

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF ISLAMIC STUDIES**

**MASTER THESIS**

**ḤANAFĪTE TRADITIONALISM IN THE MAMLUK  
PERIOD: IBN ABĪ L-‘IZZ’S (D. 792/1390)  
COMMENTARY ON THE CREED OF AL-ṬAḤĀWĪ**

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**THESIS SUPERVISOR  
PROF. BĪLAL AYBAKAN**

**ISTANBUL, 2023**

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**by**

**THOM DEKKER**

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in  
Islamic Studies**

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**ISTANBUL, 2023**

APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master Islamic Studies.

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This is to confirm that this thesis complies with all the standards set by the School of Graduate Studies of Ibn Haldun University.

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.



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## ÖZ

### MEMLÜKLER DÖNEMİNDE HANEFÎ GELENEKÇİLİĞİ: İBN EBÜ'L-İZZ'İN (Ö. 792/1390) TAHÂVÎ AKİDESİ ÜZERİNE ŞERHİ

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Bu tez, sekizinci/on dördüncü yüzyıl Şamlı gelenekçi Hanefî fakih, kadı ve kelâmcı Ebü'l-Hasen Sadrüddîn Alî b. Ebü'l-İzz'in (ö. 792/1390) Tahâvî Akidesi Şerhi (Şerhu'l-Akîde't-Tahâviyye) çerçevesinde onun akaid anlayışını tahlil etmektedir. Hanbelî fakihi, kelâmcısı ve cedelcisi Takiyüddin İbn Teymiyye'nin (ö. 728/1328) talebesi İbn Kesîr'e (ö. 774/1373) talebelik yapmış ve onun düşüncesinden etkilenmiş olan İbn Ebü'l-İzz, Şam'ın önde gelen Hanefî medreselerinde müderrislik yapmış, nihayetinde Şam ve kısa bir süreliğine Kahire Hanefî kadısı olmuştur. İlmî anlayışından etkilendiği İbn Teymiyye gibi İbn Ebü'l-İzz de başka bir Müslüman âlime yönelik Teymiyeci eleştirilerinin ardından dinî tartışmalara katılmıştır. Günümüzde el-Akîdetü't-Tahâviyye şerhi, İbn Ebü'l-İzz'in özellikle selefi müslümanlar arasında en çok bilinen eseri olmakla birlikte, şerh ancak yirminci yüzyılın ikinci yarısında Arnavut Selefi âlim Nâsırüddin el-Elbânî (1914-1999) tarafından İbn Ebü'l-İzz'e kesin olarak nisbet edilmiştir. Mısırlı Hanefî âlim Ebû Ca'fer et-Tahâvî'nin (ö. 321/933) Akîdetü Ehli's Sünneh ve'l-Cemâa veya Akîde-i Tahâviyye olarak bilinen eser, tartışmasız en iyi bilinen erken dönem sünnî itikadî metnidir. Bu metin, itikadi mezhep bağlılıklarına bakılmaksızın sünnî müslümanların çoğu tarafından sünnî islam itikadının sahil bir ifadesi olarak kabul görmektedir. Bu durum kısmen, Ebü'l-Hasan el-Eş'arî (ö. 324/935-36) ve Ebû Mansûr el-Mâtürîdî'nin (ö. 333/944) çağdaşı olan Tahâvî'nin sünnî kelâm ekollerinin oluşumunu öncesinden kaynaklanmaktadır. Bu tez, islam kelimindeki üç temel meseleyi (akıl ve vahiy arasındaki ilişki, iman

tanımı ve Allah'ın kelamının mahiyeti) analiz ederek İbn Ebü'l-İzz'in kelimeler anlayışının temelinde İbn Teymiyye'nin düşüncesine dayandığını göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** el-Akîde et-Tahâviyye, Hanefî-Mâtürîdîlik, İbn Ebî'l-İzz, Memlûk Sultanlığı, İbn Teymiyye, Teymiyye Kelâmı.



## ABSTRACT

### ḤANAFĪTE TRADITIONALISM IN THE MAMLUK PERIOD: IBN ABĪ L-‘IZZ’S (D. 792/1390) COMMENTARY ON THE CREED OF AL-ṬAḤĀWĪ

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This thesis analyses the theology of the Commentary on the Creed of *Ṭaḥāwī* (*Sharḥ al-‘aqīda al-ṭaḥāwiyya*) by the obscure eighth/fourteenth century Damascene traditionalist Ḥanafite jurist, judge, and theologian Ṣadr al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Abī l-‘Izz (d. 792/1390). He was influenced by the thought of Ḥanbalite jurist, theologian, and polemicist Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) as a student of his disciple Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373). Ibn Abī l-‘Izz taught at prominent Ḥanafite madrasa’s in Damascus, eventually becoming the Ḥanafite *qāḍī* of Damascus and, briefly, of Cairo. Like his Ḥanbalite predecessor, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz became embroiled in religious controversy following his marked Taymiyyan criticism of another Muslim scholar. Today, the commentary on the *al-‘aqīda al-ṭaḥāwiyya* is Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s best known work, particularly among Salafī Muslims, although the commentary was only definitively attributed to Ibn Abī l-‘Izz in the second half of the twentieth century by the Albanian Salafī scholar Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (1914-1999). The creed of the Egyptian Ḥanafite scholar Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933), known as *‘Aqīda ahl al-sunna wa l-jamā‘a* or *al-‘aqīda al-ṭaḥāwiyya*, is arguably the best-known early Sunnite Muslim creedal text. The text is revered as an authentic expression of the creed of Sunnite Islam by most Sunnite Muslims, regardless of their specific theological affiliations. This is partially a result of the fact that al-Ṭaḥāwī, as a contemporary of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī (d. 324/935-36) and Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944),

predates the formation of the Sunnite schools of Kalām. By analysing three key issues in Islamic theology: the relationship between reason and revelation, the definition of faith (*īmān*), and the nature of God's speech (*ṣifat al-kalām*), this thesis demonstrates that Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s theology is fundamentally grounded in Ibn Taymiyya’s thought.

**Keywords:** *al-‘Aqīda al-ṭahāwiyya*, Ḥanafite-Māturīdism, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, Ibn Taymiyya, Mamluk Sultanate, Taymiyyan Theology.



## PREFACE

The transliteration of all names and terms from the Arabic is based on the system employed in third edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (EI<sup>3</sup>).

For the translation of *kalām* terminology, Yahya Raad Haidar's doctoral dissertation 'The Debates between Ash'arism and Māturīdism in Ottoman Religious Scholarship: A Historical and Bibliographical Study' (2016) and Edwin E. Calverley's and James W. Pollock's *Nature, Man and God in Medieval Islam* (2002) have been helpful resources. As for the translation of Arabic traditionalist theological terminology, I mostly relied on the works of Jon Hoover – in particular his *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (2007) – and Carl Sharif el-Tobgui's *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation: A Study of Dar' ta 'āruḍ al-'aql wa-l-naql* (2020). For the translation of Qur'ānic verses I relied on M.A.S. Abdel Haleem's *The Qur'an*. For the translation of the Ṭahāwiyya I consulted William Montgomery Watt's translation in *Islamic Creed: A Selection*. At times, I offer my own translations or, if needed, make slight modifications to existing translations.

As for dates, the death-date of scholars is generally only given the first time their name appears in the text. It may, however, be repeated in the course depending on the context. Throughout the thesis, Hijrī date is always followed by the corresponding date in the Gregorian calendar.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Topic, Context and Scope

This thesis concerns the theological identity of the *Sharḥ al-‘aqīda al-ṭahāwiyya*<sup>1</sup> by Sadr al-Dīn b. Abī l-‘Izz (d. 792/1390), an obscure Ḥanafite scholar who spent the majority of his life in Mamluk Damascus. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s commentary on the well-known early Ḥanafite creedal text of Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭahāwī (d. 321/933) is an interesting, but understudied, work. Despite his upbringing in a Ḥanafite scholarly milieu, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz belonged to the first generation of scholars who came under the posthumous influence of another Damascene, the Ḥanbalite scholar Taqī al-Dīn b. Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), a fact that is clearly reflected in the theology espoused in Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s commentary on the *Ṭahāwiyya*.

The area of study is theology, *‘ilm uṣūl al-dīn* being the term Ibn Abī l-‘Izz himself uses – which literally translates as the science of the foundations of religion. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz chose this term deliberately to distinguish his brand of Islamic theology from another, more widespread, manifestation of this science in the Mamluk Sultanate of the eighth/thirteenth century, namely *‘ilm al-kalām* (lit. “the science of speech”). As a disciple of Ibn Taymiyya, the Ḥanafite seminary teacher and judge rejected Māturīdism, the ‘second’ Sunnite Kalām theological tradition after Ash‘arism, which became so intertwined with the Ḥanafite legal school by the eighth/fourteenth century, that Western scholarship often refers to Ḥanafite-Māturīdism. Instead, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz harshly criticised, from a traditionalist perspective,<sup>2</sup> what he perceived as the heretical innovations (*bida‘*, sing. *bid‘a*)

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<sup>1</sup> Sadr al-Dīn b. Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ al-‘aqīda al-ṭahāwiyya*, eds. Shu‘ayb al-Arna‘ūt and ‘Abdullah b. ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī, 2 vols. (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risāla, 1997). Occasionally, one hears Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s commentary referred to as the *Sharḥ al-‘aqīda al-ṭahāwiyya al-‘izziyya*. To my

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that in this definition, the term ‘traditionalist’ (*ahl al-ḥadīth*, *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*) is distinguished from the term ‘traditionist’ (*muḥaddith*), although Muslim scholars did not

found in the rationalistic speculative theology of *Kalām*, which contradict the Qur'ān, the Sunna of the Apostle Muḥammad, and the consensus of the pious predecessors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*).

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s theology, however, cannot be described as being opposed to reason (*‘aql*). In his critique of the rationalistic epistemological and hermeneutical theories of the Kalām theologians, as well as their scepticism towards plain-sense readings of the Qur’ānic text and the *Ḥadīths*, he advances Ibn Taymiyya’s ‘literalist rationalism’<sup>3</sup>. This traditionalistic rationalism permits the use of rational theological arguments and aims to elucidate the fundamental rationality of revelation such that Jon Hoover described Taymiyyan theology as philosophical and “seeking to elucidate and defend an “ordinary language” reading of the theological data of revealed tradition as rational and coherent.”<sup>4</sup>

This thesis is not the place to discuss the entirety of Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s *Sharḥ*, considering the fact that the commentary totals nearly 800 pages in the 1997 edition of Shu‘ayb al-Arna‘ūṭ and ‘Abdullah b. ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī. Moreover, a large portion of the commentary consists of direct citations from other scholars’ work, in particular Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. For this reason, I have selected for analysis one theme and two sections in the *Sharḥ* that are the most ‘original’ in the sense that they were largely authored by Ibn Abī l-‘Izz himself, rather than directly taken from secondary works. These are Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s epistemological and hermeneutical theories, his views on faith (*īmān*), and his views on the divine attribute of speech (*ṣifat al-kalām*). Another important reason for the choice of these topics is that during his discussion of epistemology,

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themselves always highlight this distinction clearly. The latter refers to *ḥadīth* scholars, but it does not mean that they adhere to the traditionalist theology. In this context, I am adopting George Makdisi’s definition as found in his work titled “Ash‘arī and the Ash‘arites in Islamic Religious History,” published in *Studia Islamica*, no. 17 (1962), 49.

<sup>3</sup> This term is coined by Yahya Michot to describe Ibn Taymiyya’s hermeneutics. Yahya J. Michot, “A Mamlūk Theologian’s Commentary on Avicenna’s *Risāla Adḥawiyya*: Being a Translation of a Part of the *Dar’ al-Ta‘arūf* of Ibn Taymiyya, With Introduction, Annotation, and Appendices” [Trans. of *Dar’ 5:10–87*], *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14 (2003): 149–203 (Part I) and 309–363 (Part II).

<sup>4</sup> Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 20. See also: Jon Hoover, “God Acts by His Will and Power: Ibn Taymiyya’s Theology of a Personal God in his Treatise on the Voluntary Attributes,” *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Shahab Ahmed and Yossef Rapoport (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 74.

*īmān*, and the divine attribute of speech Ibn Abī l-‘Izz directly engages with the Māturīdite theological tradition.

In this thesis I examine the ideas and doctrines Ibn Abī l-‘Izz endorses regarding religious epistemology, *īmān*, and the divine attribute of speech through an analysis of the arguments and evidence he forwards in support of them, the sources he derives them from, and determine the theological identity he espouses. Since the *Sharḥ* is a highly polemical work, I also analyse Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s arguments against other doctrines he deems false and similarly attempt to identify the sources he consults. This is not always possible, however, since Ibn Abī l-‘Izz often does not identify the specific figures or groups he criticises.

As a work that largely advances the theology of Ibn Taymiyya and his circle,<sup>5</sup> I argue that Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s *Sharḥ al-‘aqīda al-ṭahāwiyya* demonstrates a rationalised tendency, and therefore can be considered a traditionalist Kalām commentary on al-Ṭahāwī’s creed. I also demonstrate that, while Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s Ḥanafite background is certainly visible in the *Sharḥ*, this fact has a negligible influence on Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s theological views. Indeed, he present the early Ḥanafite tradition, including the eponymous founder Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767), as expounding the traditionalist theology Ibn Abī l-‘Izz himself ascribes to.

## 1.2. Literature Review

As alluded to in the previous section, the *Sharḥ* is a neglected text in Western scholarship. To the best of my knowledge, there are no academic works that have as its main topic of inquiry either the *Sharḥ* or Ibn Abī l-‘Izz. Three Western academics, however, have paid attention to this unusual Ḥanafite scholar as part of a wider study.

Most relevant for the topic of this thesis is Caterina Bori’s 2018 article “Ibn Taymiyya (14th to 17th Century): Transregional Spaces of Reading and Reception”. In this article, Bori nuances Khaled el-Rouayheb’s claim that Ibn

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<sup>5</sup> Most prominently the Ḥanbalite scholar Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350).

Taymiyya’s teachings had no significant impact on the development of non-Ḥanbalite, mainstream Sunni religious thought until the rise of Sunnite revivalism in the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> She achieves this by challenging the way historians study the impact of ideas, texts, and religious movements. Rather, than speak of the ‘influence’ of a scholar or work, she argues, we must privilege their ‘reception.’ In contrast to influence, which implies “the capacity to exert some kind of power or ascendancy on the part of the actor, or the agent, who/which ‘influences’,” the term reception allows us to observe the impact of an individual, group, text, or idea in a much broader fashion.<sup>7</sup> With this in mind, she demonstrates that Ibn Taymiyya’s impact in non-Ḥanbalite circles remained felt into the eleventh/seventeenth century.<sup>8</sup> As an example of Ibn Taymiyya’s immediate impact, Bori describes is the trial (*miḥna*) of ‘our’ Ibn Abī l-‘Izz for a theological controversy over a poet’s *qaṣīda* in praise of the Apostle Muḥammad.<sup>9</sup> Bori briefly touches upon the topic of Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s *Sharḥ*, characterising it as having a “highly Taymiyyan-marked theological identity, combined with early Ḥanafī elements” and being in need of a critical study.<sup>10</sup> By her own admittance, Bori did not thoroughly study the *Sharḥ*, because, while her characterisation of the text as “highly Taymiyyan-marked” is correct, I challenge the idea that the *Sharḥ* exhibits an early Ḥanafite identity. She also correctly states that Ibn Abī l-‘Izz does not explicitly mention Ibn Taymiyya by name. Her claim, however, that this is also the case with Ibn Taymiyya’s student Ibn al-Qayyim is wrong.<sup>11</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz does refer to him on two occasions.<sup>12</sup>

The two remaining academic works, Philipp Bruckmayr’s “Salafī Challenge and Māturīdī Response: Contemporary Disputes over the Legitimacy of Māturīdī *kalām*” and Wasim Shiliwala’s “Constructing a Textual Tradition: Salafī Commentaries on *al-Aqīda al-taḥāwiyya*,” both discuss Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s

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<sup>6</sup> Khaled El-Rouayheb, “From Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 1566) to Khayr al-Dīn al-Ālūsī (d. 1899): Changing views of Ibn Taymiyya among non-Hanbalī Sunni Scholars,” *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, eds. Y. Rapoport and Sh. Ahmed (Karachi: Oxford University Press 2010), 269–318.

<sup>7</sup> Caterina Bori, “Ibn Taymiyya (14th to 17th Century): Transregional Spaces of Reading and Reception,” *The Muslim World* 108, no. 1 (2018): 90, <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12230>.

<sup>8</sup> Bori, “Ibn Taymiyya (14th to 17th Century),” 121-123.

<sup>9</sup> Bori, “Ibn Taymiyya (14th to 17th Century),” 92-94.

<sup>10</sup> Bori, “Ibn Taymiyya (14th to 17th Century),” 94 and 94n26.

<sup>11</sup> Bori, “Ibn Taymiyya (14th to 17th Century),” 95.

<sup>12</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/272 and 2/603.

commentary in the context of modern Salafī polemic against ‘heretical’ sects and both characterise it as a Taymiyyan text.

Through a reading of modern Salafī commentaries on the *Sharḥ*, Bruckmayr rightly detects the anti-Kalām polemics in the text. Bruckmayr also notes that as a disciple of Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz adheres to the tripartite division of God’s oneness (*tawḥīd*), into God’s oneness in divinity (*ulūhiyya*), in lordship (*rubūbiyya*), and His names and attributes (*asmā’ wa ṣifāt*).<sup>13</sup>

Shiliwala, who examines the modern Salafī movement’s adoption of al-Ṭaḥāwī’s creed as a ‘Salafī’ text, provides the most detailed information about Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s life on the basis of contemporary Arabic Salafī works. He also appears to be first and only Western scholar that has noted that the fact that large parts of Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s commentary are derived from the works of Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn al-Qayyim, and, to a lesser extent, Ibn Kathīr. Unlike Bori, Shiliwala also noted that Ibn Abī l-‘Izz does twice refer Ibn al-Qayyim in the commentary.<sup>14</sup>

Most studies on Ibn Abī l-‘Izz or the *Sharḥ*, however, have been conducted in Arabic and Turkish. Arabic-language works tend to have a Salafī slant and provide sympathetic descriptions of Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s and Ibn Taymiyya’s theological views. Among these is the Saudi Arabian Salafī scholar ‘Abdullah b. ‘Ubayd b. ‘Abbād al-Ḥāfi’s analysis of Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s theology in the *Ṭaḥāwiyya*, which aims to demonstrate the authentic Salafī (*al-madhhab al-salafī*) nature of the *Sharḥ*.<sup>15</sup> One of the most important academic work on Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s *Sharḥ* in Arabic is ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Āl ‘Abd al-Laṭīf’s *Ta’līqāt ‘alā sharḥ al-‘aqīda al-ṭaḥāwiyya* from 2008, which Shiliwala references in his article regarding the authorship of parts of the *Sharḥ*. Āl ‘Abd al-Laṭīf is the scholar who definitively demonstrated that the majority of the ideas in the commentary are derived the

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<sup>13</sup> Philipp Bruckmayr, “Salafī Challenge and Māturīdī Response: Contemporary Disputes over the Legitimacy of Māturīdī *kalām*,” *Die Welt des Islams* 60, no. 2-3 (2020), 314, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700607-06023P06>.

<sup>14</sup> Wasim Shiliwala, “Constructing a Textual Tradition: Salafī Commentaries on *al-‘Aqīda al-ṭaḥāwiyya*,” *Die Welt des Islams* 58, no. 4 (2018), 475-476, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700607-00584P03>.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Abdullah b. ‘Ubayd b. ‘Abbād al-Ḥāfi, *Manhaj al-imām ibn abī l-‘izz al-ḥanaḥī wa āra’uhu fi l-‘aqīda min khilāl sharḥihi al-ṭaḥāwiyya*. Dammam: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 1424/2003.

works of Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn al-Qayyim, and Ibn Kathīr. In his book *Āl ‘Abd al-Latīf* includes an overview of almost all quotations in the *Sharḥ*, which total at 187 passages.<sup>16</sup>

Turkish studies, on the other hand, often focus on Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s relationship to Ḥanafite-Māturīdite theology.<sup>17</sup> Ihsan Timūr has written a brief analysis of the *Sharḥ*’s contents and Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s theological allegiance, concluding that he was strongly influenced by Ibn Taymiyya’s circle and that the *Sharḥ* had a limited influence on the Ḥanafite theological tradition.<sup>18</sup> Mustafa Aykaç compared the sections on faith (*imān*) in the commentaries of Ibn Abī l-‘Izz and the Ḥanafite however, that al-Bābartī’s commentary is actually composed by Sirāj al-Dīn al-Ghaznawī.<sup>19</sup>

### 1.3. Methodology

This thesis describes Islamic theology as an intellectual phenomenon that finds its expression in religious texts. It should be noted that it does not aim to philosophically evaluate the validity of the theological concepts described, but rather it attempts to explore the intended meaning conveyed by its adherents. Inherent to a descriptive study of ideas is its primary focus on the concepts

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16 ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Āl ‘Abd al-Latīf, *Ta’līqāt ‘alā sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Taḥāwiyya* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2008), 34ff.

17 Other Turkish studies have focused on Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s judicial views and criticism of the Ḥanafite law school. See: Ayhan Şen, “Et-Tenbīh Ālā Müşkilatı’l-Hidāye Adlı Eser Çerçevesinde Hanefi Fıkında el-Hidāye Metnine Yönelik Eleştirilerle İlgili Genel Bir Değerlendirme.” *Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 2, no. 4 (2013), 169-193; Ahmet İnanır, “İbn Ebi’l-‘Izz’in “İttibâ” Adlı Risalesi Bağlamında Ebu Hanife ve Hanefi Mezhebi Örneğinde Taklide Dair Görüşleri.” *Gaziosmanpaşa Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi dergisi* 1, no. 2 (2013), 225-260; Ahmet İnanır, “İbn Ebi’l-‘Izz el-Hanefi ve Muhammed b. Ali es-Senûsî Örneğinde Kuzey Afrika’da İctihad Hareketleri.” *Çukurova Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 15, no. 1 (2015), 149-174; Ahmet İnanır, “Hanefi Mezhebini Diğer Mezheplere Tercih Bağlamında İmam Buhârî’ye Yönelik Tenkitler ve Cevaplar Ekmeleddin el-Bâbertî ve İbn Ebi’l-‘Izz el-Hanefî Örneği.” *Gaziosmanpaşa Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Araştırmaları Dergisi* 15, no. 1 (2020), 91-101. For Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s views regarding Qur’ānic exegesis, see: Esat Özcan, “İbn Ebū’l-‘Izz’in Kur’ân’ın Kur’ân’la Tefsir Metoduna Yaklaşımı.” *Journal of Muş Alparslan University Faculty of Islamic Sciences* 4, no. 2 (2021), 176-193.

18 Ihsan Timūr, “Tahâvî Akîdesi’ne Ehl-i Hadis Yorum: Sadruddin İbn Ebi’l-‘Izz ve *el-Akîdetü’t-Tahâviyye Şerhi*,” *Karadeniz Technical University Journal of the Faculty of Divinity* 4, no. 2 (Autumn 2017), 61-70.

19 Mustafa Aykaç, “Tâhâvî Bağlamında İki Farklı Hanefilik Okuması (Ekmeleddin el-Bâbertî ve İbn Ebi’l-‘Izz Örneği),” *Hitit Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 17, no. 33 (2018), 134-151.

themselves, which sometimes leads to a disregard for the potential impact of social, cultural, and political contexts that may have shaped the specific historical development of these concepts.

#### **1.4. Primary Sources**

Since this is a study of the *Sharḥ al-‘aqīda al-ṭahāwiyya* by Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, the main primary source is, of course, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s own text. However, due to the condensed nature of Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s presentation, it is often necessary to refer to other works for a more comprehensive understanding. I consult the works of Ibn Taymiyya for comparable arguments to those constructed by Ibn Abī l-‘Izz himself, as they often share similarities. In terms of the arguments presented by Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s opponents, specifically the Māturīdites, I relied on Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī’s *Tabṣirat al-adilla* and Abū l-Barakāt al-Nasafī’s *al-Itimād fī l-‘itiqād* as my primary sources, since Ibn Abī l-‘Izz cites both of these authors, particularly when addressing the viewpoints of the Māturīdites, even though he regularly does not mention them.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### 2.1. Introduction

By the time Ibn Abī l-‘Izz wrote the *Sharḥ al-aqāda al-ṭahāwiyya*, Sunnism had entered a new phase. The historical antagonism between the different self-declared Sunnite *madhhabs*, both in law and theology, had largely subsided. It was replaced by the notion that Ḥanafism, Mālikism, Shāfi‘ism, and Ḥanbalism, with respect to jurisprudence, and Ash‘arism and Māturīdism, with respect to *kalām*, equally represented orthodox Sunnite Islam.<sup>20</sup> This shift is attributed to the Mamluk Sultanate, whose religious policy gave all four Sunnite legal *madhhabs* equal status, as part of an attempt to present itself as the guardian of Sunnism against Mongol, Crusader and heterodox Muslim threats.<sup>21</sup> While the integration of these various schools under the banner of orthodox Sunnism in this period included Ḥanbalite jurisprudence, traditionalist theology failed to achieve the status of orthodoxy under the Mamluk authorities, who favoured the rationalistic *mutakallimūn*. The *ḥadīth*-oriented traditionalists, like Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, rejected

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<sup>20</sup> The value of the term ‘orthodoxy’ has long been questioned for historical research. While Christianity has had fixed orthodoxies that prescribed specific doctrines to regulate correct beliefs and ‘heretical’ ones, Islam has not followed the same pattern. Like Judaism, it has lacked a consistent orthodoxy that enforced a singular set of beliefs and instead witnessed variations in normative dogma across different times and regions. Scholars such as Josef van Ess have recognised this issue and proposed that the term ‘orthodoxy’ is only meaningful if it refers to the “dominant opinion” or “mainstream position” within a particular context. Accordingly, Islam can be seen as having local *orthodoxies* rather than a single orthodoxy, as van Ess suggests. Throughout this thesis I use the term ‘orthodox’ according to this understanding. Arjan Post, *The Journeys of a Taymiyyan Sufi: Sufism through the Eyes of ‘Imād al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Wāsiṭī (d. 711/1311)*, 4, Christian R. Lange, “Power, Orthodoxy and Salvation in Classical Islamic Theology,” in *Islamic Studies in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Léon Buskens and Annemarie van Sandwijk (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 135–152, who, in turn, quotes from Josef van Ess, *Der Eine und das Andere: Beobachtungen an islamischen häresiographischen Texten* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 1299.

<sup>21</sup> Wilferd Madelung, “The Spread of Māturīdism and the Turks,” in *Actas do IV Congresso de Estudos Arabes e Islamicos, Coimbra-Lisboa 1968* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), 166-167; Lutz Berger, “Interpretations of Ash‘arism and Māturīdism in Mamluk and Ottoman Times,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2, DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199696703.013.012.

aspects of the religious, scholarly, and cultural heritage that had become widely accepted among the educated Muslim classes as common knowledge and thereby removed themselves from the mainstream. Traditionalist theologians were also consistently accused of holding anthropomorphic views of God by their Ash‘arite and Māturīdite opponents.<sup>22</sup> Traditionalist criticism of certain aspects of Sufism, however, invited most hostility.<sup>23</sup> This is because Sufism had become a commonly accepted phenomenon among the Muslim elite by the eighth/fourteenth century.<sup>24</sup> Lastly, Māturīdism, the second major *kalām* school of Sunnite Islam after Ash‘arism, had become a well-established theological tradition by the eighth/fourteenth century and had spread from its original centres in Transoxania and North-eastern Iran to the Eastern Mediterranean. More so than in earlier centuries, Ḥanafism and Māturīdism had become significantly intertwined.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, we can speak more confidently of the existence of a Ḥanafite-Māturīdite tradition in this period, while non-Māturīdite or traditionalist Ḥanafites, like Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, had become a minority faction within Ḥanafism.

This chapter is divided into five parts and a conclusion. In Part One, a historical overview is presented, outlining the factors that contributed to the rise of Māturīdism as a distinct school of Islamic theology. Particular attention is paid to the state of the *madhhab* in the Eastern Mediterranean prior and during the lifetime of Ibn Abī l-‘Izz in the eighth/fourteenth century, since this is the form of *Kalām* the *Sharḥ*. Part Two has a similar aim with regard to the emergence of Traditionalism, as well as the immediate impact of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) in the decades after his death, since his is the particular traditionalist theology that Ibn Abī l-‘Izz adopted. In doing so, this part explains the historical circumstances that contributed to the clear Taymiyyan theology permeating Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s commentary. Part Three discusses the reception of Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭaḥāwī’s (d. 321/933) *‘Aqīdat ahl al-sunna wa l-jamā‘a* among Ḥanafites, Māturīdites, and Ash‘arites, since all claim that al-Ṭaḥāwī’s creed (largely) represents their

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<sup>22</sup> Berger, “Interpretations of Ash‘arism and Māturīdism,” 7.

<sup>23</sup> Berger, “Interpretations of Ash‘arism and Māturīdism,” 9.

<sup>24</sup> Jonathan Porter Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 59.

<sup>25</sup> Madelung, “The Spread of Māturīdism,” 140.

respective theologies. Part Four explores Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s life, including family background, education, scholarly career, and the controversies he was involved in.

## 2.2. Hanafism and Māturīdism by the Eighth/Fourteenth Century

The close association of Māturīdism with Ḥanafism (evidenced by the nomenclature “Ḥanafīte-Māturīdism”) from the late fifth/eleventh or early sixth/twelfth century onwards obscures the fact that there existed a Ḥanafīte theological tradition prior to the transformative influence of the Transoxanian scholar Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944). This early Ḥanafīte theology goes partly back to Abū Ḥanīfa himself (d. 150/767) and persisted, independent from Māturīdism, until at least the end of the fifth/eleventh century.

The formative period of the Māturīdīte theological tradition extended until the sixth/twelfth century. Ulrich Rudolph outlined three developmental stages: (1) the establishment of Ḥanafīte theology and its dissemination in Northeastern Iran, occurring from the late second/eighth to early third/ninth centuries; (2) the transformation of this early Ḥanafīte tradition by Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944), who transformed theological Ḥanafism through his defense of Ḥanafīte school of speculative theology in the late fifth/eleventh or early sixth/twelfth century, through the efforts of Transoxanian theologians including Abū l-Yusr al-Pazdawī (d. 493/1100), Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114), in response to the growing influence of the Ash‘arism in Northeastern Iran in that period.<sup>26</sup>

As mentioned above, the foundations of Māturīdism go back to Abū Ḥanīfa. Although the Kūfan scholar is primarily renowned for his contributions as a jurist, his opinions formed the basis for two separate intellectual traditions: the Ḥanafīte law school and, to a lesser extent, the Ḥanafīte theological tradition that would transform into Māturīdism. Rudolph noted that although the Ḥanafīte theological

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<sup>26</sup> Ulrich Rudolph, “Ḥanafī Theological Tradition and Māturīdism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2, DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199696703.013.023.

he death of Abū Maṣūʿ al-Māturīdī in 333/999, it eventually acquired recognition as an orthodox Sunni Kalām school and rivals its Ashʿarite counterpart in terms of the number of adherents.<sup>27</sup>

Surprisingly, Abū Ḥanīfa's theological reflections are better documented than his legal views. Rudolph has identified the contents of two early epistles as forming the nucleus of the early Ḥanafite theological tradition, known as the *Risāla I* and the *Risāla II*. The first epistle is widely considered to be of Abū Ḥanīfa's own hand and described as a Murji'ite text (a label which he rejects), because of Abū Ḥanīfa's statements regarding faith and sin, the main topic of the epistle.<sup>28</sup> It resembles the theological positions of the Ḥanafite-Māturīdite tradition on faith that we will discuss in the second chapter, such as the exclusion of actions from the essence of faith.<sup>29</sup> The *Risāla II* is of less certain authorship but definitely free will and absolute determinism.<sup>30</sup>

As a result of its ties with the Murji'ites, the decline of Murji'ism in Abū Ḥanīfa's

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The transfer of theological Ḥanafism from its birthplace in Iraq to Northeastern Iran and Transoxania is related to the local influence of Murji'ism, whose scholars sympathised with Abū Ḥanīfa and travelled to Kūfa in order to study with him before taking Abū Ḥanīfa's theological views to their native regions. Consequently, the theological concepts of Abū Ḥanīfa gained significant traction in Northeastern Iran and Transoxania, which served as the primary stronghold of the Ḥanafī theological tradition from the late second/eighth to the early

<sup>27</sup> Rudolph, "Ḥanafī Theological Tradition and Māturīdism," 1.

<sup>28</sup> Rudolph, "Ḥanafī Theological Tradition and Māturīdism," 2-3; Wilferd Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 19. For a translation of the *Risāla I* (in German), see Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*, vol. 5 (Berlin; New York: W. de Gruyter, 1991-1997), 24-29.

<sup>29</sup> Ulrich Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī and the Development of Sunnī Theology in Samarqand*, tr. Rodrigo Adem (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), 34-36 and Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*, vol. 1 (Berlin; New York: W. de Gruyter, 1991-1997), 199ff.

<sup>30</sup> Rudolph, "Ḥanafī Theological Tradition and Māturīdism," 5.

<sup>31</sup> Van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 1/221-233.

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Ḥanafite scholars would produce foundational Ḥanafite theological texts, these Abū Muṭī‘ al-Balkhī’s (d. 199/814) *al-Fiqh al-absaṭ*, and al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī’s (d. 342/953) *Kitāb al-sawād al-a‘zam*, which became important sources for Māturīdite scholars.<sup>33</sup>

The most influential of all, however, was Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī’s *K. al-tawḥīd*, the first Ḥanafite work of Kalām. It was Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944) established the Eastern Ḥanafite tradition of *Kalām* that came to be known as Māturīdism. Although his thought transformed Transoxanian Ḥanafism, al-Māturīdī did not seek to establish a novel theological tradition. He saw himself as Ḥanafite. The Samarqandian scholar is neither recognised as such in early descriptions by his admirers.<sup>34</sup> Further supporting this notion is the absence of the term "Māturīdism" in scholarly discourse until approximately the middle of the eighth/fourteenth century, as attested by the lack of earlier references prior to the works of al-Taftazānī.<sup>35</sup>

Over time, al-Māturīdī’s teachings brought about a profound transformation in Ḥanafite thought. However, this transformation was not immediate and instead unfolded gradually over a considerable period. As a result, even by the late fourth/tenth century, it remained possible to be a Ḥanafite without engaging with Kalām.<sup>36</sup> Rather, it was the Ḥanafite scholar Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114) who should be considered the true founder of the Māturīdite school, through his critical engagement with the Ash‘arite school; most notably in his influential Kalām work *Tabṣirat al-adilla*. Abū l-Mu‘īn’s work served as a model for Transoxanian scholars who, starting from the early fifth/eleventh century, authored a multitude of kalām works and creeds, aiming to articulate the beliefs

<sup>32</sup> Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran*, 14-20; Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī*, 25-30. See also Wilferd Madelung, “The Early Murji’a in Khurāsān and Transoxania and the Spread of Ḥanafism,” *Der Islam* 59 (1982): 32–39

<sup>33</sup> Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī*, 45-60.

<sup>34</sup> Abū l-Mu‘īn Maymūn b. Muḥammad al-Nasafī, *Tabṣirat al-adilla fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Claude ), vol 1, 356-359; Abū l-Yusr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bazdawī, *Kitāb uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Hans Peter Linss, amended and annot. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqā (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya lil-Turāth, 1424/2003), 14.

<sup>35</sup> Wilferd Madelung, “Māturīdiyya,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill 1986), 6/847–848.

<sup>36</sup> Rudolph, “Ḥanafī Theological Tradition and Māturīdism,” 12.

of “the followers of Abū Ḥanīfa” (*aṣḥāb Abī Ḥanīfa*),<sup>37</sup> although, according to Rudolph, they had effectively evolved into the Māturīdite school.<sup>38</sup>

By the late seventh/thirteenth century, when the last of these Māturīdite works were being written, the theology of al-Māturīdī had extended westward and gained widespread acceptance in regions along the Mediterranean Sea under Mamluk rule at the time. The earliest extant manuscripts of al-Māturīdī’s tafsir, dating back to the mid-seventh/thirteenth century, indicate a continuous reception of Māturīdism in the region.<sup>39</sup> This expansion can be attributed, as demonstrated by Madelung, to the Seljuqs migrated from Central Asia to the Mediterranean.<sup>40</sup> Under the Seljuks and their successors, the Ayyubids and Mamluks, Ḥanafite law and Māturīdīte Kalām spread in the region. According to Madelung and Bruckmayr, prior to the Seljuks, the prevailing theology in Syria and Egypt among Ḥanafites Ḥanafites of Turkish origin.<sup>41</sup> By the time of the rule of the Ayyubid Salāḥ al-Dīn denomination in Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s native Damascus and Ḥanafīte-Māturīdite

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Typically, these seminaries were dedicated to a single school of law, although the four Sunnite law schools were widely accepted during that period. Within Sunnite Islam, the Ayyubids of Egypt and Syria privileged the Shāfi‘ites, although displaying great tolerance for the other schools in the areas under their control. When the Ayyubids were succeeded by Mamluk Sultanate, it went further than the Ayyubids by making the equal treatment of the four Sunnite schools part of its

religious policy, although the earlier Zengid and Ayyubid dynasties had

<sup>37</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz also refers to *aṣḥāb Abī Ḥanīfa* when discussing Māturīdīte Ḥanafites. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/470 and 2/672.

<sup>38</sup> Rudolph, “Ḥanafī Theological Tradition and Māturīdism,” 12. Philip Bruckmayr demonstrates the interconnectedness of Māturīdite theology and Eastern Ḥanafism by looking at the chains of transmission of specific Ḥanafite works. Philip Bruckmayr, “The Spread and Persistence of Māturīdī Kalām and Underlying Dynamics,” *Iran & the Caucasus* 13, no. 1 (2009), 61-62.

<sup>39</sup> Philip Bruckmayr, “The Spread and Persistence of Māturīdī Kalām and Underlying Dynamics,” *Iran & the Caucasus* 13, no. 1 (2009), 62-63.

<sup>40</sup> Madelung, “The Spread of Māturīdism and the Turks,” 140.

<sup>41</sup> Madelung, “The Spread of Māturīdism and the Turks,” 113 and Bruckmayr, “The Spread and Persistence of Māturīdī Kalām and Underlying Dynamics,” 62.

<sup>42</sup> Madelung, “The Spread of Māturīdism and the Turks,” 146-150.

implemented similar policies, albeit less extensive.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, there already existed a degree of shared tolerance and acceptance between scholars of different jurisprudential and theological affiliations before the advent of the Mamluks.<sup>44</sup>

### 2.3. The Development of Ḥanbalism

According to Jon Hoover, traditionalist theology, as represented by Ḥanbalism, was disproportionately influential in the development of Islamic theology. This is due to the fact that Ḥanbalism was the sole Sunnite law school to consistently uphold a traditionalist theological perspective. The Ḥanbalites emerged as the vanguard of a broader traditionalist movement within mediaeval Islam, standing

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The Ḥanbalite school of law emerged in Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate at the time, during the late third/ninth and early fourth/tenth centuries. It inherited the mantle of the earlier traditionalist movement that had originated almost two centuries prior. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), the prominent figure of the third/ninth century, served as the foremost traditionalist and the namesake of the Ḥanbalite school. Under his guidance, a strong emphasis was placed on collecting and studying the *ḥadīths*, with the aim of grounding Islamic beliefs and practices exclusively in the Qur'ān, the *ḥadīths* and the example of the righteous forebears. In contrast, proponents of *ra'y* (personal opinion) held a more dominant position, relying on common sense and rational discretion. By the late second/eighth century, traditionalists and proponents of *ra'y* had already found themselves in conflict. In reaction to the pressure exerted by traditionalists, proponents of *ra'y* gradually adapted their legal jurisprudence to conform to

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<sup>43</sup> Berger, "Interpretations of Ash'arism and Māturīdism," 1-5.

<sup>44</sup> Haidar, "The Debates Between Ash'arism and Māturīdism," 59.

<sup>45</sup> The adjective *kalāmīc* is used by Miriam Ovodía, among others. See: Miriam Ovodía, *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and the Divine Attributes: Rationalized Traditionalistic Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 39.

<sup>46</sup> Jon Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1-2. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199696703.013.014.

traditionalist stances. They began to increasingly rely on the precedents of the ‘founders’ of their respective schools and the *ḥadīths*.<sup>47</sup>

Traditionalism found its most consistent expression in Ḥanbalite law and theology. While traditionalist voices in the Shāfi‘ite and Ḥanifite law schools also rejected *Kalām*ic theology, they did not voice their opposition as openly as the Ḥanbalites did. This choice was motivated by the fear that an emphasis on anti-Kalām Sina's philosophy into their theology, the Ḥanbalite were generally more vocal in their promotion of traditional theological doctrines.<sup>48</sup>

Unlike later Ḥanbalites, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and his traditionalist contemporaries, spoke about God in anthropomorphic terms under the condition that these terms were found in the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīths*. The rationalistic Kalām theologians, especially the Mu‘tazilites, accused the traditionalists of assimilating a transcendent God to creation (*tashbīh*). Later Ḥanbalite scholars were more sensitive to the accusation of anthropomorphism. Thus, they denied the existence of any similarities between God and creation, while affirming the reality of the divine attributes mentioned in revelation, which they refused to interpret figuratively (*ta’wīl*). This approach to descriptions of God is known in Islamic theology as *bi-lā kayf* (lit. "without how").<sup>49</sup>

The Ḥanbalites were not immune, however, to the influence of Kalām theology. *Kalām*ic views and argumentation. Abū Ya‘lā Ibn al-Farrā’ (d. 458/1066), the leading Ḥanbalite of his time, sought a middle way between rationalism of the

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<sup>47</sup> Hoover, “Ḥanbalī Theology,” 2, and Wael B. Hallaq, *Sharī‘a: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 36ff. See also: Melchert, Christopher, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th–10th Centuries C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

<sup>48</sup> Hoover, “Ḥanbalī theology,” 2-3, where he quotes Makdīsī’s, “Ash‘arī and the Ash‘arites in Islamic Religious History,” and “Ḥanbalite Islam,” in *Studies on Islam*, ed. M.L. Swartz (New

<sup>49</sup> Hoover, “Ḥanbalī theology,” 4-5.

*mutakallimūn* and traditionalism of the Ḥanbalites. He remained opposed,

During the heated debates between the traditionalist Ḥanbalites and the influential criticism of Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), a rare Ash‘arite Ḥanbalite, and the conquest of Baghdad by the Mongols in 656/1258. Damascus assumed the role of the intellectual hub for Ḥanbalism, despite the Ḥanbalites’ decreased influence in the face of Shāfi‘ite, and to a lesser extent, Ḥanafite dominance. Nonetheless, the Damascene Ḥanbalites produced many of the school’s foremost scholars, such as Muwaffaq al-Dīn b. Qudāma (d. 620/1223), as well as less prominent ones.<sup>51</sup> The ancient city’s most influential Ḥanbalite scholar for the later development of the *madhhab*, as well as on the non-Ḥanbalite scholar Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, is of course Taqī al-Dīn b. Taymiyya.

#### **2.4. The Legacy of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328)**

Much has been said about the impact of Ibn Taymiyya’s thought on Muslim theology. While the Wahhābite tradition, Salafism, and other nineteenth century Islamic revivalist movements have undeniably been shaped by Ibn Taymiyya’s views, the immediate impact of his thought, in sense of the positive reception and influence of his teachings, is generally considered to have been limited. Like Ibn Taymiyya himself, his students did not receive widespread attention until the nineteenth century, including Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), Abū l-Fidā’ b. Kathīr (d. 774/1373), as well as Ibn Abī l-‘Izz.<sup>52</sup>

Jon Hoover described the intellectual and theological climate in which Ibn Taymiyya, his circle, and early followers moved was permeated with Aristotelian logic, Neoplatonist philosophy, and philosophised Ash‘arite Kalām against which

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<sup>50</sup> Hoover, “Ḥanbalī theology,” 7; Daniel Gimaret, “Théories de l’acte humain dans l’école hanbalite,” *Bulletin d’études orientales* 29, 161-165.

<sup>51</sup> Hoover, “Ḥanbalī theology,” 11.

<sup>52</sup> El-Rouayheb, “From Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī,” 270 and Bori, “Ibn Taymiyya (14th to 17th Century),” 121-123.

he wrote extensively in *Al-radd 'alā l-mantiqīyyīn*, *Bayān talbīs al-jahmiyya* and *Dar' ta 'arruḍ al-'aql wa l-naql*. The latter work is extensively cited by Ibn Abī l-'Izz in his commentary.<sup>53</sup>

Notwithstanding Ibn Taymiyya's criticism of theological and philosophical rationalism, he did not reject rationality itself but argued that reason must be in agreement with revelation. Instead, according to Hoover, Ibn Taymiyya initiated a new form of theology, lending special authority to the Qur'ān, the Sunna, and the pious forebears (*salaf*), but also drawing on kalām and philosophical ideas of figures, such as Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210). Ibn Taymiyya's criticism of Kalām theology is based on a fundamentally different conception of God as a perpetually creative and temporally dynamic being.<sup>54</sup> While it recognises changes Ibn Taymiyya's thoughts and beliefs, for Hoover the consistency and coherency of his thought justifies the nomenclature "Taymiyyan" theology.<sup>55</sup>

One of these consistent points is Ibn Taymiyya's view that the fundamental problem of his time was that many Muslims had strayed from the sound worship and understanding of God, as exemplified by the pious forebears. Ibn Taymiyya regarded later Muslim scholars (*muta'akhhirūn*), especially philosophers and Kalām theologians, as responsible for this. His solution was fundamentally traditionalist, namely a return to the sources of Islam: The Qur'ān, the Sunna, and the example of the righteous forebears. Another error that had crept into Islam was sectarian division (*ta'shub*), in the form of unquestioned *madhhab*-adherence. Ibn Taymiyya held the belief that the consensus of Muslim scholars was not inherently infallible. He emphasised the necessity of critically evaluating them in light of the teachings and practices of the righteous forebears. He argued that since they were closer to the time of the Apostle Muḥammad and had a better understanding of his teachings. Therefore, their understanding of revelation should be given more

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<sup>53</sup> Hoover, "Hanbalī theology," 11.

<sup>54</sup> Jon Hoover, "Perpetual Creativity in the Perfection of God: Ibn Taymiyya's Hadith Commentary on God's Creation of this World," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 15, no. 3 (2004), 299.

<sup>55</sup> Hoover, "Hanbalī theology," 12.

weight than the interpretations of later scholars.<sup>56</sup> These sentiments are found in Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s thought as well.

Ibn Taymiyya’s main criticism of Kalām and theology is that both prioritise metaphysical monotheism over ethical monotheism and the theoretical worship of God over practical worship. While Kalām theologians and philosophers deduce their theology, from God’s existence to the religious practices of Islam, from the creation of the world (*ṣan‘ al-‘ālam*). Ibn Taymiyya reverses this order by arguing that God’s sole right of worship, known as *al-tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*, is more important than God’s exclusive status as the creator of the world, or *al-tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya*. God possesses the exclusive right to be worshipped because of His being, and not simply because He alone creates.<sup>57</sup>

According to Hoover, Ibn Taymiyya transformed theology into a part of Muslim jurisprudence. Ibn Taymiyya believed that theology and religious obligations are not about proving the existence of God, but about how to worship God correctly. He argued Islam’s function is guiding Muslims to a righteous life, and that this can only be achieved through the correct worship of God. In the eighth/fourteenth century, the prevailing view among the majority of Muslim scholars was to differentiate between the principles (*uṣūl*) of religion and the branches (*furū‘*). The *uṣūl* pertained to theological doctrines from a theoretical standpoint, while the branches focused on religious obligations from a legal perspective. Ibn Taymiyya rejects this distinction. Rather, for Ibn Taymiyya the *uṣūl-furū‘* distinction indicates importance, with the principles dealing with the most crucial aspects of theological doctrine and religious practice, while the branches treat the smaller details of dogma and ritual.<sup>58</sup>

Ibn Taymiyya does, however, afford a place for reason. Ibn Taymiyya discusses the role of reason and the innate human disposition (*fiṭra*) in recognizing the need for an originator (*muḥdith*) for anything that comes into existence (*ḥādith*). He argues that reason and the primordial disposition inherently acknowledge that

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<sup>56</sup> Hoover, “Ḥanbalī theology,” 12.

<sup>57</sup> Hoover, “Ḥanbalī theology,” 12-13.

<sup>58</sup> Hoover, “Ḥanbalī theology,” 13.

worship is exclusive to God. Additionally, Ibn Taymiyya asserts that revelation encompasses not only knowledge but also rational arguments, countering the Kalām theologians' position. He challenges the premises of the Kalām theologians by affirming that revelation contains the correct proofs of reason, and reason itself acknowledges the truth of revelation. This stands in contrast to the Kalām theologians, who confine revelation to knowledge beyond the reach of reason.<sup>59</sup>

Ibn Taymiyya's perspective on God's essential perfection, namely God's perpetual, temporal, and purposeful activity, distinguishes him from all other Muslim theologians. Influenced by various strands of Islamic thought, including non-Sunni elements, Ibn Taymiyya argues that God acts, creates, and speaks by His will (*mashī'a*) and power (*qudra*) from eternity (*min al-azal*). God's actions are inherent to His essence (*dhāt* or *nafs*) and unfold in a temporal succession. They are an inseparable part of His being and occur in a sequential manner. Rather than using the term contingencies (*hawādith*) to describe God's acts, Ibn Taymiyya prefers terms closer to the language of the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth, such as voluntary acts.<sup>60</sup>

As for the issue of God's speech, Ibn Taymiyya discards the Ash'arite and Māturīdite doctrine that postulates the eternity of the Qur'ān, as described in the doctrine of undifferentiated meaning (*ma'nā wāḥid*), while also rejecting the Mu'tazilite claim that the Qur'ān is created (*makhlūq*). Ibn Taymiyya asserts that

Another figure worth mentioning here is Ibn Taymiyya, leading student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350). His magnum opus *Al-ṣawā'iq al-mursala*, written along Taymiyyan lines, heavily cited in Ibn Abī l-'Izz's *Sharḥ*, is a refutation of Kalām figurative interpretation (*ta'wīl*), the notion that reason and revelation conflict (*ta'arūḍ al-'aql wa l-naql*), the Kalāmīc concept of allegory heavily cited in Ibn Abī l-'Izz's *Sharḥ al-'aqīda al-ṭahāwiyya*.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Hoover, "Hanbalī theology," 14.

<sup>60</sup> Hoover, "Hanbalī theology," 16-17.

<sup>61</sup> Hoover, "Hanbalī theology," 16-17.

<sup>62</sup> Ovadia, Miriam, *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and the Divine Attributes: Rationalized Traditionalistic Theology* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), 1-5.

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## 2.5. The Creed of Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933)

Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933) was an early traditionist (*muhaddith*) and jurist of the Ḥanafite school, who spent most of his life in Egypt. There he was educated and worked under several judges, later serving as a judicial administrator and teacher.<sup>63</sup>

Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭaḥāwī left a lasting impact in Ḥanafism, primarily the field of Ḥanafite law. He is widely acknowledged as one of the principal authorities within the school, with Ḥanafite scholars extensively studying his texts and frequently referencing his opinions. Although he faced criticism from other prominent traditionists, scholars outside the Ḥanafite tradition have commended his expertise in jurisprudence and *ḥadīth* criticism as well. While William Montgomery Watt describes al-Ṭaḥāwī as seeming to have been “fairly conservative” in his views, there is limited information available about al-Ṭaḥāwī’s theological affiliations, apart from his authorship of a single but respected creedal text, the *Bayān al-sunna wa-l-jamā‘a*, more commonly known as *al-‘Aqīda al-ṭaḥāwiyya*.<sup>64</sup>

The *al-‘Aqīda al-ṭaḥāwiyya* has a reputation for being an accessible and popular creed. Manuscript evidence suggests that it was widely read and circulated. Historical reports confirm that the text was particularly revered by most Sunnites, especially Ḥanafite-Māturīdite scholars. However, it was not the most popular creed in the pre-modern Muslim world. In ninth/fifteenth century Egypt, where Ibn Abī l-‘Izz resided briefly a century earlier, evidence indicates that the creeds of Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142) and Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) were more widely read than the Ṭaḥāwiyya. Consequently, the Ṭaḥāwiyya garnered a relatively limited number of commentaries prior to the fourteenth/twentieth century. Shiliwala lists only twelve original commentaries for the Ṭaḥāwiyya, all but four of which were written in the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries by Ḥanafite scholars mainly active in Damascus and

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<sup>63</sup> Norman Calder, “al-Ṭaḥāwī,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill 2000), 10/101-2.

<sup>64</sup> Shiliwala, “Constructing a Textual Tradition,” 471; Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 48.

Cairo. In contrast, the aforementioned Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī's *al-'Aqā'id al-nasafiyya* has at least 130 commentaries, supercommentaries, abridgments, and versified versions.<sup>65</sup> These are by: Isma'īl al-Shaybānī (d. 629/1232 in Damascus), Abū l-Faḍā'il Mankūbars al-Nāṣirī (d. 652/1254 in Baghdad), Shujā' al-Dīn al-Turkistānī (d. 733/1333 in Damascus), Sirāj al-Dīn al-Ghaznawī (d. 773/ 1372 in Cairo), Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 777/1375 in Damascus), Akmal al-Dīn al-Bābartī (d. 786/1384 in Egypt)<sup>66</sup>, Ibn Abī al-'Izz (d. 792/1390 in Damascus), Majd al-Dīn al-Bilbīsī (d. 802/1400 in Cairo), Maḥmūd b. Ishāq al-Qaṣṭantīnī (d. after 916/1510 in Constantinople?), Shaykh Zāda al-'Amasī (d. 944/1537 in Constantinople), Kāfī Ḥasan al-'Aqḥisarī (d. 1025/1616 in Prusac), and 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Ghunaymī al-Maydānī (d. 1298/1881 in Damascus).<sup>67</sup>

This overview of commentators clearly demonstrates that the *Ṭahāwiyya*, as a scholarly engaged with text, reached its popular height in the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries with the Ḥanafite scholars of Damascus and Cairo. While Ibn Abī l-'Izz's theological views did not align with the dominant Kalām theology of Ḥanafites during that period, his commentary must be seen as part of the heightened interest in the *Ṭahāwiyya* among Mamluk-era Ḥanafites. Shiliwala primarily attributes this increase to spiritual and reverential motives, as both Ḥanafite and non-Ḥanafite scholars regarded the creed of al-Ṭahāwī as an authentic expression of Abū Ḥanīfa's theological views.<sup>68</sup>

Shiliwala's survey of the various commentaries on the *Ṭahāwiyya*, concludes that the text did not hold a central place in mediaeval theology. In their introductions, the commentators, such as Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ghaznawī, frequently praised the work as a popular and easily accessible text, characterized by eloquence, brevity, clarity,

<sup>65</sup> Shiliwala, "Constructing a Textual Tradition," 473.

<sup>66</sup> Although Shiliwala includes al-Bābartī's commentary among the twelve commentaries, Ihsan fellow Cairene scholar, al-Ghaznawī. See: Ihsan Timūr, "Tahavi'nin Akide Şerhlerinde İtikadi Farklılaşmalar" (PhD diss., Ankara University, 2016), 12-14. The editor of al-Bābartī's version, 'Abd al-Salām Shannār, also acknowledges that al-Ghaznawī's commentary is likely the original, thereby reducing the number of commentaries on the *Ṭahāwiyya* to eleven. For Shannār's remarks on the authorship of al-Bābartī's *Sharḥ al-'aqīda al-ṭahāwiyya*, see: 'Abd al-Salām Shannār, "

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<sup>67</sup> Shiliwala, "Constructing a Textual Tradition," 473, who quotes from 'Abdallāh al-Ḥibshī, *Jāmi' al-shurūḥ wa-l-ḥawāshī*, 2 vols. (Abu Dhabi: al-Majma' al-Thaqafi, 2004), 2:1208-10.

<sup>68</sup> Shiliwala, "Constructing a Textual Tradition," 473.

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and widespread acceptance. However, according to Shiliwala, this praise also implies that the text does not require an extensive elucidation of its meanings. It seems that these scholars primarily wrote with the intention of honouring al-Ṭaḥāwī and expressing their pride in the Ḥanafite tradition. All commentators were adherents of the Ḥanafite school, and many indicated that their motives were more rooted in spirituality and reverence rather than intellectual pursuits.<sup>69</sup>

The *Ṭaḥāwīyya* is a concise work, covering approximately 105 points of belief and is accompanied by a brief introduction and conclusion. Al-Ṭaḥāwī starts by stating that he presents the Sunnite creed (*ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā'a*) as professed by Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767) and his students Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798) and Muḥammad al-Shaybānī (d. 189/805), describing them as the jurists of the religion (*fuqahā' al-milla*). He proceeds to enumerate beliefs related to the nature of God, Prophecy, revelation, faith, fate and free will, and death and the afterlife.<sup>70</sup>

Unlike larger or more systematic works, al-Ṭaḥāwī does not delve into the reasoning or provide evidence for his beliefs. Furthermore, he does not organise the creedal statements in detectibly systematised manner, occasionally revisiting previously discussed topics in different sections of the text. It seems that his main objective was to offer a concise description of the distinctive features of Sunnism, setting them apart from heterodox sects, referring to the anthropomorphists, Mu'tazilites, Jahmites, Jabrites, and Qadarites.<sup>71</sup>

In the introduction to his translation of the *Ṭaḥāwīyya*, E.E. Elder characterizes it as reflecting a pre-Ash'arite orthodoxy that avoided controversy over intricate problems. It focuses more on the *sam'iyāt*, the matters to be accepted on authority, rather than delving into the technical issues addressed in later manuals. According to Shiliwala, al-Ṭaḥāwī crafted a creed that was agreeable to almost all Sunnites

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<sup>69</sup> Shiliwala, "Constructing a Textual Tradition," 474.

<sup>70</sup> Shiliwala, "Constructing a Textual Tradition," 471.

<sup>71</sup> Shiliwala, "Constructing a Textual Tradition," 472; Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 56.

by straightforwardly listing his beliefs and abstaining from detailed philosophical discussions.<sup>72</sup>

For the same reason, the Ash‘arite Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), a contemporary of Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, was able to write that the *Ṭahāwiyya* broadly contains the creedal beliefs of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī<sup>73</sup>. Additionally, the fact that Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭahāwī’s (d. 321/933) creed belongs to an era predating the formation of later orthodox Sunnite Kalām, as Bruckmayr notes, likely explains the appeal of the text to Sunnites, including Māturīdite Kalām theologians. For the *Ṭahāwiyya* is generally free from the inter-Sunnite polemics surrounding the legitimacy of Kalām, with the exception of al-Ṭahāwī’s different approach to *ta’wīl* from Kalām theology. This allowed Ḥanafite-Māturīdite scholars to read the *Ṭahāwiyya* as confirming the beliefs of the Māturīdite Kalām theology.<sup>74</sup> For example, the Ayyubid sultan of Damascus, al-Malik al-Mu‘azzam (d. 624/1227), who studied Ḥanafite jurisprudence under the prominent Transoxanian Ḥanafite-Māturīdite scholar Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥaṣīrī (d. 636/1238), proclaimed that he was “upon the creed of al-Ṭahāwī” – an indication of the work’s reputation among Māturīdite-Ḥanafites at the time.<sup>75</sup> Nonetheless, Madelung sees the *Ṭahāwiyya* as a creed closer to early Shāfi‘ite and Ḥanbalite traditionalism than the Māturīdism of later Ḥanafites, with the notable exception of al-Ṭahāwī’s presentation of faith (*īmān*) where he follows early Ḥanafite theology.<sup>76</sup>

## 2.6. The Life of Ṣadr al-Dīn b. Abī l-‘Izz (d. 792/1390)

Ṣadr al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī b. Shams al-Dīn Abī ‘Abdullah Muḥammad b. Sharaf al-Dīn Abī l-Barakāt Muḥammad b. ‘Izz al-Dīn Abī l-‘Izz Ṣāliḥ b. Abī l-‘Izz b. Wuhayb b. ‘Aṭā’ b. Jubayr b. Jābir b. Wahb al-Adhra‘ī al-Dimashqī al-Ṣāliḥī al-Ḥanafī was born in 731/1331. The toponym “al-Adhra’ī”

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<sup>72</sup> Shiliwala, “Constructing a Textual Tradition,” 472, where he quotes from E.E. Elder E.E. Elder, “Al-Ṭahāwī’s ‘Bayān al-Sunna Wa’l-Jamā‘a,’” *The MacDonald Presentation Volume*, ed. William Shellabear et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1933), 132.

<sup>73</sup> Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Mu‘īd al-ni‘am wa mubīd al-niqam*, ed. Jādullah Bassām Ṣāliḥ (Amman: Dār al-Nūr al-Mubīn li-l-Nashr wa l-Tawzī‘, 2014), 62.

<sup>74</sup> Bruckmayr, “Salafi Challenge and Māturīdī Response,” 297.

<sup>75</sup> Ibn Kathīr. *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, ed. ‘Alī Shīrī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1988), 13/142.

<sup>76</sup> Madelung, “The Spread of Māturīdism and the Turks,” 113..

derives from the city of Dar‘ā, known as Adhri‘āt in Mediaeval Arabic, located roughly 90 kilometers south of Damascus. The second toponym “al-Şāliḥī” refers to the Şāliḥiyya quarter in the northern suburbs of Damascus, founded by Ḥanbalite scholars who migrated from Palestine in the aftermath of the First Crusade. Şāliḥiyya gained a reputation as a centre of Ḥanbalite learning, although Ḥanafite madrasas quickly outnumbered the Ḥanbalite ones. Despite these toponymic surnames, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s exact birthplace is unknown, but it was likely in Damascus, since biographical sources state that his great grandfather, Sharaf al-Dīn, was already born in the city in 645/1247-8, as well as Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s grandfather and father.<sup>77</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz was born in a family of Ḥanafite judges, mufti’s, Friday preachers (*khutabā’*), and *madrasa* teachers, with a number of his relatives, including his grandfather Shams al-Dīn (d. 722/1322), having reached the position of *Qādī l-Quḍāt* for both the Damascene and Cairene Ḥanafites. Little is known about Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s education and teachers. He very likely studied under his father, ‘Alā’ al-Dīn (d. 746/1345), about whose education there is no information, nor his grandfather. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s only ancestor with a known teacher is his great grandfather, Sharaf al-Dīn (d. 723/1323), who studied under the Ḥanbalite scholar Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Dā’im al-Maqdisī (d. 668/1269-70). Besides his father, the only person Ibn Abī l-‘Izz is known to have received tutelage from is the aforementioned Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), since he refers to the Shāfi‘ite scholar as his “shaykh”.<sup>78</sup> He is also speculated to have studied under Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), a contemporary and fellow Damascene, because of Ibn Qayyim’s profound influence over his writing. It seems that Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s education progressed quickly since he started teaching in Damascene Ḥanafite *madrasas* from 748/1347-8 onward, at around the age of 17. He first assumed a teaching position at the Qaymāziyya *madrasa* in 748/1347-8, followed by the Jawhariyya *madrasa* somewhere before 777/1375-6, then the Rukniyya *madrasa* in 777/1375-6, and the ‘Izziyya Barrāniyya *madrasa* from 784/1382-3 onward.

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<sup>77</sup> Şadr al-Dīn b. Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ al-‘aqīda al-ṭahāwīyya*, eds. Shu‘ayb al-Arna‘ūt and ‘Abdullah b. ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī, 4th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Risāla al-‘Ālamiyya, 2020), 48-49. Please note on Ibn Abī l-‘Izz.

<sup>78</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/227 and 2/480.

Despite his long career at the *madrasa*, the identities of Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s students are unknown, with the exception of the Ḥanafite *Qāḍī l-Qudāt* of Cairo, Ibn al-Dayrī (d. 867/1462), whose son Burhān al-Dīn (d. 876/1471-2) taught the famous Shāfi‘ite scholar Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505).<sup>79</sup> Following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, he served as a Friday preacher at the al-Afram mosque in Damascus until a year before his death in 791/1388-9, as well as in the town of Ḥisbān, an important Mamluk settlement south of Amman, at an unknown date. In accordance with family tradition, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz briefly served as a Ḥanafite judge in Damascus at the end of 776/1375, replacing his cousin Najm al-Dīn who was appointed judge in Cairo. After Najm al-Dīn’s resignation and return to Damascus in 777/1375, after three months in office, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz took his place in Cairo in the same year, resigning after only two months to resume his former activities in Damascus.<sup>80</sup>

Indeed, the limited available information regarding Ibn Abī l-‘Izz's education and mentors leaves considerable gaps in our understanding of his intellectual development. Born shortly after Taymiyya’s death in 728/1328, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz was part of the first generation of Muslim scholars who came under the posthumous influence of the Ḥanbalite scholar and was clearly influenced by him and his circle, perhaps through his teacher Ibn Kathīr. Despite being a Ḥanafite, Ibn Abī al-‘Izz shared the Taymiyyan emphasis on adhering to the views of the righteous forebears and harboured suspicions towards later developments in Islam. He expressed these concerns in a treatise titled *al-Ittibā’*, which denounced blind partisanship to legal *madhhabs* (*ta‘aṣṣub*). This epistle was directed at his fellow Ḥanafites of that period, including the aforementioned Akmal al-Dīn al-Bābartī (d. 786/1384), criticising their allegiance to their school. Ibn Abī al-‘Izz argued that such loyalty hindered the consideration of opinions from other schools and neglected the Qur’ān and *ḥadīths* from which legal rulings are derived. Moreover, he authored a critical commentary on the influential Ḥanafite work *al-Tanbīh ‘alā mushkilāt al-hidāya* by Burhān al-Dīn al-Marghinānī (d. 593/1197). Rather than providing a comprehensive commentary on the entire text, he focused on specific passages that he found problematic or requiring further discussion, particularly

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<sup>80</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/49-61.

those based on weak *ḥadīths*. This demonstrates that while he may have identified himself as a Ḥanafite, Ibn Abī al-‘Izz was open to revising his opinions when confronted with textual evidence.<sup>81</sup>

The most famous episode of Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s life occurred in the year 784/1382–1383. The poet ‘Alī b. Aybak (d. 801/1398) had composed a *qaṣīda*, known as the *Lāmiyya*, in praise of the Apostle Muḥammad. Ibn Abī al-‘Izz criticised Ibn Aybak's poem due to certain doctrinal errors regarding the concepts of intercession through the Apostle Muḥammad’s intermediation (*al-tawassul bi-l-nabī*) and his infallibility (*‘iṣma*). Ibn Abī al-‘Izz wrote down his critique, which ‘Alī b. Aybak learned of. Taking offense, ‘Alī b. Aybak managed to turn a number of scholars against him. The news of this incident reached Cairo, where Ibn Abī al-‘Izz's fellow Ḥanafites disapproved of his stance. Eventually, the case came before the Sultan, who issued a decree to Damascus for Ibn Abī al-‘Izz to be interrogated by judges, jurists, and scholars, representing the four *madhhabs*, with the possibility of punishment.<sup>82</sup>

Ibn Abī al-‘Izz underwent a series of interrogations conducted over five sessions. The allegations against him centered on different perspectives and practices regarding the veneration of the Apostle Muḥammad. One of the accusations was Ibn Abī al-‘Izz maintained that the expression "He suffices Me" could only be attributed to God. He was also criticised for suggesting that one should not seek the Apostle’s intercession by directly asking him to intercede, but rather by addressing God directly and requesting that the Apostle intercede on their behalf. Additionally, it was alleged that pronouncing an oath in anything but God was impermissible.<sup>83</sup>

The concept of the Apostle Muḥammad’s infallibility (*‘isma*) was also a point of contention. One of the allegations involved Ibn Abī al-‘Izz's supposed restriction of the Apostle’s description as being “safe from error” (*al-ma‘ṣūm min al-zalal*) by saying that the Apostle Muḥammad was not prevented from error of

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<sup>81</sup> Shiliwala, “Constructing a Textual Tradition,” 475.

<sup>82</sup> Bori, “Ibn Taymiyya (14th to 17th Century),” 92-93.

<sup>83</sup> Bori, “Ibn Taymiyya (14th to 17th Century),” 93.

reproaching someone for evil conduct. (*illā bi-zallat al-‘itāb*). These issues reflect the concerns shared by followers of Ibn Taymiyya and reappear in later criticisms directed at Ibn Taymiyya himself. They revolve around the idea of safeguarding the oneness and uniqueness of God by removing from human beings, including prophets, the prerogatives that are exclusively attributed to the divine, thereby ensuring that worship is solely directed to God.<sup>84</sup>

This thesis analyses the theological views of Ibn Abī l-‘Izz. This scholar did not, however, only hold unorthodox views in theology, but also regarding Islamic law. In the realm of Islamic jurisprudence, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz diverged from the Ḥanafite majority in specific rulings, as well as rule formulation. His works *al-Tanbīh* and *al-Attibā’* exemplify these differences. In the *al-Tanbīh*, for instance, he asserts that the five congregational prayers are obligatory (*farḍ*), rather than a confirmed sunna (*sunna mu‘akkada* or *sunna al-hudā*).<sup>85</sup> He also disagreed with the Ḥanafites on issues such as the legal penalties for hunting while in the state of sacralisation (*ihrām*) and engaging in homosexual acts.<sup>86</sup> As for the establishment of legal rulings in the Ḥanafite *madhhab*, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz emphasised the primacy of the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīths*, the consensus of the righteous forebears, and diligent inquiry (*ijtihād*) over the blind imitation (*taqlīd*) of the established opinions of a specific school of law, including his own Ḥanafite one.<sup>87</sup> In his aforementioned epistle *al-Attibā’*, for example, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz accuses his contemporary al-Bābartī of fanaticism (*ta‘aṣṣub*) and division (*tafarruq*) for his highly partisan endorsement of the Ḥanafite school and criticism of the Shāfi‘ites.

While Ibn Abī l-‘Izz is keen to emphasise the extent of Abū Ḥanīfa’s knowledge, he stops short of designating the Kufan scholar as the greatest authority in Islam

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<sup>84</sup> Bori, “Ibn Taymiyya (14th to 17th Century),” 93.

<sup>85</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Al-tanbīh ‘alā mushkilāt al-hidāya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥakīm b. Muḥammad Shākir, H. Evren Sünnetçioğlu, “Attendance at the Five Daily Congregational Prayers, Imams and Their Communities in the Jurisprudential Debates during the Ottoman Age of Sunnitization,” in *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450-c. 1750*, ed. Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021), 350.

<sup>86</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Al-attibā’*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Aṭāllah Ḥanīf and ‘Āṣim b. ‘Abdullah al-Qaryūī,

<sup>87</sup> Ahmet İnanır, “İbn Ebi’l-İzz’in “İttibā’” Adlı Risalesi Bağlamında Ebu Hanife ve Hanefi Mezhebi Örneğinde Taklide Dair Görüşleri,” *Gaziosmanpaşa üniversitesi ilahiyat fakültesi dergisi* 1 (2013): 225-260.

after the righteous forebears, a viewpoint that al-Bābartī distinctly holds. Instead, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz regards Abū Ḥanīfa as an important religious authority whose opinions carry great weight, but is sometimes mistaken, such as regarding the rulings on hunting in the state of sacralisation and homosexual acts. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz argues that the Ḥanafites do not have a monopoly on religious truth. Rather, the best scholars are those who “follow the Qur’ān, the Sunna, consensus, and authentic analogy,” regardless of their *madhhab*-affiliation.<sup>88</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s Taymiyyan-marked traditionalist criticism of blind imitation of Ḥanafite jurists and emphasis on the primacy of revealed sources, in addition to his critique of *Kalāmīc* methods in theology, raises the question of his judicial affiliation. In short: is Ibn Abī l-‘Izz a Ḥanafite? While Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s more conventional Ḥanafite opponents might question his allegiance to their *madhhab*, there are no distinct signs that he did not identify himself as a Ḥanafite. In his writings he often speaks reverentially about Abū Ḥanīfa, Ḥanafite scholars, and Ḥanafite works.<sup>89</sup> The fact that he was appointed as a Ḥanafite judge in Egypt indicates that the contemporary (religious) authorities also considered him to be a follower of the Ḥanafite school. Finally, other Muslim scholars, such as Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449), have identified Ibn Abī l-‘Izz as a Ḥanafite.<sup>90</sup>

## 2.7. The Sharḥ al-‘aqīda al-ṭahāwiyya

I wished to write a commentary that follows the path of the righteous forebears in their expressions, continuing upon their approach, and elaborating upon them in the hope that I may be included within their ranks, counted among them, and gathered in their company “among those He has blessed: the messengers, the truthful, those who bear witness to the truth, and the righteous- what excellent companions these are!” (Q 4:69).<sup>91</sup>

In the introduction of the text, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz expresses his motive for writing a lengthy commentary on the Ṭahāwiyya. He criticises earlier commentators who relied on *Kalāmīc* arguments to explain the creed instead of consulting the Qur’ān, Sunna, and the views of the righteous forebears. It is highly probable that Ibn Abī l-‘Izz is referring to the previously mentioned Ḥanafite *Kalāmīc* commentaries. It

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<sup>88</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Al-attibā’*, 22-23.

<sup>89</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Al-tanbīh*, 237-238.

<sup>90</sup> Shihāb al-Dīn b. Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Inbā’ al-ghumar bi-abnā’ al-‘umar*, ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī, al-‘A’lā li-l-Shu’ūn al-Islāmiyya, Lajnat Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1969), 258.

<sup>91</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/20.

is impossible, however, to ascertain which specific commentaries, out of the five to six written before or during Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s lifetime, he had read or was familiar with since he does not provide any specific names or titles.<sup>92</sup>

As convincingly demonstrated by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ‘Āl ‘Abd al-Laṭīf, the majority of ideas presented in Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s commentary can be traced back to the writings of Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Qayyim, and to a lesser extent Ibn Kathīr. Rather than merely drawing intellectual inspiration from their works, it appears that only a few passages within the *sharḥ* can be ascribed to Ibn Abī l-‘Izz himself. Instead, substantial portions of the commentary consist of direct or nearly identical quotations from the works of these scholars, particularly Ibn Taymiyya’s *Dar’ ta ‘ārūḍ al-‘aql wa l-naql* and *Minhāj al-sunna al-nubuwwiyya* and Ibn Qayyim’s *Al-ṣawā‘iq al-mursala*, *Kitāb al-rūḥ*, and *Madārij al-sālikīn*. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s commentary includes a total of 187 passages from these and other works, which make up the majority of the book.<sup>93</sup> In terms of length, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s commentary on the *Ṭahāwiyya* is notably extensive, with the oldest known manuscript spanning 339 leaves.<sup>94</sup>

## CHAPTER III

### THE REFUTATION OF THE *MUTAKALLIMŪN*

What we do not know is far more than what we know [*al-majhūl lanā min al-ḥaqq ad-‘āf al-ma‘lūm*] [...] Our knowledge of principles is much greater than our knowledge of details. We need God’s complete guidance in this matter. But even when we obtain guidance, we must pray God to keep its path. This is the last stage of guidance. The only remaining guidance is guidance into Paradise.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/1-21.

<sup>93</sup> ‘Āl ‘Abd al-Laṭīf, *Ta‘līqāt*, 34ff.

<sup>94</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 4th. ed., 1/88.

<sup>95</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/519-520.

### 3.1. Introduction

As alluded to earlier, at the core of Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s *sharḥ* is the portrayal of the *Taḥāwīyya* as a broadly traditionalist creed, which is facilitated by the fact that Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭaḥāwīyya’s life predates the formation of orthodox Sunnite Islam and the subsequent debates on the permissibility of speculative theology within it. As Ibn Abī l-‘Izz argues for the traditionalist essence of the creed, he aims to refute the interpretations of Kalām theologians regarding the matters addressed in the *Taḥāwīyya*. In the introduction of the commentary Ibn Abī l-‘Izz provides a brief traditionalist account of the history of Islamic theology. He has two reasons for this. First, he attempts to demonstrate the heretical nature of Kalām. Second, he seeks to justify disputation with Kalām theologians, which was not uncontroversial among traditionalists in the eighth/fourteenth century, since it requires delving into the same theological issues that preoccupy Kalām theology.<sup>96</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz sees the emergence of Kalām in the light of the *ḥadīth* which says that the once united Muslim community will divide into 73 sects, all of whom are condemned to Hell save one.<sup>97</sup> He considers Kalām to be one of these deviant sects, since the righteous forebears and early Muslim scholars prohibited Kalām, along with philosophy. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz specifically mentions allegorical interpretation (*ta’wīl*), which he describes as diverting revelation from its plain meaning, as an innovation the Kalām theologians exposed Muslims to, and which he regards as their worst distortion (*tahrīf*) of Islam. It was primarily allegorical interpretation, which, according to Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, caused religious confusion among Muslims by introducing heretical interpretations of revelation and blurring the distinction between true and false understandings of scripture.<sup>98</sup> This brings Ibn Abī l-‘Izz to the second purpose of this heresiography: providing a rationale

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<sup>96</sup> Jon Hoover, “Theology as Translation: Ibn Taymiyya’s Fatwa permitting Theology and its Reception into his Averting the Conflict between Reason and Revealed Tradition (*Dar’ Ta’arūḍ al-‘Aql wa l-Naql*),” *The Muslim World* 108, no. 1 (2018): 43-34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12229>.

<sup>97</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, 1/340, 2/545, 2/775.

<sup>98</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, 1/251-258.

for engaging in disputation with Kalām theologians. The emergence of Kalām theology forced rightly guided scholars, among whom Ibn Abī l-‘Izz counts Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭaḥāwī, to engage with the Kalām theologians to defend the original understanding of Islam, in accordance with Muḥammad’s prophecy. This response resulted, however, in verbosity (*kathura al-kalām*) and disturbances (*shaghab*), because many Muslims had accepted many of the specious arguments that the Kalām theologians had raised.<sup>99</sup>

Besides al-Ṭaḥāwī, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz cites several other prominent scholars who condemn (pre-Sunnite) *kalām*, including al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/820) and al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), as well as Abū Yūsuf al-Anṣārī (d. 182/798), an esteemed Ḥanafite authority. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz attributes to the latter a statement also associated with Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795): "Whoever seeks knowledge through *kalām* becomes a heretic." In an apparent attempt to further convince his Ḥanafite colleagues, he cites another Ḥanafite scholar, the Transoxanian jurist Zāhīr al-Dīn al-Bukhārī (d. 619/1222), who condemns *kalām* in his *al-Fatāwā al-Zahīriyya*. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz does also not refrain from questioning his *mutakallim* opponents’ learning and piety, asserting that Muslim laymen possess greater knowledge and religious certainty than they do.<sup>100</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s primary criticism of Kalām, however, revolves around the (perceived) subordination of revealed evidence, namely the Qur’ān and the Sunna of the Apostle Muḥammad and the statements of the righteous forebears, to human reason. While clearly favouring the former, in line with Ibn Taymiyya, he is eager to emphasise that the Qur’ān and the Sunna never contradict pure reason (*al-‘aql al-ṣarīḥ*), nor do they conflict with the sound primordial disposition (*al-fiṭra al-salīma*) of human beings. A concept captured in the Taymiyyan slogan: ‘*al-‘aql al-ṣarīḥ lā yukhālif al-naql al-ṣaḥīḥ*’,<sup>101</sup> meaning that pure reason never stands in contradiction to authentic revelation. These three sources – revelation, reason, and the primordial disposition – form Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s religious epistemology and hermeneutics. This chapter will examine Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s religious epistemology

<sup>99</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, 1/14.

<sup>100</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, 1/17-19.

<sup>101</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, 7/665.

and the arguments he sets forth against the rationalist theology of the *mutakallimūn*.

### 3.2. “Blameworthy” Kalām

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz often refers to his opponents as *ahl al-kalām al-madhmūm* or “the people of blameworthy Kalām.” He uses this label, which is also found in the works of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim, for those Muslim scholars who engage in an unacceptable form of kalām, ranging from Mu‘tazilites to the Māturīdite commentators on the *Ṭahāwiyya*:

The cause of misguidance is rejecting to contemplate [*tadabbur*] the words of God and His Apostle and preoccupying oneself with those of the Greeks and others. These people are called "the people of speech" [*ahl al-kalām*] not because they provide new knowledge, but rather because they have only added more needless words, such as analogical reasoning [*qiyās*] to clarify what is [already] known through sensory perception [*ḥiss*], even though this analogy and its likes may be useful in another context, and in the presence of those who deny sensory perception [i.e., sophism].<sup>102</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s mention of the Greeks (*al-yūnān*) is a reference to the Greek-inspired vocabulary, methods of argumentation, and conceptions that influenced the development of Kalām theology, although this influence remained controversial both within and outside traditionalist circles.<sup>103</sup> Notwithstanding this criticism, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz argues that the use of Kalām terminology, such as atom (*jawhar*), body (*jism*), and accident (‘*araḍ*), as well as engaging in disputation with heretics is not inherently forbidden.<sup>104</sup>

This statement, along with the term “blameworthy Kalām” appears to suggest that there is an acceptable form of speculative theology as well. This aligns with the aforementioned development in Ḥanbalism/traditionalism, in which certain Kalām viewpoints and engaging in disputation with heterodox theologians were cautiously embraced by certain Ḥanbalites, including Ibn Taymiyya. Thus, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s criticism of the *mutakallimūn* is not their use of Kalām terminology as such – the righteous forebears themselves were receptive to non-qur’ānic

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<sup>102</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, 1/242.

<sup>103</sup> El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation*, 127.

<sup>104</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, 1/20-21.

terminology if its meaning is compatible with revelation. Rather, his objection arises from their misuse of reason and kalām as a means to introduce false concepts into Islam, as he sees it.

### 3.3. Objections to *Kalām*ic Reason

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz presents various objections against *kalām*ic reason in the *Sharḥ al-‘aqīda al-tahāwīyya*, scattered throughout the text. These objections include both those he directly draws from the works of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim, as well as those he formulates himself. He has, however, specifically devoted two sections in the *Sharḥ* to refute *Kalām*ic methodology, namely the introduction and a section that follows his discussion of the beatific vision (*ru’yat Allāh*).

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s main objection against the use of *Kalām*ic reason in theology is the belief that it is less epistemologically certain and objective than scripture and therefore must be subordinated to (a literal reading of) revelation. For Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, the value of revelation is derived from its source, namely the apostles who infallibly transmitted God’s revelation to mankind. Then, however, in what his *mutakallim* peers might have described as *dawr*, or circular reasoning, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz maintains that this infallibility (*iṣma*), upon which the superiority of revelation over reason is built, is itself proven through reason.<sup>105</sup> The lack of certainty and objectivity provided by reason, as Ibn Abī l-‘Izz argues, is best demonstrated by his refutation of *ta’wīl* as understood by *Kalām* theology, namely allegorical interpretation.

### 3.4. Refutation of Allegorical Interpretation (*ta’wīl*)

This focus on *ta’wīl* is not surprising, given that mediaeval Muslim debates over reason and revelation primarily revolved around the permissibility of allegorical interpretation, and if deemed permissible, the circumstances under which a scholar may resort to it when faced with a straightforward meaning of a Qur’ānic passage that contradicts reason. Rationalist scholars were particularly concerned regarding

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<sup>105</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/230-232.

passages that describe God in creaturely terms, where the plain sense interpretation implies assimilation (*tashbīh*) of God to created beings, which many Kalām theologians deemed rationally indefensible. The latter, however, implies a contradiction between reason and revelation, both of which were perceived by many eighth/fourteenth century *mutakallimūn* as providing equal knowledge about God and the universe. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) offered a response to these objections by asserting that both reason and revelation are important sources of knowledge about God and the universe (*kull wāḥid minhumā aṣl muhim*), denying any contradiction between them. Al-Ghazālī and his fellow Persian Ash‘arite Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) have arguably been most influential for the development of the post-classical<sup>106</sup> Sunnite Kalām understanding of *ta’wīl*. The former endorsed the principle that engaging in *ta’wīl* of a revealed text (whether it be the Qur’ān or the ḥadīth corpus) is permissible only when a demonstrative argument (*burhān al-‘aql*) has established the rational impossibility of the literal meaning (*zāhir*).<sup>107</sup> Subsequently, al-Rāzī, expanding upon the ideas of al-Ghazālī, formulated a principle known as the "universal rule" (*al-qānūn al-kullī*). According to this principle, if the literal meaning of revelation contradicts reason, that meaning should either be interpreted differently to align with reason or regarded as something beyond human comprehension and delegated to God (*tafwīd*) without further reflection.<sup>108</sup>

The use of allegorical interpretation among Sunnites is not limited to the Ash‘arite school. Among Ḥanafite-Māturīdites, we find a supporter of *ta’wīl* in the person of the Transoxanian theologian Abū l-Barakāt al-Nasafī (d. 710/1310),<sup>109</sup> who wrote in his *Al-i‘timād fī l-i‘tiqād*:

Regarding the adherence of the corporealists (*mujassima*) to the apparent senses (*zawāhir*) of the revealed text: The way of the righteous forebears is that we affirm them (*nuṣṣadiquhā*) and delegate its interpretation to God (*nufawwiḍu ta’wīlahā ilā Allāh*), while denying any resemblance between God and any created thing, nor interpreting them allegorically, but to believe that what God has intended with them is the truth. The way

<sup>106</sup> Following what has conventionally been considered the classical era of Islamic civilisation in Arabic-speaking regions, which spanned approximately the first six centuries of Islam.

<sup>107</sup> Frank Griffel, ‘Al-Ghazālī at His Most Rationalist. The Universal Rule for Allegorically Interpreting Revelation (*al-Qānūn al-Kullī fī t-Ta’wīl*)’, in *Islam and Rationality*, 116-120.

<sup>108</sup> Jon Hoover, ‘Theology as Translation’, 40.

<sup>109</sup> Abū l-Barakāt al-Nasafī spent the majority of his life in the eastern part of the then Islamicate Ḥanafite scholars, including Ibn Abī l-‘Izz. Al-Nasafī may have taught another commentator on Migration of Hanafi Scholars From Central Asia in the 11th to 13th Centuries,” 52.

of later scholars (*al-khalaf*) is to interpret them allegorically as befits God's essence and His attributes without asserting that our allegorical interpretation is God's [true] intention, because of a lack of definitive proof for the allegorical meaning [...] The way of the righteous forebears is safer (*aslam*), but the way of the later scholars is more learned (*aḥkam*). Obedient faith (*taslīm*) is safer for laymen who do not grasp the subtle questions of Kalām. As for those lucky to be firmly rooted in knowledge and well versed in the subtle details of Kalām, investigation (*baḥṭh*) and independent interpretation of the revealed texts (*ijtihād*) are desired.<sup>110</sup>

The above citation demonstrates that the Māturīdite al-Nasafī has a higher regard for the allegorical interpretation of rationally problematic passages of revelation than the early Muslim practice of delegating (*tafwīd*) their meanings to God. Al-Nasafī does acknowledge, however, the inherent limitation of allegorical interpretation, emphasising that it can never provide a definitive understanding of scripture.

Rather than being grounded in reason, Ibn Abī l-'Izz polemically characterises allegorical interpretation as merely a term used to obfuscate what is, in fact, an innovation that involves discarding the apparent (*ẓāhir*) of revelation and interpreting it in a manner that diverges from its apparent words, without any indication (*qarīna*) within the words themselves or other revealed evidence (*dalīl sharṭ*) to support such an interpretation. For Ibn Abī l-'Izz, Kalām theologians' resorting to allegorical interpretation is not because of the rational impossibility of a literal understanding, but rather because the text clashes with their preconceived notions and whims. This, according to Ibn Abī l-'Izz, is the result of Kalām theology's inability to provide objective rules regarding the use of reason, thereby allowing for the spread of false beliefs:

This door that you have opened, even though you claim to be victorious over your fellow believers on some small point, you have also opened for various types of polytheists and innovators but cannot close. When you allow yourself to divert the Qur'ān from its clear intended meanings without any revealed evidence, what criteria do you have for what interpretations are acceptable and what are not? If you say, "We interpret it based on what reason definitively indicates." Then how do you determine definitive reason (*al-qāṭi' al-'aqlī*)? The Qarmatians reject the apparent meanings of God's law; the philosophers deny bodily resurrection, while the Mu'tazilites appeal to definitive reason to claim the impossibility of seeing God (*ru'yat Allāh*) and Him having knowledge, speech, or mercy. The number of reason-based interpretations is too great to be mentioned here.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Abū l-Barakāt al-Nasafī, *Al-i'timād fī l-i'tiqād*, 122-123.

<sup>111</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/257.

While the above passage is of course highly polemical, it aptly demonstrates Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s scepticism towards the use of rational proofs in theology. Unlike revelation-based proofs, reason, when unrestricted by a sense of loyalty to the literal meaning of the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīths*, becomes little more than personal opinion. This abandonment of the straightforward meanings of revelation explains, according to Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, led to the proliferation of misguided rationalist and esoteric sects who endlessly debate among themselves over the meanings of revealed texts and all claim that their particular interpretation agrees with reason. This division causes lay Muslims to lose faith in revelation because they cannot ever be certain if its apparent meaning is the correct one.

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s second criticism of the use of reason in Kalām theology is connected to allegorical interpretation and al-Rāzī’s universal rule. Following Ibn Taymiyya’s critique of al-Ghazālī, al-Rāzī and the universal rule in his *Dar’ ta ‘āruḍ al-‘aql wa l-naql*,<sup>112</sup> which his Ḥanafite disciple quotes extensively, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz argues that Kalām theologians hold that rational principles (*uṣūl ‘aqliyya*) are prior to revelation. This explains why some *mutakallimūn* refuse to resort to textual evidence to support their arguments; revelation carries no intellectual worth in their theological framework. Whenever those Kalām theologians do advance revelation-based arguments in support of their doctrines, they only present it as additional evidence. Others do include them, but only to demonstrate that revelation agrees with their rational arguments and to convince lay Muslims of the truth of Kalām theology.<sup>113</sup> In a similar vein to Ibn Taymiyya’s discussion, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s critique primarily takes the form of polemics, containing both accurate and inaccurate portrayals of Kalām theology. Regarding the inaccuracies, it is incorrect to claim that Kalām theology, and specifically Sunnite Kalām, called reason the foundation of revelation,<sup>114</sup> as both Ibn Abī l-‘Izz and Ibn Taymiyya maintained. Al-Ghazālī has said that the most correct stance regarding the apparent conflict between reason and revelation is to regard both as important foundations. Only the most extreme rationalists adopted reason

<sup>112</sup> See Taqī al-Dīn b. Taymiyya, *Dar’ ta ‘āruḍ al-‘aql wa l-naql*, eds. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim 1/170-171.

<sup>113</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/793.

<sup>114</sup>

as the exclusive foundation for their theological inquiries. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz is also mistaken in asserting that Kalām theologians believe reason contradicts revelation. On the contrary, the *mutakallimūn* deny any contradiction between reason and revelation. Such conflict is merely an illusion, as no such opposition exists.<sup>115</sup> This is an argument that Ibn Abī l-‘Izz himself also supports.

The question of whether Ibn Abī l-‘Izz is correct depends on the interpretation of "foundation" (*aṣl*), and in this regard, traditionalists and kalām theologians have differing perspectives. A figure like al-Ghazālī understands *aṣl* to mean the "primary source of information." Sunnite Kalām theologians consider both reason and revelation as sources after their truth has been ascertained. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz's main accusation against his *mutakallim* opponents is that these theologians consider reason to be revelation's foundation, namely the "principal means of verifying revelation." On the other hand, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz's opponents argue that rejecting reason would entail rejecting revelation altogether. Both al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī believed that reason serves as a means to verify revelation, with al-Ghazālī explicitly stating that rejecting reason would also lead to rejecting revelation.<sup>116</sup> This is the stance that Ibn Abī l-‘Izz opposes when he claims that Kalām theologians prioritise rational principles over revelation. If the verification of revelation's truth relies solely on reason, then reason undeniably serves as its basis.

The final major objection against the use of reason in theology is only discussed briefly in the introduction of the *Sharḥ*. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz holds that reason, independent from the revelation, is unable to know certain religious truths, in particular those related to God's names (*asmāʾ*), attributes (*ṣifāt*), and acts (*afʿāl*).<sup>117</sup> As we will see later, however, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz does believe that mankind is able to attain basic knowledge of God through reason and the primordial disposition (*fiṭra*). This view, while similar to Ḥanafite-Māturīdite epistemology, is likely derived from Ibn Taymiyya, because of its emphasis on the role of the primordial disposition.

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<sup>115</sup> Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī at his Most Rationalist," 120.

<sup>116</sup> Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī at his Most Rationalist," 108ff.

<sup>117</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim, *Al-ṣawāʾiq al-mursala*, ed. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Dakhīl Allāh (Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣima), 1/150-152.

### 3.5. The Proof From Mutual Hindrance (*dalīl al-tamānu* )

As alluded to in the section on allegorical interpretation, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz characterises Kalām theology as engaging in endless, and ultimately, fruitless debates on hypothetical issues that have been entirely imagined by Kalām theologians themselves, without there being any people in the world who actually believe them. This is illustrated by Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s treatment of the *dalīl al-tamānu* ‘ or “proof from mutual hindrance,” which is employed by both Ash‘arites and Māturīdites to negate the existence of multiple deities.<sup>118</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz does not reject the soundness of the proof of mutual hindrance as such, but rather he questions the relevance of the argument. According to Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, there never has been any religious group, Muslim or not, which affirmed the existence of multiple co-equal creators, since the knowledge of its impossibility is imbedded in mankind’s primordial disposition. This is a reflection of his Taymiyyan view of monotheism, which posits that polytheistic cosmologies do not assert the existence of multiple co-equal creators, thereby violating God’s oneness of lordship (*tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya*), but rather engage in worshipping other beings apart from God, which is a violation of God’s oneness of divinity (*tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*). Thus, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz sees the Kalām theologians’ preoccupation with these types of arguments aimed at disproving non-existent beliefs as a pointless activity.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> As formulated by al-Rāzī, the *dalīl al-tamānu* ‘ negates the existence of two deities, under the assumption that both possess an effective power over all possibilities, such as moving or stopping the same body simultaneously (*ḥarakat jism aw sukūnuhu*). In other words, the power of either of the two cannot exceed that of the other. This results in three inconceivable possibilities: that both gods accomplish their will (*murād*), that neither god does, that one of them accomplishes its will, while the other does not. Fakhṛ al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Ḥāshiya ‘alā l-khamsūn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Sa‘īd Qur’ānic verses: “If there had been in the heavens or earth any gods but Him, both heavens and earth would be in ruins”, (Q 21:22), and “ God has never had a child. Nor is there any god beside Him– if there were, each god would have taken his creation aside and tried to overcome the others”, (Q 23:91). Abrahamov also states that Ibn Abī l-‘Izz uses the *dalīl al-tamānu* ‘ to prove God’s oneness. This is correct insofar as Ibn Abī l-‘Izz cites Ibn al-Qayyim’s version of this kalāmīc (1998), 35–36.

<sup>119</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/28; Hannah Christine Erlwein argues that Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī, who God’s oneness of lordship (*tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya*), but also God’s oneness of divinity (*tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*) by negating the existence of two creators, because creation proves not only that God alone is creator, but also that divinity and right of worship must only be ascribed to God. Hannah

### 3.6. Preference for Transmitted Evidence

As discussed earlier, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, despite his Ḥanafite credentials, takes essentially a traditionalist Taymiyyan approach regarding the sources of his religious epistemology that lends special authority to revelation:

How can someone speak about the fundamentals of religion [*uṣūl al-dīn*] when they do not receive it from the Qur’ān and the Sunna, but only receive it from the words of some human being [*fulān*]? And while they claim that they take it from the Qur’ān, they do not receive the exegesis [*tafsīr*] of the Qur’ān from the Apostle’s traditions [*aḥādīth*], nor do they consider them or what the Companions and the Followers said.<sup>120</sup>

While Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, much like Ibn Taymiyya, does not reject reason as such, he does give added authority to the Qur’ān, the Sunna, and the righteous forebears, since “how can one acquire knowledge of the principles (*‘ilm al-uṣūl*) without following what the Apostle brought?”<sup>121</sup> Importantly, he sees revelation not only as the main source of his religious epistemology, he also considers it the primary tool to interpret scripture. This becomes clear when Ibn Abī l-‘Izz criticises those who do not resort to the *ḥadīth* corpus and the statements of the righteous forebears to interpret the Qur’ān. It is also reflected in the sources he uses throughout the commentary to support his views. These tend to be primarily Qur’ānic verses, *ḥadīths*, and statements by the righteous forebears, among whom Abū Ḥanīfa figures prominently.

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz does distinguish, however, between religious knowledge and secular knowledge, when he says that it is possible to acquire knowledge from sources other than revelation in worldly matters (*umūr duniyawiyya*) such as medicine, arithmetic, and agriculture. However, in matters of divine nature (*umūr ilāhiyya*) and religious knowledge [*ma‘ārif dīniyya*], true knowledge is only that which has been derived from revelation.<sup>122</sup>

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Christine Erlwein, “Arguments for the existence of God in classical Islamic thought: a reappraisal of perspectives and discourses” (PhD diss., SOAS, University of London, 2016), 53-54.

<sup>120</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/221.

<sup>121</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/18.

<sup>122</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/230.

Another important reason for Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s preference for revealed sources over rationalist arguments is his belief in the inherent comprehensibility of Islam. According to Ibn Abī l-Izz, Islam, and the revelation that communicates it, are essentially clear and accessible to all:

Islam [...] is clear [*zāhir*] and extremely obvious [*ghāyat al-zuhūr*] to every discerning person [*mumayyiz*], whether they are young or old, eloquent or non-Arabic speakers, intelligent or simple-minded [...] The Qur’ān and the Sunna demonstrate Islam’s clarity and its ease of learning [*zuhūr al-islām wa suhūlat ta’allumihī*].”<sup>123</sup>

This sentiment is further demonstrated by Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s criticism of allegorical interpretation and statements about its redundancy, since ‘every Arab understands it [i.e., revelation] meanings’,<sup>124</sup> and that the theological understanding of children, (old) women, and Bedouins (their lack of intellectual sophistication being obviously implied) is superior to that of the Kalām theologians. For Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, the comprehensibility of the Qur’ān, the Sunna, and the speech of the righteous forebears, therefore, makes the use of rational methods, such as allegorical interpretation, to understand revelation largely redundant. According to Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, this clarity of revelation was intended. When the Apostle Muḥammad introduced religious matters that were unfamiliar to the Arabs, and, hence, had no name in their language, he would use a word whose meaning corresponded to the concept he wished to communicate to his Companions. As examples he gives terms like *ṣalāt* (ritual prayer), *zakāt* (alms tax), *ṣawm* (fasting), *īmān* (faith) and *kufṛ* (unbelief).

Arguably, this belief in the fundamental clarity of revelation extends to Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s interpretation of God’s voluntary attributes (*al-ṣifāt al-ikhtiyāriyya*) in which he largely ascribes to the amodal approach of the traditionalists, commonly referred to as *bi-lā kayf*.<sup>125</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz argues that while Muslims should not delve into nor allegorically interpret the meaning of these attributes, such as ascending the Throne, descending to the earth, being happy or angry, their basic meanings are known (*aṣl ma’nāhu ma’lūm*). This sentiment is also found with Ibn Taymiyya, as well as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) who

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<sup>123</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/787.

<sup>124</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/251.

<sup>125</sup> Hoover, “Ḥanbalī theology,” 4-5.

reportedly said that “God did not reveal any verse but that He wishes [us] to know what He meant by it” (*mā anzala Allāh āya illā wa huwa yuḥibbu an yu‘lama mā arāda bihā*). Any claim to the contrary, namely that the Qur’ān and the Sunna contain vague and ambiguous terms (*alfāz mujmala muḥtamila*) in matters related to the principles of the religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*), implies that God and the Apostle Muḥammad conveyed the revelation in an unclear fashion.<sup>126</sup>

### 3.7. Harmony Between Reason and Revelation

As alluded to earlier, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz aligns closely with Ibn Taymiyyan regarding their belief in the harmony between reason and revelation, although Ibn Abī l-‘Izz never mentions the Ḥanbalite scholar by name. In the vein of Ibn Taymiyya, he seeks to demonstrate that pure reason (*‘aql ṣarīḥ*) and the literal meaning of authentic revelation (*naql ṣaḥīḥ*) can never be in true conflict:

Assertions such as, "Reason contradicts what revelation indicates, and given that reason serves as the foundation of revelation [*al-‘aql aṣl al-naql*], we must prioritise reason," are unwarranted, [since] this would never occur. But if something appears to suggest otherwise, then if the transmitted knowledge is authentic, what is claimed to be rational is actually unknown [*majhūl*]. [...] [For] it is inconceivable for clear reason [*‘aql ṣarīḥ*] and authentic transmission [*naql ṣaḥīḥ*] to contradict each other.<sup>127</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz regards any perceived contradiction between reason and revelation arising from the incorrect use of reason, or a misinterpretation of the revealed text. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz ascribes these errors to the dubious rational premises of the Kalām theologians whom he accuses of only resorting to revelation “for support, not for reliance<sup>128</sup> [...] if it aligns with what they claim reason indicates. However, if it contradicts their preconceived notions, they reject it.”<sup>129</sup> This outlook strongly resembles that of Ibn Taymiyya, as described by el-Tobgui.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/233.

<sup>127</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/227.

<sup>128</sup> “*lil-i‘tidād lā lil-i‘timād*.” This appears to be a Taymiyyan phrase. Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj al-U*

<sup>129</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/258.

<sup>130</sup> El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 6.

### 3.8. The Role of Primordial Disposition (*fiṭra*)

As for the last part of the *naql-‘aql-fiṭra* trinity, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz ascribed to a Taymiyyan understanding of *fiṭra*, or primordial disposition. Ibn Taymiyya presents a nuanced understanding of the *fiṭra*, which El-Tobgui described as the "original normative disposition." Although the *fiṭra* is undeniably innate to human beings in Ibn Taymiyya's perspective, El-Tobgui argues that this term fails to fully capture the strong moral and cognitive normativity ascribed to the *fiṭra* by Ibn Taymiyya. This normativity is derived from its innateness in the human constitution, implanted there by God.<sup>131</sup>

Like Ibn Taymiyya, in Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s thought the primordial disposition is an inborn faculty (*quwwa*) or knowledge strongly related to reason. As is the case with Ibn Taymiyya, determining the exact relationship is difficult. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz frequently uses reason and the primordial disposition together. For example, he says that “the knowledge that the existence of two equal creators is impossible in itself (*li-dhātihī*) is anchored (*mustaqirr*) in the primordial disposition and its falsity is known by pure reason (*ṣarīḥ al-‘aql*).<sup>132</sup> Unlike Ibn Taymiyya, however, he does not seem to suggest that the primordial disposition serves as the foundation for reason, or alternatively, that reason is the foundation of *fiṭra*, an apparent contradiction noted by Jon Hoover.<sup>133</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz asserts that many concepts known through reason are also recognised by the primordial disposition, such as the rational necessity of God’s existence (“There is no doubt that knowledge of affirming the existence of the creator and the necessity of His existence is an innate [*fiṭrī*] and necessary [*ḍarūrī*] matter.”).<sup>134</sup> In contrast, polytheism is deemed as something extraneous (*ḥādith ṭāri’*).<sup>135</sup> Moreover, the primordial disposition encompasses basic rules of thought, such as understanding similarity and difference. Consequently, it is known by the

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<sup>131</sup> El-Tobgui, Ibn Taymiyya, 260.

<sup>132</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/40.

<sup>133</sup> Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism*, 39.

<sup>134</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/77.

<sup>135</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/314.

primordial disposition that God's attributes are fundamentally distinct from those of human beings.<sup>136</sup>

Although Ibn Abī l-‘Izz holds an optimistic view of the primordial disposition's capacity to know God, including knowledge of God beyond His mere existence, this disposition is susceptible to corruption. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz identifies various factors that can potentially corrupt the *fiṭra*, including of satans (“If people were left on their sound primordial disposition and correct rational faculties, there would be no conflict among them. However, the devil casts into some people's minds his delusions and falsehoods”)<sup>137</sup>, imitation (*taqlīd*) (“Every child is born upon the primordial disposition. Then, their parents make them Jewish, Christian, or Magian”)<sup>138</sup>, doubts, specious arguments, and false opinions (“It is the truth [...] witnessed by the sound primordial disposition that has not been altered by doubts, suspicions, and false opinions”).<sup>139</sup> This also explains why Ibn Abī l-‘Izz often not only accuses Kalām theologians of holding wrong views, but also lacking in religious conviction and piety.

Regarding the restoration of the primordial disposition, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz mentions that one of the most effective approaches to attain true knowledge is through the healing of the heart. Reminiscent of Ibn al-Qayyim's discourse on spiritual disease, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz describes anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*) and the negation of God's attributes (*naḫī*) as diseases of the heart.<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, apart from disclosing aspects of Islam that cannot be discerned through the primordial disposition alone, such as the belief in the Last Day (*al-yawm al-ākhar*), God sent messengers and revealed scriptures to restoring the innate knowledge of those whose primordial dispositions had become clouded through false ideas, like the philosophers who rejected their innate knowledge of the reality of the bodily resurrection.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/314-315

<sup>137</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/186.

<sup>138</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/33.

<sup>139</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/172.

<sup>140</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/258.

<sup>141</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/589.

One of the few points where Ibn Abī l-‘Izz and Ibn Taymiyya appear to differ is regarding the existence of an innate knowledge of good and evil. According to Ibn Taymiyya, the primordial disposition also prescribes what is good for humans. In his view, God has disposed humans to want innately, or naturally, what is beneficial and fend off what is detrimental for them.<sup>142</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, on the other hand, asserts that the primordial disposition recognises spiritual benefits and harms, such as the innate good of monotheism and evil of polytheism, but is oblivious in this regard to the morality of worldly customs (*‘ādāt duniyawiyya*), since “you have no knowledge of their corruption or the benefits they may hold for you.”<sup>143</sup>



## CHAPTER IV

### FAITH (*ĪMĀN*)

#### 4.1. Introduction

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz was a jurist affiliated with the Ḥanafīte school of Islamic law, as was his family. Notwithstanding this, he disagreed with the school, both in law as well as theology. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz took different positions on a wide range of issues.

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<sup>142</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy*, 42.

<sup>143</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/315.

These included doctrines and positions characteristically associated with the Ḥanafite-Māturīdites. One of the most significant of these is the Ḥanafite conceptualisation of faith/belief, or *īmān*.<sup>144</sup> Ḥanafite, going back to the writings of Abū Ḥanīfa himself, expressed an understanding of *īmān* that differs from the (later) Sunni mainstream position. Likely for this reason, there is no topic in the *Sharḥ al-‘aqīda al-ṭahāwiyya* where Ibn Abī l-‘Izz engages with Ḥanafite-Māturīdite theology more than in his discussion of *īmān*.

Following the structure of al-Ṭahāwī’s text, and as is customary in many Kalām texts, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz addresses *īmān* primarily in the second half of the commentary. The discussion, however, not located in one particular section but disseminated throughout the work, presumably the result of his desire to adhere to the structure of the *Ṭahāwiyya*. This means that, in order to get a full picture of Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s understanding of *īmān*, it is necessary to move back and forth between different parts of the *sharḥ*.

For this reason, the analysis in this chapter diverges from the order in which Ibn Abī l-‘Izz addresses *īmān* in order to present his different arguments and proofs as a single discussion. He discusses the definition of faith and related disagreements, the identity of Muslims, the effect of sin on faith, the controversy surrounding excommunication, the question of increase and decrease in faith, the meaning of Islam in relation to *īmān*, the debate around qualification in *īmān* (*al-istithnā’*), the meaning of friendship between God and believers (*walāya*), and the question of differentiated ranking in *īmān*. In a spirit of independence characteristic of him, the Ḥanafite Ibn Abī l-‘Izz largely rejects his own school’s position in favour of the Ḥanbalite/traditionalist interpretation, although through a Taymiyyan lens.

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<sup>144</sup> Najah Nadi, “The Nature of Faith: Sa‘d al-Dīn Mas‘ūd ibn ‘Umar al-Taftāzānī (d. 792/1390), *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*” in *Māturīdī Theology: A Bilingual Reader*, ed. Lejla Demiri, Philip Dorroll and Dale J. Correa. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 162fn2, DOI 10.1628/978-3-16-161286-2. Both faith and belief, when used as translations for *īmān* in the context of Islam, pose difficulties. As noted by Najah Nadi, in Christianity faith denotes a state of certitude without the need for evidence. However, in Islamic theology, *īmān* represents a state of certitude and acceptance that is either based on direct knowledge of the proofs or knowledge of someone trustworthy who possesses that knowledge, known as imitation. On the other hand, the term belief is better suited to the Arabic word *i’tiqād*, which primarily refers to acceptance without considering the existence or absence of evidence. Therefore, I have opted to retain the untranslated Arabic term, *īmān*.

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s main aim is to demonstrate that al-Ṭaḥāwī’s and Abū Ḥanīfa’s conception of *īmān* is essentially identical to the traditionalist one. The difference being only semantical. For this reason, most of his criticism is directed towards Ḥanafite-Māturīdite scholars and only occasionally towards al-Ṭaḥāwī as well. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz excludes Abū Ḥanīfa himself, however, from all criticism. Rather, he views Abū Ḥanīfa as a scholar who has expressed the traditionalist conception of *īmān*. Interestingly, whereas Ibn Taymiyya directs his polemic towards the Murji’ites (although he possibly includes Ash‘arite and Māturīdite *mutakallimūn* in this pejorative term as well) in his discussion of *īmān*, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz employs Ibn Taymiyya’s polemic against Murji’ism to criticise the Māturīdites, specifically. As a Ḥanafite and a follower of the “true” creed of Abū Ḥanīfa, he was arguably motivated by a desire to defend “his” imam from his Ḥanafite-Māturīdite colleagues who claim to be the true followers of Abū Ḥanīfa’s creed as well. This is also evidenced by the fact that Ibn Abī l-‘Izz regularly takes statements from Ḥanafite-Māturīdite scholars as a starting point for his critique.

#### 4.2. *Īmān*, Affirmation (*taṣdīq*), and Actions (‘*amal*)

Generally, both traditionalists and Kalām theologians agree on the ‘object’ or items of faith, meaning: What do Muslims have to believe in? To answer this question Muslim scholars, including Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, refer to the Qur’ān, particularly Q 2:285, and the well-known *ḥadīth* of Gabriel, in which the Archangel Gabriel visits the Apostle Muḥammad to question him, among other things, regarding the meaning of faith. While Q 2:285 mentions five objects of *īmān*, omitting predestination (*qadar*), the *ḥadīth* of Gabriel lists the more common six, known as the *arkān* or *uṣūl al-īmān*, or articles/pillars of *īmān*, which are belief in God, His angels, His scriptures, His apostles, the Last Day, and predestination - its good and evil. As mentioned above, traditionalist and Kalām views do not diverge on the question of faith’s objects, but rather regarding the essence of *īmān* (*māhiyyat al-īmān*).<sup>145</sup>

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As mentioned above, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz ascribes to a traditionalist view of *īmān*. His two main reasons for adopting this view are fundamentally traditionalist as well, namely that the traditionalist position aligns with (1) a Taymiyyan reading of the Qur’ānic verses and ḥadīth related to *īmān* and (2) the opinion of the righteous forebears.

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz begins his discussion of *īmān* by providing an overview of the different opinions on *īmān* existent among the various theological schools that arose in the history of Islam, such as the Qadarites, Jahmites, the Murji’ites, early Shī’ites, Mu‘tazilites, the Karrāmites, the Ash‘arites, the Ahl al-Ḥadīth, the early Ḥanafites, and the Ḥanafīte-Māturīdites, who, along with the early Ḥanafites, receive most attention.

As is common in both the traditionalist theological and *Kalām* literature, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz attributes the traditionalist view of *īmān*’s essence to the majority of the righteous predecessors, including the "founders" of three out of the four mainstream Sunni legal schools (Mālik, al-Shāfi‘ī, and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal), the "founder" of another early Sunni legal school, Abū ‘Amr ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Awzā’ī (d. 157/774), the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, such as Ibn Rāhwayh (d. 238/853), and the scholars of Medina (*ahl al-madīna*).<sup>146</sup> Additionally, this understanding is shared by the Zāhirites, as well as a faction among the *Kalām* theologians.<sup>147</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz describes the traditionalist definition of the essence of *īmān* as consisting of three parts: (1) affirmation with the heart (*taṣdīq bi-l-janān*), (2) avowal with the tongue (*iqrār bi-l-lisān*), and (3) action with the limbs (*‘amal bi-l-arkān*), also summarised as “speech and action” (*al-qawl wa l-‘amal*), with “speech” referring to the affirmation of *īmān* in the heart and its avowal with the tongue.<sup>148</sup> Although this definition of *īmān* consists of three parts, it primarily revolves around the understanding of affirmation and actions and their

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<sup>147</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/459; This passage is nearly identical to the one found in Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī’s *Tabṣirat al-adilla*. See, al-Nasafī, *Tabṣirat al-adilla*, 798.

<sup>148</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/459.

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relationship. This is also made clear by the fact that Ibn Abī l-‘Izz scarcely discusses avowal (*iqrār*) in his commentary.

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz argues that two views on *īmān* fall within the broad scope of Sunnism. These are, of course, his own traditionalist one and the early Ḥanafite view, as found in the *Ṭaḥāwiyya*, which defines *īmān* as consisting of two parts: affirmation in the heart and avowal with the tongue, thus excluding action by the limbs. His inclusion of the early Ḥanafite view within Sunnism is suggested by the fact that he refers to it as the position of al-Ṭaḥāwī, Abū Ḥanīfa, and “many of our associates” (*kathīr min aṣḥābinā*). Ibn Abī l-‘Izz excludes the view of the fellow Ḥanafite Abū Maṣū‘ al-Māturīdī from Sunnism, which he describes as affirmation in the heart, while avowal with the tongue is an additional element (*rukṅ zā’id*); not a fundamental one (*laysa bi-aṣlī*). Although Ibn Abī l-‘Izz does not designate al-Māturīdī’s definition as being manifestly corrupt (*fasād zāhir*), as he does describe the Jahmites’ and the Karrāmites’ definition, his frequent criticism of the Ḥanafite-Māturīdītes implies that he believes that al-Māturīdī is incorrect, but only less obviously so than the Jahmites and the Karrāmites.

The reason why Ibn Abī l-‘Izz describes the early Ḥanafite conception of *īmān* as Sunnite is not because it is supported by other authentic evidence or diligent inquiry (*ijtihād*), but rather because the differences between the traditionalist and early Ḥanafite definitions is superficial (*ṣūrī*) and semantic (*lafzī*). According to Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, Abū Ḥanīfa held that actions (of the limbs) are a consequence of the heart’s *īmān* (*lāzimatan li-īmān al-qalb*), rather than a part of *īmān* itself (*juz’ān minhu*). Both conceptions share, however, several beliefs, such as that a grave sinner (*murtakib al-kabīra*) is not an unbeliever, but rather they are under God’s will (*fī mashī’at Allāh*); He punishes them if He wills or pardons them. Both conceptions also share the view that *īmān* is both speech (*qawl*) and action (*‘amal*), meaning that God demands from Muslims three things: that they (1) affirm *īmān* in their hearts, (2) avow it by verbally expressing it, and (3) enact it through the physical performance of the mandatory rituals of worship. The first two fall under the heading of “speech”, while the third falls under “action.” Traditionalists and Ḥanafites also agree that if someone affirms *īmān* in their heart and avows it with their tongue, while refraining from actions, that they are

disobedient to God and His Apostle and exposed to the threat (*al-wa'īd*). This superficial semantic disagreement, says Ibn Abī l-'Izz, does not lead to the corruption of belief (*fasād i 'tiqād*).<sup>149</sup>

Where Ibn Abī l-'Izz does allow for the existence of some disagreement between Abū Ḥanīfa and other early Muslims is regarding the premises from which they reached their opinions. According to Ibn Abī l-'Izz, Abū Ḥanīfa based his view on *īmān*'s lexical meaning (*ḥaqīqat al-īmān lughatan*), in addition to evidence from revelation. Other imāms from among the righteous predecessors, however, based their views on linguistic habits and conventions concerning the use of the term *īmān* (*nazarū ilā ḥaqīqatihi fī 'urf al-shāri'*). According to those imāms, God has added descriptions (*awṣāf*) and conditions (*sharā'it*) to the affirmation (*taṣdīq*) of *īmān*, one of them being action (*'amal*), just as He put conditions on the performance of religious duties, such as the ritual prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage.<sup>150</sup>

Thus, the actual point of dispute (*maḥall al-nizā'*) between traditionalists and Ḥanafites amounts to the question of whether the term (*ism*) *īmān* comprises all that is required of Muslims (i.e., *qawl* and *'amal*) or only one of them, namely *qawl*. In other words, does *īmān* as such only mean affirming *īmān* in one's heart (*taṣdīq*) and avowing it verbally (*iqrār*), while action (*'amal*) is not subsumed under its nominatum (*musammā*)? In that case, when both *qawl* and *'amal* are mentioned in conjunction, it refers to the latter metaphorically (*majāzan*).<sup>151</sup>

In order to refute the Ḥanafite view on *īmān*, Ibn Abī l-'Izz turns his attention to the meaning of affirmation (*taṣdīq*) according to Ḥanafite theologians. He presents the Ḥanafite argument for the exclusion of actions from *īmān* as being funded primarily upon the alleged synonymity of *īmān* and *taṣdīq*. One of the proofs presented by the followers of Abū Ḥanīfa (*aṣḥāb Abī Ḥanīfa*), Ibn Abī l-'Izz says, is Q 12:17: “The Exalted said, telling about the brothers of Joseph: “You will not believe us” (*wa mā anta bi-mu'min lanā*) (Q 12:17). According to the Ḥanafites,

<sup>149</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/462-463.

<sup>150</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/470.

<sup>151</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/462-63.

the word *mu'min* in this context is synonymous with *muṣaddiq*, the present participle of the verbal noun *taṣdīq*, even invoking linguistic consensus on this issue.<sup>152</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz appears to have learned of the Māturīdite position, directly or indirectly, from the work of the Bukharan Māturīdite scholar Nur al-Dīn al-Ṣābūnī’s (d. 580/1184) work on speculative theology *K. al-bidāya min al-kifāya*, since he quotes al-Ṣābūnī verbatim, without mentioning him by name.<sup>153</sup> Likewise, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz rejects the claim found in the *K. uṣūl al-dīn* by the Bukharan Māturīdite scholar Abū l-Yusr al-Bazdawī’s (d. 493/1100) that consensus exists among Arabic grammarians on this issue.<sup>154</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz rejects the claim of consensus among Arabic grammarians.<sup>155</sup> This meaning of the word *īmān*, namely the affirmation in one’s heart of the truth of the revelation conveyed by the Apostle Muḥammad, is obligatory upon every Muslim. Thus, whoever does this is a believer in the eyes of God (*fīmā baynahu wa bayna Allāh*), while avowal (*iqrār*), as mentioned earlier, is a condition for the implementation of the rulings of God’s law pertaining to a person. The opposite of *īmān* is *kufr*, (lit., “to deny”). Because *kufr* clearly occurs in the heart, *īmān*, the opposite of *kufr*, will also occur in the heart. Q 16:106: “With the exception of those who are forced, although their hearts remain firm in faith” indicates that the heart’s role as the seat (*mawḍi‘*) of *īmān*, rather than the tongue. Furthermore, if *īmān* were composed (*murakkab*) of speech and action, it would cease to exist with the loss of one of its parts. The final Ḥanafite argument, as presented by Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, is that in the Qur’ān actions are often conjoined (*‘uṭifa*) with *īmān*, such as the common Qur’ānic phrase: “Those who believe [*āmanū*] and do good deeds [*‘amilū al-ṣāliḥāt*]” (Q 5:93). This phrase is an example of an *‘atf mughāyara*, in which two or more different or opposing words are conjoined, such as ‘water and bread’ or ‘good and evil’. Since this form of conjunction requires

<sup>152</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz appears to have learned of the Ḥanafite position, directly or indirectly, from the Bukharan Ḥanafite scholar Nur al-Dīn al-Ṣābūnī’s (d. 580/1184) work on speculative theology *K. al-bidāya min al-kifāya*, since he cites al-Ṣābūnī verbatim. See, Nūr al-Dīn al-Ṣābūnī, *K. al-bidāya min al-kifāya*, 152; in the *Lisān al-‘Arab* the word *taṣdīq* is also considered synonymous with *īmān*.

<sup>153</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/470-471; Nur al-Dīn al-Ṣābūnī, *K. al-bidāya min al-kifāya*, ed. Fathalla Kholeif (Alexandria: Dār al-Ma‘ārif bi-Miṣr, 1969), 152.

<sup>154</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/472; Abū l-Yusr al-Bazdawī, *K. uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Hans Peter Linss (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li-l-Turāth, 2002), 148. Also found in *Lisān al-Arab*.

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differentiation (*mughāyara*) between the words conjoined, the phrase found in Q 5:93, and other Qur'ānic verses, is another indication that *īmān* does not include actions.<sup>156</sup>

As for Ibn Abī l-'Izz's own theory of affirmation (*taṣdīq*) in support of the traditionalist interpretation of *īmān*, it is mostly derived from Ibn Taymiyya's thought, as found in his *K. al-īmān*, passages of which Ibn Abī l-'Izz cites verbatim. These passages include the scriptural evidence, the authoritative opinions, and linguistic arguments Ibn Taymiyya puts forward in support of his theory, albeit in an abbreviated form. As we will see, Ibn Taymiyya's understanding of *taṣdīq* is "fluid", by which I mean that how *taṣdīq* must be understood depends on the specific context in which *taṣdīq* is being used.

At a basic level, however, it is possible to define *taṣdīq* as the inner structure of the mental act of believing.<sup>157</sup> It involves the affirmation the truth of Muḥammad's apostlehood and, consequently, all that he conveyed from God, such as (true) monotheism (*tawḥīd*), the religion (*dīn*), and the divine law/revelation (*shar'*)<sup>158</sup> in a general fashion (*īmānan 'āmmaṅ mujmalan*).<sup>159</sup> This is what is required of an individual Muslim (*farḍ 'ayn*). Detailed knowledge (*tafṣīlī*) of the Apostle's mission (*risāla*), such as commanding right and forbidding wrong, *jihād*, contemplation of the Qur'ān, knowledge of the *sharī'a*, is an obligation upon the general Muslim community (*farḍ kifāya*).<sup>160</sup> In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya's (and Ibn Abī l-'Izz's) conception is nearly identical to the early Ḥanafites and the Kalām theologians. Within the Taymiyyan conception, however, *taṣdīq* is more than a mental act. On the basis of revelation and authoritative opinion, Ibn Taymiyya argues that actions may also be seen as a form of *taṣdīq*. Nonetheless, he argues that *īmān* and *taṣdīq* are different from each other. By separating *taṣdīq* from *īmān*, Ibn Taymiyya seeks to open the way for introducing actions into the definition of *īmān*.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/470-483.

<sup>157</sup> Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief*, 93-94.

<sup>158</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/172.

<sup>159</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/7.

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<sup>161</sup> Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief*, 166-179.

First, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz rejects the Qur’ānic and philological argument of the Ḥanafites, who cite Q 12:17 to prove that *taṣḍīq* is synonymous with *īmān*: ‘You will not believe us, though we are telling the truth’ (*wa mā anta bi-mu`min lanā wa law kunnā ṣādiqīn*). Here the Qur’ān seemingly uses *mu`min* (the present participle of *īmān*) as a synonym for *taṣḍīq*. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz seeks to refute the Ḥanafites through a linguistic counterargument taken word for word from Ibn Taymiyya’s *K. al-īmān* (7/289-298), where it is originally directed against the M

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This counterargument holds that pre-Islamic Arabic language custom contradicts the claim of the Ḥanafites, because the non-prepositional transitive verb *ṣaddaqa* (from which *taṣḍīq* is the verbal noun) operates differently from the non-prepositional form of *āmana*, from which the word *īmān* is derived. *Ṣaddaqa* is used to affirm the truth of an informant’s (*mukhbīr*) statement, while *āmana* requires the preposition *lām* to carry a similar (but not synonymous) meaning. However, even then, the meaning of *āmana li* differs from *īmān* as ‘faith’ or ‘belief’ as Ḥanafites claim, because *āmana li* refers to affirming the truthfulness of an informant as a person, whereas *īmān* (as commonly understood in Islamic theology) involves affirming the truth of the information (*mukhbār bihi*) related by the informer. To arrive at this second meaning the particle *bā`* has to be added to *āmana*, as in *īmān bi-llāh* (faith in God). As evidence for this, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz (as articulated by Ibn Taymiyya) cites Qur’ānic verses that demonstrate the difference between *āmana li* and *āmana bi*, such as Q 10:83, which tells of the refusal of the Israelites to believe Moses’s rebuttal of Pharaoh’s sorcerers: “But no one believed in Moses (*fa-mā āmana li-mūsā*)” and Q 9:61: “He believes in God (*yu`min bi-llāh*) and trusts the believers (*yu`min li-l-mu`minīn*)”. These verses are cited to demonstrate that the form of *āmana* that most closely resembles *ṣaddaqa*, namely *āmana li*, does not apply to those objects associated with *īmān* in the sense of faith or belief, such as the ones found in the aforementioned *ḥadīth* of Gabriel. As for the Ḥanafite Murji`ite counterargument that the grammatically correct phrase *mā anta bi-muṣaddiq lanā*” (You are not going to believe in us), which, like Q 12:17

<sup>162</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū` al-fatāwā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Qāsim (Medina: King

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(*ma anta bi-mu'min lanā*), also contains the *lām*, proves the synonymy of *taṣḍīq* and *īmān*, Ibn Abī l-'Izz replies that this is refuted by basic knowledge of Arabic grammar. Rather than being connected to the verb *ṣaddaqa* here, this preposition functions to strengthen (*taqwiya*) the participle *muṣaddiq*.<sup>163</sup>

Then, Ibn Abī l-'Izz offers another philological argument, regarding the context in which *taṣḍīq*, *īmān*, and their related verbs are employed, to demonstrate their dissimilarity. According to Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *taṣḍīq* is used to affirm the authenticity of information regardless of whether the person receiving said information witnessed the event or matter related by the informer (*'an shāhid aw ghayb*). To use an example offered by Ibn Abī l-'Izz: whether the informer says, 'The sky is above us', which every person can directly observe, or whether they relate an event not witnessed by the person being informed, the verb *ṣaddaqa* is used to affirm the truthfulness of their report. This is not possible with *āmana*, however, which can only be used with regard to reports about events that occurred or matters that exist outside the view of the report's recipient, either because of geographical distance or because the reported event or matter is only accessible to the informer, like a prophet who tells of an unseen realm (*ghayb*). This is because the word *īmān* is derived from *amn*, meaning 'security', 'trust', and 'to become tranquil in heart'. This implies, according to Ibn Abī l-'Izz, that the informer has to be trusted or believed by those informed (*i'timān*) concerning the truth of their report, which is not the case with reports that relate universally observable phenomena, such as the sky being above us or the rising of the sun. Hence, contrary to the Ḥanafite claim, the meaning of *taṣḍīq* and *īmān* cannot be synonymous, because of the difference in their application.<sup>164</sup>

Ibn Abī l-'Izz's third argument against the synonymy of *taṣḍīq* and *īmān* rests on the absence of a shared antonym or *ḍidd*. For words to be synonymous they must also share the same antonym. After all, if the meaning of two words is the same, then the opposite meaning of these two words has to be the same as well.

<sup>163</sup> Here Ibn Abī l-'Izz possibly refers to the *lām al-tabayīn*, that clarifies what the participle refers to (*al-mad'uww lahu bihi*), thereby "strengthening" it. See, Abū l-Qāsim al-Zajjājī, *K. al-lāmāt*,

<sup>164</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/470-474; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' al-fatāwā*, 7/291 and 7/680.

Therefore, instead of juxtaposing *taṣḍīq* and *īmān*, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz contrasts their opposites to demonstrate the semantic disparity between *taṣḍīq* and *īmān*. While the antonym of *taṣḍīq* is *takdhīb* (denial), the opposite meaning of *īmān* is *kufr* (unbelief), which may carry the meaning of *takdhīb*, but is not limited to that meaning. Rather, it is something worse, namely a form of rejection with hostility (*mu‘ādāt*), hatred (*ibghād*), and opposition (*mukhālafā*). Hence, a person is able to believe in the truthfulness of an informer, such as a prophet, but still reject following them and instead oppose them. In other words, *kufr* may be a form of *takdhīb* in one situation and opposition and hostility without *takdhīb* in another. Thus, if *kufr*, the antonym of *īmān*, is not synonymous with *takdhīb*, the antonym of *taṣḍīq*, then *īmān* and *taṣḍīq* cannot possibly mean the same thing because they have different antonyms. This fact entails that *īmān* cannot consist of mere *taṣḍīq*, but rather *taṣḍīq* has to be accompanied by agreement (*muwāfaqa*) and compliance (*inqiyād*) in order to be considered *īmān*.

After presenting this (somewhat reluctant) semantic argument against the synonymy of *īmān* and *taṣḍīq*, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz turns to the *ḥadīth* corpus. Even if the Ḥanafite claim about the synonymy of *īmān* and *taṣḍīq* is true, he speculates, then the traditionalists’ argument for the inclusion of works still stands, because the Ḥanafite conception of *taṣḍīq* as a purely inward act is contradicted by the *ḥadīth*: “The eyes commit adultery by gazing, the ears by listening, the tongue by speaking, the hands by embracing, the legs by walking, the heart through yearning and desiring, while the genitals may bring it about or prevent it (*yusaddiqu dhālika al-farju wa yukadhdhibuhu*).” This narration demonstrates, according to Ibn Abī l-‘Izz that actions are a form of *taṣḍīq* and *takdhīb* in the sense that they affirm or deny a person’s intentions, disproving the Ḥanafite claim that *taṣḍīq* is a solely mental act.

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz also cites a statement ascribed to al-Ḥasan al-Basrī (d. 110/728), a prominent figure among the second generation of pious forebears (*tābi‘ūn*), in support of the notion that works are a form of *taṣḍīq*: “Faith is neither

pretentiousness (*tahallī*) nor mere wishing (*tamannī*), but it settles (*waqara*) in the heart and is affirmed by actions (*ṣaddaqaṭhu*).<sup>165</sup>

To conclude, if *taṣḍīq* is *īmān*, then it would be a specific *taṣḍīq* (*taṣḍīq makhṣūṣ*), just as the ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*) is a specific kind of prayer (*du‘ā*). This is not an alteration of revelation’s signature clarity (*bayān*), however. For God has not commanded Muslims to have absolute *īmān* (*īmān muṭlaq*), but rather, a specific *īmān* (*īmān khāṣṣ*). So, the *taṣḍīq*, that is synonymous with *īmān*, in its lowest form (*adnā aḥwālīhi*), is to be a type of general *taṣḍīq* (*taṣḍīq ‘amm*) that does not exactly conform (*muṭābiq*) to *taṣḍīq* (in general (*‘umūm*) and specific (*khuṣūṣ*) instances) in all instances, without changing the clear language of revelation (*bayān*). Instead, *īmān* as found in revelation (*kalām al-shāri‘*), is composed of both general and specific aspects. To illustrate this, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz gives the example of human beings (*insān*) being rational animals (*ḥayawān nāṭiq*), because they share a general *ḥayawāniyya* (animality) with non-human animals, but also differ from them through a specific characteristic called reason. So, this particular *taṣḍīq* (*taṣḍīq makhṣūṣ*) that is synonymous with *īmān* has implicates (*lawāzim*) which form part of the meaning of the word *taṣḍīq* when it is used absolutely (*muṭlaq*) as opposed to a conditional sense (*muqayyad*), because the absence of the implicate (*lāzim*) indicates the absence of the implicant (*malzūm*). Thus, according to Ibn Abī l-‘Izz only a semantic dispute (*nizā‘ lafẓī*) remains, namely: are actions included in *īmān* or is it a necessary sequel to *īmān*.

### 4.3. The Increase and Decrease of Īmān

Another point of difference between Ḥanafite and traditionalist theologians addressed by Ibn Abī l-‘Izz is the question whether *īmān* is able to increase and decrease. Unlike many other debates, such as the alleged synonymy of *īmān* and *taṣḍīq*, the question of *īmān*’s quantitative increase and decrease is not strictly divided along Kalām and traditionalist lines. While the Ḥanafites hold that *īmān* is unchanging, both traditionalist and Ash‘arite theologians argue that *īmān* is variable and increases and decreases (*al-ziyāda wa l-nuqṣān*) among different

<sup>165</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/273; Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief*, 168-169.

believers and within the heart of a single person over time. Rather surprisingly considering the prominence of this question in Ḥanafite-Māturīdite scholarship, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s discussion is very brief. He has limited this section mainly to mentioning the Qur’ānic verses, *ḥadīths*, and authoritative statements that support the traditionalist position, all collected by Ibn Abī l-‘Izz himself with the exception of two passages taken from Ibn Taymiyya’s *K. al-īmān*.

As mentioned above, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s argument for the increase and decrease of *īmān* is entirely based on transmitted evidence, namely the Qur’ān, Sunna, and opinions of the righteous forebears.

As for evidence for the increase of *īmān* in the Qur’ān, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz includes Q 48:4: “It was He who made His tranquillity descend into the hearts of the believers, to add faith to their faith” (*li-yazdādū īmānan ma‘a īmānihim*), but also Q 19:76 “God gives more guidance to those who are guided” (*wa yazīd Allāh alladhīna ihtadaw hudan*), interpreting guidance (*hudā*) to mean *īmān*.<sup>166</sup>

Evidence in the Qur’ān for the decrease of *īmān* Ibn Abī l-‘Izz finds in Q 3:167: “On that day they were closer to disbelief than belief” and Q 9:124-125: “When a sura is revealed, some [hypocrites] say, ‘Have any of you been strengthened in faith by it?’ It certainly does strengthen the faith of those who believe and they rejoice, but, as for the perverse at heart, each new sura adds further to their perversity. They die disbelieving.”

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz mentions the Ḥanafite scholar Abū l-Layth al-Samarqandī (d. 373/983), who in his exegesis of Q 9:124 relates a *ḥadīth* on the authority of Abū Hurayra to support the Ḥanafite view that *īmān* is fixed: “‘A delegation from Thaḳīf came to God’s Apostle – God bless him and give him peace – and said, ‘O God’s Apostle, does *īmān* increase and decrease?’ He replied, ‘No, *īmān* is complete [*mukammal*] in the heart. Its increase is in goodness, and its decrease is

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<sup>166</sup> The other Qur’ānic verses are: “[Their] faith increases [*zādahum īmānan*] when His revelations are recited to them” (Q 8:2), “And those who believe will have their faith increased” (*wa yazdāda alladhīna āmanū īmānan*) (Q 74:31), “Those whose faith only increased [*fa-zādahum īmānan*] when people said, ‘Fear your enemy: they have amassed a great army against you,’ and who replied, ‘God is enough for us: He is the best protector’” (Q 3:173).

in unbelief.”<sup>167</sup> In response, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz cites his teacher Ibn Kathīr who rejected the authenticity of the *ḥadīth*, questioning the quality of the *isnād* and the reliability of the *ḥadīth*’s transmitters, among them the aforementioned Ḥanafīte scholar Abū Muṭī‘ al-Balkhī (d. 199/814), who composed the *Al-fiqh al-absaṭ*.<sup>168</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz then cites authentic *ḥadīths* in support of the view that *īmān* quantitatively varies, such as the *ḥadīth* that describes women as deficient in intellect and religion (*nuqṣān al-‘aql wa l-dīn*), as well as the famous *ḥadīth*: "None of you truly believes until I am dearer to him than his children, parents, and all people." Ibn Abī l-‘Izz argues that these narrations deny the Ḥanafīte claim that *īmān* is fixed and complete in all Muslims. He also mentions *ḥadīths* mentioning *īmān*’s branches and the Apostle’s intercession as reinforcing the traditionalist and Ash‘arite position.<sup>169</sup>

The last section of this discussion, mentioning the opinions of the righteous forebears regarding the variability of *īmān*, is derived from Ibn Taymiyya’s *K. al-īmān*. Here Ibn Taymiyya mentions a narration that states that the third caliph ‘Umar used to say to his companions: “Let us increase in faith," and they would remember God.”<sup>170</sup>

#### 4.4. The Relationship Between Islam and *Īmān*

Unlike the debate surrounding the increase and decrease of *īmān*, the question of whether Islam and *īmān* are synonymous or separate concepts once more sets Kalām theologians against their traditionalist colleagues. The former argues that the meaning of Islam and *īmān* is identical, while the latter holds that Islam and *īmān* differ substantially. According to Kalam theologians, there is a mutual concomitance (*talāzum*) between *īmān* and Islam in a scriptural (*shar‘ī*) sense, even though they are semantically different. The uniformity of Islam and *īmān* is founded on the aforementioned notion that *īmān* is synonymous with the

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<sup>167</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/479-480; Abū l-Layth al-Samarqandī, *Tafsīr al-samarqandī*, 2/99.

<sup>168</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/480.

<sup>169</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/481-482.

<sup>170</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/481-482.

affirmation (*taṣḍīq*).<sup>171</sup> As formulated by the Eastern Ḥanafite theologian Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114):

If it is known that *īmān* is affirmation [*taṣḍīq*], then it is [also] known that *īmān* and Islam are one thing [*shay’ wāḥid*]. These two terms are synonymous [*asmā’ mutarādifa*], so every believer is a Muslim and every Muslim is a believer [*kullu mu‘min muslim wa kullu muslim mu‘min*]. That is because *īmān* is a term which denotes that the testimony of reason, Qur’ānic verses, and reports affirms [*taṣḍīq shahādat al-‘uqūl wa l-āyāt wa l-āthār*] God’s oneness and that to Him belongs creation and command, without partner. Islam, on the other hand, is the submission of man’s entire self [*islām al-mar’i nafsihi bi-kulliyatihā*], and likewise, everything else, in worship of God [*bi-l-‘ubūdiyya lillāh*], without partner. Thus, both mean the same thing [*tarīq al-murād fihimā ‘alā wāḥid*].<sup>172</sup>

The uniformity of *īmān* and Islam rests upon the Kalām notion that *īmān* is synonymous with *taṣḍīq*. As mentioned earlier, *taṣḍīq* involves the mental affirmation of the revelation conveyed by the Apostle Muḥammad, which contains God’s commandments (*awāmir*, sing. *amr*) and prohibitions (*nawāhin*, sing. *nāhiya*). Islam, on the other hand, is defined as obedience (*inqiyād*) and submission (*istislām*) to God, which is only realised (*yataḥaqqaq*) through the acceptance (*qubūl*) of God’s commandments and prohibits as conveyed by the Apostle. Hence, it is inconceivable (*lā yutaṣawwar*) that a person affirms the truth of revelation while rejecting the commandments and prohibitions contained in it. Just as it is inconceivable that someone accepts God’s commandments and prohibitions found in revelation but does not affirm the veracity of that same revelation in which these commandments and prohibitions are mentioned.<sup>173</sup> This is what Sunnite Kalām theologians refer to when they say that every believer is a Muslim and every Muslim is a believer.

In other words, the scriptural (*shar‘ī*) meaning of *īmān* (i.e., Islam) encompasses both the linguistic meaning of *īmān* (i.e., *taṣḍīq*) and Islam (i.e., submission), while the scriptural meaning of Islam (i.e., *īmān*) also encompasses both the linguistic meaning of *īmān* and Islam. Thus, the scriptural meaning of *īmān* and Islam is identical.

<sup>171</sup> Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat*, 817.

<sup>172</sup> Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat*, 817.

<sup>173</sup> Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat*, 817-820; Sa‘d al-Dīn al-Taftazānī, *Sharḥ al-‘aqā‘id al-*

The traditionalist position, as formulated by Ibn Abī l-‘Izz diverges from the Kalām one. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz argues that revelation overwhelmingly supports the traditionalist thesis that *īmān* and Islam are different. It is, therefore, clear, he says, that whoever equates *īmān* and Islam opposes the Qur’an and Sunna to which Muslims always must turn. Anticipating Kalām theologians’ arguments for the opposite view, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz says the texts of revelation may initially appear to contradict each other, in actuality, they can be reconciled with one another (*al-sha`n fī al-tawfīq*).<sup>174</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz argues that the main difference between *īmān* and Islam is that *īmān* concerns the inward (*bāṭin*) aspects of religion, namely the five principles (*al-uṣūl al-khamsa*),<sup>175</sup> while Islam concerns the outward (*ẓāhir*) ones. This belief is primarily derived from the famous *ḥadīth* of Gabriel in which the religion (*al-dīn*) is explained as consisting of three things: Islam, *īmān*, and *iḥsān*. As the most important part of religion, *iḥsān* stands at the top of a hierarchy at the bottom of which is Islam, with *īmān* mediating between the two. He describes *iḥsān* as being the most comprehensive (*a‘amm*) but having the fewest number of practitioners, followed by *īmān* and Islam.<sup>176</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz also cites Ibn Taymiyya’s evidence for the dissimilarity of *īmān* and Islam from Q 49:14: “The desert Arabs say, ‘We have faith.’ [Prophet], tell them, ‘You do not have faith. What you should say instead is, ‘We have submitted,’ for faith has not yet entered your hearts.’” According to Ibn Taymiyya, this verse indicates that a person can be a Muslim, while lacking *īmān* (*laysa bi-mu‘min kāmil al-īmān*), because if *īmān* and Islam were identical, then God would not have ordered the desert Arabs to say, “We have submitted” [*aslamnā*], as they would have been referred to as unbelievers instead. Likewise, the Apostle Muḥammad denied the *īmān* of Muslims while they are engaging in unlawful killing, adultery, robbery, and fraud. This, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz says, refutes the criticism of those who say that if Islam referred to outward things (*umūr ẓāhira*), it would be possible for their religion to be accepted on the basis of nothing other than those

<sup>174</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/493.

<sup>175</sup> Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief*, 57-59.

<sup>176</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/487-494.

outward acts, but not the *īmān* of a sincere person (*īmān al-mukhlis*).<sup>177</sup> Although he does not mention the source of this criticism, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz almost certainly refers to Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī’s *Kalām* critique of the traditionalist position. According to Abū l-Mu‘īn, the desert Arabs in Q 49:14 were hypocrites (*ahl al-nifāq*), who claimed to have *īmān* to avoid ‘the disgrace of the sword’ [*ma‘arrat al-sayf*] at the hands of the Muslims. Moreover, God commanding the desert Arabs to say, “We have submitted” does not refer to the type of Islam mentioned in Q 3:85 “If anyone seeks a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from them”. Rather, it denotes a military surrender by the unbelieving desert Arabs to Muslim forces. Otherwise, if the traditionalist thesis were to be true, and the desert Arabs’ religion (*dīn*) was limited to the outward acts of Islam mentioned in the *ḥadīth* of Gabriel, which they obeyed and accepted, then only the outward Islam of the hypocrites should be valid in God’s eyes, while the *īmān* of a sincere person must be rejected.<sup>178</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz refers to the relationship between Islam and *īmān* as being similar to the double testimony of faith (*shahādatān*). In essence, they are two different things; the testimony to Muḥammad’s prophethood is not the same as the testimony to God’s oneness, yet they are related in meaning (*ma‘nan*) and ruling (*ḥukm*) as one thing. Here Ibn Abī l-‘Izz refers to a rule often used by Muslim scholars to describe certain terms as having different meanings when conjoined and being synonymous when separated (*idhā ijtama‘ā iftaraqā wa-idhā iftaraqā ijtama‘ā*),<sup>179</sup> such as *birr* (righteousness) and *taqwā* (piety), *kufṛ* (unbelief) and *nifāq* (hypocrisy), or *faqīr* (poor) and *miskīn* (needy). Similar is case with Islam and *īmān*, says Ibn Abī l-‘Izz. One cannot have *īmān* without Islam, nor Islam without *īmān*. A person cannot be a believer without having Islam to actualise their faith, and a Muslim’s Islam cannot be realised without having *īmān*.<sup>180</sup>

For the refutation of the Ḥanafites, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz again cites a passage from Ibn Taymiyya’s *K. al-īmān*. Since the Ḥanafite argument for the uniformity of *īmān*

<sup>177</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/491-492.

<sup>178</sup> Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī, *Tabṣirat*, 819-820.

<sup>179</sup> Hussein Ali Abdulsater, *Shi‘i Doctrine, Mu‘tazili Theology: al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā and Imami Discourse* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 12.

<sup>180</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/490.

and Islam rests primarily on the assumption of the synonymy of *īmān* and *taṣḍīq*, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s criticism rests partly upon the traditionalist rejection of *taṣḍīq* as a synonym for *īmān* on linguistic grounds. He also mentions Qur’ānic verses that appear to imply the dissimilarity of *īmān* and Islam, such as Q 33:35 where the terms Muslim and believer (*mu’min*) are mentioned separately: “For men and women who are devoted to God [*al-muslimīn wa l-muslimāt*]- believing men and women [*al-mu’minīn wa l-mu’mināt*] [...] - God has prepared forgiveness and a rich reward.” Since the above verse proves the dissimilarity of *īmān* and Islam when mentioned together, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz returns to the example of the double testimony of faith (*shahādatān*) to demonstrate the connectedness of *īmān* and Islam:

Consider the testimony of *īmān*, for the Prophet – God bless him and give him peace – said, “I have been commanded to fight against people until they testify that there is no deity but God.” [...] If they had [only] said, “There is no deity but God” but deny [Muḥammad’s] prophethood [*risāla*], then do not deserve protection [‘iṣma], rather, they must say, ‘There is no god but Allah’ while upholding its truth [i.e., Muḥammad’s prophethood]. The one who truly stands by ‘There is no deity but God’ will not truly do so unless they affirm in [Muḥammad’s] prophethood. Likewise, whoever testifies to Muḥammad’s prophethood must testify to God’s oneness.<sup>181</sup>

Within the *ḥadīth* corpus Ibn Abī l-‘Izz finds evidence against the Ḥanafites in a report about a man who attested to his friend’s *īmān*, to which the Apostle Muḥammad replied, “You should rather say that he is a Muslim,” and he repeated these words three times. Thus, the Apostle Muḥammad affirmed a man’s Islam, but did not affirm his *īmān*.<sup>182</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz again seeks to present Abū Ḥanīfa as an exponent of traditionalist theology. According to Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, reports about Abū Ḥanīfa make it clear that the objections from later Ḥanafite-Māturīdite against the traditionalist position on the relationship between *īmān* and Islam did not originate from Abū Ḥanīfa himself, but rather from his followers. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz mentions a report related by al-Ṭaḥāwī in another work about a debate between Abū Ḥanīfa and Ḥammād b. Zayd al-Azraq (d. 179/795), a prominent Basran traditionist, about *īmān* and Islam. When Ḥammād related a *ḥadīth* to Abū Ḥanīfa about which part of Islam

<sup>181</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/492.

<sup>182</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/493.

is best, he added, 'Do you not see that he [i.e., the Apostle Muḥammad] was asked which part of Islam is best, and in reply he said *īmān*, and then made emigration (*hijra*) and jihad a part of *īmān*.'” When Abū Ḥanīfa remained silent, and some of his students asked why he did not respond to Ḥammād, Abū Ḥanīfa said, 'How should I respond when he is telling me about this from God’s Apostle?’<sup>183</sup>



## CHAPTER V

### THE QUR’ĀN AND THE ATTRIBUTE OF SPEECH (*ṢIFAT AL-KALĀM*)

#### 5.1. Introduction

The debate regarding God's speech, known as *kalām Allāh*, and its manifestation through the Qur’ān, sparked intense discussions between rationalists of various

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<sup>183</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/494.

stripes and traditionalist scholars, notably the Ḥanbalites. The central focus of this debate was whether the Qur'ān, being God's speech, should be understood as an inherent attribute of God's essence and consequently eternal (*qadīm*), or if it should be seen as distinct from God's essence, implying its contingency and temporal origin (*muhdath*), implying that the Qur'ān is created (*makhlūq*).<sup>184</sup>

The Mu'tazilite school strongly argued that the Qur'an was a creation of God, while the Sunnite scholars maintained that it was uncreated. The Mu'tazilites supported their position by reasoning that the Qur'ān was subject to God and could thus impossibly be coeternal with Him. On the other hand, Sunnite scholars cited various Qur'ānic verses, *ḥadīths*, and authoritative opinions of the righteous to assert that God has always spoken and known the Qur'ān, implying its pre-existence before creation. These tensions reached their height in 218/833 when the Abbasid caliph al-Mu'taṣim, whose predecessor al-Ma'mūn (d. 218/833) had adopted Mu'tazilism as the state doctrine, implemented an inquisition (*miḥna*) in a failed attempt to force traditionalist scholars to affirm createdness of the Qur'ān. The Inquisition came to an end in 237/851, but its impact was profound. It contributed to the consolidation of the rising Sunnite resistance against Mu'tazilism and cemented opposition to Mu'tazilite doctrines as a fundamental principle of Sunnite Islam.<sup>185</sup>

The Mu'tazilites argued that God's words in the Qur'ān are presented as expressions of a sensory language, such as the statement "We made it an Arabic Qur'an" (Q 43:3). Despite its complexity, the language of the Qur'ān is subject to hearing, sight, and recitation, while scholars can study it on the basis human linguistic, grammatical, and logical tools. According to this view, God's attributes and names are part of a "spatial-temporal idiomatic structure" with complex meanings that can be understood by human beings. The attributes and names are considered to be inherent to the essence of God, although the essence itself

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<sup>184</sup> El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 34-35.

<sup>185</sup> Khalid Blankinship, "The early creed," in *The Cambridge Companion to Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 49.

remains veiled in its transcendence. Ultimately, human reason can only apprehend a portion of what can be expressed about divinity.<sup>186</sup>

On the other hand, the Ḥanbalites held that God's revelation is meant to be recited, and its full meaning cannot be exhausted by interpretations. The essential nature of the attributes is unknowable and human beings can only affirm their existence based on their mention in the Qur'ān. Nevertheless, many believers are encouraged to make a pious effort to understand their significance.<sup>187</sup>

By asserting that all sensory phenomena are created, Sunnite Kalām theology occupied a middle ground between Mu'tazilism and Ḥanbalism. This position holds that what is recited, heard, read, and copied from God's speech is created, without saying that the Qur'ān itself is a 'creature' (*makhlūq*). Thus, the sensible pronunciation (*lafziyya*) in the recitation (*qirā'a*) of God's words is considered created, while God's speech, as what is recited (*maqrū'*), is deemed uncreated. This perspective allows the affirmation of God's attributes without reducing them to His essence or separating them from it, which the Ḥanbalites accused the Mu'tazilites of, and preserving God's oneness without undermining it with a semblance of multiplicity, which the Mu'tazilites, in turn, accused Ḥanbalites. This departure from the Mu'tazilite refutation of the reality of God's attributes seeks to avoid anthropomorphism. However, the Sunnite *mutakallimūn*, in general, tended to adhere broadly to the Ḥanbalite creed, while being moderately open to rational discussions in its defence. Ḥanbalite scholars typically affirm that the Qur'an is not created and caution against considering it, or its utterance (*lafz*) as created, deeming such a belief as disbelief. For example, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal argued against the idea of something other than God saying to Moses, "I am your Lord," because of the Ḥanbalite belief that God's speech is manifested through an uncreated letter (*ḥarf*) and voice (*ṣawt*). The Ḥanbalite reject, in this regard, the Sunnite *Kalāmīc* claim that the sensible pronunciation (*lafziyya*) of the Qur'ān is created. The Ḥanbalites prioritise the literal meanings of the Qur'ān, but also emphasise the importance of interpreting them based on the *ḥadīth* corpus and the

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<sup>186</sup> Nader El-Bizri, "God: essence and attributes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 126.

<sup>187</sup> El-Bizri, "God: essence and attributes," 124-125.

opinions of the righteous predecessors.<sup>188</sup> Ibn Taymiyya advocated the doctrine of the uncreated nature of the Qur'ān, not its eternity (*qidam*). According to Madelung, Ibn Taymiyya's view is closer to the pre-*mihna* traditionalists.<sup>189</sup> Travis Zadeh has nuanced Madelung's view. According to Zadeh, Ibn Taymiyya argues on multiple occasions that the righteous forebears never explicitly stated the eternal nature (*qadīm*) of God's speech. Instead, according to Taymiyya, the righteous forebears asserted the Qur'ān's uncreatedness (*ghayr makhlūq*). Zadeh argues, however, that Ibn Taymiyya acknowledges that the uncreatedness of divine speech implies its eternity. In this regard, he maintains, although with certain qualifications, the eternity of God's speech and that the Qur'an embodies His speech.<sup>190</sup>

## 5.2. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz Position

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz discussion of the nature of the Qur'ān and God's speech is highly original in terms of its composition. Unlike other sections of the *Sharḥ al-‘aqīda al-tahāwiyya*, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz mostly wrote it himself, rather than resorting to other scholars' texts. He did, however, include passages from the works of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya.<sup>191</sup> Similar to Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī's *Tabṣirat al-adilla*, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz begins his discussion with a refutation of the various Mu‘tazilite views regarding God's speech and the Qur'ān and their objections against the opinions of the traditionalists. The middle part is dedicated to expounding the correct traditionalist position, while the last section contains a refutation of the Sunnite Kalām theologians, particularly the Māturīdites.

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz writes that generally all Sunnites, including the adherents of the four *madhhabs* and the righteous forebears, agree that God's speech is uncreated. They

<sup>188</sup> El-Bizri, "God: essence and attributes," 125-127.

<sup>189</sup> Wilferd Madelung, "The Controversy on the Creation of the Koran," *Orientalia Hispanica sive studia F.M. Pareja octogenario dicta* 1, no. 1 (1974): 512-513.

<sup>190</sup> Travis Zadeh, "Fire Cannot Harm It': Mediation, Temptation, and the Charismatic Power of the Qur'ān," *Journal of Qur'ānic Studies* 10, no. 2 (2008), 62.

<sup>191</sup> These are Ibn Taymiyya's (1) *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawiyya*, (2) *al-Mas'ala al-miṣriyya fī l-Qur'ān*, (3) *al-Risāla al-madaniyya*, (4) *al-Risāla al-kaylāniyya*, (5) *al-Qur'ān kalām Allāh haqīqatan*, (6) *al-Qur'ān al-‘Azīm kalām Allāh*, (7) *Al-tis'īniyya*, (8) *al-Tibyān fī nuzūl al-qur'ān*, K. *al-īmān*, (10) *Dar' al-ta'arūḍ al-‘aql wa l-naql*, and (11) *Mas'alat al-aḥruf allatī anzalaha Allāh ‘alā banī ādam* and Ibn al-Qayyim's (1) *Mukhtaṣar al-ṣawā‘iq al-mursala* and (2) *Ḥādī al-arwāḥ ilā bilād al-afrāḥ*.

also agree that this doctrine is one of the fundamental principles of theology (*uṣūl al-dīn*). Later Sunnite scholars, however, descended into dispute about the nature of God's speech. Is it an undifferentiated meaning subsisting in His essence (*ma'nā wāḥid qā'im bi-l-dhāt*)? Does it consist of letters and sounds through which God speaks after which He stops speaking? Has He always been speaking whenever He wills, however He wills, and whenever He wills, and that God's speech is eternal as a class (*naw'*).<sup>192</sup> The author of this creed, however, Abū Ja'far al-Ṭaḥāwī, however, is one of the scholars who have taken the correct stance regarding the nature of the Qur'ān. Here Ibn Abī l-'Izz again demonstrates his Taymiyyan influences, when he says that the view of *ahl al-sunna wa l-jamā'a* is grounded in the teachings of the Qur'ān, the Sunna, the example of the righteous forebears, correct rational faculties (*'uqūl mustaqīma*) and the sound primordial disposition (*fiṭra salīma*).<sup>193</sup>

Among Muslims (*ahl al-qibla*) as a whole, however, the dispute (*nizā'*) is more profound. The point of disagreement is whether the Qur'ān is created by God, as held by the Mu'tazilites, or whether it is His speech which He has spoken, and which subsist in His essence. Ibn Abī l-'Izz leaves no doubt that the Mu'tazilites are misguided and belong to those sects who have introduced heretical innovations to Islam (*ahl al-bida'*). According to the Ḥanafite jurist, the Mu'tazilites acknowledge that their beliefs are not derived from the Qur'ān, the Sunna, or the exemplary conduct of the righteous forebears. Rather, they claim that their beliefs are derived from reason and allege that they derived them from legal scholars (*a'imma sharā'i'*).<sup>194</sup>

Like other commentators on the *Ṭaḥāwiyya*,<sup>195</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz interprets al-Ṭaḥāwī's statement that God's speech proceeded from Him amodally as words (*minhu badā bi-lā kayfiyya qawlan*) as a refutation of the Mu'tazilite doctrine of

<sup>192</sup> As we will see later, this is the view Ibn Abī l-'Izz ascribes to himself and which he attributes Ṭaḥāwī, Abū Hanīfā, and the early Ḥanafites.

<sup>193</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/172 and 1/185-6.

<sup>194</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/186.

<sup>195</sup> See Abū l-Faḍā'il Mankūbars al-Nāṣirī, *Al-nūr al-lāmi' wa l-burhān al-sāṭi'*, 348-349, and Sirāj al-Dīn al-Ghaznawī, *Sharḥ 'aqīdat al-imām al-ṭaḥāwī*, 91-93. Al-Ghaznawī adds that al-Ṭaḥāwī's Ḥanbalite view that God's speech consists of letters and sounds (*min jins al-ḥurūf wa l-aṣwāt*).

the createdness of the Qur'ān (*khalq al-qur'ān*). According to the Mu'tazilites, the Qur'ān did not proceed from God's essence, but was created by God at a certain moment in time. Concerning God's relationship to the Qur'ān, Ibn Abī l-'Izz describes the Mu'tazilite view as holding that the Qur'ān is ascribed (*iḍāfa*) to God in a manner similar to how the Ka'ba in Mecca is ascribed to God as His house (*bayt Allāh*) and the she-camel sent to the people of Thamūd is referred to as God's she-camel (*nāqat Allāh*).<sup>196</sup> These attributions are a means of honouring (*li-l-tashrīf*) certain things, such as the Ka'ba, through their association with God.<sup>197</sup>

Although Ibn Abī l-'Izz does not explain the rationale behind the Mu'tazilite doctrine, Ibn Taymiyya recounts that the early Mu'tazilites held the belief that the occurrence of accidents (*a'rād*, sing. *'arad*) and contingencies (*ḥawādith*, sing. *ḥādith*) in God's essence is impossible. The Mu'tazilites meant that God's attributes, actions or states (*aḥwāl*; sing. *ḥāl*) could not possibly subsist in Him (*taqūmu bihi*). As a result of this initial denial of God's attributes and actions, the Mu'tazilites adopted the view that the Qur'ān is a created entity (*'ayn*) that is separate from God, but attributable to Him as an honoured creation. Their reasoning was based on the belief that if the Qur'ān exists in the divine essence (*dhāt*), it would imply the coexistence of actions and attributes within God, a position that they had rejected earlier.<sup>198</sup>

### 5.3. Refutation of the Mu'tazilites

Ibn Abī l-'Izz presents a refutation of the Mu'tazilite view in the form of another theory of attribution. Influenced by Ibn Taymiyya,<sup>199</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz explains that both real entities (*ma'ānī*, sing. *ma'nā*) and self-standing entities (*a'yān*, sing. *'ayn*) can be ascribed to God. The latter are part of God's creation and their ascription to God is, as the Mu'tazilites correctly point out, for the sake of

<sup>196</sup> God's she-camel is mentioned in Q 91:13, Q 11:64 and Q 7:73 as part of the story of the prophet Ṣāliḥ and the people of Thamūd.

<sup>197</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/174; Ibn Taymiyya uses the term *ikhtisāṣ* or "particularisation,"

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<sup>198</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar'*, 4/24 and 8/286.

<sup>199</sup> See, e.g., Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-masīḥ*, 71.

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honouring that created entity. Real entities, such as God’s knowledge (*‘ilm*), power (*qudra*), and life (*hayāt*), however, are uncreated, since they are among God’s attributes (*ṣifāt*, sing. *ṣifa*). For a clearer description of *idāfa*, we have to look at another section of the *Sharḥ* where Ibn Abī l-‘Izz cites a passage written by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya:

It should be known that ascriptions [*muḍāf*] to God Almighty are of two categories. [The first category are] attributes that do not subsist in themselves [*ṣifāt lā taqūm bi-naḥsihā*], such as knowledge, power, speech, hearing, and sight. These attributes are ascribed to the entity qualified by an attribute or quality [*mawṣūf*]. So, His knowledge, speech, power, and life are His own uncreated attributes [*ṣifāt lahu ghayr makhlūq*], as well as His face and hand [...] The second category are attributes of self-standing entities that are separate from Him [*a yān munfaṣila ‘anhu*], like a house, a camel, a servant, a messenger, or a spirit. These are attributes of created beings attributed to their Creator. However, this attribution entails particularity [*takhṣīs*] and honour [*tashrīf*], distinguishing the attributed from others [*yatamayyaza bihi al-muḍāf ‘an ghayrihi*].<sup>200</sup>

Unlike the ascription of self-standing entities to God, the divine attributes, such as God’s speech evidenced in the Qur’ān, are an inherent and inseparable component of God’s essence (*dhāt*). Hence, unlike the universe which God created, these attributes are not external creations originating in time.<sup>201</sup> These attributes cannot exist by themselves (*bi-naḥsihā*) but subsist within other entities which are receptive to qualification by an attribute or quality (*mawṣūfāt*).

Describing God as speaking (*al-waṣf bi-l-takallum*) affirms His transcendence (*tanzīh*) over creation since speech (*kalām*) is considered one of God's "attributes of perfection" (*ṣifāt al-kamāl*). On the other hand, denying God the attribute of speech, as Ibn Abī l-‘Izz accuses the Mu‘tazilites of doing, implies the opposite (*ḍidduhu*), which is God being unable to speak. Muteness is considered an attribute of deficiency (*ṣifat al-naqṣ*) and diminishes God's transcendence.<sup>202</sup>

The Qur’ān, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz argues, demonstrates that the inability to speak is a deficiency unbecoming to God: “In his absence, Moses’ people took to worshipping a mere shape that made sounds like a cow— a calf made from their jewellery. Could they not see that it did not speak to them or guide them in any way? Yet

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<sup>201</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/174-175.

<sup>202</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/175.

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bī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 2/563-564; Ibn al-Qayyim, *K. al-rūh*, 2/447-448.

they took it for worship: they were evildoers.” (Q 7:148) and “Did they not see that [the calf] gave them no answer, that it had no power to harm or benefit them?” (Q 20:89). These verses show that the calf’s inability to respond (*rujū‘ al-qawl*) and speak (*takallum*) proves its lack of divinity. So, how can the Mu‘tazilites deny God’s speech? In a polemical fashion, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz states that the Israelites who took to worshipping the image of a calf were more knowledgeable of God than the Mu‘tazilites, despite the fact they worshipped an idol, as they did not even say to Moses, "And your Lord does not speak, either."<sup>203</sup>

The most specious objection (*ghāyat shubhatihim*) forwarded by the Mu‘tazilites is that the affirmation of God’s speech entails assimilation (*tashbīh*) and corporealism (*tajsīm*). Ibn Abī l-‘Izz responds that the Mu‘tazilites neglect that God speaks in a manner that befits His Majesty (*kamā yalīq bi-jalālihi*). This fact negates their objection. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz adopts the Ḥanbalite amodal approach: we believe that God speaks, but we do not know how His speech is. He cites other examples from the Qur’ān of speech whose modality unknown to us: “ On that Day We shall seal up their mouths, but their hands will speak to Us, and their feet bear witness to everything they have done” (Q 36:65) and Q 41:21: “They will say to their skins, ‘Why did you testify against us?’ and their skins will reply, ‘God, who gave speech to everything, has given us speech’”. He also mentions *ḥadīths* about pebbles and food items praising God and stones giving salutation to the Apostle Muḥammad. We believe, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz states, that all these objects – hands, feet, skins, pebbles, food, and stones – could speak, even though they lack mouths and lungs from which sounds rise that use the pronunciation of letters as a means to convey speech. This Mu‘tazilite objection is, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz notes, what al-Ṭaḥāwī specifically refuted with his statement: ‘God’s speech proceeded from Him amodally as words’ (*minhu badā bi-lā kayfiyya qawlan*). That is, God’s speech emerges from Him, while the manner of His speaking (*kayfiyyat takallumihi*) is unknown. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz explains that al-Ṭaḥāwī emphasised this meaning by adding *qawlan*, a verbal noun that signifies the reality of God’s speech (*al-maṣḍar al-mu‘arrif li-l-ḥaqīqa*).<sup>204</sup>

<sup>203</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/175-176.

<sup>204</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/175-176

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz sees in the Qur’ān and the Sunna many proofs that affirm the attribute of speech, among them Q 4:164 which is cited by many Sunnite scholars as affirming the notion that God truly speaks: “To Moses God spoke directly” (*wa kallama Allāh Musā taklīman*), in which the verbal noun *taklīm* is employed to affirm the reality of God speaking to Moses and to negate a figurative understanding of God’s speech (*bi-l-maṣdar al-muthbit li-l-ḥaqīqa al-nāfi li-l-majāz*).<sup>205</sup>

The Mu‘tazilites also relied upon revelation to defend their doctrine of the createdness of the Qur’ān. They infer God’s creation of the Qur’ān from the Qur’ānic verse “God is the Creator of all things” (*Allāh khāliq kull shay’*) (Q 13:16). Since the Qur’ān is a thing (*shay’*), it logically follows that it is created by God, the Qur’ān being included within the generic meaning of “all things” (*dākhilān fī ‘umūm al-kull*). However, strangely enough, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz says, the Mu‘tazilites argue that humans are the creators of their own actions, not God.<sup>206</sup> Hence, they exclude human acts from the category of “things”, while including God’s attribute of speech within this category, implying that God’s attributes are created.<sup>207</sup>

After presenting the evidence of the Mu‘tazilites, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz offers a unique refutation that is based on an infinite regress argument (*tasalsul*). While Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim also refuted this Mu‘tazilite argument on the basis of an argument of infinite regress, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz adopts a different approach. His response to the Mu‘tazilites aligns more closely with the arguments of the

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<sup>205</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/176-177; Ibn Abī l-‘Izz also relates an account of an encounter between Abū ‘Amr b. al-‘Alā’ (d. c. 154–6/770–2), one of the seven authoritative Qur’ān reciters (*al-qurrā’ al-sab‘a*), and an unnamed Mu‘tazilite scholar. The latter reportedly requested him to read Q 4:164: “To God Moses spoke directly” and place the word *Allāh* in the accusative case, so that Moses would be the one speaking, not God. To which Abū ‘Amr replied, ‘Go away! I recite this verse as it is. How will you reconcile this with the saying of the Almighty: “When Moses came for the appointment, and his Lord spoke to him”’ (Q 7:143). This answer left the Mu‘tazilite baffled. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/177. For similar accounts, see: Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs*, 3/303 *ṣawā‘iq al-mursala*, 3/1037.

<sup>206</sup> Something which Ibn Abī l-‘Izz does not seem to argue is that the Mu‘tazilites’ exclusion of human acts from God’s creative power appears to contradict their own evidence/argument for the creation of the Qur’ān, namely verse 13:16. By excluding human actions from the realm of God’s power, the Mu‘tazilites effectively say that God is not the creator of all things.

<sup>207</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim also refutes this argument of the Mu‘tazilites in *Madārij al-sālikīn*. Ibn al-*Madārij al-sālikīn*, 4/320.

Ash‘arites Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233)<sup>208</sup> and al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273),<sup>209</sup> in terms of wording. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s argument is also different from al-Āmidī’s be inferred by the reader.

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s argument rests on the Taymiyyan assumption that God’s speech is an active attribute (*ṣifa fi‘liyya*),<sup>210</sup> that relates to the involvement of God in creation, such as ‘the Creator’ (*al-khāliq*), ‘the Provider’ (*al-razzāq*), and ‘the Originator’ (*al-fāṭir*). God creates through His speech as it is by God’s command (*bi-amrihi*), which is a form of speech, that things come into existence. Although Ibn Abī l-‘Izz does not mention it in this context, the association of God’s command (*amr*) with His active attribute of speech is based on the Qur’ānic verse “When He wills something to be, His way is to say, “Be”- and it is!” (Q 36:82). According to Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, this verse demonstrates that God creates things in the world by using His attribute of speech to give the command “be” (*kun*), the imperative of the Arabic verb *kān*.<sup>211</sup>

Once Ibn Abī l-‘Izz has established that the attribute of speech is an active attribute synonymous with God’s command, the impossibility of the createdness of God’s speech, and hence the Qur’ān, can be demonstrated. He does this through the Qur’ānic verse “He created the sun, moon, and stars to be subservient to His command; all creation [*khalq*] and command [*amr*] belong to Him” (Q 7:54). Here

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<sup>209</sup> Shams al-Dīn al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ l-ahkām al-qur‘ān*, 7/221-222; al-Qurṭubī’s argument is based on the early Ash‘arite theologian Abū Bakr al-Bāqilānī’s (d. 403/1013) argument, who was a teacher of Abū l-‘Hasan al-Ash‘arī. See: al-Bāqilānī, *K. tamhīd al-awā‘il wa talkhīṣ al-dalā‘il*, 271; for al-Ash‘arī’s version of the infinite regress argument, see Nader El-Bizri, “God: essence and attributes,” 131.

<sup>210</sup> Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī does not give the attribute of speech as an essential and active attribute (*ṣifāt al-dhāt wa l-fi‘l*). Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, 6/219. Jon Hoover, “God Acts by His Will and Power,” 59; Ibn Taymiyya’s view contradicts that of the Ash‘arites and Māturīdites who regarded God’s attribute of speech only as an essential attribute, also referred to as *ṣifāt al-ma‘nā*, seven attributes, viz. Power, Will, Knowledge, Life, Sight, Hearing, and Speech. This belief is traceable to al-Ash‘arī himself. See: Frank, “Elements in the Development,” 154.

<sup>211</sup> Al-Āmidī, *K. ghāyat al-marām*, 109-110 and al-Qurṭubī, *Al-jāmi‘*, 7/221-222; Ibn Abī l-‘Izz ṭubī’s works since he cites him ten times throughout the *Sharḥ*.

God distinguishes between creation (*khalq*, i.e., the created universe) and command (*amr*). God's creation is created by Him, while His command must be uncreated. For if God created His command, then it would be as if the Qur'ānic verse read "all creation and creation [*al-khalq wa l-khalq*] belong to Him", which is an absurd thing for God to say and therefore impossible.<sup>212</sup> In other words, since God creates through His command, which is His speech, then if His command is created, then another command must have created the first command. This, in turn, implies that another command created the second command, etcetera. This is a form of infinite regress of causes (*tasalsul fī l-'ilal*). And if their argument were extended, says Ibn Abī l-'Izz, all God's attributes, such as His knowledge, His power, and others, are reduced to the level of created entities. For God's knowledge is considered a thing (*shay'*), as well as His power and life. If these attributes fall under the meaning of the Qur'ānic verse "God is the Creator of all things" (Q 7:54), they too would be created. This is explicit unbelief (*ṣarīḥ al-kufr*).

By rejecting that God's speech proceeds from Him, but rather is created and separate (*munfaṣil*) from God, it seems that the Mu'tazilites, as far as Ibn Abī l-'Izz is concerned, argue that God's speech subsists in other beings (*qāma bi-ghayrihi*).<sup>213</sup> This entails that the speech God originates (*aḥdathahu*) in inanimate objects (*jamādāt*), such as in the human limbs, stones, and food items mentioned in revelation, as well as animals, is His speech; there being no difference between their speech and God's (*naṭāqa wa anṭāqa*; lit. "to speak and to make speak). This also means that God is the one who speaks when He creates speech in others

<sup>212</sup> This is obviously implied by Ibn Abī l-'Izz, but mentioned explicitly in al-Qurṭubī, *Al-jāmi'*,

<sup>213</sup> The Mu'tazilites would disagree with this assessment, as they openly referred to God's speech and God as a speaker. The Mu'tazilite Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī (d. 303/916) and his son Abū Hāshim (d. 321/933) defined a speaker as "one who makes speech (*man fa'ala al-kalām*)" instead of "one in whom speech subsists (*man qāma bihi al-kalām*)". See Daniel Gimaret, *La doctrine d'al-Ash'arī* (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 1990), 310; Abū l-Faṭḥ Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*, ed. Aḥmad Fahmī Muḥammad (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1992), 1/67 and Angelika Brodersen, *Der unbekannte kalām: Theologische Positionen der frühen Māturīdīya am Beispiel der Attributenlehre* (Munich: LIT Verlag, 2014), 26-7. Ibn Taymiyya's criticism of the Mu'tazilite conception of God's role as a speaker (*mutakallim*) is similar to Ibn Abī l-'Izz, but, Hanafite disciple, Ibn Taymiyya demonstrates that he is familiar with the adapted definition of the Jubbā'īs, but nonetheless describes it as 'obscuring and corrupting of revelation, reason, and language' (*talbīs wa ifsād al-shar' wa l-'aql wa l-luḡha*). See Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' al-fatāwā*,

(*yakūn mutakalliman bi-kulli kalām khalaqahu fī ghayrihi*), even when they utter falsehood (*zūr*), lies (*kadhib*), and unbelief (*kufr*). He likens the Mu‘tazilite view to monistic ontology (*ittiḥādiyya*) of Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240).<sup>214</sup>

Another consequence of this Mu‘tazilite view is that the accidents (*a‘rāḍ*, sing. *‘araḍ*) God causes to subsist in His creatures, such as colours, scents, tastes, height, shortness, and the like, can be attributed to God as well.<sup>215</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz refutes the linguistic argument of the Mu‘tazilites, calling it their worst one, that the verb “to make” (*ja‘ala*) the Qur’ānic verse: “We have made it a Quran in Arabic” (Q 43:3) is synonymous with “to create” (*khalaqa*). The verse therefore indicates that the Qur’ān is created. He responds that when the verb *ja‘ala* denotes “to create”, it has a single object (*ta‘addā ilā maf‘ūl wāḥid*), such as “He made darkness and light” (Q 6:1). In Q 43:3, however, *ja‘ala* has two objects, disproving the Mu‘tazilite claim that the Qur’ān is created.<sup>216</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz argues that the Mu‘tazilites, in an attempt to preserve God's unity, claim that God's created speech exists in a separate substrate from Himself. The Mu‘tazilites interpret the Qur’ānic verse “A voice called out to him from the right-hand side of the valley, from a tree on the blessed ground” (Q 28:30) to mean that God created His speech in a tree and Moses heard it from there. The Mu‘tazilites ignore, however, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz says, the context of the verse. If we include its beginning “When he arrived there”, it becomes clear that the call came from a distance. This is also indicated by the Arabic word *nidā’*, which refers to speech that comes from a distance. This means that the call to Moses came from the valley’s edge. Then God says, “From a tree on the blessed ground” (Q 28:30), meaning that the call was made on the blessed ground near the tree. This is because, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz reasons, the location from which a sound emerges is not necessarily the same as the source that produces that sound. For example, when someone says that they heard Zayd’s speech from the house, what they mean is

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<sup>214</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/179-180.

<sup>215</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/180.

<sup>216</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/182; according to al-Qurṭubī, this view is also advanced by the Egyptian Qur’ānic philologist Abū Ja‘far al-Naḥḥās (d. 338/950). See: al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘*, 6/387.

that the sound of his speech emerged from the house (*li-ibtidā' al-ghāya*; lit. “start of the destination”),<sup>217</sup> not that the house is one who speaks (*mutakallim*). It follows from this that if God created the speech that Moses heard in the tree, then the tree would say, “Moses, I am God, the Lord of the World” (Q 28:30), which is impossible. If these words were really said by someone other than God, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz says, then Pharaoh (*fir‘awn*) spoke the truth when he said “I am your supreme lord” (Q 79:24). For, according to the Mu‘tazilites, both verses are created and spoken by a being other than God.<sup>218</sup> The Mu‘tazilites have sought to meet this objection by differentiating between these two speech acts, but according to their false premise (*‘alā aṣlihim al-fāsid*) that God’s speech subsists in other beings and that human beings create their own actions. Thus, the Mu‘tazilites interpret these verses as saying that God is the one who made His speech subsist in the tree, while Pharaoh created his own speech. For Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, this is an alteration (*tabdīl*) and distortion (*tahrīf*) of the revealed text, but worse is that Pharaoh’s creation of his own speech implies the existence of a creator other than God. This is tied to the debate surrounding the question of who creates human actions (*khalq af‘āl al-‘ibād*) creator other than God.<sup>219</sup> This is tied to the debate surrounding the question of who creates human actions (*khalq af‘āl al-‘ibād*).<sup>220</sup>

#### 5.4. Refutation of the Ḥanafite-Māturīdites

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz argues that al-Ṭaḥāwī and Abū Ḥanīfa held that God has been “speaking from eternity whenever and how He willed and that His speech as a

<sup>217</sup> Ali Yunis Aldahesh, ‘Qur’anic Idiomatic Phrasal Verbs: Their Syntactic and Semantic Properties,’ 17.

<sup>218</sup> A similar argument regarding Pharaoh is made in *al-Radd ‘alā al-zanādiqa wa l-jahmiyya* (also *al-Radd ‘alā al-jahmiyya wa l-zanādiqa*), a short polemical treatise ascribed to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. Ḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-radd ‘alā al-jahmiyya wa l-zanādiqa*, 136; the argument of Ibn Ḥanbal is *r’ ta‘āruḍ al-‘aql wa l-naql*, 6/153.

<sup>219</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/182-183; in his commentary on the so-called *Fiqh akbar II*, Mullā ‘Alī al-Qārī references this passage, but he misattributes it, along with other passages, including the mention of Ibn ‘Arabī, to Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 777/1375), an older contemporary of Ibn Abī l-‘Izz.

<sup>220</sup> For a short but detailed appraisal of Islamic theological discussions surrounding the creation of human acts, see L. Gardet, “Kasb,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. E. van Donzel et al. (Leiden: Brill 1997), 4:692-694.

class is eternal”.<sup>221</sup> As proof he cites a passage on the Qur’ān and God’s speech from the so-called *Fiqh akbar II*, traditionally ascribed to Abū Ḥanīfa.<sup>222</sup> From the words “When He spoke to Moses, He spoke to him with His speech which is His attribute from eternity,” Ibn Abī l-‘Izz deduces a refutation of the Sunnite *Kalām* doctrine of “inner speech” (*kalām nafṣī* or *kalām al-nafs*),<sup>223</sup> according to which the recited, heard, memorised, and written Qur’ān is a manifestation (*dalāla*) of God’s eternal inner speech that ontologically precedes its transformation into the expression in sounds, letters, and speech of the Qur’ān (*kalām lafẓī*) in the external world.<sup>224</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz describes the doctrine of *kalām nafṣī* as holding that God has been continuously speaking since eternity, repeating the contents of Qur’ān over and over again. Thus, God has been saying, “O Moses...” since eternity.<sup>225</sup> According to Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, the Qur’ān itself refutes the *Kalām* theologians/Māturīdites, when it says, “When Moses came for the appointment [*li-mīqātinā*, lit. “our appointment”], and his Lord spoke to him” (Q 7:143).

<sup>221</sup> “*lam yazal mutakalliman idhā shā’ kayf shā’ wa anna naw’ kalāmihī qadīm.*” Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/186. I follows Jon Hoover’s translation in “God Acts by His Will and Power,” 58 and El-Tobgui, Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation, 106. For a detailed treatment of the history and details of the expression of *lam yazal* in Muslim theology, see Frank, “‘Lam yazal’ as a Formal Term in Muslim Theological Discourse.”

<sup>222</sup> W. Montgomery Watt’s translation of this passage from the *Fiqh akbar II* reads as follows: “(a) The Qur’ān is the Speech of God, written in the copies, remembered (preserved) in the hearts, recited by the tongues, and sent down (from God) to the Prophet. Our utterance of the Qur’ān is created, our writing of it is created, our reciting of it is created, but the Qur’ān is uncreated. (b) What God mentions in the Qur’ān (as a report about) Moses and the other prophets, and (about) Pharaoh and Satan, is all the speech of God reporting about them. The speech of God is uncreated, but the speech of Moses and of the others of the creatures is created, the Qur’ān as the speech of God is from eternity, but not their speech. Moses heard the speech of God, as in the verse, ‘God spoke with Moses’ (4.162). God was speaking before He spoke to Moses, just as He was creating from eternity before He created creation. When He spoke to Moses, He spoke to him with His speech which is His attribute from eternity.” W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Creeds: A Selection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 63. For an earlier translation and a detailed discussion of *Fiqh akbar II* and its historical origins, see: A.J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 188ff.

<sup>223</sup> According to Yahya Raad Haidar, the *kalām nafṣī* doctrine encounters theoretical challenges when considering the evidence found in the Qur’ān, particularly the accounts of Moses speaking directly with God at Mount Sinai. In a plain-sense reading, the narrative presents a contradiction, since how can God’s eternal, formless speech be audibly received within a temporal-spatial location? This specific aspect led to a disagreement between Ash’arites and Māturīdites regarding the possibility of hearing God’s eternal inner speech. While the Ash’arīs affirmed its possibility, the Māturīdites deemed it impossible. See Yahya Raad Haidar, “The Debates Between Ash’arism and Māturīdism in Ottoman Religious Scholarship: A Historical and Bibliographical Study” (PhD diss., Australian National University, 2016), 125.

<sup>224</sup> Feriel Bouhafa, “After Adam: Ibn ‘Aqīl on Language Origin, Change, and Expansion,” in *Philosophy and Language in the Islamic World*, eds. Nadja Germann and Mostafa Najafi. (Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 2021), 248-249, DOI: 10.1515/9783110552409-009.

<sup>225</sup> “*lā annahu lam yazal wa lā yazāl azalan wa abadan yaqūl yā mūsā.*” Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*,

Although Ibn Abī l-‘Izz does not elaborate further, he seems to imply that the word “appointment” (*mīqāt*), which carries the meaning of “a time appointed for the performance of some action”,<sup>226</sup> indicates that God chose to speak to Moses when and how He wished, as Abū Ḥanīfa and al-Ṭahāwī pointed out. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz sees Abū Ḥanīfa’s statement also as a refutation of Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī, who taught that God’s eternal inner speech is an undifferentiated meaning (*ma‘nā wāḥid*), whose sound (i.e., the Qur’ān’s external linguistic expression) is created by God in the air (*fi l-hawā’*) but is inaudible (*ghayr masmū‘*) in itself.

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz interprets Abū Ḥanīfa’s statement in *Fiqh akbar II* “His speech which is His attribute from eternity,” as a refutation of those who hold that God’s attribute of speech temporally originated (*ḥadatha*) at a particular point in time, before which it did not exist.<sup>227</sup> This is a polemic description of the Karrāmīte position regarding God’s speech. In reality, the Karrāmītes<sup>228</sup> held that both God’s description as a speaker and His speech are eternal (*qadīm*) by virtue of the eternity of His power (*qudra*) to speak. The actual “utterance” (*qawl*) resulting from this eternal capacity for speech (*qāliyya*), crucially the Qur’ān, however, is contingent (*ḥādith*), while at the time uncreated and subsisting in God, since the Karrāmītes considered God to be a substrate (*maḥall*) for contingent events (*ḥawādith*), namely accidents (*a‘rāḍ*).<sup>229</sup>

Then Ibn Abī l-‘Izz proceeds to defend an aspect of Karrāmīte theology, namely the importance of God’s essential attributes of will (*mashī‘a*) and power (*qudra*) in relation to the Qur’ān, although he discusses this topic with regard to the

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<sup>227</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/187.

<sup>228</sup> Karrāmism was a theological, legal, and ascetic movement, named after Muḥammad b. Karrām (d. 255/869), that shared certain doctrinal elements with Ḥanafism and were active primarily in Transoxania and Eastern Iran from the third/ninth to the seventh/thirteenth centuries. For a detailed assessment of the Karrāmītes, see: C. Bosworth, “Karrāmiyya,” EI2, vol. 4, 667–669. For an overview of early Eastern Ḥanafite attitudes towards the Karrāmītes, see: Rudolph, Ulrich. *al-Māturīdī and the Development of Sunnī Theology in Samarqand*. Translated by Rodrigo Adem.

<sup>229</sup> Aron Zysow, “Karrāmiyya,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 9-10, DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199696703.013.29; Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Kalam* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1976), 300-302. See also al-Baghdādī, *al-Ma‘arq*, 192;

Mu‘tazilites. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz writes that, even though the Mu‘tazilites were heretics, some of their views, such as that the Qur’ān is speech dependent on God’s will (*mashī’a*) and power (*qudra*), that He speaks when He wills, and that He speaks one thing after another (*shay’ān ba‘da shay’*), are true and must be accepted. Similarly, some ideas of others, such as that God’s speech subsists in God’s essence and is His attribute, and that an attribute subsists only in another entity (*mawṣūf*), are also true and must be accepted and adhered to.<sup>230</sup> This rather surprising defence of Mu‘tazilite doctrines should be seen in the light of Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s Taymiyyan traditionalist theology, since the Ḥanafite jurist adheres to Ibn Taymiyya’s views on the voluntary attributes (*al-ṣifāt al-ikhtiyāriyya*).<sup>231</sup>

Responding to the (presumably) Ash‘arite and Māturīdite critique that his Taymiyyan view makes God a substrate of contingent events, he says that this objection is vague and ambiguous (*mujmal*). According to Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, none of the leading earlier scholars (*a’imma*) have denied that contingent events (*ḥawādith*) subsist in God. On the contrary, the Qur’ān, Sunna, the early religious authorities (*a’imma*), as well as clear reason (*ṣarīḥ al-‘aql*), uphold it.<sup>232</sup> God’s messengers (*rusul*) certainly knew this. When the prophets conveyed God’s revelation and told their audiences that God said something, called some, confided with someone, or that He spoke, they did not intend to say that God created these words separate from Himself. Rather, the prophets wanted to convey to their audiences that God spoke those words and that God’s speech subsist in Him, not in a substrate apart from Him as the Mu‘tazilites claimed, and that God is the one who uttered them (*qālahu*). As Ibn Abī l-‘Izz explained earlier in the examples of the tree and Pharaoh, someone whose speech subsists in another being can neither rationally nor linguistically be seen as the speaker. Instead, it is the other being

<sup>230</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/187.

<sup>231</sup> In the *Sharḥ*, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz explicitly mentions God’s voluntary attributes only once. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/97. For a detailed appraisal of Ibn Taymiyya’s view on the voluntary attributes, see: Hoover, “Ḥanbalī theology,” 16-17; Hoover, Jon. *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism*. Leiden: Brill, 2007, Hoover, Jon. “Perpetual Creativity in the Perfection of God: Ibn Taymiyya’s Hadith Commentary on God’s Creation of this World.” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 15, no. 3 (2004): 287–329, and Hoover, Jon. “God Acts by His Will and Power: Ibn Taymiyya’s Theology of a Personal God in his Treatise on the Voluntary Attributes.” In *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, edited by Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed, 55–77. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

<sup>232</sup> Ibn Taymiyya similarly appeals to traditional authority to establish the veracity of this position. Hoover, Hoover, “God Acts by His Will and Power,” 58, El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 105-106: Ibn Taymiyya, “Faṣl fi al-ṣifāt al-ikhtiyāriyya,” *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, 6:218 and *Dar’*, 48ff.

who truly speaks. Similarly, one cannot imagine a powerful person (*qādir*) whose power subsists elsewhere, nor a living being (*ḥayy*) whose life subsists in someone else.<sup>233</sup>

Regarding those who dismiss this view due to a concern of assimilating God to humans (*tashbīh*), they should in that case refrain from affirming any of God's attributes, including His Power, Life, and Knowledge. If they then invoke the principle of *bi-lā kayfa*, stating, "He knows but not as we know," we can easily respond, "And God speaks but not as we speak."<sup>234</sup>

Next, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz returns to his earlier criticism of his fellow Ḥanafites for their adoption of the doctrine of undifferentiated meaning (*ma‘nā wāḥid*). He briefly, but accurately, describes how many later Ḥanafites (*kathīr muta‘akhhirī al-ḥanafīyya*) believed that the God’s speech is undifferentiated meaning and that multiplicity (*ta‘addud*), plurality (*takaththur*), divisibility (*taba‘ub*), and compartmentalisation (*tajazzī*) concern its indication (*dalālāt*) to God’s speech, rather than what it indicated (*madlūl*), namely God’s eternal speech itself. These expressions (*‘ibārāt*) are created; they are called God’s speech because they indicate His speech and convey it (*ta‘addīhi bihā*). When expressed in Arabic, it is the Qur’an and when expressed in Hebrew, it is the Torah. Hence, its expressions vary, but not God’s eternal speech itself.<sup>235</sup> This leads the Ḥanafites to conclude that these expressions are called God’s speech in a metaphorical sense (*majāzan*).<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/188-189.

<sup>234</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/188.

<sup>235</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s description of the Ḥanafite position is similar to Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī *ṣirat al-adilla*, since Ibn Abī l-‘Izz refers to expressions (*‘ibārāt*, sing. *‘ibāra*), an Ash‘arite term that refers to an indication (*dāll*) to God’s speech. Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī, *Tabṣirat al-adilla*, 1/259ff. According to Ramon Harvey, Abū l-Mu‘īn appears to be one of the first Māturīdī theologians to use the term *‘ibāra*, replacing Abū l-Yusr al-Bazdawī’s earlier term *manzūm*. Ramon Harvey, *Transcendent God, Rational World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 207.

<sup>236</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/189. While Ibn Abī l-‘Izz description of the Ḥanafite view regarding God’s speech is close to that of Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī, to my knowledge Abū l-Mu‘īn does not explicitly refer to these expressions as metaphorical, although it is implied. Al-Bazdawī, however, does explicitly speak of them as metaphorical, using his term “compositions” (*manzūmāt*). See, Abū l-Yusr al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 68.

Citing Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz criticises this distinction between God’s eternal undifferentiated speech and its worldly expressions (*‘ibārāt*) as negating the real existence of different meanings in the Qur’ān. Hence, the Qur’ānic verse “And do not go anywhere near adultery” (Q 17:32) would essentially have the same meaning as “Keep up the prayer” (Q 2:43).<sup>237</sup>

According to Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, the Qur’ān and earlier scriptures are God’s speech in reality (*ḥaqīqatan*). God’s speech is endless (*lā yatanāhā*). He has been speaking from eternity whatever, whenever and how He willed, continuing to do so forever.<sup>238</sup> In support of his view, he cites the Qur’ānic verse “Say [Prophet], ‘If the whole ocean were ink for writing the words of my Lord, it would run dry before those words were exhausted’ - even if We were to add another ocean to it” (Q 18:109).<sup>239</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz also points to legal rulings that imply the Qur’ān’s status as God’s literal speech. If the contents of the Qur’ānic copies (*muṣḥaf*, pl. *maṣāḥif*) are only an expression of God’s speech, he asks, then why is it forbidden for the ritually impure (*‘alā al-junub wa l-muḥdith*) to touch the *muṣḥaf* or recite the words of the Qur’ān?<sup>240</sup> Referring back to the *Fiqh akbar II*, God’s speech is equally (*fī hādhihi al-mawāḍi‘ kullihā*) what is remembered in the hearts, recited by the tongues, and written in the copies.<sup>241</sup>

Against the *Kalām*ic accusation that the traditionalists believe in a divine indwelling (*ḥulūl*) when they argue that the Qur’ān’s copy is God’s speech, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz makes an appeal to language, specifically the meaning of the Arabic particle *fī*, meaning “in,” that denotes spatial circumstance (*ẓarfīyya makāniyya*). Ibn Abī l-‘Izz affirms the literal truth (*ṣaḥīḥ ḥaqīqī*) four statements regarding the *muṣḥaf* of the Qur’ān:<sup>242</sup> (1) “The ink in the *muṣḥaf*,” (2) “The scribe’s

<sup>237</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/189-190. For the original passage, see: Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-qur’ān al-‘aẓīm kalām Allāh*, 12/122.

<sup>238</sup> “*lām yazal yatakallam bi-mā shā’ idhā shā’ kayf shā’ wa lā yazāl kadhālik*,” Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *h*, 1/190.

<sup>239</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/190.

<sup>240</sup> According to common, but not universal, Muslim practice, Muslims in the minor state of impurity (*muḥdath ḥadathan aṣghar*) are not allowed to touch a copy of the Qur’ān, while Muslims *ṣhaf* nor recite the text.

<sup>241</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz mentions them here in a slightly different order from the *Fiqh akbar II*.

<sup>242</sup> In order to elucidate Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s highly condensed argument, I present his statements in a

handwriting (*khatt*) and writing (*kitāba*) is contained in the *muṣḥaf*,” (3) “The heavens and the earth, Jesus and Muḥammad are contained in the *muṣḥaf*,” and that (4) “God’s speech is written in the *muṣḥaf*.”

Imaginably, the Kalām theologians will reply that the ink (*midād*) with which the *muṣḥaf* is written is a created thing, therefore it cannot truly contain God’s speech, but it is only an expression of it. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz would admit that the ink is indeed created but God’s speech in the *muṣḥaf* is not, because the particle *fī* has different connotations depending on its linguistic application (*iṭlāq*).

The first statement, “The ink in the *muṣḥaf*,” is literally true, because the particle “*fī*” here denotes something being physically contained in something else, that is, the *muṣḥaf*’s paper or parchment holding the ink. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s repeated reference to the ink is to emphasise that the inks’ contingency does not negate the uncreatedness of God’s speech. In the case of the second statement, “A scribe’s handwriting and writing is contained in the copy,” which is also true, but in the sense that the *muṣḥaf* is recorded in writing by a human being, not God. This fact, however, does not change the true “authorship” of the Qur’ān.<sup>243</sup> Regarding the third statement that the heavens and the earth, Jesus and Muḥammad are contained in the *muṣḥaf*, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz means that the particle *fī* has a second and metaphorical meaning, namely the words “heavens,” “and,” “earth,” “Jesus,” and “Muḥammad.” The physical earth and the physical Jesus are obviously not contained in the *muṣḥaf*, but the words that signify them are. The final and most important meaning of *fī* is found in the statement “God’s speech is in the *muṣḥaf*.” Here *fī* denotes the ontological status of the Qur’ānic codex, namely that the *muṣḥaf* is God’s literal speech.<sup>244</sup> For example, when we see a physical copy of al-Mutanabbī’s diwan, we say, “In this book is contained the poetry of al-Mutanabbī,” or “This is the poetry of al-Mutanabbī”. Both these statements are true. Hence, if we follow Ibn Abī l-‘Izz argument, al-Mutanabbī’s diwan is not a metaphorical representation of his speech, but it is truly his.

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<sup>243</sup> On Muslim disputes over the eternality and inimitability of the Qur’ān and its influence on the status of scripture as a material object, see Travis Zadeh, “‘Fire Cannot Harm It’: Mediation, Temptation and the Charismatic Power of the Qur’an,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies*, 10(2), 50–72.

<sup>244</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/190-192.

A closely related issue is the relationship between the recitation of the Qur'an (*al-qirā'a*) and what is recited (*al-maqrū'*). Ibn Abī l-'Izz describes the recitation of Qur'ān, an act of the reciter, and the thing read, as God's speech. To illustrate the difference, he cites a line by Labīd b. Rabī'a (d. 40/661), renowned for being one of the poets of the *Mu'allaqāt*: "Everything but God is vain." If a person finds this verse written somewhere, Ibn Abī l-'Izz hypothesises, written by a known scribe, the reader of this verse will conclude four things, namely that the line is truly Labīd's speech, that it is truly the scribe's handwriting, that what all things but God are truly vain, and that this is a true report (*khābar*).<sup>245</sup>

Similarly, is the case with the Qur'ān. It is God's speech because He is the one who spoke it, regardless of the fact that it is recited by a human being. Whoever hears its recitation by a human being, nonetheless, realises that it is truly God's speech. Likewise, the Qur'ānic codex. If one points to the *muṣḥaf* and refers to it as God's speech, then this meant in a literal sense, rather than metaphorical.<sup>246</sup>

Ibn Abī l-'Izz maintains that this distinction is found in the Qur'ān itself. Sometimes the Qur'ān refers to itself as the act of reading, such as in the verse "And [recite] the Quran at dawn— dawn recitation is always witnessed" (Q 17:78). The Apostle Muḥammad also referred to the Qur'ān in this fashion "Embellish the Qur'ān with your voices." Other verses describe the Qur'ān as a read text "So pay attention and listen quietly when the Quran is recited, so that you may be given mercy." (Q 7:204).<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/191. While I chose to use "report", what Ibn Abī l-'Izz exactly means *ḥ* are divided as well. The Ethiopian Salafi scholar Muḥammad Amān al-Jāmī (1930-1996) interprets Ibn Abī l-'Izz as referring to a truthful report (*khābar ḥaqīqī*), the Saudi Arabian Salafi 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Bāz (1912-1999), Ṣāliḥ al-Fawzān, and Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (1914-1999) "Sharḥ al-'aqīda al-ṭahāwiyya li-l-imām Muḥammad Amān b. 'Alī al-Jāmī al-dars raqam 018"

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<sup>247</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/191-192.

“

*a*

*l*

*ā*

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Then, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz describes that realities have four levels of existence (*wujūd*): existence in reality (‘*aynī*), in the mind (*dihnī*), in speech (*lafẓī*) and in writing (*rasmī*). Entities that exist in reality (*a’yān*) are comprehended in the mind (*tu’lam*), then verbally expressed (*tudhkar*), and finally recorded in writing (*tuktab*). The Qur’ān’s *muṣḥaf* falls into the fourth category (*rasmī*), since it is written down.<sup>248</sup> The Qur’ān, however, is speech (*kalām*) and falls in the third category (*lafẓī*) before the *muṣḥaf*. Therefore, there is no intermediary, that is the mind and the tongue, between God’s speech and the physical *muṣḥaf*.<sup>249</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz returns to criticise the Kalām theologians, specifically Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī who held that God’s speech is inaudible (*ghayr masmū’*).<sup>250</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, however, maintains that the external reality of God’s speech (*ḥaqīqa*) is what is heard (*yusma’ minhu*) or what is conveyed (*muballigh ‘anhu*). When someone hears God’s speech, they know and remember it. Hence, for whoever hears God’s speech it is a heard, known and remembered thing, for whoever utters it, it is something read or recited, and for whoever writes it, it is something written. All these different aspects (*wujūh*, sing. *wajh*) are God’s literal speech, not metaphorically. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz cites several Qur’ānic verses in support “If any one of the idolaters should seek your protection [Prophet], grant it to him so that he may hear the word of God” (Q 9:6). The verse indicates that God’s speech is not heard from God Himself directly, rather it is heard from someone who conveys it from Him. A plain sense reading of this verse, which is the departure for all interpretations of scripture, contradicts the Kalām theologians who hold that the Qur’ān is an expression (‘*ibāra*) or mimetic reproduction<sup>251</sup> (*ḥikāya*) of God’s eternal speech. It is not, however, the eternal speech itself.<sup>252</sup>

The Māturīdite notion that God’s speech is an inaudible undifferentiated meaning and the wider *Kalāmīc* belief that the Qur’ān that is heard, revealed, recited, and

<sup>248</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/191. Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s scheme follows Ibn Taymiyya, see: Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū’ al-fatāwā*, 12/385 and 16/265.

<sup>249</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/193.

<sup>250</sup> Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī, *K. al-tawḥīd*, ed. Bekir Topaloğlu and Muhammed Aruçi (Istanbul: ḥūth al-Islāmiyya, 2022).

<sup>251</sup> I follow Travis Zadeh’s translation of *ḥikāya* as “mimetic reproduction”. Zadeh, “Fire Cannot Harm It”

<sup>252</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/194.

written is God's literal speech is also refuted by al-Ṭaḥāwī's statement that began Ibn Abī l-'Izz's discussion, namely that "the Qur'an is God's speech proceeded from Him." Ibn Abī l-'Izz connects al-Ṭaḥāwī's statement to the righteous forebears, such as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal: "From Him it begins and to Him it returns". The first half is directed against the Mu'tazilites who said that God created the speech in a substrate from where it proceeded, rather than God being the speaker from whom Qur'ān proceeded. The second half of the statement, "To Him it returns," is that God's speech is raised from the hearts and paper that preserved it without leaving a verse behind. Al-Ṭaḥāwī's reference to a modality of God's speaking does not mean that His speech is metaphorical.<sup>253</sup>

According to Ibn Abī l-'Izz, al-Ṭaḥāwī's statement, "They were certain that it was truly [*bi-l-ḥaqīqa*] God's speech. It is not created like the speech of the creature,"<sup>254</sup> is directed against both the Mu'tazilites and the Sunnite Kalām theologians. Specifically, the word "truly" is a refutation of the earlier mentioned Kalām doctrine of inner speech (*kalām naḥsānī*), namely that conceive of God's speech as an inaudible undifferentiated meaning that subsists in God's essence. Ibn Abī l-'Izz argues that the god of the Kalām theologians does not speak, since it is inconceivable that a being in whom subsists inner speech but does not speak is described as a true speaker. This would entail that a mute person (*al-akhras*) is also a speaker. It also entails that the Qur'ānic codex does not contain the Qur'ān nor God's speech but is only an expression of it. This puts the Qur'ān at the level of a mute person who is forced to use sign language, so that a scribe is able to record an expression of the meaning the mute person tries to convey. In this fashion, Ibn Abī l-'Izz asserts, the Kalām theologians see the Qur'ān. He admits that they do not call God mute, but the Kalām theologians do maintain that the angel retrieves the pure (*mujarrad*) the undifferentiated meaning subsisting in God's essence, converts it into letters and sounds, and expresses it. Hence, it is the angel who creates the Arabic composition (*naẓm*) of the Qur'ān. Alternatively, God is the one who created the angel's words in other bodies (*aḥsām*), such as the air.<sup>255</sup>

<sup>253</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 195.

<sup>254</sup> Montgomery, *Islamic Creeds*, 49.

<sup>255</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 197-198.

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz posits that the supporters of the *ma‘nā wāḥid* doctrine must either accept that the entire undifferentiated subsisting in God is heard or only some part of it (*ba‘duhu*). If they say that the entire meaning is heard, then they imply that Moses heard all of God’s speech at Mount Sinai, which is clearly false. If they deny this, it implies that the undifferentiated meaning is actually divisible (*yataba‘aḍ*). Similarly, when God informed the angels about the creation of Adam and then told them to bow down to him, did the angels hear the entirety of God’s speech or part of it? The first is a form of arrogance (*mukābara*), while the latter amounts to admitting that God’s speech is characterised by multiplicity (*ta‘addud*).<sup>256</sup>

Common evidence for the validity of the doctrine of undifferentiated speech in Māturīdite Kalām works, is a line from the Umayyad Christian poet al-Akḥṭal (d. 92/710): “Indeed, speech exists in the heart / The tongue only indicates it.” Ibn Abī l-‘Izz laments the fact that the Māturīdites consult the words of a Christian poet, while they object to authentically transmitted *ḥadīths* that disprove their doctrine. Furthermore, the meaning of al-Akḥṭal’s line is not even correct, he says. It implies that a mute person may be called a speaker, because their speech subsists in their heart, even though they cannot utter it nor can anyone hear them.<sup>257</sup> Quoting Ibn Taymiyya, he suggests that the relationship between the Māturīdite doctrine of undifferentiated meaning and Christianity goes further than only their reliance upon the line of a Christian poet for evidence. He argues that relationship between God’s speech, as an inaudible meaning that exists in God’s essence, while the audible created composition, which expresses the eternal meaning, resembles the Christian doctrine of the incarnation (*imtizāj al-lāhūt wa l-nāsūt*, lit. “blending of divinity and humanity”) regarding the person of Jesus.<sup>258</sup>

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz makes another argument from Islamic law against the doctrine of inner speech. Following the *ḥadīth* “No human speech is permitted during our prayers,” Muslim jurists agree that if someone intentionally and unnecessarily

<sup>256</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/198

<sup>257</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/199-200; Abū l-Barakāt al-Nasafī, *al-‘Itimād*, 137.

<sup>258</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/199-200

speaks during prayer, their ritual prayer is invalid. The jurists also agree that a person's thoughts that occur in their heart involving worldly things do not invalidate the ritual prayer. It is only speech that does this.<sup>259</sup>

According to Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, revelation, Muslim tradition, Islamic law, and Arabic language convention all agree that true speech does not include inner speech or thoughts. Rather, speech refers to an act of the tongue that produces meanings and expressions. That is why the Apostle Muḥammad explained that people are not punished for inner speech/thoughts (*ḥadīth al-nafs*) until they verbally express or act upon them. This dispute regarding the meaning of speech, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz reports, did not exist among the righteous forebears, but only arose among later scholars from the people of innovation, and then it became widespread.<sup>260</sup>

The Kalām theologians who say that the Qur’ān is an expression of the undifferentiated meaning subsisting in God, effectively argues that the Qur’ān is created, although they may not be aware of it. God often refers to the Qur’ān as a physical entity that is recited and heard by people. This is indicated by the Qur’ānic verse “Say, ‘Even if all mankind and jinn came together to produce something like this Quran, they could not produce anything like it’” (Q 17:88). God obviously refers to the Qur’ān as something heard and recited, since how could mankind and the jinn produce something the like of the Qur’ān if it subsists in God’s essence, which they have no access to.<sup>261</sup>

To the response that God refers to the Qur’ān as a mimetic reproduction (*ḥikāya*) and expressions (*‘ibāra*) of what subsists in Himself, and this what is recited, written, and heard, then this also entails the createdness of the Qur’an. In fact, the notion that the Qur’ān is a reproduction and expression of God’s essence is more blasphemous (*akfar*), because the reproduction of something is like thing itself. Thus, the Kalām theologians declare that God’s attributes are reproduced (*maḥkiyya*). If this recitation were a reproduction of God’s essence, this would mean that the Qur’ān’s reciter produces something similar to God’s speech. This

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<sup>259</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/201.

<sup>260</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/202.

<sup>261</sup> Ibn Abī l-‘Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/202-203.

negates the inimitability of the Qur'ān (*fa-ayna 'ajzuhum*, lit. “where is there incapacity?”). The *Kalāmīc* notion that the recited Qur'ān is a reproduction and expression of God's undifferentiated speech, means that the reader recites letters and sounds that represent something without letters and sounds. This makes no sense.<sup>262</sup>

Against the doctrine of undifferentiated meaning and inner speech, Ibn Abī l-'Izz posits that the physicality and multiplicity of the Qur'ān is reflected in the fact that the Qur'ān is divided into *suras*, verses, and letters. This, according to Ibn Abī l-'Izz is known from revelation: “Then produce ten invented suras like it” (Q 11:13) and “But no, these are verses clear to the hearts of those endowed with knowledge” (Q 29:49). Ibn Abī l-'Izz also cites the *ḥadīth* attributed to the Apostle Muḥammad “I do not say that *Alif Lām Mīm* is a letter; rather, the *alif* is a letter, the *lām* is a letter and the *mīm* is a letter.”<sup>263</sup>

Like Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Abī l-'Izz balks at the idea that there is a difference between God's eternal speech and the Arabic Qur'an since the miraculous nature (*i'jāz*) of the Qur'ān is found both in its composition and meanings. He mentions the report that Abū Ḥanīfa allowed for the Qur'ān to be recited in Persian during the ritual prayer. He later abandoned this position, stating that all able to perform the prayer in Arabic must do so. He also cites other opinions that whoever recites the Qur'ān in a different language is either insane (*majnūn*), in need of medical treatment, or a heretic (*zindīq*) who is to be executed. Interestingly, Ibn Abī l-'Izz also cites the Māturīdite theologian Abū l-Barakāt al-Nasafī's *al-Manār* in support for the traditionalist view, “The Qur'an is the term for both the composition [*naẓm*] and the meaning [*ma'nā*].”<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/202-203.

<sup>263</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/203.

<sup>264</sup> Ibn Abī l-'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1/204.



## **CHAPTER VI**

### **CONCLUSION**

Ibn Abī l-‘Izz was an obscure Ḥanafite disciple of Ibn Taymiyyan in the eighth/thirteenth century. He was part of a relatively small number of scholars who positively received the teachings and works of the innovative and controversial Ḥanbalite scholar. Both men lived at a time in which the intellectual and theological climate was permeated with Aristotelian logic, Neoplatonist philosophy, and philosophised Kalām. Like his Ḥanbalite example, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz

In writing his commentary on the creed of the Ḥanafite Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭaḥāwī, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz was clearly motivated to fight what he perceived as heresies. Like Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz believed that the Muslim scholarly community had deviated from the righteous forebears’ and the early Muslim community’s original understanding of Islam. Rather than rely on the authoritative sources of the Qur’an, the Sunna, and the practice of the righteous forebears, the Kalām theologians decided to follow the premises of Greek philosophy, non-Muslim theologies, and their own whims.

As a Ḥanafite himself, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz dedicated significant portions of his commentary to the refutation of the *Kalām*ic beliefs and premises of his fellow Hanafites, who had overwhelmingly adopted the Kalām theological vision of the Transoxianan Ḥanafite scholar Abū Maṣū‘ al-Māturīdī.

At first glance, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s choice for the *Ṭaḥāwiyya* to refute the *mutakallimun* may seem surprising because of its close association with the Ḥanafite and Māturīdite traditions, reflected in the fact that all commentaries on the creed before the twentieth centuries were written by Ḥanafites. The creed itself, however, with some exceptions such as al-Ṭaḥāwī’s statements on *īmān*, is not an overtly Ḥanafite text, allowing for different interpretations of its contents. Secondly, the close association of the creed with the Ḥanafites, it allowed Ibn Abī l-‘Izz to challenge this association and claim al-Ṭaḥāwī and more importantly Abū Ḥanīfa for the traditionalist camp.

In his pursuit to combat heresy, Ibn Abī l-‘Izz did not seek to write an “original” text. Large parts of the commentary are directly taken from the works of Ibn Taymiyya. The sections written by Ibn Abī l-‘Izz’s own hand are, however, also permeated with Taymiyyan theological views and concerns.

The second chapter of this thesis demonstrated that Ibn Abī l-‘Izz criticises Kalām theologians on the basis of a Taymiyyan epistemology and hermeneutics. He privileges revelation and the example of the early Muslim community and

criticises the use of reason in the religious sciences. Like Ibn Taymiyya, however, he takes aim at the Kalamīc form of reason, which privileges reason in cases when it conflicts with the texts of revelation and reinterprets them (*ta'wīl*). According to Ibn Abī l-'Izz, the Qur'ān and the Sunna never contradict pure reason (*al-'aql al-ṣarīḥ*), nor do they conflict with the sound primordial disposition (*al-fiṭra al-salīma*) of human beings. Any apparent conflict is the result of the incorrect use of reason or misinterpretation of revelation. In Taymiyyan fashion, Ibn Abī l-'Izz God's existence, the nonexistence of the multiple creator deities, and the basic rules of rational thoughts.

The third chapter analysed Ibn Abī l-'Izz's conception of *īmān*, where the Ḥanafite *Taḥāwīyya* significantly diverges from the traditionalists by excluding acts from *īmān*. For that reason, Ibn Abī l-'Izz dedicates a large portion of it to demonstrate the traditionalist credentials of Abū Ḥanīfa. He argues that apparent conflict between the early Ḥanafites and the righteous forebears is a semantic one, revolving around the question whether actions are a part of the essence of *īmān* or a consequence of having *īmān* in one's heart. He also rejects the *Kalāmīc* notion

This thesis's final chapter discussed Ibn Abī l-'Izz's treatment of the divine of the createdness of the Qur'ān. He primarily takes aim against the Mu'tazilite entails, Ibn Abī l-'Izz argues, that God's speech exists in another beings, which is

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