CHAPTER THREE

GOD'S CREATION AND GOD'S COMMAND

Ibn Taymiyya's Creation/Command Hermeneutic

If God is the wise Creator of everything that occurs in the world, how does Ibn Taymiyya account for human agency and responsibility? The following chapter focuses directly on how God creates human agency. The present chapter examines how the shaykh relates God's legislation, which imposes human obligation and responsibility, to God's all-encompassing creation. As noted in the last chapter, Joseph Bell shows how Ibn Taymiyya attacks al-Juwaynī for equating God's love and good pleasure with God's creative will (*irāda khalqīyya*) of all things. According to Ibn Taymiyya, God does not love the unbelief that He creates. Rather, God loves and is well pleased with obedience to His legislative will (*irāda sharʿīyya*). God only creates unbelief for a wise purpose that he loves. God does not love unbelief, but God loves the wise purpose for which it is created.

While Bell has well described the core of Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine, it remains to display the variety of ways in which the shaykh expresses it. The terms 'creative will' and 'legislative will' are part of a creation/command hermeneutic that Ibn Taymiyya employs to interpret a wide range of quranic and theological terms. Equivalent to God's creation are God's lordship, inspiration, determination, decree and ontological will. Corresponding to God's command are God's divinity, love, good pleasure and religious will, as well as the distinction between piety and immorality. Additionally, Ibn Taymiyya does not always address the conundrum posed by creation and command with God's love for his wise purpose. Frequently he simply affirms wise purpose, justice or mercy in God's creation. On a few occasions, however, he does suggest images or similitudes to render the non-coincidence of creation and command more plausible.

Besides surveying diverse ways that Ibn Taymiyya affirms creation and command, the present chapter gives much space to his attendant polemic against Kalām theologians, Sufis and skeptics. However, the shaykh's critique of Sufism, which grows out of his concern to give creation and command

each their due, is much more extensive than can be examined here.¹ The discussion below is limited to indicating some major directions this takes. More detailed treatment of Ibn Taymiyya's criticism of Sufism may be found elsewhere.²

Ibn Taymiyya's Classification of Errors in Creation and Command

A Typology of Errors

In several theodicean texts, Ibn Taymiyya sets out a four-fold typology on creation and command that classifies his polemical opponents and identifies his own view.³ Although not complete, the following passage translated from *Tadmuriyya* is fairly typical. Four major positions are identified with the appellations "Majūsīs," "Mushrikīs," "Iblīsīs," and "People of Guidance and Success." Following the translation, the first three positions will be clarified and augmented from the shaykh's other instances of the typology and related polemic.

It is well known that it is obligatory to believe in God's creation (*khalq*) and His command (*amr*), His decree (*qadā'*) and His legislation (*shar'*). The mis-

¹ Much of Ibn Taymiyya's thinking on Sufi matters is found in volumes 1, 2, 10 and 11 of MF, and in *Iqtidā'*, *Istiḳāma* and *Maḥabba*. There is also a great deal of material scattered throughout his other writings.

² For Ibn Taymiyya's various critiques of Sufi speculation and popular religious practices, see Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), 87–111, with corrections to the analysis of Ibn Taymiyya in the review by Jon Hoover in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 10:3 (Oct. 1999): 392–4; Muhammad Umar Memon, *Ibn Taimiyya's Struggle against Popular Religion: With an Annotated Translation of his Kitāb iqtidā' aṣ-ṣirāt al-mustaḳim mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jahīm* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976); Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*, 5–14, 24–39; Jean R. Michot, *Musique et danse selon Ibn Taymiyya*, Le livre du Samā' et de la danse (Kitāb al-Samā' wa l-Raqṣ) *compilé par le shaykh Muḥammad al-Manbijī* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1991); P. Nwyia, "Une cible d'Ibn Taimiyya: Le moniste al-Tilimsānī (m. 690/1291)," *Bulletin d'Etudes orientales* 30 (1978): 127–145; Niels Henrik Olesen, "Étude comparée des idées d'Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328) et de Martin Luther (1483–1546) sur le culte des saints," *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 50 (1982): 175–206; and Niels Henrik Olesen, *Cultes des Saints et Pélerinages chez Ibn Taymiyya* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1991).

³ *Ibtāl*, MF 2:300–4; *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:409–411; *Tadmuriyya*, MF 3:111–2; *Qadariyya*, MF 8:256–261; and *Tā'a*, MF 8:444–6. Cf. *Minhāj*, 3:82/2:9–10. The following discuss the same ideas although not in the form of a tidy typology: *Wāsiṭiyya*, MF 3:148–150; *Irāda*, 8:97–117; *Sa'āda*, MF 288–9; *Ihtijāj*, MF 8:303–370; *Jabr*, MF 8:449–478; *Furqān*, MF 13:211–229; *Hasana*, MF 14:347–359; *Shams*, MF 16:230–248; and *Minhāj*, 3:75–8/2:7–8.

guided people who delve into determination (*qadar*) have divided into three sects: Majūsīs, Mushrikīs and Iblīsīs.

The Majūsīs are those who gave the lie to the determination of God even if they believed in His command and His prohibition. The extremists among them denied the [fore-]knowledge [of God] and [pre-]writing [of human acts]. The moderates among them denied the generality of His will (*mashī'a*), His creation and His power (*qudra*). These are the Mu'tazilīs and those who agree with them.

The second sect is the Mushrikīs who acknowledged decree and determination and denied command and prohibition. He—Exalted is He—said, “Those who gave associates [to God] will say, ‘If God had willed, we would not have given associates, nor would have our fathers, and we would not have forbidden anything [against His will]’” (Q. 6:148). Whoever argues for stripping away the command and prohibition with determination is one of these. This has become frequent among those Sufīs who claim [to have attained] reality.

The third sect is the Iblīsīs who acknowledged the two elements, but they regarded them as contradictory in the Lord—Glory be to Him, Exalted is He—and they discredited His wise purpose (*hikma*) and His justice (*adl*), just as this is mentioned concerning Iblīs, their ringleader, according to what the experts in sectarian teachings (*ahl al-maqālāt*) transmitted and what is transmitted from the People of the Book.

The point is that [the above] is what the people who go astray say. As for the People of Guidance and Success, they believe in both. They believe that God is Creator, Lord and Sovereign of everything. What He wills is, and what He does not will is not. He is powerful over everything, and His knowledge encompasses everything... And it is necessary to believe in legislation. This is belief in the command and the prohibition and the promise and the threat, as God raised up His messengers with this and sent down His books.⁴

As noted under the fourth position, that of the People of Guidance and Success, Ibn Taymiyya includes “the promise and the threat” on the side of divine command and prohibition.⁵ This involves the promise of reward for good deeds and the threat of punishment for bad deeds. Under command, he elsewhere includes “the names and the judgments (*al-asmā' wa al-ahkām*)” which deal with whether one is a believer or unbeliever.⁶ These matters fall on the side of command rather than creation because they involve questions of human accountability.

In other texts, Ibn Taymiyya identifies all of the first three positions cited above as Qadarī. This yields the “Majūsī Qadarīs,” the “Mushrikī Qadarīs” and

⁴ *Tadmuriyya*, MF 3:111–3. Much of the ellipsis is translated below (157–8).

⁵ The connection between command and prohibition, or related notions, and promise and threat also occurs in *Jabr*, MF 8:452; and *Shams*, MF 16:230, 235.

⁶ *Furqān*, MF 13:211.

the “Iblīsī Qadarīs.”⁷ These are polemical labels rather than names of actual groups. The sense of Qadarī in these appellations is that of anyone who goes astray on the doctrine of determination (*qadar*), and the adjectives Majūsī, Mushrikī and Iblīsī denote three different ways of erring. Ibn Taymiyya occasionally uses other adjectival forms with Qadarī such as “Mujbirī Qadarīs,”⁸ “Jabrī Qadarīs”⁹ and “Murji’ī Qadarīs.”¹⁰ For Ibn Taymiyya the Mujbirīs or Jabrīs deny that humans are the agents of their acts, and the Murji’īs, who did constitute an actual movement in early Islamic history, understand faith (*īmān*) as assent and knowledge without deeds.¹¹ The shaykh places both groups under the category of Mushrikī Qadarīs because of their perceived weakness in upholding human accountability.

Qadarīs and Mu’tazilīs: Compromising Creation

The terms Mushrikī Qadarī and Iblīsī Qadarī do not appear often in Ibn Taymiyya’s writings.¹² He most commonly reserves the term Qadarī for those who follow the precedent of the historical Qadarī trend in early Islam and deny that God creates human acts.¹³ He states, for example, “Not one of the Qadarīs affirms that God is Creator of the acts of servants.”¹⁴ Ibn Taymiyya also calls Qadarīs “Deniers (*nufāh*)” because they deny that God can make someone either obedient or disobedient.¹⁵ In light of this, the shaykh often uses the term Qadarī to denote the Mu’tazilīs.¹⁶ He cites the Mu’tazilī Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī as a prominent proponent of the Qadarī view and credits

⁷ For these three types of Qadarīs, see *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:409–411; *Qadariyya*, MF 8:256–261; MF 10:718; and *Shams*, MF 16:230, 232, 235, 238, 239.

⁸ *Furqān*, MF 13:212, 225; and *Hasana*, MF 14:247. In *Irāda*, MF 8:105, Ibn Taymiyya also notes that some early scholars in Islam called those who believed in God’s compulsion (*jabr*) of human acts Qadarīs.

⁹ *Nubuwwāt*, 96.

¹⁰ *Irāda*, MF 8:105.

¹¹ For Ibn Taymiyya’s views on the Jabrīs, see below. For his views on the Murji’īs, see *Īmān I*, MF 7:190ff., and the translation of this work, *Kitāb Al-Iman: Book of Faith*, trans. Salman Hassan Al-Ani and Shadia Ahmad Tel (Bloomington, IN: Iman Publishing House, 1999), 200ff. See also *Shams*, MF 16:241–3.

¹² I located five occurrences of the term “Iblīsī Qadarīs” in MF: *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:400, 411; *Qadariyya*, MF 8:260; MF 10:718; and *Shams*, MF 16:232.

¹³ On the Qadarī movement in early Islam, see W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973), 82–118.

¹⁴ *Shams*, MF 16:232. Cf. *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:400, where Ibn Taymiyya includes with the Qadarīs the “naturalists” who attribute acts to bodies, natures, celestial spheres or souls rather than God.

¹⁵ *Furqān*, MF 13:225–6. Cf. *Hasana*, MF 14:347.

¹⁶ See for example *Shams*, MF 16:239; and *Minhāj*, 3:18/2:267.

him with being “the foremost of the later Mu‘tazilis.”¹⁷ He also uses the term Qadarī for later Shī‘is such as Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī who adopt Mu‘tazilī theology.¹⁸ In creation and command typologies, Ibn Taymiyya typically only explains that the Mu‘tazilis reject God’s creation of human acts in order to maintain His justice, but he does give the Mu‘tazilī rationale “closer attention in other contexts.

The term Majūsī, which appears in the quotation from *Tadmuriyya* above, comes from Majūs, the Arabic word denoting the followers of the dualist, Persian religion Zoroastrianism, also called Mazdaism.¹⁹ The Majūs were known to Ibn Taymiyya as believing in an agent of evil other than God. He adds that they were a community which paid the jizya to the Muslims and whose women some scholars said Muslims could marry.²⁰ He equates the Majūs with the Persians,²¹ and he explains that they fell into dualism (*thanawiyya*) by inquiring into the cause of evil.²² The shaykh links the Qadarīs to the Majūs on the basis of a hadith in which the Prophet is said to have called the Qadarīs “the Majūs of this community.”²³ He also notes

¹⁷ *Shams*, MF 16:236. Concerning Abū al-Ḥusayn, Ibn Taymiyya continues, “He had more intelligence and erudition than most of his peers, but he had little acquaintance with the traditions (*al-sunan*), the meanings of the Qur’an and the path of the Salaf.”

¹⁸ For example, see *Minhāj*, 3:181/2:34, where Shī‘is are subsumed under the Qadarīs, and *Minhāj*, 3:190/2:37, where Ibn Taymiyya calls his opponent al-Ḥillī a Qadarī. *Minhāj*, 1:127–8/1:31, describes how later Shī‘is adopted Mu‘tazilī doctrine. For the assimilation of the Mu‘tazilis to the Qadarīs in early Kalām theology, see Daniel Gimaret, *La doctrine d’al-Ash‘arī* (Paris: Cerf, 1990), 396–8.

¹⁹ On Zoroastrianism and its relationship to the Islamic tradition, see M. Morony, “Madjūs,” EI2 5:1110–8; Guy Monnot, *Penseurs musulmans et religions iraniennes: ‘Abd al-Jabbār et ses devanciers* (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1974), 77–81, 88–91, 137–142; Guy Monnot, *Islam et religions* (Paris: Éditions Maisonneuve et Larose, 1986), 129–156 (on al-Māturīdī) and 157–170 (on the Ash‘arī al-Bāqillānī); and Christoph J. Bürgel, “Zoroastrianism as Viewed in Medieval Islamic Sources,” in *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions: A Historical Survey*, ed. Jacques Waardenburg (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 202–212. For the view that Zoroastrianism and Mazdaism are synonymous, see Gherardo Gnoli, “Zoroastrianism,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed., Mircea Eliade (New York: MacMillan, 1987), 15:579–591. On the dualism of both Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism in relation to Islam, see G. Monnot, “Thanawiyya,” EI2 10:439–441. Also of interest on Islamic responses to dualism is G. Vajda, “Le Témoignage d’al-Māturīdī sur la doctrine des Manichéens, des Dayṣānites et des Marcionites,” *Arabica* 13 (1966): 1–38, 113–128.

²⁰ *Irāda*, MF 8:100.

²¹ *Shams*, MF 16:239.

²² *Tā’iyya*, MF 8:248 (reading ‘*illat al-sharr*’ instead of ‘*illat al-sirr*’).

²³ *Wāsiṭiyya*, MF 3:150; Abū Dāwūd. 4071, Al-Sunna, Fī al-qadar. Sarah Stroumsa and Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, “Aspects of Anti-Manichaean Polemics in Late Antiquity and under Early Islam,” *Harvard Theological Review* 81:1 (1988): 37–58 (especially 54–5), cite this hadith as evidence that debate over divine determination in Islam emerged in the context of the challenge posed by Zoroastrian, as well as Manichaean, dualism.

that the Qadarīs resemble the Majūs inasmuch as both “affirm [someone] other than God who produces evil things apart from His will, His power and His creation.”²⁴ The point in comparing the Qadarīs to the Majūs is to accuse the former of a dualism of creators when they posit human beings as the creators of their acts.

The quotation from *Tadmuriyya* above also distinguishes between “extremist” Majūsīs who deny God’s foreknowledge and “moderate” Mu’tazilīs who do not. In *Jabr* Ibn Taymiyya reports that Ma’bad al-Juhanī (d. 83/703) promulgated the extremist Qadarī teaching first in Basra to counter the Umayyads but was opposed by the Companions of the Prophet.²⁵ Elsewhere, the shaykh notes that deniers of foreknowledge argue that it would be bad of a prince to command someone to do something when he knows that the person will not obey, and so also with God.²⁶ Apart from such occasional mentions, denial of God’s foreknowledge is not a major concern for Ibn Taymiyya, and he says that almost no one denied it in his time.²⁷

Sufi Antinomians, Jahmīs, Jabrīs and Ash’arīs: Compromising Command

Turning now to the Mushrikī Qadarīs, or more simply the Mushrikīs, the crux of the problem shifts from denying God’s creation of human acts to nullifying God’s command. The term *mushrik* means idolater or more literally one who associates partners (*ashraka*) with God, and, for Ibn Taymiyya, Mushrikī is a term of aspersion rather than the name of a historical group. The shaykh’s primary concern in the *Tadmuriyya* quotation above is the argument of the Arab associationists found in the Qur’an that divine determination prevented them from pure worship of God. He notes that this argument is widespread among Sufi gnostics in his time. He alleges that the Sufi antinomians (*mubāḥiyya*) are worse than the Arab associationists. The latter, he observes, at least have some laws whereas the Sufis annul the Law completely.²⁸

²⁴ *Jabr*, MF 8:452.

²⁵ *Jabr*, MF 8:450. Cf. *Sa’āda*, MF 8:288. According to Watt, *Formative Period*, 85, 87, Ma’bad was involved in political opposition to the Umayyads and denied that God had determined their misdeeds. J. van Ess underlines the politically charged and thus uncertain nature of the sources for knowledge of this figure in “Ma’bad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Ukaym al-Djuhanī,” EI2 5:935–6.

²⁶ *Shams*, MF 16:233.

²⁷ *Wasitiyya*, MF 3:148–9. God’s foreknowledge is discussed briefly in *Tahṣīn al-‘aql*, MF 8:429–430; and *Shams*, MF 16:233–4. A full defense consisting mostly of quranic quotations occurs in *Jabr*, MF 8:490–7.

²⁸ *Jabr*, MF 8:457–8.

Ibn Taymiyya writes prolifically against this “determination argument (*al-ih̥tijāj bi-l-qadar*).”²⁹ His main complaint is that it does not hold up against human rationality. Reason and the natural constitution know it to be a vain argument.³⁰ He explains that no one will accept divine determination as an excuse for injustice, violation of his wife, and murder of his son. Nor will anyone who excuses his own misdeeds with determination accept it as an excuse from someone who acts against him. Everyone is subject to the same divine determination, and so it cannot serve as an argument for anyone. The shaykh asserts that, if all could do as they pleased without censure, the world would be destroyed.³¹

On this basis, Ibn Taymiyya adopts a pragmatic perspective. If someone is warned of an approaching enemy, he does not wait for God to create “fleeing” in him; he strives to flee and then God helps him flee.³² Someone who truly wills to believe and obey God and has the power to do so will do it. If he does not do it, it is because he did not will it.³³ Whoever defends his sins with determination is simply following his caprice and does not have knowledge.³⁴ For Ibn Taymiyya, the proper attitude is patience with the afflictions that God has determined. In sins the response should be repentance and asking forgiveness, while in acts of obedience one should also confess God’s determination to avoid pride.³⁵

The shaykh identifies two different foundations of Sufi antinomianism, one particular and the other general.³⁶ The particular occurs when the individual Sufi in ecstatic annihilation (*fanāʾ*) erroneously believes that he no longer has a will of his own but passes away into the will of the Real. In this witnessing (*mushāhada*), any distinction between good and evil does not apply to the gnostic, and the Law is no longer relevant. Ibn Taymiyya cites the Ḥanbalī Sufi Abū Ismāʿīl al-Anṣārī al-Harawī (d. 481/1089) as an example of this line of thinking. In response Ibn Taymiyya appeals to the teaching of the early Sufi master al-Junayd (d. 298/910) that even in witnessing the

²⁹ Giving extended attention to the *qadar* argument are *Ih̥tijāj*, MF 8:303–370; *Minhāj*, 3:54–86/2:2–11; *Qaḍāʾ*, MF 8:262–271; *ʿUbūdiyya*, MF 10:157–172; and *Ibtāl*, MF 2:300–3, 323–330.

³⁰ *Minhāj*, 3:56/2:3, 3:60/2:4, and 3:65/2:5.

³¹ *Tāʾa*, MF 8:263; *Tāʾiyya*, MF 8:248–251; *Jabr*, MF 8:453–5; *Minhāj*, 3:56–7/2:3; *ʿUbūdiyya*, MF 10:164–5; *Ibtāl*, MF 2:300–2; and *Irāda*, MF 8:114.

³² *Minhāj*, 3:67/2:5. Cf. *Minhāj*, 3:65/2:5.

³³ *Minhāj*, 3:69–70/2:6.

³⁴ *Minhāj*, 3:65/2:5; and *ʿUbūdiyya*, MF 10:165.

³⁵ *Ih̥tijāj*, MF 8:327–8, 331; *Minhāj*, 3:78/2:8; *ʿUbūdiyya*, MF 10:159–160; *Ibtāl*, MF 2:301–2; *Tadmuriyya*, MF 3:122; MF 8:76–7; and MF 8:237.

³⁶ *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:364–370, outlines the two perspectives.

universal will of God one must also witness command and prohibition.³⁷ He also asserts that ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (d. 561/1166), the eponym of the Qādirī Sufi order, prohibits arguing from determination.³⁸ Ultimately, the shaykh asserts, the Sufi gnostic cannot escape the fact that he still draws distinctions between what profits and harms him, and this is in fact what the Law was sent to clarify.³⁹

Ibn Taymiyya identifies a general basis for antinomianism in the doctrine of Ibn ‘Arabī and his followers whom the shaykh calls the “People of the Oneness of Existence (*ahl waḥdat al-wujūd*)”⁴⁰ or the “Unificationists (*ittiḥādīs*).”⁴¹ The shaykh interprets their teaching as a monism that collapses a proper distinction between God and His creatures and makes God identical to creation. This leads to the repulsive notion that God punishes Himself and is identical to idols, satans, pigs and unbelievers.⁴² Ibn Taymiyya alleges that Ibn ‘Arabī and his followers thus accept any kind of worship: “They agree with every form of associationism in the world, equate God with every created thing, and permit worship of everything.”⁴³ Furthermore, the shaykh charges the Unificationist poet al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291) with falling into explicit antinomianism, making all forbidden things lawful, even marriage to one’s mother or daughter.⁴⁴

Although Ibn Taymiyya does not mention the Jahmīs, Jabrīs and Ash‘arīs in the above typology from *Tadmuriyya*, he includes them in similar discussions elsewhere. He accuses them of upholding determination at the expense of God’s command, and he sometimes links them to Sufi antinomianism.⁴⁵ He usually takes the early Muslim theologian Jahm b. Ṣafwān to be the source of this tendency, explaining that Jahm upheld God’s determination

³⁷ *Ḥasana*, MF 14:354–5. Cf. *Iḥtijāj*, MF 8:317–8, 346, 369; *Awliyāʾ*, MF 11:245; *Minḥāj*, 3:168/2:31; and *Furūq*, MF 8:228–9.

³⁸ *Iḥtijāj*, MF 8:306, 369. Ibn Taymiyya devotes the treatise ‘*Abd al-Qādir*, MF 10:455–548, to ‘Abd al-Qādir’s *Futūḥ al-ghayb*. The latter has been translated as ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, *Revelations of the Unseen (Futūḥ al-Ghaib)*, trans. Muhtar Holland (Houston, TX: Al-Baz, 1992).

³⁹ *Tadmuriyya*, MF 3:116–7; and *Iḥtijāj*, MF 8:308–311, 346–7.

⁴⁰ *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:367. Cf. *Ibtāl*, MF 2:294ff.

⁴¹ *Ittiḥādiyyin*, MF 2:134, 140–1.

⁴² *Ittiḥādiyyin*, MF 2:142, 173; *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:364–5; and *Ibtāl*, MF 2:331, 355–6.

⁴³ *Ittiḥādiyyin*, MF 2:255.

⁴⁴ *Manbij*, MF 2:472; and *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:364–7. Ibn Taymiyya, *Ibtāl*, MF 2:342, also reports that al-Tilimsānī said that even a dead, scabby dog was part of God’s essence.

⁴⁵ *Tāʾa*, MF 8:444–5; *Iḥtijāj*, MF 8:352–3; and *Ḥasana*, MF 14:346–359. Cf. *Shams*, MF 16:235.

in the extreme.⁴⁶ Ibn Taymiyya describes Jahm and his followers the Jahmīs as Jabrīs and Mujbirīs, calling Jahm himself “the Imām of the Mujbirīs.”⁴⁷ Additionally, the shaykh frequently compounds the names Jahmī and Mujbirī to yield “Mujbirī Jahmīs.”⁴⁸ The labels Jabrī and Mujbirī both derive from the word *jabr* (compulsion), which denotes the idea that God, as the sole Actor in the universe, compels the human act. In earlier Islamic history, these terms did not denote a particular group but were used by the Mu‘tazilis to cast aspersion upon their opponents.⁴⁹ Ibn Taymiyya asserts that the Jahmīs were the first to deny that humans were truly the agents (*fā’il*) of their acts, and he reports that it was said that they believed that “the servant is compelled (*majbūr*), and he has no act fundamentally.”⁵⁰ The shaykh accuses Jahm of several related errors. Jahm sees no real difference between good and evil deeds.⁵¹ He rejects God’s wise purpose, justice and mercy by denying that God creates and commands for a cause or reason: “[Jahm] used to deny that God was the Most Merciful of the merciful. He used to go out to the lepers, look at them and say, ‘The Most Merciful of the merciful has done the likes of this with them.’”⁵² Ibn Taymiyya also claims that Jahm and his followers bear a strong resemblance to the people of India (*ahl al-Hind*), but he does not explain why.⁵³ The Muslims knew the Brahmans (*Barāhima*) of India primarily as deniers of prophecy, and possibly Ibn Taymiyya linked an extreme emphasis on compulsion to a denial of the need for prophecy.

Under the rubric of the Jabrīs, Ibn Taymiyya mentions the Ash‘arī theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.⁵⁴ He writes, “[Al-Rāzī] openly proclaimed that he taught *jabr*,”⁵⁵ and he calls al-Rāzī a “pure Jabrī.”⁵⁶ As we will see in the next chapter, al-Rāzī does in fact call himself a Jabrī, and the well-known

⁴⁶ *Hasana*, MF 14:346–358, in which passage Ibn Taymiyya accuses Jahm of two innovations: denial of the divine attributes and excess in divine determination. The Mu‘tazilis then fell into the first error and the Ash‘arīs the second. Cf. *Ihtijāj*, MF 8:347, 352ff. In *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:367, Ibn Taymiyya says that the Ittīhādīs realized the Jahmī position better than anyone else.

⁴⁷ *Kash*, MF 8:394; and *Minhāj*, 3:75/2:7. In *Thulth*, MF 17:177, Ibn Taymiyya calls Jahm “the Imām of the extremist Mujbirīs.”

⁴⁸ *Jabr*, MF 8:497; *Minhāj*, 3:75/2:7, 3:193–6/2:38; and *Hasana*, MF 14:310.

⁴⁹ Watt, *Formative Period*, 118.

⁵⁰ *Jabr*, MF 8:460.

⁵¹ *Jabr*, MF 8:466; and *Hasana*, MF 14:346–358.

⁵² *Jabr*, MF 8:460. This story is also found in *Nubuwwāt*, 353; *Minhāj*, 3:32/1:270; and *Thulth*, MF 17:102.

⁵³ *Shams*, MF 16:239.

⁵⁴ *Shams*, MF 16:236; and *Istiṭā‘a*, MF 8:375.

⁵⁵ *Minhāj*, 3:267/2:56.

⁵⁶ *Ihtijāj*, MF 8:307.

Ash‘arī doctrine of acquisition (*kasb*) in human acts is of no consequence to either al-Rāzī or Ibn Taymiyya. Beyond this, Ibn Taymiyya is convinced that al-Rāzī’s doctrine of *jabr* annuls ethical distinctions: “[Al-Rāzī] firmly believes...that the servant is compelled (*majbūr*) [to do] his act and that the act of one compelled is not bad. Thus, no acts of servants are bad.”⁵⁷ Ibn Taymiyya believes that al-Ash‘arī is better in this regard since he affirms that the difference between command and prohibition is real for creatures even if not for God.⁵⁸

It is something of an oddity that the two major groups that Ibn Taymiyya brings together under the one rubric of those compromising command—the Sufis and the Ash‘arīs—differ fundamentally in their approach to problems of evil. The Sufis typically adopt some kind of optimism while the voluntarism of the Ash‘arīs completely rejects rationality in God’s will. What the two groups share, however, is belief in God’s determination of all existents, and Ibn Taymiyya’s primary concern in this type is with those who shirk God’s command because they take determinism to be incompatible with human responsibility.

Free-thinkers and Poets: Impugning God’s Wise Purpose and Justice

The Iblīsīs constitute the third group in the *Tadmuriyya* typology quoted earlier. Ibn Taymiyya explains that the Iblīsīs take their name from their fore-runner Iblīs and accuse God of injustice and foolishness in what He creates and commands. Elsewhere, Ibn Taymiyya identifies this as the view of “the fools among the poets and such like among the free-thinkers (*zanādiqa*),” and he cites the poet Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī (d. 449/1058) as an example.⁵⁹ Curiously, Ibn Taymiyya does not identify the voluntarist Jahmīs and Ash‘arīs explicitly with the Iblīsī position even though their problems are similar: both deny rationality in God’s all-determining will. Possibly the difference is that the shaykh regards the Ash‘arīs as seeking to maintain a semblance

⁵⁷ *Shams*, MF 16:246.

⁵⁸ *Hasana*, MF 14:355; and *Shams*, MF 16:246–7.

⁵⁹ *Qadariyya*, MF 8:260. I have not found Ibn Taymiyya naming any particular free-thinkers on the question of God’s justice. One of the better known is Ibn al-Rāwandī (4th/10th century) who voiced the basic Iblīsī complaints mentioned here in a book called *Kitāb al-tā’id wa al-tajwīr*. For notice of this book, see Abū al-Ḥusayn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. ‘Uthmān al-Khayyāt, *Kitāb al-intiṣār*, ed. H.S. Nyberg and trans. Albert N. Nader (Beirut: Les lettres orientales, 1957), 12 (trans. 2); and Sarah Stroumsa, *Freethinkers in Medieval Islam: Ibn al-Rāwandī, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, and Their Impact on Islamic Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 131–2, which includes an English translation of al-Khayyāt’s notice.

of piety in practice while the Iblīs position is that of explicit skepticism, disbelief and rebellion.

The Qur'an does not speak of Iblīs's denial of God's wisdom and justice. It only mentions that he grew proud and refused to bow before Adam at God's command.⁶⁰ However, as noted in the typology from *Tadmuriyya* above, Ibn Taymiyya indicates that experts in sectarian teachings and the People of the Book have transmitted an account of Iblīs's defamation of God's wisdom and justice.⁶¹ He probably has in mind the story of Iblīs's seven objections to God's wisdom found at the beginning of the *Kitāb al-milal wa al-nihāl* of al-Shahrastānī. (Among other charges, Iblīs questions God's wisdom in creating him when God already knew what would become of him).⁶² A passage in *Irāda* similar to that in *Tadmuriyya* makes explicit reference to al-Shahrastānī's account and the fact that al-Shahrastānī traces it to the People of the Book. Ibn Taymiyya casts doubt on the authenticity of the story by noting that it lacks a proper chain of transmission, and he goes on to argue that it is probably a Mu'tazili forgery.⁶³

In *Irāda* the shaykh also explains why the Mu'tazilis would have interest in forging such a story: "Their intention in this is to refute those who affirm determination. They say that God's case against His creatures can only be brought forward by denying determination."⁶⁴ In Ibn Taymiyya's view, the

⁶⁰ The story of Iblīs is found in Q. 2:34, 7:11–8, 15:28–42, 17:61–5, 18:50, 20:116–120 and 38:71–85. On the reception of this story in Sufism, see Peter J. Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblīs in Sufi Psychology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983).

⁶¹ *Tadmuriyya*, MF 3:111. In *Minhāj*, 3:82/2:9, Ibn Taymiyya also mentions that a disputation by Iblīs was related, but he does not indicate by whom.

⁶² Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa al-nihāl*, ed. Aḥmad Fahmī Muḥammad (Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, n.d.), 7–9, which is translated in Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions: The Section on Muslim Sects in Kitāb al-Milal wa 'l-Nihāl*, trans. A.K. Kazi and J.G. Flynn (London: Kegan Paul, 1984), 12–5, and Shahrastani, *Livres des religions et des sectes*, trans. Daniel Gimaret and Guy Monnot (Louvain: Peeters, 1986), 1:115–9.

⁶³ *Irāda*, MF 8:114–5. Sarah Stroumsa, *Freethinkers*, 130–1, sees the ethical challenge presented to monotheists by Manichaean and Zoroastrian dualists behind this story. Stroumsa and Stroumsa, "Aspects of Anti-Manichaean Polemics," 51–8, argue that Mu'tazilis such as 'Abd al-Jabbār sought to refute the dualist challenge by rejecting the foolish and unjust God of the Manichaean caricature of monotheism. This Mu'tazili polemic then found a target closer home in their Mujbirī co-religionists whose belief in God's absolute determination seemed to bear a strong resemblance to the Manichaean caricature. These observations do not, of course, prove that al-Shahrastānī's story of Iblīs was a Mu'tazili forgery, but they do indicate the sort of milieu in which it may have arisen. The above comments may also help to explain why, in *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:400, Ibn Taymiyya lists the Majūsis not with those who deny God's creation of human acts but with the Iblīsīs. Perhaps he was thinking of the Zoroastrian polemic against the goodness of a monotheistic God.

⁶⁴ *Irāda*, MF 8:115.

story of Iblis defaming God's wisdom and justice serves the Mu'tazilī polemical purpose of undermining belief in God's all-encompassing creation and determination. If God's creation of all human acts can be shown to entail foolish and unjust behavior from God, then this view must be wrong. This is in fact the strategy adopted by the Shī'ī scholar al-Ḥillī in his *Minhāj al-karāma*, the Mu'tazilī-inspired polemic against Sunnism that Ibn Taymiyya in turn refutes in *Minhāj*. Al-Ḥillī's basic charges against an all-determining God have already been noted in the description of *Minhāj* found in the Introduction to this study.

In setting out the four-fold typology of positions on creation and command, Ibn Taymiyya does not always highlight Iblīs skepticism. Instead, one version confronts ethical laxity with a quotation attributed to the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn al-Jawzī, "You are a Qadarī in obedience, and you are a Jabrī in disobedience, which is to say, whatever school of thought suits your caprice is the one you adopt."⁶⁵ Ibn Taymiyya says that people holding this view take credit for their good deeds but blame their acts of disobedience on God's decree, and he notes that this is not a particular school of thought but the attitude of those unconcerned with the Law. In other places dealing with creation and command, the shaykh cites this statement in conjunction with Sufi antinomianism.⁶⁶

To sum up the creation and command typology, Ibn Taymiyya charges that the Sufis and the Ash'arīs emphasize God's determination at the expense of God's command and drift towards a monism that collapses the human sphere entirely into God. He castigates the Mu'tazilīs for dualism in denying that God creates human acts, and he censures those who impiously reject God's creation and command on the grounds that they are irrational and unjust. Ibn Taymiyya himself maintains the reality of both the human responsibility involved in God's command and the all-encompassing character of God's creation without favoring one at the expense of the other. He makes no effort here to resolve the conundrum of creation and command rationally. He simply wards off theological and ethical shortcomings that he perceives in the solutions of others.

⁶⁵ *Tā'a*, MF 8:446.

⁶⁶ *Ibtāl*, MF 2:301; and *Shams*, MF 16:248. The quotation is also found in MF 8:241; *ʿUbūdiyya*, MF 10:165; and *Abū Dharr*, MF 18:204.

Ibn Taymiyya: Analogy Is the Cause of Error in Creation and Command

Ibn Taymiyya's commentary on Surat al-Shams (Q. 91) [hereafter *Shams*]⁶⁷ provides a colorful analysis of the causes of the three types of error in creation and command noted above. The shaykh here traces the roots of the problem to a common Qadarī and Jabrī presupposition in the realm of ethical value and to an analogy Iblīs drew from himself to God. These same points are made elsewhere, but *Shams* appears to be unique in the degree to which it draws them together and fills them out into a story of what went wrong.

Ibn Taymiyya opens *Shams* with a brief comment on the sura's first eight verses.⁶⁸ Then he devotes the bulk of his energy to polemic involving the eighth verse, "[God] inspired [the soul] to its immorality (*fujūr*) and its piety (*taqwā*)" (Q. 91:8). This one verse, he claims, exposes error in both the Majūsī Qadarī and the Jabrī/Mushrikī/Sufi antinomian currents of thought. Ibn Taymiyya explains that inspiration (*ilhām*) here carries the meaning of creation. Thus, God is Creator of both piety and immorality. This invalidates a Qadarī interpretation of inspiration that excludes God's creation of human acts even if it affirms both God's foreknowledge and God's determination of everything else.⁶⁹

The shaykh then contends that the verse also establishes God's legislation because the phrase "its immorality and its piety" distinguishes between the good of piety that is commanded and the evil of immorality that is prohibited. If the verse had read only, "He inspired it to its acts," the indication of command and prohibition would not have been present. "There would be no distinction between the good and the evil, the loved and the hated, and the commanded and the prohibited." As it stands, however, the verse "is a proof against the Mushrikīs, such as the antinomians and Jabrīs, who do away with command and prohibition, and good and bad."⁷⁰

Thus the verse, "He inspired [the soul] to its immorality and its piety," affirms both God's creation and God's command. Ibn Taymiyya also finds both together in other verses such as "He misguides whomever He wills, and He guides whomever He wills" (Q. 16:93). In this verse, God's will involves

⁶⁷ *Shams*, MF 16:226–250. The text gives no indication of its date. At MF 16:237, Ibn Taymiyya mentions having once elaborated something elsewhere but without specifying the location.

⁶⁸ *Shams*, MF 16:226–30.

⁶⁹ *Shams*, MF 16:230–4.

⁷⁰ *Shams*, MF 16:235.

creation of all things, while guidance and misguidance involve the distinction between good and evil found in His command and prohibition.⁷¹

Following a discussion of the human act in *Shams*, Ibn Taymiyya locates the ultimate source of Qadarī and Jabrī difficulties in the shared presupposition that rational judgment of ethical value is incompatible with God's creation of human acts. He argues that both the Qadarīs and the Jabrīs agree that something created by God cannot be subject to judgments of moral value by virtue of some inherent quality. "They say, 'If [God] is the Creator of an act, it is impossible for the act to be inherently good and deserving of reward or bad and deserving of punishment.'"⁷² The Jabrīs then conclude that acts cannot be inherently good or bad since God creates everything. Good and bad only arise from the command and prohibition of the God who has the right to "command what He wills without any quality [inhering] in it and prohibit what He wills without respect to any quality [inhering] in it."⁷³ On the other hand, the Qadarīs conclude that God does not create human acts because acts are indeed inherently good or bad. If God created inherently bad acts, He Himself would be bad.⁷⁴

In *Shams* Ibn Taymiyya does not defend himself against what appears to be the inevitable conclusion of his polemic: that God creates inherently bad acts. Instead, he continues his diatribe against the Qadarīs and the Jabrīs, showing his preference for the Qadarīs and the Mu'tazilīs over the Jabrīs because the former give stronger emphasis to God's command and prohibition. Following this, the shaykh turns to the Iblīsīs. He explains that they acknowledge God's command as well as His determination. They err, however, in claiming that, in the contradiction of these two, God is ignorant and foolish and that God is unjust to punish someone for what He created in him.⁷⁵ Ibn Taymiyya then traces the source of Iblīs's error to the analogy he drew from himself to God in his rebellion:

[Iblīs] said, "Because You misled me, I will indeed adorn the path of error for them in the earth, and I will mislead them all" (Q. 15:39). He confessed that God misled him. Then he deemed that to be a motive making it necessary for him to mislead Adam's progeny. Iblīs was the first to show enmity toward

⁷¹ *Shams*, MF 16:235.

⁷² *Shams*, MF 16:237–8.

⁷³ *Shams*, MF 16:238.

⁷⁴ *Shams*, MF 16:238. Similarly, in *ʿUbūdiyya*, MF 10:166, Ibn Taymiyya indicates that neither Sufi antinomians nor the Mu'tazilīs can imagine someone being commanded to do the opposite of what has been determined for him.

⁷⁵ *Shams*, MF 16:238–9.

God, exceed the proper bounds of His creation and command, and oppose what was appointed with analogy (*qiyās*).

Because of this, one of the Salaf said, "The first to draw an analogy was Iblis." God commanded him to prostrate before Adam, but he opposed that command with, "I am better than him" (Q. 7:12), and he refused to prostrate. He was the first to show enmity toward God. He is ignorant and unjust—ignorant of the wise purpose in the command of God and unjust by virtue of his pride in which he combined disregard for the Real (*al-Haqq*) and contempt for humanity.

Then his statement to his Lord, "Because You misled me, I will surely do [such and such]," made God's act—which is His misleading him—into his argument and motive for misleading humankind. This was his discrediting of God's act and His command and his allegation that it was bad. So [he said], "I will do bad also." He drew an analogy from himself to his Lord and likened himself to his Lord. Thus, he was imitating [God] in lordship.⁷⁶

In this passage, Iblis's first error is to draw an analogy between himself and Adam and then to conclude that God's command was without wise purpose. Moreover, Iblis accuses God of having committed a bad act in misleading him. This is also based on an analogical projection of his own sense of good and bad onto God, which, in Ibn Taymiyya's judgment, is tantamount to claiming the prerogative of lordship.

In *Shams* the shaykh does not directly accuse the Qadarīs/Mu'tazilīs of holding God analogically to human standards of good and bad, but it is implicit in his analysis of why they maintain that God cannot create bad acts. If we say that God cannot do acts that we know to be inherently bad, then we are holding God to human standards of what is bad. As we will see later in Chapter Six, Ibn Taymiyya argues this explicitly against the Mu'tazilīs in his discussions of God's justice. In discussing God's creation and command, the shaykh also does not accuse the Jabrīs/Ash'arīs of falling into the analogy trap. Yet, this as well is implicit in his analysis here in *Shams* when he argues that the Jabrīs share with the Qadarīs the common presupposition that God could not create inherently bad deeds. Thus, the Jabrī viewpoint also rests on a human analogical judgment about what is impossible for God. This common presupposition of the Qadarīs and the Jabrīs comes out clearly in Ibn Taymiyya's narrative description of their joint failure to defeat Iblis:

The Qadarīs intended to exonerate God of foolishness. Their intention was good because He—Glory be to Him—is much too holy for what the unjust among Iblis and his forces say. [He is] a wise arbiter and just. However, [the Qadarīs] were not up to the task, and a sort of ignorance overtook them. With

⁷⁶ *Shams*, MF 16:239–240.

this, they firmly believed that this exoneration could only be completed by stripping Him of His power over the acts of servants, His creation of them, and His all-encompassing will of everything. They disputed with Iblīs and his party in one thing, but Iblīs got the better of them from another angle. This is one of the greatest banes of debating in religion without knowledge or without truth. This is the talk (*kalām*) that the Salaf blamed. One who does this refutes vanity with vanity and innovation with innovation.

Then groups from the People of Affirmation [of determination] came and disputed with [the Qadarīs] in order to establish firmly that God is Creator of everything, that what God wills is and what He does not will is not and that He is powerful over everything. However, their strength and knowledge were not up to the task. For they firmly believed that this could not be completed unless we deny God's love, good pleasure and the good and evil attributes that set one act apart from another and we deny His wise purpose and His mercy. Thus, every act is admissible for Him, and He is exonerated neither from injustice nor any other act.⁷⁷

Here Ibn Taymiyya alleges that the Qadarīs maintain God's wisdom and justice at the expense of God's power, creation and will. The "People of Affirmation" (i.e. Jabrīs) maintain God's creation, will and power against the Qadarīs at the expense of God's love and good pleasure and His wise purpose, justice and mercy. In the Jabrī outlook, God can do anything, and good and evil are totally subjective.

It must be said, of course, that the historical figures lying behind the polemical labels Qadarī and Jabrī do not deny the divine attributes in question. Rather, they interpret them in senses not to Ibn Taymiyya's liking. Yet, this raises questions about the coherence of the shaykh's polemic in *Shams*. On the one hand, he rejects analogical extension of human concepts onto God. On the other, he has definite ideas about what God's attributes mean—obviously based on some kind of relation to human language—and he criticizes those who differ with his interpretations. However, the shaykh does not explain in *Shams* how he himself escapes the analogy trap, and his polemic taken in isolation presents itself as completely contradictory. Sense can be made of it only by reference to his theological methodology surveyed in Chapter One. The God who bears no analogy to creatures must nonetheless be spoken well of—given the highest similitude—in accord with considerations of tradition and reason.

⁷⁷ *Shams*, MF 16:241.

*Modes of Expressing Creation and Command in Ibn Taymiyya's Thought**Creation and Command in the Wāsiṭiyya Creed*

The previous two sections have outlined Ibn Taymiyya's polemic against those whom he believes fail to uphold creation and command in proper balance. The commentary in *Shams* has shown also how the shaykh reads creation and command into the quranic term inspiration (*ilhām*) and the contrast between piety and immorality, respectively. The present section examines the diverse modes of expression that fall under this rubric more directly, beginning with the basic confession of creation and command found in the segment on God's determination in Ibn Taymiyya's well-known catechismal creed *Wāsiṭiyya*.⁷⁸ The shaykh opens this segment by affirming that the People of the Sunna believe in "determination, the good of it and the evil of it." He then proceeds to note that belief in determination has two stages. The first stage (*daraja*) is belief in God's knowledge of all human acts from eternity and in God's writing down all that He determined to be, in general and in detail. The second stage of belief in determination sets out God's creation and command:

As for the second stage, it is the operational will of God (*mashīʾat Allāh al-nāfidha*) and His all-inclusive power (*qudra*). It is belief that what God wills is and that what He does not will is not. And that there is no motion and rest in the heavens and the earth except by the will of God—Glory be to Him. There is nothing in His sovereignty except what He wills. And that He—Glory be to Him, and Exalted is He—is powerful over everything among existents and nonexistents. There is no created thing in the earth or in heaven but that God is its Creator—Glory be to Him. There is no creator other than Him and no lord except Him.

Along with this, He has commanded His servants to obey Him and obey His messengers, and He has prohibited them from disobeying Him. He—Glory be to Him—loves the pious, the beneficent and the fair, and He is well pleased with those who believe and perform righteous deeds. He does not love the unbelievers, and He is not well pleased with iniquitous people. He does not

⁷⁸ "Al-'Aqida al-wāsiṭiyya," MF 3:129–159, which is equivalent to MRK 1:387–406 and has been translated into three European languages: Henri Laoust, *La profession*; Merlin Swartz, "A seventh-century (A.H.) Sunnī creed: The 'Aqida Wāsiṭiyya of Ibn Taymiyya," *Humaniora Islamica* 1 (1973): 91–131; and Clemens Wein, trans., *Die Islamische Glaubenslehre ('Aqida) des Ibn Taymiyya* (Bonn: n.p., 1973). This creed became very well known in Ibn Taymiyya's day and has had widespread appeal down to the present. For affirmations similar to those found here in *Wāsiṭiyya*, see MF 8:235–8; *Taḥṣīl*, MF 8:246–7; and *Jabr*, MF 8:449–450, 452, 459, 466.

command abomination, and He is not well pleased with unbelief in His servants. He does not love corruption.

Servants are agents in reality (*ḥaqīqatan*), and God is the Creator of their acts. The servant is the believer and the unbeliever, the righteous and the immoral, the one praying and the one fasting. His servants have power to do their acts, and they have a will. God is their Creator and the Creator of their power and their will, as He—Exalted is He—said, “To whosoever among you wills to go straight. You will not unless God, Lord of the worlds, so wills” (Q. 81:28–9).

The vast majority of the Qadarīs denounce this level of determination as lies—those whom the Prophet—God bless him and give him peace—called the Majūs of this community. A group from among the people who establish [God’s attributes and determination] are extreme in it to the point that they strip the servant of his power and choice, and they exclude wise purposes (*ḥikam*)⁷⁹ and benefits from God’s acts and judgments.⁸⁰

The first paragraph of this passage establishes that God’s attributes of will, power, sovereignty, lordship and creation encompass everything. He is the Creator of all things. The third paragraph treats the special instance of God’s creation of human acts. Ibn Taymiyya is here concerned to maintain that human acts are real and that humans are in fact the agents of their acts despite God’s will and creation of them. The human act will receive further consideration in Chapter Four. The second paragraph links God’s command to His attributes of love (*maḥabba*) and good pleasure (*ridā*). God loves and is well pleased with belief and obedience, and He does not love unbelief, disobedience and corruption. The fourth paragraph disparages the Qadarī position on determination and criticizes those who deny that God acts for wise purposes and benefits (i.e. the Jabrīs).

Lordship and Divinity

Parallel to the creation/command distinction in Ibn Taymiyya’s thought is a further distinction between God’s lordship and divinity. We have already met these two notions in Chapter One, and, as noted there, God’s lordship (*rubūbiyya*) deals with His creation of all things and the great need of creatures to call upon Him for help while God’s divinity (*ulūhiyya* or *ilāhiyya*) is linked to His command and indicates His essential right to worship. These

⁷⁹ Laoust, *La profession*, 73, appears to have read *ḥikam* as *ḥukm* because he renders the Arabic as “sens” (“sense” or “meaning”). The plural form *ḥikam* of the singular *ḥikma* (“wisdom” or “wise purpose”) flows better with the Arabic style of the sentence since it lies in parallel with the clearly plural *maṣāliḥ* (“benefits”).

⁸⁰ *Wāsiṭiyya*, MF 3:149–150; the translation is my own.

terms usually appear in strongly ethical discussions, often dealing with the verse in the *Fātiḥa*, “You alone we worship; You alone we ask for help” (Q. 1:5). These discussions make an appeal to confess both that God is the only Lord who may be called upon for help (*tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya* or *al-tawḥīd al-rabbānī*) and that God is the sole divinity or worthy object of worship (*tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya* or *al-tawḥīd al-ilāhī*). This *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya* excludes any kind of *shirk* or giving partners to God; God has the right to exclusive devotion.⁸¹

A reasonably full treatment of these concepts appears in Ibn Taymiyya's *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, an apologetic text directed toward Sufis. Its primary lacuna is explicit reference to the Avicennan causal analysis relating lordship as the efficient cause to divinity as the final cause, which was noted in Chapter One. In discussing lordship, Ibn Taymiyya affirms that God is the Lord, Creator and Sovereign of all things. He created the heavens and the earth. The heart of every servant is “between two fingers of the fingers of the All-Merciful. If He wills to set them aright, He sets them aright. If He wills to turn them aside, He turns them aside.”⁸² The Lord makes people laugh, and He makes people cry. He sends the wind and the rain. He guides and misguides. He knows all things and has power over them.⁸³ The shaykh complements God's overwhelming power, lordship and governance with His goodness, wise purpose and mercy. Everything that God has created is good, perfect and wise. His mercy extends far and wide, and, as found in the Hadith, “Indeed, God is more merciful toward His servants than this mother toward her son.”⁸⁴

Ibn Taymiyya draws these affirmations together under two principles: 1) the universality of God's creation and lordship and 2) the universality of His beneficence (*iḥsān*) and wise purpose. God's attributes of lordship and sovereignty are not capricious but give evidence of God's goodness and mercy. God creates all, and all that God creates is good and wise. All things are in fact signs of God, and they manifest (*muzḥir*) the names and attributes of God from which they derive.⁸⁵

Following this Ibn Taymiyya moves in *Fī Fuṣūṣ* to God's divinity (*ilāhiyya*), which indicates that creatures should make God their god (*ta'alluh*), that is,

⁸¹ *Tawḥīd*, MF 1:22–3; *Shirk*, MF 1:89–90; *Manbijī*, MF 2:455–9; *Tadmuriyya*, MF 3:98–109; *Uḥūdīyya*, MF 10:156–8; *Fātiḥa*, MF 14:5–15, 31–6; *Ḥasana*, MF 14:376–380; *Mahabba*, 24–5; *Talbīs*, 2:454; and *Minhāj*, 3:276–336/2:59–74.

⁸² *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:398–9.

⁸³ *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:398–9.

⁸⁴ *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:399–400. This hadith is found in Bukhārī, 5540, Al-Adab, Raḥmat al-walad wa taqbiluhu wa mu'anaqatuhu; Muslim 4947; and Ibn Māja, 4287.

⁸⁵ *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:400.

their object of worship, and that worship should be devoted to God alone.⁸⁶ The shaykh elaborates further that the source of God's exclusive right to worship is God's essence or very self (*nafs*):

To Him is the destiny [of beings] and their return, and He is their object of worship and their God. It is not fitting that any [being] be worshipped except Him—just as no one created them but He—because of that to which He has a right in Himself (*limā huwa mustahiqquhu bi-nafsibi*) and of that which He alone possesses of the attributes of divinity, in which He has no associate.⁸⁷

Ibn Taymiyya then discusses how God's divinity and lordship appear in humans. Traces of divinity and the rulings of the law are manifest only in those who serve God, take God as a friend, agree with God in what He loves and is well pleased with and follow what He commands and prohibits. God manifests traces of His lordship and the rulings of His power in both believers and unbelievers as He gives them provision, property, beauty, knowledge and religious experiences. The manifestation of lordship apart from divinity is especially clear in Pharaoh, the Mongol conqueror Ghengis Khan and the one-eyed Dajjāl. The manifestation of divinity and lordship together occurs in angels, prophets and friends of God as in the Prophet Muḥammad and the Messiah, son of Mary. Ibn Taymiyya notes further that lordship corresponds to the judgments of the 'ontological words' and divinity to judgments of the 'religious words', and he gives an extensive list of such 'words'.⁸⁸ These two kinds of words correspond to creation and command, respectively, and they will be examined next from a different text.

Ontology and Legislation

Ibn Taymiyya often qualifies matters linked to God's determination and creation with the term ontological (*kawnī*) and things related to God's command and prohibition with the terms religious (*dīnī*) and legislative (*sharʿī*). The shaykh speaks, for example, of the "ontological, determinative and lordly realities (*al-ḥaqāʾiq al-kawniyya al-qadariyya al-rubūbiyya*)," which apply to all things, and the "religious, legislative, divine realities (*al-ḥaqāʾiq al-dīniyya al-sharʿiyya al-ilāhiyya*)," which extend only to those who obey God's command.⁸⁹ Other similar ways of speaking include God's "address of generation

⁸⁶ *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:404–6.

⁸⁷ *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:406.

⁸⁸ *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:407–8, 411–3.

⁸⁹ *Fātiḥa*, MF 14:15; and *ʿUbūdiyya*, MF 10:156–7.

(*khiṭāb al-takwīn*)” and God’s “address of obligation (*khiṭāb al-taklīf*)”,⁹⁰ and “His ontological creation (*khalquhu al-kawnī*)” and “His religious command (*amruhu al-dīnī*)”.⁹¹ Ibn Taymiyya takes a number of quranic terms to have an ontological meaning in some contexts and a legislative meaning in others. Among these are God’s will (*irāda*), decree (*qadāʾ*), judgment (*ḥukm*), authorization (*idhn*) and command (*amr*). The shaykh sets these out in list form with example quranic verses and hadiths in a number of texts.⁹²

One such list, which is typical of the rest, is translated below with its introduction. This passage falls within *Taraddud*, a short fatwa on the meaning of God’s hesitation (*taraddud*) found in the Hadith of Supererogatory Works (*ḥadīth al-nawāfil*). The last portion of the hadith reads, “I do not hesitate over anything as I hesitate over taking the soul of My believing servant. He hates death, and I hate to torment him.”⁹³ Ibn Taymiyya notes that God loves His servants who draw close to Him through supererogatory works, and so He hates to take their lives. Yet, God has decreed death. God’s hesitation means that God decrees death despite the fact that He hates it. There is thus a conflict of interest between God’s love and God’s decree. To resolve this, Ibn Taymiyya concludes that God has a wise purpose (*ḥikma*) in everything that He determines and decrees.⁹⁴ In the middle of the fatwa, Ibn Taymiyya notes that a similar conflict between God’s moral attributes and His ontological attributes exists in His willing of unbelief and disobedience, and this leads him into a listing of parallel ontological and religious terms:

[Concerning] the unbelief, iniquity and disobedience that occur in existence. God—Exalted is He—loathes that, displays wrath against it, hates it and prohibits it. And He—Glory be to Him—has determined it, decreed it and willed it with His ontological will (*al-irāda al-kawniyya*), even if He did not will it with a religious will (*irāda dīniyya*). This is the crux of the matter (*ḥaṣl al-khiṭāb*) about which the people dispute: Does He—Glory be to Him—command what He does not will?

⁹⁰ *Marātib*, MF 8:182–6.

⁹¹ *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:409.

⁹² The fullest text of this kind that I have located is *Awliyāʾ*, MF 11:265–271, which is translated in Yahya M. Michot, “Textes Spirituels d’Ibn Taymiyya: II. L’être (*kawn*) et la religion (*dīn*)”, *Le Musulman* (Paris) 13 (1990–1): 7–10, 28. Similar lists are found in *Fī Fuṣūṣ*, MF 2:411–3; *Tuḥfa*, MF 10:23–8; and MF 8:58–61.

⁹³ This is the last part of the *ḥadīth al-nawāfil* found in Bukhārī, 6021, Kitāb al-riqāq, Bāb al-tawāḍuʿ. See Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word*, 173–4, for a brief discussion of the transmission and content of this hadith.

⁹⁴ *Taraddud*, MF 18:129–135, which is translated into French in Yahya Michot, *Un Dieu hésitant?* (Beirut: Dar Al-Bouraq, 1425/2005).

The general belief among the Kalām theologians who establish [determination] and those who agree with them from among the jurists is that He commands what He does not will. The Qadarīs, the Mu‘tazilis and others say that He only commands what He wills.

The truth of the matter is that will (*irāda*) in the Book of God is of two kinds: a religious, legislative will and an ontological, determinative (*qadari*) will. The first is like His statement—Exalted is He—“God wills ease for you. He does not will difficulty for you” (Q. 2:185), and His statement—Exalted is He—“He wills to purify you” (Q. 5:6). And His statement—Exalted is He—“God wills to make plain to you and to guide you in the ways of those before you,” to His statement, “and God wills to turn toward you” (Q. 4:26–7). Here, will has the meaning of love and good pleasure, and this is the religious will. The indicator of this is His statement, “I did not create the jinn and humankind except that they might worship Me” (Q. 51:56).

As for the ontological, determinative will, this is like His statement—Exalted is He—“Whomever God wills to guide, He opens his breast to Islam. Whomever He wills to misguide, He makes his breast narrow and tight as if he were climbing up to the sky” (Q. 6:125). And like the saying of the Muslims, “What God wills is, and what God does not will is not.” All beings are encompassed in this will (*irāda*) and necessitating will (*ishā‘a*). Good and evil, right and wrong do not deviate from it. This will and the necessitating will include what the legislative command does not include. The religious will corresponds to the legislative command. They do not differ. This division between the ontological, determinative and the religious, legislative appearing in the term will appears likewise in the terms command (*amr*), words (*kalimāt*), judgment (*ḥukm*), decree (*qadā‘*), writing (*kitāb*), raising up (*ba‘th*), sending (*irsāl*) and their like.

The ontological words are those from which neither a righteous person nor an immoral person deviates. These are those with which the Prophet—God bless him and give him peace—asked for help in his statement, “I take refuge in the complete words of God that no righteous or immoral person oversteps.”⁹⁵ God—Exalted is He—said, “His command when He wills something is only that He says to it, ‘Be!’ and it is” (Q. 36:82). As for the religious [words], these are the books sent down about which the Prophet said, “Whoever fights so that the word of God is exalted is on the path of God.”⁹⁶ And He—Exalted is He—said, “She judged the words of her Lord and His books to be true” (Q. 66:12).

Also, the religious command is like His statement—Exalted is He—“Truly, God commands you to deliver trusts back to their owners” (Q. 4:58). And the ontological, “His command when He wills something” (Q. 36:82).⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Aḥmad, 14914, Musnad al-makkiyyīn, Ḥadīth ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Khanbash.

⁹⁶ Bukhārī, 120, Al-‘Ilm, Man sa‘ala wa huwa qa‘im ‘āliman jālisān; Bukhārī, 2599; Muslim, 3525; and elsewhere.

⁹⁷ Ibn Taymiyya only quotes the first part of this verse, having already quoted it in full above.

The religious raising up is like His statement—Exalted is He—“It is He who raised up from among the unlearned a Messenger from among them” (Q. 62:2). And the ontological raising up, “We raised up against you servants of ours” (Q. 17:5). The religious sending is like his statement, “He it is who sent His messenger with guidance and the religion of truth” (Q. 9:33). And the ontological, “Do you not see that We sent satans against the unbelievers to incite them” (Q. 19:83).⁹⁸

Behind some of these terms lie polemical debates and distinctions. The first part of the quotation mentions the difficulties of Kalām theologians with will, and these will be treated below.⁹⁹ A further example comes from Ibn Taymiyya’s polemic against Ibn ‘Arabī’s interpretation of decree (*qadā’*). In the verse, “Your Lord has decreed that you serve none but Him” (Q. 17:23), Ibn ‘Arabī understands decree (*qadā’*) to mean that no one in the universe worships anyone but God, no matter what his immediate object of worship might be. In the story of Aaron, Moses and the calf, for example, Ibn ‘Arabī says that Moses knew that those worshipping the calf were in fact worshipping God because this is what God decreed.¹⁰⁰ In Ibn Taymiyya’s view, Ibn ‘Arabī incorrectly reads decree in Q. 17:23 in an ontological sense, while the context of the verse dictates that decree means command.¹⁰¹

Ontological Will and Legislative Will

Several times in his writings, Ibn Taymiyya sets out the two types of will (*irāda*) found in the list from *Taraddud* above along with the same or similar illustrative verses.¹⁰² The two types receive a number of different names. For example, the shaykh calls them the “commanding will (*al-irāda al-amriyya*)” and the “creative will (*al-irāda al-khalqiyya*).”¹⁰³ On the side of creation are also “the ontological, determinative (*qadariyya*) will”¹⁰⁴ and “the ontological,

⁹⁸ *Taraddud*, MF 18:131–3.

⁹⁹ See also discussion of the two types of command (*amr*) in *Ibtāl*, MF 2:289, 320–330, and the two types of authorization (*idbn*) in *Ḥasana*, MF 14:383ff., which occur in a treatment of God’s authorization of intercession in Q. 2:255. Cf. *Qawl ‘Alī*, MF 8:168.

¹⁰⁰ See Muḥyi al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. and commentary Abū al-‘Alā’ ‘Afīfī (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-‘arabī, n.d.), 72 and 191–2. Both passages from *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* are quoted by Ibn Taymiyya in *Itihādīyyīn*, MF 2:251–2.

¹⁰¹ *Itihādīyyīn*, MF 2:264.

¹⁰² *Minhāj*, 3:16–7/1:266–7, 3:156–7/2:29, 5:412–3/3:103; *Irāda*, MF 8:131, 140; MF 8:159; MF 8:197–8; MF 8:201–2; *Tā’a*, MF 8:440–1; *Jabr*, MF 8:476; and *Thulth*, 17:62–63.

¹⁰³ *Minhāj*, 5:413/3:103.

¹⁰⁴ *Minhāj*, 3:156/2:29.

all-inclusive (*shāmila*) will.”¹⁰⁵ Other ways of drawing the distinction include “the will of decree (*qaḍāʾ*) and determination (*taqdīr*)” versus “the will of command and legislation (*tashrīʿ*),”¹⁰⁶ and “the will of generation (*takwīn*)” versus “the will of command, Law, love, good pleasure and religion.”¹⁰⁷ The following passage speaks of the two wills in yet another combination of terms—determinative, creative and commanding, legislative—and links them to lordship and divinity, respectively. Also, God’s commanding will is linked to God’s love and good pleasure and that which is beneficial for human beings.

The Salaf, the leaders of the jurists and the great majority of Muslims affirm creation and command: the determinative, creative will including every originating event and the commanding, legislative will concerning everything that God loves and is well pleased with for His servants, which is what the Messengers were commanded and is what profits servants, is beneficial to them, and has a praiseworthy end, profitable at the Return (*al-māʿād*) and repelling corruption. This commanding, legislative will is linked to His divinity which includes His lordship. Similarly, that creative, determinative will is linked to His lordship.¹⁰⁸

Ibn Taymiyya outlines the four possible combinations of ontological will and legislative will in a brief treatise called *Marātib al-irāda*. First, the two wills coexist in the generation of righteous deeds. Second, righteous deeds that do not occur are linked to the legislative will, but not to the ontological. Third, acts of disobedience and permitted acts (*mubāḥāt*) that occur, but are not commanded, are linked to the ontological will, but not the legislative. Fourth, neither the legislative will nor the ontological will are linked to permitted acts and acts of disobedience that do not occur.¹⁰⁹ Ibn Taymiyya makes similar notes on the combinations of the two wills elsewhere. For example, he defines the happy person as the one in whom God’s will of determination and will of command concur and the unhappy person as the one in whom they do not.¹¹⁰ Also, God wills belief and obedience from those

¹⁰⁵ *Irāda*, MF 8:131.

¹⁰⁶ MF 8:197.

¹⁰⁷ MF 8:201–2.

¹⁰⁸ *Thulth*, MF 17:64.

¹⁰⁹ *Marātib al-irāda*, MF 8:188–9, which is translated in Fritz Meier, “The Cleanest about Predestination: A Bit of Ibn Taymiyya,” in *Essays on Islamic Piety and Mysticism*, trans. John O’Kane (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 309–334 (text on 328–9), which is in turn a translation of Fritz Meier, “Das sauberste über die vorbestimmung: Ein stück Ibn Taymiyya,” *Saeculum* 32 (1981): 74–89. Reference to Meier hereafter is only to the English. Bell, *Love Theory*, 67, provides a diagram illustrating the various combinations of will.

¹¹⁰ MF 8:198.

who believe and obey both in command and creation, and He helps them and makes them do that. On the other hand, God commands unbelievers to believe and obey in His legislative, religious will, but He does not will to create their obedience in His ontological will. This is for a wise purpose and a benefit that overrides whatever benefit may have been attained in creating obedience.¹¹¹

The shaykh furthermore links the ontological will to God's *mashīʿa* (will) and, as we saw above, the legislative will to His love and good pleasure.¹¹² For Ibn Taymiyya, the semantic fields of *mashīʿa* and *irāda* are not identical, and this presents a problem in translation. For lack of better alternatives, I usually translate both terms as "will" and transliterate the Arabic when necessary. Ibn Taymiyya uses *mashīʿa* only for God's ontological activity as when he says that the *irāda* "linked to the creation is the *mashīʿa* and is the ontological, determinative *irāda*."¹¹³ The term *irāda*, however, carries either an ontological or a legislative sense depending on the context.¹¹⁴

The distinction between *irāda* and *mashīʿa* also becomes apparent in Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of oath taking. If someone swears an oath that he will do such and such if God wills (*shāʿa*) and does not do it even when he has no excuse, he has not broken his oath. A person cannot be held accountable for not conforming to God's *mashīʿa*. If, however, he swears an oath by God's love, and he does not do it, then he has broken his oath. He is liable to do what God loves and commands. If he swears by God's *irāda* and does not do it, he has broken his oath only if he intended the *irāda* of love.¹¹⁵

Ibn Taymiyya's primary polemical targets when discussing the two types of *irāda* are Kalām theologians who make the semantic fields of divine will, love and good pleasure identical. This has different results for the Muʿtazilīs and the Ashʿarīs, respectively. The shaykh reports that the Muʿtazilīs equate love, good pleasure and will—both *irāda* and *mashīʿa*—solely with God's command. In this case, things exist which God does not will (*yashāʿ*), and God wills things that do not exist.¹¹⁶ Ibn Taymiyya reports that al-Juwaynī

¹¹¹ *Minhāj*, 5:414. Cf. *Minhāj*, 3:162–3 and 182–3, and MF 8:199.

¹¹² *Minhāj*, 3:233/2:47–8; and MF 8:159.

¹¹³ *Minhāj*, 3:156/2:29.

¹¹⁴ Bell's brief discussion of *mashīʿa* and *irāda* in *Love Theory*, 65–6, is not sufficiently precise and may be read to mean that both *mashīʿa* and *irāda* carry ontological and religious senses. As noted here, however, Ibn Taymiyya uses *mashīʿa* only in the ontological sense.

¹¹⁵ *Minhāj*, 3:16/1:266, 3:19/1:267, 3:155–6/2:28, 3:188/2:36; and *Jabr*, MF 8:475. Cf. *Minhāj*, 3:258/2:54.

¹¹⁶ *Minhāj*, 3:14–5/1:266, 3:158/2:29, 3:196/2:39; *Iḥtijāj*, MF 8:340; and *Jabr*, MF 8:474, 476–7.

said that al-Ash‘arī was the first to equate divine love, good pleasure and will (both *irāda* and *mashī‘a*) wholly with God’s creation of all that exists, and in this he was followed by Abū Ya‘lā, al-Juwaynī himself and others. The shaykh says that this ultimately goes back to Jahm b. Ṣafwan, although he also accuses the latter of denying God’s attributes completely.¹¹⁷ In this Ash‘arī view, God loves and is well pleased with everything, including iniquity, unbelief and disobedience. God loves, wills and is well pleased with all that exists. He does not love and will what does not exist, and He is not well pleased with it. Ibn Taymiyya notes that the Ash‘arīs reinterpret such verses as “God does not love corruption” (Q. 2:205) and “God is not well pleased with unbelief in His servants” (Q. 39:7) to mean that God does not love and will corruption and unbelief in those in whom they do not exist or that God does not love and will these things religiously in the sense that He does not will to reward the corrupt and the unbeliever.¹¹⁸

Ibn Taymiyya also reports that al-Ash‘arī held a second position, which is that of the majority among those who believe in only one type of *irāda*. In this view, the *irāda* is God’s *mashī‘a* alone whereas God’s love and good pleasure are linked to His command.¹¹⁹ The shaykh attributes this view to most of the Kalām theologians, the Karrāmīs and the Ḥanbalīs Abū Bakr ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and Ibn al-Jawzī.¹²⁰ Ibn Taymiyya argues that the majority of Sunnīs up to the time of al-Ash‘arī, as well as subsequently, distinguish God’s *irāda* of all things from His love and good pleasure linked to His command. However, it is not always clear whether the shaykh also attributes a two-*irāda* view to this majority or simply a separation between a single *irāda* on the one hand and love and good pleasure on the other.¹²¹

For the sake of independent historical perspective, Gimaret and Bell have shown that the complete identification of love and good pleasure with all that God wills to exist is not found in Ash‘arī theology until al-Juwaynī. It also appears that no Ash‘arī followed him in this thereafter.¹²² Bell cites the

¹¹⁷ *Minhāj*, 3:15/1:266, 5:412/3:102–3; *Jabr*, MF 8:475; *Hasana*, MF 14:353; and *Thulth*, MF 17:101–2.

¹¹⁸ *Minhāj*, 3:14–5/1:266, 3:158–9/2:29, 3:196/2:39–40; *Ihtijāj*, MF 8:340–5; *Jabr*, MF 8:476–7; *Thulth*, MF 17:101; and *Irāda*, MF 8:98. Much of *Irāda*, MF 8:97–106, is translated in Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, 149–153.

¹¹⁹ *Minhāj*, 3:181/2:34.

¹²⁰ *Minhāj*, 5:411–2/3:102–3.

¹²¹ *Minhāj*, 3:15/1:266, 3:17–8/1:267, 3:159/2:29; and *Jabr*, MF 8:475–6.

¹²² Bell, *Love Theory*, 56–60. See al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-irshād*, 99 (in the middle of “Bāb al-qawl fī al-istiṭā‘a wa ḥukmiḥā”), for the identification of will, love and good pleasure. In this text, however, al-Juwaynī does not identify this view as that of al-Ash‘arī explicitly but only as that of those Ash‘arīs who are right (*man ḥaqqāqa min a‘immatinā*). D. Gimaret,

later Ash'arīs al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī as maintaining a distinction between good pleasure and love on the one hand and will on the other.¹²³ Also, Roger Arnaldez has shown that al-Rāzī sets out a scheme of two wills, one pertaining to creation and one to command.¹²⁴ Additionally, the Sufi Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996) identifies *irāda* with *mashī'a* and love with God's command, and he also then distinguishes two types of *irāda*: one pertaining to generation and one to command.¹²⁵ In sum Ibn Taymiyya says nothing new with his doctrine of two wills and the restriction of love and good pleasure to God's legislative will. However, he singles out al-Juwaynī's view that God loves all that exists and makes it a frequent focus of polemic. He may believe that this is what Ash'arism truly reduces to, or possibly this doctrine enables him to make the link that he perceives to exist between Ash'arī theology and antinomian Sufism.¹²⁶

Ibn Taymiyya Defending the Coherence of Creation and Command

As is clear from the preceding discussion, Ibn Taymiyya devotes much effort to holding creation and command in balance without compromising one to the other and without succumbing to skepticism or irrationality. However, he devotes relatively little energy to exploring the sense of their relationship when they appear to contradict. Yet, he does not ignore the problem completely. Perhaps his most powerful metaphor capturing the paradoxical

"Un problème de théologie musulmane: Dieu veut-il les actes mauvais? Thèses et arguments," *Studia Islamica* 40 (1974): 5–73 and 41 (1975): 63–92 (at 40:17–23), locates the direct attribution of this view to al-Ash'arī only in non-Ash'arī texts including the Māturīdī theologian al-Pazdawī (d. 593/1099), and he adds that he could find no grounds in al-Ash'arī's texts for attributing the view to the master himself.

¹²³ Bell, *Love Theory*, 233 n. 5. For further historical background, see especially Gimaret, "Un problème de théologie musulmane," 40:17–23; and al-Julaynad, *Qaḍīyyat al-khayr wa al-sharr*, 42–51 (includes Mu'tazilī views). See also, Gardet, *Dieu et la destinée de l'homme*, 120–1; and Meier, "The Cleanest about Predestination," 321–2.

¹²⁴ Roger Arnaldez, "Apories sur la prédestination et le libre arbitre dans le commentaire de Razi," *Mélanges de l'institut dominicain d'études orientales* 6 (1959–1961): 123–136 (at 135–6).

¹²⁵ Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb* (n.pl.: n.p., n.d.), 1:127–8 (i.e. toward the end of Section 30 in Vol. 1), distinguishes between God's command which attaches only to religious obligations and God's love which attaches to both religious obligations and supererogatory works. See also the general discussion of the conflict between God's will (*irāda*) and command (*amr*) in Sufism in Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption*, 101–9.

¹²⁶ Ibn Taymiyya clearly links the Ash'arī equation of will and love to Sufi antinomianism in *Ihtijāj*, MF 8:337–370; and *Hasana*, MF 14:346–359. Cf. Bell, *Love Theory*, 90–1.

linkage of creation and command is the image of seeing with two eyes. I have found only one clear usage of this in the shaykh's writings. Concerning God's will of determination and God's will of the Law, he says, "Judgment (*al-hukm*) goes according to these two wills. Whoever looks at deeds with these two eyes sees. Whoever looks at determination without the Law or the Law without determination is one-eyed."¹²⁷

Ibn Taymiyya explores the coherence of his position in a few different places, but it is in *Minhāj*, writing against al-Ḥillī the Shī'ī theologian of Mu'tazilī orientation, that he makes his fullest contribution. Al-Ḥillī strongly insinuates that the will of the Sunnī God is irrational, charging *inter alia* that the Prophet disobeys God in commanding belief when the Sunnī God wills the unbelief of the unbeliever.¹²⁸ Ibn Taymiyya's counter polemic against Mu'tazilism has been surveyed above. Here we focus on the shaykh's attempt to defend the rationality of his approach.

Wise Purpose in Commanding but not Helping

In an extended discussion in *Minhāj*, Ibn Taymiyya distinguishes two kinds of will (*irāda*) as follows. First is the will of an agent to perform his own act, and second is the will of an agent that someone else commit an act.¹²⁹ With respect to God, the shaykh observes that some affirm only the first kind of will, God's will to act Himself. These are obviously the Jabrīs, although he provides no labels. Conversely, the Qadarīs affirm the second kind of will but deny the first by denying that God creates human acts. Ibn Taymiyya asserts that the Salaf affirm both kinds of will, and he continues with examples from human affairs of how this might be so to advance the plausibility of this view. For instance, someone may command another to do what profits the latter but not help him do it because there is no benefit (*maṣlaḥa*) in it for the commander. This is like someone who advises another to marry a certain woman but does not marry her himself. Ibn Taymiyya argues that if

¹²⁷ MF 8:198. When discussing God's lordship and divinity in *Shirk*, MF 1:90, Ibn Taymiyya speaks similarly, but less vividly, of two views (*mashhad*): "When the servant is found true in this view [of lordship] and [God] gives him success in that such that this view does not veil him from the first view [of God's divinity], he is learned (*faqīh*) in his servitude. These two views are indeed the pivot around which the religion turns." For this reference I am indebted to Yahya M. Michot, "Textes Spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya: IV. Entre la divinité et la seigneurialité, le polymorphisme de l'associationnisme (*shirk*)," *Le Musulman* (Paris) 16 (1991): 8–13, (at 10), which translates *Shirk*, MF 1: 88–94.

¹²⁸ *Minhāj*, 3:154/2:28.

¹²⁹ *Minhāj*, 3:168–177/2:31–4. This distinction is also made in *Minhāj*, 3:18/1:267; and *Jabr*, MF 8:477–8.

this distinction is possible with respect to creatures it is *a fortiori* possible with respect to God. God has commanded human beings what profits them and prohibited them from what harms them. Yet, God does not create all acts which He commands. Such was the case in God commanding Pharaoh and Abū Lahab to believe but not helping them do so because of His wise purpose in that or to avoid some unspecified detriment (*mafsada*).

Ibn Taymiyya goes on in *Minhāj* to emphasize that commanding someone to do something that will benefit the commanded or even the commander is not the same as helping the commanded carry out the act. The commander may refrain from helping in order to avoid his own detriment. As an example, the shaykh cites the quranic story of one who came running to warn Moses to flee. "He told Moses, 'A crowd is conspiring to kill you. Leave! I am an advisor to you' (Q. 28:20). It was to his benefit to command Moses to leave but not to help him in that. Indeed, if he had helped him, his people would have harmed him."¹³⁰ Again, Ibn Taymiyya argues that if it is possible on the human plane that someone command but not help out of consideration for his own wise purpose and benefit then it is *a fortiori* possible for God. He adds another example to illustrate the basic concept. Someone—apparently a king, although the shaykh does not specify—may realize that it would be to the benefit of one of his subjects to learn the ways of power. Furthermore, this king might command his subject to do what would benefit him (i.e. the subject). However, the king himself will not help his subject lest he rise up as an enemy against the king's son. The upshot is that God has a wise purpose in all that He commands and all that He creates "even if there is a kind of harm in that for some people on account of the wise purpose in that."¹³¹

Ibn Taymiyya's various illustrations from human affairs presuppose libertarian freedom in the one commanded, that is, freedom to act apart from any external control. Yet, as the shaykh makes clear at the beginning of this passage in *Minhāj*, the distinction between willing to act oneself and willing that another act involves subsuming the creation of human acts strictly under God's own will to act. It thus goes without saying that Ibn Taymiyya's examples do not apply to the God-human relationship univocally, and the shaykh acknowledges this in an aside as he reiterates his main point:

[As for] the examples that are mentioned concerning creatures—even if it is not possible to mention the like of them with respect to God—the point here is that it is possible with respect to the wise creature to command someone else

¹³⁰ *Minhāj*, 3:172/2:32.

¹³¹ *Minhāj*, 3:171–5/2:32–3 (quote at 3:175/2:33).

with a command and not help him do it. The Creator is all the more worthy (*awlā*) of that possibility with respect to Him with His wise purpose.¹³²

As elsewhere, Ibn Taymiyya does not explain the methodology of his theological jurisprudence as well as he might, but reference to the quranic injunction to give God the highest similitude (*al-mathal al-ā'lā*) discussed in Chapter One makes his procedure reasonably clear. While maintaining that God's essence, attributes, and acts are wholly unlike those of creatures, the shaykh nonetheless seeks to ascribe to God praiseworthy human perfections. In the present passage from *Minhāj*, Ibn Taymiyya wards off the implication in al-Ḥillī's polemic that the relationship between creation and command is irrational by building on examples of human wisdom to point to the praiseworthiness of God's wisdom.

Ibn Taymiyya continues in *Minhāj* with some suggestions as to God's wise purposes in untoward things. God's creation of illness and oppression lead to invocation, humility, repentance, expiation of sins, removal of pride and enmity, and softening of the heart, all benefits that health and justice would not necessarily bring. Ibn Taymiyya ends the present *Minhāj* discussion of two wills by saying that it is not given to humans to know the details of God's wise purposes.¹³³ Further attention will be given to God's wise purposes in evil in Chapter Five below.

A little later in *Minhāj*, Ibn Taymiyya again draws a distinction between will as commanding another and will as helping another. The shaykh quotes the Shī'ī theologian al-Ḥillī's charge that someone (i.e. the Sunnī God) who commands what he does not will and wills what he prohibits is foolish. Ibn Taymiyya argues that this is not so. A doctor who commands a sick person to take medicine does not have to help his patient take it, and advisors in matters of business and agriculture do not have to follow their own advice. Conversely, an advisor may tell an advisee not to do what the advisor himself is doing because it would be harmful to the advisee. The shaykh notes that a snake handler is not foolish to prohibit his son from handling a snake. Likewise, a swimmer tells someone who cannot swim not to swim, and a king who goes out to fight prohibits women from going out with him. Upon mentioning these examples, Ibn Taymiyya makes a clear statement of his methodological aim. He notes that it is not possible to find an example or similitude that is applicable to God in every respect since there is nothing like Him. Rather, the point is to show that it is possible that one

¹³² *Minhāj*, 3:176/2:33.

¹³³ *Minhāj*, 3:176–7/2:33.

commands what he does not will, whereas the Mu'tazilīs think this to be foolish necessarily.¹³⁴

Doing what one Hates for a Wise Purpose that Is Loved

As Bell has observed, Ibn Taymiyya also tries to give sense to the conundrum of creation and command by interpreting God's creation of things contradicting His command as a means to that which He loves. Again, the shaykh articulates this most fully in *Minhāj* when responding to al-Ḥillī's Mu'tazilism. He argues that humans may will things that they hate as when taking medicine. Conversely, they may will not to have things that they love as when a sick person does not eat something that would harm him. Similar logic applies to someone fasting who does not eat even though he loves food or does not drink even though he is thirsty. Likewise for someone who loves to follow his appetites but does not do so because he hates them from the perspective of his reason and religion. The shaykh infers that if these distinctions are possible with respect to creatures, then there is no reason that they might not be possible for God. Ibn Taymiyya extends this thinking into a distinction between what is willed and loved in itself and what is willed accidentally as a means (*wasīla*) to something that is loved in itself. For example, a sick person may take medicine as a means to the health that he loves and wills. Thus, the shaykh concludes, there are two kinds of will (*irāda*): the will for what is loved in itself and the will for something hated but willed for the sake of something else that is loved in itself.¹³⁵

In defense of God's creation of hateful things as a means to things that He loves, Ibn Taymiyya observes the need to choose between contrary alternatives. At the human level, we understand that one cannot enjoy everything at once. The pleasure (*ladhdha*) of eating precludes the pleasure of drinking at the same time. Listening to one thing prevents listening to another. One cannot simultaneously go on hajj and fight in jihad. Everything has its necessary concomitants. Similarly, even though God is powerful over all things, He cannot create contraries simultaneously in one place, and He cannot create a son before his father. God is bound to follow the rules of logic. Thus, if

¹³⁴ *Minhāj*, 3:188–190/2:36–7.

¹³⁵ *Minhāj*, 3:163–4/2:30, 3:182/2:35, 3:207/2:41, 5:414/3:103; *Iḥtiṭāj*, MF 8:362–3; and *Jabr*, MF 8:478.

He creates obedience in some but not in others, it is for some wise purpose that could not have been achieved through some other means.¹³⁶

In some places in *Minhāj*, the shaykh defines God's wise purpose itself as that which is willed and loved. He asserts, "[God] created creatures according to His wise purpose that He loves."¹³⁷ Moreover, God creates things that He hates and loathes "for the sake of a wise purpose that He loves and is well pleased with."¹³⁸ Elsewhere, he notes that these things are created with respect to their end (*ghāya*) and not for themselves,¹³⁹ and this explains God's creation of satans and other detestable things.¹⁴⁰ He adds in *Minhāj* that God could have created everyone to be a believer but has not done so in His wisdom. He may know that that would have led to some end that He would have hated.¹⁴¹ Ibn Taymiyya does not speculate what that hateful end might have been. In keeping with his method of giving God the highest similitude, his aim is simply to suggest how it might be thought that God loves the wise purpose in what He creates.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how Ibn Taymiyya polemicizes against three currents which he believes fail to hold God's creation and God's command in proper balance. First, he castigates the Qadarīs and the Mu'tazilīs for denying God's all-encompassing creation and falling into dualism by asserting that human beings are the creators of their own acts. Second, he charges the Jahmīs, the Ash'arīs and the Sufis with using God's creation and determination of human acts as an excuse to weaken adherence to the Law. Moreover, the shaykh alleges that Ibn 'Arabī and his followers not only annul human responsibility but also collapse the distinction between Creator and creature into a metaphysical monism that makes value judgments meaningless because everything is divine. In the treatise *Shams*, Ibn Taymiyya accuses both the Mu'tazilīs and the Ash'arīs of having fallen afoul of the belief that God's creation of human acts is incompatible with rational judgment of the ethical value of

¹³⁶ *Minhāj*, 3:183–6/2:35–6, 5:415–6/3:103–4. Cf. *Jabr*, MF 8:512–3.

¹³⁷ *Minhāj*, 5:408/3:102. Cf. *Minhāj*, 5:401/3:100.

¹³⁸ *Minhāj*, 5:411/3:102. Cf. *Thulth*, MF 17:99.

¹³⁹ *Ihtijāj*, MF 8:363, in which Ibn Taymiyya also notes that the correct attitude of the Sufi gnostic (*ʿarif*) is to hate the unbelief and disobedience that God creates just as God hates it but to love God's wise purpose in creating these things just as God loves His wise purpose.

¹⁴⁰ *Jabr*, MF 8:478.

¹⁴¹ *Minhāj*, 3:183/2:35.

those same acts. The Mu'tazilis maintain that reason distinguishes good and bad human acts and that this precludes God's creation of these acts. For the Ash'arīs, God's creation of human acts precludes rational discernment of the ethical value that God attaches to these acts. Ibn Taymiyya censures a third group consisting of poets, free-thinkers and the ethically lax, and he charges these with following Iblīs in making God's creation and command out to be contradictory and disparaging God's wise purpose and justice.

Beyond polemics, Ibn Taymiyya employs his hermeneutic of creation and command to give sense to diverse vocabularies found in the Qur'an and the wider religious discourse. Equivalent terms for expressing God's creation of all things include lordship, determination, will (*mashī'a*), inspiration, power and the ontological words. Terms used on the level of command and prohibition include divinity, love, good pleasure, hate, the religious and legislative words and the distinction between piety and immorality. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya identifies a number of words, including will (*irāda*), judgment (*ḥukm*) and decree (*qadā'*), which appear in the Qur'an in an ontological sense at some points and in a legislative sense at others. These various sets of terms indicate two distinct realms, that of God's determination of all things and that of human responsibility to obey God.

Ibn Taymiyya does not often address the rational difficulty in upholding creation and command simultaneously. However, especially in *Minhāj*, he does employ the juridical imperative to give God the highest similitude to show that God creating what opposes God's command need not be irrational. Citing various examples from human affairs, he argues that someone may have a wise purpose in commanding someone to do something but refrain from helping, or that someone may do something he hates out of love for a desirable end. While recognizing that these explanations do not fully explain the relation of God's creation to God's command, Ibn Taymiyya maintains that such worthy intentions are *a fortiori* ascribable to God.