

# Philosophical Exegesis in Context. Some Views by Ibn Taymiyya

Yahya M. Michot  
Hartford Seminary

## Introduction

Like their Jewish or Christian counterparts, Muslim philosophers did not remain indifferent to the truth value of their revealed scriptures. They however approached them in a variety of ways. Three examples will suffice here to illustrate this point.

In his famous *Risāla Aḍḥawiyya*, Avicenna states explicitly that “what is wanted by the Law and religion (*milla*) that have come [to us] through the tongue of any of the Prophets is to address all the crowd (*al-jumbūr kāffā*)” and that “it is unacceptable (*mumtaniʿ*) to communicate to the crowd the true doctrine (*taḥqīq*).”<sup>1</sup> The theology taught by the Prophets is thus a minimalist one and, concerning for example eschatology, “the outer meaning of the Laws cannot be used as an argument.”<sup>2</sup> In the revealed scriptures, philosophers might find images of their own intelligible truths but, contrarily to what al-Fārābī or the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ would say, teaching such truths or, in other words, their philosophical interpretations of scriptural texts, is neither the aim nor the responsibility of the Prophets.

*Qānūn al-taʾwīl* (*The Rule for interpretation*), a text circulating under the name of al-Ghazālī,<sup>3</sup> seems to have been influenced by Avicenna’s *Risāla Aḍḥawiyya*. Therein, three types of contexts are distinguished for the scholar: contexts offering the possibility of “close interpretations” (*taʾwīlāt qarība*), contexts demanding “distant interpretations” (*taʾwīlāt baʿīda*), and contexts “in which the manner to interpret is fundamentally not clear,” as is for example the case with the liminary letters of some of the Qurʾānic sūras.<sup>4</sup> In such a situation, the author remarks, nobody can dispense with making a choice. He therefore has three advices to give. Firstly, “not to want to examine all this.” As mentioned in the Qurʾān (*al-Isrāʾ* – 17: 85), we indeed “have been given, of knowledge, but little.” Moreover, what was meant by the Prophet in all this is not always known, even to “the greatest ulemas.” Second advice: to trust the intellect as “the intellect attests

<sup>1</sup> AVICENNA, *Risāla Aḍḥawiyya*, partial translation in Y. MICHOT, *A Mamlūk Theologian’s Commentary on Avicenna’s Risāla Aḍḥawiyya. Being a Translation of a Part of the Dar’ al-Taʾāruḍ of Ibn Taymiyya, with Introduction, Annotation, and Appendices*, Part i, in *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 14:2 (Oxford, 2003), p. 149-203, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>3</sup> AL-GHAZĀLĪ, *Qānūn al-taʾwīl*, in M. M. ABŪ L-ʿALĀʾ (ed.), *Maʾarīj al-quḍs fī madārij maʾrifat al-naḥs wa maʾa-hu Qānūn al-taʾwīl* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jindī, 1388/1968), p. 232-246.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 239.

to the truth of the Law” (*al-‘aql muṣṭakakī al-shar‘*). In a number of passages, “interpreting is indeed unavoidable” (*lā budd min al-ta’wīl*). Third and final advice: “in case of contradicting possible meanings (*ta’arūḍ al-iḥtimālāt*), to abstain from a specific interpretation.” There is indeed a danger in deciding, on the basis of an opinion and conjecture, what God and His Messenger mean. To reduce the number of possible meanings to one, it is “demonstration” (*burhān*) which has to be used.<sup>5</sup> That being said, it would be a mistake to see in such a rational attribution of one single meaning to a particularly vague scriptural text an undue, excessively reductive interpretation leaving no room for exegetical maneuver. When, in his *Fayṣal al-tafrīqa*, al-Ghazālī explains that “deeming as true” (*taṣdīq*) something said to exist by the Prophet consists in “acknowledging [its] existence” (*al-i’tirāf bi-wujūd*), does he not open the door to a multiplicity of interpretations by directly adding that “existence is of five levels”: “Existence is indeed essential (*dhātī*), sensory (*ḥissī*), imaginal (*khayālī*), intellectual (*‘aqlī*), and analogous (*shibhī*)?”<sup>6</sup>

For Averroes, “the purpose of Scripture is simply to teach true science and right practice.”<sup>7</sup> This hermeneutical statement of the *Faṣl al-maḡāl* reminds one of both al-Fārābī and Avicenna as the first would agree about true science and the second about right practice. As for his exegetical methodology, Averroes would willingly accept al-Ghazālī’s second advice to trust the intellect. For him, “whenever the conclusion of a demonstration is in conflict with the apparent meaning of Scripture, that apparent meaning” indeed “admits of allegorical interpretation.”<sup>8</sup> He nevertheless disagrees with the Ḥujjat al-Islām and accuses him of “committing an offence against the Law and against philosophy”<sup>9</sup> for socio-political reasons: “allegorical interpretations ought to be set down only in demonstrative books”<sup>10</sup> rather than be made accessible to everybody. In this regard, Averroes is again closer to Avicenna’s ideas in the *Risāla Adḥaniyya*.

Avicenna, al-Ghazālī and Averroes might somehow diverge on the exact purpose of Scriptures and the nature of legitimate exegesis but they share a common rationalism. The latter is particularly strong in the case of Avicenna, for whom the literal meaning of revealed and prophetic texts is no argument in the search for truth. Al-Ghazālī’s rationalism might go together with some agnosticism but eventually opens the door to very different understandings of reality. Sociologically, these three thinkers also have things in common, notably a division of people into

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 239-241.

<sup>6</sup> AL-GHAZĀLĪ, *Fayṣal al-tafrīqa*, in M. M. ABŪ L-‘ALĀ’ (ed.), *al-Quṣūr al-‘awālī min rasā’il al-imām al-Ghazālī*, Part I (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jindī, 1390/1970), p. 123-159, p. 129. See thereabout Sh. A. JACKSON, *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam: Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī’s Fayṣal al-Tafrīqa Bayna al-Islām wa al-Zandaqa* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, “Studies in Islamic Philosophy,” 2002), p. 93-96.

<sup>7</sup> G. F. HOURANI, *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*. A translation, with introduction and notes, of Ibn Rushd’s *Kitāb faṣl al-maḡāl*, with its appendix (*Ḍamīma*) and an extract from *Kitāb al-kashf ‘an manāḥij al-adilla* (London: Luzac & Co., 1976), p. 63.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

different groups relatively to knowledge. This elitism might not be manifest in the two Ghazālīan texts quoted but is obvious in Avicenna's *Risāla Adḥawiyya* and in Averroes' *Faṣl al-maqāl*.

The theologian-muftī Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) had access to each of the works of Avicenna, al-Ghazālī and Averroes examined *supra*, read them, quoted parts of them and commented on them.<sup>11</sup> *Ta'wīl* methodology was of interest to him and he deals with it in a number of writings, notably in an *Epistle on the knowledge of the esoteric and of the exoteric*.<sup>12</sup> This epistle, which is in fact a *fatwā* answering a question about the seven esoteric meanings of the Qur'ān,<sup>13</sup> offers, among other things, a short, useful, passage<sup>14</sup> situating philosophical explanations (*tafsīr*) and interpretations (*ta'wīl*) of the revealed scripture within the multi-dimensional space of ideological debates in Islam around 700/1300. It makes it easier to measure properly what was at stake in these philosophical readings of some scriptural texts and to understand why some of them were judged theologically problematic or simply unacceptable.

Ibn Taymiyya's fundamental standpoint is a salafī position: "the well-known *tafsīr* coming from the Companions [of the Prophet] and [their] Followers" is the best and any other approach to the Qur'ān "opens the door to free-thinking (*ẓandaqa*) and heresy (*ilḥād*)."<sup>15</sup> In order to illustrate his views, the theologian-muftī gives lists of esoteric interpretations which he considers typical of two groups.

<sup>11</sup> On Ibn Taymiyya and Avicenna's *Risāla Adḥawiyya*, see Y. MICHOT, *A Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary on Avicenna's Risāla Adḥawiyya. Being a Translation of a Part of the Dar' al-Ta'arūf of Ibn Taymiyya, with Introduction, Annotation, and Appendices*, Part i, in *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 14:2 (Oxford, 2003), p. 149-203; Part ii, in *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 14:3 (Oxford, 2003), p. 309-363. On Ibn Taymiyya's use of al-Ghazālī's *Qānūn al-ta'wīl* and *Fayṣal al-tafriqa*, see Y. MICHOT, *An Important Reader of al-Ghazālī: Ibn Taymiyya*, in *The Muslim World*, no 103/1 (January 2013), p. 131-160, p. 132; *Al-Ghazālī's Esotericism According to Ibn Taymiyya's* Bughyat al-Murtād, in G. TAMER (ed.), *Islam & Rationality. The Impact of al-Ghazālī. Papers Collected on His 900th Anniversary*, vol. I (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2015), p. 345-374, p. 347-348, 354, 359, 371-373. On Ibn Taymiyya's use of Averroes' *Faṣl al-maqāl*, see F. BEN AHMED's paper to this same conference.

<sup>12</sup> IBN TAYMIYYA, *Risāla fi 'ilm al-bāṭin wa l-ẓāhir*, in *Majmū' al-fatāwā*, ed. 'A. R. b. M. IBN QĀSIM, 37 vols. (Rabat: Maktabat al-Ma'ārif, 1401/1981. — King Khālid ed.), vol. xiii, p. 230-269 (sigle F).

<sup>13</sup> "The Shaykh al-Islam, may God sanctify his spirit, was asked about a group of spiritual indigents (*mutafaqqir*) who claim that the Qur'ān has an esoteric [meaning] (*bāṭin*) and that this esoteric [meaning] has an esoteric [meaning, and so on] until seven esoteric [meanings]. They relate thereabout a ḥadīth according to which the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, said: 'The Qur'ān has an esoteric [meaning] (*bāṭin*); [this] esoteric [meaning] has an esoteric [meaning, and so on] until seven esoteric [meanings].' They give of the Qur'ān an other explanation than what is known to come from the Companions, the Followers, and the imāms from among the jurists..." (Ibid., p. 230). For Ibn Taymiyya, "the mentioned ḥadīth is among the fabricated ḥadīths reported by none of the people of knowledge and which are not found in any of the books of ḥadīth" (Ibid., p. 231-232).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 235-242. A complete translation of this passage is given *infra*.

<sup>15</sup> "It has thereby become clear that whoever explains (*fassara*) the Qur'ān or the ḥadīth, and gives of it an other exegesis (*ta'annala*) than the well-known explanation (*tafsīr*) coming from the Companions and the Followers is forging a lie against God, heretizing about the signs of God, and distorting (*muḥarrij*) the sense of the words. This is opening the door of free-thinking and heresy. It is necessarily known to be vain in\* the religion of Islam" \* fi : min F (IBN TAYMIYYA, *Risāla fi 'ilm al-bāṭin wa l-ẓāhir*, p. 243).

First come interpretations attributed to esotericist Qarmaṭs:

|                                                                                     |   |                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Praying                                                                             | = | knowing our secrets                                                     |
| Fasting                                                                             | = | keeping our secrets concealed                                           |
| The pilgrimage ( <i>ḥajj</i> )                                                      | = | a trip to visit our sanctified shaykhs                                  |
| The Garden (for the elite)                                                          | = | enjoying the pleasures in this life                                     |
| The Fire                                                                            | = | observing the [religious] prescriptions and coming under their burdens  |
| The mount ( <i>dabba</i> ) (Q, <i>al-Naml</i> – 27: 82)                             | = | the scholar talking knowledgeably in every moment                       |
| Isrāfīl, who will blow the trumpet (Q, <i>al-Anʿām</i> – 6: 73)                     | = | the scholar who blows his knowledge into the hearts, so that they live  |
| Gabriel                                                                             | = | the intellect agent from which the existents flow                       |
| The reed pen ( <i>qalam</i> ) (Q, <i>al-Qalam</i> – 68: 1)                          | = | the first intellect claimed by the philosophers to be the first creator |
| The planets, the moon and the sun which Abraham saw (Q, <i>al-Anʿām</i> – 6: 76-78) | = | the soul, the intellect and the necessary existent                      |
| The four rivers which the Prophet saw during [his] <i>miʿrāj</i>                    | = | the four elements                                                       |
| The Prophets whom the Prophet saw in the heaven                                     | = | the planets                                                             |
| - Adam                                                                              | = | the moon                                                                |
| - Joseph                                                                            | = | Venus                                                                   |
| - Idrīs                                                                             | = | the sun                                                                 |
| The clear registry ( <i>imām</i> ) (Q, <i>Yā Sīn</i> – 36: 12)                      | = | ʿAlī                                                                    |
| Abū Lahab's two hands (Q, <i>al-Masad</i> – 111: 1)                                 | = | Abū Bakr & ʿUmar                                                        |
| The imāms of unbelief (Q, <i>al-Tawba</i> – 9: 12)                                  | = | Tālḥa & al-Zubayr                                                       |
| The cursed tree (Q, <i>al-Isrāʾ</i> – 17: 60)                                       | = | The Umayyads                                                            |
| The cow to slaughter (Q, <i>al-Baqara</i> – 2: 67)                                  | = | ʿĀʾisha                                                                 |

As for the second group, esotericist Sufis and philosophers, they indulge in the following sort of interpretations:

|                                                                                              |   |                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pharaoh (Q, <i>Ṭā Hā</i> – 20: 24)                                                           | = | the heart                                                                                                                       |
| The cow to slaughter (Q, <i>al-Baqara</i> – 2: 67)                                           | = | the soul                                                                                                                        |
| The words said ( <i>taklīm</i> ) to Moses (Q, <i>al-Nisāʾ</i> – 4: 164)                      | = | what flowed upon him from the intellect agent or another [source]                                                               |
| The taking off the sandals (Q, <i>Ṭā Hā</i> – 20: 12)                                        | = | abandoning this world and the hereafter                                                                                         |
| The tree from which Moses was spoken to, the sanctified valley (Q, <i>al-Qaṣaṣ</i> – 28: 30) | = | states that occur to the heart when the knowledges come about to it                                                             |
| The angels and the devils                                                                    | = | the powers of the soul                                                                                                          |
| What the people are promised in the hereafter                                                | = | similitudes ( <i>amthāl</i> ) struck in order to make [them] understand what comes to the soul as pleasure and pain after death |

Put all together, the *taʾwīlāt* listed by Ibn Taymiyya appear to be of various natures. They come from different ideological disciplines or groups: Shīʿī sects like the Nuṣayrīs, the Ismāʿīlīs and the Rāfīḍīs, philosophers like the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and Avicenna, Sufis like al-Ghazālī, Ibn Qasī and Ibn ʿArabī. They also illustrate several agendas: gnostic, bāṭinī, occult, or politico-religious, or philosophical, or astrological, or moralist. The last example given by the theologian-muftī is typical of his tendency to go sometimes too quickly in his examination of things and to merge them. He indeed does not explain what the eschatological promises are an image of, how they are interpreted, but gives the rationale for using these images. What he offers is thus less an example than an analysis. That being said, it is clear that, for Ibn Taymiyya, the philosophical interpretations of scriptural texts are an aspect of a wider phenomenon of esotericism involving some Shīʿī sects, later excessive Sufis and later Kalām theologians. They are thus not satisfactorily, relevantly approached when separated, abstracted, from this context of all-pervading esotericism.

Who are the main culprits responsible for such a situation? The theologian-muftī distinguishes two types of them: early ones and later ones. The early culprits are al-Ghazālī and his “master,” Avicenna. As confirmed by several recent studies on the Hujjat al-Islām,<sup>16</sup> Ibn Taymiyya correctly understands that al-Ghazālī, despite sometimes criticizing the philosophers, “had entered into the esoteric doctrines (*butūn*) of the philosophers, then wanted to come out [from them] but was not able [to do so].” “[Avicenna’s] *Healing - al-Shifā’*,” had in fact “made him sick.” Hence the esotericism of a work like his *Mishkat al-anwār* (*The Niche of the Lights*). As for the later culprits, they are for Ibn Taymiyya the later Sufis and Kalām theologians having adopted Avicenna’s understanding of the prophetic eschatological promises and threats as socio-politically useful myths, not as hereafter related information. He does not name which theologians he has in mind (al-Ghazālī? Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī?) but, among the Sufis, explicitly identifies Ibn ‘Arabī, “the author of *The Bezels - al-Fuṣūṣ*.” He mentions some of his “exegesis (*ta’wīl*) and explanations (*tafsīr*) which every believer and every Jew and Nazarene know through a necessary (*ḍarūrī*) knowledge to be in conflict with what was brought by the Messengers” and does not resist the pleasure of another attack against the Akbarī doctrine of the unicity of existence (*wahdat al-mujūd*).

This search for culprits might sound a bit like a witch-hunt but reveals an interesting fact: for Ibn Taymiyya, rather than just being part of a broader societal reality marked by esotericism, the exegesis of the philosophers have played a pivotal role in the creation of this reality, at least in its later developments. Hence, his opposition to them.

Similarly interesting is the typology of interpretations which Ibn Taymiyya eventually presents in his *Epistle on the knowledge of the esoteric and of the exoteric*. It basically consists in distinguishing two “species” of things: vain (*bāṭil*) exegesis and *ishārāt*.

For the theologian-muftī, an interpretation is vain when it is in conflict “with what is known,” i.e. what the Muslims know “concerning the fundamentals of their religion,” and “the indication (*dalīl*) given of it will thus be nothing except vain.” It is the case when a textual exegesis implies for example that the five prayers are not an obligation or that “wine and abominations” are not prohibited. Such interpretations are nothing but “forgeries.”

The *ishārāt* species of exegesis come up with meanings that are true, valid relatively to the Qur’ān and the Sunna, but the scriptural passages put forward as indicating such meanings are themselves problematic, with the consequence that such exegesis are “often confusing for some people.” Two situations ought then to be distinguished. (a) The interpreter claims that only his

<sup>16</sup> See for example Y. MICHOT, *Avicenne et le Kitāb al-Maḍnūn d'al-Ghazālī*, in *Bulletin de Philosophie médiévale*, 18 (Louvain, 1976), p. 51-59; J. JANSSENS, *Al-Ghazālī and His Use of Avicennian Texts*, in *Problems in Arabic Philosophy*, redigit M. MAROTH (Piliscsaba: The Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, “Acta et studia, II,” 2003), p. 37-49; M. AEFIF AL-AKITI, *The Three Properties of Prophethood in Certain Works of Avicenna and al-Ghazālī*, in J. MCGINNIS (ed., with the assistance of D. REISMAN), *Interpreting Avicenna: Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islam. Proceedings of the Second Conference of the Avicenna Study Group* (Leiden - Boston: Brill, “Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Texts and Studies, LVI,” 2004), p. 189-212; F. GRIFFEL, *Al-Ghazālī’s Concept of Prophecy: The Introduction of Avicennan Psychology into Aṣ’arite Theology*, in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 14 (2004), p. 101-144; *Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); A. TREIGER, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought. Al-Ghazālī’s theory of mystical cognition and its Avicennian foundation* (London - New York: Routledge, 2012).

exegesis is the true meaning intended, or indicated, by the Qur'ānic and/or ḥadīth wording he puts forward. Be they deliberate forgeries or just mistakes, such exegesis are also wrong. The first of the six examples Ibn Taymiyya gives of them consists in claiming that the cow to slaughter mentioned in Q. *al-Baqara* – 2: 67 is the soul. (b) The interpreter does not say that the Qur'ānic and/or ḥadīth text demands the exegesis he produces but offers the latter from some “view-point” or “consideration” (*i'tibār*), or “analogically” (*qiyās*). By so doing, he does not invoke “the indicative quality of the wording” (*dalalat al-lafẓ*) as exclusively allowing his interpretation. For Ibn Taymiyya, what he does is comparable to the analogies (*qiyās*) used by jurists or to “what the Sufis call “allusion” (*ishāra*). The first example the theologian-muftī gives of this second sort of exegetic *ishārāt* refers to the Qur'ānic verse *al-Wāqī'a* – 56: 79: “No one touches it except the pure ones” and consists in saying that “just as the preserved tablet in which the letters of the Qur'ān are written is not touched except by a pure body, likewise the meanings of the Qur'ān are not tasted except by the pure hearts, i.e. the hearts of those fearing God.” Such an interpretation of the *ishāra* type, Ibn Taymiyya remarks, offers “a valid meaning and a valid consideration.” This is however not always the case: just like the analogies of jurists, exegetic *ishārāt* can also be vain.

Beside “the well-known *tafsīr* coming from the Companions and the Followers” which he favours, Ibn Taymiyya's typology of exegesis thus comprises three sections: (1) forgeries; (2) exclusivist, vain, *ishārāt* imposing an alternative, weird and supposedly literal meaning as the only true one; (3) *ishārāt* with no claims to exclusivity and that might not always be religiously valid. This being so, where should one expect to find the interpretations developed by the philosophers? For the theologian-muftī, they are forgeries as “the first species [of exegesis and explanations] is frequently found,” not only “in the words of the Qarmats,” but also “of the philosophers in conflict with the Muslims concerning the fundamentals of their religion.”

Ibn Taymiyya's *Epistle on the knowledge of the esoteric and of the exoteric* is a fatwā, i.e. a circumstantial text whose views might differ from those he expresses in other writings. In the pages examined here, he is more interested in exegetical matters than in hermeneutics. Fundamental is his conviction that, as such, scriptural texts have a clear, transparent meaning accessible to all with a good knowledge of the Arabic language and, for some particular passages, the help of the early *tafsīrs*. Despite such a salafism he does however not close the door to all the types of *ta'wīl* and acknowledges the legitimacy of the *ishāra* sort of interpretations which, due to the spiritual, moralist, message they convey, do not threaten the Sunnī practice of the religion. He nevertheless cautions against the risks involved in this sort of exegetical exercise as in the jurists' use of analogy. As for the exclusivist invention of any alternative “indicativeness of the wording” (*dalalat al-lafẓ*) of scriptural texts, he is totally opposed to them. Even more so with qarmatizing or philosophical interpretations, both because of their vain nature and of their negative impact on the Muslim society.

Ibn Taymiyya's treatment of exegetical matters in the pages examined here raises two important questions.

In these pages, the theologian-muftī says nothing about the great classical *tafsīrs*—al-Ṭabarī, al-Zamakhsharī, al-Qurṭubī, etc. Does he simply assimilate them to those “coming from the Companions and the Followers” which he favours, despite the chronological distance separating

them from these first generations and as if, in them, nothing had been added to “the well known explanation (*tafsīr*)” of the Scriptures given by these ancients (*salaf*)?

A second question has to do with Ibn Taymiyya’s characterization of philosophical exegesis as some kind of qarmatizing forgeries. If we look at Avicenna, it is clear that he does not deny the obligatory nature of the five daily prayers or, more generally, the necessity of a literal reading of Scriptures. The purpose of prophethood is indeed not to teach any sort of theology or philosophy beyond the outward meaning of the revealed text but, as said *supra*, to speak to the greatest number in a down to earth language, the only one understood by “the commonalty’s thick nature” (*al-‘ammat al-ghalīza ṭibā‘u-hum*).<sup>17</sup> Concerning for example the Garden and the Fire promised by the Qur’ān to the believers, the Shaykh al-Ra’īs is so deeply convinced of their reality that he elaborates an imaginal eschatology in order to explain how the believers effectively live the bliss they are promised or the chastisement they are threatened with.<sup>18</sup> As for the philosophical interpretations of scriptural texts that Avicenna, al-Ghazālī and others develop in some of their writings, why should they be prohibited? Rather than forgeries, could they not be considered as nothing more than philosophical *ishārāt*, in the sense given to this word by Ibn Taymiyya, just as there are legitimate Sufi exegesis? These philosophers do not impose their philosophical interpretations of scriptural texts as the only true meaning of the latter, exclusively demanded by an alternative *dalālat al-lafẓ* and to be adopted by all. The opposite is rather true as, according to al-Ghazālī and Averroes as much as according to Avicenna, such philosophical interpretations are only destined to an elite and should be kept away from all those unworthy to understand them.

The theologian-muftī’s approach of philosophical exegesis in his *Epistle on the knowledge of the esoteric and of the exoteric* is thus problematic because it is too general or, more precisely, because he examines *falsafa* in its historical, sociological and ideological context. He cannot help not asking where these interpretations come from, who is promoting them or similar ones, where they lead to and which societal evolutions they trigger. This being so, should he be blamed for operating not just as an historian of ideas but, also, as a theologian-muftī?

## TRANSLATION

[235] Concerning the realities (*ḥaqā’iq*) of the faith, humans greatly differ from each other in eminence. The people of the highest class know the state (*ḥāl*) of the people of the lowest one, without the opposite [being true], just as [amongst] the people of the Garden, in the Garden, the highest ones go down towards the lowest ones whereas the lowest ones do not rise towards the highest. The knowledgeable one knows the ignorant because he was ignorant, whereas the ignorant does not know the knowledgeable one because he has not been knowledgeable. This is why, concerning the esoteric (*bāṭin*) realities of the faith and the realities of the informations on the unknown (*ghayb*) provided by the Messengers, there are [things] that are not known except by the

<sup>17</sup> AVICENNA, *Risāla Adḥawīyya*, partial translation in Y. MICHOT, *A Mamlūk Theologian’s Commentary on Avicenna’s Risāla Adḥawīyya*, Part i, p. 176.

<sup>18</sup> See Y. MICHOT, *La destinée de l’homme selon Avicenne. Le retour à Dieu (ma’ād) et l’imagination* (Louvain: Peeters, “Académie Royale de Belgique, Fonds René Draguet, V,” 1986).

elite of humans. Such a knowledge is thus esoteric from two viewpoints: inasmuch as its object is esoteric, and inasmuch as the knowledge [of it] is hidden (*baṭīn*), unknown to most humans. Moreover, in speaking in that way about this knowledge, true and vain (*baṭīl*) [statements] come about that do not come about [when speaking] about other things. What is in agreement with the Book and the Sunna is true whereas what conflicts with it is vain, as said about exoteric (*ẓāhir*) matters.<sup>19</sup>

When, by “esoteric knowledge” (*al-‘ilm al-baṭīn*), is intended (*urida*) the knowledge which is hidden (*baṭāna*) from most people or from some of them, this is of two species. One is an esoteric [knowledge] which conflicts with the exoteric knowledge whereas the second [species] does not conflict with it. [236] Now, the first [species of knowledge] is vain. Whoever claims [to possess] a hidden (*baṭīn*) knowledge, or knowledge of [something] esoteric, that [knowledge] conflicting with the exoteric knowledge, is indeed making an error and is either a heretic (*mulḥid*), a free-thinker (*ẓindīq*), or an ignorant, someone going astray. As for the second [species of knowledge], like speaking about the exoteric knowledge it may be true and it may be vain. When the esoteric is not in conflict with the exoteric, its vain nature (*buṭlān*) is not known on the part of its conflicting with the exoteric, known [thing]. If it is known that it is true, it is thus accepted whereas, if it is known that it is vain, it is refused—and, if not so, one keeps away from it.

The esoteric conflicting with the exoteric, known [thing], is similar to what is claimed by the esotericist Qarmaṭs:<sup>20</sup> the Ismā‘īlīs,<sup>21</sup> the Nuṣayrīs,<sup>22</sup> and their like—those who agree with them among the philosophers and the excessive (*ghulāt*) Sufis and Kalām theologians. The worst of these Qarmaṭs claim that the Qur’ān and Islam have an esoteric [dimension] conflicting with [their] exoteric one. The prayer which one is commanded to perform, they say, is not this prayer, or it is only the commonalty which is commanded to perform this prayer; as for the elite, praying consists, in their case, in knowing our secrets. Fasting is keeping our secrets concealed and the pilgrimage consists in going on a trip in order to visit our sanctified shaykhs. For the elite, they say, the Garden is enjoying the pleasures in this life, whereas the Fire is observing the [religious] prescriptions and coming under their burdens. The mount (*dabba*) which God will bring out for

<sup>19</sup> — : faṣl F

<sup>20</sup> One of the Ismā‘īlī sects; see W. MADELUNG, *EI2*, art. *Qarmaṭi*.

<sup>21</sup> One of the main Shī‘ī sects, named after Ismā‘īl b. Ja‘far al-Šādiq; see W. MADELUNG, *EI2*, art. *Ismā‘īliyya*; F. DAFTARY, *A Short History of the Ismailis: Traditions of a Muslim Community* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).

<sup>22</sup> Extremist Shī‘ī sect named after Muḥammad b. Nuṣayr al-Fihri l-Numayrī, a disciple of the 10th or 11th Twelver imāms, and still extant today (‘Alawīs of Syria); see D. GIMARET, J. JOLIVET & G. MONNOT, AL-SHAH-RASTĀNĪ, *Livre des religions et des sectes*. Traduction avec introduction et notes, 2 vols. (Louvain: Peeters – Paris: UNESCO, “Collection Unesco d’œuvres représentatives. Série arabe,” 1986), vol. i, p. 542, n. 225; Y. FRIEDMAN, *The Nuṣayrī-‘Alawīs: An Introduction to the Religion, History, and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria* (Leiden: Brill, 2010). Ibn Taymiyya alludes to, and refutes, the Nuṣayrī doctrines in many texts, including several fatwās; see S. GUYARD, *Le Fatwa d’Ibn Taymiyyah sur les Nosairis*, in *Journal Asiatique*, 6/18 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1871), p. 158-198; Y. FRIEDMAN, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Fatāwā against the Nuṣayrī-‘Alawī Sect*, in *Der Islam*, 82,2 (2005), p. 349-363; *The Nuṣayrī-‘Alawīs*, p. 299-309.

the people,<sup>23</sup> they say, is the scholar talking knowledgeably in every moment. Isrāfīl, who will blow the trumpet,<sup>24</sup> is the scholar who blows his knowledge into the hearts, so that they live. Gabriel is the intellect agent from which the existents flow. The reed pen<sup>25</sup> is the first intellect [237] claimed by the philosophers to be the first creator. The planets, the moon and the sun which Abraham saw<sup>26</sup> are the soul, the intellect and the necessary existent. The four rivers which the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, saw during the night of [his] ascension (*mi'raj*) are the four elements and the Prophets whom he saw in the heaven are the planets: Adam is the moon, Joseph Venus, Idrīs the sun, and similar things.<sup>27</sup>

Many of the Kalām theologians and of the Sufis got involved in many of the things said by these [esotericists]. These Qarmats, their exoteric [doctrine] is however rejectionism (*rajd*) and their esoteric one sheer unbelief. The commonalty of Sufis and Kalām theologians are not rejectionists considering the Companions as great sinners and they do not call them unbelievers. There are however, among them, some [people] who are like the Zaydīs<sup>28</sup> giving more eminence to 'Alī than to Abū Bakr. Among them, there are also some who give more eminence to 'Alī concerning the esoteric knowledge, such as Ṭarīqat al-Ḥarbī<sup>29</sup> and his like. They claim that 'Alī was more knowledgeable of the esoteric and that this knowledge, from him, was more eminent, whereas Abū Bakr was more knowledgeable of the exoteric. These are the opposite of the Sufis who realize the truth (*mubāqqiq*) and their imāms. They are indeed agreed on the fact that the creature the most knowledgeable of the esoteric knowledge was Abū Bakr the Veracious, and the people of the Sunna and the communion (*jama'a*) are agreed on the fact that Abū Bakr was [the member] of the community most knowledgeable of the esoteric and the exoteric. More than one [author] have reported a consensus (*ijma'*) concerning this.

"And of every thing have We taken account in a clear registry (*imām*)."<sup>30</sup> These esotericists give as explanation (*fassara*) of [this verse] that it is 'Alī.<sup>31</sup> "Perish the two hands of Abū Lahab! Perish he!"<sup>32</sup> They give as explanation of this saying of the Most High that the two [hands] are

<sup>23</sup> See Qur'ān, *al-Naml* – 27: 82: "And when the word [of judgement] falls upon them, We shall bring out for them a mount from the earth who shall speak to them."

<sup>24</sup> See Qur'ān, *al-An'am* – 6: 73: "His word is the truth, and to Him sovereignty belongs on the day when the trumpet will be blown."

<sup>25</sup> See Qur'ān, *al-Qalam* – 68: 1: "By the pen and what they write."

<sup>26</sup> See Qur'ān, *al-An'am* – 6: 76-78: "When night darkened over him, he saw a planet and said, 'This is my Lord!' But when it set, he said, 'I do not like those who set.' Then, when he saw the moon rising, he said, 'This is my Lord!' But when it set, he said, 'Had my Lord not guided me, I would surely have been among the astray lot.' Then, when he saw the sun rising, he said, 'This is my Lord! This is bigger!' But when it set, he said, 'O my people, indeed I disown what you associate [to Him].'"

<sup>27</sup> The link between Adam and the moon, Joseph and Venus, Idrīs and the sun mentioned by Ibn Taymiyya corresponds to the one generally made in the *mi'raj* stories; see J. E. BENCHEIKH, *EI2*, art. *Mi'raj*.

<sup>28</sup> One of the main Shī'ī sects, named after Zayd b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn and which refuses to condemn unconditionally the three first rightly guided caliphs; see W. MADELUNG, *EI2*, art. *Zaydiyya*.

<sup>29</sup> I have not been able to identify this person.

<sup>30</sup> Qur'ān, *Yā Sīn* – 36: 12.

<sup>31</sup> See S. H. NASR (ed.), *The Study Quran. A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: HarperOne, 2015), p. 1072, n. 12.

<sup>32</sup> Qur'ān, *al-Masad* – 111: 1.

Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. “Fight the imāms of unbelief!”<sup>33</sup> [They give as explanation of] this saying that they are Ṭalḥa<sup>34</sup> and al-Zubayr.<sup>35</sup> [238] “The cursed tree [mentioned] in the Qur’ān.”<sup>36</sup> [They give as explanation of this] that it is the Umayyads. As for the esotericist Sufis, they say about this saying of the Most High “Go to Pharaoh!”<sup>37</sup> that he is the heart and, about “God commands you to slaughter a cow”<sup>38</sup>, that it is the soul, whereas those say that it is ‘Ā’isha. They and the philosophers explain the words said (*taklim*) to Moses<sup>39</sup> as what flowed upon him from the intellect agent or another [source]. They deem the taking off the sandals<sup>40</sup> to mean abandoning this world and the hereafter. They explain the “tree”<sup>41</sup> from which Moses was spoken to, the “sanctified valley,”<sup>42</sup> etc. as states that occur to the heart when the knowledges come about to it. Among those who travelled along that [road] are the author of *The Niche of the Lights*<sup>43</sup> and his like. This [work] is among the things for which the Muslims have greatly criticized him. “[Avicenna’s] *Healing – al-Shifā’*,” they said, “made him sick.” “He had entered into the esoteric doctrines (*buṭūn*) of the philosophers,” they also said, “then wanted to come out [from them] but was not able [to do so].” There are people who attack such books and say that they are lyingly attributed to him whereas others say that [al-Ghazālī] disavowed them. This is the most plausible of the things that are said. He indeed clearly affirmed the unbelief of the philosophers about [some] questions, their leading [people] astray in even more questions, and he clearly affirmed that their way does not lead to what is searched for.

The esotericist philosophers explain the angels and the devils as the powers of the soul and what the people are promised in the hereafter as similitudes (*amthāl*) struck in order to make [them] understand what comes to the soul as pleasure and pain after death, not in order to

<sup>33</sup> Qur’ān, *al-Tawba* – 9: 12.

<sup>34</sup> Ṭalḥa b. ‘Ubayd Allāh, one of the first Muslims and one of the ten Companions promised Paradise, both allied to and rival of al-Zubayr against ‘Alī, killed during the Battle of the Camel (36/656); see W. MADELUNG, *EI2*, art. *Ṭalḥa*.

<sup>35</sup> Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Zubayr b. al-‘Awwām, one of the first Muslims and one of the ten Companions promised Paradise, allied to ‘Ā’isha and Ṭalḥa against ‘Alī, killed during the Battle of the Camel (36/656); see I. HASSON, *EI2*, art. *al-Zubayr b. al-‘Awwām*.

<sup>36</sup> Qur’ān, *al-Isrā’* – 17: 60.

<sup>37</sup> Qur’ān, *Ṭā Hā* – 20: 24.

<sup>38</sup> Qur’ān, *al-Baqara* – 2: 67.

<sup>39</sup> See Qur’ān, *al-Nisā’* – 4: 164: “And God spoke directly unto Moses.”

<sup>40</sup> See Qur’ān, *Ṭā Hā* – 20: 12: “Verily I am your Lord. Take off your sandals. You are in the sanctified valley of Ṭuwā.” See Abū l-Qāsim Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn Ibn Qasī (d. 546/1151), *Khal’ al-na’layn fī l-waṣūl ilā ḥaḍrat al-jam’ayn*.

<sup>41</sup> See Qur’ān, *al-Qaṣaṣ* – 28: 30: “And when he came to the [fire], he was called from the right bank of the valley, from the tree in the blessed ground.”

<sup>42</sup> See Qur’ān, *Ṭā Hā* – 20: 12: “Verily I am your Lord. Take off your sandals. You are in the sanctified valley of Ṭuwā.”

<sup>43</sup> Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, eminent theologian and mystic (d. 505/1111); see W. Montgomery WATT, *EI2*, art. *al-Ghazālī*. See A. Ḥ. AL-GHAZĀLĪ, *Mishkāt al-anwār*, edition A. al-‘A. ‘AFĪFĪ (Cairo: al-Dār al-Qawmiyya li-l-Ṭibā’a wa l-Nashr, 1383/1964); W. H. T. GAIRDNER, *Al-Ghazālī’s Mishkāt al-anwār* (“*The Niche for Lights*”). A Translation with Introduction (London: Royal Asiatic Society, “Asiatic Society monographs, 19,” 1924).

establish the existence of distinct realities in which it would delight or from which it would suffer. [Ideas] of<sup>44</sup> that type have found their way into the words of many of the later Sufis, similar to which nothing is found coming from their imāms and their predecessors. Likewise, things of that [nature] have found their way into the words of many of the later [239] adepts of Kalām theology and examination that are not found coming from their imāms and their predecessors. These later [authors], despite their going astray and their ignorance, claim that they are more knowledgeable and more cognizant than the Ancients (*salaf*) of the community and its earlier [scholars]. They even got to the point, eventually, where they deemed existence to be one as Ibn ‘Arabī, the author of *The Bezels – al-Fuṣūṣ*,<sup>45</sup> and his like did. They entered into<sup>46</sup> this subject to the point of exiting all rationality (*‘aql*) and religion. And in spite of that they claim that the earlier shaykhs such as al-Junayd b. Muḥammad,<sup>47</sup> Sahl b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Tustarī,<sup>48</sup> Ibrāhīm al-Khawwās,<sup>49</sup> and others died without knowing monotheism (*tanḥīd*). They criticize al-Junayd and his like for distinguishing between the Lord and the servant as [when] he said: “Monotheism is isolating advention (*ḥudūth*) from preeternity.” By my life! Their monotheism in which they deemed the existence of the created to be the existence of the Creator participates of the greatest heresy (*ilḥād*) which the well-guided shaykhs have criticized! They knew that it is vain; so they criticized it, warned people against it, and commanded them to distinguish between the Lord and the servant, the Creator and the created, the preeternal and the advented (*muḥdath*). [They told them] that monotheism consists in knowing that the Lord is different from His creatures, distinct from them, and that, in His creatures, there is nothing of His essence nor, in His essence, anything of His creatures.

[The esotericists] moreover claim that they are more knowledgeable of God than the Envoys and that the Messengers only derive [their] knowledge of God from their Niche. They give an explanation of the Qur’ān corresponding to their vain esotericism, as [is the case with] His words “Because of their slips...”<sup>50</sup> (*mim-mā khaṭī’ati-bim*): “it is these [slips] that made the [people of Noah] go forward (*khaṭā bi-*), so that they drowned in the seas of God’s knowledge.”<sup>51</sup> Likewise for their saying that *al-‘adhbāb*, “torment,” is [a word] deriving from *al-‘udhūba*, “sweetness.” They also say that [240] the words of Noah concerning his people were “a praise of them by means

<sup>44</sup> min: fi F

<sup>45</sup> Muḥyī l-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. al-‘Arabī, theosophist and mystic (Murcia, 560/1165 - Damascus, 638/1240). See IBN ‘ARABĪ, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, edition and commentary by M. M. AL-GHURĀB (Damascus: Maṭba‘a Zayd b. Thābit, 1405/1985); Ch.-A. GILIS, *Ibn ‘Arabī, Le livre des chatons des sagesse*. Traduction intégrale, notes et commentaires, 2 vols. (Beirut: Al-Bouraq, 1418/1997-1419/1998).

<sup>46</sup> fi: min F

<sup>47</sup> Abū l-Qāsim b. al-Junayd, moderate Sufi of Baghdād, disciple of al-Sarī l-Saqatī and master of al-Ḥallāj (d. 298/910); see A. J. ARBERRY, *EL2*, art. *al-Djunayd*.

<sup>48</sup> Abū Muḥammad Sahl b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Tustarī, theologian and mystic, master of al-Ḥallāj (d. Baṣra, 283/896); see L. MASSIGNON, *EL2*, art. *Sahl al-Tustari*.

<sup>49</sup> Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad b. Ismā‘īl al-Khawwās (d. 291/904), Sufi close to al-Junayd; see K. AL-ZIRIKLI, *al-A‘lām: Qāmūs tarājīm li-ashḥar al-rijāl wa-l-nisā’ min al-‘Arab wa-l-musta‘rabin wa-l-mustashriqīn*, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li-l-Malāyīn, 1990), vol. i, p. 28.

<sup>50</sup> Qur’ān, *Nūḥ* – 71: 25.

<sup>51</sup> Verbatim quote of IBN ‘ARABĪ, *Fuṣūṣ*, ed. AL-GHURĀB, ch. *Noah*, p. 72; see also Ch.-A. GILIS, *Ibn ‘Arabī*, vol. i, p. 128.

of the language of blame.”<sup>52</sup> “As for those who unbelieve, it is the same whether you warn them or warn them not: they will not believe...”<sup>53</sup> They explain these words of the Most High [by adding]: “(...) in the knowledge of the exoteric. Rather, ‘God has set a seal on their hearts (...)’<sup>54</sup> so that they do not know any other than Him, ‘(...) on their hearing and on their eyes;’<sup>55</sup> they thus do not hear from any other than Him and do not see any other than Him. He has indeed no other. They thus do not see other than Him.” “And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him.”<sup>56</sup> About this saying of [the Most High] they say that its meaning is that He has decreed that because, there, there is no other existent than Him. It is thus unimaginable that other than Him be worshiped. All those who worshiped the idols and the calf were thus not worshipping anything other than Him because, there, there is no other.<sup>57</sup> And [they propose other] similar exegesis (*ta’wil*) and explanations (*tafsir*) which every believer and every Jew and Nazarene know through a necessary (*daruri*) knowledge to be in conflict with what was brought by the Messengers like Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad, God bless them all.

The sum of what to say about that is that this type of things (*bab*) comprises two species.

One is [when] the mentioned meaning is vain as it is conflicting with what is known. This is in itself vain. The indication (*dalil*) given of it will thus be nothing except vain. Of something vain there is indeed no indication that would imply it to be true.

The second [species comprises] something which is in itself true. As indications of it they however put forward wordings (*lafẓ*) from the Qur’ān and the ḥadīth by which that is not intended. This is what they call “allusions” (*ishārāt*). There are many things of that type in *The Truths of [Qur’ānic] Explanation – Ḥaqā’iq al-tafsir* of Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān [al-Sulamī].<sup>58</sup> [241]

The first species [of exegesis and explanations] is frequently found in the words of the Qarmaṭs and of the philosophers in conflict with the Muslims concerning the fundamentals of their religion. Whoever knows that God was pleased with the foremost, the first<sup>59</sup> [of the Muslims] and that they were pleased with Him knows that every thing which these [Qarmaṭs and philosophers] mention which is conflicting with that is vain. Whoever affirms the obligatory nature of the five prayers for every individual as long as his reason is present knows that whoever gives a textual exegesis cancelling that [obligation] for some of them has forged a lie (*iftarā*). Whoever knows that wine and abominations are prohibited to every individual as long as his reason is present knows that whoever gives a textual exegesis implying making that licit for some people is a forger.

<sup>52</sup> IBN ‘ARABĪ, *Fuṣṣuṣ*, ch. *Noah*, p. 67; see also Ch.-A. GILIS, *Chatons*, vol. i, p. 120.

<sup>53</sup> Qur’ān, *al-Baqara* – 2: 6.

<sup>54</sup> Qur’ān, *al-Baqara* – 2: 7.

<sup>55</sup> Qur’ān, *al-Baqara* – 2: 6.

<sup>56</sup> Qur’ān, *al-Isrā’* – 17: 23.

<sup>57</sup> See the passages of Ibn ‘Arabī translated and commented on in W. C. CHITTICK, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge. Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 343.

<sup>58</sup> Important Qur’ān commentator, hagiographer and theoretician of Sufism (Nishāpūr, c. 330/940 - c. 412/1021). *Ḥaqā’iq al-tafsir*, his principal commentary on the Qur’ān, was probably finished in 370/980. See AL-SULAMĪ, *Ḥaqā’iq al-tafsir. Tafsir al-Qur’ān al-‘azīz*, ed. S. ‘UMRĀN, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1421/2001); G. BÖWERING, *EI2*, art. *al-Sulamī*.

<sup>59</sup> See Qur’ān, *al-Tawba* – 9: 100: “The foremost, the first of the Emigrants and the Helpers and those who followed them in virtue, God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him.”

As for the second species [of exegesis and explanations], it is the one often confusing for some people. What is meant is indeed valid as the Book and the Sunna indicate it. The problem (*sha'n*) has however to do with the wording which they mention proving it. There are here two possibilities (*qism*).

One of them consists in saying that this meaning is what is intended (*murād*) by the wording and this is a forgery against God. Whoever says that what is intended by His saying “to slaughter a cow”<sup>60</sup> is the soul, by His saying “Go to Pharaoh!”<sup>61</sup> the heart, by “those who are with him” Abū Bakr, by “hard against the unbelievers” ‘Umar, by “merciful amongst themselves” ‘Uthmān, and by “you see them bowing and prostrating”<sup>62</sup> Alī, has lied about God, either deliberately or by mistake.

The second [possibility] consists in deeming that as falling under a consideration from a viewpoint (*i'tibār*) and an analogy (*qiyās*), [242] not under the indicativeness of the wording (*dalalat al-lafẓ*). This participates thus of the species of analogy. What the jurists call “analogy” is indeed what the Sufis call “allusion” (*ishāra*), and this divides into valid and vain just as analogy divides into them. “No one touches it except the pure ones.”<sup>63</sup> Whoever hears this saying of God, Most High is He, says that it is the preserved tablet or the [Qur’ānic] copy (*muṣḥaf*), and says that, just as the preserved tablet in which the letters of the Qur’ān are written is not touched except by a pure body, likewise the meanings of the Qur’ān are not tasted except by the pure hearts, i.e. the hearts of those fearing God, this is a valid meaning and a valid consideration. This is why this is reported from a group of the Ancients. The Most High said: “Alif, Lām, Mīm. This Book, there is no doubt in it, a guidance to those fearing God.”<sup>64</sup> He also said: “This is an exposition for mankind, and a guidance and exhortation for those fearing God.”<sup>65</sup> He also said: “By it God guides those who pursue His contentment unto the paths of peace.”<sup>66</sup> And similar [verses] (...) Likewise, right is whoever says: “The angels do not enter a house in which there is a dog nor [one in which there is someone] in the state of ritual impurity (*junub*)”<sup>67</sup> and considers thereby that the realities of the faith do not enter the heart when there is in it something—pride, jealousy (...)—which defiles it. The Most High said: “Those are the ones whose hearts God did not will to purify.”<sup>68</sup> The Most High also said: “I shall turn away from My signs those who wax arrogant upon the earth without right: even if they were to see every sign, they would not believe in them. And if they were to see the path of guidance they would not take it as a path, but if they were to see the path of error they would take it as a path.”<sup>69</sup> And similar [verses] ...

<sup>60</sup> Qur’ān, *al-Baqara* – 2: 67.

<sup>61</sup> Qur’ān, *Ṭā Hā* – 20: 24.

<sup>62</sup> See Qur’ān, *al-Hujurat* – 49: 29: “Muḥammad is the Messenger of God and those who are with him are hard against the unbelievers and merciful amongst themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating [in worship]...”

<sup>63</sup> Qur’ān, *al-Wāqī’a* – 56: 79.

<sup>64</sup> Qur’ān, *al-Baqara* – 2: 1-2.

<sup>65</sup> Qur’ān, *Āl ‘Imrān* – 3: 138.

<sup>66</sup> Qur’ān, *al-Mā’ida* – 5: 16.

<sup>67</sup> See IBN ḤANBAL, *Musnad*, vol. i, p. 80, 83; also AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Bad’ al-khalq* (Būlāq, vol. iv, p. 114) ; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Libās* (Constantinople, vol. vi, p. 156-157) ;

<sup>68</sup> Qur’ān, *al-Mā’ida* – 5: 41.

<sup>69</sup> Qur’ān, *al-A’raf* – 7: 146.