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Ibn Taymiyya

Shaykh al-Islām Taqī l-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm ibn ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Taymiyya l-Ḥarrānī

DATE OF BIRTH 22 January 1263
PLACE OF BIRTH Ḥarrān
DATE OF DEATH 25 September 1328
PLACE OF DEATH Damascus

BIOGRAPHY
The Ḥanbalī jurist Ibn Taymiyya was one of the most incisive and prolific religious scholars of the late medieval period. His circle of disciples was small, and his ideas were not widely accepted, even within the Ḥanbalī school of law. His atypical theological views and political misfortunes in later years also appear to have made even his closest disciples hesitate before collecting his writings after his death (Bori, ‘The collection’; Bori, ‘Ibn Taymiyya wa-jamāʿatuhu). Nonetheless, Ibn Taymiyya had a disproportionate impact on his immediate context through his activism and polemical writings, and his reformist turn inspired a wide range of Muslim reformers from the 18th century onwards. Central to Ibn Taymiyya’s project was rejuvenating the Islamic belief and practice prescribed in the Qur’an and the Sunna of the Prophet and practiced by the early Muslim community, the salaf. In his writings, he sought to show that his vision of Islam accorded fully with reason, trumping other claimants to superior rationality, such as kalām theology and the Aristotelian-Neoplatonism of the falāsifa, and he worked to distinguish true Islam from later innovations in jurisprudence and Sufism and from theological competitors such as Imāmī Shi‘īsm and Christianity. His writings on Christianity aim to demonstrate the truth of Islam over against Christian doctrine, limit Christian impact on the Muslim community, and clarify the legal boundaries between the two communities.

Ibn Taymiyya was born in 1263 in Ḥarrān into a family of Ḥanbalī scholars, and in 1269 he fled with his family to Damascus to escape Mongol invaders from the east. Settled in Damascus, Ibn Taymiyya was a precocious student of the Islamic sciences and took over teaching at the Sukkariyya madrasa in 1284 upon his father’s death. In 1294, Ibn Taymiyya made his first major public intervention, insisting on the death
penalty for a Christian accused of insulting the Prophet. This led to the shaykh’s detention at the hands of the authorities and spurred him to write Al-ṣārim al-maslūl to clarify the legal issues of the case.

Ibn Taymiyya actively supported the Mamluk Empire of Egypt and Syria in its resistance to the three Mongol invasions of 1299-1300, 1300-1 and 1303, but he also worked diplomatically to reduce bloodshed and harm. He helped negotiate the surrender of Damascus in 1300 in the face of superior Mongol power, and he prevailed upon the Mongols to release prisoners and keep their allies, the Armenians and the Georgians, from wreaking destruction around Damascus. Following the failed third Mongol invasion in 1303, Ibn Taymiyya also wrote Al-risāla l-qubruṣiyya to the crusader baron John II of Giblet, appealing for good treatment of Muslim prisoners held on Cyprus.

The external threats posed by the Mongols, and to a lesser degree by the crusaders, upped the ante for Jews, Christians and Shiʿīs living within the Mamluk realm, especially as some of them had hoped the Mongols would end Mamluk Muslim rule. Churches in Cairo were shut for a time from 1301 and riots in Egypt in 1321 and 1354 led to a significant reduction in the size of the Christian community. Ibn Taymiyya argued for the limitation of Christians and Christian expression on juristic and historical grounds to protect the purity of Muslim practice and identity, and he wrote a number of treatises on Christian churches, monks and religious practices. It has been suggested that his Iqtiḍāʾ al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm, a major polemic against popular Christian and Muslim religious practices, was written in the wake of the disturbances of 1321, but it must in fact be dated to before 1315-16.

In the early 1300s, Ibn Taymiyya’s polemics against Ashʿarī kalām theology and Ibn al-ʿArabī’s philosophical Sufism, as well as his agitation against Sufi transgressors of the Sharīʿa, led to disruption among the ‘ulamāʾ and attracted the attention of the political authorities. This culminated in three trials before the governor of Damascus in 1306 over accusations that Ibn Taymiyya was guilty of corporealism (tajsīm) in his doctrine of God’s attributes. The trials were inconclusive, with the shaykh outwitting his opponents in debate, but he was nonetheless summoned to Cairo for interrogation. Ibn Taymiyya then spent seven years in Egypt and, despite periods of imprisonment and house arrest, he remained active in preaching, writing and confronting Sufi excesses until his return to Damascus in 1313.

Ibn Taymiyya wrote two of his largest and best known works after his return to Damascus. His encyclopedic Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql,
affirming the congruity of reason with revelation, dates to between 1313 and 1317, and his Minhāj al-sunna l-nabawiyya, a vast refutation of Imāmī Shi‘ism, was written thereafter. Ibn Taymiyya’s extensive refutation of Christianity Al-jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ also belongs to this period, dating to 1316 or a little later.

The latter years of Ibn Taymiyya’s life saw him imprisoned twice on legal issues. In 1318, the sultan forbade him from issuing fatwas on divorce (talāq) because he denied the validity of divorce oaths and making three divorce pronouncements at once. The shaykh was eventually accused of violating the sultan’s order and incarcerated in the Citadel of Damascus for five months in 1320-21. Later, in 1326, Ibn Taymiyya was again imprisoned in the Citadel, along with a number of his followers, for unpopular rulings on tomb visitation and criticism of the cult of saints. He continued to write in prison until his pens and paper were removed in the spring of 1328, and he died in the Citadel five months later.

The following entries present Ibn Taymiyya’s works dealing primarily with Christians and Christianity, including those mentioned above. The information about manuscripts in each entry has been culled largely from Brockelmann GAL, the extensive list in Shibl’s 1995 edition of Ibn Taymiyya’s Mas’ala fi l-kanāʾis, al-Shaybānī’s 1993 list of manuscripts in the Süleymaniye in Istanbul, and the introductions to critical editions of Ibn Taymiyya’s works. Efforts have been made to identify as many of the published editions of each work as possible, and three major printed collections of Ibn Taymiyya’s works are indicated with the abbreviations KMF, MRM and MF as follows:

**KMF** = Kitāb majmūʿat fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Taqī l-Dīn ibn Taymiyya l-Harrānī, 5 vols, Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Kurdistān al-ʿIlmiyya, 1908-11

**MRM** = Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, ed., Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil wa-l-masāʾil, 5 parts, Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Manār, 1922-30


**MF** has been reprinted several times by various publishers. The reprint of **MF** from Medina: Mujammāʿ al-Malik Fahd, 2004, retains the pagination of the original, makes the corrections given in the errata at the end of each volume of the first printing, and is accessible at www.archive.org/details/mfsiaitmmfsiaitm. Some reprints of **MF** do not retain the original pagination, nor does the similarly named Majmūʿat al-fatāwā, which is
identical to MF in content, and these should be avoided for scholarly purposes. MF does not indicate the exact textual basis for each item therein, but the introduction to the first volume describes the sources for the collection as a whole: manuscripts found in Saudi Arabia, the Žāhiriyya library in Damascus (Syrian National Library) and elsewhere, as well as previously published works. The treatises from the whole of MRM, for example, have been integrated into MF.

Ibn Taymiyya’s writings are sometimes repackaged in trade collections with little or no scholarly value added. A good example is ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Umayra (ed.), Al-jihād li-Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya, 2 parts in 1 vol., Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1991. This work simply reprints the texts in MF xxviii in the same order without acknowledgement and adds the title, a hortative introduction, and indexes for names and Qur’an and Hadith references. No effort has been made here to go through works of this kind systematically to identify relevant texts, and treatises from such collections are only included when they can be easily identified through the secondary literature.

Also worthy of note is the 14th-century abridger of Ibn Taymiyya’s works, Badr al-Dīn al-Baʿlī (d. 1376-77). Published editions of his abridgements of Ibn Taymiyya’s Iqtidā’ al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm and Al-ṣārim al-maslūl are given in the lists of editions in the entries on the respective works. However, I have not tried to link several short texts in al-Baʿlī’s Mukhtaṣar al-fatāwā l-miṣriyya (ed. ‘Abd al-Majīd Salīm, Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1949; repr. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1985), pp. 512-19, to their fuller versions in Ibn Taymiyya’s corpus because their brevity precludes certain identification. The better part of p. 512 may, however, be al-Baʿlī’s abridgement of Ibn Taymiyya’s fatwa on monks found in MF xxviii, pp. 659-63. Michel, Response, pp. 81-82, surveys some of the content of Mukhtaṣar al-fatāwā l-miṣriyya, pp. 512-19, but without noting the role of al-Baʿlī’s editorial hand.

The following entries by no means exhaust what Ibn Taymiyya has to say about Christianity and Christians, as he also frequently discusses these subjects in works devoted primarily to other topics. It has not been possible to catalogue all of these references, and it must suffice to cite just a few examples here. Ibn Taymiyya’s long commentary on Sūrat al-ikhlāṣ (Q 112) includes a section arguing that Christ is not divine but a creature (MF xvii, pp. 272-86). In Raʾs al-Ḥusayn (MF xxvii, pp. 450-89), a treatise on the shrine cult of Ḥusayn’s head, Ibn Taymiyya lashes out against Christian shrine religion and mentions debating with a group of Christian monks in Cairo (MF xxvii, pp. 460-64, trans. Michot,

In addition, there are numerous very short texts in MF dedicated to Christians and Christianity that have not been given separate entries below. For example, no entry is given for the two-page fatwa at MF iv, pp. 322-23 on whether Jesus is currently alive – Ibn Taymiyya says that he is (trans. Michot, Textes spirituels d’Ibn Taymiyya. Nouvelle série, I, Jésus est vivant, 2009, pp. 1-2). Similarly, there is no entry for the fatwa at MF xxiv, pp. 295-96 concerning a Christian woman who is married to a Muslim man and dies seven months pregnant – should she be buried in the Christian or the Muslim cemetery? As the dead fetus is a Muslim who cannot be buried in a Christian cemetery and the woman is an unbeliever who cannot be buried with Muslims, Ibn Taymiyya rules that she cannot be buried in either cemetery; she must be buried separately. Also, among the several writings on Christians in MF xxviii, pp. 600-67, I provide entries only for the following longer texts: Al-risāla l-qubrāsiyya (pp. 601-30), Masʾala fi l-kanāʾis (pp. 632-46), a treatise on the Pact of ‘Umar (shurūṭ ‘Umar) (pp. 651-56), and Ibn Taymiyya’s fatwa on the legal status of monks noted above (pp. 659-63).

With respect to listing translations and studies in the following entries on Ibn Taymiyya’s works, the aim is to include the major discussions of scholarly significance in European languages, as well as numerous short mentions, and whatever has been come across in Arabic. There is probably much more in Arabic, Urdu and other languages that could have been added here with the benefit of additional time and resources. Collecting and analyzing that material is worthy of a major research project in its own right and would contribute immensely to our understanding of Ibn Taymiyya’s significance for Christian-Muslim relations today.

It should be noted that the scope of the following articles does not extend to Ibn Taymiyya’s writings on jihād, even though this would arguably be relevant to Muslim-Christian relations. The basics of his doctrine may be found in his work of political theory Al-siyāsa l-sharʿiyya (MF xxviii, pp. 244-397), which discusses booty acquired in battle with unbelievers (pp. 269-73), fay’ lands taken from unbelievers (pp. 274-77), and jihād against unbelievers (pp. 349-72). Al-siyāsa l-sharʿiyya has been

**MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

**Primary**


**Secondary**

Y. Rapoport and S. Ahmed (eds), Ibn Taymiyya and his times, Karachi, 2010


C. Bori and L. Holtzman (eds), A scholar in the shadow. Essays in the legal and theological thought of Ibn Qayyīm al-Ğawziyyah, Oriente Moderno monograph series, 90 (2010) (ten articles on Ibn Qayyīm al-Jawziyyah, the foremost student of Ibn Taymiyya, with much comparison to the latter’s thought)


Y. Michot, *Ibn Taymiyya. Muslims under non-Muslim rule*, Oxford, 2006 (pp. 149-69 provide a chronology of Ibn Taymiyya’s life)


M.M. Yunis Ali, Medieval Islamic pragmatics. Sunni theorists’ models of textual communication, Richmond UK, 2000, pp. 87-140

Y. Michot, ‘Vanités intellectuelles ... L’impasse des rationalismes selon le Rejet de la contradiction d’Ibn Taymiyyah’, Oriente Moderno 19 (2000) 597-617

A.D. Knysh, Ibn ʿArabi in the later Islamic tradition. The making of a polemical image in medieval Islam, Albany NY, 1999, pp. 87-111

Samāḥ Ḥamza, Ibn Taymiyya wa-ghayr al-Muslimīn, Tunis, 1998-99 (Diss. University of Tunis 1)


‘ Abd al-ʿAzīz ibn ʿAlī al-Shibl, Ibn Taymiyya. Masʿala fi l-kanāʾis, Riyadh: Maktabat al-ʿUbaykān, 1995 (pp. 25-77 list more than 250 manuscripts of Ibn Taymiyya’s works)
J. Michot, *Ibn Taymiyyah. Lettre à un roi croisé*, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1995 (pp. 27-82 discuss the Mongol invasions of Syria in 1299-1303)


Q. Khan, *The political thought of Ibn Taymiyyah*, Delhi, 1992²

Muḥammad Khayr al-ʿAbbūd, *Qawāʿid tawḥīd al-adyān ʿinda Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya*, Amman, 1994 (extensive quotation from MF to resist those who would put Judaism, Christianity and Islam on the same level at the expense of Islamic supremacy)


T.F. Michel, *A Muslim theologian’s response to Christianity. Ibn Taymiyya’s Al-jawab al-sahih*, Delmar NY, 1984 (pp. 68-86 and 99-135 provide a survey of Ibn Taymiyya’s writings on Christianity)

V.E. Makari, *Ibn Taymiyyah’s ethics. The social factor*, Chico CA, 1983 (pp. 127-31 treat the legal status of the People of the Book)


H.Q. Murad, ‘Ibn Taymiya on trial. A narrative account of his miḥān’, *Islamic Studies* 18 (1979) 1-32 (detail on Ibn Taymiyya’s life events not found elsewhere in English)


D.P. Little, ‘Did Ibn Taymiyya have a screw loose?’ *Studia Islamica* 41 (1975) 93-111


Brocklemann, *GAL* ii, pp. 100-5; S ii, pp. 119-26
WORKS ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Al-jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ; Bayān al-jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ, ‘The correct answer to those who have changed the religion of Christ’

DATE 1316 or shortly thereafter

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Arabic

DESCRIPTION

Ibn Taymiyya’s Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ is a long refutation of the Christian Letter from the people of Cyprus (q.v.), which is a revised version of the Letter to a Muslim friend written by Paul of Antioch, Melkite Bishop of Sidon (q.v.), sometime in the late 1100s or early 1200s. Ibn Taymiyya received the Letter from the people of Cyprus in 1316 and probably completed his Jawāb well before 1321, the year in which Damascene Muslim scholar Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī (q.v.) received a second copy of the Cypriot Christian letter and wrote his own response. The version of the Letter from the people of Cyprus that Ibn Taymiyya quotes section by section in the Jawāb is largely that found in the edition of Ebied and Thomas (Polemic, 2005, pp. 54-147), but with minor additions, deletions and re-orderings. Ibn Taymiyya knew that the Letter from the people of Cyprus was based on the earlier letter by Paul of Antioch, and he was aware of that letter’s wide circulation.

Michel (Response, 1984, p. 78) suggests that Ibn Taymiyya’s Al-risāla l-qubrūṣiyya, which was sent to the Cypriot court to request humane treatment for Muslim prisoners, sparked a kind of dialogue: the Cypriot court replied to Al-risāla l-qubrūṣiyya with the Letter from the people of Cyprus, and Ibn Taymiyya responded in turn with his Jawāb. Ebied and Thomas (Polemic, pp. 17-19) think that this scenario is unlikely because Al-risāla l-qubrūṣiyya is considerably earlier than the Jawāb and the two treatises differ in aim and content. Ebied and Thomas suggest that the Letter from the people of Cyprus was instead written by an Arabic-speaking Christian from the Syrian mainland who had emigrated to Cyprus.

Manuscripts and printed versions of the Jawāb add to its great length by appending Ibn Taymiyya’s Takhjīl ahl al-Injīl to the end without clearly identifying it as a separate work (see the discussion on the Takhjīl in Michel, Response, pp. 370-82). A good critical edition of the Jawāb was published in Riyadh in seven volumes from 1993 to 1999 (hereafter
1999 ed.). The Jawāb runs to nearly 2,000 pages and extends to vol. 5, p. 145, of this edition, while the remainder is devoted to the Takhjīl and indexes. Two earlier editions are often cited in the literature. The Jawāb extends to more than 1,000 pages, to vol. 3, p. 274, in the four-volume 1961-64 Cairo edition (hereafter 1964 ed.), and to vol. 3, p. 258, in the four-volume 1905 Cairo edition. The 1905 edition is based on partial manuscripts held in private libraries in Cairo and Baghdad (see vol. 4, p. 325). The 1964 edition gives no indication of its sources, and it is presumably based on the 1905 edition. The 1999 edition is based on four manuscripts – the earliest dating to 1330, just two years after Ibn Taymiyya’s death – and also on the 1905 and 1964 Cairo editions.

While the Jawāb poses a full-scale challenge to central Christian doctrines such as the Trinity and the Incarnation, its primary purpose is not to refute the Cypriot Letter for its own sake or to provide Muslims with a battery of arguments for disputations against Christians. Rather, the main aim of the work is to clarify Islamic doctrine by making Christianity out to be an example of what Muslims should avoid (Michel, Response, 1984, pp. vii-viii, 99-103; Thomas, ‘Apologetic’, 2010, pp. 255-62). As Ibn Taymiyya himself puts it, ‘By knowing the reality of the Christian religion and its falsity, the falsity of what resembles their views is also known, that is, the views of the heretics and innovators’ (Jawāb 1964, i, p. 19; 1999, i, p. 98). Ibn Taymiyya in the Jawāb warns those he deems wayward in the Muslim community – Sufis given to excess, kalām theologians, Shi‘is, and others – that they are guilty of corrupting their religion in the fashion of Christianity, and he devotes much of the Jawāb to dissecting their errors as well.

The following narrative outline of Ibn Taymiyya’s Jawāb is keyed to the pagination of the 1964 Cairo and 1999 Riyadh editions of the Arabic text and to Thomas Michel’s translation in Response (1984) to aid referencing and further research. Also, material from the Letter from the people of Cyprus is keyed to the pagination in Ebied and Thomas’ 2005 edition and translation. Michel’s Response provides the best access to the Jawāb in a Western language. However, the translation covers only about one-third of the work, sometimes skipping over long sections of the Arabic and occasionally obscuring the progression of Ibn Taymiyya’s thought. Additional outlines of the argument in the Jawāb are found in Siddiqi (‘Letter’, 1986, pp. 37-45) and Michel (Response, 1984, pp. 99-135).

Ibn Taymiyya begins his Jawāb with a long introduction affirming basic Islamic doctrines, explaining that Islam was the religion of all the prophets and warning against Jewish and Christian innovations. He then
states that the occasion of writing was receiving the *Letter* from Cyprus, and he outlines the *Letter* and his strategy in responding (*Jawāb* 1964, i, pp. 1-26; 1999, i, pp. 59-119; Michel, pp. 137-45). Ibn Taymiyya divides the *Letter* and the corresponding body of the *Jawāb* into six parts, and in each part he quotes the *Letter* in successive portions and offers his responses.

The first part of the *Letter* claims that Muḥammad and the Qurʾan were not sent to the whole of humanity but only to the pagan Arabs, and thus there is no need for Christians to respond to the Islamic message (Ebied and Thomas, *Polemic*, 2005, pp. 54-61). Against this, Ibn Taymiyya argues at length that Muḥammad was sent to all humanity, including Christians, who have corrupted and innovated their religion (*Jawāb* 1964, i, pp. 26-229; 1999, i, p. 119-ii, p. 132; Michel, pp. 146-92).

The *Letter*’s second part offers textual proofs for Christianity. First (pp. 60-67), it cites Qurʾanic texts praising Christ and his mother Mary and honoring Jesus’ disciples and churches. This, the *Letter* claims, obligates Christians to retain their religion. Ibn Taymiyya denies that the Qurʾan supports Christianity, and he provides Islamic reinterpretations for the texts in question (*Jawāb* 1964, i, pp. 229-90; 1999, ii, pp. 133-267; Michel, no trans.) The *Letter* (pp. 66-71) then goes on to argue that the Qurʾan affirms the Christian scriptures and thus precludes the Muslim charge that they have been subject to substitution (*tabdīl*) and alteration (*taghyīr*). In response, Ibn Taymiyya explains the Qurʾanic texts in question and discusses various theological issues. He maintains that Christians have certainly altered the meanings of their texts (*tahirīf al-maʿānī*) but not necessarily their actual wording (*alfāẓ*). Nonetheless, the Christian scriptures lack the reliability of multiple lines of transmission (*tawātur*) (*Jawāb* 1964, i, pp. 290-362; 1999, ii, pp. 268-409; Michel, pp. 192-220). The *Letter* (pp. 70-73) also rejects the possibility that the Christian scriptures were altered only after the revelation of the Qurʾan. Ibn Taymiyya is inclined to think that very little of the actual text of the Christian scriptures has ever been changed, and he maintains that one cannot in fact know whether a particular text has been altered. However, he clarifies that Christianity as a religion had been changed long before the coming of Muḥammad and that Christians should judge according to the original Gospel (cf. Q 5:46-47), which points to Muḥammad (*Jawāb* 1964, i, p. 362–ii, p. 28; 1999, ii, p. 410-iii, p. 52; Michel, pp. 220-40). The *Letter* (pp. 72-91) carries on with several more proofs for Christianity from both the Qurʾan and the Hebrew scriptures and argues that Christians are superior to Jews in religion. Ibn Taymiyya reinterprets the texts Islamically,
counters that Muslims are better at following Christ than Christians, and outlines Christian errors. He also observes that Jews and Christians take the opposite extremes on basic religious issues while in the middle position Muslims adopt correct views (*Jawāb* 1964, ii, pp. 28-90; 1999, iii, pp. 53-181; Michel, pp. 240-54).

The third topic in the Cypriot Christian *Letter* (pp. 90-93) is a defense of the Trinity. This begins with the traditional Arab Christian proof from reason that God is the Creator, who must be living so as not to be dead and speaking so as not to be dumb. God is then essence, speech and life, that is, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Among other things, Ibn Taymiyya responds that the Trinity cannot be derived from rational proofs; Christians only derive it from what they suppose to be in their scriptures. He also observes that Christians place Trinitarian doctrine above reason, and he retorts that in fact the Trinity opposes reason, is tri-theistic, and has no foundation in revelation (*Jawāb* 1964, ii, pp. 90-121; 1999, iii, pp. 182-235; Michel pp. 255-73). The *Letter* (pp. 92-97) continues by citing several texts from the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament and the Qur’ān in support of speaking of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Ibn Taymiyya reinterprets these texts to accord with Islamic teaching and exposes further difficulties with Trinitarian doctrine (*Jawāb* 1964, ii, pp. 121-60; 1999, iii, pp. 236-307; Michel, pp. 273-85).

The long fourth part of the *Letter* (pp. 97-129) is dedicated largely to the Incarnation and the two natures of Christ. The *Letter* (pp. 97-125) first explains the Incarnation as Christ’s humanity being God’s ‘veil’ (cf. Q 42:51) and provides a great many biblical prophecies of Christ, along with condemnation of the Jews for not believing in him and in the Trinitarian character of God. Ibn Taymiyya’s response denies that God can indwell a human, provides numerous rational arguments against the Incarnation, and reinterprets sayings that might be misunderstood to indicate divine indwelling. He also accuses Christians of misunderstanding their texts (1964, ii, pp. 160-279; 1999, iii, p. 308-iv, p. 26; Michel, pp. 285-303). The *Letter* (pp. 124-29) continues by explaining the divine and human natures of Christ and showing how they concur with Qur’ānic testimony. Ibn Taymiyya rejects the claim that the Qur’ān supports the Christian doctrine (*Jawāb* 1964, ii, pp. 279-307; 1999, iv, pp. 27-75; Michel, pp. 303-8), and he denies that the Melkite doctrine of Christ’s two natures has any foundation in reason or prophetic tradition (1964, ii, p. 307-iii, p. 137; 1999, iv, pp. 76-402; Michel, pp. 308-37).

This long refutation of Christ’s two natures draws on major portions of earlier works. Ibn Taymiyya quotes and discusses material refuting
Jesus’ divinity from the 10th-century Mu’tazili theologian al-Ḥasan ibn Ayyūb’s Risāla ilā akhīhi ‘Alī b. Ayyūb (q.v.) (1964, ii, p. 313-iii, p. 4; 1999, iv, pp. 88-182). These quotations are our primary source of knowledge for Ibn Ayyūb’s letter; the original and full form is not extant. Immediately following this, Ibn Taymiyya quotes extensively from an expanded version of the ecclesiastical history Naẓm al-jawhar, also known as the Annals, of Sa’īd ibn Baṭrīq (q.v.), Melkite Patriarch Eutychius of Alexandria (d. 940), to construct a narrative of how Christians innovated their religion (1964, iii, pp. 5-125; 1999, iv, pp. 182-373). Troupeau (‘Ibn Taymiyya’, 1978) translates a portion of this in which Ibn Taymiyya argues that the Melkite Christology is more contradictory than the Nestorian, a common trope in Muslim anti-Christian polemics (1964, iii, pp. 37-51; 1999, iv, pp. 249-67). The version of the Annals from which Ibn Taymiyya drew had been expanded, perhaps in the 11th century, to include Kitāb al-burhān written by Peter, Melkite Bishop of Bayt Rās (Capitolias) (q.v.), probably in the late 800s. Ibn Taymiyya quotes the Kitāb al-burhān material on Christology and the Trinity from the Annals and refutes it (Jawāb 1964, iii, pp. 51-122; 1999, iv, pp. 268-378) (analyzed in Swanson, ‘Ibn Taymiyya’, 1995). The last part of Ibn Taymiyya’s polemic against the doctrine of Christ’s two natures maintains that revelation and reason agree and that Christians may not argue that their Christology lies beyond reason. The Christian doctrine contradicts reason, whereas the sayings of the prophets do not (1964, iii, pp. 125-37; 1999, iv, pp. 384-402).

The fifth part of the Letter (pp. 128-39) is devoted to questions of theological language. It explains that Christians affirm that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the non-literal way that Muslims affirm various anthropomorphic attributes of God mentioned in the Qur’an, and it defends the Christian creedal practice of calling God substance (jawhar) against Muslim objections. Ibn Taymiyya responds by explaining his approach to God’s attributes, criticizing Christians for having no prophetic foundations for doctrinal terms such as uqnūm (hypostasis) and tathlīth (Trinity), and noting their ambiguous use of doctrinal terms such as ‘son’ (1964, iii, pp. 137-228; 1999, iv, p. 403-v, p. 56; Michel, pp.337-50).

The sixth and last part of the Letter (pp. 138-47) argues that Islam is superfluous, given that in Christ God brought the perfection of grace to the justice found in the Law of Moses. Ibn Taymiyya responds that rather Islam is the perfect religion because it perfectly combines grace and justice (Jawāb 1964, iii, pp. 228-58; 1999, v, pp. 57-113; Michel, pp. 350-69). The final sections of the Jawāb recount the errors that Christians make.
in argumentation and interpretation of texts (1964, iii, pp. 258-74; 1999, v, pp. 114-45; Michel, no trans.)

SIGNIFICANCE

Ibn Taymiyya's Jawāb is the longest refutation of Christian doctrine in the Islamic tradition, and it was part of the most extensive Christian-Muslim polemical exchange in the medieval period. This exchange began with Paul of Antioch's Letter to a Muslim friend and its refutation by the Egyptian jurist Aḥmad ibn Idrīs al-Qarāfī (d. 1285) in Al-ajwiba l-fākhira (q.v.). An anonymous Christian later revised Paul's letter into the Letter from the people of Cyprus, probably in 1316 or just before, and sent it to Ibn Taymiyya, who responded with his Jawāb. The Letter was later sent to Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī in 1321, who also wrote a lengthy response. While al-Qarāfī's and Ibn Abī Ṭālib's works are among the largest and most insightful medieval responses to Christianity, Ibn Taymiyya's Jawāb surpasses both in length, scope and sophistication.

As Michel notes, the originality of Ibn Taymiyya's Jawāb lies not in devising clever new arguments or refuting the Cypriot Letter point by point, but in taking a vast body of well-known arguments against Christianity and integrating them into a comprehensive new analysis of deviant human response to prophetic revelation. In Christianity, a whole religious tradition went astray. In Islam, many had fallen into errors resembling those of Christians, but God had preserved a faithful remnant adhering to the truth. Ibn Taymiyya in the Jawāb uses the Christian errors to warn the wayward in the Muslim community. Ibn Taymiyya was also, as far as Michel knows, the first Muslim to draw on a prominent Christian history – Ibn Baṭrīq's Naẓm al-jawhar – to advance his argument (Michel, Response, 1984, pp. 94, 98-103).

The Jawāb is one of several large theological works in Ibn Taymiyya's corpus, and its argumentation is typical of his wider apologetic strategy, which is to show that errant doctrine is both irrational and without support in prophetic tradition, and then to affirm and demonstrate that revelation and reason agree and coincide. In the Jawāb, this strategy is most evident in his writing on the Trinity and Incarnation. Christians have strayed from true prophetic teaching by innovating these two doctrines. Moreover, he asserts, these doctrines are not just mysteries beyond reason but positively irrational. Ibn Taymiyya then goes beyond polemic to reinterpret the scriptural texts used in the Cypriot Letter – both qur'anic and biblical – to support Islamic monotheism and the prophethood of Muḥammad. This work of interpretation and integration of scriptural
texts into his theological vision, that is, giving the texts their proper Islamic sense as he understands it, is central to his apologetic for the rationality of the prophetic revelation. The net effect is not only refutation of Christian doctrine but also appropriation of the biblical texts into an Islamic frame of reference.

Ibn Taymiyya’s willingness to venture interpretations of biblical texts points up his agnostic and comparatively generous approach to the question of textual corruption. Christians, in his view, have certainly corrupted the meaning of the texts (tahrif al-ma’nā), but it cannot be known with certainty whether they corrupted the actual wording (tahrif al-lafż). Such corruption may not be affirmed lest one mistakenly reject a report of authentic revelation, nor may it be denied lest one inadvertently accept an inauthentic report. Ibn Taymiyya thus makes no attempt to judge on the corruption of specific texts, and in this he differs markedly from Ibn Ḥazm, who seeks to demonstrate that the biblical text was necessarily corrupted by identifying contradictions, historical inaccuracies, anthropomorphisms, and the like.

In modern times, Muslims continue to use Ibn Taymiyya’s Jawāb as a source book for the refutation of Christianity. This is the express purpose given for publishing the abridged English translation Answering those who altered the religion of Jesus Christ that is available on the Internet. It is also evident in the large two volume work of Maryam Zāmil, Mawqīf Ibn Taymiyya min al-Naṣrāniyya (‘Ibn Taymiyya’s attitude toward Christianity’). Although Zāmil’s title suggests an analytical study of Ibn Taymiyya’s views on Christianity, the work instead uses his Jawāb to undertake a thoroughgoing critique of Christianity itself. Christian engagement with the doctrinal claims of Ibn Taymiyya’s Jawāb has not been extensive, but Thomas Michel ventured a thorough theological response in a series of six lectures delivered in Oxford in 2000.

MANUSCRIPTS

MS Leiden, University Library – 40 (formerly Or 338 and 2018), (1330; second half of the Jawāb, presumed counterpart to MS Istanbul, Topkapi Saray – 287, as it carries the same sale notice dated 1457)
MS Istanbul, Topkapi Saray, Ahmed III Library – 287 (first half of the Jawāb, presumed counterpart to MS Leiden – 40, as it carries the same sale notice)
MS Istanbul, Yeni Cami – 732 (1683; first half of the Jawāb)
MS Cairo, Egyptian National Library – 378 (1864)
MS Hyderabad, Asafiyā – 2 (165/6), 1298 (1901)
MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye – 803 (date unknown)
EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS


Al-jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ, ed. Sayyid ‘Imrān, 4 parts in 2 vols, Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2005 (no sources are given for this edition)


Al-jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ, 4 parts in 2 vols, s.l.: Matābīʿ al-Majd al-Tijāriyya, s.d. (apparently a reprint of Cairo, 1961-64, with identical pagination)

Michel, Response (best available translation; translates key passages totaling about one-third of the Jawāb; revision of Michel’s 1978 dissertation that leaves out substantial introductory materials, some of the translation, and the pagination of the Arabic text)

T.F. Michel, Ibn Taymiyya’s Al-jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ. A Muslim theologian’s response to Christianity, 2 vols, Chicago IL, 1978 (PhD diss. University of Chicago) (vol. 2 is a trans. of about one-third of the Jawāb, keyed to the pagination of Cairo, 1964)

Al-jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ, 4 parts in 2 vols, Cairo: Maṭbaʻat al-Madani, 1961-64 (apparently a reprint of Cairo, 1905, with different pagination)


Al-jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ, 4 vols, Cairo: Maṭbaʻat al-Nīl, 1905 (based on partial MSS in the possession of private individuals in Cairo and Baghdad)

STUDIES

D. Thomas, ‘Apologetic and polemic in the Letter from Cyprus and Ibn Taymiyya’s Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ’, in Rapoport and Ahmed (eds), Ibn Taymiyya and his times, 247-65

Sarrió Cucarella, ‘Un irreductible choque de ortodoxias’


R.Y. Ebied and D. Thomas (eds), Muslim-Christian polemic during the crusades. The Letter from the people of Cyprus and Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashiqi’s response, Leiden, 2005 (pp. 1-23 discuss the Letter from the people of Cyprus to which the Jawāb responds; pp. 54-147 provide an edition and translation of the Letter)


Maryam ‘Abd al-Rahmān ‘Abdallāh Zāmil, *Mawqīf Ibn Taymiyya min al-Naṣrāniyya*, 2 vols, Mecca: Jāmiʿat Umm al-Qurā, Maʿhad al-Buḥūth al-‘Ilmiyya wa-Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1997 (a refutation of Christianity that relies heavily on the Jawab; maintains that Ibn Taymiyya accuses Christians of ṭahrīf al-lafẓ but notices that he does not provide examples)


H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined worlds. Medieval Islam and Bible criticism*, Princeton NJ, 1992 (notes to the discussion of Muslim interpretation of biblical texts on pp. 79-110 include references to the Jawāb)

M.N. Swanson, review of T.F. Michel, *A Muslim theologian’s response to Christianity*, in *MW* 78 (1988) 84-85 (includes a list of corrections to Michel)


Michel, *Response*


Michel, ‘Ibn Taymiyya’s *Al-jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ’*

Troupeau, ‘Ibn Taymiyya et sa réfutation d’Eutychès’


S.M. Stern, ‘The Oxford manuscript of Ibn Taymiyya’s anti-Christian polemics’, *BSOAS* 22 (1959) 124-28 (discusses earlier confusion over the relationship between the Jawāb and *Takhjīl al-Injīl*)

Abū Zahra, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 514-19


I. di Matteo, *La divinità di Cristo e la dottrina della Trinità in Maometto e nei polemisti musulmani*, Rome, 1938, pp. 27-31, 64-71

Fritsch, *Islam und Christentum im Mittelalter* (pp. 28-33 give an overview of the Jawāb according to the pagination of the 1905 edition; the second part of this book – pp. 39-150 – is a systematic exposition of medieval Muslim polemic against Christianity that draws upon the Jawāb as a key source)


Steinschneider, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur*, pp. 32-34
Takhjīl ahl al-Injīl wa-l-nahj al-ṣaḥīh fī radd ‘alā man baddala dīn Īsā ibn Maryam al-Masīh, ‘The shaming of the followers of the Gospel and the correct way to refute those who have altered the religion of Jesus, son of Mary, the Christ’; Al-takhjīl li-man baddala l-Tawrāt wa-l-Injīl, ‘The shaming of those who have altered the Torah and the Gospel’; Al-takhjīl li-man ḥarrafa l-Tawrāt wa-l-Injīl, ‘The shaming of those who have corrupted the Torah and the Gospel’

DATE Unknown; possibly before 1316
ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Arabic

DESCRIPTION
Takhjīl ahl al-Injīl exists independently in two known manuscripts, one at the Bodleian Library in Oxford and another at the Süleymaniye in Istanbul. Otherwise, the Takhjīl is found as the last quarter of manuscripts and printed editions of Ibn Taymiyya’s Jawāb without any indication that it is a separate work. The Takhjīl begins at vol. 3, p. 258, in the 1905 Cairo edition of Jawāb; at vol. 3, p. 275, in the 1961-64 Cairo edition; and at vol. 5, p. 146, in the 1993-99 Riyadh edition (hereafter 1999 ed.). The Takhjīl comes to a total of 856 pages in the 1999 edition.

The identity of Takhjīl ahl al-Injīl was the subject of considerable confusion among Western scholars into the early 20th century. Samuel M. Stern and especially Thomas Michel (Response, pp. 370-82) clear away the confusion and establish that Takhjīl al-Injīl is distinct from Ibn Taymiyya’s Jawāb. This is supported by the facts that Takhjīl exists in independent manuscripts and that its contents bear no direct relation to the Letter from the people of Cyprus, to which the Jawāb responds section by section. In Michel’s view, the Takhjīl was probably written before the Jawāb and then appended to it by 1330, the date of the earliest extant manuscript of the Jawāb, perhaps by Ibn Taymiyya himself.

The Takhjīl responds to two longstanding Christian charges against Islam, namely, that Muḥammad’s prophethood, unlike Christ’s, was not foretold, and that someone who is not foretold cannot be a prophet. Roughly the first fifth of the Takhjīl (vol. 5, pp. 146-318 in the 1999 ed.) counters these charges by citing numerous passages in the Hebrew Bible.
and the New Testament to demonstrate Muḥammad’s prophethood. The latter four-fifths of the *Takhjīl* are devoted to such matters as proofs for Muḥammad’s prophethood from the Qur’an, the Prophet’s miracles, and his knowledge of the unseen.

SIGNIFICANCE
*Takhjīl ahl al-Injīl* is not well known as a separate work because of its long-standing connection to Ibn Taymiyya’s *Jawāb*. Nonetheless, it provides a major medieval summation of Muslim biblical proofs for Muḥammad’s prophethood found earlier in Ibn Qutayba (q.v.) and ʿAlī l-Ṭabarī (q.v.). Ibn Taymiyya’s student, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (q.v.), quotes these proofs at length in his *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā*.

MANUSCRIPTS
- MS Leiden, University Library – 40 (formerly: Or 338 and 2018) (1330; latter part of the *Jawāb* with *Takhjīl al-Injīl*)
- MS Oxford, Bodleian Library – Marsh 299 (perhaps 15th or 16th century)
- MS Cairo, Egyptian National Library – 378 (1864; full *Jawāb* with *Takhjīl al-Injīl*)
- MS Hyderabad, Asafijiyya – 2 (165/6), 1298, (1901; full *Jawāb* with *Takhjīl al-Injīl*)
- MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye – 2712 (date unknown)

EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS
The *Takhjīl* has only been printed as the last part of Ibn Taymiyya’s *Jawāb*. See the discussion of editions above and the editions listed for the *Jawāb*.

*Answering those who altered the religion of Jesus Christ*, abridged by Ahmad al-Tahhan, trans. Muhammad Fadel, Umm al-Qura, Saudi Arabia: Umm al-Qura for Translation, Publishing and Distribution, s.d., www.mohdy.name/pdfs/e057.pdf, accessed 10 April 2010, pp. 343-84 (partial translation of the first fifth of the *Takhjīl*, without indication that it is separate from the *Jawāb*)

STUDIES
- Michel, *Response*, pp. 370-82 (clarifies earlier confusion over the identity of the *Takhjīl*)
Stern, ‘The Oxford manuscript of Ibn Taymiyya’s anti-Christian polemics’ (as with Michel, includes references to the earlier confused discussions over Takhrij)

*Al-risāla l-qubruṣiyya. Risāla min Ibn Taymiyya ilā malik Qubruṣ, ‘The Cypriot letter. Letter from Ibn Taymiyya to the ruler of Cyprus’*

**DATE**  Between April 1303 and May 1304  
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**  Arabic  

**DESCRIPTION**  

Ibn Taymiyya wrote the letter to appeal for good treatment of Muslim captives held by the Franks in Cyprus. The Mamluks drove the Franks, that is, the crusaders, out of the Levant in the 1290s, with the last of them removed from Ruwād in 1302. However, from their base in Cyprus the Franks continued to raid the Syrian coast for slaves and captives. Yahya Michot (1995, pp. 89-91) proposes that Ibn Taymiyya wrote *Qubruṣiya* on behalf of Muslim prisoners taken in the crusader raid on al-Dāmūr (between Beirut and Sidon) at the turn of the new year 1302-3 (Jumādā l-ūlā 702). Michot notes that this fits well with Rafff’s suggestion (pp. 15-16) that the letter dates to just after the Mamluk victory over the Mongols at Marj al-Ṣuffār in April 1303. Michot also observes that the letter gives the impression that the Mongol leader Ghāzān is still alive – he died in May 1304. Thus, the letter most probably dates to between April 1303 and May 1304.

Ibn Taymiyya addresses *Qubruṣiya* to *s-r-j-w-ā-n* (*MF* xxviii, p. 601), a word whose meaning and Arabic vowel pattern are not readily apparent. The addressee is given as *s-r-j-w-ā-s* (ending in sīn rather than nūn) in several printed editions. Raff (p. 19 n. 2) explains that this is an error first introduced into the title of the 1901 edition and then into the opening line of the text in the 1946 edition (and subsequent editions as well). The addressee *s-r-j-w-ā-n* or *s-r-j-w-ā-s* is sometimes taken simply to be
the king of Cyprus – at the time Henry II of Lusignan – without further investigation (e.g. Michel, *Response*, p. 73). The addressee is called ‘king’ (*malik*) several times in the course of the letter. However, the term ‘king’ was not used exclusively for the supreme ruler over a territory at that time, and it could refer to political and military actors of lesser rank. In light of this, Raff (pp. 18-20) reads the addressee’s name as *sirjawān* (Sir Jawān), taking it to be an Arabic transliteration of the Old French ‘Sire Johan’, that is, John II of Giblet (Jubayl, today in Lebanon) whose family had taken refuge in Cyprus after having been driven out of the Levant by the Mamluks. This man is known to have raided the Syrian coast along with other crusaders during the Mongol campaigns on Syria. Opposing Raff, Marco di Branco (2005, pp. 392-93) thinks that the exiled crusader baron John II of Giblet would be of too low a station to deserve the praise for his religiosity and knowledge that Ibn Taymiyya lavishes on him in the letter. Di Branco proposes instead to change the second consonant *rāʾ* to *nūn* and read *sanjawān* (San Jawān), meaning Saint John, a title referring to William of Villaret who was Master of the Knights Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem between 1294 and 1305. The Knights had also engaged in raids on the Levantine coast after fleeing from the Mamluks to Cyprus. Sarrió Cucarella, who provides the most recent review of possible addressees (‘Corresponding’, pp. 192-94), is not persuaded by di Branco’s arguments: it has not been proven that John II of Giblet was unworthy of Ibn Taymiyya’s praise, and the reading *sanjawān* has nowhere else been suggested. Sarrió Cucarella thus prefers John II of Giblet as the best hypothesis until proven otherwise.

It has been suggested that *Qubruṣiyya* was the first round in an exchange between Ibn Taymiyya and the Cypriot court. The correspondence continued with the Christian *Letter from the people of Cyprus*, a revised version of Paul of Antioch’s *Letter to a Muslim friend*, to which Ibn Taymiyya responded with his vast *Al-jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ* (Michel, *Response*, p. 78). However, it seems highly unlikely that there was any direct relation between *Qubruṣiyya* and the latter exchange because they were separated by 12 years or more and the purposes of Ibn Taymiyya’s respective treatises differ (Ebied and Thomas, *Polemic*, pp. 17-19). Nonetheless, and despite the great difference in size between *Qubruṣiyya* and *Al-jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, the backbone of the critique of Christianity found in both is the same (Sarrió Cucarella, ‘Corresponding’).

The first half of *Qubruṣiyya* (*MF* xxviii, pp. 601-15) is dedicated to a narrative of prophetic history that, as elsewhere in Ibn Taymiyya’s writings, portrays Islam as the correct middle way between Judaism and
Christianity. After the opening address and invocations, Ibn Taymiyya writes of creation and original monotheistic worship and then the human innovation of idolatry, God’s restorative guidance through prophets such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, rejection of these prophets by the Children of Israel, and God’s sending of Christ, son of Mary. Ibn Taymiyya outlines three responses to Christ. Some (the Jews) did not believe in him. Others (Christians) exaggerated their regard for him, calling him God, Son of God, and the like; Ibn Taymiyya here provides extensive criticism of the Christian clergy for their innovation and hypocrisy and of monks for their trickery. A third group did not fall into innovation and idolatry, believed that Christ had announced a coming prophet, and turned to him when he came. These people believe in all the prophets from Adam to Muḥammad; they are the middle community (umma wasat) between the two extremes of the Jews and the Christians.

Having made his addressee fully aware of what he believes to be correct religion in the first half of Qubruṣiyya, Ibn Taymiyya prepares the ground more directly for his appeal on behalf of Muslim prisoners in the following pages (MF xxviii, pp. 615-21). Among other things, he flatters the crusader baron with commendations of his religiosity and love of knowledge, and the shaykh recounts his intervention with the Mongols during their invasion of Syria in the winter of 1299-1300 to secure the release of Syrian prisoners, both Muslims and non-Muslims, under Muslim protection. He also underlines the ascendency of Islam as the Mongols retreated in defeat following their invasions of 1301 and 1303.

In the last third of the letter (MF xxviii, pp. 621-30), Ibn Taymiyya launches his appeal. He accuses the Christians on Cyprus of acting treacherously in the taking of prisoners, and he denies that the Muslims had initiated hostilities. He explains that Christ did not command jihād against, or the taking of captives from, those who follow the religion of Abraham. Moreover, mistreating prisoners would be detrimental to the spiritual standing of the king, and the prophets in fact spoke of releasing captives. Presenting himself as a representative of Christ and all the prophets, Ibn Taymiyya asks that the prisoners be given assistance and not forced to change their religion.

SIGNIFICANCE
Unlike most of Ibn Taymiyya’s writings on Christianity, which are written for Muslims in the first instance, Qubruṣiyya is addressed directly to a specific Christian – probably John II of Giblet – about a matter of concrete concern: the good treatment of Muslim prisoners on Cyprus.
There is no record of whether the letter achieved its purpose. It appears that Ibn Taymiyya modeled his epistle on the Prophet Muḥammad’s letters to rulers calling them to Islam. The shaykh opens his letter with the same qur’anic verse as that used in these letters (Q 20:47), and he mentions two of their recipients: Heraclius, the emperor of Byzantium, and the Negus of Abyssinia. Qubruṣiyya is also probably Ibn Taymiyya’s first polemical work against Christian doctrine and practice, and the fundamentals of its critique of Christianity are the same as those found much more fully developed in his vast Al-jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ (Sarrió Cucarella, ‘Corresponding’, 2010).

Qubruṣiyya is being put to Islamic theological use today. Published in Jordan in 1994, Muḥammad Khayr al-ʿAbbūd’s Qawāʿid tawḥīd al-adyān quotes the full Qubruṣiyya along with other texts by Ibn Taymiyya to oppose a modern pluralism of ‘heavenly religions’ (adyān samāwīyya) said to be found among some ordinary people. According to al-ʿAbbūd, individuals of diverse religions should not be treated equally but in accord with God’s just laws, which he finds well presented by Ibn Taymiyya.

MANUSCRIPTS
MS Munich, Staatsbibliothek – 885, 3 (among a collection of books dated 1331)
MS Damascus, Žāhiriyya – 3128 (15th century)
MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek – 2087 (15th century?)
MS Riyadh, King Saud University – 1421, 2, 26-38 (date unknown)

EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS
Al-risāla l-qubruṣiyya. Risāla min Ibn Taymiyya ilā malik Qubrus, Cairo: Maktabat al-Riḍwān, 2007
M. di Branco, Lettera a un sovrano crociato. Sui fondamenti della ‘vera religione’, Milan, 2004 (Italian trans.)
Sahib Mustaqim Bleher, Das ist die aufrechte Religion. Brief des Ibn Taymiya an den König von Zypern, Würselen, 1984 (German trans.)
Al-risāla l-qubruṣiyya, MF xxviii, pp. 601-30
Al-risāla l-qubruṣiyya. Khiṭāb li-Sirjawās malik Qubrus, Cairo: Maṭba’at al-Mu’ayyad, 1901

STUDIES
R.Y. Ebied and D. Thomas (eds), Muslim-Christian polemic during the crusades. The letter from the people of Cyprus and Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqi’s response, Leiden, 2005, pp. 17-19
Michot, Ibn Taymiyya. Lettre à un roi croisé
Michel, Response, pp. 71, 73-78
Fritsch, Islam und Christentum im Mittelalter, pp. 26-28

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**Al-qawl fi mas’alat Īsā kalimat Allāh wa-l-Qur’ān kalām Allāh**, ‘What is said about the issue of Jesus being the Word of God and the Qur’an being the Word of God’

**DATE** Unknown

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE** Arabic

**DESCRIPTION**
The only known source of information for this fatwa is an edition published in Egypt by an anonymous editor. There is no reason to doubt the fatwa’s authenticity as the writing is characteristically Taymiyyan. The text runs to 44 pages in the printed edition.

The fatwa is in response to an inquiry about a Muslim and a Christian who are debating the Word. The Christian observes that the Qur’an calls both Jesus the Word of God (kalimat Allāh) and it itself the Word of God (kalām Allāh). The Christian further observes that the Qur’an is uncreated (ghayr makhlūq), apparently suggesting that Jesus the Word is therefore uncreated as well, and thus divine.

In reply, Ibn Taymiyya explains that the Qur’an is indeed uncreated but that Jesus was a creature brought into being by God’s command: ‘Be!’ (kun). This differentiates the uncreated Word of the Qur’an from the created Word Jesus. Ibn Taymiyya also denies that the Qur’anic description of Jesus as ‘a Spirit from Him [i.e. God]’ (Q 4:171) proves his divinity. Rather, the Spirit of God in the Qur’an refers to the angel Gabriel, who was also created. Ibn Taymiyya develops his arguments for these points more fully here than in a similar discussion in Jawāb (1964, ii, pp. 293-307; 1999, iv, pp. 53-75), which may indicate that this fatwa is later.

The fatwa includes polemics against Sufis such as al-Ḥallāj and Ibn ‘Arabi, whom Ibn Taymiyya accuses of errors resembling those of the Christians: positing God’s indwelling in human beings (ḥulūl) or conflating (ittiḥād) God and the world. Ibn Taymiyya also discusses the Christian doctrines of the two natures of Christ and the Trinitarian hypostases. The fatwa ends with Ibn Taymiyya calling Christians associators (mushrikūn).

**SIGNIFICANCE**
The inquiry and resulting fatwa provide evidence of live Christian-Muslim theological discussion within the Mamluk sultanate of Ibn Taymiyya’s time.
Kitāb al-ṣārim al-maslūl ‘alā shātim al-Rasūl,
The unsheathed sword against whoever insults the Messenger

DATE 1294
ORIGINAL LANGUAGE  Arabic

DESCRIPTION
Al-ṣārim al-maslūl is a lengthy legal treatise arguing that anyone – Muslim or non-Muslim – who curses (sabba) the Prophet Muḥammad must be killed without further recourse. This was Ibn Taymiyya’s first major work, and it comes to around 1,100 pages in the 1997 critical edition of al-Ḥalawānī and Shawdarī, and between 400 and 600 pages in various trade editions. Al-Ḥalawānī and Shawdarī base their edition on five manuscripts, three of which date to the 1300s.

Ibn Taymiyya wrote Al-ṣārim al-maslūl in 1294 in response to an incident involving a Christian who insulted the Prophet. The Christian was a scribe attached to the Arab amīr ‘Assāf ibn Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Ḥajjī. The Christian himself is sometimes called ‘Assāf in the secondary literature (Turki, Michel), the source of which is a confused report in Ibn Kathīr’s history Al-bidāya wa-l-nihāya. The much fuller and clearer account in al-Jazārī, Tārīkh āhwādīth al-zamān (Beirut, 1998), i, pp. 202-5, does not supply the Christian’s name.

In mid-1294, the people of Suwaydā’, a village just outside Damascus, complained to the Damascene governor that ‘Assāf’s Christian scribe had cursed the Prophet. The governor hesitated to administer the death penalty on account of his cordial relations with ‘Assāf. This led to a series of disturbances involving crowds and legal scholars, among them Ibn Taymiyya. The Christian eventually converted to Islam to save his neck, and the governor got the leading Shāfī’ī scholars of Damascus to rule that conversion averted the death penalty. Ibn Taymiyya wrote Al-ṣārim al-maslūl to clarify that this was not the case.
In Al-ṣārim al-maslūl Ibn Taymiyya argues that the ḥadd punishment for any Muslim or unbeliever who curses (sabba) or insults (shatama) the Prophet is death. A Muslim offender is an apostate (murtadd) or a heretic (zindīq), and a non-Muslim offender under Muslim protection (dhimmī) breaks his pact of protection. Repentance (for the Muslim) and conversion to Islam (for the non-Muslim) cannot avert the death penalty for cursing the Prophet. No lesser punishment of the curser, such as expiation or enslavement, is acceptable.

Ibn Taymiyya’s views were not those of the majority, and he had to overcome certain intellectual obstacles to sustain his position. Friedmann (Tolerance, pp. 151-52) explains that he faced two apparently contradictory sets of traditions. One set reported that some Companions of the Prophet killed the Prophet’s cursers without offering them a chance to repent, while another set of traditions called cursers apostates (murtadd). The legal schools generally agreed that apostates should be given the opportunity to repent before facing the death penalty, which would appear to preclude executing cursers of the Prophet directly.

To resolve this contradiction, Ibn Taymiyya differentiates between simple apostasy (ridda mujarrada) and aggravated apostasy (ridda mughallaẓa). Simple apostasy is a matter of drifting away from the faith, whereas aggravated apostasy is intentional impugning of the religion, as when someone curses the Prophet. Simple apostasy should be met with an invitation to repent and return to Islam, but those guilty of aggravated apostasy such as cursing the Prophet should be killed without recourse.

SIGNIFICANCE
Al-ṣārim al-maslūl was Ibn Taymiyya’s first major work, and it firmly established his reputation as a public intellectual who wrote in response to specific challenges posed by the historical environment. The affair of ʿAssāf’s Christian scribe spurred him to clarify the reasons why all cursers of the Prophet should be executed directly. Al-ṣārim al-maslūl is also the most extensive legal discussion concerning those who insult the Messenger in the Islamic tradition (Friedmann, Tolerance, p. 151). Michel (Response, pp. 70-71) underlines the specifically legal character of the treatise by contrasting it with Ibn Taymiyya’s more polemical works against Christianity. The large number of modern editions of Al-ṣārim al-maslūl probably indicates that Ibn Taymiyya’s discussion of apostasy is of considerable interest among Muslims today.
MANUSCRIPTS

MS Leiden, University Library – 2411 (1318-19)
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MS Medina, Al-Maktaba l-Maḥmūdiyya – 1867 (1339-40)
MS Medina, Markaz Khidmat al-Sunna – 784 (1339-40)
MS Damascus, Zāhiriyya – 2980 (part 1) and 2981 (part 2) (perhaps 14th century)
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MS Cairo, Egyptian National Library – 1,327 (date unknown)

EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS

Al-ṣārim al-maslūl ʿalā shātim al-Rasūl, Muhammad Iʿjaz, Lahore: Nuriyah Rizviyah, 2010 (Urdu trans.)
Al-ṣārim al-maslūl ʿalā shātim al-Rasūl, Giza, Egypt: Dār al-Fārūq, 2009

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STUDIES
Al-Ḥalawānī and Shawdarī (eds), Al-ṣārim al-maslūl, i, pp. 165-82, 211-51 (studies on various aspects of the book)
Michel, Response, pp. 69-71
Makari, Ibn Taymiyyah’s ethics, p. 127
Murad, ‘Ibn Taymiyya on trial’, pp. 1-2, 26 n. 4 (recounts the circumstances leading up to the composition of Al-ṣārim al-maslūl)
Laoust, Essai, pp. 249, 276, 372

Masʾalat al-kanāʾis, ‘The question of the churches’

DATE Between 1303 and 1305
ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Arabic

DESCRIPTION
Masʾalat al-kanāʾis (also known by slightly different titles, such as Kitāb fī l-kanāʾis, Maqāla fī l-kanāʾis, Masʿala fī l-kanāʾis and Suʾāl fī l-kanāʾis) is a fatwa on the status of churches under Muslim rule that comes to 15 pages in MF xxviii, pp. 632-46, and 41 pages in the critical edition of Shibl. Shibl’s version of the fatwa is based on four manuscripts and the text printed in MF. It also includes a list of the conditions in the Pact of ʿUmar (al-shurūṭ al-ʿumariyya) (q.v.), which is not found in the MF version and is different from that found in the treatise in MF xxviii, pp. 651-56, beginning Fī shurūṭ ʿUmar.
Laoust (La biographie, p. 147) dates Masʾalat al-kanāʾis on the basis of a letter that Ibn Taymiyya wrote in 1310 to his relatives in Damascus.
In the letter, the shaykh requests that what he has written ‘on the matter of the churches’ (fi amr al-kanā’īs) be sent to him in Cairo (in Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī, Al-ʿuqūd al-durriyya, pp. 284-85 and MF xxviii, pp. 656-57). Assuming that this refers to Masʾalat al-kanāʾīs, Laoust proposes that Ibn Taymiyya wrote the fatwa between 1303 and 1305, just after the Mamluk sultan closed the churches in Cairo in 1301, but before the shaykh was exiled to Egypt in 1306. Later scholars have followed the dating of Laoust (O’Keeffe 55; Sarrió Cucarella 296).

The immediate backdrop to Masʾalat al-kanāʾīs is the Mamluk initiative in 1301 to curtail Coptic Christian influence in Egypt. The sumptuary laws of the Pact of ‘Umar were enforced; churches were nailed shut; and Copts were removed from their prominent roles in the bureaucracy. The Mamluks could not sustain these measures, however, most likely for economic and political reasons. Some churches reopened the following year, the king of Aragon intervened in 1304 to get two churches opened, probably for foreign Christian merchants, and Copts regained their prominence in the bureaucracy. But the Muslim populace did not look favorably upon relaxation of the sumptuary laws, and the Mamluks sometimes left the masses to enforce the laws themselves.

The long inquiry to which Ibn Taymiyya’s fatwa Masʾalat al-kanāʾīs responds concerns the churches in Cairo. The anonymous inquirer observes that the Christians complained that closing the churches was unjust because they dated back to the era of the second caliph, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. It was understood that Christians could not build new churches under their protection agreement with the Muslims, but it was thought that churches predating the coming of Islam could remain open. The inquirer also asks whether it is acceptable for protected communities (ahl al-dhimma) to appeal for help to their co-religionists living outside the lands of Islam, and he wonders whether Muslim political and economic interests justify complying with Christian demands for reopening the churches.

In response, Ibn Taymiyya denies that there is any injustice in the closing of the churches, and he argues that the consensus of the Companions, the Successors, the four Sunni legal schools and other early jurists is that the ruler would be justified in demolishing every church in Muslim territory conquered by force (ard al-ʿanwa), which includes Egypt, Iraq and Syria, if he so wished. Later in the fatwa, Ibn Taymiyya explains that the original Muslim conquerors did not demolish the churches because the Christians were peasants living apart from the Muslim military camps. This, he elaborates, is much as the Prophet Muḥammad left the Jews in
Khaybar after conquering it, because Jews were peasants and the Muslims were engaged in jihād. Eventually, however, the Jews and Christians were expelled from Arabia because they were no longer needed there. Similarly, Ibn Taymiyya argues, churches are rightly destroyed when Muslims come to live in the same places as Christians in accord with the saying of the Prophet, ‘It is not fitting to have two directions of prayer (qibla) in the [same] land’, and some righteous rulers such as ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz and Hārūn al-Rashīd did destroy churches.

Ibn Taymiyya also denies the Christian claim reported in the fatwa inquiry that the churches date back to the time of the second caliph, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. He explains instead that it was 200 years of Fatimid Ismāʿīlī rule in Egypt and the concomitant absence of Shariʿa law that granted Christians opportunity to build new churches and also allowed the Franks (crusaders) to conquer the Syrian coast. It was only with the Ayyūbids and Salāḥ al-Dīn that Islam returned to the region.

Responding to other questions in the inquiry, Ibn Taymiyya does not permit protected peoples to correspond with their co-religionists living outside the realm of Islam; those who do so should be punished. He also refuses to allow that Muslims might need to comply with Christian demands in order to protect their own interests. He denies categorically that Muslims have any need of Christians, and he argues that Muslim interests are best served by strengthening religion and humiliating God’s enemies.

SIGNIFICANCE
Ibn Taymiyya’s Masʾalat al-kanāʾīs is part of a wider body of literature in the Mamluk period advocating harsh treatment of Christians in Egypt to counter their prominence in government and society. Others writing in this vein include ‘Abd al-Ghaffār al-Qūṣī (d. 1307), Jamāl al-Dīn al-Asnāwī (d. 1370) and Ibn al-Naqqāsh (d. 1362) (O’Keeffe, pp. 55-56, and Perlmann). Classical Sunnī jurists agree that new churches may not be built after the coming of Islam, but there is disagreement as to whether pre-Islamic churches in Egypt may be destroyed (see, e.g., Fattal, pp. 196-97). The issue turns on whether Egypt is Muslim territory conquered by force (ʿanwa) or by treaty (ṣulḥ). If the latter, pre-Islamic churches are protected, but Ibn Taymiyya takes the view that Egypt – as well as Syria and the plains of Iraq – is Muslim territory conquered by force, with pre-Islamic churches subject to destruction if the ruler so wishes. In his presumably later Fatwā fī amr al-kanāʾīs, he changes his view on the legal status of Syria and Iraq from territory conquered by force to territory

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conquered by treaty, but he retains his judgment that Egypt is territory conquered by force. Whatever the case, Ibn Taymiyya in *Masʿālat al-kanāʾis* renders the question largely moot as he also deploys his detailed knowledge of Egyptian history to undermine Christian claims to pre-Islamic antiquity for their churches in Cairo. These polemics of Ibn Taymiyya and others played a role in the Christian-Muslim conflict in Egypt that erupted sporadically in violence through the mid-14th century and led to the destruction of a number of churches.

Ibn Taymiyya’s view does not appear to be held widely today, but it has been cause for concern among present-day Egyptian Christians. In this regard, see the response of Mājid al-Rāhib to *Suʿāl fī al-kanāʾis*, the 2009 Cairene publication of Ibn Taymiyya’s fatwa; al-Rāhib takes the opportunity to warn against Wahhābī influence of Taymiyyan inspiration in Egyptian affairs (‘*Istihlāl hadm al-kanāʾis bi-fatwā Suʿāl fī l-kanāʾis*, 1 November 2009, www.copts-united.com/Arabic2011/Article.php?I=895&A=9359).

**MANUSCRIPTS**
- MS Paris, BNF – 2962, 2, fols 34-49 (date script unclear: 751/1350-51 or 851/1447-48)
- MS Damascus, Al-Ẓāhiriyya – 2311, 175-183 (1414-15)
- MS Cairo, Egyptian National Library – 20545b (1917-18)
- MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek – 8478,6 (date unknown)
- MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek – 10275 (date unknown)
- MS Istanbul, Bayazid Library – 1141, 16 (date unknown)

**EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS**
- *MF* xxviii, pp. 632-46 (without the Pact of ‘Umar appended)

STUDIES

Sarrió Cucarella, ‘Iglesias en tierra de Islam’


O’Keeffe, ‘ʿĀḥmad Ibn Taymiyya. Masʾalat al-kanāʾis’


Bat Ye’or, *The dhimmi*, pp. 194-96 (trans. of first few pages of *Masʾalat al-kanāʾis* as found in the text by ʿĀḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq given in Schreiner, ‘Contributions à l’histoire’, below)

Michel, *Response*, pp. 78-80


Laoust, ‘La biographie’, p. 147

M. Perlmann, ‘Notes on anti-Christian propaganda in the Mamlûk Empire’, *BSOAS* 10 (1942) 843-61, pp. 844, 853

Laoust, *Essai*, pp. 265-77 (discussion of non-Muslims under Islam based partially on this treatise)

M. Schreiner, ‘Contributions à l’histoire des Juifs en Égypte’, *Revue des Études Juives* 31 (1895) 212-21 (ed. with trans. of an anti-Jewish fatwa by a certain ʿĀḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq that quotes and summarizes parts of *Masʾalat al-kanāʾis*)

Steinschneider, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur*, pp. 89-90
Fatwā fī amr al-kanāʾis, ‘Fatwa on the issue of churches’

DATE Unknown
ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Arabic

DESCRIPTION
The only known source for this short fatwa is Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya’s Aḥkām ahl al-dhimma (ii, pp. 677-86 in the 1961 edition of Subḥī al-Ṣāliḥ), and it has now been printed independently in the collection Jāmiʿ al-masāʾil cited below. Fatwā fī amr al-kanāʾis treats the legal status of churches under Muslim rule, and it probably dates to after Masʾalat al-kanāʾis because it takes a less polemical and more juristic approach to the question.

In long and involved fashion, the inquiry prompting Fatwā fī amr al-kanāʾis asks about the status of unbelievers’ places of worship in Muslim territories conquered by force (ʿanwa). This is likely in response to Ibn Taymiyya giving Egypt, Syria and the plains of Iraq this status in Masʾalat al-kanāʾis and thereby rendering all churches in those regions subject to destruction if the ruler so wished. Ibn Taymiyya backtracks in Fatwā fī amr al-kanāʾis, explaining that most of Syria and Iraq was in fact conquered by treaty (ṣulḥ). This would give protection to churches built in those regions prior to Islam. Ibn Taymiyya explains that Egypt was also conquered initially by treaty. However, its inhabitants then violated their treaty, and Egypt had to be re-conquered by force. All unbelievers’ property in such regions belongs to the Muslims; no exception is made for churches, even those that are pre-Islamic. The ruler may give pre-Islamic churches, synagogues and other places of worship into the temporary care of those who use them, but he may rescind this when the public welfare (maṣlaḥa) requires. Churches and synagogues built after the Islamic conquest must be removed immediately, as the Pact of ‘Umar prohibits building new churches, monasteries and the like.

SIGNIFICANCE
The fatwa inquiry and Ibn Taymiyya’s response reflect the controversy over the Islamic legal status of Egypt and its churches that raged in the context of Egyptian Christian-Muslim conflict in the 14th century. Ibn Taymiyya’s Fatwā fī amr al-kanāʾis is less inflammatory than his Masʾalat al-kanāʾis, but he retains his ruling that Egypt is territory conquered by force and that its churches are thus subject to destruction.
Untitled treatise beginning *Fi shurūṭ ʿUmar...*,
‘Concerning the Conditions of ʿUmar...’

**DATE**  Unknown

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**  Arabic

**DESCRIPTION**
This short treatise of six pages printed in *MF* xxviii, pp. 651-56, provides a listing of the Conditions of ʿUmar applying to non-Muslims living under Muslim protection (*ahl al-dhimma*) and discusses related matters. For example, Ibn Taymiyya denies that the Prophet said, ‘Whoever harms a protected person (*dhimmī*) has harmed me’, and that unbelievers can never be rightly harmed. Also, he affirms that the Conditions of ʿUmar should always be enforced and, among other things, he censures the Ismāʿīlī Fatimids – here called Banū ʿUbayd al-Qaddāḥ – for permitting the building of churches in Egypt.

**SIGNIFICANCE**
The text shows that Ibn Taymiyya supports robust implementation of the Pact of ʿUmar.

**MANUSCRIPTS**  —

**EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS**
- Sarrió Cucarella, *Iglesias en tierra de Islam*, pp. 320-24 (Spanish trans.)
- *MF* xxviii, pp. 651-56
- *MRM* i, pp. 226-30
Untitled fatwa beginning *Wa su‘ila ʿan al-ruhbān* . . . ,
‘And he was asked about the monks . . .’

**DATE**   Unknown

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**   Arabic

**DESCRIPTION**
This brief fatwa on the legal status of monks living as *dhimmīs* under Muslim rule takes up five pages in *MF* xxviii, pp. 659–63. The fatwa inquirer asks whether monks who circulate freely among the populace, engaging in business and agriculture, are subject to the *jizya* tax levied on *dhimmīs*. In response, Ibn Taymiyya turns to the instruction of the first caliph, Abū Bakr, to Yazīd ibn Abī Sufyān, who was setting out on a military expedition to Syria: he should not harm monks who are secluded in hermitages, but should fight those who wear the tonsure, on the grounds that God commanded fighting the ‘leaders of unbelief’ (Q 9:12).

Ibn Taymiyya explains that Abū Bakr prohibited killing monks in hermitages only because they did not mix with their co-religionists in society and thus did not pose any danger to the Muslims. However, monks who mixed in society – those who wore the tonsure  – and provided strategic or material aid to their co-religionists in battle against Muslims were to be killed. It follows, therefore, that monks who trade and farm among their people after the cessation of hostilities must also pay the *jizya*. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya elaborates, these monks are the ‘leaders
of unbelief’, who block their co-religionists from the way of Islam and who the Qur’an says must be fought in time of battle.

In the latter part of the fatwa, Ibn Taymiyya discusses the legal status of Egypt under Muslim rule and complains that the Fatimids (al-dawla l-rāfidiyya) had permitted Christians to gain too much power in the government bureaucracy.

SIGNIFICANCE

Ibn Taymiyya’s view that monks active in society should pay the jizya and may be killed in time of battle falls within the mainstream of debate in classical Islamic jurisprudence. Some jurists exempted monks from the jizya, probably on the grounds that they were poor and secluded themselves for worship. However, some Christians in the Umayyad period turned to monasticism to avoid the jizya, which led rulers to impose the tax on monks. The jizya for monks was abolished and reinstated several times through the centuries, and this request for a fatwa from Ibn Taymiyya bears testimony to the fact that the taxation status of monks was still an open question in the Mamluk era (see Michot, *Fetwa des moines*, p. 13 n. 14 for references).

Yahya Michot’s 1997 *Le statut des moines*, a study and translation of Ibn Taymiyya’s fatwa on monks published under the pseudonym Nasred-din Lebatelier, provoked considerable controversy when it first appeared. The introduction to the study examines the 1996 capture and killing of seven French Trappist monks in Tibehirine, Algeria, attributed to the Islamist militant group Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA), and it analyzes GIA statements along with the widespread condemnation of the killings by Muslim leaders at the time. Michot seeks to contextualize both the GIA statements and the subsequent Muslim condemnations in the wider Islamic legal tradition with the help of Ibn Taymiyya’s fatwa. Some interpreted Michot’s work as legitimizing the killings of the Trappist monks (Bozzo, Wehbé and Veilleux), though Michot strongly denied that this was his aim and publicly condemned the killings.

MANUSCRIPTS — EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS


Nasreddin Lebatelier [Yahya Michot], *Le statut des moines*, Beirut: El-Safina, 1997


*MF* xxviii, pp. 659-63

**STUDIES**

Sarrió Cucarella, ‘La fetua de Ibn Taymiyya sobre los monjes’, pp. 171-90


Michot, *Fetwa des moines*


Lebatelier, *Le statut des moines*

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*Kitāb iqrāʾāʾ al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm; Iqrāʾāʾ al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, ‘The necessity of the straight path in distinction from the people of hell’

**DATE** Before 1315-16

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE** Arabic

**DESCRIPTION**


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al-mustaqīm fī mukhālafat ahl al-jahīm) is a large book forbidding Muslim imitation (tashabbuh) of unbelievers, especially Christians in their festivals. Its date is uncertain, but the earliest known manuscript was copied in 1315-1316, setting a terminus ad quem. The work was probably written not much before this.

At the beginning of the Iqtiḍā, Ibn Taymiyya states that he had previously written a tract on the same topic to positive effect. However, the problem of Muslims imitating unbelievers re-emerged, and someone asked him to write about it again. Ibn Taymiyya does not give the name of the first work – it is perhaps the short fatwa Khamīs or the fatwa in MF xxv, pp. 329-32 – and he adds that it was not even available to him when writing the Iqtiḍā. In the introduction to Ibn Taimiya’s struggle, a nearly full English translation of the Iqtiḍā, Memon provides a detailed attempt to date the text, but, not being aware of the 1315-1316 manuscript, he speculates that it was written after the 1321 Christian-Muslim conflicts in Cairo (pp. 7, 78-82).

Ibn Taymiyya refers to the Iqtiḍā by name in his treatise Ra’s al-Ḥusayn (MF xxvii, 450-89, p. 464), and he copies from it extensively to compose his short fatwa Dhamm khamīs al-Naṣārā (MF xxv, pp. 318-28).

The text of the Iqtiḍā divides into 24 chapters (faṣl). While these are not numbered in the Arabic text, Memon has conveniently numbered them in his translation, and this numbering will be followed in the description of the book here. Page references are to the two-volume critical edition of Nāṣir ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm al-ʿAql (seventh printing, 1999, indicated as ‘Aql), in which the Iqtiḍā takes up 880 pages, and to Memon’s translation.

The first chapter of the Iqtiḍā (ʿAql i, pp. 71-94; Memon, pp. 88-98) states its aim: to identify the errors of Jews, Christians and other unbelievers, especially pertaining to religious practices, so that Muslims can avoid these errors and remain on the Straight Path. Inspired by traditional interpretation that applied ‘not those who have incurred anger, nor those who have gone astray’ (Q 1:7) to Jews and Christians respectively, Ibn Taymiyya describes Jews as those who know the truth but incur God’s anger by not acting on it, and Christians as those who go astray by acting without knowledge. Christians have, out of ignorance, innovated rites of worship, and some Muslims have moreover fallen into imitating them. On Ibn Taymiyya’s analysis, participating in shared behavior outwardly, as when Muslims imitate Jewish and Christian ways, leads eventually to similarity in character and belief, whereas differing in
outward behavior prevents straying and clearly distinguishes those who are rightly guided from those who are not.

The second through eighth chapters (ʿAql i, pp. 95-477; Memon, pp. 98-193) constitute more than one third of the Iqtiḍāʿ and establish the general legal foundation for the rest of the treatise. Ibn Taymiyya touches on a range of issues here, but the thrust of his argument is that the Qurʾan, the Sunna and the consensus of the early Muslim scholars prohibit imitating unbelievers as a general rule and prescribe differing from them as either obligatory or commendable. For example, Muslim men are commanded to dye their beards to distinguish themselves from Jewish and Christian men. The Hadith contain reports that Muslims should not imitate the greetings of the Jews and the Christians and that Muslims should dress differently from others. Conversely, and in accord with the Pact of ʿUmar, non-Muslims living within Muslim lands should be required to dress differently from Muslims. In these and many other ways, Ibn Taymiyya argues, the legal sources of Islam call Muslims to distinguish themselves outwardly from unbelievers in order to avoid falling into proscribed deeds and eventually wrong belief.

With this general principle in place, the remainder of the Iqtiḍāʿ focuses specifically on proscribing participation in non-Muslim and innovated festivals. Ibn Taymiyya defines a festival (ʿīd) as a recurrent gathering to perform religious rituals and customs, which may or may not be tied to a specific place. Examples of Muslim festivals include gathering for Friday prayers and celebration of the Feast of Fast-Breaking (ʿīd al-fijīṭr). The term ‘festival’ also applies to places in which such gatherings might occur; this is the sense in the saying of the Prophet, ‘Do not turn my grave into a festival’ (ʿAql i, pp. 496-97; ii, pp. 5, 121; Memon, pp. 198, 220, 241).

Ibn Taymiyya grounds the prohibition against Muslim participation in non-Muslim and innovated festivals both on the textual foundations of Islam and on considerations of benefit (maṣlaḥa) and detriment (mafsada). With regard to the latter, he argues that Muslims derive benefit by deliberately differing from the People of the Book (ʿAql i, p. 478; Memon, p. 193). Moreover, while innovations in ritual may involve a measure of profit and Jews and Christians may derive some advantage from performing their own rites, all of this is outweighed by the greater evil in those rites. Had the good of those activities outstripped their evil, the shariʿa would have prescribed them from the outset (ʿAql ii, p. 117; Memon, p. 241). In Ibn Taymiyya’s view, the prescriptions of Islam
coincide fully with what is beneficial to humankind, and anything else can only detract from this.

The ninth through fourteenth chapters of the *Iqtīḍāʾ* (ʿAql i, p. 478-ii, p. 81; Memon, pp. 193-229) provide detailed analysis of non-Muslim festivals. Drawing on Qur’an, Hadith and views of the *salaf* and early scholars, as well as considerations of benefit and detriment, Ibn Taymiyya censures Muslim imitation of or participation in pre-Islamic, Persian and Jewish festivals and the Christian festivals of Christmas, Jesus’ baptism, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Easter. Ibn Taymiyya ranges widely in analyzing the origins and rituals of these various festivals, and he complains that he has seen Muslims participating in Christian festive practices such as coloring eggs, exchanging gifts, burning incense at graves, giving children new clothes, and spreading clothes out on roofs in hope for a blessing from the Virgin Mary. Such activities, Ibn Taymiyya explains, draw Muslims into Christian rites and belief – even baptism – or engender a theological pluralism in the minds of the Muslim masses in which ‘the object of worship is one, even if the paths differ’ (ʿAql i, p. 540; Memon, p. 213, translation added), meaning that parts of the Jewish and Christian laws may lead to God even if they are not in agreement with Islam. Ibn Taymiyya reiterates that imitation or participation in Christian festivals is not permitted. Jews and Christians as the People of the Book may practice their festivals within Islamic territory, but they must keep their festivals to themselves and not involve Muslims. However, Muslims are permitted to receive gifts from the People of the Book on the occasions of their festivals, and Muslims may eat food prepared by Jews and Christians during their festivals within certain limits.

The final portion of the *Iqtīḍāʾ* – well over a third of the book – focuses on showing that innovation (*bidʿa*) is always in error and entails corruption of religion (ch. 15, ʿAql ii, pp. 82-120; Memon, pp. 229-41), and on ferreting out innovated festivals of time (ch. 16, ‘Aql ii, pp. 121-48; Memon, pp. 241-51) and place (chs 17-24, ‘Aql ii, pp. 149-401; Memon, pp. 251-331). Considerable space is given to condemning the turning of graves into festivals. Most of this discussion concerns practices that have emerged within the Muslim community itself, and Christians and other unbelievers are not often mentioned. Nonetheless, Christians and Jews still loom in the background as those from whom Muslims must distinguish themselves and as sources of Muslim innovations. For example, Ibn Taymiyya traces the innovated Muslim celebration of the Prophet Muḥammad’s birthday (*mawlid*) to imitation of the Christian festival of Christmas, and he faults Christians for introducing unreliable stories into the Muslim
community that lead Muslims to believe in the special efficacy of praying at graves. Turning graves into festivals is proscribed because it so quickly deteriorates into associating partners with God (shirk) as Muslims fall foul of the Christian propensity to deify and worship human beings. Moreover, explains Ibn Taymiyya, the Prophet prohibited building religious sanctuaries over graves in deliberate divergence from Jewish and Christian practice.

Much of the last chapter in the Iqtiḍāʾ (ch. 24, ‘Aql ii, pp. 354-401; Memon, pp. 320-31) is devoted to an exposition of exclusive devotion to God (tawḥīd). Ibn Taymiyya here sets out his vision of correct worship of God over against the errors and excesses of Sufis and Muslim jurists and theologians, as well as against the stereotypical shirk of Christians and the arrogance of Jews.

SIGNIFICANCE
Ibn Taymiyya’s Iqtiḍāʾ is part of a wider literature in the Baḥrī Mam-luk sultanate of the late 13th and the early 14th centuries, which decried Muslim involvement in allegedly deviant religious practices – including those of Christians. Other examples of this literature include the Madkhal of the Cairene Ibn al-Ḥajj al-ʿAbdarī and the Kitāb al-lumaʿ of Idrīs ibn Baydākin al-Turkumānī (Shoshan, Popular culture in medieval Cairo, p. 68; Memon p. 6). These treatises are also part of a wider genre of anti-innovation legal treatises that emerged earlier in the medieval period (Fierro), prompted in part by the widening prevalence of Sufism and shrine religion in the Muslim community.

The Iqtiḍāʾ stands out among these other works by developing a rationale for proscribing Muslim participation in non-Muslim festivals that appeals to considerations of benefit (maṣlahā) and goes beyond simply opposing Jews and Christians or protecting the sharīʿa from danger. The result is probably the most sophisticated argument for the social, cultural and religious separation of Muslims from non-Muslims in the medieval period. In the Iqtiḍāʾ, as in other writings, Ibn Taymiyya takes the minority view within medieval Islam that there is no such thing as a good innovation (bidʿa ḥasana). This rules out celebrating the Prophet’s birthday, the cult of saints and other popular practices that had developed within the Muslim community over time. On Ibn Taymiyya’s analysis, the origins of these practices lay outside Islam among Jews, Christians and others. As Islam has set out all that is required to benefit mankind, imitating non-Muslim practices or those that derive from them cannot but harm Muslims and is thus proscribed. The fullest benefit for
Muslims is found in following the salaf and intentionally opposing non-Muslim practices.

At the level of social history, the work provides ample evidence that the boundary lines between the Christian and Muslim communities of this time were much more blurred than Ibn Taymiyya would have wished and that a good number of Muslims had no difficulty mixing with Christians in Christian celebrations. It also provides an interesting witness to the content of popular Christian festive practices under the Mamluks, albeit through Ibn Taymiyya’s polemical lens.

Reception of the Iqtiḍā’ today has been ambivalent among some more conservative Muslims because of Ibn Taymiyya’s acknowledgement that those engaged in erroneous practices might gain some (limited) benefit from them (Ukeles). However, as is evidenced by the proliferation of editions and commentaries, the text has received much attention, especially in Saudi Arabia, and it continues to inspire a vision of cultural, social and religious separation between Christians and Muslims (e.g. al-Dasūqī).

**MANUSCRIPTS**
- MS Dublin, Chester Beatty – 4160 (1315-16)
- MS Damascus, Zāhiriyya – 2982 (86 in Tawḥīd and ʿIlm al-Kalām) (1379-80)
- MS Princeton Garrett – 3889Y (14th-18th centuries)
- MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek – 2084 (perhaps early 15th century; missing first half and part of the end)
- MS Princeton Garrett – 3642Y (16th-18th century)
- MS Riyadh, King Saud University – 4146 (17th century)
- MS Saudi Library, General Presidency of Scholarly Research and Ifta – 564, 86 (1808-9)
- MS Riyadh, King Saud University – 1203 (1886-87)
- MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye – 188 (date unknown)
- MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı – 493 (date unknown)
- MS Cairo, Egyptian National Library – 4155 (date unknown)
- MS Cairo, Egyptian National Library – 2540 (date unknown)
- MS Ramur – 2, 283, 11 (date unknown)
- MS Bankipur – 13, 903 (date unknown)

**EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS**


Ibn Taimiyah, The right way. A summarised translation, Riyadh: Darussalam, 1996 (drawn largely from the latter third of the Iqtiḍāʾ)


IQTIḌĀʾ AL-ṢIRĀṬ AL-MUSTAQĪM MUKHĀLAFAT AṢḤĀB AL-JAḤĪM, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqī, Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1950 (later reprints by various publishers)

KITĀB IQTIḌĀʾ AL-ṢIRĀṬ AL-MUSTAQĪM MUKHĀLAFAT AṢḤĀB AL-JAḤĪM, Cairo: Al-Maṭbaʿa l-Sharafijiyya, 1907

STUDIES

R.M. Ukeles, ‘The sensitive puritan? Revisiting Ibn Taymiyya’s approach to law and spirituality in light of 20th-century debates on the Prophet’s birthday (mawlid al-nabī’), in Ibn Taymiyya and his times, 319-37, pp. 324-25 (reprehensibility of celebrating the Prophet’s birthday out of desire to imitate Christmas)

Michot, ‘Between entertainment and religion’ (notes 5, 9, 15 and 66 cite Iqtiḍāʾ)


Wāʾil ibn ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Dasūqi, Kitāb tahrīm mushārakat al-kuffār min ahl al-kitāb wa-al-mushrikin fi a’yādihim aw tahnī’atihim bihā, 2003-4, rev. 4th printing 2009, published online at www.mediafijire.com/?kzzdlyyvho and elsewhere (a normative work that draws heavily on the Iqtiḍāʾ to argue that Muslims should not participate in Christians festivals)


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C.S. Taylor, *In the vicinity of the righteous. Ziyāra and the veneration of Muslim saints in late medieval Egypt*, Leiden, 1999, pp. 172-90 (the *Iqtiḍāʾ* used as a source for discussing Ibn Taymiyya’s censure of visiting graves; see especially pp. 184-85 on Christian influences)


Makari, *Ibn Taymiyya’s ethics*, p. 131

Morabia, ‘Ibn Taymiyya, dernier grand théoricien du *ǧihād* médiéval’, pp. 92-95

Memon, *Ibn Taimiya’s struggle* (study and nearly full trans.)

Laoust, ‘La biographie’, p. 154

Laoust, *Essai*, pp. 270, 272

M. Schreiner, ‘Beiträge zur Geschichte der theologischen Bewegungen im Islām, V.c’, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 53 (1899) 51-88 (includes Arabic extracts from the Berlin MS of the *Iqtiḍāʾ* with discussion pp. 51-59, 78-85)

**Untitled fatwa beginning** *Wa suʾila ʿamman yafʿal min al-Muslimīn mithl ṭaʿām al-Naṣārā fī Nayrūz*. . . .

‘He was asked about Muslims who eat the food of the Christians at Nayrūz . . .’; *Taḥrīm mushārakat ahl al-kitāb fi ʿayādiḥim*, ‘Forbidding participation with the People of the Book in their festivals’

**DATE** Unknown

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE** Arabic

**DESCRIPTION**

This brief fatwa is printed in *MF* xxv, pp. 329-32, and *MRM* i, pp. 230-32, and bears no title in either collection. Thomas Michel (*Response*, pp. 82-84)
gave the work the title *Taḥrīm mushārakat ahl al-kitāb fī ‘ayādihim*, apparently deriving it from editor Rashīd Riḍā’s very brief summary of the work found in the table of contents to *MRM*. While there is no clear evidence by which to date the text, Michel speculates that Ibn Taymiyya wrote it in Egypt in 1309-10. The inquiry prompting the fatwa asks in a general way about Muslim involvement with Christians in festivals such as Christmas, Maundy Thursday, Easter and Nayrūz. Ibn Taymiyya responds that it is not permitted to have anything to do with Christians in their festivals. Muslims should not participate in their rituals and ancillary celebrations. Moreover, Muslims should not sell Christians anything to be used in their festivals or assist Christians in celebrating their feast days in any way. To do so is tantamount to helping Christians in their unbelief and associationism (shirk).

**SIGNIFICANCE**

Michel suggests that this fatwa is a precursor to the far more developed *Iqtiḍā’*, and Memon thinks it may be the brief work mentioned by Ibn Taymiyya at the beginning of that book (p. 345, n. 4).

**MANUSCRIPTS**

**EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS**

- *MF* xxv, pp. 329-32
- *MRM* i, pp. 230-32

**STUDIES**

- Michel, *Response*, pp. 82-84
- Memon, *Ibn Taimiyā’s struggle*, p. 345, n. 4
- Laoust, *Essai*, pp. 270, 272

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*Mas’ala fī man yusammī l-khamīs ʿīd, ‘A question about someone who calls Maundy Thursday a festival’*

**DATE** Unknown

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE** Arabic

**DESCRIPTION**

This fatwa (six pages in the printed edition) responds to an inquiry about calling the Christian celebration of Maundy Thursday a festival (ʿīd), and about activities such as painting eggs, gambling and using incense that
are linked to this day. Ibn Taymiyya responds that Muslims should not engage in any activities associated with the feasts of the unbelievers in accord with two sayings of the Prophet, ‘Whoever imitates a people is from them’, and ‘Whoever imitates someone apart from us is not from us’.

Ibn Taymiyya then censures the various beliefs and practices mentioned in the inquiry. Muslims who engage in these things should be called upon to repent; if they refuse, they should be killed. Moreover, those who are baptized, pray to the east and venerate the Cross are unbelievers and apostates who should be killed in accordance with the law, even if they claim to be Muslims. However, Muslims should not go to the opposite extreme and fast on Christian festivals in order to oppose them explicitly.

Ibn Taymiyya ends the fatwa by calling upon the ruling authorities to prohibit engagement in forbidden acts and command adherence to the laws of Islam.

SIGNIFICANCE

Among Ibn Taymiyya’s writings that censure participation in Christian festivals, Khamīs is the only text known to prescribe the death penalty for Muslims who do not refrain. This fatwa also provides evidence that commemoration of Maundy Thursday during Mamluk times was an occasion of considerable Christian merrymaking.

MANUSCRIPTS

MS Damascus, Zāhiriyya – 2962, fols 76v-78r (1352-53)
MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek – 2085 (15th century)
MS Dublin, Chester Beatty Library – Ar 3296, fols 14v-16r (perhaps 16th century)

EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS


STUDIES

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**Mas’ala fī dhamm khamīs al-Naṣārā; Dhamm khamīs al-Naṣārā, ‘Censure of the Christians’ Maundy Thursday’**

**DATE** Unknown

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE** Arabic

**DESCRIPTION**
Al-Walīd ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad Āl Farayān edited this short fatwa on the Christian festival of Maundy Thursday from three manuscripts, which he describes in the introduction to his edition in the Saudi journal *Majallat al-buḥūth al-islāmiyya* in 1995. He judges that two of the manuscripts come from the 16th century, while the third was copied in 1922-23. Āl Farayān does not mention where he found these manuscripts, and neither does he note that this fatwa appears without title in *KMF* ii, pp. 74-79, and in *MF* xxv, pp. 318-28, as two separate pieces (pp. 318-20 and pp. 320-28).

*Dhamm khamīs al-Naṣārā* clearly derives from the *Iqtiḍāʾ*, and by all appearances Ibn Taymiyya or possibly a disciple drew upon the earlier book to respond quickly to this later inquiry about Maundy Thursday. Apart from the introductory paragraph and some omissions, *MF* xxv, pp. 318-20 (Āl Farayān, pp. 363-66), is nearly identical to the first few pages of *Iqtiḍāʾ*, ch. 12 (Arabic ed. of ‘Aql ii, pp. 9-12; trans. of Memon, pp. 221-22). *MF* xxv, pp. 320-23 (Āl Farayān, pp. 366-71), is largely identical to passages found in *Iqtiḍāʾ*, ch. 9 (‘Aql i, pp. 534-40, ii, pp. 6-8; Memon, pp. 210-14, 220-21), and *MF* xxv, pp. 323-24 (Āl Farayān, pp. 371-73), draws from ch. 11 (‘Aql ii, pp. 6-8; Memon, pp. 220-21). The remainder of the fatwa consists of material found in various places elsewhere in *Iqtiḍāʾ*, some of which may not have been copied directly but taken from memory.

*Dhamm khamīs al-Naṣārā* lists censured activities linked to Maundy Thursday, such as women leaving their homes, coloring eggs, leaving off work for the festival, and spreading incense at graves. It argues that these activities are forbidden to Muslims because they could lead to worse acts, such as baptism and seeking blessing from the Cross.

**SIGNIFICANCE**
The existence of this and other fatwas devoted specifically to Maundy Thursday indicates that the activities associated with the day were a matter of particular curiosity among Muslims in the Mamluk period.
Untitled fatwa beginning *Suʿila Shaykh al-Islām... ‘an jamāʿa min al-Muslimīn ishtadda nakīruhum ‘alā man akala dhabīḥat Yahūdī aw Naṣrānī muṭlaqan*, ‘The Shaykh of Islam... was asked about a group of Muslims who severely reproached someone who had eaten the meat of animals slaughtered by a Jew or Christian’

**DATE** Unknown

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE** Arabic

**DESCRIPTION**
In this fatwa of 22 pages as found in *MF* xxxv, pp. 212-33, Ibn Taymiyya permits Muslims to eat meat from animals slaughtered by Christians and Jews. He also deems all Christian and Jewish butchers eligible to provide meat for Muslims, opposing a Shāfīʿī legal view that Christians and Jews who had converted to their respective religions – or whose descendants had converted – after the rise of Islam were not eligible. In Ibn Taymiyya’s view, it runs against the principles of Islam to factor these sorts of historical and genealogical considerations into interaction with non-Muslims.

**SIGNIFICANCE**
This is apparently the only fatwa in which Ibn Taymiyya speaks about the question of Muslims eating meat from animals slaughtered by Jews
and Christians. He is here in agreement with mainstream Sunnī views, apart from the Shāfīʿīs.

MANUSCRIPTS — EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS


*MF* xxxv, pp. 212-33

*KMF* i, pp. 152-64

STUDIES


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