

The Hanbalite Theology: A Critical Study of The Hanbalite Theological Creeds and Polemical Adversaries

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18196/afkaruna.v17i1.11353>

AHWAN FANANI

Universitas Islam Negeri Walisanga

email: ahwan.fanani@walisongo.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The Hanbalite school, well-known as a traditional school of Islamic law, played important role in theological discourses in Islamic history. The fact, however, fails to be paid enough attention because of prevalent knowledge among Islamic society that the Hanbalite is only and a school of Islamic law. The Hanbalite theology is frequently abandoned in Islamic scholarship, although several researches have tried to reveal them. This article is aimed to extend previous researches of the Hanbalite theology through the description of its creeds and the elaboration of theological polemics between the Hanbalites and their adversaries. This article employs the history of idea by analyzing references written by Hanbalite scholars and other related sources. The references are collected and categorized according to the need of topics and then interpreted to provide readers with overall picture of the Hanbalite theology and their polemics along history. The Hanbalites creeds are based on textual understanding on Quranic texts and prophetic traditions. The creeds are underpinned by the idea that the Quran is not created and Quranic verses on God's attributes should be understood textually. The idea led Hanbalite scholars to do a debate with other theologians. The article provides a more vivid description on Hanbalite creeds and analyzes the creeds in the light polemics launched by the Hanbalite scholars against their rivals. The article, however, does not elaborate detailly on each Hanbalite scholar's contribution in forming sophisticated Hanbalite theology.

Key Word: Hanbalite, theology, creeds, polemics

ABSTRAK

Mazhab Hanbali, yang dikenal sebagai mazhab hukum dalam Islam, memainkan peran penting dalam wacana teologi dalam sejarah Islam. Akan tetapi, kenyataan itu kurang mendapatkan perhatian karena kuatnya persepsi di kalangan masyarakat

muslim bahwa mazhab Hanbali hanya sekedar mazhab hukum. Teologi Hanbali seringkali diabaikan dalam kajian akademik, meski beberapa artikel tentang teologi Hanbali mulai muncul. Artikel ini dimaksudkan untuk memperluas penelitian sebelumnya mengenai teologi Hanbali melalui penggambaran lebih jelas credo Hanbali dan penjabaran mengenai polemik teologi yang melibatkan para ulama Hanbali berhadapan dengan lawan diskusi mereka. Artikel ini menggunakan pendekatan sejarah ide melalui analisis berbagai karya yang ditulis oleh para ulama Hanbali dan sumber-sumber terkait. Referensi tersebut dikumpulkan dan dikategorikan sesuai dengan pembahasan serta ditafsirkan untuk menyediakan pembaca tentang gambaran mengenai teologi Hanbali dan polemik teologis mereka. Credo Hanbali didasarkan atas pemahaman tekstual atas teks al-Quran dan hadis. Credo tersebut dibangun di atas gagasan bahwa al-Quran bukan makhluk dan sifat-sifat Allah harus dipahami secara tekstual. Gagasan itulah yang menjadi titik polemik ulama Hanbali dengan ulama dari aliran teologis lainnya. Namun, artikel ini tidak menjelaskan lebih detail mengenai pandangan masing-masing ulama Hanbali dan sumbangsih mereka dalam pembentukan teologi Hanbali yang lebih maju.

Kata Kunci: Hanbali, teologi, keyakinan teologi, polemik

INTRODUCTION

Hanbalite is generally associated as a school of Islamic law, along with Hanafite, Malikite and Shafi'ite, but it involves in theological discourse along Islamic history. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal was a pioneer of traditionist movement againsts rationalistic theology.¹ George Makdisi noted two important moments in the development of classical Islamic scholarship. The first is the emergence of the Shafi'ite school of thought which succeeded in synthesizing reason and text so that the views of traditionists could be accepted by classical jurists. The second was the emergence of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal who successfully escaped of *mihna* and represented traditionists' theological views in front of officially imposed rational belief.²

At the beginning of his development, however, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's authority as jurist was questioned by several scholars, such as Muhammad Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 310/923 AD), who regarded him as a traditionist. Ibn Nadim (d. 377 H / 987 AD) and al-Maqdisi (375 H / 985 AD) also categorized Amad Ibn Hanbal as traditionist (*ashab al-hadith*), along with al-Awza'i (d. 157 / 774 AD), Ibn Mundhir (d. 316 / 928M) and Ishaq Ibn Rahawayh (d. 151/768 AD). Both scholars, however, put another traditionist school, namely zahirite, as the school of Islamic law at the end of the 10th century AD.³

The Hanbalite as the school of Islamic law, however, received a wide

acceptance so that Hanbalite school is always being included in the collection of sunni legal schools that encompasses the legal opinions of Hanbalite scholars in addition to the Malikite, Hanafite, and Shafi'ite scholars as can be seen in the comparative legal works like *al-Fiqh 'ala Mazhab al-'Arba'a*.⁴ The Hanbalites, then, became one of established traditional school of Islamic law among Sunnite Muslims.

The existence of the Hanbalite as the school of Islamic law is also recognized by Islamic Organizations in Indonesia, such as Nahdlatul Ulama. Bahtsul Masail, a forum for resolving legal problems among Nahdlatul Ulama's followers, refers to the work of several Hanbalite scholars, such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728 H / 1328 AD), Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751 H / 1350 AD), Abu Ya'la al-Farra' (d. 458H), Shams al-Din Ibn Muflih al-Maqdisi (d. 763H / 1362 AD), 'Ali Ibn Sulayman al-Mardawi (d. 885 H / 1480 AD) and Mansur Ibn Yunus Ibn 'Idris al-Bahuti (1051H / 1641 AD).⁵ Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim had influence in the idea of coming back to the Qur'an and the Prophet traditions, opening the door of *ijtihad* and puritanism in modern Islamic movement, such as Muhammadiyah di Indonesia.⁶

Hanbalite played important is not only a school of Islamic law, but it also plays an important role in theology. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal was celebrated as a defender of traditionist position in their opposition to the force of Mu'tazila imposed by the Abbasid rulers in the era of al-Ma'mun (d. 218H / 833AD, al-Mu'tasim (d. 227H / 842AD) and al-Wathiq (232H / 847AD). Hanbalite gained the reputation as *ahl al-sunna* school, an ortodox Islam.⁷ In the 11th century, Hanbalite was recognized as an independent theological school.⁸

Hanbalite differs from other legal schools because of its position as both legal and theological schools. Most Hanafite adhere to Maturidite theology, while the majority of Shafi'ites and some Malikite follows Ash'arite's creeds. Hanbalite scholars, however, do not need to adhere to any other theological schools because Hanbalite acts as theological school as well. Eventhough well-known as jurists, Hanbalite scholars, such as Abu Ya'la, Ibn 'Aqil, and Ibn Qudama wrote theological treatises and involved in theological debate with other theologians. Such theological debate was not new phenomenon in Hanbalite as Ahmad Ibn Hanbal wrote several theological treatises, such as *Kitab al-Sunna* and *al-Radd 'ala al-Jahmiyya wa al-Zanadiqa*.

The theological attitude of the Hanbalite school is influenced by the idea of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal rose as theologian because of his opposition to *mihnah* (inquisition) conducted by Abbasid caliphs. *Mihna* was

the official stance taken by the Caliph al-Ma'mun in 212 AH / 827 AD to promote a creed that the Koran is creature as stated by Mu'tazila scholars. Al-Ma'mun's policy sparked opposition from conservative clerics in 218 AH / 833 AD when he ordered the provincial governors to ask religious scholars to conform to this idea and that the conformity was a condition for the application for an employee chair. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, along with Muhammad Ibn Nuh, opposed the policy that led to their arrest and imprisonment.⁹

The opposition made Ahmad Ibn Hanbal popular as defender of the *sunna* and the stance of Sunnis majority. His struggle to face *mihna* attracted followers and shaped theological basis for Hanbalite theology. Unfortunately, the theological stance of Hanbalite was not elaborated detailly yet by scholars due to the attribution of Hanbalite as Islamic school of law by Khan, al-Jaziri and 'Uthaimin.¹⁰ The works on Hanbalite mainly focus on its legal thought or on hadith study.

There are, however, some previous researches on Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's opposition against rationalistic theology. Melchert wrote articles on "The Adversaries of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal"¹¹, "Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and the Qur'an",¹² and "The Hanabila and the Early Sufis."¹³ In first article, he provided the depiction on Ahmad's disputes with rationalist and semi rationalist. He positioned Ahmad Ibn Hanbal as traditionist who opposed rationalists' camps on their reliance on opinions rather than hadits reports and their idea that the Quran is creature and the pronunciation of the Quran as creature as well. He also addressed his critics toward Shi'a hostility toward prophets' companions.

In second article, Melchert highlights Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's position on the recitation of the Quran and the position of the Quran in legal thinking. In third article, he elaborates Hanabila hostile critics toward sufis, especially Sari al-Saqati and al-Muhasibi, on their engagement in theology and their performing *dhikr* collectively. However, Melchert does not provide the explanation on Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's creeds further because his aim was to show the difference between Ahmad Ibn Hanbal from his adversaries.

Azmeh and Williams highlight rigorous religiosity that Ahmad Ibn Hanbal embraced. Al-Azmeh considered him as the proponent of fideism (anti-rationalistic idea), especially on God's attributes.¹⁴ Williams does not agree to Azmeh's conclusion on Ahmad's fideism, rather he prefer to categorizing Ahmad as minimalist fideism proponent for his limited employment of rationalism and interpretation. Anthropomorphism initially flourished under Ahmad

Ibn Hanbal patronage, but it come to be alternative view available for muslims to interpret important pillars of Islam.¹⁵

This paper aims to reveal the theological creeds held by the Hanbalite and to provide vivid picture of theological polemics launched by Hanbalite scholars. The development of theological idea of Hanbalite is a contributive point that the article offers to academic readers. The article is to deepens the insight into the body of Hanbalite creeds in the light of long history of polemics carried out by Hanbalite scholars to their opponents. The understanding of the development of Hanbalite creed will reveal the reality that Hanbalite schools acts as the school of Islamic law and the school of theology, the fact that is rarely paid close attention.

The article uses a historical approach through library research to give a description of the development of Hanbalite creeds. The article scrutinizes Hanbalite theological works written by Hanbalite scholars to describe the Hanbalite's creeds and to portray the polemic conducted by Hanbalite scholars againsts their opponents. The data are collected and categorized according to the squence of narration and interpreted to provide clear description of the Hanbalite creeds and analyses of their arguments in the polemics againsts their opponents. The article, therefore, provides a diachronic explanation to the evolution of Hanbalite creeds through theological debate against their theological proponents.¹⁶

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HANBALITE MADHHAB

The Hanbalite school is associated to its founder, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal. During his lifetime, he was recognized more as an traditionist (*muḥaddith*) than a jurist (*faqih*). He was also well-known for his opposition against the Abbasid rulers who imposed a belief on the Quran as creature. The career leads a historian Ibn Jarir al-Tabari to not include him as a jurist.¹⁷

The recognition of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal as a jurist initially came from Hanbalite scholars. Abu Ya'la (d. 458H / 1065M), a well-know Hanbalite jurist, quoted the words of Rabi' Ibn Sulayman (d. 270 / 883M), a student of al-Shafi'i, who reported the recognition of al-Shafi'i on Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's expertises in eight fields, including in Islamic law (*al-Imam fi al-Fiqh*), although al-Shafi'i respected Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's expertise in *hadith* and *rijal* (*hadith* narrators).¹⁸ Ahmad Ibn Hanbal refused his opinion to be recorded and emphasized a direct reference to the Quran and *sunna* instead. However, his students recorded his various fatwas in *Masa'ils* works that provide early

compilation of Hanbalite legal opinions.¹⁹

The Hanbalite school developed from Baghdad, the birthplace of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal. The Hanbalite School developed and competed with other legal schools until it was recognized as an independent legal school in the 10th century. The appointment of Abu Ya'la as a judge accelerated the development of Hanbalite so that its influence expanded to Syria in the 10th century and to Egypt in the 12th century. The development of Hanbalite in Egypt began with the appointment of al-Hajjawi as a judge during the late Ayyubid reign (1171-1250 AD). The development of the Hanbalite School was not as fast as three other schools because it was never adopted as an official school by any political power. The Hanbalite school again gained strong position in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Qatar in modern time.²⁰

There are several figures who played important role in the development of the Hanbalite. Al-Kawsaj (d. 251/865 AD) was a narrator of *Masa'il Ahmad Ibn Hanbal* who traveled to Hijaz, Syria, Iraq and finally settled in Nisabur until he died. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's son, Salih Ibn Ahmad (d. 266/880 AD), served as judge in Tarsus and Isfahan. Abu Salih Muflih (d. 330 942 AD) developed the Hanbalite school in Damascus. Abu al-Qasim al-Khiraqi (d. 334 H/ 945 AD) acted as writer of standard works of the school. He settled in Damascus during the Buwaihi influence in the Abbasid caliphate.

Prominent Hanbalite figures appeared, such as 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Harrani (d. 476 H/ 1083 AD), a judge, mufti and teacher of the Hanbalite. In Isfahan, the names of several Hanbalite figures emerged, such as Abu al-Qasim (d. 360/971 AD), Abu 'Abd Allah Ibn Manda al-Isfahani (d. 395/1005 AD) and Abu al-Qasim Ibn Manda al-Isfahani (d. 470 / 1078M). In Amid (present day: Diyarbakir, Turkey), there were 'Abd al-Rahman al-Baghdadi (d. 468/1075) and Abu al-Qasim Ibn Abi Ya'la (d. 469/1077 AD). In Herat, there was a famous Hanbalite figure, 'Abd Allah al-Ansari al-Harawi (d. 481/1088 AD). Meanwhile in 'Ukbar, Ibn Batta al-'Ukbari (d. 387/997 AD), Abu Hafs al-'Ukbari (d. 339/950 AD) and Abu al-Husayn al-'Ukbari (d. 424/1033 AD) appeared as outstanding Hanbalite figure in early 10th Century.²¹

The emergence of Hanbalite was a monumental victory of traditionists in Islam over rationalists.²² The recognition of Hanbalite as the school of Islamic law took place subsequent to *mihna* during the Mutawakkil era until the emergence of Buwayhid Dynasty (855-945AD / 241-334 H). Hanbalite involved in the confrontation againsts Imami Shi'ites, supported by the Buwayhids. Buwayhid Dynasty strengthened Isma'ili Shi'a in Egypt during the Fathimid

dynasty (358 H / 969 AD). Hanbalite figures had increasingly a decisive influence during the restoration of the Sunni era of al-Qadir (381-422 H / 991-1021 AD) and played role as the defender of the caliphate and the Sunni groups.²³ The last two centuries of the Abbasid rule in Baghdad (447-656 / 1061-1258) were the golden age of the Hanbalite school.

At the end of the Abbasid era, outstanding masters emerged among the Hanbalite. The first was Ibn Hubayra, prime minister of the Caliph al-Muktafi (from 554 H / 1149 AD), who established Hanbalite in 557 H. The second was Abd al-Qadir al-Jaylani (d. 561 H / 1666 AD), the founder of Qadiriya's brotherhood and celebrated as prominent saint in Islamic world. The third was Abu al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzi (597H / 1200AD), a legal and hadith expert, who studied with many Hanbalite masters and wrote several works rejecting Sufis' practices and philosophers.²⁴

The important development of the Hanbalite in Syria were influenced by Ibn Munajja's and Bani Qudama's family. Bani Qudama contribute to the development of the Hanbalite school through 'Abd al-Ghani, an Ash'arite Sufi and Muwaffaq al-Din Ibn Qudama. In Harran, a region near Damascus, there was also the center of Hanbalite from the beginning, with Majd al-Din Ibn Taymiyya (d. 652 / 1254-1255), the grandfather of Ibn Taymiyya. Under the Mamluk Bahriya and 'Uthmaniyya Reign, the Hanbalite was still active in Syria and Palestine, with the prominent figures Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728 / 1326 AD), Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350AD) and Ibn Rajab (d. 1393AD). Under the Mamluk Circasian (784-923 H/ 1382-1517 AD), the Hanbalite began to lose its importance in several cities, as a result of their opposition to Ibn 'Arabi, whose influence was increasing at that time in Syria, Palestine, Nisabur, Ray and Isfahan.²⁵

AHMAD IBN HANBAL'S THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT

1. The Attitude Toward Theologians

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal reflected traditionists who did not prefer the use rational arguments (*ra'y*) in legal and theological disputes. He rejected legal teaching without direct reference to *hadith* or the opinions of Prophet's companions. His opposition to the *ra'y* was strong that he condemned person who issued fatwas based on *hiyal* (rational manipulation) as infidel. He included *ashab al-ra'y* (jurits who inclined to use *ra'y*) in the theological groups that he rejected, namely Murji'a, Qadariya, Rafida, Hawarij and Jahmiya. He excluded those theologians, especially Rafida, from Islamic community.²⁶

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal opposed the proponents of *ra'y* who held the idea that the Quran is created. The opposition to the idea was central in Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's thought. He labelled those who believed that the Quran is created and who rejected the attributes of God as Jahmiya. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal requested them to repent, otherwise they might be killed.²⁷

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's attitude towards theologians (*mutakallimin*) was harsh. He forbade his students to sit with those who claimed the createdness of the Quran and deemed the claim as *bid'a* (innovation). He criticized his friends who studied with al-Karabishi (d. 245 H/ 862 AD) and Abu Thawr (240 / 854M), both of which considered the recitation of the Quran as created. Interestingly, Ahmad highly praised Abu Thawr for his expertise in *hadith*.²⁸ Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's criticism was not only directed at theological arguments, but also at rational arguments. He prohibited the use of logical arguments to defend Islamic faith.

Although Ahmad Ibn Hanbal appreciated the practice of Sufism and wrote the book *al-Zuhd*, his attitude toward sufis was not hospitable. Ahmad respected Ma'ruf al-Karkhi (d. 200 / 815-16 AD) for his mastery in *hadith*. However, he did not like al-Harith al-Muhasibi (d. 243 / 857- 58) because of his rational theological thought. Al-Muhasibi had to hide from the Hanbalite threat and his funeral was only attended by four people.²⁹

His opposition to the belief that the Quran was created as promoted by the Abbasid Caliph since al-Ma'mun (d. 833 AD), al-Mu'tasim (833 - 842) until al-Wathiq (842-847) brought him into jail for 28 months in Bagdad during the reign of al-Mu'tasim. After released, he was forbidden to teach until the regime of Caliph Mutawakkil (847-861 AD) who sought support from him.³⁰ Traditionists were targeted at *mihna* – inquisition held by Abbasid rulers - due to their persistence not to comply government's request.³¹

The opposition of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal to *mihna* drew wide support from mass and scholars. The resistance to the *mihna* and to the followers of Jahmiya was also directed by a mob to officials after the death of al-Mu'tasim and the rise of al-Wathiq (227-232 / 842-847 AD). The mob beat two of Jahmiya's followers and removed a sign promoting the createdness of the Quran from a private mosque in Baghdad. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, however, refused to support violent resistance to the Abbasid government.

The struggle of Ahmad also drew support from other Mu'tazilah insider, namely Abu Hasan al-Ash'ari (d. 324 H/ 935-6 AD). He had been a follower of Mu'tazila before he chose to support Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's movement and

celebrated Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's opinion as the representation of the truth (*al-haqq*) and *sunna*. Al-Ash'ari, who belonged to Shafi'ite background, abandoned Mu'tazila later and founded his own theological school.³² Al-Ash'ari critics against Mu'tazila's creeds in his *al-Ibana* led Makdisi to conclude that he was a traditionists and Hanbalian as well.³³ Al-Ash'ari's approach, however, was not always in line with Hanbalite's one. Although praising Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his work, his method of argumentation differed from that of Hanbalite.³⁴

Abu Hasan al-Ash'ari called Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's proponents as *ahl al-haqq wa al-sunna* whose creeds were: "Allah is One, Muhammad is His messenger, heaven and hell are true and Allah will raise those in the grave". Al-Ash'ari embraced the idea that Allah reigns (*istiwa'*) in '*arsh* and has face and hands without necessarily explaining how (*bila kayf*) as traditionists usually hold. According to him, whoever thought that Allah's attributes are other than Him, he had lost his way.³⁵ Ignaz Goldziher saw the creeds were aimed to counter to Mu'tazila's. While Mu'tazila rejected a literal understanding on the attributes of the God, the Hanbalite held the imperative position to hold textual interpretation on it, such as hearing, seeing, standing and sitting, without necessarily questioning how God does it (*bi la kayf*).³⁶

Although supporting Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, al-Ash'ari criticized him in his other works. According to Amin, al-Ash'ari's support to Ahmad Ibn Hanbal was an effort to gain the support from wider community members. The literality of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and traditionists' theology was incompatible to the rational background of al-Ash'ari, who chose to defend Islamic orthodoxy by both textual and rational arguments. The critics marked the methodological break between al-Ash'ari, followed subsequently by the Ash'arite, and traditionists, especially Hanbalite.³⁷ The break led to long disputes between Ash'arite proponents and the Hanbalites, both of which claim to be the representation of *ahl al-sunna* camp.

2. The Creeds of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal

The theological thoughts of the Hanbalite stemmed from and were strongly influenced by the views of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal. Abu Ya'la at the end of his *Tabaqat al-Hanabila* presented a chapter on Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's creeds. The creeds highlighted and systematized the pillars of Hanbalite theology, especially on God's attributes and human actions.

a. God's Attributes

God's attributes are central issues in Islamic theology. The schools of Islamic theology embrace different stances on the God's attributes. Mu'tazila, for instance, was known as a supporter of an absolute monotheism and insisted on the inseparability between God's attributes and His substance. Mu'tazila emphasized the Oneness of God so that His various attributes might not be seen as independent entity from His Essence. However, God has different names mentioned in the Quran, which are parallel to His attributes. The discussion about the relationship between His Oneness and the variety of His names sparked heat debate among Islamic theologians.³⁸

According to Watt, the debate on God's attributes is a continuation of the previous debate about the Quran beginning in 750 AD. The Qur'an is the *logos* or the word of God as stated in the Quran *sura* al-Zukhruf verse 3: "We actually made the Quran in Arabic so that you can understand it." The verse opens different interpretations whether the Quran is a creature or it has divine character.³⁹

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal recognizes all attributes of God mentioned in the Quran. God's attributes, according to him, might be known through the information of The Quran. Every attribute has unique meaning, such as *al-Sami'* (All-Hearing) and *al-Basir* (All-Seeing), both of which are unique. He accepts literal meaning of the Quran, such as the God has a face. The face of God is real, unimagined and eternal. The God also has two hands, but they are not members of any body and are not composed of any element. Whoever claims that God's face is He Himself, he has deviated from true teaching of the Quran. People who refuses to accept God's attributes will turn to be apostate.⁴⁰

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's explanation on Allah's attributes may lead to suspicion that he embraces an anthropomorphic tenet, as Patton and Anawati do.⁴¹ Hanbalite has been accused by its opponents as the follower of the *Mujassima* (anthropomorphism). However, several scholars, such as Laoust, Strothmann and Watt, refused the accusation since Ahmad is the representation of the orthodox camp, rather that of the anthropomorphist. Wesley William consider anthromorphism a choice among the Sunnists at the beginning of its development. The anthromorphism was not only as the result of literal understanding of the Quran, but it is also a kind intellectual perspective.⁴² In fact, Ahmad realized that anthromorphic attributes of God in the Quran constituted metaphorical understanding and they do not refer to any physical

form.⁴³ He refuses to interpret those attributes metaphorically and avoids theological speculations as well.

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal insistently refuses to give any chance to the idea that the Quran is created. He said: "a creature is created with all its characteristics, while Allah is not creature with all of His attributes." On the question of whether the letters of the Quran are identical to their reference, Ahmad and traditionists would answer "We don't know"⁴⁴, as the manifestation of *bi la kayf* position.

b. God's Justice and Human Actions

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal included justice as God's attribute, without reducing His power. According to him, if God wanted to get rid of any human action that He does not like, He would do it because He would never be forced. His justice is not determined or grasped by human reason and His deeds are not created as well. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal challenges the second principle of Mu'tazila, namely God's absolute justice, which obliges God to show his justice by freeing human from responsibility for actions they have no determination to do them. Mu'tazila holds idea that God will never punish human for actions they are not responsible to.⁴⁵ This idea contradicts to that of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal who hold the absolute power and will of the God.

He avoided debate on whether a faith was created or not. He blamed who regarded the createdness of the faith as heathen (unbeliever) and considered who assumed it the uncreated as heretic because the discussion on God's attributes were not explained in Quran or prophetic traditions.⁴⁶ This principle was followed by Ibn Taymiyya in his *al-'Aqidah al-Hamawiyya* that brought him into trial in Egypt and Damascus.⁴⁷ Ibn Taymiyya highlighted the idea of Hanbalite and traditionists on the issue.

Ahmad distinguished between belief and Islam, based on the popular *hadith* regarding belief (*iman*), Islam and *ihsan* and the content of Surah *al-Hujurat* 14, concerning God's rejection of Bedouin's claim that they had been believers. The difference between belief and Islam is that the former is justification on faith and the latter is an manifestation of the submission of human to their God. A Muslim would not be an infidel because of their sins, except for abandoning obligatory five prayers, in which the doer deserved to be punished by death sentence.⁴⁸ The thought differed from that of the Khawarij who argued that a muslim who committed serious sins would be an infidel and any ruler who was not line with Allah's law should be fought against.⁴⁹

For Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Allah would forgive the sinners according to His deliberate choice.

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal creed comprises many other issues. He discusses on graves, legal arguments, rituals, leadership, *bid'* or innovation, human effort (*kasb*), *karama* (magical power) of saints, and *hadith* experts. He, for instance, believes in life in the grave and believe that the Prophet also lived in their graves. He also holds belief that Allah punishes people in their graves due to their sins.

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal prefers political stability than radical political change. He supports status-quo on political leadership (*imama*). For him, conflict against a ruler should be avoided eventhough he conducted wrong policy. He considered prayer behind of an injustice leader as legitimate because Ibn Umar prayed Friday and 'Id behind al-Hajjaj (who was notoriously brutal). Consequently, he forbade his fellow Muslims to disobey political leaders, as far as they did not stated that the Quran was created and did not belong to *qadariya* creed.

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal wrote theological treatises rejecting the creed of the *Jahmiya*, the *Qadariya* and the *Zindiq* regarding to their creeds on the Quran, leadership (*imama*) and *ahl al-bayt* (prophet family). Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's son, 'Abdullah, had a treatise on *al-Sunna*, while Abu Bakr al-Khallal collected inter-religious topics attributed to Ahmad Ibn Hanbal under title *Ahkam Ahl al-Milal min al-Jami' li Masa'il al-Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal*.⁵⁰ The creed of the Hanbalite attracted Islamic scholars, such as Abu al-Fadl Muhammad Nasir al-Sulami (d. 550 H), who abandoned Shafi'ite and, instead, chose the Hanbalite due to theological reason.⁵¹

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HANBALITE THEOLOGY

The writing on theological issues was developed among the Hanbalite after the era of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal. The Hanbalite had outstanding figures who were interested in theological discussions, such as Abu Ya'la al-Farra', Ibn 'Aqil, Ibn al-Jawzi, Ibn Mibrad, Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim. Their writings shaped Hanbalite theological characters and had the Hanbalite not only as legal school, but also as theological one. This stance made the Hanbalite differed from other Islamic law schools who focused on legal opinions. A Shafi'ite would put additional attribute of theological school in their name to show their theological orientation because not all of Shafi'ite are Ash'arite. Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi (d. 467H 108 3AD) was an example of a Shafi'ite who

was not an Ash'arite. He conducted theological debate with Abu Ma'ali al-Juwayni (d. 478H/ 1085AD), a Shafi'ite-Ash'arite figure, on theology.⁵² Hanbalite scholars, in other hand, did not need to show theological affiliation because the Hanbalite represented theological affiliation as well as legal school.

Abu Bakr al-Khallal (d. 311H/ 923M) collected various legal and theological issues attributed to Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his *Ahkam Ahl al-Milal*. The book contained legal issues regarding *ahl al-kitab*, such as on rituals, almsgiving (zaka), law of *ahl al-dhimmah* (non-Muslims under the protection of Muslim), the settlement of disputes between *dhimmi* (protected non-moslems) and his fellow, marriage, slaughter, punishment, *siyar* (war) and apostasy. The book opened with special chapter on theological issues under *Kitab al-Iman*.⁵³

After Ahmad Ibn Hanbal passed away, the Hanbalite continued to preserve his main creeds. Ibn 'Aqil stated that he was follower of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's creed and Ibn Taymiyya notified that the Hanbalites followed the path of their predecessors.⁵⁴ The theological discourses among the Hanbalite went around the topics discussed by Ahmad Ibn Hanbal previously, although they added some supportive arguments. Al-Barbahari (d. 941 AD) developed the idea of *bila kayf* (without how) suggesting that people were not be able to describe how God's attributes work. God should be described according to what He himself had described without questioning on "how" and "why". Al-Barbahari attributed this view to Malik Ibn Anas (d. 795 AD) who said that *istiwa'* (the residing of Allah in the Throne) was known (*ma'lum*), but the way was unknown (*majhul*). The belief on the *istiwa'* was an obligatory, but the question on "how" was a heresy.⁵⁵

Al-Barbahari wrote *Sharh al-Sunnah* a small treatise on propethic traditions. The treatise emphasized that Islam is *sunna* and the *sunna* is Islam, both of which should not be separated. The *sunna* confirmed *bila kayf* idea so that God's attribute could not be explained why and how. He rejected rational discussion on the topic that he condemned it to be an innovation (*bid'a*) and heresy. Al-Barbahari restated Ahmad Ibn Hanbal idea that The Quran was not created by referring to the authority of Malik, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and classical jurists.⁵⁶

Another celebrated Hanbalite figure was Abu Ya'la al-Farra' (458H / 1065AD). He wrote *al-Mu'tamad fi Usul al-Din* which provided various theological topics, such as the law of reasoning, the knowledge of God, the attributes of Allah, spirit, reason, the actions of human (*kasb*), *jinn*-devil-an-

gels, *mizan*, sirat (a path in hereafter), grave punishment, heaven, faith, commanding good and forbidding evil, extremists from the Shi'a Rafida and the interpretation of metaphore. The treatise of Abu Ya'la gave a picture of Hanbalite's attitudes towards other schools, especially those who were deemed as infidels based on the consensus of Muslims, namely the *Dahriyah* (belief in time); philosophers; the Brahmins who rejected the messengers of God; worshippers of idols, stars and fire; and Jews and Christians.

The category also included Islamic theological schools, such as Qadariya, Mu'tazila and Jahmiya based on their claims that al-Quran was creature. Some schools, like Murji'a who embraced the idea that true faith was based on statement. The Khawarij were differentiated by the Hanbalite between those who believed in 'Usman Ibn 'Affan (d. 35 / 656M) and 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib (d. 41 H/ 661 AD) and those who did not. The latter was considered infidel, so did Rafida.⁵⁷

Ibn Qudama, a great jurist of the Hanbalite, was another outstanding theologian. He wrote *Lum'a al-I'tiqad* presenting the general creeds of the Hanbalite.⁵⁸ The tiny treatise talked about main Hanbalite's or *salaf's* creeds based on classical authorities, such as Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Muhammad Ibn Idris al-Shafi'i, Ibnu Mas'ud, al-Awza'i and 'Umar Ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz. The treatise discussed God's attributes, the Quran as the word of God, seeing God in the hereafter, *qada* and *qadr* (human destiny), the embodiment of faith in words and deeds, belief in Prophet's teachings, and Muhammad as the last prophet. The work was typical of the Hanbalite's, filled with the quotations from the Quranic verses and prophetic traditions. The work was later elaborated by Muhammad Ibn Saih al-'Uthaymin (d. 2001 AD), a prolific Saudi Arabian scholar.⁵⁹

In sum, Hanbalite creeds encompassed the topics the God's attributes, the Quran as divine words the interpretation of the Quran and the embodiment of belief in both statement and deeds. The topics stemmed from Ahmad Ibn Hanbal polemic against theologians and subsequent elaboration of Hanbalite scholars of Ahmad's creeds. The formulation of the Hanbalite creeds, then, were influenced by the disputes conducted by their scholars against other theologians and sects.

THEOLOGICAL POLEMICS

Theological polemic formed theological ideas in Islam. The polemics among scholars used to be carried out through *jadl* (debate) and *munazara* (discus-

sion). *Munazara* emphasized on the seeking of true knowledge through collective discussions, while *jadal* was oriented to defend a belief or opinion. Islamic scholars wrote several works on *jadl* and *munazara* to provide other scholars with guidance on how to conduct both in the discussion on Islamic law or theology. There were popular works on the topic, such as *al-Ma'una fi al-Jadal* by Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi, *al-Jadal fi al-Usul* by Abu al-Wafa' Ibn 'Aqil and *al-Kafiya fi al-Jadal* by Abu Ma'ali al-Juwayni. According to Widigdo,⁶⁰ *jadl* was not only a kind of debate but it also served as the test of argumentation and reasoning because the *jadl* was aimed to re-examine the validity of the arguments.

The polemic on theological issue in Hanbalite was, again, pioneered by Ahmad Ibn Hanbal. His opposition against *mihna* was starting point for the formulation of Hanbalite creeds.⁶¹ He also launched critics against other Islamic sects. The Hanbalite also fought fiercely against the *Syi'a* with the support of the Caliph al-Qahir in 321H/ 933 AD. Al-Barbahari was the celebrated figure who fought against *Shi'a* until his death in 329 H/940 AD.⁶² Afterward, several Hanbalite scholars follow the path, such as Abu Ya'la and his disciple Abu Ja'far, Ibn Qudama and Ibn Taymiyya, to defend Hanbalite creeds.

1. Abu Ya'la and Abu Ja'far

The polemic between the Hanbalites and the Ash'arites took place from 429H/ 1038AD until 445H/ 1053AD. Ash'arite scholars condemned Abu Ya'la's understanding of God's attributes as kind of *tashbih* (anthromorphic), especially in his *Kitab al-Sifat* (*Kitab Ibtal al-Ta'wilat li Akhbar al-Sifat*). Abu Ya'la, however, got support from Shafi'ite traditionist, Abu Hasan al-Qazwini, who accompanied him before the trial by Caliph al-Qa'im. After the consultation to Shafi'ite judge, Abu Tayyib al-Tabari (d. 450H/ 1058AD) and judges from other schools, the Caliph decided to approve the work.⁶³

Abu Ya'la divided religious law into three categories: first of which are known only by reason, such as the inevitability of the Creator. The second was not be formulated by reason, rather by *sam'* (transmission), such as religious obligations and prohibitions. The third employed both rational arguments and transmission (the Quran and *hadith*), such as the possibility of seeing God with eyes in Hereafter and the forgiveness for believers.⁶⁴

Abu Ya'la involved in a polemic against an Ash'arite scholar, Ibn Furak (d.1015AD), regarding the interpretation of figurative speech (*ta'wil*) of God's attributes. This topic marked the break between the Hanbalites and the

Ash'arites. Abu Ya'la wrote *Kitab al-Sifat* in response to the work of Abu Bakr Ibn Furak (d. 406 H/ 1015AD), entitled *Ta'wil al-Akhbar*.⁶⁵ The conflict between the Hanbalites and the Ash'arites broke in 469/1077 when 'Abd al-Karim al-Qushayri (d. 1074AD), an the Ash'arite propagandist, received an award at Madrasa Nizamiyya and gave a lecture at the Nizamiyya Gate. He promoted the Ash'arite's creeds and deemed the Hanbalites as *mujassima* (anthromorphist).

Al-Qushayri's statement sparked protests from the Hanbalites led by Abu Ya'la's disciple, Abu Ja'far (d. 470 H). In return, the Shafi'ite-Ash'arite proponents attacked Abu Ja'far (d. 470 H) at his mosque, which prompted the Hanbalites camp to retaliate, drawing them into street fight with the Ash'arites and causing the death of a tailor, hit by stone. The clash led Wazir Nizam al-Mulk (d 1092 AD) to intervene and to end it with the imprisonment of Abu Ja'far who refused to reconcile.⁶⁶

The rivalry between the Hanbalite and the Ash'arite was inseparable from the efforts of the Ash'arite to penetrate into the Shafi'ite school of law. By this effort, Ash'arite would have legitimacy in Islamic orthodoxy, while they developed rationalistic approach, especially as had been done by Abu Ma'ali al-Juwayni as well.⁶⁷ The Hanbalite, in other hand, concerned to prevent the penetration of Mu'tazila into the Hanafis⁶⁸ and worried to rationalistic tendency among the Ash'arites. The polemic between the Hanbalite and the Ash'arite was inevitable as result of their different approaches to deal with theological issues as well as their competition to get legitimacy as the representation of Islamic orthodoxy.

Hanbalite scholars also clashed with Hanafite-Mu'tazili cleric Abu 'Ali Ibn Walid in 456H/1063AD. This clash led to the recitation of *al-I'tiqad al-Qadiri* before the meeting of the clerics. The Hanbalite also moved against Ibn 'Aqil in 461H/1069AD under Abu Ja'far's leadership. Ibn 'Aqil was well-known as Hanbalite, but his scholarship history linked him with both the Hanbalite and the Mu'tazilite scholarship. Ibn 'Aqil was accused of being the sympathizers of Mu'tazila and al-Hallaj by Abu Ja'far, though the accusation was driven by Abu Ja'far's disappointment of Abu Ya'la's decision to choose Ibn 'Aqil as his successor. Ibn 'Aqil fled and hid in Bab Maratib until the problem was resolved with his repentance in 465 H/ 1072 AD.

Hanbalite, along with Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite, was dominant wave of theological orientation in the 10th and 11th centuries AD. The three schools involved in competition to be authoritative reference among Islamic society.

Al-Ghazzali tried to reconcile them by underpinning the acceptance of the Prophet's teachings as pillar of the true belief. He highlighted the diversity of creeds as natural phenomena, even inside Ash'arite.⁶⁹

2. Ibnu Qudama

The core idea of Hanbalite theology lies on its resistance to rationalism. This resistance led to the polemic between the Hanbalites and the Mu'tazilite and between the Hanbalites and the Ash'arite. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and many Hanbalite circles strongly rejected the use of *ta'wil* (metaphorical interpretation) on God's attributes. The opposition of Hanbalite toward *ta'wil* had them suffer of being accused as anthropomorphists.⁷⁰ The high-profile scholars among the Hanbalite who launched attacks on rationalism were Ibn Qudama and Ibn Taymiyya.

Ibn Qudama (d. 620H / 1223 AD) is a master-jurist among the Hanbalites. His masterpiece, *al-Mughni*, is widely circulated and recognized as source for comparative study on Islamic law. He wrote *Rawda al-Nazir wa Junna al-Munazir*, a work on Islamic jurisprudence. The work was written following the structure of al-Ghazzali's model of writing on *al-Mustasfa*.⁷¹ The interaction of Ibnu Qudama to al-Ghazzali's work did not mean that he agreed to Ash'arite creeds.

In his *al-Munazara fi al-Qur'an al-'Azim* (1990), Ibn Qudama told his experience of carrying out munazara with people he referred to as *ahl al-bid'a* (heretics). He wrote the treatise based on a request from his friends to prevent disinformation on the Quran. Ibn Qudama reinforced the idea that the Quran was the word of God, including the letters of the Quran. His opponents, however, argued that the letters were not the Quran, but creatures that signified the words of God. Ibn Qudama did not explain who he called them *ahl al-bid'a*, but it was presumably 'Abdullah Ibn Kullab (241H / 855AD), the predecessor of Abu Hasan al-'Ashari.⁷² Ibn Qudama refuted this opinion by quoting Ahmad Ibn Hanbal who remarked that whoever implied the Quran as a creature, he would be infidel.

The debate regarding the Quran extended to the topic of God's creature in which Ibn Qudama expressed his objection to the arguments of Jahmiya. Ibn Qudama cited a reportation on Abdullah Ibn Ahmad's question to Ahmad Ibn Hanbal about the Jahmiya who believed that God did not speak with voice. Ahmad answered that they had lied and had embraced the idea of the omission of God's attributes (*ta'til*). In his *Ithbat Sifah al-'Uluw*, Ibn Qudama

reinforced Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's notion that Allah is on *'arsh* based on prophetic traditions, the opinions of the companions and the opinions of classical authorities, such as Malik, Sufyan al-Thawri, Abu Hanifa, Muhammad al-Hasan (d. 189H / 804AD), Ibn Mubarak (d. 181H/ 797AD) and Abdullah Ahmad Ibn Hanbal.⁷³

Ibn Qudama also wrote *Tahrim al-Nazar fi Kutub al-Kalam* to address Ibn 'Aqil's case. Ibn 'Aqil was an Hanbalite scholar who studied from both Hanbalite and Mu'tazilite teachers. Ibn Qudama's work was written after Ibn 'Aqil repented from Mu'tazilite orientation. Ibn Qudama reminded that if Ibn 'Aqil did not repent, he would be classified as a *zindiq* (heretic). He, however, praised Ibn 'Aqil's decision to repent and considered the repentance had overcome his mistakes. He criticized the suspicions among the Hanbalites of Ibn 'Aqil as excessive and baseless attitude. Moreover, Ibn 'Aqil had written works on the rejection of *ta'wil*.⁷⁴

3. Ibnu Taimiyah

Ibn Taymiyya (728H / 1328AD) was the most prominent late Hanbalite figure after Ibn Qudama. Ibn Taymiyya was an intelligent figure. However, he was undergoing several imprisonments due to his persistent defence on the *salafi* creeds. His work, *Al-'Aqida al-Hamawiyah*, brought him into trial before judges and a group of scholars, both in Egypt and in Damascus. He, however, managed to convince the judges and scholars to accept his opinion, although he was imprisoned for his refusal to accept the judge's summons before and his refusal to speak in front of judges whom he considered not neutral.⁷⁵

Al-'Aqida al-Hamawiyah was Ibn Taymiyya's answer to the question of Hama citizens in 798 H about Quranic verses and prophetic traditions concerning God's attributes.⁷⁶ This work provides theological arguments using the *salaf* (early pious generation of Muslims and scholars) perspectives. Ibnu Taymiyya rebutted the claim of people who supported *khalaf* (later scholars) approach employing *ta'wil*. He categorized the premises of the *khalaf* that ignored the Islamic sources as misleading premises.

Ibn Taymiyyah took different path from his predecessors who tried to defend Hanbalite creeds by means of pure textual arguments. In *Dar' Ta'arud al-'Aql wa al-Naql*, also known as *Muwafaqa Sahih al-Manqul li Sarih al-Ma'qul*,⁷⁷ he employed a rational debate to support *salaf* creeds and falsified the arguments of rationalists, such as that of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 606H/

1210AD), al-Amidi (d. 631H/ 1233AD), Ibn Kullab (d. 240H/ 854AD), al-Baqillani, al-Ghazzali, Ibn Sina (d. 428H/ 1037AD), Ibn Rushd (d. 595H/ 1198AD), Ibn 'Arabi (d. 638H/ 1240AD) and Abu Hasan al-Ash'ari. Ibn Taymiyya classified al-Ash'ari in one camp with Ibn Kullab, al-Harith al-Muhasibi (d. 243H/ 857AD, al-'Abbas al-Qalanisi (d. 270H), Abu Bakr al-Sibghi (d. 342H) and Abu 'Ali al-Thaqafi (d. 326H), although he praised al-Ash'ari's views in *al-Maqalat al-Islamiyyin*, *al-Ibana* and *al-Luma'* that were in accordance to salaf's creeds. Ibn Taymiyya's attacks were mostly aimed to al-Razi, Mu'tazilite circles, Jahmiya, philosophers and pantheistic Sufis.⁷⁸

Despite of his affiliation to the Ash'arite, al-Razi inclined more to philosophy than al-Ghazzali did.⁷⁹ Ibn Taymiyya presented 44 arguments to refute al-Razi regarding his priority of reason over religious texts. Al-Razi frequently referred to the *Risala Adawiyya* by Ibn Sina and reinterpreted it more freely according to his rational inclination.⁸⁰ Ibn Taymiyya criticized the rationalist inclination to put the reason higher than textual sources in his *al-Radd 'ala al-Mantiqiyin*. The work criticized the principles of Aristotelian (traditional) logic he saw it unreliable. Ibn Taymiyya's critics were directed at three logical structures, namely the definition of terms, the proposition and the syllogisms. Ibn Taymiyya denied the superiority of logic for understanding religion as rationalists held, such as al-Ghazzali in his *al-Mustasfa*.⁸¹

He also criticized Abu Hasan al-Ash'ari, al-Ghazzali, al-Juwayni, Ibn Furak, Abu Ishaq al-Isfira'ini (d. 418H/ 1027-8 AD), and Abu al-Mu'in al-Nasafi (d. 508 H) as he also criticized Abu Ya'la and Ibn 'Aqil that supported the validity of traditional logic.⁸² Despite his critics to traditional logic, Ibnu Taymiyya did not reject reason, rather he tried to balance reason and textual sources, with the emphasis on literal sources regarding God's attributes.⁸³ While many of the Hanbalites avoided rational arguments to defend their creeds, Ibn Taymiyya used different strategy to enforce literalism. He took advantages of rational arguments to prove that the rational approach itself was inadequate to explain basic theological belief.

The emphasis on literalism marked the nature of Hanbalite theological discourse. To use of *ta'wil* (the interpretation of text) was the central of disputes between Hanbalites and its opponents. The Hanafites and the Shafi'ites were quite familiar with of rationalism in Islamic law. Hanafite frequently used *ra'y* (rational deduction) so that they are better known as *ahl al-ra'y* (the rationalists), while the Shafi'ite attempted to compromise the traditionists' and the rationalists' approaches. In Baghdad, the Hanbalites criticized the Hanafites

who embrace Mu'tazila, while the Shafi'ite embraced Ash'arite.⁸⁴ Later, the Hanafites preferred Maturidite, after all Islamic orthodoxy camps put Mu'tazila as their antithesis and Shafi'ite authorities turned to be Ash'arite proponents.

The Hanbalite represented traditionalists' beliefs. The Hanbalite strongly disapproved speculative theology (*kalam*) and esoteric-philosophical sufism. Hanbalite scholars did not attach to any other theological school like Shafi'ite and Hanafite did because Hanbalite acted as theological school as well. The Hanbalite was not homogeneous entity since Ibn Qudama criticized Ibn 'Aqil for having Ash'arite tendencies and Ibn al-Jawzi had different views than that of Abu Ya'la (d. 458H/ 1066AD), Abu al-Hasan al-Zaghuni (d. 527H/ 1132AD) and Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (d. 561H/ 1166AD).⁸⁵

Despite of their difference, the Hanbalites generally took position as the defender of *salaf* creeds that put them as an alternative school among other theological schools in Islam.

CONCLUSION

Hanbalite creeds marked an unique portrait of the Hanbalite as being both legal and theological schools. The school of Islamic law grew from the discourse of Islamic law followed by the application of the opinions in court and in Islamic madrasahs. Known as traditionalists, Hanbalites gradually gained acknowledgment as a legal and theological movement. The position of the Hanbalite as legal school was so prevalent that its position as theological school failed to be taken into account frequently.

The Hanbalite creeds and movement was laid down by Ahmad Ibn Hanbal. The creeds of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal went around the textual understanding of Islamic source in the matters of theology and the persistent position that al-Quran is the words of God. Subsequently, Hanbalite scholars continued to elaborate and to defend the creeds against other theologians. Hanbalite scholars, such as al-Barbahari, Abu Ya'la, Ibn Qudama and Ibn Taymiyya carried out polemics against theologians from Mu'tazilite, Ash'arite, Jahmite, Shiite and philosophical sufis. Through the polemics, the Hanbalite creeds was tested and elaborated more sophisticatedly.

The article tried to extend previous research on Hanbalite theology by adding direct reference to Hanbalite theological treatises, narrating Hanbalite scholars' polemics against other theologians and portraying the shift of the method of argument in hands of Ibnu Taymiyya. The article diachronically revealed the arguments of Hanbalite that shapes a distinctive stance of

Hanbalite among other Islamic theological schools. The article, however, did not elaborate detailed arguments presented by each of Hanbalite scholars, rather it provides readers with the glimpses of their acquaintance to theological discourses in defending their creeds.

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