to any cave during his lifetime. Had it been something desirable the Prophet would have recommended it to his people.

The second thing to which Ibn Taymīyyah strongly objects concerns the Ṣūfīs' practice of *dhikr*. He says that all the *dhikr* which the Prophet taught and which are preserved in the books of Ḥadīth are meaningful sentences. There is nothing in them like saying merely the word Allah or the pronoun *hū* (He). Such is reported neither from the Prophet, nor from any of his Companions. This practice is an innovation of the Ṣūfīs and is completely unjustified. Al-Ghazālī is more mistaken when he says that *lā ilāha illā Allah* is the *dhikr* of the common man, and saying *Allah* is the *dhikr* of the elite.

The most important part of the Ṣūfī *sulūk* is the experience of *fanā*. Ibn Taymīyyah knows well that it was part of the prophetic *sulūk*. Later Ṣūfīs like Sheikh Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1034/1624) and Shah Walī Allah (d. 1176/1762) of India have clearly said that it was never part of the prophetic *ṭarīqah*.²³ Nevertheless, Ibn Taymīyyah does not call it *bid'ah*. He only objects when a Ṣūfī like Shaykh 'Abdullah Al-Anṣārī Al-Ḥarwī (d. 481/1088) extols the experience as the goal of *sulūk*,²⁴ or when one like Ibn 'Arabī builds on it the doctrine of the unity of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).

Ibn Taymīyyah's strongest and most vehement criticism of *taṣawwūf* is directed against the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. As expounded by Ibn 'Arabī, the doctrine stands on two premises. First, the essence of a thing is other than its existence, and it is not a mere non-entity, but something which exists there before it is qualified with existence. Second, the existence of God is identical with the existence of the world.²⁵ Ibn Taymīyyah refutes both these doctrines. We have noted earlier that he is a thoroughgoing

nominalist. Hence, starting from that position, it is not difficult for him to refute the reality of the essence prior to its existence. It is easy to see the reason he refutes the identification of God's existence with the existence of the world. He denies in principle anything as absolute existence, or existence as such. What exists out there is this thing or that thing, and the existence of one thing is not the existence of the other. The existence of God is the existence of God, and the existence of the world is the existence of the world. One is not identical with the other. Existence as such is only a mental abstraction, not a reality.

Other grounds on which Ibn Taymīyyah assails the doctrine of the unity of being are those damaging consequences to religion, morality, and life which follow from it. For example, it follows that God's attributes are not real, they are mere relations; the world proceeds from Him necessarily and is not created by His will; man has no will of his own; his actions are done not by him but by God; it is God Who believes or disbelieves and who does good and does evil; it is He Who worships and He Who is worshiped, He Who kills and He Who is killed; there is nothing good or bad in itself; faith and unfaith are one; *tawhīd* is the same as *shirk*; the worship of idols or gods other than God is the worship of God, for there is no one in existence other than God; the call of the prophets to worship one God is a guile, for there is no god in existence other than God; Hell is not a place of suffering but of joy, different from the joy of Paradise.

Some Ṣūfīs, on the basis of their experiences, the ideas that they get in *kashf*, or the powers they have developed, have said that their *walayāt* is better than the *walāyah* of the prophets, or a *walī* is greater than a *nabī*. They have also said that, like the seal of the prophets, there is also a seal of the saints. Ibn Taymīyyah examines these ideas and shows that they are untrue, that no *walī* is greater

than a *nabī*, or even equal to one. Further, no *walī* can dispense with the revelation and the guidance of the *nabī*. For a man to secure God's *walāyah*, friendship and support, two things are required: faith in God and obedience to His Prophet. Whoever has faith and follows the Prophet is a *walī* of God. It is not necessary for him to follow a *Ṣūfī ṭarīqah*, have mystical experiences, acquire *kashf* and work wonders; *walāyah* is open to everyone, be he a farmer, trader, scholar, *mujāhid* or ruler.

Ibn Taymīyyah reviews the interpretations which *Ṣūfīs* give to religious virtues such as abstinence (*zuhd*) and love (*war'*), trust and *riḍā*. He shows what part of them is correct in the light of the Qur'ān, the Sunnah, and the words and practices of the Elders, and what part is influenced by their own experiences and ideas. Ibn Al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) before him had made a similar review in his *Talbīs Iblīs*. Ibn Taymīyyah goes beyond him and expounds in detail what these virtues positively mean in the light of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. This task was further carried out by his disciple, Ibn Al-Qayyīm (d. 751/1350) in his *Madārij as-Sālikīn* and other writings.

An Islamic society is an organized society. Its affairs are to be managed by a government. If there is no government, the community is required to establish one. Except for some innovationist sects like the *Khawārij*, the rest of the *ummah* is agreed that it is the *duty* of the community to establish a government (*imāmah*) which manages its affairs, promotes its well-being and secures its happiness, establishes the daily prayers, the prayers on Fridays and 'īd occasions, organizes the ḥajj, collects and distributes the *zakāh*, promotes the true faith and protects it from idolatrous practices, supervises the morals of the society, enjoins the good and forbids the evil, enforces the *hudūd*

punishments, administers justice in all affairs, social, political and economic, maintains peace and order, and protects the community from disruptive elements within and from invading forces without. In short, it establishes the religion (*iqāmat ad-dīn*) in all aspects.

Opinions have differed as to whether the basis of this obligation is reason for the *shar'*. Some Mu'tazilah consider it to be rational and *shar'ī*, while the Asha'irah consider it to be purely *shar'ī*. Ibn Taymīyyah, in consonance with his general position with regard to good and evil, states that it is rational as well as *shar'ī*. Man is a social being; he cannot be happy or secure his well-being unless he lives in an organized society ruled by a just government. The Prophet has commanded a party of just rulers to set up a leader over them and obey his commands. He would all the more like that the community set up a government and obey its regulation. Many of the provisions of the Shari'ah, such as the collection and the distribution of *zakāh*, the enforcement of *hudūd*, establishment of justice, and so on, require an effective government. There are verses in the Qur'ān and many *ahādīth* of the Prophet which explicitly command Muslims to obey their rulers and order the rulers to fulfill their duties towards the people. Hence the setting up of a strong government is both a rational and *shar'ī* obligation on the community. Not only an obligation, every effort to establish it and serve it in any capacity once it is set up is one of the most commendable acts which secure God's pleasure (*ridā*) and favor (*qurb*). It is not at all a secular occupation, as many ignorant people think

The concept of an Islamic government on which there is consensus in the *ummah* is that the real ruler is God. He has created the people, and it is for Him to rule them. Sovereignty is His, and He is the Law-giver and the Ruler. Human rulers are to

exercise their power and authority within the limits set by God, according to the law given by Him, in the way prescribed by Him, and for the purpose laid down by Him, either directly or through His Prophet. They are also accountable before Him for each and everything they will do. In other words, authority is a trust (*amānah*) from God, and people act as trustees. Ibn Taymīyyah prefers to use the term *amānah* rather than *khilāfah*. He thinks that the imām, the highest authority in the government, should not be called the deputy (*khalīfah*, or caliph) of God, which implies, in his view, the absence of the real authority or his inability to rule personally. Much can be said against his assumption. It will be sufficient, however, to point out that in actual practice there is no difference between an *amīr* and a *khalīfah*; the difference between them is only a matter of semantics.

The head of the Islamic state and the chief ruler of the government, the imām or the *khalīfah*, is to be chosen from among the Muslim community. Is it necessary that he be from the tribe of Quraysh? On this point most Muslim thinkers have said that he should be a Qurayshī. The Khawārij were the first to differ from that condition and believed that any Muslim could be imām provided he fulfilled the other requirements. From among the Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah, Qāḍī Abū Bakr Al-Baqillānī (d. 404/1013), as Ibn Khaldūn has said, also believed that the post was open to all Muslims.²⁶ Ibn Taymīyyah sides with the majority view, but says that if a competent Qurayshī is not available, a non-Qurayshī may be chosen.

On the procedure for the election of an imām, the constitution of an electoral college (*ahl al-ḥall wa al-‘aqd*), and the ratification of the elected imām by the oath of allegiance (*bay‘ah*) from the community, Ibn Taymīyyah subscribes to the view of the majority

of the scholars. However, with regard to the qualifications for *imāmah*, he is more realistic than his predecessors, Al-Mawrādī (d. 450/1058) and Abū Ya‘lā (d. 490/1097).

It is possible for an imām to make mistakes or commit sins. Like the scholars of the Ahl as-Sunnah, Ibn Taymīyyah rejects in the strongest terms the Shī‘ī doctrine of the infallibility and innocence of the imām, as he rejects in unequivocal terms their effort to confine the *imāmah* to the family of ‘Alī and Fāṭimah, may God be pleased with them. He is also one with the majority of the Sunnīs’ view that the imām may be deposed by the people if he fails to perform certain of his duties. However, obedience to the imām in things that are not wrong is a bound duty on the people. They are only to abstain from obedience when it involves sin against God.

Imāmah or *khilāfah* as defined above is the correct and the proper kind of government in Islam. But if someone seizes power and establishes his rule and acts according to the Sharī‘ah, it will be acceptable on grounds of expediency. Monarchy (*mulk*) is a legitimate form of government under certain conditions, but it is not at all the ideal Islamic government. Its legitimacy is based on the fact that the effort needed to change it may cause more harm than good. Though legitimate on grounds of expediency, a monarchy is bound by the same rules as the caliphate; so it should work within the same limits and according to the same laws. Absolute monarchy is inconceivable in Islam.

The constitution of the caliphal government, the distribution of powers among the authorities, and other matters of detail are open questions to be decided by the community in the light of the traditions of the rightly guided caliphs (*al-khulafā’ ar-rāshidūn*). The guiding principle should be how to accomplish best the

objectives which God has set before the Islamic government and how to secure the well-being of all sections of the community, not only that of a person, family, tribe, class or section.

These are some important aspects of the great innovative work which Ibn Taymīyyah did on the plane of ideas. We have not touched on all the aspects. The reader may go through the pages of this book and find others from the words of the *Shaykh al-Islām* himself. He will certainly find them no less illuminating and inspiring. Ibn Taymīyyah did not limit himself to expounding ideas; he preached them, fought for them and bore patiently all the suffering that his opponents might inflict on him. For the cause he was sent to prison time and again, and it was in prison that he laid down his life like a true martyr.

Ibn Taymīyyah did not carry out *jihād* with the pen alone: he also fought with the sword. History will remember how he worked day and night, persuading Muslim armies and commanders to fight against the Mongols, and how he himself fought alongside them with faith and courage until God turned the tide against the Mongols. This side of his work, and the campaigns that he led against popular forms of *shirk* and against the enemies of Islam within the community itself, we have not mentioned, but they are also worthy of study.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, malāḥim:1.

² Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 'ilm:10; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 'ilm:1; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, muqaddamah:17; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, v:196.

³ Salāḥ ad-Dīn Al-Munajjid, *Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymīyyah, Sīratuhu wa Akhbāruhu 'ind al-Mawrikhīn*, Beirut, Dār Al-Kutub Al-Jadīdah, 1976, p. 19.

⁴ For these details see Majīd Fakhrī, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, Columbia University Press, New York and London, 1970, pp. 313ff.

⁵ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, faḍā'il aṣ-ṣaḥābah:6; anbiyā':54; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, faḍā'il aṣ-ṣaḥābah, 23; At-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, manāqib:17; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, 6:55.

⁶ For discussion of these points see Dr. 'Alī Sāmī Nashshār, *Manhāj al-Baḥth 'ind Mufakkirī al-Islām*, Beirut, Dār An-Nahḍah, 1984, pp. 187-279.

⁷ Ibn Taymīyyah, *Al-Furqān bayn al-Ḥaqq wa al-Bāṭil*, 1:74.

⁸ See my *Ṣūfism and Sharī'ah*, Islamic Foundation, Leicester, U.K. 1986, pp. 31-33.

⁹ Ibn Taymīyyah, *Kitāb an-Nubūwwāt*, Riyadh, n.d., p. 39.

¹⁰ Ibn Taymīyyah, *Minhāj as-Sunnah*, Cairo, Bulāq, 1321, 1:96.

¹¹ Miskawayh, *Al-Fawz al-Asghar*, Cairo, Maṭba'at as-Sa'ādah, pp. 12-16. For Ibn Sīnā's remark see 'Abdur-Raḥmān Badawī, *Araṣṭū 'ind al-'Arab*, Cairo, An-Nahḍah, 1947, p. 23.

¹² Ibn Rushd, *Al-Kashf 'an Manāhij al-Adillah*, Muḥammad Qāsim, ed., Cairo, Maktabat Al-Anjalo, 1964, p. 15- 154.

¹³ Sayd Sharīf Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 1325 A.H., 8:379.

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- ¹⁴ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Minhāj as-Sunnah*, op. cit., 1:39.
- ¹⁵ Ibn Rushd, *Al-Kashf ‘an Manāhij al-Adillah*, op. cit. p. 232.
- ¹⁶ Al-Fārābī. *Arā’ Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah*, Cairo, Maktabat Al-Husayn At-Tijārīyyah, 1948, p. 121.
- ¹⁷ Al-Fārābī, *As-Siyāsāt al-Madanīyyah*, Hyderabad, 1994, p. 53; See also, M. ‘Abdul-Ḥaqq Anṣārī, *The Moral Philosophy of Al-Farabi*, Aligarh, 1965, pp. 53-54.
- ¹⁸ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Ar-Radd ‘alā al-Mantiqīyyīn*, Bombay, 1949, p. 458.
- ¹⁹ Ibn Sīnā, *An-Najāt*, Cairo, Al-Kurdī, 1938, p. 291; *Fī Aqsām al-‘Ulūm al-‘Aqliyyah*, included in *Tisa’ Rasā’il fī al-Ḥikmah wa Aṭ-Ṭabī‘īyyāt*, Hyderabad, 1908, pp. 114-15.
- ²⁰ Ibn Sīnā, *Ar-Risālah al-‘Uḍwīyyah fī Amr al-Ma’ād*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā, Cairo, 1949, p. 57.
- ²¹ See note 20.
- ²² Al Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, janā’iz, 80: tafsīr, 30:1, qadr:3; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, qadr, 22, 23, 24; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II: 315, 346.
- ²³ Sheikh Aḥmad Sirhindī, *Maktubāt Imām Rabbānī*, Vol. 1, letter 113; Shah Walī Allah, Hamdāt, ed. Nūr Al-Ḥaqq ‘Alawī and Ghulām Muṣṭafā, Hyderabad; Pakistan, 1964, pp. 16-17. See also my *Ṣūfism and Sharī‘ah*, pp. 64, 66-67.
- ²⁴ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū’ Fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām*, Riyadh, vol. X, p. 498.
- ²⁵ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Ḥaḳīqat Madhhab al-Ittiḥādiyyīn*, included in *Rasā’il wal-Masā’il*, ed Rāshid Riḍā, Cairo, Vol. 4, pp. 6-17.
- ²⁶ See Ibn Khaldūn, *muqaddamat*, Dār Baḥṭh, Makkah, 4th. ed. 1978, p. 194f.

PART I

EPISTEMOLOGICAL

FOUNDATIONS

1. Human Nature (*Fiṭrah*), Reason and Revelation

(1.1) The essential nature (*fiṭrah*) of man

Every human being is born in the nature of Islam. If this nature is not subsequently corrupted by the erroneous beliefs of the family and society, everyone will be able to see the truth of Islam and embrace it.

The Prophet (pbuh) said, “All human beings are born with *fiṭrah*, the nature (of Islam). It is their parents who make them Jew, Christian or Zoroastrian.”¹

What he meant is that there is a certain nature with which God created man, and that is the nature of Islam. God endowed mankind with this essential nature the day He addressed them saying, “Am I not your Lord?” and they said, “Yes, You are” (7:172). *Fiṭrah* is the original nature of man, uncorrupted by subsequent beliefs and practices, ready to accept the true ideas of Islam. Islam is nothing but submitting to Allah, and to none else; this is the meaning of the words, “There is no god except Allah.”

Elucidating this concept, the Prophet (pbuh) said, “Man is born with a perfectly sound nature (*fiṭrah*), just as a baby animal is born to its parents, fully formed without any defect to its ears, eyes or any other organ.”² He thus emphasized that a sound heart is like a sound body, and a defect is something alien which intervenes. Muslim, the famous compiler of *ḥadīth*, has recorded in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* from ‘Iyād Ibn Ḥimār that the Prophet (pbuh) once quoted God’s words: “I created my people faithful to none but Me; afterwards the devils came upon them and misled them. They forbade them what I had permitted, and commanded them to associate with Me ones I had never authorized.”³

The *fiṭrah* is to the truth as the light of the eye is to the sun. Everyone who has eyes can see the sun if there are no veils over them. The erroneous beliefs of Judaism, Christianity and

Zoroastrianism act like veils, preventing people from seeing the truth. It is common experience that people whose natural sense of taste is not spoiled love sweets; they never dislike them unless something spoils the sense of taste.

However, the fact that people are born with *fiṭrah* does not mean that a human body is actually born with Islamic beliefs. To be sure, when we come out of the wombs of our mothers, we know nothing. We are only born with an uncorrupted heart which is able to see the truth of Islam and submit to it. If nothing happens which corrupts the heart we would eventually become Muslims. This power to know and to act which develops into Islam when there is nothing to obstruct it or affect its natural working is the *fiṭrah* on which God has created man.

[*Fatāwā* 4:245-7]

(1.2) Prophets address the *Fiṭrah*

Prophets address the fiṭrah of man and appeal to it, for knowledge of the Truth is inherent in the fiṭrah.

No prophet has ever addressed his people and asked that they should first of all know the Creator, that they should look into various arguments and infer from them His existence, for every heart knows god and recognizes His existence. Everyone is born with the *fiṭrah*; only something happens afterwards which casts a veil over it. Hence, when one is reminded, one recalls what was there in one's original nature (*fiṭrah*).

That is why God sent Moses (and Aaron) to Pharaoh. He said, "Speak (to him) in soft words; he might recall" (20:44); [that is, he might recall] the knowledge inherent in his original nature regarding his Lord and His blessings on him, and that he depends upon Him completely. This may lead him to faith in his Lord, or cause him "to fear" (20:44) punishment in the Hereafter in case he denies Him. This, too, may lead to faith. That is why God has said,

“Call to the path of your Lord with wisdom (*ḥikmah*) and polite admonition (*maw‘izah*)” (16:725). *Ḥikmah* is to explain the truth so that one who wants to accept it rather than reject it may accept. But if he rejects it because of his evil desires he should be admonished and warned.

Knowledge of the truth leads to its acceptance, because the love the truth is endowed in human nature. Truth is dearer and more acceptable to the *fiṭrah* of man than untruth, which has no basis on which to stand and is abhorred by the *fiṭrah*. However, if truth and knowledge do not lead a person to faith, he should be warned against his refusal and threatened with punishment. People do fear punishment and try to avoid what may cause them pain, even though they may not move to secure what is good and useful.

Some people only indulge in base desires and belie the punishment they are threatened with, or try to forget it so that they may do what they want without feeling any prick in their hearts, for if they recognized the punishment and remembered it, they would not indulge their evil desires. One is either ignorant or forgetful before one commits evil. That is why all sinners against God are ignorant.

[*Fatāwā* 16:338-9]

(1.3) Reason is necessary but not sufficient

Reason is prerequisite to the acquisition of knowledge, as well as for the performance of a good deed or righteous act. Mystical states like ecstasy or intoxication, which involve the suppression of reason, are imperfect states of mind, and ideas that conflict with reason are false. However, reason is not self-sufficient; it cannot dispense with revelation, which alone gives the knowledge of realities that transcend it.

Many theologians base their ideas simply on reason, and rely exclusively on it. They subject it to the faith and the Qur’ān.

Knowledge is derived from general principles of reason sufficient in themselves without a recourse to faith on the Qur'ān.

Most Ṣūfīs, on the other hand, condemn reason and find fault with it. They assert that sublime states and higher spiritual stages are never attained without negating reason. They expound ideas which contradict reason and lead to rapture, ecstasy and intoxication. They believe in truths and experiences which, as they claim, accrue only when reason is completely suppressed; they also believe in things that are clearly denied by reason or are not attested to by it.

Both these sources are wrong. To be sure, reason is prerequisite to all knowledge, as it is the prerequisite of virtue and good life. With it we acquire knowledge and virtue, but it is not sufficient by itself. It is only a faculty of the soul, a power like the power of vision in the eye. It works only when it receives light from faith and the Qur'ān, as the eye sees only when it receives light from the sun or a fire.

Left to itself, reason cannot know things which it is not equipped to know by itself. On the other hand, when it is completely suppressed, the ideas that one receives and the acts that one performs may be things such as happen to the animals. One may have love and ecstasy and other experiences, but they will not be different from what the animals get. Hence the states that one attains to by negating reason are defective, and the ideas one receives contrary to reason are false.

Prophets came with knowledge which reason could not attain in and of itself; never did they come with what reason considers to be impossible. People who place unjustified faith in reason readily make statements regarding the necessity, possibility or impossibility of things purely on the basis of reason; they work all the while under the impression that their views are correct, whereas they are false; they are even audacious enough to oppose the views which the prophets taught. On the other hand, those who decry reason and affirm things that are false, revel in satanic states

and evil practices, and cross the boundaries which the sense of discrimination (between good and evil) draws, with which God has endowed man and elevated him above other creatures.

Among the people of *ḥadīth* (*ahl al-ḥadīth*)⁴ there are also some who lean towards one or the other of these two groups. They sometimes bring down reason from its position, and sometimes put it against the prophetic practices (*sunan*).

[*Fatāwā* 3:338-9]

(1.4) Knowledge of good and evil

Acts are of three kinds. One is those which are good or bad even before the shar‘ comes with its verdict regarding them; their goodness or badness is known through reason (as well as the shar‘). This, however, does not imply that one who commits evil will be punished in ‘alā, although the shar‘ had not declared its verdict. The second kind is those that acquire the property of goodness or badness on account of the command of the Law-Giver (Ash-Shari‘) regarding them, and thus become good or bad. The third kind is those which the Law-Giver commands only in order to see if one will obey Him or not. In such cases what matters is the command, not what is commanded.

On the question of whether good or evil are known through reason, there are different views among the Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah,⁵ the followers of the four schools of jurisprudence, as well as others. The Ḥanafīs and many of the Mālīkīs, Shāfi‘īs and Ḥanbalīs believe in their rationality. This is also the view of the Karrāmīs⁶ and the Mu‘tazilah,⁷ as well as that of many sects among Muslims, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians and other religions. On the other hand, many followers of Ash-Shāfi‘ī, Mālīk and Ibn Ḥanbal oppose that position; this is the view of the Ash‘arīs.⁸

However, the Ahl as-Sunnah do not differ with respect to the issue of *qadr*.⁹ They believe that God has power over everything,

that He is the Creator of human acts as well as all other things, and that what He wills happens and what He does not will does not happen. The Mu‘tazilah and others who uphold the autonomy of human will (Qadarīyah)¹⁰ hold the opposite view; they deny *qadr* and are guilty of unjustified innovation (*bid‘ah*). Some people think that those who believe in the rationality of good and evil deny *qadr*; they bracket them with the Mu‘tazilah on the issue of divine justice (*ta‘dīl wa tajwīr*).¹¹ This is not correct. The majority of Muslims do not side with the Mu‘tazilah in this regard, nor do they agree with the Ash‘arīs in their denial of purpose in divine actions, or in their negation of causes in the nature. On the contrary, all these groups believe in *qadr* and affirm that God is the Creator of everything, including human acts, and that what He wills happens, and what He does not will does not happen.

However, it is only the extremists among the Mu‘tazilah who deny God’s fore-knowledge of things or His fore-ordaining of human actions. All others believe that God knows in advance what men will do, and testify to the prophetic sayings on the issue that God has determined everything before their creation. They believe, for example, in the *ḥadīth* which Muslim has recorded on the authority of Ibn ‘Umar, “God ordained everything pertaining to creation fifty thousand years before He created the heavens and the earth, when His throne was on the waters.”¹²

Both Al-Bukhārī and Muslim have also recorded the *ḥadīth* reported by Ibn Mas‘ūd: The Prophet said - and he has said nothing but truth - “Your formation in the womb of your mothers goes on in stages: The first stage of semen extends to forty days, the second stage of blood-clot extends also to the same duration; then the angel is called and given orders regarding four things. He is asked to write the provision of the person, the duration of his or her life, his or her actions, and whether he or she shall be happy or unhappy. Then the soul is breathed into him or her. By God, Who has power over all life, you may go on doing good deeds, as the people of Paradise should do, till Paradise is at your arm’s length.

Then God's writ overtakes you and you do the deeds of the people of Hell, and eventually enter into Hell. On the other hand, you may go on doing the deeds of the people of Hell till Hell is at your arm's length. At that time the writ of God overtakes you, and you do the deeds of the people of Paradise and finally enter it."¹³ There are other *ahādīth* also on the subject. Most of the Qadarīyyah accept them; only the extremists among them deny them.

The majority of Muslims also affirm the existence of causes which God has ordained as causes in the process of creation He carries on and off reasons regarding the commands He issues. They affirm the wise purpose which He pursues in His creation as well as in His enactments. They testify to all the statements that God has made to this effect in the Qur'ān, such as: "(There are signs) in the rain which God sends down from the skies, and in the life which He gives therewith" (2:164); or "He causes rain to descend on (the dead land) and produce every kind of harvest therewith" (7:57). The Qur'ān and the Sunnah abound with such statements. Muslims in general also make statements such as "X has done this by means of Y," rather than "X has done this at the time of Y."

The point I am making is that the issue of knowledge of good and evil is not tied to the issue of *qadr*. Now that this has been clarified, let me state that there are three different views regarding knowledge of good and evil, two on the extremes and one in the middle. The first view is that good and evil are rational, that they are the essential properties of acts, and that the *shar'* only reveals those properties rather than generating them. This is the view which the Mu'tazilah hold and which is not sound. If one extends this ethical doctrine to theology and claims that what is good for man is also good for God and what is evil for man is also evil for God, one would arrive at the false notion of the Qadarīyyah, including that regarding divine justice. These people are guilty of anthropomorphism; they liken divine acts to human acts and human acts to divine acts. This is as wrong as likening divine

attributes to human attributes or human attributes to divine attributes.

God's acts cannot be judged on the pattern of human acts, for people are servants while He is their Lord. They wrong each other and commit shameful acts, and He has power to stop them, but He does not do so. This is not something evil for Him, for He may have some higher purpose behind it or may have some good to bestow on His people. This is what the Elders, the *fuqahā'* and Muslims in general believe; they all affirm that creation, as well as the legislative activity of God, is purposive.

Those who say that God's creative act has no purpose or that His command pursues no need affirm a will that chooses one thing against the other without any reason. Ibn Kullāb¹⁴ and his followers subscribe to this view, which was propounded originally by the Qadarīyyah and the Jahmīyyah.¹⁵

The second view on the issue is that acts of God have neither the qualities of goodness nor of evil, nor the properties on account of which they are characterized as good or evil. God simply wills one thing against another just because He wills it, rather than for any reason or purpose which He may pursue by creation or command. The expanders of this view are not even shy to say that God could command one to associate partners with Him, or find fault with serving Him alone, or order unjust and shameful acts, or forbid virtue and piety. For them, all ethical judgments are relative; good is not something good in itself, nor is evil something evil in itself. When God says, "He [the Prophet] commands them what is just (*ma'rūf*) and forbids them what is evil (*munkar*), He is permitting what is good and prohibiting what is evil (and impure)" (7:157). This would mean, according to their view, that He commands what He commands, forbids what He forbids, permits what He permits and prohibits what He prohibits. In fact, the objects commanded or forbidden, permitted or prohibited are neither good nor evil nor right or wrong in themselves, except when they are taken to mean what suits people. It also follows that

God neither loves any good nor hates any evil.

This view and its implications are unacceptable, for they are opposed to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, and to the consensus of the Elders and the jurists. They are also opposed to common sense. They have nothing to do with God, for exalted is He above them. He has Himself said, "No, God never commands what is shameful" (7:28). He has also dissociated Himself from putting good on the same level as evil when He has said, "What! Do those who seek after evil ways think that We shall hold them equal with those who believe and do righteous deeds, that equal will be their life and death? Ill is the judgment that they render" (45:21); or, "Shall We then treat the people of faith like the people of sin?" (68:35); or, "Shall We treat those who believe and work deeds of righteousness the same as those who do mischief on earth? Shall We treat those who guard against evil the same as those who turn aside from the right? (38:28). But according to the view of these people who deny (objectivity to ethical judgments) it is all the same if you equate the righteous with the wicked or elevate them over the latter. To dissociate God from the former is no better than to associate Him with the latter. This certainly violates the Scripture as well as reason.

God has said, "God knows best whom to charge with His mission" (6:124). But for these people charging someone with a mission does not require any qualities on his part before or after his commission, just as obligating people with some act does not presume any properties in the act. Jurists as well as the common folk of the Muslim community say, on the contrary, that God prohibits the *wrong*, which is thereby prohibited, and commands the *right*, which becomes thereby a duty. We have two things here: one, the act of obligation or prohibition, which the word of God makes; and, two, the obligatory or forbidden character of an act, which is a property of the act. God is knowing and wise. He knows the good that His command entails. It is on the basis of His knowledge of the good or the evil of the people involved in the

command or the prohibition, or the etchings commanded or prohibited, that He commands or prohibits. To be sure, it is He Who makes an act obligatory or forbidden, but as for the property of the act, it may be present before or without the command.

If you look at the words of the *shar‘* and the ends which its rules pursue, you will find three kinds of acts. The first are those which involve some kind of good or evil even before the *shar‘* commanded them. We know, for example, that justice leads to the well-being of people, and injustice involves their suffering. Such acts are therefore good or evil (in themselves); their goodness or evil is known even through reason, as well as through the *shar‘*, but not in the sense that the *shar‘* invests them with a property which they did not have before. However, in affirming an independent property of evil in some act it by no means follows that their doers will be punished in the Hereafter, even if the *shar‘* had not come with its verdict.

This is a point on which the extremists among those who believe in the rationality of good and evil have gone wrong. They say that people will be punished for their evil deeds even if no messenger had been sent to them. They go against the statements of the Qur’ān, such as, “We would not punish until We had sent a messenger (to give warning)” (17:15); or “Messengers who gave good news as well as warning that mankind after (the coming) of the messengers should have no plea against God” (14:165); or “Your Lord was not one to destroy a population until He had sent to its center a messenger, rehearsing to them our verses, nor are we going to destroy a population except when its members practice iniquity” (28:59); or “Every time a group is cast therein, it keepers will ask, ‘Did no warner come to you?’ They will say, ‘Yes, indeed, a Warner did come to us, but we rejected him and said, ‘God never sent down any (messenger);’ you are in nothing but an egregious delusion.’ They will further say, ‘Had we but listened or used our intelligence we should (now) be among the companions of the blazing fire’” (68:8-10). Both Al-Bukhārī and Muslim have

recorded that the Prophet (pbuh) said, “No one is more generous in accepting an excuse than Allah. This is why He sends messengers to people who give good tidings and warnings.”¹⁶ There are many more texts on the subject that fully underscore the point that God does not punish people unless He had sent His Message to them. These texts refute the claim of the rationalists that people are punished even if no messenger is sent to them.

The second kind of acts are those which *become* good when the *shar‘* commands them, or *become* evil when it forbids them. They acquire the property of goodness or evil by virtue of the command of the *shar‘*.

The third kind of acts are those which the Law-Giver (Ash-Shāri‘) commands just to see whether people carry out His commands or not; the performance of the act as such is not what is desired. For example, Abraham was told to slaughter his son. When he and his son submitted to the command and Abraham laid his son on the ground, the objective was achieved. Abraham was thereafter given a lamb to sacrifice in place of his son. Another example is the *ḥadīth* that tells of a leper, a bald man and a blind man. When God sent them an angel to beg for charity and only the blind man responded to his request, the angel said, “Keep your money with you. God only intended to test you people. He is pleased with you, and is angry with the two others.”¹⁷ This illustrates that the intention of a particular command may be the command itself and not the thing commanded.

The Mu‘tazilah, did not understand this kind of act or the one mentioned before it. They were wrong in thinking that there are no good or evil acts other than those which are independent of the decree of the *shar‘*. The Ash‘arīs, on the other hand, believed that all the commands of the Sharī‘ah are of the third kind, just for trial, and that they have no property whatsoever before or even after the word of the *shar‘*. Men of knowledge and wisdom (*ḥukamā’*)¹⁸ and Muslims in general recognize these three types of acts. And this is the correct view.

[*Fatāwā* 8:428-436]

(1.5) Knowledge of God and His unity.

People have various views as to how we know God and His unity and what the basis for obligation is in this regard. The best view on this subject is that acts have properties which make them good and obligatory or evil and forbidden. This fact is often known by reason, but God does not punish anyone except after His message has reached him.

Opinions have differed regarding the means of knowing God and His unity and other basic principles of religion. Is it the *shar'* which gives us knowledge about them, and defines our obligations or is it the case that we know them through our reason, while it is the *shar'* which makes them obligatory? Or is it the case that reason is both means of their knowledge and the instrument of their obligation? These are three known views on the subject, and each one is held by various sections among the followers of the founders of the four schools of *fiqh*, Aḥmad and others.

One group is of the view that the source of knowledge as well as the basis of obligation is nothing but the *shar'*. The Salīmīyyah¹⁹ and others such as Shaykh Abū Al-Farāj Al-Maqdīsī²⁰ belong to this group. The followers of Aḥmad and others from the Ahl as-Sunnah have also been reported to hold this view. It is also held by Ibn Dirbās,²¹ Ibn Shukr²² and many other followers of Ash-Shāfi'ī. From the scholars of *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*, those who condemn *kalām* generally subscribe to it. This is the issue on which a controversy had flared up between the companions of the theologian Ṣadaqah Ibn Al-Ḥusayn Al-Ḥanbalī²³ and a faction of Aḥmad's followers, as well as between Abū Al-Farāj Ibn Al-Jawzī²⁴ and another faction of the Ḥanbalīs. The former parties contended that the *shar'* is both source of knowledge and the basis of obligation, whereas the latter group

said that the source of knowledge is reason but the basis of obligation is the *shar'*. Al-Āmidī²⁵ has mentioned three views regarding the source of knowledge. One, it is reason alone, independent of Revelation (*as-sam'*), as Ar-Rāzī²⁶ has said; second, it is revelation, that is to say, the Qur'ān and the Sunnah; and third, both of them are sources of ethical knowledge. And it is the last one which Al-Āmidī has preferred, and it is the correct view.

The second view is that the instrument of obligation is the *shar'* alone, even though reason is also a source of knowledge. This is the view of Al-Ash'arī²⁷ and his followers, as well as Qādī Abū Ya'lā,²⁸ Ibn Az-Zaghunī,²⁹ Ibn 'Āqil,³⁰ and others. The third view is that the source of knowledge as well as the instrument of obligation is reason. This is the view of the Mu'tazilah, the Karrāmīyyah and many others from the followers of *a'imma*h, such as Abū Al-Ḥasan Al-Āmidī, Abū Al-Aṭṭāb³¹ and others. Sections of Māliki, Shāfi'ī and Ḥanafī scholars also hold this view; even Abū Ḥanīfah³² is reported to have subscribed to it. It has been noted that the Mu'tazilah, Abū Bakr Ar-Rāzī,^{32a} and Abū Al-Khaṭṭāb have clearly stated that even those who have not received the words of any prophet will be punished on account of their violation of the dictates of reason.

We have mentioned that the most reasonable view on the subject is that acts possess properties which make them good and obligatory, or evil and forbidden, and that is often known by reason. But God does not punish people except after they have received His message, as He has said, "We do not punish people unless we have sent to them a messenger" (17:15). This is a general proclamation from God, and He has not differentiated between one kind of act and the other.

[*Kitāb An-Nubūwwāt* 162-3]

(1.6) The place of *wahī*

Things of the world which are the objects, for example, of medicine, mathematics and commerce are known through reason. But divine things and religious truths are only known from the Prophet. He knows them best and is most competent to expound them. At times he also advances rational arguments for them. We are to take all that he says quite serious, his statements as well as his arguments, and build upon them.

Knowledge is what is demonstrable, and of that what is useful has been conveyed by the prophets. However, there is a part of knowledge which we get from other sources. This concerns the matters of the world, such as the objects of medicine, mathematics, agriculture and commerce. But so far as divine things and religious truths are concerned, the only source of their knowledge is the Prophet. He knows them best, is most eager to preach them to the masses and most competent to formulate and expound them. He is above everyone in knowledge, will and competence - things which are required to accomplish his mission perfectly. Everyone else is deficient in knowledge, has a distorted idea of things, or lacks the urge to preach what he knows either because he is seeking something else, entertains some fears or does not have sufficient power to expound his ideas clearly and forcefully to the conviction of the people.

Sometimes the Prophet advances rational arguments in support of the truths he preaches. The Qur'ān is full of rational arguments and clear proofs regarding divine realities and religious truths. Sometimes the Prophet only states them, for he has already offered clear and convincing proofs to establish the fact that he is a prophet of God bearing a message from Him, that he is telling nothing about God except the truth, and that God has Himself borne witness for him and told people that he is honest and reliable in delivering His message to them. In fact, there are many arguments

to establish that he is the Messenger of God; some of them are rational and verifiable by reason, others are religious and revealed, but the Prophet explained them to people and demonstrated them. Theologians of different affiliations are agreed that the Qur'ān offers rational arguments on religious matters. They often mention them in their theological and exegetical works. They also make use of religious and revealed arguments in various matters; since they have established the veraciousness of the Prophet, he must be believed, they say, in whatever he states.

Knowledge is of three kinds. One is not known except through rational arguments. Concerning this category, the best arguments are those which the Qur'ān has stated and the Prophet has mentioned. Let it be known that the best and the most perfect rational arguments are the ones which are received from the Prophet. I emphasize this fact because many people do not know it. Some people reject outright all rational arguments, since they believe that they have been manufactured by the theologians. Others do not reflect on the Qur'ān, or try to understand the rational and convincing arguments which it offers, because they have somehow developed the idea that the Qur'ān only states truths. They think that one should first ascertain the veracity of a prophet and the authenticity of the words he has said on rational grounds, and then deduce the truth of his statements from the truth of his prophethood.

The other kind of knowledge is that which a non-prophet has no way of knowing except through a prophet; his word alone is the argument for it. This knowledge is concerned with details regarding God, angels, the Throne, Paradise and Hell, as well as details regarding things which the prophet enjoins or forbids. As for as the existence of the Creator and His unity, knowledge, power, will, wisdom, and mercy, these matters can be known through reason. But the arguments and the proofs which the prophet offers in these matters are the most perfect and rational arguments. However, prophetic word is not the only means for

knowing them, even though it does offer certain knowledge. These things are, therefore, known by the rational arguments which the prophet offers as well as by his word, since his veracity has been established by arguments, proofs and miracles.

People have also differed concerning knowledge of the life hereafter and knowledge of good and evil. The majority is of the view that they are known through reason as well as revelation (*as-sam'*). However, those who uphold the rationality of the knowledge of good and evil are more than those who uphold the rationality of the knowledge of the Hereafter. Abū Al-Khaṭṭāb noted that this is the view of most of the jurists and theologians. The other view is that we know about the life hereafter and about good and evil from no other means than the word of the Prophet. This is the view of Al-Ash'arī and his followers, as well as many others from the followers of the *a'immah*, such as Qādī Abū Ya'lā, Abū Al-Ma'ālī Al-Juwaynī,³³ Abū Al-Walīd Al-Bājī,³⁴ and so on. However, bothse groups agree that there are things that are known through reason as well as through the word of the Prophet, such as the issue of whether human acts are created by God or not, pr whether we shall see Him in the Hereafter.

What I want to say is that one should take from the Prophet the knowledge of all divine and religious matters, both those that are merely revelational and those that are rational, and base upon it all one's rational arguments, since what he has said is true in principle as well as in detail. Arguments for the veracity of the Prophet establish the truth of his teachings in principle, and the rational arguments that the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth* expound demonstrate that in detail.

Again, prophets and messengers are sent first of all to give this very knowledge; they are, therefore, the most knowledgeable on these matters, the most competent to teach them, and the most honest about them. Those who examine what they say and what the others say in such matters find that the truth is with the prophets and that others are mistaken. This is asserted by Ar-Rāzī,³⁵ who is

extremely critical of arguments from tradition and is known to have made the statement that arguments from tradition fail to produce conviction. No other recognized scholar has come out with such a scathing remark.

But it is he who is reported to have said, “I have long pondered theological and philosophical arguments, and have finally reached the conclusion that they do not generate certainty. In comparison to them, the arguments of the Qur’ān are more convincing. Read, for example, the verse, ‘To Him mount up (all) words of purity’ (35:10), or the verse, ‘The most gracious One is firmly established on the Throne’ (20:5), which describe God in positive terms. Read also the verse, ‘There is nothing whatsoever like unto Him’ (42:11), which describes Him in negative terms.” Thereafter, he said, “Whoever goes through the experience I have gone through will reach the same conclusion I have reached.”

Similarly, if you consider those who do not follow the prophets nor have faith in their teachings, you will find them skeptical, perplexed and ignorant of the truth, or ignorant as well as conceited. They are like those about whom the Qur’ān has said, “As for the unbelievers, their deeds are like a mirage in sandy deserts, which the man parched with thirst mistakes for water until, when he comes up to it, he finds it to be nothing. He only finds God who will pay Him his account; and God is swift in taking account. Or their state is like the depths of darkness in a vast, deep ocean overwhelmed with billow topped by billow, topped by (dark) clouds: depths of darkness, one above another. If a man stretch out his hand he can hardly see it, for any to whom God gives not light, there is no light at all.” (24:39-40).

[*Fatāwā* 13:136-141]

(1.7) The Correct Way to Interpret the Qur’ān

The correct way is to explain the Qur’ān through the Qur’ān itself, then through the Sunnah of the Prophet, then with the help of

the comments of the Companions, and then the comments of the rightful Successors. Never should one go against an interpretation on which they all agree. To explain the Qur'ān simply on the basis of one's reason, without knowing all these things, is forbidden.

The best way is to explain the Qur'ān is through the Qur'ān. What the Qur'ān alludes to in one place is explained in another, and what it says in brief on one occasion is elaborated upon on another. But if this does not help you, you should turn to the Sunnah, because the Sunnah explains and elucidates the Qur'ān. Imām 'Abdullah Muḥammad Ibn Idrīs Ash-Shāfi'ī³⁶ said, "All that the Prophet has said is what he has derived from the Qur'ān." God has said, "We have sent down to you the Book in truth that you may judge between men, as God guides you; so do not be an advocate for those who betray their trust" (4:105); and, "We have sent down to you the message that you may explain clearly to people what has been sent to them, and that they may think over it." (16:44). Again: "We sent down the Book to you for the express purpose that you make clear to them those things in which they differ, and that it should be a guide and mercy to those who believe" (16:64). This is why the Prophet (pbuh) said, "Know that I have been given the Qur'ān and something like it,"³⁷ namely the Sunnah. In fact, the Sunnah, too, was given to him through *wahī* like the Qur'ān, except that it was not recited to him as the Qur'ān was. Imām Ash-Shāfi'ī and other scholars have advanced a number of arguments in support of this point, but we cannot produce them here.

In order to understand the Qur'ān, you must first look to the Qur'ān itself, If that does not help, then turn to the Sunnah. The Prophet (pbuh) sent Mu'ādh to Yemen and asked him, "How will you judge the cases (that come to you)?" He replied, "I will judge according to the Book of God." "But if you do not get anything there, what will you do?" the Prophet asked. He said, "I will refer to the Sunnah of the Prophet." "But if you do not find it even there,

what will you do?” the Prophet (pbuh) asked again. He replied, “I will exercise my judgment.” Hearing this the Prophet (pbuh) patted Mu‘ādh on the shoulder and said, “Praise be to God, Who has guided the messenger of His Messenger to what pleases His Messenger.”³⁸ This *ḥadīth* has been reported in the *Musnad* and *Sunan* collections of *ḥadīth* with a good *isnad*.

When you do not get any help from the Qur’ān or the Sunnah, turn to the words of the Companions, for they know the Qur’ān better. They witnessed its revelation and passed through the circumstances in which it was revealed, and knew it and understood it fully. This is particularly true of their scholars and leaders, such as the four righteous caliphs and ‘Abdullah Ibn Mas‘ūd.³⁹ It has been reported that ‘Abdullah Ibn Mas‘ūd said, “By the One besides Whom there is no god, there is no verse in the Qur’ān about which I do not know in what case and at what place was it revealed. If I were aware that anyone knew the Qur’ān more than I, and I could reach him, I would certainly have gone to see him.”⁴⁰

Another great scholar and savant was ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbās,⁴¹ the nephew of the Prophet (pbuh) and commentator of the Qur’ān. He attained that status by virtue of the Prophet’s prayer, “O God! Give me knowledge of Islam and teach him the meaning of the Qur’ān.”⁴² ‘Abdullah Ibn Mas‘ūd said, “What a good interpreter of the Qur’ān Ibn ‘Abbās is!”

When one does not find the *tafsīr* of the Qur’ān from the Qur’ān or the Sunnah or the words of the Companions, many scholars (*a’immah*) turn to the words of the Successors, such as Mujāhid Ibn Jubayr,⁴³ because he was excellent in *tafsīr*. Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq reported from Abban Ibn Ṣāliḥ that Mujāhid said, “I read the Qur’ān with Ibn ‘Abbās three times from the beginning to the end, pausing at every verse and questioning him about it.” That is why Sufyān Ath-Thawrī⁴⁴ said, “If you get the *tafsīr* of Mujāhid that is sufficient.”

Besides Mujāhid, you can refer to Sa‘īd Ibn Jubayr,⁴⁵ Ikramah,⁴⁶ the client (*mawlā*) of Ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Atā’ Ibn Abī Ribah,⁴⁷ Al-Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī,⁴⁸ Masrūq Ibn Al-Ajdā’,⁴⁹ Sa‘īd Ibn Al-Musayyib,⁵⁰ Abū Al-‘Alīyah,⁵¹ Ar-Rubay‘ Ibn Anas,⁵² Qatādah,⁵³ Aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk Ibn Muzāḥim,⁵⁴ and other Successors, or their followers, and even those who came after them.

Shu‘bah⁵⁵ and others have said, “The words of the Successors (*At-Tābi‘ūn*) wield no authority in matters of practical rules (*furū’*), so how can they have authority in *tafsīr*? What he meant is that the words of one Successor have no authority over another Successor who differs from him, and this is true. But when they agree on something, it undoubtedly wields authority. However, if they differ, the view of one will have no authority over others among them, nor over those who came after them. In such cases, one should turn to the language of the Qur’ān or Sunnah, or the Arabic literature in general, or the words of the Companions on that matter.

Tafsīr of the Qur’ān based merely on reason is forbidden (*ḥarām*). The Prophet (pbuh) said, “Whoever talks about the Qur’ān without proper knowledge makes space for himself in Hell.”⁵⁶ He also said, “Whoever talks about the Qur’ān merely on the basis of his reason is a sinner, even if what he says is correct.”⁵⁷ At-Tirmidhī, who reported this *ḥadīth*, said it is rare (*gharīb*). However, a number of scholars from the Companions and others have been reported to have condemned in the same vein the effort to explain the Qur’ān without knowledge.

If Mujāhid, Qatādah and other scholars like them have explained the Qur’ān, we expect that they would not have said anything about the Qur’ān or commented on its verses without proper knowledge, speaking simply on the basis of their reason. This is supported by various reports about them which say that they never said anything without knowledge and only from their minds. Hence, if one talks about the Qur’ān on the basis of his

reason, he is talking about what he does not know, and is violating the rule he has been asked to follow. Consequently, even if what he says is correct, he sins, because he has not followed the command.

However, those who made *tafsīr* because they knew the verses, their language as well as their legal and religious implications, had nothing to worry about. That is why their comments on the Qur’ān have come down to us. And this does not conflict with the attitude we have described above. They discussed things they knew, and abstained from discussing what they did not know. This is true of everyone: one must not speak about what one does not know. On the other hand, one must speak on what one knows when one is asked about it, for, that, too, is a duty, as God has said, “You must clearly explain it (i.e. the Qur’ān) to the people and never hide it” (3:187). The Prophet (pbuh) has also said, in a *ḥadīth* reported through various channels, “Whoever hides what he knows when asked about it will have a bridle of fire in his mouth on the Day of Judgment.”⁵⁸ Ibn Jarīr has reported through Muḥammad Ibn Bashshār, Mu’ammal, Sufyān and Abū Az-Zanād, that Ibn ‘Abbās said, “*Tafsīr* is of four kinds: one, what the Arabs can know from the language; second, what no one can be excused for not knowing; third, what only scholars know; and fourth, what God alone knows.”⁵⁹

[*Fatāwā* 13:363-375]

(1.8) The *Muḥkam* and the *Mutashābih* in the Qur’ān

Muḥkam in the Qur’ān may mean either what has come down from God and has not been mixed with anything extraneous, or the imperative of which has not been abrogated or qualified, or what is not vague or ambiguous. *Mutashābih* is the opposite of *muḥkam* in all these senses. However, it does not mean that we cannot understand or interpret the verses which are *mutashābih* in the third sense, only that part of their meaning is beyond our comprehension, and God has kept some knowledge to himself.

Iḥkām in the Qur'ān is sometimes used in opposition to promptings of Satan. *Muḥkam* according to this usage is that which God has revealed and established by differentiating it from anything with which it may have been confused, or separating it from anything that may have been added to it, for *iḥkām* is to separate, distinguish, differentiate and define something, so that it is clearly determined and identified. *Iḥkām* involves negation as well as affirmation; the former is only a part not the whole of its meaning. *Iḥkām* may sometimes mean to reaffirm a verse in opposition to the claim of its abrogation in the technical sense of revoking an imperative, whether by rescinding the order or qualifying it.

Iḥkām is also used in the context of explication and interruption where it means to determine the real import of the verse by distinguishing it from other meanings which it might be thought to convey. Its opposite, *mutashābih*, would then mean ambiguous. A verse is *mutashābih* if it may mean more than one thing and may be taken to mean any one of them. Ibn Ḥanbāl has said that *muḥkam* is that which does not admit of difference, and *mutashābih* is that which means one thing here and another thing there. Let us note that he has not said that *mutashābih* is that whose meaning and exegesis (*tafsīr wa al-ma'nā*) is not known to anyone except God, for God has only denied that anyone other than He can know the *ta'wīl* except God" (3:7). Aḥmad is perfectly correct, for God has only denied *ta'wīl* on the part of anyone except Him. In reading the verse, the stop is at the end of the word God, as is supported by many arguments; and this is the view of the Companions of the Prophet (pbuh), the majority of their Successors, and the majority of the *ummah*.

It should be noted that God has not denied the understanding and explication of *mutashābih* verses on our part. On the contrary, He has said, "(Here is) a Book which We have sent down full of

blessings, that they may ponder its verses (38:29),” and the Book contains *muḥkam* as well as *mutashābih* verses. Obviously, if we cannot understand the verses of the Book, we cannot contemplate them. God has also said, “Do they not ponder the Qur’ān?” (4:82). This is a general exhortation regarding the entire Book, from which no verse has been excepted. What God and His Prophet (pbuh) condemn is that one should pursue a *mutashābih* verse with a view to create mischief or to find out its *ta’wīl*, or ultimate meaning. They have never condemned those who contemplate its *muḥkam* or *mutashābih* verses and try to understand them and find out what they mean to the extent God wants us to understand them. On the contrary, He has positively commanded this exercise and praised those who engage in it.

[*Fatāwā* 13:274-275]

(1.9) The Meaning of *Ta’wīl*

Ta’wīl in the parlance of the Elders (Salaf) means two things: one, to explicate a passage and determine its meaning, whether such meaning agrees with the stated words of the passage or goes against them; second, is to realize what the words say. If they command something, their ta’wīl is to perform the act which they command; but if they tell of something, their ta’wīl is the happening of the thing told. However, in the language of later writers ta’wīl is to depart from the more apparent meaning of the words and adopt a less apparent meaning for some reason associated with them.

Ta’wīl in the parlance of the later writers, jurists, theologians, traditionists, Ṣūfīs, and others is to leave the more apparent meaning on the basis of some reason associated with that passage. This is the ta’wīl which is referred to in works on the principles of jurisprudence or on legal controversies. When someone says that

this *ḥadīth* or that text is subject to *ta'wīl*, or should be interpreted to mean this and not that, others may charge him with doing *ta'wīl* and ask him to state his reasons for doing it. The one who is doing *ta'wīl* has to satisfy two conditions: first, he has to show that the words may also mean what he is suggesting, and second, he must state a reason for having to depart from the more apparent meaning in favor of his own meaning. This is also the sense in which *ta'wīl* is used in the discussions on divine attributes.

In the parlance of the Elders, however, *ta'wīl* means two things. One is to explicate (*tafsīr*) a passage and elucidate its meaning, whether or not that meaning agrees with the words of the passage. On this understanding, *ta'wīl* would mean very much the same as *tafsīr*, would be a synonym for it. This is, and God knows better, what Mujāhid implies when he says that the scholars know the *ta'wīl* of this or that verse, or when Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr Aṭ-Ṭabarī⁶⁰ writes in his commentary, “Opinions regarding the *ta'wīl* of this word (of God) are as follows...,” or that “the scholars of *ta'wīl* have different opinions regarding this verse.” To be sure, what he means by *ta'wīl* here is the same as *tafsīr*. explication.

The second sense in which the Elders use *ta'wīl*, and which we should count as the third sense of *ta'wīl*, is to refer to the thing itself which is intended by the words. If the words contain a command, *ta'wīl* is carrying out the thing commanded; and if the words contain information, *ta'wīl* is the occurrence of the thing informed.

Ta'wīl in this third sense is a part of the language of the Qur'ān, for example the words of Jacob to his son, Joseph, “Thus will your Lord choose you and teach you the interpretations (*ta'wīl*) of stories and events (*aḥādīth*), and perfect His favor to you” (12:6); and the words of Joseph to his parents when the members of his larger family entered Egypt and he provided a home for them, “‘Enter Egypt (all) in safety if it pleases God.’ And he raised his parents high on the throne (of dignity) and they fell

down in prostration before him. He said: ‘Father, this is the fulfillment (*ta’wīl*) of my vision of old; God has made it come true’” (12:99-100). The *aḥādīth* in Jacob’s statement refer to visions in sleep and their *ta’wīl* means the things they point to, as is clear from Joseph’s words, “‘This is the *ta’wīl*; of my vision of old.’” The one versed in *ta’wīl* is the one who foretells them.

In another place God said, “If you differ on anything among yourselves, refer it to God and His Messenger, if you do believe in God and the Last Day. That is best and most commendable as *ta’wīl*” (4:59); that is, it will lead to the best and most desirable end. Here *ta’wīl* means the end of their actions of referring the matter to the Qur’ān and the Sunnah. On the other hand, *ta’wīl* in the verses quoted earlier from the *sūrah* Joseph is the interpretation (*ta’wīl*) of visions. Similarly, *ta’wīl* in the surahs, the Heights, Jonah, and the Family of ‘Imrān means the interpretation of the Qur’ān.

To sum up, *ta’wīl* is that to which the words are directed, or to which they refer, or to which they point; and obviously the thing to which the words point, or refer or lead (*mustaqqar*) or which they suggest or are shown to suggest is the reality of the thing itself which is what they mean. This is borne out by the way Elders have explained the word *mustaqqar* in the verse, “Every news has its *mustaqqar*” (6:67), that is, its reality. In case the words convey an information, they will point or refer to the thing informed, but when they do not point or refer to anything, they will be void.

On the other hand, if the words contain an imperative they will lead to and end up with the thing commanded, provided it is not already accomplished. However, if the information is about something promised or warned, it will lead to the thing awaited. This is supported by the *ḥadīth* which says that the Prophet (pbuh) recited the verse, “Tell them: He has all the power to send calamities on you from above and below, or to cover you with confusion in party strife, giving you a taste of mutual vengeance -

each from the other” (6:65), and then said this will happen, as its *ta’wīl*, namely the thing it amounts to, has not happened yet.^{60a} Abdullah Ibn Mas‘ūd is reported to have said, “five things have already passed: the wars, the feuds, the smoke, the (splitting of the) moon, and the (revenge against the) Romans (by the Persians).” [Fatāwā 13:288-94]

(1.10) Verses and Qur’ān regarding divine attributes are to be taken at face value.

The Elders have taken the verses and aḥādīth regarding God’s attributes on their zāhir, or face value, refusing, however, to say anything about their nature (kayfīyyah) or to conceive them along human patterns (tashbīh). By zāhir, the apparent meaning, they mean the zāhir which behooves the Creator, not the created; but will we be justified in saying that the zāhir which behooves God is really the zāhir of those verses and aḥādīth? Ibn Taymīyyah has responded to this question and discussed the meaning of zāhir at length.

The person⁶¹ who has made his vow conditional on the belief that the verse, “the Merciful ascended the Throne,” is to be understood on its *zāhir*, face, as people understand from its words, should know that *zāhir* is an ambiguous term. As known to the uncorrupted nature of man (*fiṭrah*) and used in Arabic, the religious literature and the parlance of the Elders, *zāhir* means something other than what it means to many later writers. Now if the one who vowed meant by *zāhir* something which part of the beings that are contingent or which imply some kind of imperfection on the part of God, such as the idea that God’s *istawā*, settling (on the Throne), is like the settling of one body on another, or the settling down of the soul in bodies, if souls are not included in the category of bodies in their view, he would be guilty

of violating his own vow and would be mistaken. No scholar, as far as I know, upholds this view except the Baṣrī Dāwūd Al-Jawāribī,⁶² Muqātil Ibn Sulaymān Al-Khurāsānī,⁶³ Hishām Ibn Al-Ḥakam Ar-Rāfiḍī,⁶⁴ if it is correctly reported of them.

We must believe that God is unlike anything else in His essence, attributes, as well as acts, that His difference from things created and His transcendence from any participation in them is greater than what the Gnostics from among His people may have imagined or what anybody may have stated. We must negate of Him every attribute which implies contingency or any other imperfection. Whoever claims about any scholar of the Ahl as-Sunnah that he has conceived of the divine attributes according to the attributes of created beings is either lying or mistaken.

But if the one who vowed meant by *zāhir* what is known (*zāhir*) to human nature before it is overwhelmed by desires and confused by conflicting opinions, it is the *zāhir* that behooves God's majesty and transcendence. It is also the *zāhir* of all His names and attributes, such as life, knowledge, power, hearing, seeing, speech, will, love, anger and pleasure, as well as the attributes that have been referred to in the verse, "What has prevented you from prostrating to one whom I have created with my hands" (38:75), or in the *ḥadīth*, "Our Lord descends to the lowest heaven every night."⁶⁵ The *zāhir* of these words, when they are used in our case, is an incident or a body, for our beings belong to the same category. But when they refer to God, their apparent meaning (*zāhir*) is only that which behooves them and suits His exalted self. Words like essence (*dhāt*), existence (*wujūd*), reality (*ḥaqīqah*), sense, even though we know, to be sure, that the apparent meaning (*zāhir*) of these words in the divine context, and that they have nothing in common between them which may imply a defect or contingency on the part of God, whether or not they are taken as unequivocal, equivocal or general in their connotation. The same is true of the statements we have in the Qur'ān, such as,

“He has sent it down from His own knowledge” (4:166); “Indeed God is He Who gives (all) sustenance, Lord of Power, Steadfast (forever)” (51:58); “...whom I have created with My hands” (38:75); “The Most Gracious One is firmly established on the Throne” (20:5); and so on. All are in the same category.

Earlier Jahmīs had denied all attributes to God which in our context are incidents, such as knowledge and power, or organs, such as hand and face. The later ones, however, affirmed many attributes which are incidents in our case, such as knowledge and power, and negated others along with those attributes that are organs in our case. Some of them have even gone to the extent of affirming attributes like hand that are bodies in our case.

The Salafis, on the other hand, such as Al-Khaṭṭābī,⁶⁶ Abū Bakr Al-Khaṭīb,⁶⁷ and others have stated that the way of the Elders is to take the verses and the *aḥādīth* of the attributes at face value, and to state at the same time that they neither know their nature, nor conceive of them on human patterns. They do not believe that “hands” means power, or that “hearing” means knowing. As a rule, one’s position on attributes is a corollary of one’s position on the Essence; the former follows the latter completely. And since to affirm the Essence is to affirm something that exists, rather than simply a modality (*kayfiyyah*), the affirmation of attributes should also be the affirmation of an existence rather than only a modality.

Of later writers, those who claim that the Elders did not say that it was the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*) which was intended, they should be told, provided they command our respect, that the *ẓāhir* which they did not affirm was the apparent meaning that behooved the created, not the Creator. And undoubtedly this *ẓāhir* is not intended, and anyone who says that it is intended should be declared an infidel (*kāfir*) after the point is fully explained to him.

There are two aspects to the issue here, one linguistic and the other philosophical. As for the latter, there are three views regarding *istawā*. For example, in the verse “The Gracious One is firmly established (*istawā*) on the Throne” (20:5), one is that

God's *istawā* is like the *istawā* of a creature, or something similar, that involves contingency or defect on God's part. This is the view of the *mushabbihah* and the *mujassimah*, the anthropomorphists who conceive of God as a body; and it is absolutely wrong in light of the Qur'ān as well as reason. The second view is that there is no *istawā* in the real sense, nor is there a God on a throne, or a Lord above the heavens. This is the view of another mistaken group, the *Jahmīs*, who negate the divine attributes. This is absolutely wrong also, since it is diametrically opposed to what everyone aware of the prophetic teachings knows of Islam, as well as to the conviction with regard to the Creator inherent in man's nature in which his Lord has created him. Ibn Qutaybah⁶⁸ testifies to this truth when he says that all nations, Arabs and non-Arabs, before Islam and in Islam, believe that God is in the heavens, that is, He is above them.

The third view is that God is established on the Throne in a manner behooving His majesty and glory; He is above the heavens on the Throne, transcending the world, even though He upholds the Throne and the bearers of the Throne. We know what *istawā* is, though we do not know its modality. We must believe in it and consider all questioning about it as *bid'ah*, as has been said by Umm Salamah,⁶⁹ Rabī'ah Ibn Abī 'Abdur-Raḥmān,⁷⁰ and Mālik Ibn Anas.⁷¹ This is the faith of the Muslims, and this is the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*) of *istawā* in the eyes of Muslims in general whose original nature has not been corrupted by either to negate divine attributes or to anthropomorphize them....

To support this view we have a number of traditions from the Prophet, his Companions, and numerous scholars of the *ummah*, which have come down to us from generation to generation, and which have been recorded in words great and small. Everyone who is versed in the knowledge of the traditions will agree that not a single word is reported from any one of them that goes against this. All of them are united on this point and have one faith... No one has ever said that the apparent meaning of these words is not

intended, or that this verse or that *ḥadīth* should not be taken at face-value... Had this not been the intended (*zāhir*) meaning in the eyes of the Muslims, the Prophet (pbuh) and the Elders of the *ummah* would have told the *ummah* that what they understand as the apparent meaning (*zāhir*) is not what is intended.

Know that one leads nowhere and is surely confused who does not go by words, or is not aware that sometimes the meaning of a word or a sentence is determined on the basis of etymology, or its use in common language or in the *shar‘*, that sometimes the construction of a sentence changes the original meaning of a word, that the linguistic clues and associations call for metaphorical interpretations, and that sometimes the circumstances of the speaker, the addressee, and the subject of the speech act may also affect the meaning. We will talk later about the reasons which help us call a meaning the apparent meaning (*zāhir*) out of the various possible meanings of a word or words, or to interpret them metaphorically. To be sure, if the words do not carry any clues that indicate what the speaker intends to say, and his intention is only to be known through other words mentioned at other places, then the apparent meaning is not intended. A general statement, for example, is qualified on the ground of some unassociated arguments, even a purely rational consideration; however, writers on the principles of jurisprudence differ on the question of whether one should call it the apparent meaning or not.

Generally, those who deny *istawā* and other attributes of the kind have been found on investigation to have understood *istawā* on a human pattern or in a sense which spells contingency or defect on the part of God. Having conceived of *istawā* in this way, they ascribe it to their opponents and take pains in advancing arguments for its refutation. They finally conclude that it can only be understood in the sense of dominion and control, manifestation and illumination, blessing and favor, or supermacy in status and authority.

This reason that one who claims that the apparent meaning

(*ẓāhir*) of *istawā* is the meaning that it has in a human context is wrong in this: Words are of two types. One stands for something simple, as for example, lion, donkey, ocean, dog, etc. When using them we say, “X is the lion of God and the lion of His Prophet,” or when we call one who is a fool a donkey, or the “ocean” one who is a great scholar or an eminent philanthropist, or when we refer to a lion as a dog. In such cases we are using metaphors. If there is also a clue there, it will make the intention more clear. Examples are the words of the Prophet about the horse of Abū Talḥah: “We certainly found it ‘an ocean,’”⁷² or about Khālīd Ibn Al-Walīd, “Indeed Khālīd is one of the swords of God which He has unsheathed on the polytheists,”⁷³ or about ‘Uthmān, “God will put on you a shirt...”⁷⁴ We have a further example in what Ibn ‘Abbās said or is reported to have said, “The Black Stone is the right hand of God on earth, and one who touches it pledges in a sense to God.”^{74a} Here the words have been used in an extended sense, but the intention of the speaker is quite clear. Everyone who hears these words will certainly understand what is meant by them, and his mind will easily get the meaning which is intended and not the one which the words have been coined to convey. That is not merely a possible meaning, but the intended meaning (*nass*), and to interpret the words in this sense is not a sort of *ta’wīl*, which is to take a word in the sense less probable than the one more probable. This is one of the places where people have gone astray. They have erred in thinking that what these words really mean is not their *ẓāhir* meaning and that one cannot dispense with *ta’wīl* in their case.

The second kind of words are those which stand for some relation, pure and simple, like being higher or lower, above or below, etc., or mean something positive that implies a relation, like knowledge and love, capability or incapability, hearing and seeing. Such words mean nothing in isolation; they have a meaning only in relation to the subjects they refer to. This is for two reasons: first, they are never used in isolation; and second, they can be used as

common (attribute) or as a metaphor, even their essence can be identified with the element common to their objects.

The word under discussion, name, *istawā*, has not been used by the Arabs specifically for a man's sitting, for example, on a cot, so that in cases other than that it should be taken as a metaphor. Similarly, the word *'ilm* - 'knowledge,' has not been used specifically by them for what exists in the heart of man and which is either necessary or acquired, so that its use in that context may be called literal and in other contexts metaphorical. On the contrary, it has sometimes been used in an intransitive form, such as in the verse, "When he reached full age and was firmly established (*istawā*) (28:14); and sometimes with the preposition, *ilā*, such as in the verse, "then he *istawā ilā*, turned to the heavens and it had been smoke" (41:11); and sometimes with the preposition *'alā*, both in cases of God and man. There is no reason one should take *istawā* in one case as literal and in the other as a metaphor. It is not correct to ascribe to God's *istawā* the properties that one ascribes to His creatures. He has said, "We made the heavens with (Our) hands" (51:47), or "from among the things which Our hands have finished" (36:71), or "We wrote all things for him on the Tablets..." (7:145).

On the basis of these verses should a Muslim predicate to his Lord the properties that belong to a man as maker, as fashioner, as writer and as worker? Or should he deny to Him the reality of working, making, writing, as they behoove Him and His Holiness? Or should he say that these should not be taken in their apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*)? Or should he say that everyone's work has its own properties? Just as God's essence is not like the essence of His creatures, similarly, His acting, His working, His making and His fashioning are not like man's acting, working, making, and fashioning. "When we say X has made or written" we do not understand what action or reaction these works involve except on the basis of what we know of their doer, X, and not on the basis of these terms alone. These terms stand for some action and make

sense in relation to some particular agent. If you understand this point it will clarify many of the issues which most people do not understand, and show why there has been a lot of confusion in this matter.

[*Fatāwā* 33:175-186]

(1.11) Fundamentals of the religion and the prophetic approach.

The fundamentals of the religion, whether they are matters of belief and confession, or of confession as well as action, such as the one that concerns God's unity, attributes and qadr, or prophethood and the life hereafter, or whether they are arguments for them, have all been stated very clearly by God and His Prophet. However, the issues which theologians have raised, such as the negation of attributes and qadr, or arguments for the contingency of the world, are not part of the principles of the religion. Ibn Taymīyyah has explained the method of the Prophet in defining and arguing the principles of the religion and pointed out the difference that lies between his method and the method of the theologians.

The fundamentals of the religion are either a matter of belief and confession or a matter of confession as well as action. They concern God's unity, attributes and *qadr*, prophethood and the life hereafter, as well as the arguments about them. So far as the principles are concerned, all that people need to know, believe and testify has been clearly and fully explained by Allah and His Prophet. These form the most important part of his mission. The Prophet has taught them in most clear terms and explained them most satisfactorily to the people. They represent the best effort that God has made through His prophets to establish the truth of His religion for mankind. The Book of God which was transmitted, in words and meaning, by the Companions of the Prophet, and

thereafter by the Successors, and the wisdom embodied in the Sunnah of the Prophet, which was also transmitted by them, contains whatever is required or deemed necessary in this regard...

As for the second part, name, the arguments regarding the basic principles, it has not been properly appreciated by many theologians and philosophers. They have thought that scriptural arguments hang upon authority of some statements, hence their validity depends on the veracity of the person who makes those statements. Moreover, to determine the veracity of that person, they have advanced only some rational criteria. This has led them into error. In fact, they have erred in thinking that the arguments of the Qur'ān and Sunnah are merely traditional; on the contrary, they contain all rational required arguments. This is what the Elders of the *ummah* and the *a'immaḥ*, who are known for their knowledge as well as faith, have believed. But these theologians and philosophers have failed to appreciate the arguments.

The Qur'ān has stated precisely and very forcefully the best that these people have to say. It has put them in the form of parables. God has said, "We have pronounced in this Qur'ān every kind of parable for people" (30:58). In fact, parables contain rational arguments, syllogistic as well as analogical, including what they call demonstrative arguments (*burhān*), which are nothing more than syllogistic arguments consisting of established premises, even though *burhān* in Arabic means more than that. The Qur'ān, for example, refers to the two miracles that were given to Moses as *burhān* (28:32).

To explain it further, In theological discussions, it is not justified to employ an analogical argument where the major and the minor terms are similar, nor is it justified to use syllogistic argument where the terms belong to the same class. For, as God has said, "nothing is like Him, (42:11); He cannot be likened with others or put in a proposition beside and on a par with other terms. This explains why the theologians and philosophers are not able to reach any definite conclusion in theological matters by means of

these arguments, or why they often advance contradictory arguments or fail to elect one argument against other and end up in perplexity.

The argument that one should use in this field is the argument of priority (*qiyās awlā*), whether it is a matter of deduction or analogy. The Qur’ān says, “To God applies the highest similitude” (16:60). We know that any perfection which is affirmed of a possible contingent being is free from all defects, and which is something positive rather than negative, should be affirmed of the Necessary Being prior to anything else. Again, every perfection which is free from all defects and which is found in any being created, produced and controlled, has come to it only from its Creator, Lord and Ruler, and should be therefore affirmed of Him in the first place. On the other hand, every imperfection and defect in itself, or to put it other words, every want of perfection which is negated of something created, contingent and possible, should be negated of God prior to anything else. He deserves all the positive excellences more than and prior to any other being, whereas possible and the contingent beings deserve the negative attributes...

I will cite as an example God’s description of life hereafter. Since knowledge of its existence is subject to the knowledge of its possibility, since the impossible cannot exist, God has described the possibility of its existence at length. But He does not proceed in this regard as the theologians do; that is to say He does not prove its existence by showing that it is theoretically possible. Theologians say that it is possible because the assertion of its possibility involves nothing impossible. But how do you know, one may ask, that its assertion does not involve any impossibilities, internal or external? Moreover, theoretical possibility is nothing but the absence of the knowledge of impossibility, and we know that the absence of knowledge that something is impossible does not mean that it is really possible. We call something theoretically possible when our mind neither knows that it is really possible nor that it is really possible.

In discussing resurrection, God has not contented Himself with showing its theoretical possibility, for a thing may be impossible not because of something within itself, but for some external reason, even though one may not have thought of it. On the other hand, if we know that something is really possible, it cannot be impossible. And we know that a thing is really possible, either when we know it existing, know something similar to it present in existence, or we know something greater than it to be existing; for the existence of a greater thing is proof that a smaller thing is more likely to exist. Again, when the existence of a thing is proved, God's power to bring it into existence is also proved. On the other hand, mere knowledge of a thing's possibility is no proof that it can also exist if God's power over bringing it into being is not known.

All these points have been stated in the following verses, "Do they not see that God Who created the heavens and earth has power to create the like of them (anew)? Only He has decreed for them a particular term about which there is no doubt at all. But the people that are unjust refuse to believe and persist in denying it." (17:99); "Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like thereof? Yes, indeed! He is the supreme, of skill and knowledge infinite"(36:81); "See they not that God, Who created the heavens and the earth, and never wearied with their creation, is able to give life to the dead? Surely He has power over all things" (46:33); "Certainly the creation of the heavens and the earth is a greater matter than the creation of man, yet most people understand not" (40:37). Certainly it is obvious to everyone that the creation of the heavens and the earth is something greater than the creation of man, that it demonstrates greater power, and that in comparison to it the creation of man is much easier, more feasible and less exacting.

Look at the other argument which God has given for resurrection, I mean the argument from the first creation. Read these verses, "It is He Who created first, then He will repeat it, and

that will be much easier for Him” (30:27). He is therefore entitled to say after this, “To Him belongs the loftiest similitude in the heavens and the earth (that you can think of)” (30:27); or, “If you have a doubt about the resurrection, (consider) that He has created you of dust...” (22:5); or “He [man] makes comparisons for us, and forgets his own creation! He says, ‘Who can give life to (dry) bones that are decomposed? Say, He will give them life Who created them for the first time!’” (36:78-9)

The words, “Who can give life to (dry) bones that are decomposed” is an argument in which one premise has not been mentioned, since it is obvious, and the other is a universal negative with which the conclusion has been joined, namely the parable stated earlier, “He makes comparisons for Us, and forgets his own creation. He says, ‘We will give them life to (dry) bones that are decomposed?’” This is a question that implies negation. It says, in other words, that there is none who can revive the bones which have decomposed. Their decomposition means to this objector that they cannot be revived. He thinks that since they have dried up and cooled down, they are less likely to be revived, as life requires heat and water. Furthermore, they have broken down into pieces which have mixed up with other pieces. The essence of this argument is that since the bones have decomposed and since no one can revive any decomposed bones, no one can revive man. But the negative premise which denies revivification is not correct.

God has proved the possibility of resurrection in different ways. Sometimes He has said that He has power over much more difficult things, for example, “He will revive them Who created them for the first time, and created from dust.” He has further said, “He is well versed in every kind of creation” (36:79), so that people know that He is well aware of things into which the bones have decomposed. Therefore He has said, ‘The same who produces for you fire out of the green tree;’ that is, He has done something more wonderful; He has created fire which is hot and dry from what is cold and wet. The distance between the two is far greater,

and it is much easier to combine heat with something which is wet than to combine heat with something which is dry. What is wet is more pliable than what is dry.

He has further said, “Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like thereof?” (36:81). This premise is self-evident, which is why it has been expressed in a question which implies that its truth is known to the person who is addressed. God has referred to it at another place, “No question do they bring to you but we reveal to you the truth and the best explanation (thereof)” (25:33). And He has asserted His omnipotence: “Verily, when He intends a thing, His command is “Be,” and it is!” (36:82). On this and other occasions the Qur’ān has stated truths and advanced most convincing arguments in religious matters. This is not the place to go into details. We only want to draw attention to this fact.

Another issue which the Qur’ān has discussed is the issue that God is far above begetting a son, whether one conceives begetting in physical terms or in intellectual categories, as the Christians assert regarding the proceeding from God of the Word, which, as they claim, the Son is in his essence, or as the Sabaeen philosophers conceived the proceeding from the One of the Ten Intelligences and the Nine Spheres, about which they were not sure whether they were substances or incidents. They have sometimes regarded the Intelligences as male and the Spheres as female, and conceived them as fathers and mothers, gods and goddesses. However, their idea that the spheres have their souls is suggested by their circular motion, which is an indication of voluntary movement, though most of them regarded these souls to be incidents rather than substances which exist in themselves.

This comes closer to the belief of the polytheists of Arabia and other countries who ascribe sons and daughters to God. The Qur’ān says, “They make the jinns equal with God, though God did create the jinns, and they falsely attribute to them sons and daughters without knowing anything about them. Praise and glory

be to Him for He is above what they attribute to Him” (6:100); and, “Is it not that they say, from their own invention, that God has begotten children? They are certainly liars” (37:151). They believed that the angels were the daughters of God, as those people believed that Intelligence and the Souls were angels and that they were begotten by God. Contradicting them, God says, “They assign daughters for God. Exalted is He (above that)! And for themselves (they assign sons) whom they like. When one is informed of (the birth of) a female (child) his face darkens and is filled with inward grief. With shame does he hide himself from his people because of the evil news he has had. Shall he retain it with disgrace, or bury it in the dust? And what an evil they decide on! To those who believe not in the Hereafter, applies the similitude of evil. To God applies the highest similitude, and He is exalted in power and full of wisdom...They ascribe to God what they hate (for themselves), and their tongues assert the falsehood that all good things are for them. Without doubt, for them is the Fire, and they will be the first to be hastened on into it!” (16:57-62).

Elsewhere He says, “When news is brought to one of them of (the birth of) what he sets up for (God) the Most Gracious, his face darkens, and he is filled with grief. Is then one brought up among trinkets, and unable to give a clear account in a dispute (to be associated with God)? They make into females the angels who themselves serve God. Did they witness their Creator? Their evidence will be recorded and they will be called to account!” (43:17-19). And, “Have you seen Lat and ‘Uzza, and another, the third (goddess), Manat? What, for you the male sex, and for Him the female? Such would indeed be a division most unfair!”

Thus has God made it clear that He Who is the Creator and the Lord must be exalted above all defects and imperfections. It is strange that one attributes to God what one does not like for himself and hates to have ascribed to him, even though it does happen to him in real life. On the other hand, one does not exalt God above it or negate it of Him, even though He deserves more

than everyone else that any defect of imperfection should not be attributed to Him.

The same is true of God's unity. He says, "He propounds to you a similitude from your own (experience). Do you have partners among those whom your right hands possess, to share as equals in the wealth We have bestowed on you? Do you fear them as you fear each other?" (30:28). In other words, when a human master does not like that his bondsman should be a partner in his property or should be feared as a result as he is, and tries his best not to make him an equal, then how does one make the one created and owned by God a partner to Him, to be called upon and to be worshiped as He is? How wrong were those who in their *hajj* and *'umrah* used to say, "I am here, Lord! There is no partner for You, only one who is your servant and not lord." We can go on citing verse after verse, but we have to stop, for we only want to underline the point that the fundamentals of the religion have been stated in the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and that arguments for them have also been expounded in them in detail.

Many people mention among the principles of religion a lot of things that are simply false; they are never a part of religion, nor are the arguments which have been advanced for them. In this category you may put the doctrine that negates the attributes of God or denies *qadr*, or the argument that deduces the contingency of the world from the contingency of accidents which exist as properties in corporeal beings. To establish the premises of this argument, for example, one must first prove the existence of all the accidents that are properties or at least some of them, such as movement and rest, composition and division. Second, one has to prove that they are contingent by refuting the theory that they emerge out of an latent state, or that they move from one place to another. Third, one has to demonstrate that bodies are either not free from accidents by showing that they admit of them and that they are never without an accident or its opposite, or that they are not without other beings. Fourth, one has to show that a series of

contingent accidents which has no beginning is inconceivable. This last proposition is, further, based on two premises: one, a body is never free from accidents which are its properties, and, two, that whatever is not free from properties which are accidents is a contingent being, for the properties that are accidents are necessarily contingent. Sometimes this is asserted of some properties which are accidents, such as generation, and claimed that what is not free from contingents is also contingent because infinite regression of events is ruled out.

It is obvious that this was not the method which was adopted by the Prophet to prove the existence of the Creator, or the prophethood of the prophets. It is no wonder, therefore, that great theologians like Al-Ash‘arī and others admitted that it was not the way of the prophets and their followers, the Elders of the *ummah* and their *a‘immah*. They have also tried to avoid it and declared that its efficacy as defined and formulated are very difficult to prove. You will see, therefore, that those who rely on this method in theological matters end up with one of the two things: either they eventually realize the defects of their method and discover that their own arguments are no better than the arguments of their opponents who defend, for example, the eternity of the world, and consequently move from one argument to another without sufficient reason, as you see in the case of many of them, or they are forced to take positions that are untenable both on the ground of reason and revelation. Jahm,⁷⁵ for example, had to advocate the cession of Paradise and Hell; Abū Al-Hudhayl⁷⁶ had to suggest the termination of movement on the part of the people of Paradise; Al-Ash‘arī and others like him had to expound the idea that water, air and fire also have a certain taste, color and smell; and a number of others had to claim that all accidents, whether of taste, color or any other kind, do not persist even for two moments. These people had to resort to these ridiculous ideas to counter the objection against their effort to affirm God’s attributes on the ground that bodies are contingent because they have properties which are accidents and

which come into existence one moment and perish the next moment and therefore require that God's attributes must be eternal. However, this theory conflicts with reason and common experience.

For the same reason, many theologians, the Mu'tazilah and others, have negated divine attributes totally or partly. Having once accepted that the existence of attributes proves the contingency of their subject, they are compelled to extend this thesis to God's attributes. But the idea that it is true of all beings without exception is absolutely wrong, for the same reason, too; they propounded the idea that the Qur'ān is created, that God will not be seen in the Hereafter, that He is not on His Throne, and so on. Such are the corollaries that follow from their basic thesis about accidents.

These are the ideas which these people call principles of religion. Certain, they are not the principles of the religion which God has revealed for mankind. To be sure, the religion about which He has said, "Have they partners)in godhead) who have established for them some religion that God has not approve" (42:21), has its principles and rules. As it is used, the term 'principles of religion' (*uṣūl ad-dīn*) is vague. It means different things according to the context and usage. Nevertheless, it is clear that for God, His Prophet and the Believers, principles of religion are only those that come from the Prophet. But for those who have invented a religion without any sanction from God, the principles do not come from the Prophet. Their religion as well as the principles it is comprised of are false.

This may help us understand why the Elders and the *a'immaḥ* denounce *kalām* and its exponents. It is because *kalām* advances fallacious arguments and expounds wrong ideas. However, those who expound the truths which God has stated or suggested, they are people of knowledge and faith. And it is God Who reveals the truth and guides to the right path.

[*Fatāwā* 3: 294-306]

(1.12) Exoteric Knowledge and Esoteric Knowledge

There is no harm in calling some knowledge exoteric (‘ilm az-zāhir) and some esoteric (‘ilm al-bāṭin), provided we understand the former in the sense of knowledge of acts that are performed by the body, and the latter in the sense knowledge of ideas, beliefs, and feelings that we have in the heart, or that we understand by the former what most people understand from the language of a text, and by the latter what only the learned but not the common man can understand from it. On either understanding, esoteric knowledge cannot conflict with exoteric knowledge. But the esoteric knowledge which various groups of esoterics (Baṭīnīs), philosophers, mystics and theologians, who have many things in common, talk of sometimes conflicts with exoteric knowledge and is wrong. As for the allusions (ishārāt) of the Ṣūfīs, some may be true, but the support which is adduced for them from a verse may be unjustified; others may be simply false if they go against an established truth. However, the concept of God-inspired knowledge (al-‘ilm al-ladunnī) is true. God does reveal to the heart of His pious friends (awliyā’) what He does not reveal to others. But this knowledge, it must be remembered, is not self-authenticating; it has to be supported by the arguments from the shar‘.

The ḥadīth that the Qur’ān has an inner meaning (bāṭi), and that has another deeper layer of meaning, and so on up to seven layers of inner meanings,⁷⁷ is a controversial ḥadīth; it has not been reported by any knowledgeable authority, nor is it found in any known book of ḥadīth. However, we have a ḥadīth narrated by Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī with an incomplete chain of narrators, omitting either the intervening Companion, or not going beyond him to the Prophet. It says, “Every verse (of the Qur’ān) has an external and an internal meaning, as well as an initial and a final meaning.”⁷⁸ We also hear various expressions like ‘exoteric knowledge and

esoteric knowledge', and exoterics and esoterics'. But these expressions have both right and wrong meanings...

By the term *al-bāṭin* one means either the knowledge of internal things, such as ideas and feelings of the heart, and the knowledge of the Unseen (*al-Ghayb*) communicated by the prophets. Or one means the knowledge which most people or the literalists among them are unable to comprehend. As for the first meaning, it is true that there is a knowledge which concerns the acts of the body and another knowledge which concerns the acts of the heart. It is also true that there is knowledge which is acquired through the senses and a knowledge concerning transcendental realities which is not available to the senses. Faith in the true sense is faith in the Unseen as God has said, "This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt for those who fear God, who believe in the Unseen (*al-Ghayb*)" (2:2-3). This faith in *Ghayb* is faith in the basic truths which the prophets have stated regarding God, His names and attributes, angels, Paradise and Hell. In short, it is faith in God, His prophets and the Last Day.

The term *'ilm al-bāṭin* also applies to the knowledge of the things of the heart, such as right and wrong beliefs, good and evil intentions. It applies to the knowledge of God and His love, fear for Him and sincerity in His devotion, trust in Him and expectation from Him, love and hatred towards other things for His sake, resignation to His decrees and submission to His will; it also applies to the knowledge of virtues like generosity, modesty and meekness, or of vice like pride, conceit and vanity. This is esoteric knowledge; for the objects of this knowledge are the internal things of the heart. In contrast, exoteric knowledge is knowledge of visible things which are talked about and discussed. This is what is known from the Qur'ān, the Sunnah and the sayings of the Elders and their followers. In fact, most of the verses of the Qur'ān fall into this category. God has revealed the Qur'ān as "a healing for the (diseases) of the heart, and as a guide and mercy for those who believe" (10:57). This knowledge is really the knowledge of

principles of religion; faith in the heart is the basis for confession by the tongue, and the acts of the heart are the basis for the acts of the body...

Esoteric knowledge in the sense of knowledge which most people or some of them are not able to comprehend is of two kinds: One type is opposed to esoteric knowledge, and the other is not. The first which is opposed to esoteric knowledge is untrue. One who claims to have this knowledge or knowledge of something hidden which conflicts with esoteric knowledge is certainly wrong. He is either a deliberate misinterpreter (*mulhid zindīq*), or a mistaken ignorant. The second kind of esoteric knowledge, may be classed with exoteric knowledge, and may be true or may be false. If it does not conflict with the exoteric knowledge, it cannot be pronounced false. If it is found to be true, it will be accepted; and if it is found to be erroneous, it will be rejected; but if neither is ascertained, one has to suspend judgment.

Examples of the erroneous kind of esoteric knowledge are the beliefs of various esoterics such as Karamathians,⁷⁹ the Ismā‘īlīs,⁸⁰ the Nuṣṣarīyyah,⁸¹ the philosophers who follow them, and the extremists among the mystics and theologians. To be sure, Karamathians are the worst of all of them, for they say that the Qur’ān and Islam have an inner reality which contradicts their outer form. For example, they say that the *ṣalāh* which is obligatory is not the *ṣalāh* that people offer; such *ṣalāh* is meant only for the laity. The real *ṣalāh* is the *ṣalāh* of the elite, which is to know their own doctrines. Similarly, fasting (*sawm*) is to conceal those doctrines from the ordinary men. *Ḥajj* is to visit the sites of their religion. They also say that the Paradise of the elite is the enjoyment of pleasure in this world, whereas their Hell is to observe the rules of the *shar‘* and to toil under its yoke...

Outwardly, the Karamathians are Rawāfiḍ;⁸² internally they are infidels, pure and simple. In general, the Ṣūfīs and the theologians are not Rawāfiḍ who call the Companions transgressors (*fāsiq*) but

not infidels (*kāfir*). Among them, however, there are people who, like Zaydīs,⁸³ exalt ‘Alī over Abū Bakr, or who believe that ‘Alī was more knowledgeable than Abū Bakr in things esoteric, as Al-Ḥarbi⁸⁴ and others do. This later group believes that “‘Alī was better versed in esoteric knowledge, which is the best kind of knowledge, and that Abū Bakr was superior to him only in exoteric knowledge. But this view is diametrically opposed to the view of most established Ṣūfīs and their leaders, who are agreed that Abū Bakr was most knowledgeable in esoteric matters. The scholars of Ahl as-Sunnah wal al-Jamā‘ah are one in the belief that Abū Bakr was most knowledgeable in both matters, exoteric and esoteric. Many people have reported consensus (*ijmā‘* on that point...

Esoteric Ṣūfīs interpret the words “Go to Pharaoh” (79:17) as a command to mind one’s heart, and the words, “God commanded you to slaughter a cow” (2:67) as a command to suppress the (evil) soul. They also consider the words, “take off your pair of shoes” (20:17) as a command to forsake this world and the next. Similarly they interpret “the tree” from which God addressed Moses and “the Holy Valley” where Moses was standing in terms of the feelings of heart one has at the time of enlightenment...

Esoteric philosophers interpret the angels and the devils as faculties of the soul. They say that the blessings or the suffering promised in the Hereafter have been put into figurative language. They refer to the psychological experience of pleasure or pain rather than to external things causing those feelings. Such ideas are also found in the writings of later Ṣūfīs, though nothing of this sort is heard from their earlier leaders...

Later Ṣūfīs, despite their ignorance and disbelief, have claimed that they know more than the Elders of the *ummah*, for example, Ibn ‘Arabi⁸⁵, the author of *Fuṣūṣ*, and many others like him, claim that being is one. They come to this doctrine from the same door, leaving behind all reason and religion. They say that early Ṣūfī masters like Junayd Ibn Muḥammad,⁸⁶ Sahl Ibn ‘Abdullah At-

Tustārī,⁸⁷ and Ibn Ibrāhīm Al-Khawwaṣṣ⁸⁸ died without knowing what *tawḥīd* really means. They find fault with Junayd and others like him for differentiating between the Lord and the world. Junayd said, “*Tawḥīd* is to separate the contingent from the Eternal.”⁸⁹ By God, the *tawḥīd* which these people expounded and which identifies the existence of the world with the existence of God is the worst of all false doctrines which the right minded Ṣūfī masters have condemned... They further claim that they say they all know God better than His messengers who receive knowledge from their niche. Hence they feel free to interpret the Qur’ān in the light of their false esoteric ideas. To give some examples, they say that the words “*min mā khaṭīyātihim ughriqū*” (71:25) which means that because of their sins they (the people of Noah) were drowned (in the flood), they interpret to mean that they were immersed in the sea of God’s knowledge. They try to... the word ‘*adhāb*, which means punishment, from the word ‘*udhub* which means sweetness, and then claim that Noah’s words about his people was in fact a praise for them though it appeared pejorative...

Ideas are of two kinds. First those which are opposed to what we definitely know to be true; as such they would be wrong as well as the arguments which are advanced for them, for no argument can prove a wrong thing to be right. The second kind of ideas are those that are true in themselves, but the arguments which people adduce for them from the Qur’ān and the Sunnah may not be backed by the text. These are what they call “allusions” (*ishārāt*). Abdur-Raḥmān’s⁹⁰ book, *Secrets of Exegesis (Ḥaqā’iq at-Tafsīr)* abound in such allusions.

The first kind of ideas are found in the works of the Karamathians and philosophers whose beliefs are different from those of the Muslims. If you accept that God was pleased with the early Muslims and they, too, were pleased with Him, you must accept that whatever goes against their way is wrong. If, for example, you accept that *ṣalāh* is obligatory for everyone who is sane, you must accept that whatever makes it non-obligatory for

any particular person by reinterpreting a text is simply telling a lie. Similarly, if you accept that wine and adultery are forbidden for everyone in his/her senses, you must accept that whoever interprets a text to justify these things on the part of a person is telling a lie.

With regard to the ideas of the second kind, there are many who are confused, because the ideas themselves are true and may be supported by the Qur'ān and Sunnah. The question is only with regard to the particular text which is cited in their support. Ideas of this kind may be further divided into two types, first, those which say that a particular text X means Y. This claim is wrong. For example, one who says that the words, "slaughter a cow" (2:267) means "suppress the evil soul," or that "go to Pharaoh" (77:17) means "mind your heart," or that the first part of the verse (48:29) "those who are with him (the Prophet)" is a reference to Abū Bakr, the next part "are hard on the infidels" is a reference to 'Umar, the third part "kind to each other" is a reference to 'Uthmān, and the fourth part, "you will see them bow and prostrate themselves" is a reference to 'Alī - he is telling nothing but lies in the name of God, either intentionally or unintentionally. The second type of ideas are those which do not claim that X means Y; they only say that Y also follows from X. In other words, it is a kind of inference (*qiyās*). What the jurists call *qiyās*, the Ṣūfīs call *ishārah*, allusion. But these allusions may be right and may be wrong, for example, if anyone takes the verse, "no one shall touch it but those who are clean" (56:79) to refer to the Guarded Tablets or the Holy Qur'ān, and says that just as the guarded Tablets in which the Qur'ān is written is not touched except by those who are clean, similarly its meaning is not grasped except by clean hearts or the hearts of pious men, he will be saying something correct and his inference, too, will be correct...

Ḥaqā'iq at-Tafsīr by Abū 'Abdur-Raḥmān As-Sulāmī has all three kinds of ideas. One kind is inauthentic; for example most of the sayings which he has ascribed to *ijmā' Aṣ-Ṣādiq*⁹¹ are not the

words of *ijmā'*, they are the words of Abū 'Abdur-Raḥmān himself. Various scholars of tradition have found fault with his reports. That is why, whenever Al-Bayhaqī⁹² relates from him, he goes beyond him to those from whom he has heard. The second kind of tradition is those which have been reported by authentic reports but have some inaccuracies in the report. the third kind of traditions is those which are authentic as well as correct.

Everything which goes against the Qur'ān and the Sunnah is wrong, and all evidence in its support is to be rejected. Similarly, if something agrees with the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, but the text which is said to mean it actually means something else, that too will not be correct. However, if one claims that it follows from the text as an inference or as a lesson (*i'tibār*), that may be right and may be wrong.

As for God-inspired truths (*al-'ilm al-ladunnī*), it is true that God reveals to His friends and pious servants what He does not reveal to others, because they avoid what He disapproves and pursue what He approves. 'Alī alluded to it when he said, "Nothing special is given to me except an insight into His Book that God gives to a servant."⁹³ Another tradition says, "One who acts upon what he knows is given the knowledge of what he does not know."⁹⁴ This may be supported by a number of Qur'ānic verses, such as, "if they had done what they were told, it would have been best for them, and would have gone farthest to strengthen their (faith), And We would have given them from Our presence a great reward, and We would have shown them the Straight Way" (4:66-8). This means that whoever does what he is commanded is guided to the right path... Elsewhere God has said, "For those who follow the guidance, He increases further (the light of) their guidance, and gives them their piety" (47:17)... This also means that one who does what God dislikes is turned away from guidance and knowledge, as He has said, "When they went wrong, God let their hearts go wrong" (61:5)... There are many more verses that can be cited on the subject.

People have three different views on the matter; two are extreme and one is the middle. One group says that abstinence, purification of the heart, and austere practices by themselves lead to knowledge without the assistance of anything else. Another group says that these things have nothing to do with knowledge, which is acquired either with the words and the commands of the *shar‘* or rational arguments. The correct view is the one which is held by the people in the middle, namely that the things which have been mentioned by the first group are some of the most important factors which facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, and even form the condition for the attainment of various kinds of knowledge; but they are not sufficient by themselves. One needs something more: either statements on matters that are not known except through them, or a clear idea of the concepts involved in propositions that belong to the field of necessary knowledge.

As for knowledge of things necessary for salvation in the Hereafter and happiness there, it is not available except through following what the prophets have taught. God has said, “If, as is sure, there comes to you guidance from Me, whoever follows My guidance will not lose his way or fall into misery. But whoever turns away from My message, verily for him is a life narrowed down, and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Judgment. He will say: ‘My Lord why have you raised me up blind, though I had sight (before)?’ (God) will say: Thus did you, when Our signs came to you, disregard them; so will you this day be disregarded. Thus do We recompense him who transgresses beyond bounds, and believes not in the sign of his Lord” (20:123-7). Elsewhere He has said, “Whoever withdraws himself from remembering the Most Gracious, We appoint for him an evil one to be an intimate companion for him” (43:36). Hence if anyone thinks he can find the Way and acquire faith through knowledge alone, without acting upon that knowledge or through austere practices and abstinence without acquiring knowledge, is surely mistaken.

Further removed from truth than these two groups of people are those who, in order to acquire knowledge, pursue the method of philosophers and the *mutakalimūn*, and neither refer to the Qur'ān and Sunnah nor practice what they know (of *shar'*). No better are those who engage in the austere practices and abstinence on the line of the philosophers and the mystics without referring to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah or checking their practices with the rules (of the *shar'*). The one moves away from correct knowledge and the *shar'*, and the other moves away from correct practice and the *shar'*; thus both of them go astray, far from truth. One is like the Christians, who have lost the truth, and the other is like the Jews who have incurred God's wrath. Some of them are even worse than the Christians and the Jews, I mean the Karamathians, the monists and other misguided philosophers like them.

Some people think that the Prophet has told every group what was best for it. This statement may be understood in two ways. One is that *shar'* caters to the needs of various groups of people. This is true, for the *shar'* does not put the same obligation on the rich and poor, the healthy and the sick, nor does it charge a man with the same duties in prosperity as in adversity, or a woman when she is clean and when she has her period, or a person when he is the ruler and when he is the ruled.... But if this statement means that the *shar'* itself changes, that the Prophet commands one thing to one person and just the opposite to another, or tells one thing to some person and just the contrary to another, this is completely wrong. Some people cite by way of example the case when 'Ā'ishah asked the Prophet whether he had seen his Lord, and he replied in the negative, but when Abū Bakr asked the same question he replied in the positive.⁹⁵ He thus gave one reply, they say, to one person and another to another on the same issue according to their respective situations. This is a lie which the enemies of Islam and the hypocrites have told about the Prophet. How can they attribute such a thing to one who said, "It does not behoove a prophet that he point to something with his eyes against

what he says with his mouth.”⁹⁶ This has been reported by Abū Dāwūd and other compilers of *ḥadīth*. At the time of the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet announced that Ibn Abī Sarh was not to be forgiven. When ‘Uthmān brought him to the Prophet that he might pledge fealty to him, the Prophet turned his face away. He did that twice or thrice and only then allowed him to pledge fealty, saying to the people around him, “Was there no intelligent person among you who could see that I had turned away from this man and get up and kill him?” On that, a person in the audience said, “Why did you not point to me with your eyes, O Prophet?” His reply was, “It does not behoove a Prophet to point stealthily with his eyes.” This is the hallmark of integrity, of correspondence between outer behavior and inner reality, of identity of action with intention, which is diametrically opposed to the practice of the hypocrites who put up on their face the opposite of what they have in their hearts

It was part of his integrity that the Prophet never confided to someone in secret any part of religion which he did not tell others. However, it did happen that when someone asked him about a thing to which he could not give an answer, he said something instead which could benefit the questioner, for example, once a Bedouin Arab asked him about the Day of Judgment, as to when it would come. But nobody other than God knows when it will happen. Therefore instead of addressing the question direct, he asked the Bedouin what preparation he had made for it? The Bedouin said that he had not done much, but he did love God and the Prophet. Thereupon he said, “Everyone there will be with those who he loves”⁹⁷. This was how he would discern the real purpose behind a question and respond to it. He never gave answers which his people could not follow.

As regards the *ḥadīth* of Hudhayfah, it is true that according to a *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth* Hudhayfah knew some secrets which others did not know.⁹⁸ That was information about the leading hypocrites, which the Prophet had told him the year the expedition of Tabuk was

undertaken. It has been reported that a group of hypocrites was planning to loosen the saddle of the camel on which the Prophet was to ride so that he might fall and die; but he was informed of it by way of revelation. Hudhayfah was sitting near him at that time, he turned to him and gave him the names of the hypocrites. It has been reported that ‘Umar would not pray over the coffin of anyone unless Hudhayfah also prayed over his coffin. This knowledge which Hudhayfah had was not, it is obvious, a part of religion, nor a matter of the heart as distinguished from the matters of behavior. God has himself stated in His Book a lot about the character and behavior of the hypocrites, particularly in Sūrat At-Tawbah (IX) which exposes them completely.

As for the *ḥadīth* of Abū Hurayrah, it is recorded in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections. Abū Hurayrah says, “I have preserved two bags of *ḥadīth*; the contents of one I have spread among the people, but were I to divulge the contents of the other bag you would cut this throat.”⁹⁹ But this also has nothing to do with inner truths as distinguished from external rules, nor does it refer to the principles of religion. In the other bag of Abū Hurayrah were only *aḥādīth* regarding *malahi* and *fitan*, the former meaning wars between Muslims and non-Muslims, and the latter meaning wars among the Muslims themselves. This is supported by the remark of ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Umar,¹⁰⁰ “Had Abū Hurayrah said that you would kill your *khalīfah* or that you would do this or that, you would have called him a liar.” Obviously, if information that is not liked by kings and their supporters were divulged, it would have had serious consequences for their governments.

[*Fatāwā* 13:231-256]

(1.13) Misinterpretation of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah

Those who misinterpret the text of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah are of three kinds. Some change the word for the meaning and

reject what the Prophet has said under the impression that it goes against reason. Others just reproduce texts without understanding them and claim that this is the way of the Elders. The third group expounds ideas and claims that they are part of religion, even though they contradict the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.

God has divided the People of the Book whom He has condemned into two groups, misinterpreters and ignorant folk. “Do you expect,” He has said, “that they will believe in you, seeing that a group of them would read the word of God and then change it deliberately after they had understood it fully. When they talk to the Believers they say: ‘We are also Believers.’ But when they talk to each other in private they say: ‘Do you tell these people what God has revealed to you, so that they may argue against you in from of your Lord.’ Do you not understand (their aim)? Do they not know that God knows what they conceal and what they reveal? And there are among them illiterates, who follow not the Book but their own desires, and do nothing but conjecture. Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say, ‘This is from God’ to traffic with it for a miserable price. Woe to them for what hands write and the gain they make thereby (12:75-9).

Therein is a lesson for those from our own community who follow their own way. The misinterpreters of the text of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah regarding God's attributes, statements, and commands either change the words of the texts or their meaning, and reject what the Prophet has said by denying it outright or negating its meaning. They claim that this is what is demanded by their reason, which they appoint as judge over the revelation.

Others do not do more than state the texts, which they hardly understand. They claim that this is what revelation demands, that it was the practice of the Elders, and that God did not require them to understand those texts. Thus they know nothing of the Book except

wishes, that is, they only recite it, and “they do nothing but conjecture.”

There is a third group, who expound ideas and claim that they are part of religion, that there are texts and rational arguments to support them, and that they are part of God’s religion even though they go against His Book. They are the ones “who write the Book with their hands and then say that it is from God” in one sense or the other.

So think over these verses, how they underline all the three ways of misinterpretation. The words, “do you tell them what God has revealed to you that they may argue against you in front of your Lord,” depict those people who hide texts which others might use against them. Such people even forbid the narration of prophetic *ḥadīth*, and were it possible for them to hide the Qur’ān they would do so. But since they cannot they try to suppress inferences from its texts of ideas which follow from them, and offer people in their place what they have written with their hands, claiming that it is from God.

[*Fatāwā* 14:70-71]

(1.14) Opposition to the Qur’ān and the Sunnah arises from unfounded conjecture or objectionable desires.

Whoever diverges from the Prophet’s path builds on wild conjecture or evil desires, as God has said about those who worshiped Al-Lat and Al-‘Uzza, “They follow nothing but conjectures and their wishes, even though the true guidance has come to them from their Lord” (53:23). His remark about those who believed that the angels are females is, “Those who believe not in the Hereafter name the angels with female names. But they have no knowledge thereof. They follow nothing but conjectures, and conjectures reveal nothing against truth” (53:28).... The importance of the Prophet’s teachings he endorses, on the other hand, in these words: “By the star when it sets, your companion is

neither astray nor being misled. Nor does he say ought of (his own) desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him, which the One has taught him Who is mighty in power” (53:1-5)

So whoever opposes the Prophet is only following his conjectures or pursuing his wishes. If he really believes in what he says, and has some argument for it, it would at most be a conjecture which avails nothing of the truth. He may be arguing from either false premises, inauthentic traditions, or inspired words which he may be thinking to have come from God, whereas they have actually come from Satan.

People consider these three things to be sufficient reason to oppose the Sunnah. They put forward a rational argument and consider it to be an apodeictically certain proof, whereas they are wild guesses consisting of vague concepts and obscure ideas which they have not examined and seen which part of them is true or which part is untrue. You will find these things in all rational arguments which have been advanced against the Qur’ān and the Sunnah. Their concepts are vague. When you analyze them you see what is true and what is false. This is the case regarding rational arguments.

Those who argue from tradition use a *ḥadīth* which is either a simple lie foisted on the Prophet or which does not prove what those opponents of the Prophet suppose it to prove. The reason may lie in either the transmission of the tradition, the text of the tradition itself or in the inference from it. This is the case regarding all the traditions which the exoterics put forward as arguments.

As for the people of inspiration, ecstasy, vision and audition, some of them, to be sure, have authentic inspirations. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim have reported that the Prophet said, “There were men in the earlier communities who were addressed from above (*al-muḥaddathūn*). if there were such a one in my community it would be ‘Umar.”¹⁰¹ And ‘Umar used to say, “Keep near to the obedient Servants of God, and listen to what they say, for things are revealed to them in their true form.” At-Tirmidhī has reported

through Abū Sa‘īd that the Prophet said, “Beware of the insights of the Believer, for he sees by the light of God” and sighted the verse, “Indeed there are signs in it for those who understand by tokens”¹⁰² (15:75). One of his companions said, “By God, I believe that He puts the truth in their hearts and in their ears.” Al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* has recorded from Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet related the words of God, “My servant comes closer to Me through his supererogatory acts till I love him, and when I love him I become his ears by which he hears, his eyes by which he sees, his hands by which he strikes, and his legs by which he walks.”¹⁰³ In another version of the *ḥadīth* the words are “...he hears through Me, sees through Me, strikes through Me, and walks through Me.” God has thus made it clear that the pious hear through God and see through God. People used to say about ‘Umar (raa) that “peace speaks through his tongue.”¹⁰⁴ The Prophet (pbuh) said, “If anyone asks for the post of judge and seeks the help of people for it, he is left to himself, but if he does not ask for it nor seeks people’s help, God appoints for him a human angel who helps him in making correct judgment.”¹⁰⁵

What I want to say is that such things do happen. Inspiration does come from God. Out there are other inspirations also which are thought to have come from Him, though they do not come from Him. People do not differentiate between a true and a false inspiration, just as they do not distinguish between a correct and incorrect argument, rational or traditional. Sometimes they hear a word or see a person who commands something, but that word comes from Satan himself; it is he who addresses them, though they think the person to be a friend (*walī*) of God, or one of the invisible beings (*rijāl al-ghayb*). But invisible beings are from among the jinns, whom they consider to be human. The being whom they see may tell them that he is Khidr or Elijah, or that he is Muḥammad or Abraham or Christ, or that he is Abū Bakr or ‘Umar, or that he is this *shaykh* or that *shaykh* whom they hold in esteem. He may fly them in the air, give them food and drink, or

bring them money which they may consider to be a divine favor, sign, or miracle demonstrating that that being is really an invisible being or an angel, whereas the truth is that he is none other than Satan, who has deceived them. Experiences of this kind often happen, and I personally know of many instances, just as I know many wrong rational and traditional arguments.

These people follow nothing but conjectures which give them no truth at all. Had they not stepped in front of God and His Prophet, and had instead adhered to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah they would have discovered that it was from Satan. Many of these people act upon their feelings, experiences and inclinations without any knowledge, guidance or insight. They pursue only their wishes and conjectures... Similarly, those who follow the voices they hear, the lights they see, or the figures they behold, and do not check them with the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, run after their guesses, which avail nothing.

There is no one better than 'Umar among those who hear voices and receive inspirations. The Prophet said about him, "There had been men in the earlier communities who received words. If there were anyone in my community it would be 'Umar."^{105a} "On many occasions his view was endorsed by God's revelation. But even a person like him was obliged to adhere to the Prophet's teachings and not act upon anything he experienced unless he had checked it with the Prophet. He never put himself ahead of God and His Prophet; on the contrary, he always turned to the Sunnah whenever he found that what came to his heart did not agree with what he knew. Often Abū Bakr explained to him things he could not discern, and he submitted to Abū Bakr's explanations and counsels. This happened, for example, at the time of Ḥudaybiyyah,¹⁰⁶ the day the Prophet died,¹⁰⁷ and the day he argued with Abū Bakr about those who refused to pay *zakāh*,¹⁰⁸ and so on. Again, a woman could get up and refute his view, citing a verse from the Qur'ān, and Umar would submit to it. I am referring to the case of the amount of dowry given to a wife.¹⁰⁹ There are other

instances also. Obviously, no recipient of inspiration, vision and illumination can be better than ‘Umar. He must follow ‘Umar’s way, adhere to the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, and submit to the teachings of the Prophet, rather than subjecting them to his own experiences.

[*Fatāwā* 13:66-74]

PART II

ISLAMIC

FAITH

2. GOD

(2.1) The Qur'ān and the existence of God.

Knowledge of God's existence is latent in human nature, and is a part of it. The Qur'ān only revives this knowledge and brings it out by pointing to the signs of God's existence and His attributes. In this it differs from the way theologians and the philosophers follow in proving God's existence.

The knowledge that a contingent being needs someone to bring it into existence is part of our natural knowledge. With regard to particular beings, this knowledge is necessary and more self-evident than with regard to universals, for we arrive at the universals only after we have examined the particulars. The same is true of all universal propositions on which most theologians and philosophers base their arguments, such as the whole is greater than the part, that contraries do not exist together or vanish together, that the ones that are equal to something are equal to each other, and so on, for whenever you think of any whole you know that it is greater than its parts, even though you may not have been aware of it as a universal proposition. Everyone knows, for example, that a human body is more than its organs, that a dirham is more than its fractions, that a city is more than its neighborhoods, and that a mountain is more than its parts. The same is true with regard to contraries, their existence and non-existence. Whenever you think of the existence and non existence of anything, you know that it cannot both exist and not exist at the same time, that either it exists or does not exist. You make this judgment about particular things, even though you may not call up in your mind the universal truth regarding contraries, and so on.

Since a general argument is concerned with something general, not particular, the proper way to prove the existence of God is to

point to signs (*ayāt*). This is the way of the Qur'ān, and this is what is inherent in our nature. Even though deductive reasoning is

correct, its utility is limited. And the Qur'ān, whenever it uses deductive reasoning in theological issues, employs the argument of priority (*qiyās al-awlā*) and not the argument that uses common terms, for the defects and imperfections that should be negated of creatures must be negated of the Creator in the first place, and the excellences and perfections free from all defects which are asserted of creatures, such as life, knowledge and power, must be asserted of the Creator before anyone else. All created beings are signs of the Creator. The difference between a sign (*ayah*) and an argument (*qiyās*) is that the sign proves the object itself of which it is the sign. Every created being is a sign and a proof of the Creator Himself, as we have explained at other places.

Human nature knows the Creator without these signs; that knowledge is inherent in it. Had it not known Him before these signs, it could not have known that they are His signs, for they are signs and proofs of God just as a name is a sign of the object named. One must have known the object before one may know the name and know that it is the name of this particular object. Similarly, for a sign to be the proof of an object one must have known the object and known that the said sign is associated with it, and that it necessarily implies its existence. It follows that if the object has not been known it cannot be known that the sign points to it. The knowledge of a relation depends upon the knowledge of the thing which is related as well as the thing to which it is related. However, sometimes one does not know the thing which is related or that it is a sign of the thing to which it is related, but when one imagines it one knows the object it signifies. People know that creatures are the signs and proofs of the Creator; this means that they must have already known the Creator so that they can pronounce that these things are His signs. What we want to underline is that it is this rational and natural method which the

Qur'ān adopts, and which is upheld by reason and revelation, by thought and tradition.

On the other hand, philosophers like Ibn Sīnā¹¹⁰ Ar-Rāzī^{110a} and their followers think that the way to prove the existence of God is to argue from the contingency of the world, to deduce the existence of the Necessary Being from the existence of possible beings. They proceed like this: Existence is either necessary or possible; and in order for the possible to exist there must be a necessary being, hence *the* Necessary Being exists. Ibn Sīnā was the first to formulate this argument; he took some ideas from the theologians and some from the philosophers and combined them in this form. The theologians had divided existence into eternal and contingent. Ibn Sīnā, on the other hand, divided it into necessary and possible, for in his view the spheres are not contingent, they are only possible. This distinction was something new; no philosopher before him had ever done that; in fact, leading figures among them considered this distinction to be wrong, and charged him with going against earlier philosophers and all rational thinkers. We have shown elsewhere that eternity and necessity of existence imply each other, that this is the view of all the wise men of the past and present except these people and that there is no disagreement between them on this point. It is common experience that things come into existence after they had not been existing and that they go out of existence after they have existed. It is clear that that which is non-existent or which ceases to exist cannot be the Necessary Being or an eternal everlasting, thing.

If at all these people succeed in proving the existence of the Necessary Being, there is nothing in their argument to show that He is different from the heavens and the spheres. Al-Ghazālī¹¹¹ and others have demonstrated that they have failed in this regard. Their argument that no body can be a necessary being because it is a compound, and that the Necessary Being is not a compound being, is not correct. We have elsewhere advanced a number of arguments and shown that this view is wrong. Various other

thinkers have shown in their own way the falsity of this view. Al-Ghazālī is one of them.

The concept of necessity is very vague since it may mean a number of things. It may mean that which exists in itself and does not vanish; on that meaning, both Essence and the attributes will be necessary. Or it may mean that which exists in itself and by itself; on that meaning only the Essence is necessary and not the attributes. Or it may mean the Originator is the same as the Creator. On this meaning, the Necessary Being will be the Essence qualified with attributes, for the Essence without the attributes cannot create, nor can the attributes without the Essence. This vagueness has led many claimants of gnosis and the enlightenment that follows these people to call the Necessary Being ‘Being as such’ (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), as we have explained elsewhere.

[*Fatāwā* 1:47-50]

(5.3) The Necessary Being is other than the possible beings.

Being may be taken to mean as such (al-wujūd al-muṭlaq), which will comprehend the Necessary Being as well as the possible being. In this sense being is a common universal which does not exist except in mind or in word. Or it may be taken to mean the being which is ascribed to the Necessary or to the possible. Being in this sense is specific to the thing to which it is ascribed. Hence the being of the Creator is other than the being of the world; similarly, the being of Zayd is other than the being of ‘Umar, and there is no being which is common to any two things.

Some people think that things which we predicate of the world are only predicated of the Creator as a metaphor including the word ‘thing’ (*shayy*) itself. This is the opinion of Jahm and the Bāṭinīyyah who agree with him on this point. They refrain from calling God as existing (*mawjūd*) as a thing or by any other name.

Others hold just the opposite view: everything predicated of God is predicated in the real sense, whereas it is predicated of the world as a metaphor. This is the view of Abū Al-‘Abbās An-Nāshī¹¹² from among the Mu‘tazilah.

People in general believe that things are predicated of both God and the world in the real sense, and for most of them they are predicated of both unequivocally in the broadest sense of the term, or equivocally if that is distinguished from the former. The latter is certainly different from special unequivocal predication in which the meanings are similar while the words are cognate. Only a small group of later thinkers have regarded them to be homonymous as against the majority and the most popular thinkers. Ar-Rāzī has attributed this view to Al-Ash‘arī, but it is not correct, for Al-Ash‘arī and for his followers in general, *wujūd*, or being, is a general term divisible into the eternal and the contingent. He, however, believes that the existence of everything is identical with its essence which is the view of all rational people, Muslims as well as non Muslims. Some people such as Al-Āmidī^{112a} have wrongly inferred from this that the term is a homonym. We have discussed this at length elsewhere for everyone to find out the truth.

To one who says that *wujūd* may either refer to the essence or to an attribute over and above the essence we would put the following question: Do you mean by *wujūd* ‘being as such’, which may be eternal and may be possible, or do you mean by it a particular being, whether the Necessary Being or the possible beings.... We have three terms here. When we say the *wujūd* of a man, his self (*dhāt*), essence or reality, it is specific to him, referring to his own self qualified with his own attributes. Similarly when we say the *wujūd* of the Lord, His self, His essence, His reality, they all refer to what is specific to Him, which is His self qualified with His attributes. Hence, in reply to Al-Āmidī’s statement that the term *wujūd* refers either to the essence of God or to an attribute over and above it, we say that if

you mean by the term ‘being as such’, which comprehends both necessary and the possible beings, then it does not refer to something which is specific either to the Necessary or to the possible being; it rather refers to a universal concept only exist in mind or in word. There is nothing out in reality there which is something universal as well as real... However, if you mean by *wujūd* that which refers to both, as in the in the phrase ‘all beings, the necessary and possible’, or ‘being, necessary and possible’, then it refers to what is specific to each, as when we say the being of the necessary and the being of the possible. In short, it either means being as a universal concept which is divisible, or it means a particular being such as the being of the necessary or the being of the possible, or both, as when we say ‘all beings, necessary and possible’, or ‘beings, necessary and possible’, without implying in any case that it is common to both.

Al-Āmidī has said that if *wujūd* refers to the Essence (of God), the divine Essence will be opposed by all other beings. We would point out that *wujūd* as such, which is divisible, does not refer to what is specific to God. But when we take it in the sense of particular beings, it does refer to God; similarly, when we take it in a general sense and say ‘being, necessary and possible,’ it also refers to what is specific to God, even though it is opposed by other beings. It is just like saying ‘the divine self’ and ‘the human self’ since each refers to what is specific to itself, even though the reality of one is opposed to the reality of the other. The word *wujūd* refers to God and to the world in a similar way, even though they are two different realities.

It may be said that since the reality of one being is different from the reality of the other, the word being (*wujūd*) will be a homonym. This, we will say, is a mistake which has given rise to other mistakes. Different realities are called by a general name which refers to them unequivocally or equivocally. For example, the word color applies to black, white, and red, even though they are different colors; similarly, the words attribute, accident, and

concept apply to knowledge, power, life, taste, color, and smell, even though they are different realities. In the same way, the word animal applies to human beings and cattle even though they are different realities. This is all the more true of the word *wujūd*.

Diverse realities may have something common between them which may be referred to by a word such as color. Later on it may be qualified in order to refer to every particular reality. For example, we may say black color or white color. Similarly, we may say the being of God and the being of man, even though we are using a general term which applies to all its particular instances. We say color or colors, animal, accident or being, which apply to everything that comes under them, even though they may be different realities; this is because these terms comprehend them as does any other general term, even though individual realities differ in another sense from these general terms.

If, on the other hand, the term *wujūd* stands, Al-Āmidī says, for an attribute that means one and the same thing in the case of the Necessary and the possible, it will follow that the necessary is possible and the possible is necessary, or else the term has to be treated as a homonym. To this objection we respond in this way. We ask if you mean by the term *wujūd* 'being as such' or a particular being referring to one thing or the other, as when we say the *wujūd* of the necessary or the *wujūd* of the possible. If you take the term in the first sense then we will say that it means one and the same thing, but it will not follow thereby that their *wujūd* is similar. Even if their ideas in mind may be similar, it does not follow that they are similar out there. The only thing that follows is that the term applies to both, just as any other term unequivocal or equivocal. When we say black, it may refer to the blackness of pitch or of ink even though they are not similar; or when we say white or red it may refer to many things which are white or red in various degrees. Similarly, the term living applies to the angels, the people in Paradise, the fly and the mosquito, even though their lives are completely different. If this is the case, how can the *wujūd*

of God or His knowledge or power be like the *wujūd* of the possible or its knowledge or power, even though the word *wujūd* as such or knowledge as such or power as such comprehends them both.

But if Al-Āmidī says that he means a particular being, such as the being of the Necessary or the being of the possible, we will say that what being denotes in one case is different from what it denotes in the other case. That is why it is qualified. We say being of the one or being of the other. This qualification rules out similarity between the two beings, which is by no means necessitated by the commonness of the term, for in this case the difference lies in the term *wujūd* itself, and the qualification through ascription only enforces it, in whatever form we express it, whether ‘the being of the Lord’ or the ‘Necessary Being’, on the one hand, and the being of the object created or ‘the possible being’ on the other.

[*Fatāwā* 20:441-447]

(2.3) God’s existence is identical with His Essence, not something over and above it.

People have differed on the question whether the existence of God is same as His Essence or something over and above it, as well as on the question whether the term existence should be understood unequivocally or equivocally or just as a homonym. Some take existence as a homonym, which rules out its division into the necessary and the possible. This conflicts with the judgment of all rational beings as well as with the obvious truths of reason. But if it is taken as a general concept whether unequivocal or equivocal, it would comprehend all, beings, and would be common to both necessary and possible beings. But this common existence will require something for its differentiation into one existence or the other, which can only be the essence of a particular being; that would in turn require that the existence of a

being should be over and above its essence. This would mean that the existence of the Necessary Being depends upon something other than Himself.

Following Ar-Rāzī and his disciples, people have generally mentioned three views on the same issue of God's existence. One is that existence is a homonym that has nothing common except the word. The second is that the existence of the Necessary Being is over and above His essence. The third is that it is existence as such, which is nothing other than existence devoid of every positive essence.

All these views are wrong and none of them are true. The error arises from the assumption that when we say that existence divides into the Necessary and the possible It follows that there is an existence out there which is in the Necessary as well as in the possible. There is nothing in the two beings which is common between them in reality, except for the word *wujūd* existence, and its idea in mind or in writing. That alone is common between them. As an idea in mind or as a word pronounced or written, *wujūd* is common to both, but as realities out there they have only some kind of resemblance between them. As for one having something of the essence or the attributes of the other, the falsity of that idea would be apparent to anyone who thinks over it. Those who have not realized it yet are those who have not thought it over.

What is true of the term essence (*dhāt*) the thing itself (*'ayn*), the self (*nafs*), the quiddity (*maḥīyyah*) or reality (*ḥaqīqah*) is also true of *wujūd*. Just as reality is divisible into necessary reality and possible reality, and just as quiddity and essence are divisible, similarly *wujūd* is also divisible. And just as by saying that reality or quiddity are divisible into the necessary and the possible it does not follow that the quiddity of the Necessary has something of the quiddity of the possible, saying that *wujūd* is divisible into the Necessary and the possible, does not imply that the *wujūd* of the Necessary should have something of the *wujūd* of the possible. In fact the Necessary Being has neither the existence as such nor the

quiddity as such; its quiddity is identical with its reality and its existence.

As the existence (*wujūd*) of a particular created being out there is identical with its essence (*dhāt*) or reality (*ḥaqīqah*) of God is all the more identical with His existence (*wujūd*) in which nothing else participates, and which is same as His quiddity that exists in itself.

[*Dar' Ta'arud al-'Aql wa al-Naql* 1:292-3]

(2.4) Are the attributes of God other than His Essence?

God is qualified with attributes which cannot be separated from His self. This means that His attributes are not over and above His essence. However, we can distinguish in thought between them, and say that His attributes are over and above His essence in knowledge, belief and description.

One may ask whether the attributes of God are over and above His essence. The answer is that the Being which is out there is qualified with attributes. There is no divine Essence out there without any attributes; in fact there is not a single essence out there stripped of all attributes. The word *dhāt* is the feminine of *dhū*, which is always used in a construct from. *Dhāt* as such came later on. Originally, people used to say *dhāt 'ilm, dhāt qudrah or dhāt sam'*, that is, one having knowledge, having power, having hearing, and so on. In the Qur'ān We have, "Fear God and set right *dhāt baynakum* (8:1) that is the ... between you. People say, "She is *dhāt māl or dhāt jamāl*, that is she is one that has wealth or one that has beauty. Later on, when people realized that the divine self is *dhāt 'ilm, qudrah, sam', baṣr*, that it has knowledge, power, hearing and seeing, and came to realize it in opposition to those who negated these attributes, they put the definite article on the word which replaced its use in a construct from. So when we say it means one having something. It follows, therefore, that there

cannot be any *dhāt* which is not a *dhāt* having an attribute such as knowledge, power, etc., neither in language nor in thought.

When the scholars of the *Ahl-al Sunnah* say that *aṣ-ṣifāt zā'idah 'alā al-dhāt* it means that the attributes (*ṣifāt*) are more than (*zā'idah*) what the negators of attributes think of them in relation to the divine Essence (*adh-dhāt*). These negators only affirm an Essence which has no attributes. It is in opposition to them that the *Ahl as-Sunnah* affirm the additional character of the attributes, that they are in addition to divine Essence in our knowledge, belief and statements, not that they are over and above the divine Self, not at all. On the contrary, the divine Self is ever qualified with those attributes which are inseparable from it. Neither are the attributes without the Essence, nor is the Essence without the attributes. For a detailed treatment of the point, see my other writings.

[*Fatāwā* 17:161-162]

(2.5) The way of the Elders with regard to divine attributes.

The way of the Elders with regard to divine attributes is that one should predicate of God all the attributes that He has predicated of Himself or that His Prophet has predicated of Him, without changing their meaning (taḥrīf) or negating them (ta'tīl), as well as without going into their modality (takyīf) or conceiving them on human pattern (tamthīl). Those who do not follow this line are of three categories: ahl at-takhyīl, ahl at-ta'wīl and ahl at-tajhīl.

The best statement on divine attributes is that one should predicate of God what He has predicated of Himself or what His Prophet has predicated of Him, or what the first Muslims have said about Him; never should one go beyond the Qur'ān and the

Sunnah. Imām Aḥmad has said, “One should not attribute to God what He or His Prophet have not attributed to Him, and one should restrict himself to the Qur’ān and the Sunnah”

The practice of the Elders in this regard was to predicate of God what He has predicated of Himself or what His Prophet has predicated of Him, without changing it (*tahrīf*), or negating it (*ta’ṭīl*), or inquiring into its modality (*takyīf*), or conceiving it on human patterns (*tamthīl*). We know that what God has said of Himself is free from ambiguity and obscurity, and that one can find out its meaning in the way one finds out from a statement what its author wants to say. This is all the easier when the author is one who knows more than anyone what he says, and is more competent than any one to express his ideas, to formulate them and state them.

It is also true, on the other hand, that God is unlike anything in His sublime Self which is qualified with attributes and names, as well as in His acts. Similarly it is true that He really has an essence (*dhāt*); that He acts in reality; that He is qualified with real attributes; that there is nothing like unto Him in essence, attributes and acts; that He is absolutely free from anything which implies defect or pertains to contingent beings; and that he possesses all perfections in the highest degree. Contingency does not touch Him because His existence is neither followed by non-existence nor preceded by it. He does not need anyone to bring into existence; He exists necessarily by Himself.

The Elders have avoided both negation and comparison. They neither compare God’s attributes with the attributes of His creatures or His essence with their essence, nor do they negate what He has predicated of Himself or His Prophet has predicated of Him. Hence they do not have to falsify His names and attributes, misunderstand his words by isolating them from their contexts, or distort the meaning of His names and words.

Those who negate God’s attributes and those who compare them with other beings each commit mistakes. The negators first

conceive God's names and attributes on creaturely patterns and then negate those concepts; hence they do both negation and comparison, comparison first and negation next. They liken God's names and attributes to the names and attributes of His creatures, give them the meanings which they have in the context of the creatures, and deny the meanings that they should have as it behooves His majesty. When they say that if God were (*istawā*) on the Throne, He would either be greater than the Throne or smaller than it or equal to it, all of which possibilities must be ruled out. This means that they do not understand by God's being on the Throne any differently from what they understand by one body being on another body, otherwise they would not have drawn those conclusions. The *istawā* which behooves God's majesty and is only for Him does not admit of any of those consequences which are associated with bodies and which must therefore be negated of God. To draw these consequences is like saying that if the world had a maker he would be either a substance or an accident, both of which are ruled out, as there is no being other than these two. Those who draw these consequences, and those who say that if God were on the Throne He would be seated there as a man is seated on a cot or on a boat, since there is no third kind of *istawā*, both compare God's *istawā* with human *istawā* and both negate what God predicates of Himself. The first denies every idea of real *istawā*, and the second affirms nothing other than creaturely *istawā*.

The correct view in this matter is what the best people of this community hold. God is established on the Throne in a manner which behooves the majesty of God and is unique to Him. When we say that God knows everything, that He can do everything, or that He sees everything hears everything, it does not mean that His knowledge and power have the same characteristics which are found in the knowledge and power of creatures. Similarly, when we say that He is established on the Throne it does not mean that His establishment on the Throne has the same characteristics that

are found in the establishment of one object on another object. There is no rule of reason, or no statement in authentic traditions, which may go against this view of the Elders. But this is not the place to go into details and examine the objections raised against it. If you have any objections and really want an answer, it should not be difficult to find.

Those who go against the Qur'ān, the Sunnah and the Elders of the *ummah*, and interpret figuratively God's names and attributes, are in a fix; the people who deny the Beatific Vision, for example, claim that reason rules it out and hence they are forced to interpret it figuratively. Similarly, those who deny knowledge or power to God or that His speech is uncreated claim that they are opposed to reason, and that they cannot help interpreting them. Even those who deny the resurrection of the body, or eating and drinking in Paradise make similar claims; and similar reason is also offered by those who deny God's establishment on the Throne, and resort to its interpretation.

To refute all these claims, it is sufficient to point out that these people have no criterion to say what is and what is not contrary to reason. What one claims that reason allows or even deems necessary, the other claims to be contrary to reason. One wonders by which reason should one judge the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. May God be pleased with Imām Mālik for what he said: "Should we discard what Gabriel brought to Muḥammad whenever anyone more versed in argumentation than another comes forward and puts up a claim.

All these claims can be refuted on various grounds. First, we may show that reason does not hold these things to be impossible; second, the texts regarding them do not admit interpretation; third, it is definitely known that the Prophet has taught these things just as it is known that he has taught the five daily prayers, and the fasting during the month of Ramaḍān. Hence, any interpretation that seeks to change the meaning of these things would not be better than the interpretation which the Karmathians and

Bāṭinīyyah give to *ḥajj*, *ṣalāh* and fasting, and many other things which prophethood has taught. Fourth, we may show that reason, clear and indubitable, agrees in principle with what the texts say, although they may have details which it cannot comprehend, and so on and so forth. Even the best minds among these people admit that reason cannot attain certitude in most theological issues.

If this is the case, we must turn to prophethood and submit to what it teaches in these matters. Every Muslim knows that God sent Muḥammad with guidance and the true religion so that he might make it prevail over all religions - and enough is God for a witness - and that the Prophet explained to the people whatever he taught about faith in God and the Last Day which involves faith in the beginning and the end of the world, in creation and resurrection... God has indeed explained through His Prophet all that He has told people regarding faith in Him and the Last Day, which makes what He wants very clear.

Every Muslim also knows that the Prophet knew these matters better than anyone else, that he was more eager than anyone to convey to the *ummah* what he knew, and that he was also more competent than anyone to express his ideas in clear and forceful language. To be sure, he was the most knowledgeable of all created beings in these matters, the best interpreter of these truths, and the greatest well-wisher of the people. He combined in him the best of all knowledge, power and will... His Companions, and their successors who later followed their line, are on the right path. But those who deviated from that path are in the wrong. They are of three types: *ahl at-takhyīl*, *ahl at-ta'wīl* and *ahl at-tajhīl*, that is, the exponents of the theories of imagination, interpretation, or ignorance.

The first group, who expound the theory of imagination, comprise philosophers and theologians, Ṣūfīs and jurists who follow their line. They say that whatever the Prophet has said regarding faith in God and the Last Day is nothing but imaginary pictures of realities which common people find useful. He has

neither told them the truth nor conveyed the reality. These people are further divided into two sections, One section says that the Prophet himself was not aware of the truth; only the philosophers of metaphysics or some persons whom they call saints (*awliyā'*) know them. They believe that some philosophers and saints know God and the Hereafter more than the prophets. This is the belief of the heretics among, the philosophers and the Bāṭinīyyah, whether Shi'īs or Ṣūfīs. The other section says that the Prophet knew the truth as it is, but he did not state it clearly; rather, he said what was opposed to truth and asked people to believe in it. This was because the well-being of the common man is associated with beliefs that do not correspond to reality. These people say that a prophet must preach to the people faith in anthropomorphic ideas even though they are wrong and tell them that people in Paradise will eat and drink even though it is incorrect. There is no way to tell the truth to the people except this way which preaches untruth; on it rests their well-being. This is what these people hold about the scriptural texts on faith in God and the life hereafter. (So much about beliefs.) As for deeds, some say similar things about them; that is, the Prophet meant those deeds only for a section of people, not everyone, only for the laity, not the elite. This is the view of the Bāṭinīyyah, who are heretics, Ismā'īlīs and others.

The second group that believes in interpretation says that the Prophet never meant that people should have wrong beliefs. He himself had correct beliefs, but he did not explain them, nor did he suggest them to people. He believed that if they pondered things they would find out the truth by themselves, and if they interpreted the texts they would discover their real meaning and intent. He wanted to test them and see if they would go beyond the apparent meaning of his words and find out the truth that lies behind them. This is the view of the *mutakalimūn*, the Jahmīyyah, the Mu'tazilah and all those who advocate figurative interpretation....

The third group consists of those who expound the theory of ignorance. Among them there are many who claim to follow the

Sunnah and the Elders. They say that the Prophet himself did not know the meaning of the verses revealed concerning divine attributes, nor did Gabriel or anyone else among the earliest Muslims. The same is true, they say, about the *aḥādīth* on attributes. No one knows their real meaning except God. The Prophet himself did not know their meaning, even though he was their author; he uttered them without understanding them.

These people think that what they say follows from the verse, “No one knows their real meaning (*ta’wīl*) except Allah” (3:7), for, as the majority of the Elders say, the period after to this verse is just after the word Allah. This is correct; however, their mistake lies in their failure to distinguish between the *ma’nā wa al-tafsīr*, the meaning and exegesis of a verse, and its interpretation, which God alone knows. They think that the *ta’wīl* in the Qur’ān means same as it means in the language of later writers; this is not correct. *Ta’wīl* has been used in three different senses.

In the language of later writers, *ta’wīl* is to move from the more obvious meaning of a word to a less obvious meaning for some reason associated with the word. This means that what the word apparently conveys would not be, according to their terminology, the *ta’wīl* of the word. They think that *ta’wīl* in the verse referred to above has been used in the sense they understand the word, and that the *ta’wīl* of a text may be opposed to what its words apparently convey, and which is known only to God and no one else.

Ta’wīl is next used in the sense of *tafsīr*, the explanation of a passage whether or not that explanation agrees with the apparent language of the passage. This is the sense which *ta’wīl* has in the terminology of the majority of commentators on the Qur’ān and other writers. The *ta’wīl* of a verse in this sense is known to those who are well-grounded in knowledge. This exegesis is supported by that reading of the verse which puts the stop after (*ar-rāsikhūn fī al-‘ilm*), according to which the verse runs like this: “No one

knows its real meaning (*ta'wīl*) except God and the perfect in knowledge (*ar-rāsikhūn fi al-'ilm*).” This reading has been reported from Ibn ‘Abbās, Mujāhid, Muḥammad Ibn Ijmā’ Ibn Az-Zubayr,¹¹³ Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq,¹¹⁴ Ibn Qutaybah,^{114a} and others. To me, this and the other reading are both correct, each with its own sense, as we have discussed in detail elsewhere. Both readings have been reported from Ibn ‘Abbās, and both are correct.

Finally, *ta'wīl* has also been used in the sense of the reality (*ḥaqīqah*) to which the word turns or leads (*ya'ulū*), whether or not it agrees with them. Thus the *ta'wīl* of the words with which God has described the eating, drinking, and clothing of the people in Paradise, or their living with their spouses, or their resurrection and accounting are the realizations of those realities themselves, rather than their ideas in the mind or their expression in words. This is *ta'wīl* in the language of the Qur’ān, for example; it puts what Joseph said to Jacob in this way, “Father, this is the *ta'wīl* of my dream I had before my Lord made it real” (12:100). At another place the Qur’ān says, “Are they waiting for its *ta'wīl*? When its *ta'wīl* comes those who disregarded it before will say, ‘The messengers of our Lord did indeed bring true (tidings)’” (7:53). This is the *ta'wīl* which no one knows except God.

The *ta'wīl* of divine attributes is that truth about them which God alone knows. It is the truth about their nature, which is unknown to us. Mālik Ibn Anas said about *istawā*, “*Istawā* is known but its nature (*kayfīyyah*) is unknown.” *Istawā* is known in the sense that its meaning is known, that it may be explained (*yufassar*) and translated into another language. This is the *ta'wīl* of *istawā* which the perfect in knowledge know. However, the *ta'wīl* of *istawā* in the sense of the truth about its modality is known only to God.

‘Abdur-Razzāq¹¹⁵ and others have quoted in their commentaries these words of Ibn ‘Abbās: The *tafsīr* (exegesis) of the Qur’ān has four levels: first, that which an Arab can know in

light of his language; second, that which no one can be forgiven for not being aware of; third, that which only the learned can know; and fourth, that which no one knows except God.” Whoever claims to know this last *tafsīr* is a liar, and this is the knowledge which has been denied to human beings in the verse, “No one knows what things pleasing to their eyes have been hidden from them, in reward for what they had been doing” (32:17). The Prophet has reported from God, “I have prepared for my pious servants what no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, and no mind has ever imagined.”¹¹⁶ What is true of the blessings of Paradise is true of resurrection and judgment (*sā’ah*), and other similar things. This is the *ta’wīl* which God alone knows, even though we do know the meaning of the word which He has communicated to us. He has Himself said, “Do they not reflect on the Qur’ān: Are there locks on their hearts?” (47:24), or “Did they not think over the words?” (23:28). God has thus asked us to reflect on the Qur’ān, the whole of the Qur’ān and not only a part, and to understand it.

We have warned in these pages against the principles on which people have based their wrong doctrines about the matters of knowledge and faith which the Prophet taught. Those who say that the Prophet did not know the meaning of the Qur’ān which was revealed to him nor did Gabriel, attribute to him ignorance of revealed truths. They are virtually saying that the Qur’ān offers no guidance, nor does it reveal any truths. These people also deny any role for reason in such matters. In fact, they deny that there is any knowledge of God with the Prophet or with his *ummah*, be it rational or revealed. In more than one respect they have aligned themselves with heretics; they are certainly wrong in attributing ignorance to the Prophet and to the Elders of the *ummah*. Equally wrong are those who change the meaning of the text and misinterpret them.

[*Fatāwā* 5:26-38

(2.6) Objections against affirming attributes of God and their refutation.

First objection: If attributes were to make God perfect, He would be perfect by means of something other than Himself, which would mean that He is imperfect in Himself. The answer to this objection:

Philosophers and other thinkers who have a wrong idea of God say that if God's attributes were to make Him perfect, He would be perfect by means of something other than Himself, which would mean that He is imperfect in Himself. As they imply imperfection on God's part, they claim, He cannot be said to have them.

Answering this objection we would say, as we have pointed out before, that there is a particular perfection only when it exists and exists without any defects. If this is true the objection that God would be imperfect would be correct only when it is meant that He would be imperfect without these attributes. It is just to avoid this conclusion that we have said that He must have attributes of perfection otherwise He would be imperfect.

But if it is meant that God becomes perfect through the attributes he takes up and is not perfect in His essence divested of those attributes we would say that this objection would hold only if we allow that an essence devoid of all attributes can exist out there, or that there can be a being out there perfect in himself but devoid of all attributes. But if any one of these possibilities is ruled out, He cannot be perfect without attributes. What, then, when both possibilities are ruled out? There is no perfect being in existence without attributes. We know of necessity that a being which is not living, knowing, powerful, hearing, seeing or speaking is not more perfect than one who is living, knowing, powerful, hearing, seeing and speaking.

It is evident to our reason that a being devoid of these attributes is certainly not equal to a being qualified with them, not to say

more perfect than it. Our reason clearly pronounces that a being qualified with these attributes is more perfect. We know by necessity that perfection without attributes is inconceivable.

Again, the statement that God would then be perfect by something other than Himself is not correct, for we do not say that God's attributes are other than He. This is what leading Elders like Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbāl have said. It is also maintained by everyone who affirms God's attributes, such as Ibn Al-Kullāb and others. Some of them have put it in these words: "We do not say that they are not He, or that they are not other than He, nor do we combine the two negatives and say that they are neither one with Him nor other than He." This the way a group of people including Al-Ash'arī have put the matter. I believe that Abū Al-Ḥasan At-Tamīmī¹¹⁷ has also said it, or something very similar to it. Others, like Qāḍī Abū Bakr¹¹⁸ and Qāḍī Abū Ya'lā, allow the use of either negative separately.

The reason we have these different formulations is that the word *ghayr* ('other') is ambiguous. It may mean something different from a thing, or what is not identical with it. When words are used without clarification they may give rise to various misconceptions. To turn to the issue, we would ask if the statement, "God would become perfect through something other Him" means that God would be perfect through something which is different and separate from Him, or does it mean that He would be perfect through an attribute which is part of His essence. If the first meaning is intended, it is certainly ruled out. But if the second is meant it is true, for you cannot have the Essence of God without having an attribute which is part of it. And this would mean perfection not through something different but through oneself.

Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbāl and other leading affirmers of divine attributes like Ibn Al-Kullāb and others have said that when one says: "Praise be to Allah," or "I invoke Allah and worship Him," or "by Allah," the term Allah means His Essence qualified with

His attributes, which are not addition to the Being, named by His beautiful names.

If you ask: are His attributes over and above His Essence? I would say: If you mean by Essence the Essence divested of attributes which the negators of attributes posit, then the attributes are over and above Essence. But if you mean by Essence the Essence that exists out there, it does not exist except with necessary attributes, and then the attributes are not over and above the Essence qualified with them, even though they are over and above it when divested of them in thought.

[*Fatāwā* 6:95-97]

(2.7) The Second Objection:

If God had attributes which have an existence, He would have to depend upon them, and dependence is a defect. Answer to this objection:

It is objected that if God had attributes which have an existence, He would have to depend upon them, and they would depend upon Him and this would imply God's dependence on something other than Himself. This objection assumes first the possibility of a substance wherein attributes exist, and second of an essence that may not have any attributes. If either of the two possibilities is rejected the objection will not stand. What if both of them are rejected? An essence devoid of all attributes is only a mental concept; it does not exist out there, just as being as such does not exist out there.

The word *dhāt* is the feminine of *dhū*, which is not used except in a construct. People say "X is *dhū* 'ilm wa qudrah," that is, X has knowledge and power; or they say, "*Nafs dhāt* 'ilm wa qudrah," that is, a soul having knowledge and power. Whenever *dhū* or *dhāt* is used in the Qur'ān or in the language of the Arabs, it is used in a construct, for example, "Fear Allah and set right *dhāt baynakum*"

(8:1), that is, set right the relations between yourselves, or ‘God is aware of *dhāt as-sadūr*’ (5:7), things of the heart; or the word of Khubayb (raa), “This is *fi dhāt al-ilāh*” that is, for the sake of God.

But when people started talking about it, they first said, “*dhāt ‘ilm wa qudrah*,” that is, one having knowledge and power. Later on, they detached it from the construct and made it definite, *adh-dhāt*, by adding to it the definite article. It is a new-fangled word, not found in the language of the ancient Arabs. That is why scholars like Abū Al-Faḥ Ibn Barhān,¹¹⁹ Ibn Ad-Dahhān¹²⁰ and others have said that it is not an Arabic word, although others like Qāḍī,¹²¹ Ibn ‘Aqīl^{121a} and others, have defended its Arabic origin.

The truth is that the word is not found in classical Arabic and is newly coined, as many other words such as *al-mawjūd*, the existent; *al-māḥīyyah*, the essence; *al-kayfiyyah*, nature or modality. The word involves the existence of an attribute to which it is ascribed. We say *dhāt ‘ilm*, *dhāt qudrah*, *dhāt kalām*, that is, one having knowledge or having power, or one that speaks. There cannot be a thing which exists out there unqualified by any attributes at all. To imagine such a thing is like imagining an accident existing by itself and not by any object. An accident that exists by itself or an attribute that exists by itself, are impossible. Every object must have some attributes, and every attribute must have some object existing in itself of which it is predicated.

That is why even the opponents admit that they do not know of any object existing in itself which does not have attributes, whether they call it a substance (*jawhar*) or a body (*jism*) or any other name. They admit that the existence of a substance without any attributes is impossible. Hence, if you imagine something that does not have any attributes, you are imagining something which is not known to exist out there or which cannot possibly exist out there. Why then about something which we definitely know is impossible to exist there outside the mind? Like those who deny the existence of divine attributes, the upshot of all that they say is that God does not exist out there and exists only in mind. We can have an idea of

them in mind as we can have ideas of things which are impossible, which neither exist nor can be imagined to exist out there.

Again, if it is possible for God to have attributes, and what is possible for Him is in fact necessary to Him, it means that He cannot be without the attributes of perfection. Hence, to think of Him as an essence without attributes that are essential and necessary to Him is to think of an impossibility. Now, when this idea is ruled out in general and in particular, the objection that God would be dependent on the attributes and they would be dependent on Him can only be raised against those things which may be thought to exist without the existence of the other. Since this is impossible, the objection does not hold.

We may also ask what you mean by dependence? Do you want to say that the divine Essence brings into being the attributes or originates them or vice-versa? Or do you mean that they necessarily imply each other, that is one cannot exist without the other? If you mean the first, i.e. the dependence of an object on its agent, it is ruled out; "God does not bring His attributes into being which are essential to Him, nor is He their agent or doer. To be sure, no act which He does, and no object which His action brings into being is necessary to Him. But His attributes are not the things He does, nor the objects He brings into being; they are part of His essence and necessary to Him.

If you have the second meaning in mind, that is, the mutual implication between God's essence and His attributes is correct, it is like saying that there is nothing that exists by itself which is not also eternal or necessary in itself, or that there is no one knowing and powerful who is not living. Now, if His attributes are necessary to His essence, it will make Him more perfect than when they are not necessary to Him and exists without the attributes of perfection, perfection not being necessary for Him, but only possible, and in that case He would be needing someone else to bring it into being, which would be a defect. Hence, this must be ruled out. It follows, then, that the mutual implication between the

Essence and the attributes of perfection is the consummation of divine perfection.

[*Fatāwā* 6:98-101]

(2.8) The Third Objection.

Attributes are accidents which exist only in a composite body, and a composite being is contingent and dependent. This would imply a defect on the part of God. Refutation of the objection:

It has been said that attributes are accidents, that accidents only exist in a composite body, that whatever is composite is contingent and dependent, hence to affirm attributes is to impute defects to God.

People who affirm the existence of divine attributes have taken three positions on the issue whether the term accident (*'arḍ*) can be applied to divine attributes. Some deny that they are accidents; they say that they are attributes, not accidents. This is the view of Al-Ash'arī, and of many scholars of *fiqh* from among the followers of Aḥmad and other masters. Others, like Hishām¹²² and Ibn Karrām,¹²³ call them accidents. A third group neither denies nor affirms that they are accidents; they pursue the same line as they have done in the case of words like “other” (*ghayr*) or “body”...

People have similarly differed regarding the term body (*jism*). In Arabic, *jism* sometimes means *badan* or *jasad* the body of a living being as many scholars of language as Al-Aṣma'ī,¹²⁴ Abū Zayd,¹²⁵ and others have mentioned. From among the theologians, some mean by that term a composite being, and apply it to atoms in combinations of two, four, six, eight, sixteen or thirty-two, or to a composite of matter and form; others apply it to anything that exists or that exists in itself. Both these groups use the term for particular beings as well as for general things.

Since the term means many things, some of which are correct and others incorrect, it is ambiguous. In such cases we have to

determine the meaning before we can pursue the discussion. We must ask: What do you mean when you say that the attributes are accidents? Do you mean to say that they exist in something, or that they are attributes of something, or the like? Which answer is correct? Or do you mean to say that they are flaws or defects? Or do you mean to say that they appear and disappear and never survive for two moments? If you mean the first, it is correct; if you mean the second, it is ruled out; and if you mean the third, the answer may vary. One who says that accidents do not persist for a second moment while he believes that attributes persist will not call them accidents. But one who says that accidents persist for a second moment does not desist from calling them accidents.

One may say that an accident does not exist except in a body. We say: You believe, on the one hand, that God is living, knowing and powerful, and on the other, that these names apply only to a body, just as those attributes which you call accidents apply to none but a body. Now the plea that you offer for justifying the application of the names can be offered by the affirmers of attributes for attributes themselves. We further ask: What do you mean by saying that these attributes are accidents and that they exist only in a (composite) body? Do you mean by a composite body something which is first divided into parts and then assembles itself, or is assembled by someone, or which is divisible and breakable into parts one part from the other; or which is formed of indivisible atoms; or which consists of matter and form; or which is something that can be pointed to; or which exists in itself; or which is simply existing? If you mean the first, we would not accept that divine attributes, which you call accidents, do not exist except in a body as you understand the term. But if you mean the second, we will not accept that it follows thereby that He is a composite being, for God exists in Himself, and He can be pointed to, in our opinion. Hence we cannot accept this charge.

To those who understand the composite in the senses noted above, such as assembling oneself after being divided, or being

assembled by someone, or being divisible, we say that we do not accept the first premise of the argument, namely that God is a composite being in these senses. But if you mean by the composite that which can be pointed to, or that which exists in itself and is qualified with attributes, we do not accept the second premise (that whatever is composite is contingent or imperfect). You may see now that when the objection is analyzed, one of the premises or both are refuted, and when one of the premises is refuted the whole argument falls apart.

[*Fatāwā* 6:102-104]

(2.9) Knowledge

God's Knowledge of things to come: discussion of various views on the subject.

On the question of God's knowledge of things to come in the future, thinkers who call themselves Muslims are divided into three groups. The first group believes that God knows things to come with an eternal knowledge which is part of His essence. When they come into existence, He does not acquire a new quality or property; there only arises a new relation between His knowledge and the objects. This is the view of a section of scholars who affirm divine attributes: the Kullābīs, the Ash'arīs, and a number of jurists, Şūfīs, and *ahl al-ḥadīth* belonging to the various schools of Aḥmad, Mālik, Ash-Shāfi'ī and Abū Ḥanīfah. It is also the view of a section of the Mu'tazilah and other attribute negators. They, however, state the point a little differently. They say that God knows the things to come, but (when they come into existence) a new relation emerges between the Knower and the objects rather than between His knowledge and the objects. Earlier thinkers debated the issue whether God's knowledge is single or multiple. Al-Ash'arī and most of his followers, as well as Qāḍī Abū Ya'lā

and his followers, and many others hold the first view, whereas Abū Sahl Al- Sa'lukī¹²⁶ holds the second.

The second group of thinkers believes that God does not know things except after they have come into existence. This is the upshot of the view which the Qadarīyyah hold regarding human acts. They say that God does not know of human acts except after they have taken place and that they are not fore-ordained. Happiness or misery in the Hereafter is not something which is pre-determined. These people are the extremists among the Qadarīyyah; they appeared at the time of Ibn 'Umar,¹²⁷ who openly disapproved of their view. Different imāms like Ash-Shāfi'ī and Aḥmad have also issued statements declaring that they are infidels.

The Qadarīyyah in general deny God's foreknowledge and pre-ordainment of human acts which have been commanded or forbidden, and of things contingent upon them, namely happiness or suffering in the Hereafter. Some of them only deny the fore-knowledge of human acts; as for other things, they say that God does ordain them and know them in advance. They say they have to exclude human acts because God's knowledge of them in advance conflicts with His command to do some things and avoid others. This situation, they point out, does not arise with regard to things that are not commanded or forbidden. Others, however, do not make any exception; they say that God knows nothing at all in advance. It is reported that this view was held by 'Āmr Ibn 'Ubayd¹²⁸ and some others; however, another report says that 'Āmr recanted from it later.

The third view is that God knows things before they exist and knows them again with different knowledge when they come into existence. Theologians like Abū Al-Ma'ālī¹²⁹ have noted that Jahm held this view. He believed, they say, in a kind of multiple successive knowledge on God's part. God, he said, knows Himself; in eternity, too, He knew Himself and knew everything else which will come into existence in the future; and when He created the world and the objects of knowledge came into existence, He

produced in Himself different knowledges by which He knew those new, objects. He further said that He has one knowledge after another just as objects happen one after another, knowledge always preceding its object. He has also been reported to have said that these knowledges have no locus, just as the Mu'tazilī thinkers of Baṣrah said that God's will has no locus.

In support of this view Jahm has quoted the words of the Qur'ān *li ya'lma* (3:166), 'that He may know'. But there is nothing in this phrase to support his view, for while he maintains that God's knowledge precedes the object, the words of the Qur'ān which he has quoted tells that it follows the object. They are therefore completely different things. He has also looked for support in the *ḥadīth* which tells the story of a leper, a bald-headed man and a blind man. The *ḥadīth* contains the words, "It came to God (*bada li Allah*) that He should try them."¹³⁰ But this coming to God is not opposed to His eternal knowledge as some extremist among the Rawāfiḍ think.

Abū Al-Ḥusayn Al-Baṣrī,¹³¹ too, is of the opinion that God's knowledge multiplies itself in His essence as its objects go on coming into existence. Abū Al-Barakāt,¹³² the author of *al-mu'tabar* and a leading philosopher, also subscribes to the idea of successive knowledge and will on the part of God. God's divinity, he says, cannot be saved except on this view. Abū 'Abdullah Ar-Rāzī also inclines towards it in his *Al-Maṭālib al-'Alīyyah*¹³³ and other works.

As for hearing, seeing and speech, Al-Ḥārith Al-Muhasibī¹³⁴ says that the Ahl as-Sunnah have different opinions on the question whether they are renewed whenever their objects, heard or seen, come into existence. The view that whenever things come into existence God sees and hears them with His eternal attribute of seeing and hearing is held by Ibn Kullāb and his followers, as well as Al-Ash'arī. The second view, which maintains the eternity of the attribute of knowledge along with the renewal of the acts of

knowing, is held by many groups of thinkers including the Karrāmīs. The third view, which affirms knowledge of things on the part of God before and after their existence is held by the Salīmīyyah such as Abū Al-Ḥasan Ibn Salīm¹³⁵ and Abū Ṭālib Al-Makkī.¹³⁶ All these three views have been attributed to the *a'immah* of the Ahl as-Sunnah, like Imām Aḥmad. There are among his followers those who hold the first view, and those who hold the second view, and the Salīmīyyah also count themselves among, his followers.

Like knowledge, concerning will, too, there are three views among those who affirm the attributes. One is that it cannot be anything other than eternal. This is the view of Ibn Kullāb and Al-Ash'arī and their followers. The second is just the opposite, that it cannot be anything other than contingent. This is the view of the Mu'tazilah. However, a section of them says that the locus of God's will is something other than His Self, because He cannot be the locus of contingent events; on the other hand, another section, the Baṣṛīs, say that it exists in God Himself just as speech exists in Him. The third view is that God's will is eternal as well as contingent; this is held by different groups of people such as the Karrāmīs, the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, Ṣūfīs and others. These people hold a similar view with regard to God's speech. They say that God has been qualified with speech in eternity, but He also speaks whenever He wills. This has been clearly stated by many leaders of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* such as Imām Aḥmad and others. However, their followers in later times differed as to what this statement exactly means. Some said that it is the power of speech which is eternal; the Karrāmīs took this position. Others said that the two parts of the statement contradict each other; this is attributed by Abū Bakr 'Abdul-'Azīz¹³⁷ and Abdullah Ibn Ḥamīd¹³⁸ to some followers of Aḥmad.

So far as God's knowledge and fore-ordainment of things or events before their coming into existence is concerned, there are

innumerable statements in the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* as well as in the traditions (of the *Salaf*) that their coming into being has been known to Him in advance. He knows what has happened, what will happen, and how something which has not happened will happen when it happens. God has also told us about it. This point has only been disputed by some extremists from among the Qadarīyyah and others. As for the things to come, the following verses may be cited: “And We appointed the *qiblah* which you were used to only to know those who followed the Messenger from those who would turn on their heels” (2:143); “Do you think that you would enter Heaven without God knowing those of you who fought hard (in His cause) and without knowing who remained steadfast?” (3:142); “Do you think that you shall be left, as though God has not known those among you who strive with might and main, and take none for friends and protectors except Him and His Messenger and (the community of) Believers? And God is well-acquainted with (all) that you do” (9:16); “God will certainly know those who are true from those who are false” (29:3); “God will certainly know those who believe, and as certainly those who are hypocrites” (29:11); and “We shall try you until We know those among you who strive their utmost and persevere in patience; and We shall try your reported (mettle) (47:31).”

[*Jāmi‘ ar-Rasā’il* 1:177-183]

(2.10) Power

God has power over everything. He had that power in eternity and continues to have it ever since. He can do by His free will whatever He likes. Everything is in His control, that which is destined and will happen, that which exists at present, that which is done by men, and that which He will Himself do, whether His action causes something else, such as creation or provision, or whether it concerns Him alone, such as His ascent or descent.

What is impossible in itself is not some "thing"; hence there is no sense in putting it in His control.

There are many questions regarding God's power. First, He has stated that "He has power over everything" (2:109,148, 259, 284, etc.). What does that mean? There are three views on the subject. Some say that since the statement is general it includes those things also which are impossible in themselves, as for example, the co-existence of contraries. A group of people, of which Ibn Ḥazm¹³⁹ is one, believes that such things are also within God's power. Another group says that though the statement is general it is in a sense qualified; the impossible in itself is to be excluded from it, for even though it is some "thing" it can not be placed under His power. Ibn 'Aṭīyyah¹⁴⁰ and others belong to this group. However, bothse views are wrong. Only the third view, which is the view of most of the thinkers, is right. It says that the impossible in itself is not a thing at all. Whether or not the non-being is a thing, the impossible in itself is not a thing; it cannot exist out there, nor can one imagine it to be existing out there. One has only to think of the co-existence of contraries in the mind and declare that it is impossible to exist out there...

The second question is with regard to non-being. People generally believe that non-being is not a thing and this is right. Some, however, say that a thing is that which exists. In this view, God would not have power except over things which exist, and what He has not created would not be within His power. This is the view of some mistaken people. They say that God cannot have power except over what He wills, and what He does not will is not in His power...

The truth is that the word "thing" (*shayy*) is applied by people both to what exists out there and what is thought of in the mind. Hence what God thinks of and knows will exist is a thing in thought, knowledge and writing, even though it may not be a thing out there. This is supported by the verse, "Verily, when He intends

a thing (*shayy*) His command is ‘Be,’ and it comes into being” (36:82). The word (*shayy*) in the verse refers to both kinds of things; therefore, God has power over everything, that which exists as well as that which the mind may think of as existing if it thinks of its existence. Nothing can be excluded from it, nor included in it....

The third question is whether the statement that God has power over every thing covers also what human beings do and what they do not do. The Mu‘tazilah in general believe that human actions do not come under God’s power. The fourth question is whether the statement extends to God’s own actions. The answer is that it does; it extends to both human and divine actions. There are many verses in the Qur’ān to this effect, for example, “Is not the One Who created the heavens and the earth able to create people like them?” (36:81); “Does He not have power to give life to the dead? (75:40); “We do have power to put together in perfect order the very tips of his finger” (75:4), and so on. As for power over existing things, it has been mentioned in such verses as, “We have created man” (76:9, 90:4, etc.), and “Does he think that none has power over him?” (90:5). ... A *ḥadīth* says that once Ibn Mas‘ūd¹⁴¹ was beating his servant. The Prophet, who happened to see it, said, “God has greater power over you than you have over this man.”¹⁴² This *ḥadīth* underlines three things: one, God has power over the being of man; two, He has more power over man than man has over any of his servants; and three, man also has some power...

The fifth question: The power of God is power to act, and acts are of two kinds: One which has a separate object, and one which does not have. Both kinds have been mentioned in the verse, (He is the One Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and then ascended the Throne” (57:4). Ascent, descent, coming and other acts of the kind are intransitive; they do not have an object; they happen to the subject himself. On the other hand, creation, provision, causing death, giving life, bestowing favor or holding it

back, guiding, supporting, revealing and other such acts require an object

The sixth question is related to the eternal nature of God's power. He has power from eternity, and shall have it for ever and ever. He has power and shall continue to have power over every thing that He likes out of His free will.

He is speaking from eternity, whenever He wills and as He wills. This is the view of the Elders, and the *a'immah* such as Ibn Mubārak¹⁴³ and Aḥmad.

[*Fatāwā* 8:8-30]

(2.11) Will

God's will is of two kinds. One is religious and prescriptive, implying His love and approval. The other creative and determinative, comprehending both good and evil, right and wrong. Whatever evil we have in existence is willed by the creative will of God, is part of His creative words, and is inviolable by anyone, virtuous or wicked. It is not willed by His religious will, nor is it consistent with His religious words. He neither approves of them nor commands them.

The fact is that God's will, as His Book mentions, is of two kinds, one religious and prescriptive, the other creative and determinative. The first has been mentioned in such verses as, "God wills every facility for you; He does not will difficulties for you" (2:185); "He wills to purify you" (5:6); "God wills to make clear to you and to show you the ordinances of those before you, and to turn to you (in mercy), and God is All-knowing and All-wise. God does will to turn to you (in mercy)" (4:26-7). In all these verses "will" implies God's love and approval; it is His religious will. The same will is implied in the verse, "I have only created jinns and men that they may serve Me" (51:-56).

The creative-determinative will is referred to in this verse: “Those whom God wills to guide He opens their breast to Islam; those whom He wills to leave astray He makes their breast close and constricted as if they had to climb up to the skies” (6:125). When Muslims say, “What God wills happens, and what He does not will does not happen,” they mean the creative will of God. Every particle of the universe is the object of His will (*irādah*, *mashī’ah*), and there is nothing there which is not its object, be it good or evil, right or wrong. This will comprehends what is not comprehended by the prescriptive will. The religious will, on the other hand, corresponds to the prescriptive commands, without there being any difference between them.

The distinction which has been made in the connotation of will (*irādah*) is also true in the case of many other words such as command (*amr*), word (*kalimah*), order (*ḥukm*), decree (*qaḍā*), writing (*kitāb*), raising (*ba’tḥ*), sending (*irsāl*) and so forth. All these words have a creative, determinative sense as well as a religious, prescriptive sense. Creative words are not violable by anyone, be he virtuous or wicked. It is these words which the Prophet invoked for God’s help. “I seek,” he said, “the protection of God’s words, which are bound to happen and which none can violate, neither the virtuous nor the wicked.”¹⁴⁴ And it is this word which God means when He says, “When He wills something He says to it: ‘Be,’ and it comes into being” (36:82). As for religious words, they are from the books that God has revealed. It is this word which the Prophet means when he says, “Whoever fights in order that the word of God may triumph fights for the sake of God,”¹⁴⁵ and which God means when He says, “(Mary) obeyed the words of Her Lord and His books” (66:12).

Amr in the religious sense is used in the verse, “God commands (*ya’muru*) you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due” (4:58). It is used in the creative sense, in this verse: “Verily, when He wills a thing, His command is, ‘Be’, and it is” (36:82). *Ba’tḥ* in the religious sense is used in the verse, “It is He Who has

sent (*ba'th*) amongst the unlettered a messenger from among them to rehearse to them His verses" (62:2). *Ba'th* is used in the creative sense in the verse, "We sent against you Our servants given to terrible warfare" (17:5). Similarly, *irsāl* in the religious sense is used in the verse, "It is He Who has sent (*arsala*) His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth" (9:33, 48:28, 61:9), and in the creative sense, in the verse, "Do you not see that We have sent (*arsalnā*) the evil ones against the unbelievers to incite them with fury?" (19:83) For a detailed discussion on the subject see our other writings.

Whatever evil there is in the universe is willed by God through His creative will and is the object of His creative word, which is not frustrated by anyone, virtuous or wicked. It is not willed by the religious will of God, nor is it meant by His religious word. He does not will faithlessness from His people, nor does He command them to do any evil. They are certainly disliked by Him; however, they are disliked in a sense different from the sense in which the pain that a Believer suffers at his death is disliked by Him. He dislikes to cause pain to the Believer, yet He wills it since He has decided to take his life, a decision which cannot be avoided, although, this will of His that His servant should die is good for His faithful servant and an act of mercy for him. The Prophet has said in an authentic *ḥadīth* that God does not decree anything for a faithful servant which is not good for him. If it is prosperity and he is thankful to the Lord it brings good to him, but if it is adversity and he bears it patiently, it also brings good to him"¹⁴⁶

As for evil acts, surely God dislikes and hates them. They can only lead to evil consequences, except one repents for them, in which case one may receive God's forgiveness and mercy. Since there is no repentance without a sin, there have been two answers why a sin is decreed for a faithful servant. The first answer is that the *ḥadīth* mentioned above does not refer to evil in the sense of sin, but rather to evil in the sense of a calamity that befalls a person. The second answer is that when one repents of a sin the

mercy which his repentance brings is better for him. Repentance is something good and is very much liked by God. He is very happy when a servant repents of his sin and turns to Him. However, sinful acts of which one does not repent are certainly evil for him. God has decreed everything and ordained it, and there is a higher wisdom in all, as He has said, “He has made everything that He has created most perfect” (32:7). There is, therefore, nothing that He has created which does not have a wise purpose behind it.

[*Fatāwā* 18:132-135]

(2.12) Compliance with both wills of God.

God’s religious will is connected with His ilāhīyyah, divinity, and His creative will is connected with His rubūbīyyah, lordship. So if one heeds only His religious will and not His creative will, he certainly observes His commands and will meet a good end, but he may not have God’s help and protection since he has not attended to His rubūbīyyah. On the other hand, one who minds only the creative will of God may achieve something in this world since he seeks God’s help, but he will get nothing in the Hereafter because he has not served God sincerely.

The Elders, the leading *fuqahā’*, and Muslims in general affirm both creation and rule of God. They affirm that His creative-determinative (*al-khalqīyyah al-qadrīyyah*) will comprehends everything that happens and that His directive-prescriptive (*al-amrīyyah ash-shar’īyyah*) will comprehends all that He loves and approves of for His servants. It consists of all that the prophets have commanded, all that can benefit mankind, guarantee their well-being, secure happiness in the next world, and save them from suffering. This directive-prescriptive will is connected with His *ilāhīyyah*, divinity, which implies His *rubūbīyyah*, lordship, as the creative-determinative will is connected with His *rubūbīyyah*. This is why one who attends to the latter and submits to it and ignores

the former, the directive-prescriptive will, may have a start but will never reach the end; he is bound to be lost. He may achieve something of the world as he will be invoking God's help in view of his perception of God's rule over the world - *rubūbiyyah*, but he will not get anything in the next world, as he does not serve God sincerely. Different groups of *Ṣūfīs* and theologians have fallen into this trap.

On the other hand, whoever is only concerned with God's commands and directions, unmindful of His creative-determinative will, observes the religion and may have a good end, but he soon begins to lose heart and feels forsaken, since he loses sight of the fact that God controls everything and he is completely dependent on Him. Had he been conscious of this fact, he would have put his faith and trust in God and realized that no one has any power other than He. He tries to serve God, but does not seek His help as he should. This is the condition of the *Qadarīyyah* from among the *Mu'tazilah* and others, who say that God is not the Creator of human acts, nor is the universe the product of His will. That is why *Abū Sulaymān Ad-Daranī*¹⁴⁷ said, "The *Qadarīyyah* boast of their actions because they fail to see that it is God Who creates their acts. The *Ahl as-Sunnah* do not suffer from this self-conceit, since they believe that God is the Creator of their acts and that they have to be thankful to Him for it."

The other group seeks God's help, begs for His favor, puts trust in Him, denies that they have any power, and affirms that all power is with God. They, however, do not strive to serve God by carrying out what He has commanded and by shunning what He has forbidden through His prophets. They do not see that God loves to be worshiped and obeyed, that He is pleased when a sinner repents, and that He loves the pious and hates the infidel and the hypocrite. In the end, they may continue in the same direction and may turn out worse than the *Mu'tazilah* and the *Qadarīyyah*, and go out of the bounds of religion altogether, just as hair is removed from flour, a condition not different from that of the polytheists.

Those whom God guides to the right path realize the truth of “You do we worship, and Your help do we seek” (1:4). They know that the act which is not done in order to please God and does not conform to His commands will be rejected. They also know that one whom God does not help will not reach the goal. They therefore bear witness to the truth that there is no god except Allah, serve Him sincerely, and seek His help with faith in His creation and His law, in His ordainment and prescription. They seek His help to serve Him, and they thank Him for that favor. They know that whatever evil befalls them is because of them, even though they are convinced that everything is determined and ordained by God and that He is fully justified in what He does to His servants, and that His creation and commandments both have great wisdom in them.

[*Fatāwā* 17:64-65]

(2.13) Is God’s will one or multiple?

Is the will of God one single, eternal will, or does it renew itself? Ibn Taymīyyah cites different views on the subject and adopts one which says that God has been exercising His will from eternity, and has one will after the other. As a class His will is eternal, but as particular wills He has each at its time.

There are differing views regarding God’s will. Some say that it is a single, eternal will, that what is renewed is its relation with the objects, and that this relation is the same for every object. Furthermore, the divine will does not have a reason to choose anything. This is the view of Ibn Kullāb, Al-Ash‘arī, and their followers.

Most thinkers reject this view as palpably false. Abū Al-Barakāt has said that no reasonable person would believe in it. Certainly it is not the view of the majority of theologians. We can point out a number of things to show that it is false, for example, to

will one thing is not the same as to will another; that will cannot choose one thing rather than another all by itself; that this view does not provide for the factor which is required to bring a particular object into existence at a particular time; that the relation between the will and its objects whose renewal this view asserts as the cause of the object is not something existing, and a non-being does not renew itself. Hence things, in this view, come into existence without any particular cause or reason.

The second view also asserts a single, eternal will, but it differs from the first in saying that with every new creative act a new will comes into being in the divine Essence through His eternal will. This is the view of the Karmathians and a few others. They are nearer to the truth since they posit different wills for different acts, but they are exposed to the same objection as the first group since they, too, assume the existence of things without any contingent cause, or the choice of one thing rather than another without any reason. Moreover, they relate all particular wills to one eternal will and make them choose by themselves without providing for the emergence of any factor which may enable particular wills to choose one thing rather than another.

The third view is that of the Jahmīyyah and the Mu'tazilah, who deny that God has any will. They either negate His will outright or interpret it in terms of His command or act, or like their Baṣrī colleagues, posit a will without a locus. All these different positions are unreasonable.

The fourth view is that God has been willing from eternity with an ever-new will, coming one after the other. As a class, His will is eternal, but as will for a particular thing, He has it at its time. First He conceives or ordains things and records them, then He creates them. Hence, when He ordains them He knows what He will be doing. He wills to do them in the future, rather than do them then and there; and when their time comes He will *will* their doing. The first was a decision (*'ām*) and the second was execution (*qaṣad*).

People have differed on the question whether one should attribute decision (*'azm*) to God. Some, like Qāḍī Abū Bakr¹⁴⁸ (Al-Baḳillānī) and Qāḍī Abu Ya'lā, deny it, while others affirm it. In an authentic *ḥadīth* narrated by Umm Salamah, we have the words, *thumma 'azama Allah lī*, 'then God decided for me'. In the introduction to his book, Muslim has noted the words in this form: *fa 'azama lī*.¹⁴⁹ Whether you call it *'azm* or not, when God ordains things He knows that He will do them at their times, and He will be doing them at their times. When the time comes, there must be a will for doing a particular action as well as for the action itself, and He must be knowing what He will be doing.

Here again there are two different views on the question whether the knowledge of what He does when He does it is the same as His knowledge previous to doing it, and the same as His knowledge after He has done it. Reason as well as the Qur'ān tells us that it is something more. The phrase *li na'lama*, 'that We may know', has occurred in the Qur'ān a dozen times (2:143; 18:12; 34:21 and so forth)...

Hence, when God wills any particular object, He knows what is there in the object which has led Him to will it. Will only follows knowledge. The fact that a particular object possesses some property for which it is chosen is a matter of knowledge, it is an idea in mind, and not something out there. Those who say that non-being is a thing and mean by it that it is out are wrong. Equally wrong are those who do not affirm anything in knowledge, or say that God has only one will or one knowledge and various objects of knowledge and will have no forms in His mind. These people deny that they are things in knowledge or intention; the former, on the opposite side, assert that they are things existing out there.

These ideas which are the object of God's knowledge and will come into existence after they are non-existent, and come into existence by His will and power, just as all other events come into existence by His will and power. He decides what He will do and

then does it, and He decides one thing rather than another, or a particular thing with some properties rather than with others, on the basis of some criteria which call for a particular decision in His mind. He does not choose except what He Himself wants to choose for some reason calling for that choice, and does not prefer one thing over another except for that reason.

It is not correct to say that God prefers something just because He has the power to do so, for before He chooses a particular thing He did have the power to choose it as well as to choose something else, but since He chose it the power that He had for both will not be sufficient to account for choosing one rather than the other. Nor can His will account for choosing one rather than the other without some reason. One wills one thing out of two things for some reason associated with the willer or the object willed. It is necessary that one be more inclined to the thing one chooses, and there should be something in the object which may tilt him towards it.

The Qur'ān and the Sunnah speak of *qadr*, the pre-ordainment of things before their creation, and that they are recorded in a Book. This establishes the fore-knowledge and pre-ordainment of everything that will happen and removes all misconception on account of which many people have gone astray on the issue of knowledge and will....

There are differing views on the question whether God has multiple knowledge and will, and whether He causes them. But it is quite plain that when there are many things that one wills, you cannot say that knowledge of one thing is knowledge of another, or the will of one object is the will of another object; that would be denying an obvious truth. Again, to distinguish between one knowledge and another, or between one will and another, is not to separate one from the other. Not only that, even different attributes such as the knowledge, power and will which one has are not separate one from the other. The subject of one is the subject of the other, just as taste, color and smell exist in the same orange or any

other fruit. So when we say there are many knowledges and wills it does not follow that one knowledge or will is separate from another in a perceptible manner. They all are members of one class of knowledge or will that exists in the same soul. When one thing is known after another thing the members of the class multiply and increase; you may say, if you like, that the class grows larger. The quantitative increment cannot occur without the qualitative enhancement. We do say “more knowledge” and “greater knowledge”; and the greatness of knowledge is either due to the power of knowledge or the greatness of its objects....

Adding one knowledge to another knowledge or one will to another will, or one power to another power is like adding one body to another body, such as water to water, thereby increasing the volume of the water; but this increase is the increase of one unified quantity, not the increase of a separable quantity like a heap of dirhams. When we say knowledge or will has multiplied it is a statement about an increase in volume, that it has grown larger and greater than it was before, and not that there are more of them in number, separable from each other, as people think.

This is the reason why the Qur’ān uses knowledge as a general term which is not pluralized. It says, “If anyone disputes with you in this matter now after knowledge has come to you...” (3:61). Thus it mentions knowledge as a class. The same is the case with water (*ma’*) which the Qur’ān uses as a class name, and never uses as plural, *miyyah*. It says, “We poured water from the sky” (25:48), and so on. Knowledge has been likened to water. The Prophet (pbuh) has said, “The similitude of the guidance and knowledge which God has sent with me is like that of a torrential rain which falls on a land.¹⁵⁰ God has Himself said, “He sends down water from the skies, and the channels flow, each according to its measure... Thus does God set forth parables” (13:17).

[*Fatāwā* 16:301-312]

(2.14) Does God will sin from His creatures?

God wills sin in the sense that He creates it; He does not will it in the sense that He commands it.

(Ibn Taymīyyah) was asked if God wills sin from His creatures or not? He replied that the word will is ambiguous. It may mean two different things, one that He wills to create something, and the other that He loves something and approves of it as He commands it. If the questioner means to ask whether God loves evil acts, approves of them and commands them, the answer is that He does not will them in this sense, for God does not like evil or approve of ingratitude and faithlessness from His servants, or command vile deeds. On the contrary, (after forbidding them in the Qur’ān) He says, “The evil of all these things is hateful in the sight of your Lord” (17:38). But if the questioner means that sin is a part of the things which He wills and creates, the answer is that God is the Creator of everything, that what He wills happens and what He does not will does not happen, and that there is nothing in existence which He does not will..

At some places in the Qur’ān God has said that He wills sin, and at other places that He does not will sin. What He means on the former occasions is that He wills to create sin, and on the latter that He does not command sin, nor does He like or approve of it, for example, “Those whom God wills to guide, He opens their breast to Islam; those whom He wills to leave astray, He makes their breast close and constricted” (6:125). He quotes the words of Noah: “Of no profit will be my counsel to you, much as I like to give you good counsel, if it be that God wills to leave you go astray. He is your Lord!” (11:34). Here will is used in the first sense; for the other sense, read the following verses: “God wills every facility for you; He does not will to put you to difficulty” (2:185); “God wishes (*yurīdu*) to make clear to you and to show you the ways of those before you; and He does wish to turn to you

(in mercy). And God is All-Knowing, All-Wise. God does wish to turn to you, but the wish of those who follow their lusts is that you should turn away from Him, far, far away. God does wish to lighten your (difficulties), for man is created weak” (4:26-28); “God does not wish (*yurīdu*) to place you in difficulty - He wishes to make you clean and to complete His favor to you (5:7); and, “God only wishes (*yurīdu*) to remove abomination from you, members of the family, and to make you pure and spotless” (33:33).

[*Fatāwā* 8:159-160]

(2.15) Wisdom

God is wise and merciful, and has not created the world without a rationale.

God is wise and merciful. He has apprised that He has created the world with a rationale. He has said, “Not without purpose did We create heaven and earth and all between! That has been the thought of the unbelievers” (38:27); “Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day, there are indeed signs for men of understanding, who celebrate the praises of God, standing, sitting and lying on their sides, and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (and say): ‘Our Lord! not for naught have you created all this’” (3:190); “Nor for (idle) sport did We create the heavens and the earth and all that is between! If it had been our wish to take (just) a pastime, We should surely have taken it from the things nearest to Us, if We would do (such a thing)” (21:16-17); “We created them not except *bi ḥaqq*, in truth. But most of them do not understand” (44:39). The words *bi ḥaqq* in this verse underline the fact that God has a definite purpose in creating the world. He has reiterated this fact in various other verses such as, “It is He Who created the heavens and the earth with truth (*bi ḥaqq*), and the day He says:

‘Be,’ behold, it is” (6:73); and, “We created not the heavens and the earth and all between them but in truth; and the Hour is surely coming. So ignore (their opposition) graciously. Verily your Lord is the Master-Creator, knowing all things” (15:85-86).

[*Fatāwā* 17:95-96]

(2.16) The reason God has created the world partly concerns Him and partly the world.

God has a purpose in all that He has created, which either concerns Him and is dear to Him, or concerns the beings He has created and is a blessing upon them or an act of justice to them from Him.

God has a purpose in all that He has created. He has said, “(This is) the making of God Who makes everything perfect” (27:88); and, “He has made everything which He has created most good” (32:7). To be sure, God does not need the creation. However, there are two aspects to His purpose: one which concerns Him and is dear to Him, and the other which concerns the created beings, and is God’s blessing upon them which they enjoy.

This is true not only in the case of His creations but also in that of His commands. As for the latter, it is plain that He does like them or approve of them. If anyone violates them and then repents, He is happier than we can imagine. As the Prophet has said, “He is happier than one who loses his camel in a desert with all the provisions for his journey on its back, gives up every hope of getting it back, and all of a sudden finds it standing before him.”¹⁵¹ He is also more hurt than any of His created beings when a servant of His does what He has prohibited. But if he subsequently repents and does what He wants, no one is happier than He. Obedience to His command brings happiness in this world and the next; this is what one should take pleasure in. Hence, the things which God has commanded us to do have good consequences which concern both

Him and His people. There is a purpose in them which concerns Him and a blessing which they enjoy.

God has said, “You who believe! Shall I lead you to a bargain that will save you from a grievous penalty? (It is) that you believe in God and His Messenger, and that you strive (your utmost) in the cause of God with your property and your persons. That will be best for you if you but knew! He will forgive you your sins, and admit you to Gardens beneath which rivers flow, and to beautiful mansions in Gardens of Eternity. That is indeed the supreme achievement. And another favor which you do love: help from God and a speedy victory. So give the glad tidings to the Believers” (61:10-13). These verses underline the fact that *jihād* has been commanded in order to secure the well-being of people in this world, the victory of the right over the wrong, and, in ‘*alā*, deliverance from Hell and entrance into Paradise. In the beginning of the *sūrah* from which these verses have been quoted we have the words, “Truly, God loves those who fight in His cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure” (61:4). His love implies that He has a purpose in it before Him, and that it is also a mercy for His people, in the form of blessings in this life and the next. This is the case with all His commands.

In the case of things which God has created there is also some purpose which is related to Him and which is dear to Him, as well as some purpose which is related to His people, which is a blessing for them. When people talk about the purpose of creation and the wisdom behind it everyone does according to his knowledge. Some of their ideas are right, some are wrong, and there are some mysteries which they are not able to unravel.... Broadly speaking, there are three views on the issue, each of which is held by a large section of theologians and supported by many among the followers of the four *a’immah*, Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, Ash-Shāfi‘ī and Aḥmad.

The first view is held by the negators of divine wisdom. They say that to assert a purpose for God is to attribute some want to Him. They believe that He does what He wills for no purpose at

all. They affirm only His power and will, and the fact that He does whatever He wills. Surely they want to glorify Him, but they end by negating His wisdom under the impression that purpose implies want. This is the view of Al-Ash‘arī and his followers, and many others who agree with him like Qādī Abū Ya‘lā, Ibn Al-Zaghūnī,¹⁵² al-Juwaynī,¹⁵³ and Al-Bājī.¹⁵⁴ This view was first expounded by Jahm Ibn Safwan and other determinists who followed him.

Philosophers go a step further. They say that whatever pain we suffer or evil we meet in the world is unavoidable. They believe that this necessarily follows from God’s essence; in fact, all that happens is the necessary unfolding of His essence. But had they instead said that it follows from His will and power and is produced by Him, it would have been correct. They also assert that the evil in the world is outweighed by the good. This is correct, but it would mean that God has created the world with some definite purpose, that creation has its own rationale which must be appreciated rather than discounted. If it is not, the assertion that good outweighs evil will lose its meaning. Hence it is clear that every group has some truth and some untruth. These are the four positions, and the fifth position is the one which is held by the *a’immah*, namely that God has a purpose in whatever He has created, that it is a wise purpose, and that it is a blessing (for the creation).

The second of the three views which the theologians have advanced is that anything which God creates or commands is for the good of His people. It is only for their benefit, simply a favor which He bestows upon them; it has no other purpose at all. This is the view of the Mu‘tazilah and others like them. Some of these people have discussed at length God’s wisdom, have denied His fore-ordainment (*qadr*), and worked out a code of law for their Lord which says what is right and what is wrong for Him. They are the Qadarīyyah. However, some of them affirm (*qadr*) and say that God has a purpose, but they say that it is a mystery. This is the view of Ibn ‘Aqīl¹⁵⁵ and others who affirm *qadr*. They are one with

the Mu'tazilah in affirming purpose which concerns created beings, though they differ from them in upholding *qadr*.

The third group believes that God also has a purpose which concerns Him. But they differ as to exactly what it is. To some, God has created men in order that they may worship Him, praise Him, and glorify Him. He has created some of them for this purpose and they do achieve it. They are those who are faithful. But those who do not achieve it are not created for it. They say that this is the purpose which God wanted to realize, and it is realized. They say that it differs from the purpose which the Mu'tazilah affirm, namely the good of human beings. They point out that God creates people whom He knows will not benefit from creation; they would rather suffer from it. Hence, they claim, the Mu'tazilah land themselves in contradiction. They, on the other hand, affirm a purpose which will happen if God knows that it will happen, namely that the faithful among men will come to know Him, praise Him and glorify Him. This is the case with the faithful. Others whom God creates only suffer from creation for the benefit of others; a small evil is justifiable for a greater good. Rain, for example, is good, since it benefits a lot of people even though it harms a few others. Similarly, the infidels have been created and will be punished so that the faithful may learn a lesson from them and wage war against them. This is the view which has adopted in his which Qāḍī Abū Khāzīm Ibn Qāḍī Abū Ya'la¹⁵⁶ has adopted in his book, *Uṣūl ad-Dīn*, which he composed on the pattern of the book by Muḥammad Ibn Al-Haytham Al-Karramī.¹⁵⁷ Those who expound this view say that the words, "I have created the jinns and men only to worship and serve Me" (51:56), refer only to those people who actually worship Him, and those who do not worship Him have not been created for that purpose.

This view which is held by the Karmathians and others like them is certainly better than the view of the Jahmīyyah and the Mu'tazilah, since it affirms a purpose for God and takes the Qur'āniḥ verse in the sense which is supported by a section of

Elders. However, it is not tenable, as it goes against the majority view and conflicts with the real meaning of the verse... for, as the context shows, the verse implies condemnation and reproof of those who do not worship God. He has created them for that purpose and they have failed to achieve it. That is why immediately following the verse He has said, “No sustenance do I require of them, nor do I require that they should feed Me” (51:57). The fact that He has affirmed worship and negated feeding proves that He created them for His worship and did not require from them what human masters require of their slaves, food or drink. This is why right after it He has said, “For the wrongdoers their portion is like unto the portion of their fellows” (51:59), that is, their portion of punishment is like the punishment of the infidels of earlier generations. It is a threat to those men and jinns who do not worship God. That this threat occurs after the verse quoted above is an indication that it is for those who do not worship God....

These people...have realized that the view which the Qadariyyah hold is wrong, since God creates everything and is their Lord and Master, since what He wills happens and what He does not will does not happen, and since nothing exists in His Kingdom except what He wills, and nothing may come into being except with His power, creation and will. In support of this truth a number of arguments can be given from revelation as well as reason. This is the belief of all the Companions, all the *a'imma* of the *ummah*, and all the Muslims. It is the faith of the entire Ahl as-Sunnah.

This is precisely the reason why these people have diverged in the interpretation of the verse and qualified it. They have not been able to combine belief in *qadr* with the belief that God created men in order for them to serve Him but they did not serve Him. So they thought that those whom He created for Hell He did not create for His service. This line is taken by all those who say that God has created people so that the faithful among them should serve and worship Him.

Those who deny the wisdom of God such as Al-Ash‘arī and his followers, Qāḍī Abū Bakr¹⁵⁸ Abū Ya‘lā and others, their basic assumption is that God does not create things with any purpose. He has created men neither for His worship nor for any other object, for them, there is no particle lam that expresses purpose (*lām kay*) any where in the Qur‘ān; it only has the *lām* which indicates consequence *lām al-‘āqibah* as in the verse, “The men of the family of Pharaoh picked the babe that (*li*) he may become their enemy and bring grief to them” (28:8)... This view is wrong for many reasons. First, the consequential *lām* does not introduce an action which is intended to produce the consequence that follows from it except by one who is ignorant or who cannot help it. As the saying goes, “They approached death and prepared themselves for destruction.” They knew that this was going to be the end, but they were not able to stop it. God, on the contrary, is All-Powerful and All-Knowing, hence His action cannot be the action of an ignorant or a weak person. Moreover, it is commonly agreed that God has created man for His own worship and service, and that this is what He has willed. But this would not be true if the *lām* in the verse (*li ya‘budūnī*) is taken as a consequential *lām*. These people admit that God has created them, willed their actions, and willed reward and punishment for their actions, so whatever happens is the object of His will. But they recoil from saying that He may will a thing for something, since a purposive action, in their view, implies want on the part of the doer. But this is obviously not correct.

[*Fatāwā* 8:35-45]

(2.17) Good and evil.

Good and evil in the sense of blessing and misfortune are from God. Whenever one receives a blessing one should be thankful to God, and when one faces trouble one should bear it patiently and seek God’s forgiveness for one’s sins, for God does reward patience. However, good and evil in the sense of right and wrong

action are from both God and men, and God does not do injustice to anyone.

(Ibn Taymīyyah) was asked about the belief that good is from God and evil is from Satan, that evil is in the hand of man, and that he is free to do it and not to do it as he wills... He replied:

Praise be to God. One should bear in mind two fundamental truths. The first is that God orders us to have faith and to do good deeds, that He loves right action and is pleased with them, that He honors those who do them, rewards them, protects them, is pleased with them, and loves them, and they love Him, and they from His army which shall be victorious. They are the true friends of God, the pious ones, the men of Paradise: Prophets, *ṣiddīqūn* (sincere lovers of truth), *shuhadā* (witnesses, martyres) and *ṣāliḥūn* (the righteous)¹⁵⁹ God prohibits all evil things - disbelief, arrogance and disobedience; He hates them and condemns them and their doers, and will punish them. They are the enemies of God and the Prophet, the friends of Satan, doomed to Hell and wretchedness. They are, however, of different levels. Some of them are disbelievers, arrogant and intransigent; others are disobedient but not infidel or arrogant.

The second truth is that God is the Lord of everything, its Creator and Owner, and there is no lord or creator other than He. What He wills happens and what He does not will does not happen. None has any power or might other than He, and no one can protect anyone against Him. All that is in the universe, be it objects, attributes, movements or events, is created by Him, brought into being by His power and according to His will. Nothing is beyond His power, and there is no one there to share with Him in these matters.... Man is completely dependent on Him for everything; he has to turn to Him for everything and can never dispense with Him for a single moment. None can mislead whomever He guides, and none can guide whomever He leaves astray.

Having stated these two truths, we would now say that when one is inspired to seek guidance from God or His help to obey Him, God helps him and guides him, and this leads to his happiness in this world and the next. But when God forsakes a man who does not worship Him or seek His help, or put trust in Him, he is left to himself, to his own will and power. When this happens Satan takes charge of him, turns him away from the right path and finally lands him in misery in this world and the next. All that exists is determined by Him and produced by Him. No one can avoid what He has destined, no one can cross the line which He has drawn for him in the Guarded Tablet, and no one can challenge His decisions, which are based upon best considerations. Certainly, if He had willed He could have put everyone on the right path; nevertheless, His blessings are a favor from Him, and His chastisements are an act of justice from Him.

One should believe in fore-ordainment and should not use it as an argument against God. To believe in it is to follow the right path, and to use it as an argument against God is to go astray. Faith in fore-ordainment makes man patient and thankful - patient in adversity and thankful in felicity. When one receives a blessing, one should realize that it is from God and be thankful to Him, whether it is a good deed one has done or a good thing one has achieved through one's efforts. For it is God Who makes every good possible for man, and it is He Who rewards him for it; hence, He it is Who is to be praised for everything. On the other hand, when someone faces a trouble which is caused by another person, it is God Who has empowered that person and it is He Who has created his action, and it is He Who has written that trouble for the former. He has said, "No misfortune can happen on earth or in your souls but is recorded in a decree before We bring it into existence. That is truly easy for God. (This is) in order that you may not despair over matters that pass you by, nor exult over favors bestowed upon you" (57:22-3). Elsewhere He has said, "No kind of calamity can occur except by the leave of God. And if

anyone believes in God, (God) guides his heart aright” (64:11). The person referred to in the last part of this verse is one who faces trouble, knows that it comes from God, and submits to His will quietly.

When one commits a sin, one should seek forgiveness and turn to God. Never should one make fore-ordainment an argument against God and say that he has not done it, since it was destined for him. He should admit that he is a sinner, that it is he who has done it, even though it happened as determined and destined by God and willed by Him. Nothing can happen which He does not will, produce or create; nonetheless, it is man who does the forbidden thing, performs the evil deed and wrongs himself, just as it is he who prays, fasts, performs pilgrimage, and carries on *jihād*. It is man who does all these deeds, makes all these movements and earns all these things. And for him is what good he does, and against him is what evil he commits.

God does not command evil and does not approve of faithlessness or misbehavior. He is the Creator of everything, and is its Lord and Ruler. What He wills happens and what He does not will does not happen. None can mislead whomever He guides and none can guide whomever He leaves astray. On the other hand, man wills good as well as evil; he has the power to choose one or the other, as well as the power to do what he chooses, and he is their doer. God is only his Creator, Lord and Controller, since there is no Creator, Lord or Controller other than He. What He wills comes into existence and what He does not will does not

God has affirmed both wills: the will of the Lord and the will of man. He has also stated it clearly that the will of man is subject to the will of the Lord. “This is an admonition,” He has said; “Whosoever will, let him take a (straight) path to his Lord,” and then He added, “but you will not, except if God wills; for God is knowing and Wise” (76:29-30). Elsewhere He has said, “Verily this is no less than a message to (all) the worlds, for (the benefit of) those of you who will to go straight. But you shall not will except

if God wills, the Lord of the Worlds” (81: 27-29). At a third place, He has said, “Wherever you are, death will find you, even if you are in towers built up strong and high! If some good befalls them they say: ‘This is from God.’ But if evil befalls them, they say, ‘This is from you (O Prophet!).’ Say: All things are from God. But what has come to these people that they fail to understand a single thing! Whatever good (O man!) happens to you is from God, but whatever evil happens to you, is from your own self” (4:78-9).... Some people take the good and evil in this verse in the sense of right and wrong deeds, and then suggest different ideas. One says that everything is from God; another says that good is from God and evil is from man. Both are wrong; for good (*ḥasanāt*) and evil (*sa’iyāt*) here refer to good fortune and misfortune as is in the verse, “We tried them with both *ḥasanāt*, prosperity, and *sa’iyāt*, adversity, in order that they might turn (to Us)” (7:168)....

Whoever says that man does not will good or evil is wrong. Similarly, whoever says that he does good or evil without God’s willing it is also wrong. The truth is that he does whatever he chooses to do, good or bad, but at the same time it comes into being by the will of God and His power. We should believe in the first as well as the second, so that we can have faith, on the one hand, in the commands and prohibitions of God and the reward and punishment thereupon, and, on the other, in the fact that everything good or evil is fore-ordained. What befalls us could not miss us, and what misses us could not befall us.

[*Fatāwā* 8: 23-2400

(2.18) Creation is an attribute of God existing in His Essence.

Creation (khalq) is an act of the Creator, and the created world (makhlūq) is its object; one is different from the other. Creation is an attribute of God which exists in His Essence, and comes into being by His will and power. The same is true of all

other active attributes such as speech, provision, giving life, causing death, etc.

Muslims in general, past and present, believe that *khalq*, creation, is other than the *makhlūq*, the created world; the former is an act of the Creator, and the latter its object. That is why the Prophet would seek refuge in the acts of the Lord and His attributes. He would say, “I seek refuge in Your pleasure against Your displeasure, in Your forgiving against Your punishment, and in You against You. I am unable to celebrate Your praises as it behooves You. You are as You have spoken of Yourself.”¹⁶⁰ Thus he sought refuge in God’s forgiving as well as in His pleasure. One of the arguments of the *a’immah* of the Sunnah, like Aḥmad and others, for the belief that God’s speech is uncreated is that the Prophet has sought refuge in it and said, “If anyone enters a house and seeks the protection of God’s perfect words against the evil of the things He has created, nothing will harm him till he goes out.”¹⁶¹ Similarly, His forgiving and His pleasure are uncreated, that is why the Prophet sought protection in them. One should, however, note that the peace one has in one’s body is created by God, and is a result of His healing.

Since creation is an act of God, and the world is the object of that act, and since He has created the world by His will, it follows that creation is an act that takes place by His will and cannot be predicated of anyone else. Hence His acts exist in His Essence even though they are accomplished by His will and power. Al-Bukhārī has reported that scholars are agreed that *khalq* is different from *makhlūq*; this is also the verdict of reason. Arguments from reason as well as tradition have been advanced to prove that everything other than God is created and contingent, that it comes into being after it was not there, and that only God is eternal without a beginning. He has Himself said, “He has created the heavens and the earth and (all) that is in between them in six days” (25:29, 32:4). Now, when He created the heavens in the

beginning, either He performed an act that brought them into being, or He did not and the world came into being without an act. Again, since He was the Creator before He created the world, and is so at the time of creation and even after the creation, it is inconceivable that He should have chosen to create the world at one time rather than another without any reason accounting for the choice. Again, the existence of a created being without a contingent reason is ruled out by reason. If you say that the eternal will and power makes that choice, we would say that the relation of the eternal will with every moment of time is the same. Therefore, for it to choose one moment rather than another, similar moment without any reason is inconceivable. Hence, for something to exist, there must be a reason demanding its existence. If simply the presence of will and power were sufficient to bring it into existence, it would have existed earlier; for when we have a perfect will and a perfect power, the object cannot lag behind.

Some, like Abū Al-Ḥasan (Al-Ash‘arī) and his followers such as Ibn ‘Aqīl who hold that creation (*khalq*) is the same as the created (*makhlūq*), sometimes argue that if creation were different from the created, it would be either eternal or contingent; in the former case, the object (of creation) would also be eternal, since one implies the other; in the latter case the divine essence would be a locus of contingent things. Moreover, this creation would require another creation, and that still another, and so on *ad infinitum*... This objection has been answered by all the groups, each in its own way. One group, for example, has said that creation (*khalq*) is eternal, even though the created world (*makhlūq*) is contingent. This is the view of a number of followers of the four schools. The majority of the Ḥanafīyyah subscribe to it; they say that if you accept our view that the will is eternal whereas its object is contingent, you should also accept the same about creation as we do.

Another group says that creation (*khalq*) in itself is contingent and does not require another creation; it only happens by the power

of God. You do accept that the world comes into being by His power after it was not there. Now if it is true of a thing separate from God that it happens simply by His power, the one which is associated with Him must happen all the more. This is the answer given by many Karmathians, Hishāmīs¹⁶² and others.

Others say that, supposing that creation requires another prior act, why should you call it impossible? If you say that it implies a regression, we will point out that it does not mean the regression of the doers or the efficient causes. That, to be sure, is impossible and is admitted by all. But here it is a regression of effects or acts, that is, the occurrence of one thing after another, and the claim that it is impossible is disputed.

What the Elders have said is this: God is speaking from eternity as and when He has willed. He has said: “Say: If the ocean were ink (wherewith to write) the words of my Lord, sooner would the ocean be exhausted than would the words of my Lord, even if We added another ocean like it for its aid” (10:109). That is to say, the words of God are endless; and this regression is possible, for it is a regression in the future. Is it not the case that the blessings of Paradise are eternal and will never end; one thing will go on appearing after another forever and ever!

[*Fatāwā* 6:229-232]

(2.19) The Created world

God has been creating from eternity by His will and power. This does not mean, however, that the world is eternal. All that follows from is that the act of creation as a class is eternal. Individual things which are created, are not eternal.

The majority of Muslims believe that *khalq*, creation is other than the *makhlūq*, the created, and that it is an act which exists by God. This is the belief of the Ḥanafīs and most of the Ḥanbalīs; in the end, Qāḍī Abū Ya‘lā subscribed to it. Al-Baghawī¹⁶³ has

mentioned that this is the belief of the Ahl as-Sunnah, and Abū Bakr Al-Kalabādhī¹⁶⁴ has noted in his *At-Ta'arruf li Madhāhib Ahl at-Taṣawwūf* that this is what the Ṣūfīs believe. Al-Bukhārī has claimed consensus of the 'ulamā' on this point in his *Af'āl al-'Ibād*,¹⁶⁵ and Ibn 'Abdul-Barr¹⁶⁶ and many others have ascribed this belief to the Ahl as-Sunnah.

But whether God's act of creation is one and eternal like His will, or whether it is contingent in itself, or whether God is eternally qualified with it when it is taken as a class, all these three views are found among the Muslims; however, they all agree that everything other than God is contingent and created. This is stated by every prophet and it is substantiated by rational arguments. Philosophers have held the view that some created things are co-eternal with God. This is wrong on the ground of revelation as well as reason. We have discussed that point in detail at another place. One may object and say that the view that God has been speaking from eternity by His will entails speech that has no beginning. And if God has been speaking from eternity He must go on speaking forever, with the result that His speech will have no end. This entails the existence of an endless series of contingent events, for every word which is preceded by another word must be contingent; but the existence of an unending series of contingents is inconceivable. This, we would admit, does follow from this view. We do say that God's words have no end. He has Himself said, "Say: If the ocean were ink (wherewith to write) the words of my Lord, sooner would the ocean be exhausted than would the words of my Lord, even if we added another ocean like it for its aid" (18:109).

However, the objection that an unending series of events is inconceivable is based on the argument which has been developed to prove the contingency of the world and bodies, namely that they are not free from contingent things, and what is not free from contingent things is co-tangent. But it is wrong on both grounds of revelation and reason. It forms the basis of the *kalām* which has

been condemned by the Elders and the *a'immah*, as it lies at the base of the *kalām* which the Jahmīyyah have developed and which negates God's attributes. We have discussed the incoherence of this argument at other places which may be consulted.

However, if one can separate what is right in this argument from what is wrong, one will find that it does prove the contingency of everything other than God, and that it supports the belief of the Elders. These people have merely developed it on wrong lines. They raise the proposition that whatever is inseparable from contingent or possible and hence dependent things is also contingent to a universal proposition, and treat the Creator on the pattern of created things. Others argue that if something admits of one thing, it can never be free from the latter and its opposite at the same time, and raise it to a universal proposition. Mistakes in arguments generally arise from conceiving one thing on the pattern of another thing which is different from it. When you generalize a proposition on the basis of some common element without distinguishing between one category and the other, you end in mistakes. Examples of this are people having said that trade is just like usury" (2:275) or what Iblīs said (in defying God's order to bow down before Adam). In fact, as the Elders have said, Iblīs was the first to use a false argument. Whenever the sun or the moon is worshiped it is done on the basis of some analogy which is put against a revealed text or which is constructed on wrong premises. Every argument which goes against the scriptural text is incorrect. As for the correct argument, it is part of the Balance (*al-mizān*) which God has sent down; it will never contradict any text; on the contrary, it will support the text.

It follows that what is correct in the arguments which philosophers have advanced supports the view of the Elders. The basic point in their argument for the eternity of the world is that God has been active from eternity, and that it is inconceivable that He would have been first inactive and then started acting, or that

He could not have been active in the beginning and became active only afterwards, or that He had no power in the beginning and only acquired it later. But all these propositions only prove the eternity of God's action as a class; they do not prove that any particular object, the spheres or anything else, is eternal.

The view of the scholars of the Sunnah that God is ever acting out of His free will and power, and that action is an essential part of life, is supported by all rational and sound arguments. Moreover, it agrees with what the Elders say that God has been speaking from eternity as and when He has willed, or acting from eternity as and when He has willed. All the arguments which the Kullābīs, the Ash'arīs and the Salīmīs have advanced only prove that God has been speaking from eternity as He has willed. They prove neither the eternity of any speech which He has not willed, nor the eternity of any particular word; they only prove that His speech as a class is eternal. Similarly, all the arguments which the philosophers have produced regarding the eternity of God's activity only prove that He has been doing from eternity what He has willed. They prove neither the eternity of any particular act, nor that of any particular thing done, the heavens or anything else.

The reason both groups have erred is that they could not differentiate between a class and its particular members. One group said that movement as a class or act as a class cannot be eternal, for a series of events without a beginning is inconceivable. On this ground they denied that God would be speaking from eternity or acting from eternity out of His free will. But they did not realize that this would mean that God was at first inactive and then became active, or that He could not at first speak of His will and only spoke afterwards. Some of them such as the Karrāmīs said that God could not speak of His will at first, and could do that only afterwards. Others like the Kullābīs and their followers such as the Ash'arīs and the Salīmīs said that God did not speak of His free will nor was it ever possible for Him to do so.

The philosophers have said what their master, Aristotle, had said before. But all those who say that movement as a class came into existence at some time before which it did not exist fly in the face of reason. They say that it is inconceivable that contingent events as a class should exist without a cause, and consider it to be a piece of necessary knowledge. We submit that it shows only that movement as a class is eternal, and not that the movement of the sphere is eternal. The same is true of time and body. Their argument only proves that movement as a class is eternal and so is its measure, which is time, and its agent, which they call body. But it does not follow that any particular thing is eternal. When it is said that God has been speaking and acting from eternity whatever He has willed, it implies that His act as a class is eternal, as is its measure which is time. The mistake which Aristotle and his followers have made is that they thought that there was no time which was not the measure of the movement of the sphere, and that there was no movement beyond the movement of the sphere nor prior to it. Hence they concluded that the movement of the sphere was eternal.

They are wrong on the grounds of both reason and revelation. They cannot produce any argument to refute the existence of movement above the sphere or before them, and what they say with regard to a fissure in the sphere is quite ridiculous, as we have shown elsewhere. Similarly, their axiom that every movement must have a mover other than the body which is moving is also fallacious; I have also shown that elsewhere.

The point I want to emphasize is that a part of what these so-called rational thinkers, theologians and philosophers have to say agrees in essence with the view of the Elders and the Ahl as-Sunnah who follow the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Only a part of their argument is correct and supports their views, but they have often mixed it with untruth. They are like the People of the Book who have mixed truth with untruth. What is true with them agrees with what the prophet from among the Gentiles has taught, the prophet

whom they find mentioned in their books, the Torah and the Gospel, and it never differs from his teachings. Prophetic ideas never contradict each other, nor do rational arguments, if correct, contradict one another. Similarly, the truths of revelation and the truths of reason do not oppose one another.

[*Fatāwā* 6:2898-302]

(2.20) Speech

The saying of the Elders that God's speech is eternal means that God has been speaking of His free will from eternity, or to put it differently, His speech as a class is eternal. None of them has ever said that a particular speech, whether the Qur'ān or the Torah, is eternal; they have only said that it is uncreated.

The Elders have said, "The Qur'ān is the word of God, revealed and uncreated." They have also said, "God has been speaking from eternity whenever He has so willed." They have made it quite clear that God's word is eternal; that is to say, as a class His word is eternal. Nobody has ever said that any particular word is eternal, nor has anyone said that the Qur'ān is eternal. They have only said that it is God's speech, revealed and uncreated. Since God has spoken the words of the Qur'ān of His own free will, the Qur'ān is His speech, it has come down from Him and is uncreated. Nevertheless it is not eternal and timeless as God, even though He has been speaking from eternity as and when He has willed. Only His speech as a class is eternal.

Aḥmad and other Elders have clearly stated that the Qur'ān is the uncreated word of God. None of them has ever said that God has not spoken of His free will and power, nor has anyone said that a particular speech like the Qur'ān, or the call that He gave to Moses, or any other particular speech is eternal and timeless, without a beginning and without an end, or that particular words or words and sounds are eternal and timeless, without a beginning or

end. No one has ever said any such thing, nor can anyone produce the word of Aḥmad or any other imām in their support. In fact, Aḥmad's statements and the statements of other imāms are clearly against them. They have clearly said that God speaks of His free will and power, and that He has been speaking from eternity as and when He has willed. They have also said that God's speech is uncreated, that it has originated from Him, and that it is not something created or originated from something other than Him. Their statements on these points are well-known, and can be found in various books, such as the *Kitāb as-Sunnah* and other writings of Al-Khallāl.¹⁶⁷ ('Abdur-Raḥmān Ibn Abī Ḥātim¹⁶⁸ has compiled the words of Aḥmad and other scholars. Others who have written on the subject are the students of Aḥmad such as his two sons, Ṣāliḥ¹⁶⁹ and Adbullah¹⁷⁰, and Abū Dāwūd As-Sijistānī¹⁷¹ the author of *As-Sunan*, Al-Athram,¹⁷² Al-Marwazī¹⁷³ Abū Zur'ah,¹⁷⁴ Abū Ḥatim,¹⁷⁵ Al-Bukhārī,^{175a} the author of *Aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 'Uthmān Ibn Sa'īd Ad-Dārimī,¹⁷⁶ Ibrāhīm Al-Harbī,¹⁷⁷ 'Abdul-Waḥhāb Al-Warrāq,^{177a} 'Abbās Ibn 'Abdul-'Aẓīm Al-Anbārī,¹⁷⁸ Ḥarb Ibn Ismā'il Al-Kirmānī,¹⁷⁹ and countless other scholars, as well as the students of these students such as 'Abdur-Raḥmān Ibn Abī Ḥātim,¹⁸⁰ Abū Bakr Al-Khaṭṭāb,¹⁸¹ Abū Al-Ḥasan Al-Banānī Al-Isbahānī,¹⁸² and others. We can also mention the names of various imāms and scholars of *Uṣūl* and *furū'*,¹⁸³ such as Abū 'Īsā At-Tirmidhī,¹⁸⁴ the author of the *Al-Jāmi'*, Abū 'Abdur-Raḥmān An-Nasā'ī,¹⁸⁵ and others like them, as well as Abū Muḥammad Ibn Qutaybah,¹⁸⁶ and the like. This is not the place for going into further details.

[*Fatāwā* 12:54, 86-87]

(2.21) Transcendence (*al-'Ulū*)

God is not inside the world surrounded by different things. He is above the Heavens on the Throne, and transcends the world completely. Nothing is like Him in any respect, in essence, attributes or acts.

Anyone who believes that God is in space, that He is inside the world, surrounded by things and encircled by the Heavens, and that some things are above Him and others beneath Him is wrong and completely mistaken. Similarly if anyone believes that God needs something to carry Him, the Throne or any thing else, he is also wrong and mistaken.... No less mistaken is anyone who conceives of God's attributes on the pattern of the attributes of created beings, and says, for example, that His ascent or descent (*nuzūl*) is like the ascent and descent of His creatures. The Qur'ān and the Sunnah, as well as reason, show that God is unlike any created thing in every respect, that He needs nothing at all, and that He is completely different from created things and transcends them.

One is correct only if he believes like the Elders and the *a'immah* of the *ummah* that the Creator is different from the created, that He is above the heavens on the Throne, altogether different from His creatures, that nothing of His essence is in His creatures, nor anything of them is in His essence, that He transcends the Throne and everything else, and needs nothing of them at all, that, on the contrary, He holds the Throne and its bearers with His power even as He is established on it, that His establishment (*istawā*) is not like the establishment of the creatures, that He has all those names and attributes which He has affirmed of Himself, without there being any likeness between Him and His creatures; and that He is unlike everything in His essence, attributes and acts.

[*Fatāwā* 5:262-263]