IV. KISIM - PART IV

KELÂM

KALĀM

CHAPTER 9 / BÖLÜM 9

ISLAMIC THEOLOGY IN THE MAMLUK PERIOD: IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYA AND THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

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Among the scholarly circles of 8th/14th century Mamluk Damascus, the majority of the theological activity involved controversies between two trends of Islamic traditionalists, the Ḥanbalites and the Ashʿarites.[1] These controversies were not always purely theological; they were also shaped by the power relations between the religious scholars (*'ulamā'*) in the city. The highbrow religious establishment in Mamluk Damascus held Ashʿarite theological stances and promoted the speculative or dialectical theology known as *Kalām*. The elitist Ashʿarites were the ones to set the norms of the religious discourse, as they followed the philosophical theology of the later-Ashʿarite scholar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209).[2] In this scholarly setting, the renowned activist, Taqi 'l-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), and his devoted disciple, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350; henceforth Ibn al-Qayyim), advocated a unique version of Ḥanbalism, while openly denouncing the hegemonic Ashʿarite theology.[3] Both the master and his disciple confronted the most powerful among their contemporary Damascene *ʿulamāʾ* and rattled the socio-political conditions in the city.[4] Whereas

1 Throughout this paper I use the term 'traditionalist' which refers to the core Islamic theology. Scholars who affiliated themselves with traditionalist trends relied on the Quran and the Sunna (i.e., Hadith) in their teachings, while incorporating rational considerations; Binyamin Abrahamov, "Scripturalist and Traditionalist Theology," in Sabine Schmidtke (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199696703.013.025.

2 Ayman Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī: 6th/12th Century Developments in Muslim Philosophical Theology", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 15/1 (1999): 141–179.

3 Jon Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology," in Sabine Schmidtke (ed.), *Oxford handbook of Islamic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 633–643.

4 For an overview, see: Caterina Bori and Livnat Holtzman (eds.), "Introduction: A Scholar in the Shadows", *A*

Ibn Taymiyya's theology has been the focus of numerous studies, Western research on the thought of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya—who systemized, popularized and spread his master's teachings—has gained considerable momentum only in the past few decades.

The following paper concentrates on selected highlights of the theological thought of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya in his *magnum opus* entitled *al-Ṣawā'iq 'l-mursala ʿala 'l-jahmiyya wal-muʿaṭṭila* (The Unleashed Thunderbolts Directed against the Heretics and the Deniers [of the Divine Attributes]). In this massive work, Ibn al-Qayyim strove to refute the Ashʿarite accusations of corporealism (*tajsīm*) and anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*) which were made against the Ḥanbalite literal understanding of particularly challenging divine attributes (*ṣifāt Allāh*) in the Quran and Ḥadīth literature. While doing so, Ibn al-Qayyim attacked the fundamental premises of the Ashʿarite metaphorical interpretation method (*ta'wīl majāzī*).[5] Relying on the scholastic model of Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn al-Qayyim based his theology on the writings of his traditionalist predecessors, known as *ahl al-sunna wa'l-ḥadīth* (i.e., the people of the Sunna and Hadith). Ibn al-Qayyim responded the speculative theology of the Ashʿarites in sophisticated writing that systemized and developed his mentor's unique theological views. Ibn al-Qayyim's constant engagement with the Damascene milieu, its educated elite and laypeople alike, taught him the necessity of expanding the boundaries of the theological discussion beyond the borders of the standard traditionalistic discourse. This standard discourse is mostly represented in verbatim citations from the Islamic sources. Deliberating the central theological issue of divine attributes, Ibn al-Qayyim was prepared to go beyond the simplistic *bi-lā kayfa* formula which means affirming (*ithbāt*) the attributes and anthropomorphisms "without asking how" they realize or without inquiring further;[6] namely, understanding them literally and avoiding any interpretation. This *bi-lā kayfa* formula was also apparent in the Ashʿarite concept of *tafwīḍ*, i.e., delegating the ontic meanings of problematic divine attributes to God or to the Prophet Muḥammad. But unlike the Ashʿarite recourse to metaphorical interpretation (*ta'wīl*), the Taymiyyan approach to the divine attributes combined the known *bi-lā kayfa* formula with a linguistic inquiry that emphasizes the actual realities that the attributes represent and their depiction of God's absolute perfection.[7]

Scholar in the Shadow: Essays in the Legal and Theological Thought of Ibn Qayyim Al-Ǧawziyyah, Oriente Moderno XC/1 (Rome: Istituto per l'Oriente C.A. Nallino, 2010), 13-44.

5 Yasir Qadhi, "'The Unleashed Thunderbolts' of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya: An Introductory Essay," in: Caterina Bori and Livnat Holtzman (eds.), *A Scholar in the Shadow: Essays in the Legal and Theological Thought of Ibn Qayyim al-Ǧawziyyah*, Oriente Moderno XC/1 (Rome: Istituto per l'Oriente C.A. Nallino, 2010), 135–149; Belhaj, Abdessamad, "Ibn Qayyim al-Ǧawziyyah et sa contribution à la rhétorique arabe," in: Caterina Bori and Livnat Holtzman (eds.), *A Scholar in the Shadow: Essays in the Legal and Theological Thought of Ibn Qayyim al-Ǧawziyyah*, Oriente Moderno XC/1 (Rome: Istituto per l'Oriente C.A. Nallino, 2010), 151–160.

6 Binyamin Abrahamov, "The "Bi-lā Kayfa" Doctrine and Its Foundations in Islamic Theology", *Arabica* 42/1–3 (1995): 365–379.

7 Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology", 637-639; Livnat Holtzman, *Anthropomorphism in Islam: The Challenge of*

Adhering to Ibn Taymiyya's approach, in *al-Ṣawāʿiq* Ibn al-Qayyim offered elaborate answers to the questions of the educated non-scholarly elite about theological issues that stimulated the imagination. Ibn al-Qayyim's theology therefore represents his contribution to a new form of Islamic traditionalism that does not hesitate to profess its credo in the rationalistic language of *Kalām*.[8] Therefore, this paper aims at demonstrating Ibn al-Qayyim's use of the *Kalām*ic discourse in *al-Ṣawāʿiq* both in terms of contents and structure. The first part of this paper presents the text of *al-Ṣawāʿiq* as a whole and outlines its themes. The second part focuses on highpoints of Ibn al-Qayyim's discussions in this work. Overall, this paper summarizes some of the most important findings and conclusions I have reached to in my book published by Brill in 2018, entitled *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and the Divine Attributes: Rationalized-Traditionalistic Theology*.

As already noted, the work *al-Ṣawāʿiq*,[9] together with its more popular abridgement (*mukhtaṣar*),[10] is a large-scaled piece of dialectical theology that befits the discourse of *Kalām*. *Al-Ṣawāʿiq* is widely perceived as one of Ibn al-Qayyim's most important and mature works, which was written towards the end of his life.[11] The work's title originates in verse 13:13 in the Quran "He [God] sends thunderbolts to strike whoever He will. Yet still they dispute about God—He has mighty plans."[12] In referring to this verse, Ibn al-Qayyim discloses the fury that motivated and accompanied his writing. In fact, a*l-Ṣawāʿiq* can be characterized in a distinct martial tone, similar to that of the theological and intellectual debates in the public sphere (i.e., *munāẓarāt*). In the work's title, Ibn al-Qayyim also condemns his ideological rivals with

Traditionalism, 700–1550 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 318–320.

8 Livnat Holtzman and Miriam Ovadia, "On Divine Aboveness (*al-Fawqiyya*): The Development of Rationalized Ḥadīth-Based Argumentations in Islamic Theology", in: Yohanan Friedmann and Christoph Markschies (eds.), *Rationalization in Religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 224-269; Miriam Ovadia, *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and the Divine Attributes: Rationalized-Traditionalistic Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 68-75 (For an elaboration on the relationship between Ibn Taymiyya's and Ibn al-Qayyim's writing, see pages 75-81).

9 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, Shams al-Dīn Abū Bakr Muḥammad, *al-Ṣawāʿiq al-mursala ʿala 'l-Jahmiyya wal-muʿaṭṭila*, ed. ʿAlī al-Dakhīl Allah, third edition in 4 vols. (Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1418/1998).

10 Ibn al-Mawṣilī, Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad (d. 774/1372), *Mukhtaṣar al-Ṣawāʿiq al-mursala ʿala 'l-jahmiyya wal-muʿaṭṭila*, originally written by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, ed. Al-ʿAlawī, Al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥman, in 4 vols. (Riyadh: Aḍwāʾ al-Salaf, 1425/2004). Another noteworthy (yet sparse) abridgement of *al-Ṣawāʿiq* was written by Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (d. 1206/1792), the chief ideologue of the Wahhābi movement in Saudi Arabia of early modern times. See: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Mukhtaṣar al-ṣawāʿiq al-mursala*
ʿala 'l-jahmiyya wal-Muʿaṭṭila, the abridgement of Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, ed. Daghash ibn Shabīb al-ʿAjmī, in 1 vol. (Kuwait: Maktabat Ahl al-Āthār, 2016).

11 Birgit Krawietz, "Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah: His Life and Works", *Mamlūk Studies Review*, 10/2 (2006): 19–64; Livnat Holtzman,"Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (1292–1350)", in Joseph E. Lowry and Devin Stewart (eds.), *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography 1350–1850* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 201–222.

12 Translation of Quranic verses is taken from: M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qurʾan: A new translation*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

specific derogatory labels. The group referred to as the *Muʿaṭṭila* is the ultra-rationalistic Muʿtazilites, who negated the reality of divine attributes (*nafī*) and practiced *taʿṭīl*, namely stripping God from His attributes; the second group that Ibn al-Qayyim targets with the derogatory label *Jahmiyya* is the Ashʿarites, who are often described in loathing in Ibn al-Qayyim's writing. These groups applied figurative interpretation (*ta'wīl*) on the anthropomorphic expressions that appear in the Quran and Hadith and saw them as metaphors (*majāz*).[13] In Ibn al-Qayyim's opinion, metaphorical interpretation of challenging divine attributes distorts the original meaning of the texts sacred to Islam. In *al-Ṣawāʿiq* Ibn al-Qayyim articulates radical criticism—which is originated in Taymiyyan teachings—against the Muʿtazilite and Ashʿarite approaches to the issues of divine attributes and anthropomorphic expressions.

Ibn al-Qayyim's prime objective in his work *al-Ṣawāʿiq* is to disprove four fundamentals of the rationalistic epistemological views and hermeneutical techniques which the Ashʿarites commonly applied in theological debates. Ibn al-Qayyim designates these four fundamentals with the Arabic word *ṭawāghīt* (singular: *ṭāghūt*). The Quranic meaning of this word is "false idols" (Q 2: 256 "whoever rejects false gods [*ṭawāghīt*] and believes in God …"); however, according to Ibn al-Qayyim's terminology in his other works, he understands this word in an abstract meaning as a false and destructive principle, conviction or a way of thinking that leads to heresy.[14] These *ṭawāghīt* are formulated in the following arguments, that Ibn al-Qayyim ascribes to the Ashʿarites. As will be discussed hereinafter, all these principles are mainly derived from the thought of the later-Ashʿarite scholar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī:

1. The texts of the Qurʾan and the Hadith contain verbal evidence (*adilla lafẓiyya*) which do not produce certain knowledge (*'ilm yaqīn*).
2. In case of conflict, Reason (*'aql*) is prior to Revelation (*naql*).
3. Anthropomorphic expressions are metaphors (*majāzāt*) of no reality (*ḥaqīqa*).
4. Prophetic traditions with a limited number of chains of transmissions (such as *ḥadīth al-āḥād*) cannot produce certain knowledge.[15]

13 Wolfhart Heinrichs, "Contacts between Scriptural Hermeneutics and Literary Theory in Islam: The Case of *Majāz*", *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch islamischen Wissenschaften* 7 (1991/92): 253–255; idem, "On the Genesis of the *Ḥaqīqa-Majāz* Dichotomy", *Studia Islamica* 59 (1984): 111–117; Kees Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar and Qurʾanic Exegesis in Early Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 122.

14 See Ibn al-Qayyim's abstract use of the term *ṭāghūt* in his other works: *Iʿlām al-muwaqqiʿīn ʿan rabb al-ʿālamīn*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Salām Ibrāhīm, in 4 volumes (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1411/1991), 1: 39–40, 186; idem, *al-Kāfiya al-shāfiya fi 'l-intiṣār lil-firqa 'l-nājiya: al-qaṣīda 'l-nūniyya*, ed. ʿAbdallāh ibn Muḥammad al-ʿAmīr (Riyadh: Dār Ibn Khuzayma, 1417/[1996]), 275–276.

15 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *al-Ṣawāʿiq al-mursala*, 2: 632.

This list comprises what Ibn al-Qayyim identifies as the four fundamentals that caused the dangerous intellectual deterioration of the entire Islamic community as a direct consequence of the vast use of the method of *ta'wīl.* Each of the four *ṭawāghīt* is refuted in a separate part of the work *al-Ṣawā'iq*. The four parts are preceded by a lengthy introduction of 24 sections, whose main argument is against *ta'wīl* as a linguistic and intellectual phenomenon. Observing the contents of *al-Ṣawāʿiq* in a linear reading, the interior order of the text closely resembles the guidelines of a *Kalām* manual.[16] This order consists of a discussion on epistemology (first, second and fourth *ṭawāghīt* refutations) and the theoretical definitions of the certain knowledge (*'ilm yaqīn*) required for theological discussions, as opposed to presumptions (*ẓann, pl. ẓunūn*) that supply deficient knowledge for theological argumentation. Then, Ibn al-Qayyim continues to an advanced deliberation on hermeneutics and interpretation devices of the subject of divine attributes (third *ṭāghūt* refutation). The second *ṭāghūt*, on the preference of Reason (*'aql*) to Revelation (*naql*) when the two collide, refers to al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) 'General Rule' of interpretation (*al-qānūn al-kullī fī 'l-ta'wīl*) which was later perfected by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.[17] Ibn al-Qayyim's *al-Ṣawāʿiq* therefore targets the very core of the later-Ashʿarite epistemological and hermeneutical theories. Ibn al-Qayyim emphasizes the skeptical aspect of al-Rāzī's approach to the Islamic textual sources (*nuṣūs 'l-waḥy*), namely: the Quran and Hadith (*kalām Allāh wa-kalām rasūlihi*).[18] Ibn al-Qayyim notes that in al-Rāzī's opinion, these texts cannot produce certainty, but only presumptions (*ẓann*, pl. *ẓunūn*), "unless ten conditions are ascertained".[19] Setting conditions for the certainty of the textual sources is unconceivable, according to Ibn al-Qayyim. Under the thematic scope of the issue of divine attributes, in *al-Ṣawāʿiq* Ibn al-Qayyim attacks four major rationalistic modes of argumentation, while systematically engaging with their underlying theories of epistemology and hermeneutics.

As Ibn al-Qayyim attacks the later-Ashʿarite theoretical modus operandi as he perceives it, he also didactically unfolds his positive epistemological and hermeneutical alternative approaches to the issue of divine attributes. Ibn al-Qayyim advanced the Taymiyyan theological creed and its epistemic optimism, according to which, the texts of the Quran and Hadith produce certainty

16 Ovadia, *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and the Divine Attributes*, 81-89.

17 Ayman Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī", 171–172.

18 Ayman Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006), 181–199; al-Rāzī's pessimistic approach is first a derivative of his opinion on human agency; however, this is also appropriate to his view on the prospects of achieving certain knowledge. For a fuller discussion on the developments in al-Rāzī's epistemological view regarding this topic, see: Ovadia, *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and the Divine Attributes*, 138-145

19 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *al-Ṣawāʿiq al-mursala*, 2: 632-638. See also: Tarik Jaffer, "Muʿtazilite Aspects of Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Thought", *Arabica* 59/5 (2012): 510–535.

since they were delivered by God and His Prophet.[20] The Taymiyyan claim thus opposes the idea that any contradiction between Reason and Revelation may arise, because it considers Reason as inherent to the Revelation.[21] Therefore, the divine attributes in these texts are to be understood at face value in their apparent meanings (*ʿalā ẓāhirihi*) and according to their containing context, as describing real essences of God (*ḥaqīqa*, pl. *ḥaqāʾiq*) in the most appropriate and perfect way possible. Applying figurative interpretation on the texts alters their meanings as intended by their Godly speaker and is therefore forbidden.[22] Ibn al-Qayyim adopts Ibn Taymiyya's basic analysis, according to which the division of the language into *ḥaqīqa* (literal meaning) and *majāz* (non-literal metaphorical meaning) is alien to the ancient and authentic science of Arabic grammar. In Ibn al-Qayyim's view, the *majāz* is a mere hermeneutical device that the Muʿtaziltes invented to allegorically interpret divine attributes that implied God's corporeality.[23] The Ashʿarite theologians who were willing to incorporate rationalistic and philosophical methods in their teachings, adopted the device of *majāz* of the Muʿtaziltes.

One of Ibn al-Qayyim's more general aims throughout *al-Ṣawāʿiq* is to revalidate the epistemic status of the Hadith literature when dealing with theological issues and with the divine attributes in particular. Ibn al-Qayyim offers a tradition-based epistemic solution to the question of anthropomorphism, as he positively emphasizes the certitude produced by the Prophetic traditions. This statement appears in the first *ṭāghūt* refutation in *al-Ṣawāʿiq*, where Ibn al-Qayyim argues that the texts of the Qurʾan and Hadith produce certain knowledge (*ʿilm yaqīn*). In *al-Ṣawāʿiq*'s fourth refutation, Ibn al-Qayyim addresses the case of Prophetic traditions with a limited number of chains of transmissions (such as *ḥadīth al-āḥād* or *khabar al-wāḥid*), a category in which many anthropomorphic traditions of the divine attributes were classified (i.e., *aḥādīth al-ṣifāt*). This type of traditions of limited transmission chains was mostly regarded as much inferior to traditions classified as *mutawātir* (namely: massively transmitted) or *manshūr* (namely: well-known, widely distributed) in their epistemic value and the kind of knowledge they might produce for legal rulings and theological discussions.[24]

20 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *al-Ṣawāʿiq al-mursala*, 2: 766-794, 4: 796-909, 1091-1095, 1514-1515.

21 Abrahamov, "Ibn Taymiyya on the Agreement of Reason with Tradition", *The Muslim World* 82/3–4 (1992): 257.

22 Ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Ṣawāʿiq al-mursala*, 1:178–180. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Mukhtaṣar al-Ṣawāʿiq* (the abridgement of Ibn al-Mawṣilī), 2:690–750. Mohamed M. Yunis Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics: Sunni Legal Theorists' Models of Textual Communication* (Richmond, Surrey: Routledge, 2000). Ibn al-Qayyim's dismissal of *majāz* also relies on his mentor's view in the issue of the origin on language (*aṣl al-lugha*). For further discussion, see: Mustafa Shah, "Classical Islamic Discourse in the Origin of Language: Cultural Memory and the Defense of Orthodoxy", *Numen* 58 (2011) 314–343; Ovadia, *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and the Divine Attributes*, 201-206, 238-243.

23 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Mukhtaṣar al-Ṣawāʿiq* (the abridgement of Ibn al-Mawṣilī), 2:821–823.

24 Muḥammad Z. Siddiqi, and Abdal H. Murad, *Ḥadīth Literature: Its Origin, Development and Special Features*,

For the requirement of certainty in theological subjects, the Muʿtazilites did not hesitate to discard the credibility of *aḥādīth al-ṣifāt* with limited transmission chains and rejected these traditions—or simply ignore them—in their discussions. Ashʿarite scholars, whose commitment to the textual sources did not allow them to reject *aḥādīth al-ṣifāt* altogether, accepted them while accommodating the method of *taʾwīl* in order to allegorically interpret *aḥādīth al-ṣifāt* in an appropriate manner to the discourse about God (i.e., without interpreting their modality).[25] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, for example, perceived *akhbār al-āḥād* as invalid for attaining knowledge about God and His attributes, since they only produce presumptions (*inn*[a] *aḥbār*[a] *ʾl-āḥād*[i] *maẓnūnat*[un]).[26] In contrast, Ibn al-Qayyim articulated the Taymiyyan conviction that considers the entire corpus of traditions on the divine attributes to be indicative evidence (*dalīl*, pl. *dalāʾil*), since they corroborate one another, comply with the stories in the Quran (*qiṣaṣ al-qurʾān*) and preserve the Prophet's expressions and intended meanings. Therefore, *aḥādīth al-ṣifāt* necessarily produces certain and beneficial knowledge, including traditions of limited transmission chains.[27] Like his mentor Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn al-Qayyim accuses the Muʿtazilites of avoiding the use of traditions of a limited number of transmitters in their theology, deceptively thinking that this secures them against error. Ibn al-Qayyim makes a similar accusation against his contemporary Ashʿarites and argues they misuse verse Q 42:11 "there is nothing like Him" in order to reject sound traditions (*aḥādīth ṣaḥīḥa*).[28]

In a wider perspective, it seems that Ibn al-Qayyim deliberately structured the text of *al-Ṣawāʿiq* to reflect his stance in favor of the epistemic value of the Hadith literature. In fact, the contents and structure of *al-Ṣawāʿiq* demonstrate that this work is a direct response to Fakr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's influential work *Asās al-taqdīs*, which was explicitly written to sponsor the rationalistic use of figurative interpretation (*taʾwīl*) and counter the traditionalistic hermeneutical approach. In addition, considering the contents constituting *al-Ṣawāʿiq* and its four *ṭawāghīt* refutations, it becomes obvious that Ibn al-Qayyim does not display a typical linear manner of authorship when connecting the different parts of the work. Rather, Ibn al-Qayyim designs a literary structure of symmetry that highlights the position of the Islamic textual sources, with special consideration given to the Hadith literature. By creating a clear connec-

2nd ed. (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 1–13, 107–110; Aron Zysow, *The Economy of Certainty: An Introduction to the Typology of Islamic Legal Theory*, Resources in Arabic and Islamic Studies (Atlanta, Georgia: Lockwood Press, 2013), 7–13.

25 Holtzman, *Anthropomorphism in Islam*, 301–302, 306–308.

26 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar (d. 606/1209), *Asās al-taqdīs*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqā (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyya, 1406/1986), 215–219.

27 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Mukhtaṣar al-Ṣawāʿiq* (the abridgement of Ibn al-Mawṣilī), 4: 1401-1449ff.

28 Ibid, 4:1531–1556, 1609-1645. Ibn al-Qayyim quotes here the opinion of the Ẓāhirite scholar Ibn Ḥazm.

tion between the first and fourth *ṭawāghīt*, Ibn al-Qayyim creates a Hadith-binding for his rationalized-traditionalistic alternative to the later-Ashʿarite ideas, which to a certain degree depart from the texts and turn to exterior means of reasoning. Thus, Ibn al-Qayyim adeptly organizes his arguments in a symmetrical fashion to frame and accentuate his epistemological conceptions. This is but a single representation of Ibn al-Qayyim's sensitivity to literary aesthetics and his appealing authorial command, combining the dialectical with the didactic.[29]

Ibn al-Qayyim's discussion on the divine attribute of aboveness (*al-fawqiyya*) in *al-Ṣawāʿiq* is a brilliant illustration of his theological approach. His discussion of the divine aboveness is based on two leading principles: the literal and essential meaning of divine attributes, and their absolute perfection.[30] He opens his systematic investigation of the attribute of aboveness with numerous citations of Qurʾānic verses and evidence from the Hadith. Thereafter his linguistic inquiry sets off. As a starting point, he emphasizes the importance of the customary use of the preposition "above" (*fawq*[a]) in Arabic. Against the Ashʿarite understanding of God's aboveness as a metaphor for God's superiority and great strength, Ibn al-Qayyim claims that Arabic language does not allow for such a figurative interpretation of the divine aboveness:

> The literal and essential meaning of aboveness [*ḥaqīqat al-fawqiyya*] is that a thing is higher than other things. However, the *Jahmiyya* falsely claim that it is a metaphor [*majāz*] for a superiority of status and strength, as is customarily said: Gold is above silver [in value; *al-dhahab*[u] *fawq*[a] *'l-fiḍḍa*[ti]], and: the Emir is above his deputy [in rank; *wa'l-amīr*[u] *fawq*[a] *nāʾibih*[i]]. Even if this were true regarding God, denying the essentiality of His aboveness and forcing an interpretation according to the *majāz* on the word *fawqiyya* is wrong. … When the speaker says: "gold is above silver", the context [*al-siyāq*] and the conventions of language lead to the understanding of two things: that they are both in the same place [*makān*] and that they are different in their status [*makāna*]. Thus, the discourse [*al-khiṭāb*] refers to what the listeners know and what is not ambiguous for them. Is there a similar linguistic convention regarding God's aboveness, which takes into consideration such an understanding of the listener? … Linguistic conventions [*ʿahd*], human instincts [*fiṭar*], human minds [*ʿuqūl*], religious law [*sharāʾiʿ*] and all of God's revealed books oppose [the use of *majāz*]. God Himself [*bi-dhātih*[i]; in His essence] is above the world. The discourse about His aboveness emanates from what is firmly established in the human instincts, the human mind and the books of Revelation.[31]

29 Ovadia, *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and the Divine Attributes*, 283-289.

30 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Mukhtaṣar al-Ṣawāʿiq* (the abridgement of Ibn al-Mawṣilī), 3: 1060-1100; Holtzman and Ovadia, "On Divine Aboveness (*al-Fawqiyya*)", 252-256.

31 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Mukhtaṣar al-Ṣawāʿiq* (the abridgement of Ibn al-Mawṣilī), 3: 1061-1062; Holtzman and Ovadia, "On Divine Aboveness (*al-Fawqiyya*)", 257.

The linguistic convention according to which the word *fawq*[a] (above) is a preposition in Arabic, provides the basic argument that allows Ibn al-Qayyim to invalidate the rationalistic argument for a figurative understanding of God's aboveness. Then, Ibn al-Qayyim's speculative argumentation about the perfection of the divine aboveness runs as follows: God's aboveness is one of His attributes of perfection (*ṣifat kamāl*). As the Creator of all beings, God is the most perfect essence; hence, only attributes that express absolute perfection with no hint of deficiency (*naqṣ*) can be ascribed to Him. As the sole source of perfection, God is necessarily more perfect than His creation. Consequently, God's attributes are more perfect than those of the creatures He created. Several attributes that do not denote perfection in the creatures, denote perfection in God. Their absence would necessarily entail imperfection in God. Thus, God is necessarily above his creation in His essence in the most perfect manner; otherwise, He would have been described with the opposite attribute. "The opposite of "aboveness" is "belowness" [*sufūl*]", Ibn al-Qayyim explains, "and it is a completely reprehensible attribute because it is the abode of the arch devil Iblīs and his soldiers. … Altitude and aboveness are attributes of perfection [concerning God]."[32]

Using the Islamic textual sources as the basis of his ideas, Ibn al-Qayyim expresses the traditionalistic view that God is above the world. At the same time, his discussion on the *fawqiyya* provides a splendid example of the distinctive approach, shared by both Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Taymiyya, of combining rationalistic argumentations with evidence from the Quran and Hadith. Ibn al-Qayyim employs the scholastic devices of *Kalām*ic dialectical theology for the purpose of negating the *Kalām*ic worldview. This is not a standard traditionalistic method of argumentation, but an advanced technique practiced only by Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim. Compared to the writings of the later-traditionalists who were active in Mamluk Damascus and Cairo and similarly followed Ibn Taymiyya's approach, such as the Hadith scholars and historians Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 749/1348) or ʿImād al-Dīn Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), Ibn al-Qayyim's work *al-Ṣawāʿiq* represents a major leap forward towards rationalized Hadith-based argumentation mode.

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32 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Mukhtaṣar al-Ṣawāʿiq* (the abridgement of Ibn al-Mawṣilī), 3: 1094; Holtzman and Ovadia, "On Divine Aboveness (*al-Fawqiyya*)", 258-260.

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