7691 - Who was Ibn ‘Arabi?

the question

Could you please clarify, who is IBn Rabi? I am getting conflicting views from various sources. Shayhk Muhyi al-Deen Ibn al-'Arabi [may ALLAH be well pleased with him] was not a heretic. He was a man way ahead of his times. Those who couldn't understand his wisdom labeled him heretic but he was far from it. Unless you are a Master of Tassawuf I would ask you to refrain from calling a servant of ALLAH "deviant". He was one who reached an extremely high level of understanding. His teachings were Islamically sound but not everyone was prepared for his enlightened wisdom. Even to this very day there are those who, due to their lack of understanding, label him wrongly. Sadly it has always been the case that when people can't understand something they try to destroy and disqualify it out of fear. If you take the time to read his works you will gain a great deal of knowledge from them. It is not good to make a judgement about someone whose understanding of our Deen is lightyears ahead of your own. Do not follow the Wahabbi, Salafi and Saudis who cast doubt and disbelief on those who teach the truth to validate their wicked misguidance. Ibn Arabi never misguided anyone he was simply too advanced for the simpletons of the age to understand. Ibn Taymiyyah did not possess the same level of understanding as Ibn Arabi and therefore he assessment mirrors his lack of understanding. Ibn Taymiyyah was an ant while Ibn Arabi was a giant. It was nothing short of ignorance on Ibn Taymiyyah's part to attempt to formulate an opinion about someone who was lightyears ahead of him in knowledge. Secondly, do not go believing what Ibn Taymiyyah quoted verbatim because whereas Ibn Arabi was true scholar and Shayhk, Ibn Taymiyyah himself was a genuine deviant. Ibn Taymiyyah's fatwas have been the source of a great %100

Detailed answer

Who was Ibn ‘Arabi?

He was a prominent Sufi; in fact he was an extreme Sufi. His name was Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ibn Muhammad al-Taa’i al-Andalusi. The scholars have told us about him in response to a question which was put to them. The question was as follows:

What do the imaams of the religion and the guides of the Muslims say about a book which has been circulating among the people, the author of which claims that he wrote it and distributed it to people by permission of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) which was given to him in a dream which he claims to have seen? Most of this book contradicts what Allaah revealed in His Books and is opposed to what His Prophets said.

Among the things that he says in this book are: Adam was called insaan because in relation to the truth (Al-Haqq), he was like the pupil [insaan]of the eye, the part that can see.

Elsewhere he said: Al-Haqq which is transcendent is the physical creation which you can see.

Concerning the people of Nooh he said: if they had turned away from their worship of [their idols] Wudd, Siwaa’, Yaghooth and Ya’ooq, they would have lost more of Al-Haqq.

Then he said: Every object of worship is a manifestation of Al-Haqq. Those who know it, know it, and those who do not know it, do not know it. The one who has knowledge knows what he is worshipping and in what image the object of his worship is manifested. These many and varied manifestations are like the limbs of a physical image.

Then he said concerning the people of Hood: They reached a true state of closeness (to Allaah) and were no longer remote. The heat of Hell no longer affected them and they gained the blessing of closeness to Allaah because they deserved it. They were not given this delicious experience as a favour, but because they deserved it as a result of the essence of their deeds, for they were on a straight path.

Then he denied the idea of the warning against those of mankind against whom the word of punishment is justified.

Should the one who believes in what he says be denounced as a kaafir, or should we accept what he says, or what? If the person who listens to him is an adult of sound mind, and does not denounce him by speaking or in his heart, is he a sinner, or what?

Please explain to us clearly and with proof, as Allaah has taken the covenant from the scholars on that basis, for negligence [on the part of the scholars] causes a great deal of confusion to the ignorant.

(‘Aqeedah Ibn ‘Arabi wa Hayaatuhu by Taqiy al-Deen al-Faasi, p. 15, 16).

(The author) mentioned the response of some of the scholars:

Al-Qaadi Badr al-Deen ibn Jamaa’ah said:

The passages quoted, and other similar parts of this book, are bid’ah and misguidance, evil and ignorance. The religiously-committed Muslim would not pay any heed to them or bother to read the book to find out more.

Then he said:

The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) could never give permission in a dream for something which goes against and contradicts Islam; on the contrary, this is from the evil insinuations or whispers of the Shaytaan and a trap whereby the Shaytaan is playing with him and tempting him.

His words about Adam, that he is the pupil of the eye, and his likening Allaah to His creation, and his remark that ‘Al-Haqq which is transcendent is the physical creation which you can see’ – if by ‘Al-Haqq’ he is referring to the Lord of the Worlds – is a clear statement of anthropomorphism [likening Allaah to His creation] and he has taken this notion to extremes.

With regard to his denial of what has been narrated in the Qur’aan and Sunnah concerning the warning: this makes him a kaafir in the view of the scholars of the followers of Tawheed.

His comments about the people of Nooh and of Hood is vain and false talk which deserves to be rejected. The best way of dealing with that is to destroy this and all other similar passages of his book, for it is no more than fancy words, an expression of baseless ideas and an attempt to introduce into the religion ideas that do not belong to it. The ruling on this is that it should be rejected and ignored. (Ibid., p. 29, 30).

Khateeb al-Qal'ah Shaykh Shams al-Deen Muhammad ibn Yoosuf al-Jazari al-Shaafa'i said:

His comment about Adam being called insaan is anthropomorphism [likening Allaah to His creation] and is a lie and falsehood. His belief that the idol-worship of the people of Nooh was valid is kufr. Anyone who says such a thing cannot be approved of. His comment that 'Al-Haqq which is transcendent is the physical creation which you can see' is false and contradictory, and it is also kufr. His comment that the people of Hood had reached a true state of closeness (to Allaah) is a lie against Allaah, and by saying this, he has rejected what Allaah said about them. His remark that they were no longer remote and that Hell became a blessing and a joy for them is a lie and a rejection of everything that was revealed to the Prophets; the truth of the matter is what Allaah said about that, that they (the people of Hood) will abide in the torment forever.

Concerning those who believe what he says – and he knows what he said – the same ruling applies to them as to him: that they are misguided kaafirs, if they have knowledge. If they do not have knowledge, then the person who says that out of ignorance should be told the truth and taught about it, and should be stopped if possible.

His denial of the warning to all people is a lie and a rejection of the consensus (ijmaa') of the Muslims. No doubt Allaah will bring about the punishment. Islam offers definitive evidence that a group of sinners from among the believers will be punished, and the one who denies that is regarded as a kaafir. May Allaah protect us from wrong belief and denying the Resurrection. (Ibid., p. 31, 32).

Ibn Taymiyah said:

The Muslims, Christians and Jews all know something which is a basic principle of the Muslims' religion: that whoever says of any human being that he is a part of God is a kaafir, he is regarded as a disbeliever by all these religions. Even the Christians do not say this, although their belief is a major form of kufr; no one says that the essence of creation is part of the Creator, or that the Creator is the creation, or that Al-Haqq which is transcendent is the physical creation which you can see.

Similarly, his remark that if the Mushrikeen turn away from idol-worship, they will have turned away from Al-Haqq to the extent that they have abandoned idol-worship, is obviously kufr according to the basic principle that is common to all the religions. For the religions have agreed that all the Prophets forbade idol-worship and regarded as disbelievers those who did that; the believer cannot be a believer unless he disavows himself of worshipping idols and of everything that is worshipped instead of Allaah. As Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning);

"Indeed there has been an excellent example for you in Ibraaheem (Abraham) and those with him, when they said to their people: 'Verily, we are free from you and whatever you worship besides Allaah, we have rejected you, and there has started between us and you, hostility and hatred for ever until you believe in Allaah Alone'" [al-Mumtahanah 60:4]

— and he quoted other aayaat as proof — then he said:

Whoever says that if the idol-worshippers give up their idols, they will have turned away from Al-Haqq to the extent that they have abandoned idol-worship, is an even worse kaafir than the Jews and Christians, and the one who does not regard them as kaafirs is an even worse kaafir than the Jews and Christians, for the Jews and Christians regard idol-worshippers as disbelievers, so how about one who says that the one who gives up idol-worship has turned away from Al-Haqq to the extent that he has abandoned idol-worship?!Let alone the fact that he says, The one who has knowledge knows what he is worshipping and in what image the object of his worship is manifested. These many and varied forms are like the limbs of a physical image and the energy in a spiritual image; nothing but Allaah is being worshipped in everything that is worshipped. He is an even

greater kaafir than the worshippers of idols, for they only take them as intercessors and mediators, as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

" [The Mushrikeen say] 'We worship them only that they may bring us near to Allaah'" [al-Zumar 39:3]

"Have they taken (others) as intercessors besides Allaah? Say: "Even if they have power over nothing whatever and have no intelligence?" [al-Zumar 39:43]

They acknowledged that Allaah is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and the Creator of the idols, as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And verily, if you ask them: 'Who created the heavens and the earth?' Surely, they will say: 'Allaah (has created them)'" [al-Zumar 39:38] (Ibid., 21-23)

Shaykh al-Islam also said:

When the faqeeh Abu Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Salaam came to Cairo and they asked him about Ibn 'Arabi, he said:

He is a vile and evil shaykh who says that the world is eternal and does not see anything haraam in any sexual relationship.

He mentioned the belief that the world is eternal because this is what [Ibn 'Arabi] believed, but this is well-known form of kufr and the faqeeh Abu Muhammad denounced him as a kaafir because of this. At that time Ibn 'Arabi had not yet said that the universe was God or the universe was the image and essence of God. This is a greater form of kufr because those who say that the universe is eternal still believe that there had to be Someone Who brought it into existence, that from the One Who must exist comes that which may exist. Those shaykhs who met him [Ibn 'Arabi] said that he was a liar and a fabricator, and that in his books such as al-Futoohaat al-Makkiyyah etc. there were lies which could not be concealed from any intelligent person.

Then he said:

I have not even mentioned one-tenth of what they mentioned about kufr, but people who do not know about them have been deceived by these ideas, just as they were deceived by the Baatini Qaraamitah when they claimed to be descendents of Faatimah and said that they belonged to the Shee'ah, so the Shee'ah began to like them without knowing of their hidden kufr. So the person who is attracted to them is one of two things: either he is a heretic and hypocrite, or he is misguided and ignorant. With regard to these pantheists (ittihaadiyoon), their leaders are the leaders of kufr and must be executed, and their repentance cannot be accepted if they are seized before they repent, for they are among the greatest heretics, those who make an outward display of being Muslim whilst concealing kufr in their hearts, those who conceal their beliefs and their opposition to Islam. Everyone who follows them, who defends them, who praises them, who admires their books, who is known to help them, who does not like to speak against them or who makes excuses for them by saying that we do not know exactly what these statements mean, who says 'How can we be sure that he wrote this book?' and other excuses which no one but an ignorant person or a hypocrite would come up with, must be punished.

Indeed, it is obligatory to punish everyone who knows about them but does not help to resist them, because campaigning against these people is one of the most serious duties, for they have corrupted the minds and religious belief of many shaykhs, scholars, kings and princes, and they are spreading corruption throughout the world, preventing people from following the path of Allaah. The harm that they cause to the religion is greater than that done by those who damage the worldly interests of the Muslims but leave their religion alone, such as bandits on the highways and the Tatars (Mongols) who took their wealth but left their religion alone. Those who do not know them should not underestimate the danger they pose. Their own misguidance and the extent to which they misguide others defies description.

Then he said:

Whoever thinks well of them and claims not to know how they really are should be informed about them. If he does not then turn his back on them and denounce them, then he should

be classed as one of them.

Whoever says that their words could be interpreted in such a way that it does not contradict sharee'ah is one of their leaders and imaams. If he is intelligent, he should know what they really are. But if he believes in it and behaves like this openly and in secret, then he is a worse kaafir than the Christians.

(Ibid., p. 25-28 – adapted and abbreviated)

Ibn Hajar said:

Some confusing words of Ibn 'Arabi were mentioned to our master Shaykh al-Islam Siraaj al-Deen al-Balqeeni, and he was asked about Ibn 'Arabi. Our Shaykh al-Balqeeni said: he is a kaafir.

(Ibid., p. 39).

Ibn Khaldoon said:

Among these Sufis are: Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn Saba'een, Ibn Barrajaan and their followers who follow their path and their religion. They have many books in circulation that are filled with blatant kufr and repugnant bid'ahs, trying to interpret clear texts in very far-fetched and repugnant ways, such that the reader is astounded that anyone could attribute such things to Islam.

(Ibid., p. 41).

Al-Subki said:

These later Sufis, such as Ibn 'Arabi and his followers, are misguided and ignorant and beyond the pale of Islam; those among them who have knowledge are even worse.

(Ibid., p. 55).

Abu Zar'ah ibn al-Haafiz al-'Iraaqi said:

Undoubtedly the famous book Al-Fusoos contains blatant kufr, as does al-Futoohaat al-Makkiyyah. If it is true that he wrote this and continued to believe in it until he died, then he is a kaafir who is doomed to eternity in Hell, no doubt about it.

(Ibid., p. 60).

So how can any sane person say that these brilliant scholars did not understand Ibn ‘Arabi? If they did not understand him, who can?

An incident from which we learn a lesson:

Al-Faasi said:

I heard our companion al-Haafiz al-Hujjah al-Qaadi Shihaab al-Deen Ahmad ibn ‘Ali ibn Hajar al-Shaafa’i say: there were many disputes about Ibn ‘Arabi between me and one of those who like Ibn ‘Arabi, until I insulted him because of the bad things that he had said, but that did not make the man change his mind. He threatened to complain about me to the Sultaan in Egypt with regard to a matter that was different from that which we were arguing about, just to cause trouble for me. I said to him: the Sultaan has nothing to do with this! Come, let us make Mubaahalah [call our sons, our wives and ourselves and pray and invoke the Curse of Allaah upon those who lie – cf. Aal ‘Imraan 3:61]. It is very rare, when people make Mubaahalah and one of them is lying, for that one to go unpunished. So he said to me, ‘Bismillaah’ [i.e, he agreed]. And I said to him: ‘Say: O Allaah, if Ibn ‘Arabi is misguided, then curse me with Your Curse’ – so he said that. Then I said, O Allaah, if Ibn ‘Arabi is rightly-guided, then curse me with Your Curse. Then we parted. Then we met in a park in Egypt on a moonlit night, and he said to us, Something soft touched my leg, look! So we looked but we did not see anything. Then he checked his eyes and he could not see anything (i.e., Allaah had afflicted him with blindness).

This is the meaning of what Al-Haafiz Shihaab al-Deen ibn Hajar al-‘Asqallaani told me.

(Ibid., p. 75, 76).

This is how this man has misguided and deceived those who are seeking the truth and who want to follow the path of right guidance. He is a heretic who was not ahead of his time in any way except in misguidance and kufr. He does not possess any light or wisdom; on the contrary he is in the depths of darkness and ignorance.

We have quoted to you the words of scholars other than Ibn Taymiyah, to point out the kufr of Ibn ‘Arabi, so that you will not think that Ibn Taymiyah was the only one who denounced him as a kaafir.

In response to your bad manners towards Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah and your claim that he came years after Ibn ‘Arabi, we say: you came many more years after Ibn Taymiyah than the number of years between him and Ibn ‘Arabi, so you of all people should keep quiet about him.

It is not right to speak in such an ill-mannered way about a Shaykh such as Ibn Taymiyah, whose knowledge has spread all over the world. How can a man such as you dare to describe him as an ant?

Who are you to describe the Shaykh of shaykhs and the Shaykh of Islam as an ant? Do you not fear that you will have to stand before Allaah and be questioned as to why you were so ill-mannered towards the scholars?

We ask you by Allaah, besides Whom there is no other god, can a person who says that the creation is a part of the Creator be a Muslim?

Based on your response, you will know the state of your Islam. And Allaah is the Guide to the Straight Path.