

Ibn Al Jawzi by Dr. G. F. Haddad

`Abd al-Rahman ibn `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn `Ubayd Allah ibn `Abd Allah ibn Hammadi ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ja`far ibn `Abd Allah ibn al-Qasim ibn al-Nadr ibn al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn `Abd Allah ibn al-Faqih `Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Faqih al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Khalifat Rasul Allah -- Allah bless and greet him -- Abi Bakr al-Siddiq, Abu al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzi al-Qurashi al-Taymi al-Bakri al-Baghdadi al-Hanbali al-Ash`ari (509/510-597).

He was, with Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani, the imam of Hanbalis and foremost orator of kings and princes in his time whose gatherings reportedly reached one hundred thousand, a hadith master, philologist, commentator of Qur'an, expert jurist, physician, and historian of superb character and exquisite manners.

Orphaned of his father at age three, Ibn al-Jawzi was raised by his aunt who later brought him to the hadith scholar Ibn Nasir, his first shaykh. He took hadith from him as well as over eighty shaykhs and was teacher to his grandson Shams al-Din Yusuf ibn Qazghali al-Hanafi - Sibf al-Jawzi - as well as some of the greatest Hanbali hadith masters and jurists such as Muwaffaq al-Din Ibn Qudama, Ibn al-Najjar, and Diya' al-Din al-Maqdisi.

Ibn al-Jawzi took a staunch Ash`ari stance in doctrine and courageously denounced the anthropomorphism of his school in the interpretation of the divine Attributes in his landmark work *Daf` Shubah al-Tashbih bi Akuff al-Tanzih* ("Rebuttal of the Insinuations of Anthropomorphism at the Hands of Divine Transcendence"), also known as *al-Baz al-Ashhab al-Munqadd `ala Mukhalifi al-Madhab* ("The Flaming Falcon Swooping Down on the Dissenters of the [Hanbali] School") which he began with the words:

I have seen among the followers of our school some who held unsound discourses on doctrine. Three in particular have applied themselves to write books in which they distort the Hanbali madhhab: Abu `Abd Allah ibn Hamid,¹ his friend al-Qadi (Abu Ya`la),² and Ibn al-Zaghuni.³ I have seen them (Ibn Abi Ya`la, Ibn Hamid, and Ibn al-Zaghuni) descend to the level of popular belief, construing the divine attributes according to the requirements of what the human senses know. They have heard that Allah created Adam according to His/his likeness and form (*`ala suratih*), so they affirm that Allah has a form and face in addition to His essence, as well as two eyes, a mouth, an uvula, molar teeth, a physiognomy, two hands, fingers, a palm, a little finger, a thumb, a chest, thighs, two legs, two feet!... Then they placate the common people by adding: `But not as we think!`...

They have applied outward meanings with regard to the Divine Names and Attributes. Thus, they give the Divine Attributes a wholly innovative and contrived name for which they have no evidence either in the transmitted texts of Qur'an and Sunna or in rational proofs based on reason. They have paid attention neither to texts that steer one away from the apparent sense towards the meanings required for Allah, nor to the necessary cancellation of the external meaning when it attributes to Allah the distinguishing marks of creatures. They are not content to say: "attribute of act" (*sifatu fi`l*) until they end up saying: "attribute of essence" (*sifatu dhat*). Then, once they affirmed them to be "attributes of essence," they claimed: we do not construe the text according to the directives of the Arabic language.

Thus they refuse to construe "hand" (*yad*) as meaning "favor" and "power"; or "coming forth" (*maji*) and "coming" (*ityan*) as "mercy" and "favor"; or "shin" (*saq*) as "tribulation." Instead they say: We construe them in their customary external senses, and the external sense is what is describable in terms of well-known human characteristics, and a text is only construed literally if the literal sense is feasible. Then they become offended when imputed with likening Allah to His creation (*tashbih*) and express scorn at such an attribution to themselves, clamoring: "We are *Ahl al-Sunna*!" Yet their discourse is clearly couched in terms of *tashbih*. And some of the masses follow them.

I have advised both the followers and the leaders saying: Colleagues! You are adherents and followers of our madhhab. Your greatest Imam is Ahmad ibn Hanbal, may Allah have mercy on him, who said while under the lash of the Inquisition: "How can I say what was never said?" Beware of innovating in his madhhab what is not from him! Then, you said regarding the hadiths (of the Attributes): "They must be taken in their external sense." Yet the external sense of *qadam* ("foot") is a bodily limb!⁴ And when it was said concerning `Isa: *ruh* Allah ("Allah's spirit") the Christians thought that Allah possessed an attribute named His spirit which had entered Mary!

Whoever says: "He is established on His throne in His *Essence* (*bi al-dhat*)," has made Allah an object of sensory perception. It behooves one not to neglect the means by which the principle of Religion is established and that is reason. For it is by virtue of reason that we have known Allah and judged Him to be Eternal without beginning. If you were to say: "We read hadiths but we are silent," no one would have any objection against you. However, your interpretation of the outward sense is morally repugnant and disgusting. Do not introduce into the madhhab of this man of the Salaf, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, what his thought does not contain.⁵

Because of this work, Ibn al-Jawzi was criticized by the Hanbali and Hanbali-leaning proponents of the views he lambasted, such as Muwaffaq al-Din ibn Qudama and his grandson the hadith master Sayf al-Din ibn al-Majid⁶ as well as Ibn Taymiyya and his circle. Among them al-Dhahabi said: "May Allah have mercy on him and forgive him! Would that he had not probed figurative interpretation nor diverged from his Imam." Al-Dhahabi's words are, of course, loaded assumptions that Ibn al-Jawzi had himself long since rejected as shown by the above lines from the *Daf`*.

Some went too far in criticizing him, such as Ibn Nuqta who said: "I never saw anyone relied upon in his Religion, knowledge, and reason, that approved of Ibn al-Jawzi." Al-Dhahabi responded: "If Allah approves of him, they are irrelevant."

Ibn al-Jawzi was a prolific author of over seven hundred books, among which al-Dhahabi lists the following:

1. *al-Adhkiya'*;
2. *Afat al-Muhaddithin*;
3. *Akhbar al-Akhyar*;
4. *Akhbar al-Nisa'*, an informative handbook for Muslim women in 110 brief chapters followed by biographical notices on sixty-six eminent Muslim women. The book was printed under the title *Ahkam al-Nisa'*. In it Ibn al-Jawzi cites the following:
 5. The Prophet -- Allah bless and greet him -- is related to say: "I hate for a woman to be brazen (*salqa*) and bare-eyed (*marha*), neither wearing kohl on her eyes nor henna on her hands."
 6. `A'isha - Allah be well-pleased with her - is reported to say: "Allah's Messenger -- Allah bless and greet him -- ordered us [women] to comb through our hair in *ghusl* and completely dye our hands with henna lest they become dry and rough like men's hands."
7. *al-Amthal*, a work on proverbs;
8. *al-Bulgha fi al-Fiqh*;
9. *Dhamm al-Hasad*;
10. *Dhamm al-Hawa*;
11. *Dhamm al-Muskir*;
12. *Dhikr al-Huffaz*;
13. *Dhikr al-Qussas*;
14. *al-Du`afa'*, a compendium of weak narrators of hadith;
15. *Dur' al-Dim fi Siyam Yawm al-Ghaym*;
16. *Durra al-Iklil* in history;
17. *Fada'il al-'Arab*;
18. *Fadl Maqbarat Ahmad*, on the benefits associated with Ahmad ibn Hanbal's cemetery in Baghdad;
19. *al-Fara'id*;
20. *al-Fawa'id al-Muntaqat* in fifty-six parts;
21. *Funun al-Afnan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an'*
22. *al-Hada'iq* in two volumes;
23. *Hal al-Hallaj*, "The Status of al-Hallaj," in which Ibn al-Jawzi reports that he had in his possession the autograph copy of a treatise of the Hanbali hadith master Ibn `Aqil (d. 513) written in praise of al-Hallaj, entitled *Juz' fi Nasr Karamat al-Hallaj* ("Opusculum in Praise of al-Hallaj's Miraculous Gifts"). Like other Hanbali Sufis such as al-Harawi al-Ansari (d. 481), Ibn Qudama (d. 620) and al-Tufi (d. 715), Ibn `Aqil considered al-Hallaj a wali and did not doubt his sincerity and righteousness.
24. *al-Hathth `ala al-'Ilm*;
25. *al-Hathth `ala Talab al-Walad*;
26. *al-'Ilal al-Mutanahiya fi al-Ahadith al-Wahiya* in two volumes, a companion work to his *Mawdu`at*;
27. *al-Intisar fi al-Khilafiyat* in two volumes;
28. *al-Ishara fi al-Qira'at al-Mukhtara*;
29. *al-Jadal*;
30. *Jami' al-Masanid* in seven volumes, which al-Dhahabi said is not even near the claim laid by its title;
31. *al-Khata' wa al-Sawab Min Ahadith al-Shihab*;
32. *al-Khawatim*;
33. *Manafi' al-Tibb*;
34. *Manaqib*, a series of books on the immense merits of the following: Abu Bakr, `Umar, `Ali, Ibrahim ibn Adham, al-Fudayl ibn `Iyad, Bishr al-Hafi, Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya, `Umar ibn `Abd al-'Aziz, Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib, al-Hasan al-Basri, Sufyan al-Thawri, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, al-Shafi'i, Ma'ruf al-Karkhi, and others.
35. *al-Manasik*;
36. *al-Manfa'a fi al-Madhahib al-Arba'a* in two volumes;
37. *Mashhur al-Masa'il* in two volumes;
38. *al-Mawdu`at* in two volumes, a collection of what he considered hadith forgeries in which he included many authentic hadiths, as pointed out by those who criticized it;
39. *Minhaj al-Qasidin wa Mufid al-Sadiqin* ("The Road of the Pursuers and the Instructor of the Truthful"), an abridgment of al-Ghazzali's *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* - which Ibn al-Jawzi criticized - in which he carefully avoids the use of the terms sufi and *tasawwuf*. The *Minhaj* was epitomized in one volume by Najm al-Din Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad ibn Qudama (d. 742). Here are some of its chapter-titles and excerpts most illustrative of Imam al-Ghazzali's influence on Ibn al-Jawzi and of the latter's general adoption of Sufi themes and terminology:
 40.
 0. *Fasl 'ilm ahwal al-qalb* (Section on the science of the states of the heart)
 1. *Fasl fi daqa'iq al-adab al-batina fi al-zakat* (Section on the ethics of the hidden minutiae of zakat)
 2. *Fasl fi al-adab al-batina wa al-ishara ila adab al-hajj* (Section on the ethics of the secrets of the Pilgrimage)
 3. *Kitab riyadat al-nafs wa tahdhib al-khuluq wa mu'alajat amrad al-qalb* (Book of the training of the ego, the upbringing of the character, and the treating of the diseases of the heart)
 4. *Fasl fi fa'idat shahawat al-nafs* (Section on the benefit of the appetites of the ego)
 5. *Bayan al-riya' al-khafi al-ladhi huwa akhfa min dabib al-naml* (Exposition of the hidden self-display which is more concealed than the treading of the ant)
 6. *Fasl fi bayan ma yuhbitu al-'amal min al-riya' wa ma la yuhbit* (Section exposing the self-display which nullifies one's deeds and the self-display which does not)
 7. *Fasl fi dawa' al-riya' wa tariqatu mu'alajat al-qalbi fih* (Section on the remedy of self-display and the way to treat the heart from its ill)
 8. *Kitab al-mahabba wa al-shawqi wa al-unsi wa al-rida* (Book of love, passionate longing, familiarity, and good pleasure)

9. *Fasl fi bayan mi`na al-shawq ila allahi ta`ala* (Section exposing the meaning of passionate longing for Allah)
10. *Bab fi al-muhasaba wa al-muraqaba* (Chapter on taking account of oneself and vigilance) *al-maqam al-awwal: al-musharata* (The first station: commitment) *al-maqam al-thani: al-muraqaba* (The second station: vigilance) *al-maqam al-thalith: al-muhasaba ba`da al-`amal* (The third station: self-accounting after a deed) *al-maqam al-rabi`: mu`aqabat al-nafs `ala taqsiriha* (The fourth station: berating the ego for its shortcomings) *al-maqam al-khamis: al-mujahada* (The fifth station: struggling) *al-maqam al-sadis: fi mu`atabat al-nafs wa tawbikiha* (The sixth station: castigating and chiding the ego) - Abu Bakr al-Siddiq said: "Whoever hates his ego for Allah's sake, Allah will protect Him against what He hates." - Anas said: I heard `Umar say as he was alone behind a wall: "Bakh, bakh! Bravo, well done, O my ego! By Allah, you had better fear Allah, O little son of Khattab, or he will punish you!" - Al-Bakhtari ibn Haritha said: "I saw one of the devoted worshippers sitting in front of a fire which he had kindled as he was castigating his ego, and he did not stop castigating his ego until he died." - One of them said: "When the saints are mentioned, I say to myself: Fie on you and fie on you again." - Know that your worst enemy is the ego that lies between your two flanks. It has been created a tyrant commanding evil, always pushing you towards it, and you have been ordered to straighten it, cleanse it (*tazkiyat*), wean it from what it feeds on, and drag it in chains, subdued, to the worship of its Lord.⁹
41. [Continuation of his bibliography:]
42. *al-Mudhish*;
43. *al-Muhadhdhab fi al-Madhhab*;
44. *al-Mughaffalin*;
45. *al-Mughni*, a massive Qur'anic commentary which he abridged into *Zad al-Masir*;
46. *al-Mukhtar fi al-Ash`ar*, a ten-volume anthology of poetry;
47. *Mukhtasar Funun Ibn `Aqil* in over ten to twenty volumes;
48. *al-Muntakhab*;
49. *Muntaqad al-Mu`taqad*;
50. *al-Muntazam fi al-Tarikh*, a ten-volume history of Islam in which he narrates with his chain from al-`Abbas ibn Hamza and Musa ibn `Isa respectively;
51. I prayed zuhr behind Abu Yazid al-Bistami. When he first wanted to raise his hands to say Allahu akbar he was unable due to his great awe of Allah's name. His joints began to shake until I could hear the rattling of his bones, which shocked me.... He used to rebuke himself and say to his soul every morning: "O lair of every evil! A woman has menses then becomes pure again after three to ten days, but you, O my soul! have been sitting for twenty and thirty years and not become pure yet. When will you clean yourself?"¹⁰
52. *Mushkil al-Sihah* in four volumes;
53. *Muthir al-Gharam al-Sakin ila Ashraf al-Amakin*;
54. *al-Nab`a fi al-Qira'at al-Sab`a*;
55. *Naqy al-Naql* in two volumes;
56. *al-Nasikh wa al-Mansukh*;
57. *Nasim al-Suhur*;
58. *Qiyam al-Layl* in three parts;
59. *al-Qussas*;
60. *al-Riyada*;
61. *Sayd al-Khatir* in three volumes containing aphorisms and wise counsels;
62. *Siba Najd*;
63. *Sifa al-Safwa* in four volumes, an abridgment of Abu Nu`aym's compendium of Sufis titled *Hilya al-Awliya*, in which he cited al-Junayd as saying: "Of the marks of Allah's wrath against a servant is that He makes him very busy with what is of no concern to him";
64. *al-Tabsira* in three volumes, on oratory;
65. *Tadhkira al-Arib* on the Arabic language;
66. *Tadhkira al-Muntabih fi `uyun al-Mushtabih*;
67. *al-Tahqiq fi Masa'il al-Khilaf in two volumes*;
68. *Tahrim al-Dubur*;
69. *Tahrim al-Mut`a*;
70. *Talbis Iblis*, a work written against the Shi`a and the wayward Sufis;
71. *Talqih al-Fuhum*;
72. *al-Taysir fi al-Tafsir*;
73. *al-Thabat `ind al-Mamat*;
74. *al-`Udda fi Usul al-Fiqh*;
75. *Usud al-Ghaba fi Ma`rifa al-Sahaba*;
76. *`Uyun al-Hikayat* in two volumes;
77. *al-`Uzla*;
78. *al-Wafa bi Fada'il al-Mustafa*, a large work on Prophetic biography and immense merits in several hundred chapters;
79. *al-Wahiyat*, another title for *al-`Ilal al-Mutanahiya*;
80. *Wird al-Aghsan fi Ma`ani al-Qur'an*;
81. *al-Wujuh wa al-Naza'ir*;
82. *al-Yawaqit*, a collection of sermons.

It was reproached to Ibn al-Jawzi that he wrote too much too fast without careful verification. Al-Dhahabi said: "We call Ibn al-Jawzi hafiz (hadith memorizer) in deference to the profusion of his writings, not to his scholarliness," while Shaykh `Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghudda said:

Our reliance is on Allah! Ibn al-Jawzi composed a great big book on hadith forgeries so that jurists, preachers, and others may avoid them, then you will see him cite in his exhortative works forged hadiths and rejected stories without head nor tail, without shame or second thought. In the end one feels that Ibn al-Jawzi is two people and not one!... For this reason Ibn al-Athir blamed him in his history entitled *al-Kamil* with the words: "Ibn al-Jawzi blamed him [al-Ghazzali] for many things, among them his narration of unsound hadiths in his exhortations. O wonder that Ibn al-Jawzi should criticize him for that! For his own books and exhortative works are crammed full with *them* (*mahshuwun bihi wa mamlu'un minh*)!"¹¹ And the hadith master al-Sakhawi said in *Sharh al-Alfiyya*: "Ibn al-Jawzi cited forgeries and their likes in high abundance in his exhortative works."¹²

Abu al-Muzaffar Sibt al-Jawzi said:

I heard my grandfather say from the pulpit: "With these two fingers of mine I wrote two thousand volumes; one hundred thousand [wayward Muslims] repented at my hands; and twenty thousand [non-Muslims] entered Islam." He used to recite the entire Qur'an once a week and would not come out of his house except for jum`a or to the gathering.¹³ ...He had renounced the world and shared little in it... He never joked with anyone, nor jested with little boys, nor ate anything that came from parts the licitness of which he was unsure of.

His Utterances:

Al-Dhahabi cited some of Ibn al-Jawzi's pithy remarks:

- To a friend of his: "You are widely excused for your absence because I trust you so much, and you stand condemned all the same because I missed you so much."

- From the pulpit: "O prince! Remember Allah's justice concerning you when you exercise power, and His power over you when you mete out punishment. Do not heal your anger by infecting your religion."

- From the pulpit: "O commander of the believers! If I speak out, I shall fear you; and if I remain silent, I shall fear for you. I have decided to put my fear for you ahead of my fear of you. For the saying of one who counsels: '*Itaqillah!*' is better yet than that of one who says: 'You belong to a house that has been forgiven.' [= *Ahl al-Bayt!*"]

- To a man who was asking him what he should hold preferable, laud or asking forgiveness, he replied: "A dirty cloth needs soap more than incense."

- To a man who told him: "I did not sleep last night in anticipation of this gathering!" he replied: "This is because you were looking forward to the show; but it is tonight that you should not sleep."

- To a man who kept asking him who was better, Abu Bakr or `Ali, he replied: "Sit down. You are better than everyone else."

- A man used to sit in Ibn al-Jawzi's gatherings and frequently manifest his pleasure out loud at the Imam's expressions. One day he remained silent a long time, whereupon Ibn al-Jawzi turned to him and said: "The Harun of your exclamations are an aid to the Musa of my expressions. Therefore send it forth to me as my prop." This is a commonly-observed device of Arabic teachers who require a form of persistent ovation, beyond attentiveness or intent gaze, in order to perceive appreciation from their listeners and pour out their best to them.

- "The people of [Mu`tazili] *kalam* say that there is no Lord in the heaven, nor Qur'an in the *mushaf*, nor Prophet in the grave. These are three disgraces to be attributed to them."

Ibn al-Jawzi was severely tried towards the end of his life when his criticism of Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani - his senior of forty years - led to accusations made against him to the Sultan al-Nasir by the Shaykh's children and supporters. Thereupon Ibn al-Jawzi was publicly reviled, seized, and dragged away to jail while his house was sealed and his dependents dispersed. He was taken from Baghdad to the city of Wasit where he remained imprisoned for five years during which he never once entered a hammam, patching up his own clothes and preparing his own food. Ibn al-Jawzi was released after his son Yusuf succeeded in securing the intercession of the Caliph's mother in his favor. At that time the Imam was about eighty years old.

It was related that Ibn al-Jawzi was handsome, mild-mannered, with a melodious voice, of sweet company. He used to take care of his health and always try and improve his constitution and whatever stimulated his mind and sharpened it. He wore perfumed, fine white clothes. He had a sharp wit and was swift in his reply. As a result of drinking anacardium marsh nuts (*baladhir*) early in life, his beard fell and remained very sparse, and he used to dye it black until he died. Al-Muwaffaq `Abd al-Latif said: "His books had many mistakes in them because he would finish a book and no longer look at it." Al-Dhahabi commented on this: "His books are filled with all kinds of mistakes due to lack of revision and copying from written sources. He compiled such an amount that a second life would not have sufficed to revise it all." The week of his death he recited the following line: *kam kana li min majlisin law shubbihat halatuhu latashabbahat bi al-jannati*

"How many a gathering of mine, if its condition were to be compared to something, it would have been comparable to Paradise!"

His grandson related from his mother that on his death-bed Ibn al-Jawzi was heard repeating, addressing invisible visitors: "What do you want me to do with these peacocks?" He died between maghrib and `isha on the night before jum`a the 13th of Ramadan.

He was washed before fajr and the people of Baghdad followed his bier to the cemetery of Ahmad ibn Hanbal. The crowd was such that by the time his grave was reached it was time for Jum`a. During the remainder of the month, people recited khatmas of the Qur'an at his grave uninterruptedly, day and night. The night after Ibn al-Jawzi's burial the hadith scholar Ahmad ibn Salman al-Sukr saw him in his sleep standing on a pulpit of pearl, preaching to the angels.

Main source: al-Dhahabi, *Siyar A`lam al-Nubala'* 15:483-494 #5342.

NOTES

1Abu `Abd Allah al-Hasan ibn Hamid al-Baghdadi al-Warraaq al-Hanbali (d. 403), Abu Ya`la's teacher.

2The father of the author of *Tabaqat al-Hanabila*, al-Qadi Abu Ya`la Muhammad ibn al-Husayn ibn al-Farra' al-Hanbali (d. 458).

3Abu al-Hasan `Ali ibn `Ubayd Allah al-Zaghuni al-Hanbali (d. 527), author of *al-Idah* and one of Ibn al-Jawzi's teachers.

4A reference to the hadith whereby Allah places his "*qadam*" in the Fire. See on this the section entitled "The Salaf's Interpretation of *qadam*, *rijl*, and *saq*" in Shaykh Hisham Kabbani's *Islamic Beliefs and Doctrine According to Ahl al-Sunna* Volume One (p. 195) or his *Encyclopedia of Islamic Doctrine* (1:168). See also the relevant pages at <http://sunnah.org/faqida/index.htm>.

5Ibn al-Jawzi, *Daf` Shubah al-Tashbih*, introduction.

6On him see al-Dhahabi's *Tadhkira al-Huffaz* (4:1446).

7Narrated from `A'isha by Ibn al-Jawzi without chain in *Ahkam al-Nisa'* (p. 89).

8Ibid. Al-Haythami said in *Majma` al-Zawa'id* (5:171): "Al-Tabarani narrated it from Umm Layla in *al-Awsat* and *al-Kabir* (25:138) and its chain contains narrators I do not know." Also narrated from Umm Layla by Ibn Mandah - as stated by Ibn Hajar in *al-Isaba* (8:296) - and Ibn al-Mulaqqin in *Khulasa al-Badr al-Munir* (1:358).

9Ibn Qudama, *Mukhtasar minhaj al-qasidin li Ibn al-Jawzi*, ed. M. Ahmad Hamdan and `Abd al-Qadir Arna'ut, 2nd. ed. (Damascus: maktab al-shabab al-muslim wa al-maktab al-islami, 1380/1961) p. 426.

10In Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam* (5:28-29).

11Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh* (10:228).

12 `Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghudda, notes to al-Lucknawi's *al-Raf` wa al-Takmil* (p. 420-421).

13At this point al-Dhahabi asks: "What about congregational prayer?" Yet it seems needless to say that Sibte al-Jawzi's statement takes it for granted as the school of Imam Ahmad considers obligatory prayer invalid unless offered in congregation if one has the ability.

Source: Sunnah.org