Theology as Translation: Ibn Taymiyya's Fatwa permitting Theology and its Reception into his *Averting the Conflict between Reason and Revealed Tradition* (Darʾ Taʿāruḍ al-ʿAql wa l-Naql)[1]

Jon Hoover with Marwan Abu Ghazaleh Mahajneh

University of Nottingham

Introduction

The Ḥanbalī jurist Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) wrote his famous tome *Darʾ Taʿāruḍ al-ʿAql wa l-Naql* (*Averting the Conflict between Reason and Revealed Tradition*) in Damascus sometime after 713/1313 to critique the "universal rule" (*qānūn kullī*) of the Ashʿarī *kalām* theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210).[2] According to al-Rāzī's rule, precedence must be given to reason when reason and revelation conflict, and, when reason contradicts the plain sense of a revealed text, that sense must be either reinterpreted to accord with reason or delegated to God and given no further reflection.[3] Ibn Taymiyya rejects al-Rāzī's rule with forty-four considerations or

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[2] Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʾ Taʿāruḍ al-ʿAql wa l-Naql*, ed. M. R. Sālim, 11 vols. (Riyadh: Jāmiʿat al-Imām Muḥammad ibn Suʿūd al-Islāmiyya, 1411/1991). For the dating of *Darʾ*, see Sālim's introduction, 1:7–10, and the summary of Sālim's discussion in J. Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 11 n 23. For the manuscript basis of Sālim's edition, see his introduction, 1:23–70. There is also a brief discussion of the manuscript and publication history, as well as the reception, of *Darʾ* in A. von Kügelgen, "The Poison of Philosophy: Ibn Taymiyya's Struggle for and against Reason," *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, eds. B. Krawietz and G. Tamer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 253–328 (276–284).

[3] N. Heer, "The Priority of Reason in the Interpretation of Scripture: Ibn Taymīyah and the Mutakallimūn," in *Literary Heritage of Classical Islam: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of James A. Bellamy*, ed. M. Mir (Princeton, NJ: Darwin, 1993), 181–195, translates two versions of this rule from al-Rāzī's works (184–185), as well as Ibn Taymiyya's recasting of it in *Darʾ*, 1:4 (189). F. Griffel, "Ibn Taymiyya and His Ashʿarite Opponents on Reason and Revelation: Similarities, Differences, and a Vicious Circle," in the present volume and issue of the *Muslim World*, analyzes al-Rāzī's rule and its background in detail, as well as Ibn Taymiyya's understanding and critique of it.

arguments (*wujūh*) of widely varying length to make the claim that there is in fact no conflict between reason and revealed tradition. Reason properly understood and the texts of revelation are in complete accord.

Darʾ as a whole is gradually receiving the scholarly attention that it deserves.[4] However, it has been little noticed that Ibn Taymiyya inserted a fatwa of his own on the permissibility of theology in between his introduction to *Darʾ* and the elaboration of his forty-four arguments.[5] This is not a fatwa in the narrow sense of a mufti's straightforward response to the query of a judge or lay person about a specific case. It falls instead under Norman Calder's broader definition of the fatwa as the literary form of query and response on questions of religious interest for the purposes of not only legal counsel but also education, recreation, and debate.[6] Ibn Taymiyya introduces the fatwa in *Darʾ* by reporting that during his stay in Egypt, that is, between 705/1306 and 712/1313, "men of distinction" (*fuḍalāʾ*) posed a series of queries on the legality of engaging in theological discourse, the first of which reads, "Is it permissible or not to delve (*khawḍ*) into the

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[4] For an overview of the arguments of *Darʾ*, see B. Abrahamov, "Ibn Taymiyya on the Agreement of Reason with Tradition," *The Muslim World* 82 (1992), 256–273. The following analyze the basic problematic addressed in *Darʾ* and its early arguments: N. Zouggar, "Interprétation autorisée et interprétation proscrite selon le *Livre du rejet de la contradiction entre raison et Écriture* de Taqī l-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taymiyya," *Annales Islamologiques* 44 (2010), 195–206 (analysis of the introduction to *Darʾ* and the sixteenth argument); N. Zouggar, "Aspects de l'argumentation élaborée par Taqī l-Dīn b. Taymiyya (m. 728/1328) dans son livre du *Rejet de la contradiction entre raison et Écriture* (*Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql*)," *Arabica* 61 (2014), 1–17 (analysis of the first five arguments); Heer, "The Priority of Reason," 189–191 (brief accounts of the first, second, and tenth arguments); and Griffel, "A Vicious Circle." *Darʾ* 1:156–170 (the ninth argument) is translated in Y. Michot, "Vanités intellectuelles. . . L'impasse des rationalismes selon le *Rejet de la Contradiction* d'Ibn Taymiyyah," *Oriente Moderno* 19 (2000), 597–617. *Darʾ* 5:10–87, which falls within the twentieth argument, is analyzed and translated in Y. J. Michot, "A Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary on Avicenna's *Risāla aḍḥawiyya*: Being a Translation of a Part of the *Darʾ al-taʿāruḍ* of Ibn Taymiyya, With Introduction, Annotation, and Appendices," *Journal of Islamic Studies* Part I, 14 (2003), 149–203, and Part II, 14 (2003), 309–363. R. El Omari, "Ibn Taymiyya's 'Theology of the Sunna' and His Polemics with the Ashʿarites," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, eds. Y. Rapoport and S. Ahmed (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 101–119, examines Ibn Taymiyya's relation to the Ashʿarīs in *Darʾ*. Analysis of *Darʾ* is prominent in O. Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), especially 196–215. Two recent dissertations analyze *Darʾ* as a whole: Y. Kazi, "Reconciling Reason and Revelation in the Writings of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328): An Analytical Study of Ibn Taymiyya's *Darʾ al-taʿāruḍ*", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (Yale University, 2013); and C. Sh. El-Tobgui, "Reason, Revelation & the Reconstitution of Rationality: Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya's (d. 728/1328) *Darʾ Taʿāruḍ al-ʿAql wa-l-Naql* or 'The Refutation of the Contradiction of Reason and Revelation'," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (McGill University, 2013); we are grateful to Kazi and El-Tobgui for making their dissertations available to us.

[5] Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʾ*, 1:25–78. M. S. Özervarli, "The Qurʾānic Rational Theology of Ibn Taymiyya and His Criticism of the *Mutakallimūn*" in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, 78–100, uses this fatwa as an important source for his argument but does not identify it as a distinct literary unit.

[6] N. Calder, "The Social Function of Fatwas," in *Islamic Jurisprudence in the Classical Era*, ed. C. Imber (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 167–200.

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propositions of the foundations of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*)?"[7] Ibn Taymiyya then responds to these queries with a lengthy explanatory and polemical treatise that he may have composed for his students or for debate with fellow scholars. This fatwa will be called *Khawḍ* after the word *khawḍ* (to delve) that appears in the opening query. Ibn Taymiyya most likely penned *Khawḍ* in Egypt itself prior to its reception into *Darʾ*, but this is not completely certain. *Khawḍ* has also been transmitted separately from *Darʾ*, but it is not known whether these independent versions derive from a textual tradition originating before *Darʾ* was written or from *Darʾ* itself.[8] Additionally, Ibn Taymiyya says in *Darʾ* only that he received and answered the queries in *Khawḍ* while in Egypt. He does not state explicitly that he wrote the fatwa out in the form found in *Darʾ* while residing there. Thus, it is possible that *Khawḍ* as it appears in *Darʾ* is a revision of an earlier text or a reconstruction of his earlier interactions from notes or memory. A full translation of *Khawḍ*, the first in a western language, is appended to this article. In-line page references to *Khawḍ* throughout are to its pagination in the first volume of Muḥammad Rashād Sālim's edition of *Darʾ*, which provides the best available Arabic text of the fatwa and the basis of the translation.[9]

The fact that Ibn Taymiyya introduced *Khawḍ* into *Darʾ* underlines the fatwa's significance in his own mind and has guaranteed it a prominent place in his corpus. However, it is not immediately apparent why he included *Khawḍ* since it does not ostensibly address the primary concerns of *Darʾ*. It does not mention al-Rāzī's rule, and the point that it discusses—the permissibility of engaging in theological argument—is not a central theme in *Darʾ*. One could perhaps view its insertion as no more than a product of Ibn Taymiyya's digressive writing style. Yet, upon closer inspection, it becomes apparent that *Khawḍ* functions in *Darʾ* as the warrant and the methodological lynchpin for its argument. In *Khawḍ* Ibn Taymiyya envisions the task of theology to be translating the

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[7] Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʾ*, 1:25.

[8] Sālim in his introduction to *Darʾ* (1:64–66) describes a text of *Khawḍ* found independently of *Darʾ* in manuscript Dār al-Kutub (Cairo), Taymūriyya 204, 85–125; Sālim calls this version of the fatwa *Bayān Khātam al-Nabiyyīn* since those words appear in a descriptive sentence preceding it in the manuscript. *Khawḍ* has also been printed in the two collections *Majmūʿ Fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya* [hereafter MF], eds. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Qāsim and Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad, 37 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Raḥma, n.d.), 3:293–326; and Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Fatāwā al-Kubrā*, eds. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā and Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā, 6 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1987), 1:127–152; and as a standalone treatise bearing the title *Risāla fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*—this has been found published in two versions, one in Cairo by Maktabat al-Īmān without a date, and another given the date 1400/1980 for the third printing but without a publisher or place of publication. All of these independent versions lack short sections of *Khawḍ* found in *Darʾ*. In his critical apparatus, Sālim notes the lacunae in the manuscript of *Bayān Khātam al-Nabiyyīn*, and in the printed editions of MF and *al-Fatāwā al-Kubrā* (see e.g. *Darʾ*, 30–31, 40, 42, 55, 63). Also, all of the independent printed editions lack Ibn Taymiyya's response to the last of the fatwa queries corresponding to *Darʾ* 1:72–78. It is not clear why the various versions of the fatwa differ, and none of the printings apart from *Darʾ* specify their sources.

[9] See footnote 2 above for Sālim's edition.

meanings of revealed texts into contemporary idioms so as to safeguard those meanings in the face of competing theological articulations, and this is arguably central to what Ibn Taymiyya sees himself doing in the rest of *Dar*ʾ. Moreover, this conception of the theological enterprise in *Khawḍ* and its outworking in *Dar*ʾ sets Ibn Taymiyya in opposition not only to the rationalism of al-Rāzī's Ashʿarī *kalām* but also to the fideism of the traditionalists with whom he associated. To elaborate the significance of *Khawḍ* and its role in *Dar*ʾ, this study will examine resistance to Ibn Taymiyya's theology from within his own traditionalist circles, analyze the core argument of *Khawḍ* itself, and then return to the question of its reception into *Dar*ʾ.

The traditionalist wariness of Ibn Taymiyya's theology

Ibn Taymiyya wrote prolifically on theology or, more precisely and idiomatically, the foundations of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*), and Ovamir Anjum has recently highlighted an anecdote in which the Damascene scholar himself explains why. The anecdote is found in the laudatory biography written by ʿUmar ibn ʿAlī al-Bazzār (d. 749/1350).[10] Al-Bazzār asks Ibn Taymiyya why he wrote far more extensively on the theological foundations of religion than on other disciplines. Ibn Taymiyya replies that he saw a vast array of groups ranging from philosophers, Sufi monists, and *kalām* theologians to Nusayrī Shīʿīs and corporealists going astray into innovation, with many of them even seeking to falsify the Sharīʿa and most of them leading people into doubt and secret unbelief (*zandaqa*). Thus, Ibn Taymiyya says, "It became clear to me that everyone who can repel their specious contentions and their falsehoods and cut down their argument and their errors must exert himself in unveiling their depravities and falsifying their proofs, defending the right confession and the correct and manifest path."[11] Ibn Taymiyya goes on to explain that the cause of this calamitous situation is "turning away from the plain, clear truth and from what the honorable messengers brought from the Lord of the worlds, and following the ways of philosophy (*falsafa*) and the technical terms (*iṣṭilāḥāt*) that they call, according to what they allege, matters of philosophical wisdom (*ḥikmiyyāt*) and matters of reason (*ʿaqliyyāt*)."[12] All of this, concludes Ibn Taymiyya, obliged him to devote himself to the foundations of religion and respond to the teachings of his opponents with "answers based in the revealed tradition and reason."[13]

For a Ḥanbalī, the character and extent of Ibn Taymiyya's theological activity was unusual, and this is probably what led al-Bazzār to raise his question. The traditionalism dominant in the Ḥanbalī school and among Shāfiʿīs sharing Ḥanbalī doctrinal affinities rejected inquiry into the meanings of God's attributes and the practice of theology,

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[10] Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar ibn ʿAlī al-Bazzār, *al-Aʿlām al-ʿAliyya fī Manāqib Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1396/1976), 34–35. Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community*, 178–180, translates Ibn Taymiyya's response to al-Bazzār in almost its entirety.
[11] al-Bazzār, *Aʿlām*, 34–35; our translations differ somewhat from those of Anjum.
[12] al-Bazzār, *Aʿlām*, 35.
[13] al-Bazzār, *Aʿlām*, 35.

especially the rationalist *kalām* theology of the Mu'tazilīs and the Ash'arīs, because they led to allegedly erroneous beliefs. This posed an intellectual hurdle that Ibn Taymiyya had to overcome. While some Ḥanbalīs, most notably Abū Ya'lā ibn al-Farrā' (d. 458/ 1066), Ibn 'Aqīl (d. 513/1119) and Ibn Jawzī (d. 597/1201), had engaged in *kalām*, Ibn 'Aqīl was forced to retract his Mu'tazilī writings, and Ibn Jawzī was sharply criticized for his rationalist reinterpretation (*ta'wīl*) of God's attributes. In due course Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223) wrote a refutation of Ibn 'Aqīl spelling out a strict traditionalism precluding not only *kalām* but any kind of theological inquiry that goes beyond denying God's likeness to creatures.[14]

In *Taḥrīm al-naẓar fī kutub ahl al-kalām* (*Forbidding studying the books of the kalām theologians*), Ibn Qudāma condemns *kalām* theology and prohibits engaging those who practice it: "No mention is made of them except to censure them, to caution against them, to deter from interacting with them, to command abandoning them, disassociating from them and leaving off studying their books."[15] *Kalām* theologians should be punished and called upon to repent of their views.[16] Moreover, Ibn Qudāma fundamentally rejects *kalām* inquiry into the meaning (*ma'nā*) of God's attributes reported in the Qur'an and the Hadith, and no attempt may be made to reinterpret (*ta'wīl*) attributes like God's "sitting" (*istiwā'*) as "possessing" (*istilā'*) because this negates attributes that God has affirmed of Himself and qualifies God with attributes that God has not affirmed of Himself.[17] Rather, Ibn Qudāma maintains, the Qur'anic text, "There is nothing like Him" (Q. 42:11), is sufficient to preclude corporealism (*tajsīm*) and assimilating God to creatures (*tashbīh*) because God and creatures bear no resemblance. With this, Ibn Qudāma isolates God's attributes from the realm of human understanding such that God is entirely different from "all that occurs to the heart (*qalb*) or imagination (*wahm*)."[18] This being so, the Prophet Muḥammad and the early Muslims, the *salaf*, did not engage in interpretation (*tafsīr*) or reinterpretation (*ta'wīl*). Rather, they kept silent about the meanings of God's attributes, and they prohibited all

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[14] For a survey of Ḥanbalī theology through to Ibn Taymiyya, see J. Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. S. Schmidtke (Oxford, UK: University of Oxford Press, 2016), 625–646. R. El Omari, "*Kitāb al-ḥayda*: The Historical Significance of an Apocryphal Text," in *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion: Studies in Honor of Dimitri Gutas*, eds. F. Opwis and D. Reisman (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 419–451, shows that some early and medieval Ḥanbalīs (including Ibn Taymiyya) used the apocryphal *Kitāb al-ḥayda* to advance rational arguments for traditionalist positions while yet condemning *kalām* theology. L. Holtzman, "The *Miḥna* of Ibn 'Aqīl (d. 513/1119) and the *Fitnat* Ibn al-Qushayrī (d. 514/1120)," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 660–678, provides a recent analysis of Ibn 'Aqīl's trial and Ibn Qudāma's account of it.

[15] Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī, *Taḥrīm al-Naẓar fī Kutub Ahl al-Kalām*, in G. Makdisi, *Ibn Qudāma's Censure of Speculative Theology* (London: Luzac, 1962), 16 (Arabic), 11 (English trans.); here and below our translation usually differs somewhat from Makdisi's.

[16] Ibn Qudāma, *Taḥrīm*, 17 (Arabic), 12 (English).

[17] Ibn Qudāma, *Taḥrīm*, 30–31, 33–34 (Arabic), 21, 23 (English). God's "sitting" is found in the Qur'an, as in "The All-Merciful sat on the Throne" (Q. 20:5).

[18] Ibn Qudāma, *Taḥrīm*, 42 (Arabic), 29 (English).

theological disputation.[19] In response to the *kalām* call to discuss the meanings of the verbal forms (*alfāẓ*) that indicate God's attributes, Ibn Qudāma says, "We do not have anything to add to the verbal forms for you that would convey a meaning."[20] He prescribes silence at this point, and those who want to discuss something should discuss legal matters (*fiqh*).[21] Traditionalists of Ibn Qudāma's ilk were clearly afraid that reflection on God's attributes would lead to speaking about God in ways not warranted by the authoritative sources of the religion, and they deemed silence to be the best defense against this danger.

As Caterina Bori has documented, Ibn Taymiyya faced significant resistance to his theological project from within his own ranks.[22] His unwillingness to remain silent on theological matters brought him into conflict with those who favored a strict traditionalism of the kind found in Ibn Qudāma. One important piece of evidence for this is the following quotation from the Ḥanbalī biographer Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1393):

> Groups among the *imām*s of the Hadith scholars, those of them who had memorized [the Qurʾan], and their jurists used to love the Shaykh [Ibn Taymiyya] and deem him great. However, they did not love his deep involvement with the *kalām* theologians and the philosophers. In this, they followed the way of the *imām*s of the early Hadith scholars, such as al-Shāfiʿī, Aḥmad [ibn Ḥanbal], Isḥāq [ibn Rāhwayh], Abū ʿUbayd [al-Qāsim ibn Sallām] and those like them.[23]

The Shāfiʿī traditionalist Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) also highlights the challenge posed by Ibn Taymiyya.[24] Al-Dhahabī first distinguishes two types of theology: the foundations of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*) of the *salaf* who believe in God, His attributes, and other basic elements of the Sunnī creed, and the foundations of religion of later generations, the *khalaf*, who base their works "on reason and logic" (*ʿalā l-ʿaql wa l-manṭiq*) and thereby end up in confusion and error. With this distinction in place, al-Dhahabī observes that no one could reach the rank of Ibn Taymiyya in piecing together the two

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[19] Ibn Qudāma, *Taḥrīm*, 9–11, 30–31, 36, 64 (Arabic), 7–8, 21, 24, 43 (English).

[20] Ibn Qudāma, *Taḥrīm*, 44 (Arabic), 29 (English).

[21] Ibn Qudāma, *Taḥrīm*, 64–66 (Arabic), 43–44 (English).

[22] C. Bori, "Ibn Taymiyya *wa-Jamāʿatuhu*: Authority, Conflict and Consensus in Ibn Taymiyya's Circle," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, 23–52 (33–41).

[23] Ibn Rajab, *Kitāb al-Dhayl ʿalā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, ed. M.H. al-Fiqī, 2 vols. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1372/1952–1953), 2:394; adapted from the translations of Bori, "Ibn Taymiyya *wa-Jamāʿatuhu*," 34, and Michot, "A Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary," 166 n 39.

[24] On the tense relationship between al-Dhahabī and Ibn Taymiyya, see C. Bori's discussions in "Ibn Taymiyya *wa-Jamāʿatuhu*," 37–41; "A New Source for the Biography of Ibn Taymiyya," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 67.3 (2004), 321–348; *Ibn Taymiyya: una vita esemplare analisi delle fonti classiche della sua biografia*, Supplemento N. 1, *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 76 (Pisa/Roma: Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, 2003), 142–148; and "al-Dhahabī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE* [hereafter EI3], http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3; this and all subsequent EI3 entries cited were last accessed August 29, 2016.

currents, that of revealed tradition (*naql*) and that of reason (*ʿaql*). Al-Dhahabī does not explain how Ibn Taymiyya combines the two currents. Instead, he concludes that, even if many saw Ibn Taymiyya as a great defender of the Sunna, his efforts earned him only derision from opponents and turned him into a divisive figure.[25]

Al-Dhahabī's own theology remains to be studied in full. However, it is apparent that he favors a traditionalism similar to that advocated by Ibn Qudāma, one that does not meddle in the debates of the *kalām* theologians and one that therefore, as Bori has highlighted, put him at odds with Ibn Taymiyya.[26] In his biographical encyclopedia *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, al-Dhahabī broaches the question of God's attributes such as "sitting (*istiwāʾ*), coming (*ityān*) and descending (*nuzūl*)," which some *kalām* theologians reinterpret non-literally to avoid connotations of corporeality, spatial extension, and location in God. Concerning such attributes, al-Dhahabī writes,

> The texts show them to be sound, and the later generations have transmitted them from the earlier generations without subjecting them to refutation (*radd*) or reinterpretation (*taʾwīl*). On the contrary, they condemn anyone who reinterprets them, and they agree that [the attributes] are not similar to the qualities of created things and that there is nothing like God. It is not appropriate to debate or dispute over [the attributes] because in that is an attempt to refute God and His Messenger or to broach ascribing modality (*takyīf*) [to the attributes] or stripping [them] away (*taʿṭīl*).[27]

Similar to Ibn Qudāma, al-Dhahabī affirms that God's attributes are unlike those of creatures and then proscribes reinterpreting or discussing them any further. Such a theological fideism asserts what is to be believed but does not explain it or argue for it. For its viability, it relies instead on condemning and avoiding those who differ and on, as Aziz Al-Azmeh points out, popular preaching and wonder working.[28] This fideism may well succeed within a sphere of orthodoxy sustained by non-theological means, but it will not speak to and persuade doubters and theological opponents. For that, intellectual engagement and rational discourse is required. That is what Ibn Taymiyya set out to do,

[25] Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Bayān Zaghal al-ʿIlm wa l-Ṭalab*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li-l-Turāth, n.d.), 23–24; Bori, "Ibn Taymiyya *wa-Jamāʿatuhu*," 38, translates the latter part of al-Dhahabī's discussion.

[26] See Bori, "al-Dhahabī," for discussion and references pertaining to al-Dhahabī's theology, as well as C. Gilliot, "Al-Ḏahabi contre la «pensée spéculative»," *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 150 (2000), 69–106.

[27] Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī. *Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalāʾ*, ed. Sh. al-Arnaʾūt, 11th printing, 25 vols. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1417/1996), 11:376; French translation, Gilliot, "Al-Ḏahabi contre la «pensée spéculative»," 98.

[28] A. Al-Azmeh, "Orthodoxy and Ḥanbalite Fideism," *Arabica* 35 (1988), 253–266 (265–266). For more on the strategy of marginalizing theological debate, see A. K. Reinhart, "On Sunni Sectarianism," in *Living Islamic History: Studies in Honour of Professor Carole Hillenbrand*, ed. Y. Suleiman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 209–225; we are grateful to Christopher Melchert for drawing this article to our attention.

and it is thus not surprising that he was eventually called upon to defend and explain his project. This is the task of *Khawḍ*.

The argument of *Khawḍ*: Permitting theology as translation

Ibn Taymiyya does not identify who posed the queries that he addresses in *Khawḍ* apart from calling them "men of distinction" in Egypt. The queries themselves reflect familiarity with the typical claims of *kalām* theology that theological inquiry is obligatory and that it yields definitive or certain knowledge about God's existence and attributes, as well as the common *kalām* problematic of whether God obligates people to do what is impossible. The queries ask not only whether *kalām* is permissible but also whether it is obligatory. If, in fact, obligatory, then what is the source of this obligation? Furthermore, does *kalām* need to produce definitive (*qaṭʿī*) knowledge, and is requiring this high level of certainty tantamount to obligating people to do what is impossible (25–26)? We might speculate from this that *kalām* theologians in Egypt sought to quiz Ibn Taymiyya on the basis of their own discipline and perhaps prod him to stop interfering in their theological preserve, cease disturbing the masses with his rhetoric, and return to the silence of his traditionalist colleagues.[29] However, the queries by no means preclude the traditionalist voice, as they are all premised on the strict traditionalist assertion that "no *kalām* about [the foundations of religion] has been transmitted from the Prophet" (25). Yet, as Ibn Taymiyya himself will explain, many *kalām* theologians and even philosophers also adhered to this assertion, an assertion that he will reject. Further evidence embedded in the queries is more exclusively traditionalist. It is claimed that the Prophet prohibited "speaking (*kalām*) about some propositions" (25), and apprehension is expressed that delving into theological discussion should be obligatory when the Prophet has not provided an unambiguous statement about the matter "which would guard against falling into peril" (26). From this it appears safe to conclude that Ibn Taymiyya's inquirers in Egypt were largely traditionalists troubled by his theological practice. It is also possible that Ibn Taymiyya himself drew together the list of queries in *Khawḍ* from interactions with both traditionalists and *kalām* theologians, as well as curious students, in order to address them comprehensively, perhaps in a lecture or teaching session.

Whatever be the case, Ibn Taymiyya devotes the first part of his response in *Khawḍ* to pushing back against the claim that nothing pertaining to *kalām* has been transmitted from the Prophet. To those posing the fatwa queries in Egypt, *kalām* probably referred to the rationalist theology of the Ashʿarīs in the first instance. However, Ibn Taymiyya

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[29] For reflection on the social disturbance caused by Ibn Taymiyya's theological activity, see C. Bori, "Theology, Politics, Society: The Missing Link. Studying Religion in the Mamluk Period," in *Ubi Sumus? Quo Vademus? Mamluk Studies – State of the Art*, ed. S. Conermann (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2013), 57–94, especially 72–84.

reframes *kalām* to give it the more ordinary sense of discourse and communication, and he explains that *kalām* pertaining to the foundations of religion is indeed found in the Qur'an and has been transmitted by the Messenger and the *salaf* (26–38). He rejects the claim made in the queries that the Prophet transmitted nothing of the foundations of religion, a claim that he attributes to many among both the traditionalists and the *kalām* theologians, as well as the philosophers: the view that the Qur'an and the Sunna do not speak to the foundations of religion and that the Prophet's Companions and the Successors did not transmit them "is frequent among many of the philosophers, the *kalām* theologians, and the ignorant among the Hadith scholars, the jurists, and the Sufis" (28). On the contrary, Ibn Taymiyya insists, "God and His Messenger have elucidated everything that people need to know," and this includes both the verbal form (*lafẓ*) and the meaning (*maʿnā*) of the Qur'an (27, also 72–76).

We will take up Ibn Taymiyya's allegation against the *kalām* theologians and the philosophers below. Here, we note that his attribution of ignorance to many Hadith scholars, jurists, and Sufis targets the strict traditionalism found in the likes of Ibn Qudāma who claims that the Prophet and *salaf* did not interpret or discuss the meanings of God's attributes. To Ibn Taymiyya, this is tantamount to ascribing ignorance to the *salaf* in the foundations of religion, and he maintains instead that the Messenger and the *salaf* have indeed transmitted both the verbal forms and their meanings. This attribution of humanly accessible meanings to the verbal forms of revelation pertaining to the theological matters is the cornerstone of Ibn Taymiyya's project because it opens the door to interaction with competitors over what those meanings should be.

Ibn Taymiyya fills out the implications of this in the latter three-quarters of *Khawḍ*. After outlining some of the allegedly corrupt ideas and ambiguous technical terms that *kalām* theology introduces into the foundations of religion (38–43), Ibn Taymiyya notes that the *salaf* and the *imām*s—leading traditionalist scholars through the ages—censured *kalām* theology not only for innovating technical terms not found in revelation but also for propagating false and ambiguous meanings. Thus, it is permissible and good, if needed, to engage alien terminologies and conceptual frameworks and even to translate (*tarjama*) the Qur'an and the Hadith into other languages in order to communicate the meanings of revelation, so long as the original meanings are retained. Theological discourse or *kalām* in Ibn Taymiyya's reconception of the term here becomes a matter of translating the received meanings of revelation into other idioms. He sums up the requirements for communicating in this fashion as follows: "That requires knowledge of the meanings of the Book and the Sunna and knowledge of the meanings [intended by others] with their verbal forms, and then consideration of the two sets of meanings to make what agrees and what opposes apparent" (43–46, quote on 46; see the similar statement on 75).

A little later in *Khawḍ*—after condemning speaking and debating about God without knowledge (46–51)—Ibn Taymiyya addresses the part of the fatwa inquiry that introduces the non-scriptural expression "obligating what is impossible" (*taklīf mā lā yuṭāq*) when asking whether one is legally obligated to attain definitiveness in *kalām*. Ibn

Taymiyya states that it is obligatory to have certain knowledge of those matters that God in revelation has obligated belief in, but he does not obligate certainty in all particulars. Rather, obligation in these matters varies according to the capability of the individual, and scholars fall under greater obligation than others. Ibn Taymiyya here rejects *kalām* theology's requirement of certain knowledge in matters of theological doctrine. The strong probability (*ghalabat al-ẓann*) that is sufficient to establish rulings of the law is also sufficient to ground matters of creed for those who cannot achieve certainty (51–53).[30] After castigating those who neglect revelation (54–59), Ibn Taymiyya provides an analysis of correct and incorrect meanings of "obligating what is impossible" (59–65), which leads him as well into a similar consideration of the meanings of the *kalām* technical term "compulsion" (*jabr*) applied to human acts (65–72). Even though Ibn Taymiyya declares that these terms have been innovated and are better not expressed openly— they do not appear in revelation—he allows that some of the ways in which they are used convey correct meanings. However, he strongly disapproves of them when they are used to signify a hard determinism that he believes endangers human responsibility for acts.[31] In general, Ibn Taymiyya explains, the *salaf* and the *imām*s often prohibit uttering innovated expressions altogether—even though there may be some truth in either affirming or denying them—to avoid the ambiguity and indeterminacy inherent within them. Ibn Taymiyya himself is of the same view, but he takes the further step of permitting investigation of the meanings of innovated terms in order to distinguish truth from falsehood and to convey the truth of revelation to those who obscure it or do not understand it (73, 76).

We noted earlier that Ibn Taymiyya levels the same charge against *kalām* theologians and philosophers that he levels against many of the traditionalists: they deny that the Prophet spoke to the propositions of the foundations of religion. Moreover, he claims, these *kalām* theologians and the philosophers negate the rational claims of revelation. He explains that they "think that the revelation proves only by way of true report (*khabar*)" and so "its proof value depends upon knowledge of the truthfulness of the reporter, and they deem the basis for the truthfulness of the reporter to be sheer reason" (28). For such philosophers and *kalām* theologians, reason must first establish the truthfulness of the reporter before a report about revelation may be accepted. Revelation cannot press rational claims of its own.

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[30] Ibn Taymiyya also lowers the epistemological bar in matters of theological doctrine to that of juristic rulings elsewhere; see for example his *Rafʿ al-Malām ʿan al-Aʾimma al-Aʿlām* (Riyadh: al-Riʾāsa al-ʿĀmma li-Idārāt al-Buḥūth al-ʿIlmiyya wa l-Iftāʾ wa l-Daʿwa wa l-Irshād, 1413/1992–93), 50–51; also in MF 20:231–290 (260–261); trans. A. H. al-Matroudi, "The Removal of Blame from the Great Imāms: An Annotated Translation of Ibn Taymiyyah's *Rafʿ al-Malām ʿan al-Aʾimmat al-Aʿlām*," *Islamic Studies* 46.3 (2007), 317–380 (354).

[31] For further discussion of Ibn Taymiyya's views on *taklīf mā lā yuṭāq* and *jabr*, see Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 167–172.

To appreciate Ibn Taymiyya's allegations better, we consider two examples of his probable targets. The first is Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *kalām* manual *al-Muḥaṣṣal*,[32] and the second will come from the philosopher Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037). Ibn Taymiyya mentions in *Darʾ* that he wrote a commentary on al-Rāzī's *Muḥaṣṣal*, but unfortunately this has been lost.[33] The first half of al-Rāzī's *Muḥaṣṣal* is dedicated to philosophical matters such as epistemology, metaphysics, and physics. Within the discussion of epistemology, al-Rāzī observes that a verbal report does not communicate unless reason first determines that its reporter is truthful. Additionally, he explains, verbal proofs do not yield certainty unless they meet ten criteria assuring total clarity. These criteria include such things as the absence of ellipsis and nonliteral usage, as well as not opposing reason. Furthermore, information derived from verbal report or tradition cannot oppose reason because such information depends on reason for its verification, that is, knowledge of the truthfulness of the messenger that provides the information can be established only by reason. It would entail circular reasoning for a messenger's truthfulness to be established by his own report.[34] This is the foundational principle behind al-Rāzī's "universal rule" cited by Ibn Taymiyya at the beginning of *Darʾ*.

In the second half of the *Muḥaṣṣal*, al-Rāzī provides rational proofs for the existence of God, God's negative attributes (incorporeality, freedom from location, and not being subject to temporal origination), God's positive attributes (power, knowledge, will, life, speech, hearing and sight), God's unity, various things relating to God's acts, and finally the prophethood of Muḥammad. Basing all of this on rational argument, al-Rāzī builds a purely natural theology, and it is only with this in place that one can begin to trust Muḥammad's report of revelation. Al-Rāzī then completes his *Muḥaṣṣal* with questions of eschatology, the characteristics of belief, and the imamate, which are all based on revelation. Al-Rāzī speaks of God's speech only as report, and he makes no mention of it including rational argument.[35] His system logically precludes Ibn Taymiyya's contention that revelation presses its own rational claims.[36]

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[32] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa l-mutaʾakhkhirīn min al-ʿulamāʾ wa l-ḥukamāʾ wa l-mutakallimīn*, ed. Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raʾūf Saʿd (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyya, n.d.).

[33] *Darʾ* 1:22. See Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 10 n 21, for further references to Ibn Taymiyya's book on the *Muḥaṣṣal*.

[34] al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 51.

[35] al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 186. The Muʿtazilī *kalām* theologian ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025) limits the content of God's speech in similar fashion, in this case to the legal values of acts not known by reason. God's speech does not provide information about God's existence and attributes. On this see D. R. Vishanoff, *The Formation of Islamic Hermeneutics: How Sunni Legal Theorists Imagined a Revealed Law* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 2011), 136–137.

[36] In *Muḥaṣṣal*, 147, al-Rāzī does cite Abraham as someone who inferred God's existence from the origination of bodies, which is an Ashʿarī *kalām* reading of Qurʾan 6:76–79. However, this report does not constitute a peculiar Qurʾanic claim to reason, and it does not undermine al-Rāzī's system.

One point at which the primacy of reason over revelation becomes especially apparent in al-Rāzī's *Muḥaṣṣal* is in his brief discussion of what to do with the plain sense (*ẓāhir*) of texts suggesting corporeality and spatial extension in God. Here we see the application of al-Rāzī's "universal rule," although he does not call it by that name in the *Muḥaṣṣal*. For al-Rāzī, reason precludes God having a body, spatial extension, and location. So, the meanings of texts implying such things must be either left uninvestigated and delegated to God (*tafwīḍ*), which is the approach al-Rāzī ascribes to the *salaf*, or reinterpreted (*taʾwīl*), as he claims is the practice of most *kalām* theologians.[37] Either way, the implication of al-Rāzī's view, as Ibn Taymiyya perceives, is that the Prophet and the *salaf* did not communicate and transmit the true meanings of such texts. Ibn Taymiyya's polemics on this point stung, and some Ashʿarī theologians in his own day countered that the Prophet and the *salaf* did know these meanings.[38]

Our second example is Ibn Sīnā's passage on the character of revelation in his *al-Risālat al-aḍḥawiyya*, a treatise on eschatology arguing for the incorporeal character of the afterlife.[39] Ibn Taymiyya wrote a commentary on this passage in *Darʾ*, which has been studied and translated by Yahya Michot.[40] In this passage Ibn Sīnā explains that the purpose of revelation (*sharʿ*) and prophets is to communicate to the masses, and, this being so, the truths of theological doctrine must not be divulged. The masses must not be accosted with questions about God's oneness and His freedom from modality, quantity, location, and change, and they should not be exposed to the notions that God is neither outside the world nor inside the world and that God is not pointed to. Mentioning such truths would only drive the masses away because they would conclude from them that God does not exist at all. Revelation thus does not detail these doctrines relating to God's unity (*tawḥīd*), and it speaks of God's difference from creatures (*tanzīh*) only in an absolute and general sense. Much more often it speaks literally in language assimilating God to creatures (*tashbīh*) as when the following Qurʾanic verse mentions God's coming to us, "Are they only waiting for the angels to come to them, or their Lord to come, or some of the signs of their Lord to come?" (Q. 6:158). Such texts are to be understood in the plain sense (*ẓāhir*) and not non-literally (*majāz*).[41] After discussing more detailed questions of metaphor and non-literality, Ibn Sīnā concludes,

> So, it is plain from all this that revelations appear to address the masses with what they understand, bringing what they do not understand closer to their

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[37] al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 157–158. Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 187, observes that al-Ashʿarī affirmed a face, a hand, and sitting for God, and he responds that there is no proof for or against these attributes.

[38] J. Hoover, "Early Mamlūk Ashʿarīs against Ibn Taymiyya on the nonliteral Reinterpretation (*taʾwīl*) of God's Attributes," forthcoming in *Philosophical Theology in Islam: The Later Ashʿarite Tradition*, eds. J. Thiele and A. Shihadeh (Leiden: Brill).

[39] Avicenna, *Epistola sulla vita futura*: al-Risāla al-aḍḥawiyya fī al-Maʿād, ed. and trans. F. Lucchetta (Padova: Editrice Antenore, 1969).

[40] Michot, "A Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary."

[41] Avicenna, *Aḍḥawiyya*, 43–53.

estimations (*awhām*) by means of assimilation (*tashbīh*) and likening (*tamthīl*). If it were not this way, the revelations would be of no use at all.[42]

Ibn Sīnā further explains that the outer meaning of revelation (*ẓāhir al-sharʿ*) has no proof value in eschatological matters. If the hereafter is incorporeal and its realities inaccessible to human minds, then revelation's likening it to things that we understand tells us nothing real about it. Ibn Sīnā ends the passage by noting that his discussion was for the benefit of those aspiring to join the elite: "All of this is said to make known to whoever wants to be one of the elite (*khāṣṣ*), not a commoner (*ʿāmm*), that the plain sense of the revelations is not used as an argument in subjects like this."[43] The upshot is that prophets do not transmit the truth and revelation does not provide knowledge per se. Thus, it is not difficult to see why Ibn Taymiyya in *Khawḍ* includes philosophers along with *kalām* theologians among those who deny that the Prophet Muḥammad elucidated rational proofs for theological doctrines.

In *Khawḍ* Ibn Taymiyya counters that God did in fact elucidate rational proofs. As "the Qurʾan in its quintessence came in the best way," it advances rational arguments for theological propositions (28). However, Ibn Taymiyya underlines that Qurʾanic rational proofs in theological matters are of a certain kind. The straightforward analogies and categorical syllogisms used by *kalām* theologians and philosophers suffer from placing God and creatures on the same level of reality. This leads to confusion, and, most importantly, it fails to respect that God is unlike creatures. To respect this difference, Ibn Taymiyya explains, an analogy or syllogism must be used within an *a fortiori* argument (*qiyās al-awlā*). As Ibn Taymiyya sees it, an *a fortiori* argument claims that what applies to one case applies all the more so to another case without necessarily placing the two cases on the same ontological level. Then, in accord with the Qurʾanic verse, "To God belongs the highest similitude" (Q. 16:60), God is all the worthier of every pure perfection found in creatures than are the creatures themselves, and this is because all perfections in creatures ultimately derive from the Creator. Similarly, God is all the worthier of being freed of imperfections that creatures regard as imperfections in themselves (29–30).

Ibn Taymiyya asserts that the Qurʾan and the *salaf* use *a fortiori* argumentation to establish the foundations of religion, and as examples he cites Qurʾanic arguments for the resurrection of the dead (30–35), God's freedom from generation (35–37), and God's unity (37–38). The argument freeing God from generation will suffice to illustrate how this works. This example focuses particularly on denying that God has daughters. Ibn Taymiyya observes that the Arab associationists (*mushrikī al-ʿarab*) used to call the angels daughters of God. Then, he quotes Qurʾanic texts criticizing the associationists for ascribing to God what they themselves hated, namely, daughters: "They ascribe daughters to God—Glory be to Him—and to themselves what they desire. When one of

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[42] Avicenna, *Aḍḥawiyya*, 61.
[43] Avicenna, *Aḍḥawiyya*, 63.

them is given news of a female [baby], his face becomes dark, and he chokes inwardly…They ascribe to God what they hate" (Q. 16:57–62; see also Q. 43:16–19). Ibn Taymiyya explains that God is worthier of having hateful things denied of Him than are the associationists. If they dislike daughters, then they should surely free God of them (35–37).[44]

To sum up the argument of *Khawḍ*, Ibn Taymiyya asserts against many traditionalists, *kalām* theologians, and philosophers that the Prophet and the *salaf* transmitted both the verbal forms and the meanings of the revelation applicable to theological matters and that revelation includes both true report and rational argument, particularly of the *a fortiori* kind so as to respect God's unlikeness to creatures. Ibn Taymiyya then permits theological discourse (*kalām*) in the sense of elucidating the transmitted meanings of revelation in other idioms and languages to communicate and clarify these meanings in the face of opposing interpretations.

Ibn Taymiyya's invocation of *a fortiori* theological argumentation in *Khawḍ* finds wider resonance in his corpus. In other texts, Ibn Taymiyya not only appeals to God's right to the highest similitude as the peculiarly Qur'anic approach to rational proofs in theology. He also takes this method to constitute an independent source of rational knowledge about God. For example, God's greater right to perfection entails ascribing human perfections to Him such as laughter, joy, and movement. Similarly, it requires freeing God of sadness, crying, and hunger. While Ibn Taymiyya's rational appeal to God's perfection might be seen as a kind of natural theology, it is more so an apologetic move in which he claims that revelation is eminently rational, more rational in fact that the allegedly reason-based systems of *kalām* theologians and philosophers.[45] Ibn Taymiyya's theological discourse, his *kalām* on the foundations of religion, is fundamentally a project of translating and rationalizing a received message. It is not a natural theology subordinating revelation to some form of independent reason as in the *kalām* of al-Rāzī's *al-Muḥaṣṣal*. Of the two types of theology or "foundations of religion" identified by al-Dhahabī—that inherited from the *salaf* and that derived from reason—Ibn Taymiyya comes down firmly on the side of the former. However, Ibn Taymiyya widens the scope of this traditionalist theology by including meaning and rational argument within its transmitted content and by permitting explanation, rationalization, and translation of this content as needed. With this in mind, we are in position to turn back to *Dar'* and explore why Ibn Taymiyya appends *Khawḍ* to its introduction.

Ibn Taymiyya's reception of *Khawḍ* into *Dar'*

As noted above, Ibn Taymiyya begins *Dar'* by outlining al-Rāzī's rule: when revelation-based proofs (*al-adillat al-sam'iyya*) contradict reason-based proofs (*al-adillat al-'aqliyya*), priority must be given to reason because reason is the means by

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[44] See Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 60–62, for further exposition of these Qur'anic proofs.
[45] Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 56–69.

which revelation is verified as true. Any plain senses of revelation found to be in conflict with reason must be reinterpreted or their meanings delegated to God. Ibn Taymiyya rejects this rule, and his aim in *Darʾ* is to deconstruct the notions of reason and revelation underlying the rule and reconfigure their relation to avert conflict between the two.

In the introduction to *Darʾ*, just after reporting al-Rāzī's rule, Ibn Taymiyya sketches a typology of error in the interpretation of texts, such as those affirming God's sitting (*istiwāʾ*) and descending (*nuzūl*), that allegedly conflict with reason. He divides the field into "the people of alteration" (*ahl al-tabdīl*) on the one hand and "the people of misguidance and ignorance" (*ahl al-taḍlīl wa l-tajhīl*) on the other. "The people of alteration" then divide further into "the people of estimation and imagination" (*ahl al-wahm wa l-takhyīl*) and "the people of twisting and reinterpretation" (*ahl al-taḥrīf wa l-taʾwīl*). Ibn Taymiyya identifies "the people of estimation and imagination" as philosophers and esoteric thinkers who say that the prophets depict God in bodily form and visualize resurrection, reward, and punishment as bodily for the benefit of the masses even though the reality is different. Here, he mentions Ibn Sīnā and his *Aḍḥawiyya*, as well as the Ismāʿīlīs, the philosophers al-Farābī (d. 339/950) and Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198), and the Sufi theorist Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240), among others. Ibn Taymiyya identifies "the people of twisting and reinterpretation" as the *kalām* theologians who reinterpret the plain senses of scripture to accord with reason. He does not name any specific theologians under this type, but the likes of al-Rāzī are clearly in view. Ibn Taymiyya explains that for the final group, "the people of misguidance and ignorance," texts like "The All-Merciful sat on the Throne" (Q. 20:5), certainly do not mean what they say, but yet only God knows what they mean. He does not specify names here either, but this group evidently includes the likes of Ibn Qudāma and al-Dhahabī.[46] Ibn Taymiyya observes in *Darʾ* that all of these groups in sundry ways assert that the Messenger did not elucidate the texts, with some saying that he did not know their meanings either. This is of course the same criticism that Ibn Taymiyya levels in much less detailed fashion in *Khawḍ*.[47]

Ibn Taymiyya then comes to why he wrote *Darʾ*. It had become apparent to him that the only means to make way for what the Messenger meant was to refute "the rational obstruction" (*al-muʿāriḍ al-ʿaqlī*) of al-Rāzī's rule. Ibn Taymiyya goes on to affirm that the Messenger clearly communicated and elucidated the Qurʾan and the Hadith, and then, just before writing in *Khawḍ*, he shifts his discourse to the more encompassing frame of "the foundations of religion," complaining in by now familiar fashion that people think that the Messenger either did not know these foundations or did not elucidate them.

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[46] *Darʾ* 1:8–16; French translation in Y. (J.R.) Michot, *Ibn Taymiyya: Lettre à Abû l-Fidâʾ* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste de l'Université Catholique de Louvain, 1994), 21–27. See also von Kügelgen, "The Poison of Philosophy," 286–290, and Zouggar, "Interprétation," 198–202, for analyses of this passage.
[47] *Darʾ* 1:16–20; French translation of pp. 19–20 in Michot, *Lettre à Abû l-Fidâʾ*, 20–21.

The insertion of *Khawḍ* into *Darʾ* at this point continues Ibn Taymiyya's argument that the Prophet and his followers transmitted the meanings of the theological affirmations of Islam, not just the verbal forms. It also develops his argument further by laying out his theological methodology and justification for the detailed analyses of *kalām* and philosophical texts and concepts that follow. In *Khawḍ,* Ibn Taymiyya extracts himself from the theological silence of his strongly traditionalist colleagues among the Ḥanbalīs and Shāfiʿīs, and he pushes back against the strong rationalism of the philosophers and *kalām* theologians to make space, as he sees it, for the Qurʾan and the Prophet to speak, not just with the verbal forms of words but also with transmitted meanings and rational arguments. Ibn Taymiyya carries on in the rest of *Darʾ* correlating these transmitted meanings with the meanings of philosophical and *kalām* theological technical terms such as "body" (*jism*), "the origination of the world" (*ḥudūth al-ʿālam*), and "reason" (*ʿaql*) in much the same fashion that he treats "obligating the impossible" (*taklīf mā lā yuṭāq*) and "compulsion" (*jabr*) in *Khawḍ*, and he refutes concepts and arguments that he deems to conflict with the rationality of the revelation.[48] *Khawḍ* places revelation and its transmitted meaning at the center of the theological enterprise, and it explains and illustrates the method of correlation and translation that occupies Ibn Taymiyya throughout the rest of *Darʾ* as he deconstructs the Rāzian "rational obstacle" and reformulates the deliverances of reason to agree with his understanding of revelation.

TRANSLATION OF *KHAWḌ* (*DARʾ* 1:25–78)[49]

[25] And while I [i.e. Ibn Taymiyya] was in Egypt, those among its men of distinction who inquired of me asked me about this question [i.e. whether the Messenger knew or elucidated theology, that is, the foundations of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*)]. They said in their query:

> If someone said: is it permissible or not to delve into the propositions (*masāʾil*) of the foundations of religion that the people speak about, even though no discourse (*kalām*) about them has been transmitted from the Prophet—God bless him and give him peace? If it is said to be permissible, then in which respect? We have understood from [the Prophet]—Blessing and peace be upon him—that speaking (*kalām*) about some propositions is prohibited. And if it is said to be permissible, is it then obligatory? And has what makes it obligatory been transmitted from [the Prophet]—Blessing and peace be upon him—and is the strong probability (*ghalabat al-ẓann*) that the independent jurist (*mujtahid*) reaches sufficient in this [matter]? Or must [he] reach definitiveness (*qaṭʿ*)? If he cannot reach definitiveness, is he excused in that, or is he legally obligated by it? [If the latter], does that fall under the

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category of obligating what is impossible (*taklīf mā lā yuṭāq*) and such like, or not? [26] If it is said to be obligatory, then what is the wisdom in there being no unambiguous text (*naṣṣ*) pertaining to it from the Law-giver (*shāriʿ*), which would guard against falling into peril, [when in fact the Prophet]—Blessing and peace be upon him—had been indeed eager to guide his community?

[The Prophet has indeed transmitted the foundations of religion, both what is to be believed and the proofs for it]

I answered: Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds. The first question, which is the statement of the inquirer, "Is it permissible or not to delve into the propositions of the foundations of religion that the people speak about, even though no discourse (*kalām*) about them has been transmitted from the Prophet—God bless him and give him peace?" is a query that arises out of innovated and false coinages [of terms]. With respect to the propositions that pertain to the foundations of religion that are worthy of being called the foundations of religion—I mean the religion with which God sent his Messenger and sent down His Book—it is not permissible to say that no discourse about them has been transmitted from the Prophet—God bless him and give him peace. Indeed, this is self-contradictory since the fact that [these propositions] pertain to the foundations of religion necessitates that they pertain to the most important concerns in the religion and that they pertain to what is essential to the religion. Moreover, denying transmission of discourse about these [propositions] from the Messenger necessitates one of two things: either that the Messenger neglected important things essential to the religion and did not elucidate them or that he elucidated them and the community did not transmit them. [27] Both of these are definitely false, and this is one of the greatest calumnies of the hypocrites against the religion. Only someone ignorant of the truths that the Messenger brought or ignorant of what people comprehend in their hearts or ignorant of both together thinks this or the likes of it. Indeed, his ignorance of [what the Messenger brought] necessitates that he have no knowledge of the foundations of religion and its derivations that that includes. His ignorance of [what people comprehend in their hearts] necessitates that he introduce into rational truths what he and the likes of him call "matters of reason" (*ʿaqliyyāt*), which are nothing but "matters of ignorance" (*jahliyyāt*). His ignorance of both [what the Messenger brought and what people comprehend in their hearts] necessitates that false propositions and methods not part of the foundations of religion be thought to be part of them and that it be thought that the Messenger did not elucidate what must be believed with regard to them, as is the case for some factions from among the various kinds of people—the well-versed among them, not to mention the commoners among them.

The foundations of religion are either propositions (*masāʾil*) that must be firmly believed and must be spoken aloud or acted upon, such as propositions about [God's] unity (*tawḥīd*), [God's] attributes (*ṣifāt*), predetermination (*qadar*), prophethood (*nubuwwa*) and the [eschatological] return (*maʿād*), or the proofs (*dalāʾil*) for these propositions.

As for the first division [i.e. the propositions], God and His Messenger have indeed elucidated everything that people need to know, firmly believe in, and deem true lucidly, plainly, and so as to preclude excuse. Indeed, this is among the greatest of what the Messenger communicated very plainly and elucidated to the people. It is among the greatest of that for which God has made His servants accountable by means of the messengers who elucidated and communicated it. The Book of God, which the Companions and then the Successors transmitted from the Messenger—its verbal form (*lafẓ*) and its meanings (*maʿānī*)—and the Wisdom, which is the Sunna of the Messenger of God—God bless him and give him peace—that they also transmitted from the Messenger, contain the quintessence of that and the complete [guidance about] [28] the obligatory and the recommended. Praise be to God who has raised up in our midst a messenger from among ourselves, reciting the verses [of the Book] for us, purifying us, and teaching us the Qurʾan and the Wisdom. [God] has perfected the religion for us, completed the blessing for us, and was well pleased that Islam be a religion for us. He has sent down the Book as a detailed explication of everything, a guide, a mercy, and glad tidings for the Muslims. "It is not a statement fabricated, but a confirmation of previous revelation, a detailed explication of everything, a guide and a mercy for a people who believe" (Q. 12:111). Only those deficient in intellect and hearing and those with a share in the statement of the people of the Fire who say, "Had we only listened or used our intellect, we would never have been among the inmates of the blaze" (Q. 67:10), think that the Book and the Wisdom do not contain the elucidation of that, even though that [view] is frequent among many of the philosophers, the *kalām* theologians, and the ignorant among the Hadith scholars, the jurists, and the Sufis.

Now to the second division, which consists of proofs for the propositions pertaining to the foundations [of religion]. When the factions of the *kalām* theologians or the philosophers think that the revelation proves (*yadull*) only by way of true report (*khabar*), then its proof value depends upon knowledge of the truthfulness of the reporter, and they deem the basis for the truthfulness of the reporter to be sheer reason. They have indeed erred very greatly in that. Indeed, they have plainly gone astray when they think that the Book and the Sunna prove only by way of mere report. On the contrary, the view of the *salaf* [i.e. the early Muslims], the people of knowledge and belief, is that God—Glorified and Exalted is He—has elucidated the rational proofs (*al-adilla al-ʿaqliyya*) that are needed to know that, which [proofs] none of these [factions] can appreciate. The upshot of what [the *salaf*] mention [is that] the Qurʾan in its quintessence came in the best way.

[29] Take for example the similitudes (*amthāl*) that God mentions in His Book in which He said, "Indeed, We have struck for the people in this Qurʾan every [kind of] similitude" (Q. 39:27). Similitudes are rational deductions (*al-aqyisa al-ʿaqliyya*), whether categorical syllogisms (*qiyās shumūl*) or analogies (*qiyās tamthīl*), and include what they call demonstrations (*barāhīn*), which are categorical syllogisms composed of premises that are certain (*yaqīnī*). [They call them demonstrations] even though the term "demonstration" in ordinary language is more general than that, as when God called the

two signs of Moses two demonstrations: "These are two demonstrations from your Lord" (Q. 28:32).

Clarifying further, it is not permissible to infer theological knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ilāhī*) by means of an analogy in which the original case (*aṣl*) and the assimilated case (*farʿ*) are on the same level, nor by means of a categorical syllogism whose terms are on the same level. Indeed, God—Glory be to Him—"There is nothing like Him" (Q. 42:11). So, it is not permissible that He be likened to another, and it is not permissible that He and another come under a universal proposition (*qaḍiyya kulliyya*) whose terms are on the same level.

Therefore, when factions of the philosophers and the *kalām* theologians employ these kinds of deductions in theological issues, they do not reach certainty (*yaqīn*). On the contrary, their proofs contradict, and—after coming to their wit's end—confusion and muddle overwhelm them because of the corruption and equipollence (*takāfuʾ*) that they see in their proofs.[50]

Instead, in [theological propositions], the *a fortiori* argument (*qiyās al-awlā*) is used, whether by means of an analogy or a syllogism, as He—Exalted is He—said, "To God belongs the highest similitude" (Q. 16:60). For example, it is known that [concerning] every perfection (*kamāl*) established for the possible or originated thing in which there is no imperfection (*naqṣ*) in any respect—for an existent, this is a perfection entailing no nonexistence—the Eternal Necessary [Existent] is all the worthier of it (*awlā bihi*). [Concerning] every perfection in which there is no imperfection in any respect and [30] whose species is established for a creature that is governed, caused, and lorded over, [that creature] derives (*istafāda*) [the perfection] only from his Creator, his Lord, and his Governor, and He is worthier of it than he is. [Concerning] every imperfection and defect in itself—this is what includes the denial of this perfection—when it is necessary to deny it of something to do with the species of creatures, possible things, and originated things, then it is *a fortiori* (*bi-ṭarīq al-awlā*) necessary to deny it of the Lord—Blessed and Exalted is He. He is worthier of existent things than any existent. As for nonexistent things, the originated and possible are worthier of them. And so on.

The *salaf* and the *imām*s used methods like these in issues like these. For example, Imām Aḥmad[51] used [methods] like these, as well as those before him and those after him from among the leaders of the people of Islam. The Qurʾan came with [methods] like these to establish the foundations of religion firmly in the propositions pertaining to [God's] unity, the attributes, the return, and so forth.

An example of [firmly establishing these propositions] is when He—Glory be to Him—reported about the [eschatological] return, knowledge of which depends on knowledge of its possibility because it is not possible that the impossible come into being. He—Glory be

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[50] Ibn Taymiyya may have in view Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's late life skepticism, on which see A. Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 189–199.
[51] Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), the eponym of the Ḥanbalī school of law and theological doctrine; see L. Holtzman, "Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal," EI3.

to Him—plainly elucidated it with the most perfect elucidation, and He did not employ the method that factions of the *kalām* theologians employ. They establish extra-mental possibility from mere mental possibility. They say, "[Such-and-such] is possible because, if it were thought to exist, no absurdity would follow from thinking it to exist."[52] So, the crux [of the matter lies] in this premise. But from where is it known that no absurdity would follow from thinking it to exist?! This is a negative universal proposition, and there must be knowledge of the generality of this denial. [31] Some of [the *kalām* theologians] argue that [such-and-such] is possible because we do not know of its impossibility in the same way that we know of the impossibility of things whose impossibility is plain, as in the case of a body being [both] moving and at rest. This is like the argument of some of them that [some things] are not axiomatic because other axiomatic [things] are clearer than them. This is a weak argument because that which is axiomatic is that which the intellect affirms decisively when its two terms have been conceptualized. The two things conceptualized may be hidden, and propositions vary in clarity and hiddenness due to variation in their conceptualization, just as they vary due to variation in minds. That does not impugn their being necessary, and it does not necessitate that that whose impossibility is not plain be possible. Rather, their statement is weaker because the thing could be impossible due to hidden things entailed by it. As long as the negation of those things entailed (*lawāzim*) or the absence of their entailment (*luzūm*) is not known, it is not possible to affirm their possibility decisively. The absurdity here is more general than what is absurd in its essence or otherwise. The reality of mental possibility is the absence of knowledge of its impossibility, and the absence of knowledge of its impossibility does not make knowledge of its extra-mental possibility follow necessarily. On the contrary, it is not known that the thing in the mind is impossible and it is not known that it is possible outside [the mind]. This is what mental possibility is. Thus, it did not suffice God—Glory be to Him, Exalted is He—[merely] to elucidate the possibility of the return with this, seeing that something can be impossible, even if only on account of something else [outside] it and even though the mind does not know its impossibility. This is different from extra-mental possibility, which, if it is known, will not be impossible. The human being knows extra-mental possibility, sometimes by his knowledge of the existence of the thing, sometimes [32] by his knowledge of the existence of its equal, and sometimes by his knowledge of the existence of something, compared to which something else is all the worthier of existence. The

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[52] Ibn Taymiyya may have in mind here the kind of argumentation found in Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī's (d. 631/1233) Ashʿarī *kalām* work *Abkār al-Afkār fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*, ed. A. M. al-Mahdī, 5 vols. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub wa l-Wathāʾiq al-Qawmiyya, 2002), 4:249–260. Al-Āmidī sets out two rational proofs for the possibility of something coming back into existence after it has passed out of existence. The first proof affirms that, if it is possible to suppose something going out of existence, then it is equally possible to suppose something coming back into existence (251). Such a supposition takes place in the mind, which to Ibn Taymiyya is insufficient. Further on below, Ibn Taymiyya invokes extra-mental proof for the possibility of the return in the resurrection, namely, God's original creation of the world. Al-Āmidī's second argument is much closer to this: the original bringing forth (*al-nashʾa al-ūlā*) of something is proof for the possibility of its re-origination (251).

existence of a thing is indeed proof that whatever is less than it is all the worthier of possibility than it is. Then, when it has become clear that something is possible, it must be made plain that the Lord has power to do it. Otherwise, merely knowing that it is possible does not mean that it can occur if it is not [also] known that the Lord has power to do it.

He—Glory be to Him—has elucidated all of this with the likes of His statement, "Or have they not considered that God who created the heavens and the earth has the power to create the like of them, and that He has appointed a term for them wherein there is no doubt. But the wrongdoers refused [everything] except disbelief" (Q. 17:99); His statement, "Is not He who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like of them? Yes, indeed, He is the Creator of all, the all-Knowing" (Q. 36:81); His statement, "Do they not see that God who created the heavens and the earth and did not weary in creating them is able to give life to the dead. Even more, He has power to do all things" (Q. 46:33); and His statement, "The creation of the heavens and the earth is indeed greater than the creation of humankind" (Q. 40:57). It is indeed known through the axiomatic intuitions of the intellects (*badāhat al-ʿuqūl*) that the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of the likes of the children of Adam and the power [to do the former] is superior, and that this easier [task of creating humanity] is all the more possible and [within the scope of God's] power than that one.

Similar is His inference for that from the original bringing forth (*al-nashʾa al-ūlā*), as in His statement, "It is He who begins the creation and then brings it back again, and this is easier for Him," and because of this he said after that [33], "To Him is the highest similitude in the heavens and earth" (Q. 30:27), and He said, "O people! If you are in doubt about the resurrection (*baʿth*), indeed We have created you from earth, then from a drop of sperm, then from a clot, then from a little lump of flesh, formed and unformed, that We may make clear for you" (Q. 22:5). Similar is what He mentions in His statement, "He set forth a similitude, forgetting about His creation. He said, 'Who will give life to these bones when they are decayed?' Say, 'He who brought them forth the first time will give life to them!'" (Q. 36:78–79). His statement, "Who will give life to these bones when they are decayed?" is a syllogism of which one of its premises has been omitted because it is plain. The other is a universal negative [premise] accompanied by its proof, which is the similitude set forth and mentioned with His statement, "He set forth a similitude, forgetting about His creation. He said, 'Who will give life to these bones when they are decayed?'" This is a rhetorical question eliciting a negative response. That is, no one will give life to these bones when they are decayed. According to [the one asking the question], their being decayed makes it impossible to give them life because they have reached a state of dryness and coldness that opposes life, whose basis is hotness and wetness, and because of the dispersion of their parts, their mixing with other [things], and other such specious arguments. The presumed [syllogism] is:

> These bones are decayed.
> No one can give life to bones that are decayed.
> Therefore, no one can give life to [these bones].

However, the negative [premise] is false. Its import is that reviving life is impossible. But He—Glory be to Him—has elucidated its possibility in several respects by elucidating the possibility of what is more difficult than that and His power to do it. He said, "He who brought them forth the first time will give life to them!" (Q. 36:79). He created them from earth, and then He said, "He is all-knowing about every creation" (Q. 36:79), to elucidate His knowledge of the parts that were dispersed or impossible [to collect together again].

Then He said, "He who makes for you fire out of the green tree" (Q. 36:80). [Here] He plainly elucidated that He brings out dry, hot fire [34] from what is cold and wet. [However], that is all the more to be denied because combining heat and wetness is easier than combining heat and dryness since wetness is more flexible than dryness (*idh al-ruṭūba taqbal min al-infiʿāl mā lā taqbalu-hu al-yubūsa*).[53] Because of this, heating up air and water [which are wet] is easier than heating up earth [which is dry], even though fire itself is hot and dry. [Fire] is a subtle body, and dryness is the opposite of wetness. By wetness is meant moistness, as in the wetness of water, and by [wetness] is [also] meant ease of flexibility (*surʿat al-infiʿāl*); air is also like this. Similarly, by dryness is meant the absence of moistness—so fire is dry—and by dryness is meant rigidity in shape and inflexibility (*baṭʾ al-shakl wa l-infiʿāl*). Earth is drier than fire because earth contains dryness in the two senses, unlike fire. However, a living being in which there is heat and dampness derives from the three elements earth, water, and air. As for the part [of the living being] that is fire, people are of two views. It is said that there is fiery heat in [the living being], even though no part of it is fire, and it is said that part of it is fire. On either supposition, the generation of a living being from [its] elements is all the more possible than the generation of fire from a green tree. Then, one who is able to create fire from a green tree is *a fortiori* able to create a living being from earth. Indeed, this is normal, even if that is by means of joining air and water to it. The intention is combination into generated beings. Then He said, "Is not He who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like of them?" (Q. 36:81). This premise is known axiomatically. Therefore, He brings an interrogative into it firmly establishing and proving that that is [35] settled and known to the addressee, as He—Glory be to Him—said, "They do not bring to you a similitude but that we bring to you the truth and a better explanation" (Q. 25:33). Then He elucidated His general power with His statement, "His command when He wills

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[53] Ibn Taymiyya is here following Aristotelian elemental theory, which was common in medieval Islam. The four elements fire, air, water, and earth possess the properties of heat, coldness, dryness, and wetness in different combinations. Fire is primarily hot and secondarily dry, air primarily wet and secondarily hot, water primarily cold and secondarily wet, and earth primarily dry and secondarily cold. Furthermore, wetness is a principle of flexibility whereas dryness is a principle of rigidity. The point of Ibn Taymiyya's argument is that it is more difficult to create hot, dry fire out of a wet tree than it is to create a living being out of earth, water, and air. So, if God says that He does the former, then He can all the more so do the latter. For the reception of Aristotle's elemental theory into the Islamic tradition, see Caterina Belo, "Elements," EI3.

something is only that He says to it, 'Be!' and it is" (Q. 36:82). In this passage and elsewhere in the Qur'an are secrets and elucidation of the definitive proofs of religious issues, but this is not the place for them. The purpose [here] is only to draw attention [to these matters].

Similar to that is what He—Glory be to Him—employed to free and purify Himself from the generation (*wilāda*) that they attributed to Him, whether they called it sensual or intellectual. This is as the Christians alleged concerning the generation of the Word, which they deemed to be the substance (*jawhar*) of the Son from Him, and as the Sabian philosophers alleged concerning the generation of the ten intellects and the nine celestial souls, about which they were confused as to whether they were substances or accidents.[54] They might deem the intellect to be equivalent to males and the souls to be equivalent to females and deem those to be their fathers, their mothers, their gods, and their lords near at hand. That they have knowledge of souls is more apparent on account of the existence of periodic movement, which proves volitional movement, which [in turn] proves the mover soul (*al-nafs al-muḥarrika*). However, most of them deem the celestial souls to be an accident, not a substance subsisting in itself. That resembles the statement of the associationists among the desert dwellers (*mushrikī al-ʿarab*) and others who ascribed sons and daughters to Him. He—Exalted is He—said, "They ascribed to God the jinn as partners even though He created them, and they falsely attribute sons and daughters to Him without knowledge. Glory be to Him, and exalted is He above what they ascribe" (Q. 6:100). He—Exalted is He—said, "Truly, it is of their falsehood that they say, 'God has generated [offspring]. Certainly they are liars" (Q. 37:151–152).

[36] And they used to say that the angels were the daughters of God, just as those [Sabians] alleged that the intellects or both the intellects and the souls were angels and that they were generated from God. He—Exalted is He—said, "They ascribe daughters to God—Glory be to Him—and to themselves what they desire. When one of them is given news of a female [baby], his face becomes dark, and he chokes inwardly. He hides himself from the people because of the evil of the news that has been given him. Shall he keep her with dishonor or bury her in the earth? Certainly, evil is their decision. For those who do not believe in the hereafter is a similitude of evil, and for God is the highest similitude. He is All-Mighty, All-Wise" (Q. 16:57–59), to His statement, "They ascribe to God what they hate, and their tongues assert the lie that better things will be theirs. Without doubt, theirs will be the Fire, and they will be hastened into [it]" (Q. 16:60–62). He—Exalted is He—said, "Has He taken daughters from what He created and chosen for you sons? When one of them is given news of [a female] with which he has propounded a similitude for the All-Merciful, his face becomes dark, and he chokes inwardly. What! One who is brought up among adornments and is not lucid in dispute?! They deem the angels who are the servants of the All-Merciful to be females. Did they witness their

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[54] On the pagan Sabian gnostics of Ḥarrān, see F. C. de Blois, "Ṣābiʾ," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition [hereafter EI2], 8:672–675; and T. Fahd, "Ṣābiʾa," EI2, 8:675–678 (especially 677–678).

creation? Their testimony will be written, and they will be queried" (Q. 43:16–19). He—Exalted is He—said, "Have you considered al-Lāt, al-ʿUzza, and Manāt, the third, the other? Is it for you the male and for Him the female? That is certainly a division most deviant (*ḍīzā*)" (Q. 53:19–22), that is, unjust (*jāʾira*). There are other [relevant texts] in the Qurʾan. He—Glory be to Him—elucidated that the Lord, the Creator is worthier of being freed of imperfections than you are. So, how can you ascribe to Him that which you hate for yourselves and are embarrassed to have ascribed to you, even though [37] that most certainly occurs? You do not free Him of that and deny it of Him, even though He is worthier of having hateful and imperfect things denied [of Him] than you are.

Similar to this is His statement about God's unity, "He set forth a similitude for you from among yourselves. Do you have, among what your right hand possesses, associates in what We have provided for you so that you are equal with regard to it, you fearing them on the same level as you fear yourselves" (Q. 30:28), that is, as you fear each other? It is likewise in His statement, "Then, it is you who kill one another" (Q. 2:85), and in His statement, "Why, when you heard it, did the believing men and women not think well of their own people" (Q. 24:12), and in His statement, "Do not speak ill of one another" (Q. 49:11), and in His statement, "So turn in repentance to your Creator, and kill each other" (Q. 2:54), and in His statement, "Do not drive one another out from your dwellings" (Q. 2:84), to His statement, "Then, it is you who kill one another" (Q. 2:85). What is meant in all of this is of one sort, [namely, speaking of equals].

He—Glory be to Him—elucidated that the [slave] possessed by someone created had no share in [that person's] property so that he would not fear the [slave] that he possessed in the same way that he feared his equal. Even more, you have refused that what is possessed be an equal with you. So, how then can you be well pleased to deem My creature and My possession an associate with Me who is invoked and worshipped as I am invoked and worshipped? It is as [the associationists] used to say in their response of obedience (*talbiyya*), "Here I am, at your service, O God! Here I am, at your service! You have no associate, except an associate who belongs to you, whom you possess and who does not possess."[55] [38] This is a very wide and great topic for which this is not the place. The point is only to draw attention to the fact that in the Qurʾan and the Prophetic Wisdom [is found] the vast majority of the foundations of religion—the propositions and the proofs—that are worthy of being the foundations of religion.

[Exposition of errors following on from the kalām theologians' proof for the origination of the world from accidents]

Now to the falsehood that some people introduce under this name, which is not part of the foundations of religion, even though they introduce it into them, such as corrupt propositions and proofs like denying the attributes (*ṣifāt*) [of God], [God's]

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[55] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-ḥajj* (15), *Bāb al-talbiyya wa-ṣifatihā wa waqtihā* (3); Hadith numbers are those used at sunnah.com except that references to Aḥmad, *Musnad*, follow the numbering used at hadith.al-islam.com.

predetermination (*qadar*), and so forth among the propositions, and such as inferring the temporal origination (*ḥudūth*) of the world from the temporal origination of accidents, which are the attributes of bodies subsisting in them, either accidents of location (*akwān*) or otherwise.[56] [This includes] firmly establishing the premises that this proof needs: first, establishing the accidents (*ʿarāḍ*), which are the attributes (*ṣifāt*), or establishing some of them like the accidents of location, which are movement and rest, and conjunction and separation; second, establishing their origination by invalidating [the possibility] that they appear after having been hidden, and invalidating their transfer from substrate to substrate; third, establishing the impossibility of a body being devoid either of each genus of accidents by establishing that the body is receptive to them and that what is receptive to something is not devoid of it or its opposite, or of [just the genus of] accidents of location; and fourth, establishing the impossibility of an infinite regress of originating events. [39] [This proof] is based on two premises. The first one of them is that a body is not devoid of accidents, which are attributes. The second is that whatever is not devoid of attributes, which are accidents, is itself originated (*muḥdath*) because the attributes, which are the accidents, are originated. They may posit that for [only] some of the attributes, which are the accidents, like the accidents of location. Then, whatever is not devoid of the genus of accidents is itself temporally originated because of the impossibility of an infinite series of originating events.[57]

It is known necessarily that Muhammad—God bless him and give him peace—did not call humankind to confess the Creator and the prophecy of His prophets by means of this method. For this reason, the well-versed among the *kalām* theologians, like al-Ashʿarī[58] and others, confessed that it was neither the method of the messengers and their followers nor of the *salaf* of the community and its *imām*s, and they mentioned that they forbade it. Rather, those who know the truth [confess] that it is an invalid method and that its premises contain detail and divisions that absolutely prevent establishing what is alleged. For this reason you find one of two things follows necessarily for someone who depends on it in the foundations of his religion. Either he is aware of its weakness and compares it with the proofs of those upholding the eternity of the world

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[56] Ibn Taymiyya here begins to set out the basics of the classical *kalām* theology proof for the temporal origination of the world from accidents. For further detail, see H. A. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1987), 134–146.

[57] These premises of the classical *kalām* proof from accidents are opposed to fundamental premises of Ibn Taymiyya's theology. He rejects the principle that that in which something originated subsists is itself originated, and he defends the possibility of an infinite regress of originating events; see J. Hoover, "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*, 55–77: 66–71; and Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 91–96.

[58] Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/936), eponym of the Ashʿarī theological school; see C. E. Bosworth, "Ašʿarī, Abu'l-Ḥasan," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/asari-abul-hasan-ali-b, last accessed August 29, 2016.

such that the proofs are equipollent in his view, or he sometimes preponderates this and sometimes that, as is the case for some factions among them. Or [this method] leads him to make entailments known to be corrupt in revelation and reason follow necessarily. For example, it led Jahm[59] to make the annihilation of Paradise and the Fire follow necessarily, and [40] it led Abū al-Hudhayl[60] to make the discontinuation of the movements of the people of Paradise follow necessarily. It led one group, such as al-Ashʿarī and others, to make it follow necessarily that water, air, earth, and fire have taste, color, odor, and so forth. It and other [methods] led [another] group to make it follow necessarily that all accidents, such as taste, color, and so forth, cannot perdure but a moment. [This is] because they needed to respond to the contradiction that arose when they established the attributes of God [on the one hand] while inferring the temporal origination of bodies from their attributes [on the other]. They said that the attributes of bodies are accidents, that is, they appear and cease to exist. Thus, they do not perdure (tabqā) but a moment in contrast to the attributes of God which do perdure. One faction among them based themselves on [the notion] that if the accident perdured it could never be nonexistent because its nonexistence [would obtain] only by means of either the temporal origination of its opposite, or the lapsing of a condition, or the free choice of an agent, all of which are impossible. This is a basis that others among them do not choose. On the contrary, they permit that a freely-choosing agent may make an existent nonexistent, just as [that agent] may bring a nonexistent into existence. They do not say that the nonexistence of bodies [obtains] only by separating the accidents from them, as those [others] said, or by creating a contrary, namely, annihilation apart from a substrate, as some among the Muʿtazilīs said. [41] As for the great majority of rational people among the children of Adam, they have said that this opposes what is known by sense perception (ḥiss).

This [method] has led factions among the Muʿtazilī kalām theologians and others to make the absolute denial of the attributes of the Lord or the denial of some of them follow necessarily. [This is] because, according to them, that which proves the temporal origination of these [originated] things is the subsistence of attributes in them, and the co-presence (ṭard) [of what is proved with its proof] is necessary. So, they made it follow necessarily that everything qualified by an attribute be temporally originated by virtue of the attribute subsisting in it, which is extreme corruption and going astray. For this reason they made follow necessarily the creation of the Qurʾan, the denial of the vision of God in the hereafter and His being over His Throne, and such like among the entailments that they make follow necessarily by consistently applying the premises of this argument, which the Muʿtazilīs and those who followed them deemed to be the

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[59] Jahm ibn Ṣafwān (d. 128/746), a theologian charged by opponents with stripping God of his attributes and teaching that Paradise and the Fire will be annihilated; see W. M. Watt, "Djahm b. Ṣafwān," and "Djahmiyya," EI2, 2:388.

[60] Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. ca. 227/842), an early Muʿtazilī theologian who believed that movement in Paradise and the Fire would come to an end; see S. A. Mourad, "Abū l-Hudhayl," EI3.

foundation of their religion. This [method] falls under what these have called the foundations of religion, but it is not in reality among the foundations of religion that God has prescribed for His servants.

The religion about which God said, "Or do they have associates who prescribed for them in religion what God has not authorized?" (Q. 42:21), has foundations (*uṣūl*) and derivations (*furū'*) commensurate with it. When it becomes known that there is ambiguity and vagueness in what are called "the foundations of religion" in the convention of those using that term because of the equivocality in it with respect to the coinages (*awḍā'*) [of its terms] and [its technical] terminologies (*iṣṭilāḥāt*), it becomes clear [by way of contrast] that the foundations of religion according to God, His Messenger, and His believing servants are those inherited from the Messenger. As for someone who prescribes a religion that God has not authorized, it is known that it is not admissible that the foundations entailing it be transmitted from the Prophet—God bless him and give him peace—in view of the fact that it is false.

Whatever entails falsehood is false (*malzūm al-bāṭil bāṭil*). [42] Similarly, what is entailed by truth is truth (*lāzim al-ḥaqq ḥaqq*). A proof entails what is proved. So when [the proof] is established, what is proved is established. When what entails (*al-malzūm*) exists, what is entailed (*al-lāzim*) exists, and when what is entailed is negated, what entails is negated. Falsehood is a thing. When what is entailed by something is negated, it is known that [that thing itself] is negated. So, the falsehood of something is inferred from the falsehood of what is entailed by it. The establishment of [what is entailed] is inferred from the establishment of what entails. When what is entailed is false, what entails is likewise false. What is entailed may disappear and what entails not disappear. When what entails disappears, then what is entailed disappears.

Now, what entails may be false and what is entailed not false. Because of this, it is said that whatever entails falsehood is false. For whatever entails falsehood makes falsehood follow necessarily, and the falsehood is what is entailed. When what is entailed is false, then what entails is false because the negation of what entails follows necessarily from the negation of what is entailed. It is not said that what is entailed by falsehood is false.

This is similar to created things. For [created things] make establishing the Creator follow necessarily, but the nonexistence of the Creator does not follow necessarily from their nonexistence. A proof always makes what is to be proved follow necessarily: the co-presence (*ṭard*) [of the proof and what is proved] is necessary, but the co-absence (*'aks*) [of the proof and what is to be proved] is not necessary.[61] This differs from a definition (*ḥadd*), for which the co-presence and the co-absence [of the definition and what is defined] are [both] necessary. As for a cause, the complete cause (*al-'illa al-tāmma*)

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[61] See al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta'rīfāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1424/2003), 144 (*ṭard*), 156 (*'aks*).

must be co-present [with its effect], unlike a determining factor (*muqtaḍiya*).[62] Detail about co-absence is elaborated elsewhere.

This division draws attention also to the intention of the *salaf* and the *imām*s in censuring *kalām* theology and its practitioners, seeing that that extends to anyone who engages in inferences with corrupt proofs or engages in inferences for false views. [43] As for the one who speaks the truth that God has authorized, in which there is a judgment and a proof, he is among the people of knowledge and faith, "And God speaks the truth and guides on the path" (Q. 33:4).

[Permission to use other terminologies and translate when needed]

As for addressing the people of terminology (*ahl al-iṣṭilāḥ*) using their terminology and their language, this is not disliked (*makrūh*) if that is needed and the meanings (*maʿānī*) are correct. [This is] like addressing non-Arab Byzantines, Persians, and Turks in their language and according to their convention. Indeed, this is permissible and good when needed (*jāʾiz ḥasan li-l-ḥājja*). The *imām*s deemed it disliked only when it was not needed.

For this reason, the Prophet—God bless him and give him peace—said to Umm Khālid bint Khālid ibn Saʿīd ibn al-ʿĀṣ[63] when she was young and had been born in Abyssinia because her father was one of the emigrants, "O Umm Khālid! This is *sanā*."[64] *Sanā* in the Abyssinian language [means] "good." [The Prophet said this] because she knew that language. Therefore, the Qurʾan and the Hadith are translated for someone who needs to understand them through translation (*tarjama*). Likewise, the Muslim reads what he needs from the books of [other] communities and their discourse in their language, and he translates them into Arabic, [44] as when the Prophet—God bless him and give him peace—commanded Zayd ibn Thābit to learn the writing of the Jews in order to read it and write it for him because he did not trust the Jews with it.[65]

The *salaf* and the *imām*s did not censure *kalām* theology merely because of the new terms [introduced into the language], like the verbal forms "substance" (*jawhar*), "accident" (*ʿaraḍ*), "body" (*jism*), and so forth, but, on the contrary, because of the meanings that [the *kalām* theologians] assigned to these expressions (*ʿibarāt*). They contain blameworthy falsehood in proofs and rulings that must be denied because these verbal forms involve ambiguous meanings, whether they are denied or affirmed. As

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[62] The presence of a complete cause (*al-ʿilla al-tāmma*) necessarily entails the presence of its effect, whereas the presence of a determining factor (*muqtaḍī*) may or may not necessitate the presence of its effect. The latter is the relation of the Creator to created things.

[63] For the most part, we do not provide identifying detail for Hadith transmitters and Companions of the Prophet, as in this case for Umm Khālid.

[64] Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-Libās* (77), *Bāb mā yudʿā liman labisa Thawban Jadīdan* (32).

[65] A *ḥadīth* to this effect is found in Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm* (26), *Bāb Riwāyat Ḥadīth Ahl al-Kitāb* (2). Ibn Taymiyya also permits translation of the Qurʾan and the Sunna for those who need it in *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyya fī Taʾsīs Bidaʿihim al-Kalāmiyya*, ed. Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad al-Hunaydī, 10 vols. 2d printing (Medina: Majmaʿ al-Malik Fahd li-Ṭibāʿat al-Muṣḥaf al-Sharīf, 1426/2005), 8:474.

Imām Aḥmad said in his description of the people of innovation, "They differ over the Book, oppose the Book, and agree to leave the Book aside. They speak with indeterminate speech, and they deceive the ignorant among the people by confusing them."

If the meanings that they intend with such expressions are known, and they are weighed against the Qurʾan and the Sunna, in such a manner that the truth which the Book and the Sunna have established is established and the falsehood which the Book and the Sunna have denied is denied, that is indeed the truth. [This is] contrary to the path that the people of caprice take. [45] In [their] methods and propositions, [they] speak with these verbal forms, whether to deny or affirm, without elucidating the detail and the division that is part of the straight path. This is among the causes of specious arguments.

Nothing is found in the discourse (kalām) of the Prophet—God bless him and give him peace—nor in any of the Companions and Successors, nor in any of the imāms who are followed that links any of the foundations of religion—neither the proofs nor the propositions—to what is named by the verbal forms "substance," "body," "spatial extension" (taḥayyuz), "accident," and so forth. The kalām theologians differ in what they mean by these expressions, sometimes due to difference in coinage and sometimes due to their differing over the meaning, which [meaning] is what is indicated by the verbal form. For example, someone says, "A body is what is assembled (muʾallaf)." Then they dispute over whether it is a single substance, on the condition that it is assembled, or two or more substances, or six, or eight, or otherwise. And someone says, "[A body] is that of which it is possible to posit the three dimensions, and it is composed from matter and form." Someone [else] says, "It is the existent (mawjūd)," or he says, "It is the existent subsisting in itself," or he says, "It is that which can be pointed to, and the existent subsisting in itself is only thus."

The discourse (kalām) of the salaf and the imāms who censure and call speaking about substance, body, and accident innovation includes censuring those who introduce the meanings that these [kalām theologians] intend by these verbal forms into the foundations of religion, into its proofs, and into its propositions, whether to deny or to affirm. If the meanings that are correct and established by the Book and the Sunna are known and are expressed for the sake of someone who comes to understand by means of these verbal forms so as to elucidate what agrees with the truth in their meanings [46] and what opposes it, this is very profitable. It is part of judging by the Book between the people in that over which they differ. As He—Exalted is He—said, "The people were one community. Then, God raised up prophets bringing glad tidings and warning, and with them He sent the Book with the truth to judge between the people in that over which they differed" (Q. 2:213). This is like judging between the other communities by the Book in that over which they have differed concerning the meanings that they assigned through their [primordial] coinage and their convention. That requires knowledge of the meanings of the Book and the Sunna and knowledge of the meanings [intended by those other communities] with their verbal forms, and then consideration of the two sets of meanings to make what agrees and what opposes apparent.

[Propositions that the Qurʾan and the Sunna prohibit discussing]

As for the statement of the inquirer, "If it is said to be permissible, then in which respect? We have understood from [the Prophet]—Blessing and peace be upon him—that speaking about some propositions is prohibited," it is said [in reply] that the explanation and detail to answer the query has already been provided and that it is by no means permissible to prohibit what are in realty the foundations of religion with which God raised up His Messenger. This is opposite the so-called foundations of religion which are not foundations in reality, neither in the proofs nor the propositions. These are foundations of a religion that God did not prescribe. On the contrary, someone prescribed [that religion] who prescribed in religion what God did not authorize. As for what the inquirer mentioned concerning the prohibition [against delving into propositions pertaining to the foundations of religion], the Book and the Sunna have prohibited some things.

Among them is speaking about God without knowledge, as in His statement—Exalted is He—"Say! My Lord has forbidden only abominations—those that are manifest and those that are not manifest—sin, rebellion without right, that you associate with God that to which He did not give authority, and that you say of God that which you do not know" (Q. 7:33), and His statement, "And do not follow that about which you have no knowledge" (Q. 17:36).

[47] Among them is speaking against God without truth, as in His statement, "Was not the covenant of the Book taken against them that they might speak only the truth about God?" (Q. 7:169), and His statement, "Do not go to excess in your religion, and speak only truth about God" (Q. 4:171).

Among them is debating (*jadal*) without knowledge, as in His statement—Exalted is He—"Truly, you are those who have argued about that of which you have knowledge. Then, why do you argue about that of which you have no knowledge?" (Q. 3:66).

Among them is debating the truth after it has become manifest, as in His statement—Exalted is He —"They debated with you about the truth after it had been made clear" (Q. 8:6).

Among them is debating in falsehood, as in His statement, "They debated by means of falsehood to disprove the truth" (Q. 40:5).

Among them is debating over His signs, as in His statement—Exalted is He—"No one debates over the signs of God except those who disbelieve" (Q. 40:4), and His statement, "As for those who debate over the signs of God without authority coming to them, greatly detested is this before God and before those who believe" (Q. 40:35). He—Exalted is He—said, "Those who debate over the signs of God without authority coming to them, there is nothing in their breasts except a desire to become great, which they will never attain" (Q. 40:56), and His statement, "Those who debate over our signs know that they have no place of refuge" (Q. 42:35). Similar to that is His statement, "Those who argue about God after He has been acknowledged, their argument is disproved before their Lord. (Q. 42:16), [48] and His statement, "They debate about God, while He is severe in power" (Q. 13:13), and His statement, "Among the people are those who debate about God without knowledge, nor guidance, nor an enlightening Book" (Q. 22:8).

Among the things that God has prohibited in His Book are divisiveness and differing, as in His statement, "Hold fast to the rope of God all together, and do not be divisive" (Q. 3:103), to His statement, "Do not be like those who are divisive and differ after the clear evidences came to them. They will have a great chastisement, the day when faces will turn white and faces will turn black" (Q. 3:105–106). Ibn ʿAbbās said, "The faces of the People of the Sunna and the Community will turn white, and the faces of the people of innovation and divisiveness will turn black."[66] God—Exalted is He—said, "Indeed, those who have been divisive in religion and become schismatics, you have nothing to do with them. Their case rests with God" (Q. 6:159), and He—Exalted is He—said, "Turn your face towards the religion, as one of pure faith, the natural constitution of God according to which He has constituted humanity. There is no altering the creation of God" (Q. 30:30), to His statement, "And do not be among the associationists, among those who have been divisive in their religion and became schismatics" (Q. 30:32). He has indeed censured those who are divisive and differ in the likes of His statement— Exalted is He — "Those who were given the Book did not differ until after knowledge came to them, out of rivalry" (Q. 3:19), and in the likes of [49] His statement—Exalted is He—"They do not cease to differ, except those on whom your Lord has mercy. For that, He created them" (Q. 11:118–119), and the likes of His statement, "Indeed, those who differ over the Book are in extreme dissension" (Q. 2:176).

Likewise, the Sunna of the Messenger—God bless him and give him peace—agrees with the Book of God, like the well-known (mashhūr) ḥadīth from him, some of which Muslim reported from ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr, and the rest is known from the Musnad of Aḥmad and other [sources], from the ḥadīth of ʿAmr ibn Shuʿayb, from his father, from his grandfather, that the Messenger—God bless him and give him peace—"went out to his Companions while they were disputing about predetermination (qadar). One man said, 'Did not God say such-and such?' and another man said, 'Did not God say such-and-such?' The [Prophet's] face blazed red hot with anger.[67] He said, 'Is this what you were commanded [to do]?! Those who preceded you only perished from this. They pitted parts of the Book of God against other parts. However, the parts of the Book of God were only sent down to confirm the other parts as true, not for some parts to deny other parts. Look into what you were commanded, and do it, and what you were prohibited, and avoid it'"[68]—this [50] ḥadīth or something like it. Likewise is His statement, "Dispute over the Qurʾan is unbelief."[69] Likewise is what [Bukhārī and Muslim] have transmitted in the two Ṣaḥīḥs from ʿĀʾisha—May God be well pleased with her. [She

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[66] ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (d. ca. 68/687–688), a cousin of the Prophet renown for transmitting exegetical traditions on the Qurʾan; see Claude Gilliot, "ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbbās," EI3.

[67] Literally, "It was as though a pomegranate seed had burst in [the Prophet's] face."

[68] Aḥmad, Musnad, Musnad al-mukthirīn min al-ṣaḥāba, Musnad ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr al-ʿĀṣ (6806); there is a similar report in Ibn Mājah, Sunan, Kitāb al-Muqaddima (introduction, unnumbered), the ḥadīth containing bi-hādhā umirtum (unnumbered).

[69] Abū Dāwūd, Sunan, Kitāb al-Sunna (42), Bāb al-Nahy ʿan al-Jidāl fī ʾl-Qurʾān (5).

said], "The Prophet—God bless him and give him peace—recited His statement, 'It is He who has sent down the Book to you, in which there are determinate verses, which are the mother of the Book, and others that are indeterminate. As for those in whose hearts is deviation, they follow that of it which is indeterminate, seeking dissension and seeking its interpretation' (Q. 3:7). The Prophet—God bless him and give him peace—said, 'When you see those who follow what is indeterminate, it is those whom God has designated [in this verse]. Beware of them'."[70]

It is not permissible that the Qur'an and the Sunna prohibit knowledge of the propositions that come under what deserves to be among the foundations of the religion—By God!—except that they prohibit some of that in some circumstances, as when addressing someone with what will debilitate his understanding such that he goes astray. [This is] like the statement of 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd, "No one speaks to a people with speech that their intellects do not fathom. Otherwise, it will be [51] a cause of dissension to some of them." And like the statement of 'Alī [ibn Abī Ṭālib], "Speak to the people with what they know, and refrain from what they reject. Would you prefer that God and His Messenger be denounced as liars?" Or, it is as when telling the truth leads to more corruption than omitting it. This comes under his statement—God bless him and give him peace—"Whoever among you sees wrong, let him change it with his hand; if he is not able, then with his tongue; and if he is not able, then with his heart. That is the weakest [degree of] faith." Muslim related this.[71]

[It is obligatory to believe in the foundations of religion that the Messenger brought]

As for the statement of inquirer, "If it is said to be permissible, is it then obligatory? And has what makes it obligatory been transmitted from [the Prophet]—Peace be upon him?" it is said that there is no doubt that it is obligatory for everyone to believe in what the Messenger brought in general and on the whole, and there is no doubt that knowledge of what the Messenger brought in detail is a communal duty (farḍ 'alā 'l-kifāya). That pertains to communicating that with which God raised up His Messenger, and it pertains to meditating upon the Qur'an, comprehending it, and understanding it, knowing the Book and the Wisdom, preserving the Reminder, calling to good, commanding the right and forbidding the wrong, calling to the path of the Lord with wisdom and good exhortation, debating with what is best, and such like that God has obligated for the believers. This is a communal obligation for them.

[52] As for what is obligatory for the individuals among them, this varies according to their powers, need, and knowledge, and what the individuals among them have been commanded. Someone who is unable to pay attention to knowledge or understand its subtlety is not obligated in the same way as one who is able to do that. Someone who

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[70] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-'Ilm* (47), *Bāb al-Nahy 'an Ittibā' Mutashābih al-Qur'ān*...(1); Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *Kitāb al-Sunna* (42), *Bāb al-Nahy 'an al-Jadal wa Ittibā' Mutashābih al-Qur'ān* (2).
[71] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-Īmān* (1), *Bāb Bayān annā al-Nahy 'an al-Munkar min al-Īmān*...(20).

pays attention to texts and understands them with knowledge of the detail is obligated in a way that someone who does not pay attention to them is not. The *muftī*, the Hadith scholar, and the debater are obligated in a way that others are not.

[Strong probability is sufficient in belief if one is not able to attain certainty]

As for his statement, "Is the strong probability (*ghalabat al-ẓann*) that the independent jurist (*mujtahid*) reaches sufficient in this [matter]? Or must [he] reach definitiveness (*qaṭ'*)?" it is said that what is correct in that is the detail [to come below]. Even though there are factions of *kalām* theologians that claim that definitiveness is obligatory in all report-based propositions—which they may call propositions pertaining to the foundations [or religion]—and that it is not permissible to make inferences in them without proof yielding certainty (*yaqīn*)—they may even obligate everyone to have definitiveness in all of them—what they have said overall and generally is an error opposing the Book, the Sunna, and the consensus of the *salaf* of the community and its *imām*s. Moreover, despite that, they are the farthest people away from [adhering to] what they obligate. For they often argue in [propositions pertaining to the foundations] with proofs that they claim are definitive even though these are in reality wrong, and not even probable, to the point that one person among them often definitively affirms the correctness of a proof in one place and definitively affirms its invalidity in another place. [53] Even more, for some of them, the bulk of their discourse is like that to the point that one of two debaters may allege necessary knowledge for the contrary of what the other has alleged.

As for the detail, there is knowledge and certainty in whatever God has obligated. Whatever God has obligated of that is obligatory, such as His statement, "Know that God is severe in punishment and that God is Forgiving, Compassionate" (Q. 5:98), and His statement, "Know that there is no god but God, and ask forgiveness for your sin" (Q. 47:19). Likewise, it is obligatory to believe in what God has obligated belief in. Indeed, it has been firmly established in the Sharī'a that obligation is linked to the capability (*istiṭā'a*) of the servant, as in His statement—Exalted is He—"Fear God to the extent that you are capable" (Q. 64:16), and his statement—Peace be upon him—"If I have given you a command, do of it what you are capable." [Bukhārī and Muslim] relate this in the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s.[72]

If many of these subtle propositions that the community disputes are perhaps indeterminate for many people, and no proof—from revelation or otherwise—yielding certainty can be provided concerning them, it is not obligatory in that for someone like this to [prove] what he is not able [to prove]. He need not abandon what he is able to do in the way of firmly believing in a strong probability just because he is unable to attain complete certainty. On the contrary, [firm belief in strong probability] is what he is able

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[72] Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-I'tiṣām bi-l-Kitāb wa l-Sunna* (96), *Bāb al-Iqtidā' bi-Sunan Rasūl Allāh*...(2); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-Ḥajj* (15), *Bāb Farḍ al-Ḥajj marra fī al-'Umr* (73).

to do [and should do], especially if it corresponds to the truth. Indeed, firm belief corresponding to the truth profits him, and he is rewarded for it. The duty falls away when he is unable to do more than that.

[54] However, it must be known that the better part of those who have gone astray in this subject or have been unable to know the truth [are in such states] only because of their neglect in following what the Messenger brought and omitting the reflection and inferential reasoning that lead to knowledge of it. When they turned away from the Book of God, they went astray, as He—Exalted is He—said, "O children of Adam! If messengers from among you come to you narrating to you My signs, then whoever is pious and mends his ways, they will not fear, nor will they suffer grief" (Q. 7:35), and [as in] His statement, "He said, 'Go down [both of you] from [the Garden], one of you as an enemy to the other. Then if My guidance comes to you, whoever follows my guidance will neither go astray nor be unhappy. And whoever turns away from My Reminder, indeed he will lead a life of hardship, and We will raise him up blind on the Day of Judgment" (Q. 20:123–124). Ibn ʿAbbās said, "God ensures that whoever recites this Qurʾan and acts according to what is in it will not go astray in this world and will not be unhappy in the hereafter." Then he recited this [aforementioned] verse.

And as in the *ḥadīth* that al-Tirmidhī and others related from ʿAlī—God be well pleased with him—who said, "The Messenger of God—God bless him and give him peace—said, 'There will be dissensions'. I said, 'What will be the escape from them, O Messenger of God?' He said, 'The Book of God [55] in which there is information about what came before you, report of what will come after you, and judgment concerning what happens among you. It is the last word without jest. God will shatter whatever oppressor omits it, and God will lead astray whoever seeks guidance through something else. It is the firm rope of God, the wise reminder, and the straight path. It will not give capricious desires free reign to swerve; tongues will not mix it up; it does not wear out with repetition; its wonders do not cease; and scholars cannot get enough of it"— [A variant] report [reads], "Opinions do not differ over it"—"and the jinn when they heard it did not cease to say, 'We have heard a wonderful Qurʾan, which guides to the right way' (Q. 72:1–2). Whoever affirms it speaks the truth; whoever acts according to it is remunerated; whoever judges by it judges justly; and whoever calls to it is guided to the straight path."[73] He—Exalted is He—said, "This is My straight path. Follow it, and do not follow the ways that will separate you from My way" (Q. 6:153), and He—Exalted is He—said, "Alif Lām Mīm Ṣād. A book that was sent down to you—let [56] there be no obstruction in your breast because of it—by which to warn and as a reminder to the believers. Follow what was sent down to you from your Lord, and do not follow friends apart from Him" (Q. 7:1–3). And He said, "This is a book that we have sent down, blessed—follow it, and fear [God], so that you may receive mercy—lest you should say, 'The Book was sent down only to two factions before us, and we were heedless of what they studied',

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[73] al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ*, *Kitāb Faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān* (45), the *ḥadīth* containing *a-lā innahā satakūn fitna*.

or lest you say, 'If the Book had been sent down to us, we would have been better guided than them'. Now indeed, clear evidence, guidance and mercy have come to you from your Lord. Who is more unjust than one who denies the signs of God and turns away from them? We will recompense those who turn away from Our signs with an evil chastisement for their turning away" (Q. 6:155–157). He—Glory be to Him—mentioned that He will recompense the one who turns away from His signs without exception—whether for denying them or not—with an evil chastisement for their turning away. That clarifies that everyone who did not confess what the Messenger brought was an unbeliever, whether he firmly believed that it was lie, or was too arrogant to believe it, or turned away from it following his caprice, or doubted what he brought. Everyone who denies what he brought is an unbeliever, and someone who does not deny it may [still] be an unbeliever if he does not believe in it. Therefore, in many places in His Book, God reported the straying and chastisement of whoever omits following what He sent down, and He deemed the rational inquiry (*naẓar*), debate (*jadal*), and independent reasoning (*ijtihād*) in reason-based matters and other things that someone like that engages in to be among the attributes of the unbelievers and the hypocrites.

He—Exalted is He—said, "We made for them hearing, sight, and hearts, but their hearing, sight and hearts availed them nothing since they denied the signs of God. What they had mocked encircled them" (Q. 46:26). He—Exalted is He—said, "When their messengers came to them with clear evidences, [57] they rejoiced in the knowledge that they had [already]. What they had mocked encircled them. When they saw Our doom, they said, 'We believe in God alone, and we disbelieve in what we used to associate with Him'. But their belief did not profit them when they saw Our doom. [This] has been the custom of God with His servants, and then and there the unbelievers were lost" (Q. 40:83–85). He said, "Those who dispute over God's signs without any authority being given them—[this is] most detestable before God and before those who believe" (Q. 40:35), and in another verse, "In their breasts is only pride that they will never attain. Seek refuge in God; He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing" (Q. 40:56). The authority is the argument sent down from God. Similarly, He—Exalted is He—said, "Or have We sent down to them an authority that sanctions what they have been associating with Him?!" (Q. 30:35). He—Exalted is He—said, "Or do you have a clear authority?! Then bring your book if you are truthful" (Q. 37:156–157), and He said, "They are but names that you and your fathers have given them, for which God has sent down no authority" (Q. 53:23).

God—Exalted is He—has made a demand of anyone who has embraced a religion in His statement, "Bring me a book from before this one or a trace of knowledge if you are truthful" (Q. 46:4). So, the book is the Book, and the trace—according to those among the *salaf* who say so—is the report (*riwāya*) and the transmission chain (*isnād*). [58] They said also that [the trace] is the script (*khaṭṭ*) since the report and the transmission chain are written with script. That is because "a trace" (*athāra*) comes from "trace" (*athar*). The knowledge that one who accepts His statement speaks of is traced by the transmission chain, and that is written down with script. All of that belongs to His traces.

He—Exalted is He—has said in describing the hypocrites, "Have you not seen those who allege that they believe in what was sent down to you and in what was sent down before you? They want to refer judgment to the tyrant even though they were commanded not to believe in it? Satan wants to lead them far astray. When it is said to them, 'Come to what God has sent down and to the Messenger', you see the hypocrites turn away from you sharply. How is it that when an affliction strikes them, thanks to what their hands have done, they come to you swearing by God, 'Indeed, we want nothing but goodwill and conciliation'. Those—God knows what is in their hearts—turn away from them, admonish them, and speak to them a statement that reaches into their souls" (Q. 4:60–63).

There are diverse kinds of lessons in these verses proving that whoever refers judgment to other than the Book and the Sunna has strayed and is hypocritical, even though he claims to want to reconcile revelation-based proofs and what he calls reason-based matters, which are among those things taken from some of the tyrants of the associationists and the people of the Book [i.e. Jews and Christians]. There are other kinds of lessons [in these verses as well].

[59] Whoever has erred—because of his neglect in doing what is obligatory by way of following the Qur'an and belief, for example, or because of his transgressing the limits of God by taking the way that is prohibited, or because of following his caprice without guidance from God—is one who wrongs himself. He is among the people under the Threat (*ahl al-waʿīd*). [This is] the opposite of someone who strives (*mujtahid*) to obey God and His Messenger inwardly and outwardly, who seeks the truth by his independent reasoning (*ijtihād*) as God and His Messenger have commanded. His error is forgiven him, as He—Exalted is He—said, "The Messenger believed in what was sent down to him from his Lord, and the believers. Each one believes in God, His angels, His books, His messengers. We do not differentiate one of his messengers from the others. They say, 'We have heard, and we have obeyed. Your forgiveness, our Lord, [we do ask]'," to His statement, "'Our Lord! Do not censure us if we forget or err'" (Q. 2:285–286). It has been established in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim from the Prophet—God bless him and give him peace—that God said, "I have indeed done so."[74] Similarly, it has been established in [Muslim] from the *ḥadīth* of Ibn ʿAbbās, "That the Prophet—God bless him and give him peace—did not recite one letter from these two verses and Sūrat al-Fātiḥa without being granted that [forgiveness]."[75] This clarifies the response to this invocation for the Prophet and the believers and that God does not censure them if they forget or err.

[Saying openly that God obligates the impossible is an innovation]

As for the statement of the inquirer, "Does that fall under the category of 'obligating what is impossible' (*taklīf mā lā yuṭāq*) and such like?" [60] it is said that, even though

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[74] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-Īmān* (1), *Bāb Bayān annahu subḥānahu wa taʿāla lam yukallif illā mā yuṭāq* (57).
[75] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb Ṣalāt al-Musāfirīn…*(6), *Bāb Faḍl al-Fātiḥā wa Khawātīm sūrat al-Baqara…* (43).

people dispute over this expression a lot, whether to deny or to affirm, one ought to know that the long-established conflict over it is of two kinds. One of the two concerns what people agree is possible and does occur, [namely, God commanding someone under obligation to act but God not creating the act]. They just dispute over whether to say openly that it is impossible (*lā yuṭāq*) [to commit the act commanded]. The second [conflict] concerns what they agree is impossible [to do]. They dispute over whether it is possible to command it, but they do not dispute over the fact it does not occur. There is no [third kind of dispute] in which the people of knowledge and belief agree that [an act] is impossible and then dispute over whether the command to do it occurs.[76]

The first kind is like the dispute between those *kalām* theologians who affirm prede-termination (*qadar*) [i.e. the Ash‘arīs] and those who deny it [i.e. the Mu‘tazilīs] over the capability (*istiṭā‘a*) of the servant, which is his power (*qudra*) and his ability (*ṭāqa*). Must [the capability] exist with the [human] act and not prior to it [as the Ash‘arīs say], or must it exist prior to the act [as the Mu‘tazilīs say], or must it exist with [the act] even though it exists prior to it? It follows necessarily for whoever maintains the first that every servant who does not do what he has been commanded has been obligated to do the impossible since he has no power except with the act.

Because of this, the correct view—which those who grasp the full truth among the *kalām* theologians, the experts in jurisprudence, Hadith and Sufism, and others adhere to—is what the Qur’an proves, namely, that it is not necessary that the capability—which is the crux of command and prohibition and the factor of [bodily] soundness for the act—be conjoined to the act. The capability with which the existence of the act becomes necessary is then conjoined to it.

[61] The first [kind of capability] is as in His statement—Exalted is He—“It is the duty of the people to God to take the pilgrimage to the House, whoever is capable of making his way there” (Q. 3:97), and the statement of the Prophet—God bless him and give him peace—to ‘Imrān ibn Ḥuṣayn, “Pray standing, and if you are not capable, sitting, and if you are not capable, reclining.” It is known that the pilgrimage and the prayer are obligatory for anyone who is capable, whether he does it or not. So, it is known that this capability cannot be with the act.

The second [kind of capability] is as in His statement—Exalted is He—“They were not capable of hearing, and they were not seeing” (Q. 11:20), and in His statement, “On that day We will surely present Hell to the unbelievers, those whose eyes were covered

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[76] Ibn Taymiyya here denies the existence of this third kind of conflict, whereas below he acknowl-edges that some “extreme” Ash‘arīs state that it does indeed occur that God commands acts that every-one agrees cannot possibly occur; this is the view of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, on which see Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 105–106. For a survey of *kalām* theological views on the obligation of the impossi-ble, see D. Gimaret, “Taklīf,” EI2, 10:138–139; R. Brunschvig, “Devoir et pouvoir: Histoire d’un problème de théologie musulmane,” *Studia Islamica* 20 (1964), 5–46. For Ibn Taymiyya’s analysis of this matter, and especially his critique of al-Rāzī, see Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy*, 167–169.

from My Reminder, and they were not capable of hearing" (Q. 18:100–101). [This is] according to the view of those who interpret capability by means of these [verses].

As for the interpretation of the *salaf* and the great majority, what is intended by the lack of capability is the hardship [that the act poses] for [human beings] and its difficulty for their souls. Their souls do not have the capability to will it, even though they have the power to do it if they would will to. This is the state of someone whose caprice or corrupt opinion has turned him away from listening to and following the books of God that have been sent down. [God] has reported that he is not capable of that. This capability is the one conjoined to the act and necessitating it. But were the first [kind of capability] not to exist, obligation could not be established. For example, [the first kind is established in] His statement, [62] "Fear God to the extent that you are capable" (Q. 64:16), and His statement, "Those who believe and do righteous deeds—We do not obligate a soul except to the extent of its capacity" (Q. 7:42), and such like. If those who neglect and transgress the foundations of religion do not have the capability to hear what has been sent down to the Messenger, they come under this division.

Similar to this is their dispute over [the act] that is commanded [but] that God knows will not come to be, or that He reports will not come to be despite that [command]. Some people say that [this act] cannot occur (*ghayr maqdūr 'alay-hi*). By the same token, the extreme Qadarīs disallow that God know, report, and prescribe in advance that it will not come to be. This is because both sides agree that something contrary to [God's] knowledge is not possible and cannot occur.

The great majority of people opposed [the extreme Qadarīs] in that. They said that God's power—Exalted is He—contradicted them. This is because He reported that He had power to do things that He would not do, as in His statement, "Yes, We even have the power to make his fingers equal [in length]" (Q. 75:4), His statement, "We have the power to take it all away" (Q. 23:18), and His statement, "Say! He has the power to raise up against you a chastisement from above you or from beneath your feet" (Q. 6:65). He has said, "If your Lord had willed, He would have made humankind one community" (Q. 11:18), and such like, which report that, had He willed [something], He would have done it. When He does do it, He does it only if He has the power to do it. The Qur'an has proved that He has the power to do it when He wills, even though He does not will it.

They also said that God knows the circumstance of [the act of His servant]. He knows that it is possible and within the power of the servant, but that it neither occurs nor comes to be because the servant does not will it, because he loathes it, or such like, not because he is incapable of it. [63] This dispute goes away by differentiating kinds of power for the [act], as mentioned previously. [The act that God commands but knows will not exist] is not within the power of the power conjoined with the act, even if it is within the power of the power that is the factor of [bodily] soundness for the act, which is the crux of command and prohibition.

As for the second kind, it is as in the agreement [of the great majority] that someone incapable of an act does not have the ability [to perform the act].[77] For example the blind, the deaf and dumb, and the decrepit are not able [respectively] to add diacritical marks to a copy [of the Qur'an], transcribe [the Qur'an], or make haste. They have agreed that [obligating] this kind [of act] does not occur in the law (*sharīʿa*).

Disputing that is only a faction of extremists from among the followers of al-Ashʿarī and those who agree with them from among the followers of Mālik, al-Shāfiʿī, Aḥmad, and others who incline toward [divine] compulsion (*jabr*) [in human acts]. They dispute with each other only over the rational possibility of commanding, even to the point that some of them dispute over what is impossible in itself like combining two opposites and two contradictories—is it rationally possible to command it even though that does not occur in the law?

Those who go to extremes [even more so, like Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī] allege that this sort does occur in the law. For example, they allege that Abū Lahab was obligated to believe that he would not believe.[78] According to the vast majority of the people of the *qibla* from all the factions, they are wrong in that. No one says that Abū Lahab was made to hear this pronouncement indicating that he would not believe and that he was commanded, despite that, to believe. This is similar to when it was reported to Noah—Peace be upon him—that no one from his people would believe except those who had already believed (cf. Q. 11:36). He did not command them to believe in this pronouncement after that. Moreover, suppose that [Abū Lahab] had been informed that he would roast in the Fire (cf. Q. 111:3) [64] as a result of dying in unbelief and that he had heard this pronouncement. In this case [the term of] his obligation would have ended, and, that being so, his belief would not have profited him. That would have been like someone believing [only] after suffering chastisement. He—Exalted is He—said, "Their belief did not profit them when they saw Our doom" (Q. 40:85). He—Exalted is He—said, "Now [you believe]?! Previously you disobeyed and were among those who caused corruption" (Q. 10:91).

The point here is to note that the dispute over this foundation is of different kinds: sometimes over [the capability to perform] an act that has been commanded, and sometimes over the possibility of commanding [an act that cannot be performed]. Moreover, there is the specious argument made by *kalām* theologians who confuse the people. They deem the two divisions to be one division, and they allege absolute obligation of the impossible when one of the divisions occurs, which the vast majority of people do not deem to fall under the category of the impossible. The dispute over this is not linked to propositions pertaining to command and prohibition. It is linked only to the propositions pertaining to decree and predetermination.

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[77] Reading *yuṭīquhu* rather than *yuṭīqa*.

[78] According to Muslim tradition, Abū Lahab was an uncle of the Prophet Muḥammad who died just after the battle of Badr that took place in 2/624; see W. Montgomery Watt, "Abū Lahab," EI2, 1:136–137.

Then they deem the possibility of this division [i.e. that God command acts for which He creates no conjoined capability or that He knows will not occur] to lead necessarily to the possibility of the division that the Muslims have agreed could not occur [i.e. that God command people to do what they have no ability to do]. They compare one of the two kinds to the other. That is among the comparisons that the Muslims, indeed, all the religious confessions, no indeed, all rational people, have agreed are false. Whoever compares someone [of] sound [body] commanded to [perform] acts—and says [about him] for example, "The power is with the act," or "God knew that [65] he would not act,"—to someone who is incapable—who, even if he willed to act, would not have the power to do so—has combined two things known to be different necessarily in reason and religion. That incites passions between the Qadarīs and their brothers the Jabrīs. When this is recognized, [it becomes apparent that] saying openly that [God] obligates the impossible belongs to the innovation that emerged in Islam.

[Saying openly that servants are compelled in their acts is an innovation]

[This is] like saying openly that servants are compelled (*majbūr*) to do their acts. The *salaf* of the community and its *imām*s have agreed to condemn that, and they have censured those who speak of it, even if it was intended only to refute the Qadarīs who do not confess that God is the creator of the acts of servants, nor that He wills the things that come to be. They said that this is refuting innovation with innovation, and countering corruption with corruption and falsehood with falsehood. If it were not for the fact that this response will not bear [further] elaboration, I would have mentioned some texts on their views about that, which would have elucidated their refutation of them in that. When the intention of the speaker has been detailed [in this question of compulsion], the truth has been elucidated with expressions in which truth is not confused with falsehood, and truth has been distinguished from falsehood—this [arises] from the Differentiator (*al-furqān*)—then in this case what has been made plain emerges out of that for which they have been censured. They are the likes of those who the *imām*s have described as differing over the Book, opposing the Book and agreeing to abandon the Book, and of speaking of what is indeterminate in speech, [66] twisting words from their places, and deceiving the ignorant among the people by confusing them. Because of this, according to them, the Jabrīs came under what are called "the censured Qadarīs" (*al-qadariyya al-madhmūmīn*) because they delved into predetermination [mixing it] with falsehood. Indeed, this is the fullness of the sense for which the Qadarīs are censured.

Therefore, Imām Abū Bakr al-Khallāl[79] treated [this] in the book *al-Sunna* [in the section] "The Refutation of the Qadarīs, and their statement, 'God compelled His servants to sins'." Then he narrated from 'Amr ibn 'Uthmān, from Baqiyya ibn al-Walīd:

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[79] Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Hārūn al-Khallāl (d. 311/923), a prominent Ḥanbalī Hadith scholar, jurist, and theologian; see H. Laoust, "al-Khallāl," EI2, 4:989–990.

[Baqiyya] said, "I asked al-Zubaydī[80] and al-Awzāʿī[81] about compulsion (*jabr*)." Al-Zubaydī said, "The command of God is greatest, and His power is so great that He does not compel or debar (*yaʿḍil*). Rather, He decrees, predetermines, creates and naturally disposes His servant toward what He loves." Al-Awzāʿī said, "I do not know any basis for compulsion in the Qurʾan and the Sunna. So, I am afraid to say that. However, decree, predetermination, creation, and naturally disposing are known in the Qurʾan and the Hadith from the Messenger of God—God bless him and give him peace. I wrote this down only for fear that one of the Successors (*rajul tābiʿī*) has misgivings about the people of the community and the truth.[82]

[67] These two responses that these two *imām*s mentioned in the era of the Successors of the Successors (*tābiʿū al-tābiʿīn*) are among the best of responses. As for al-Zubaydī—Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd, a colleague of al-Zuhrī[83]—he said, "The command of God is greatest, and His power is so great that He does not compel or debar." So, he denied compulsion. That is because the compulsion known in the language is the coercion (*ilzām*) of a human being against his consent, just as the jurists say in the topic of marriage, "Is the woman compelled to marry or not? If the guardian debars her, what does she do?" By "compelling" her, they mean marrying her without her consent or her free choice, and by "debarring" her, they mean preventing her from whomever she pleases and chooses freely. So, he said, "He is so great that He does not compel or debar," because God—Glory be to Him—has the power to make the servant choose freely and with consent that which he does, and loath and hate that which he omits, which is what happens. The servant is not compelled to do what he loves, is well pleased with, and wills to do. They are his voluntary acts. And he is not debarred from what he omits. For he loathes it or hates it or does not will it. They are his voluntary omissions. As for al-Awzāʿī, he refused to utter this verbal form, even if this meaning was meant by it, inasmuch as it has no basis in the Book and the Sunna. Indeed, it leads to uttering an innovated verbal form which is manifest in connoting falsehood. That is not permitted, even if it is said that a correct meaning is intended by it.

[68] Al-Khallāl said, "Abū Bakr al-Marwazī[84] reported to us and said, 'I heard one of the shaykhs say: I heard ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Mahdī say: al-Sufyān

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[80] Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd ibn ʿĀmir al-Zubaydī (d. 149/766), a prominent Hadith transmitter and judge in Syria; see Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-ʿĀlām*, 13th printing (Beirut: Dār al-ʿIlm li'l-Malāyīn, 1997), 7:133.

[81] Abū ʿAmr ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn ʿAmr al-Awzāʿī (d. 157/774), a leading Syrian jurist; see J. Schacht, "al-Awzāʿī," EI2, 1:772–773.

[82] Abū Bakr al-Khallāl, *al-Sunna*, ed. ʿAṭiyya al-Zahrānī, 7 parts (Riyadh: Dār al-Rāya, 1410–1420/ 1989–2000), 3:555. Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 170–171, discusses al-Khallāl's text and what follows here in *Darʾ*.

[83] Abū Bakr ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742), a leading scholar of Hadith and other religious disciplines who was close to the Umayyads; see M. Lecker, "al-Zuhrī, Ibn Shihāb," EI2, 11:565–566.

[84] Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Hajjāj al-Marwazī [also al-Marwadhī and al-Marrūdhī] (d. 275/888), a student of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and a teacher of al-Khallāl; see ed., "al-Marwazī," EI2, 6:627.

al-Thawrī[85] rejected [the word] compulsion, and he said, God naturally disposes servants'. Al-Marwazī said, 'I reckoned that he meant the statement of the Prophet—God bless him and give him peace—to Ashajj 'Abd al-Qays'," that is, his statement that is in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, "[The Prophet said], 'In you are two characteristics that God loves: gentleness and deliberateness'. He said, 'Two characteristics that I give the appearance of having or two characteristics to which I have been naturally disposed?' [The Prophet said], 'Of course, two characteristics to which you have been naturally disposed.' He said, 'Praise be to God who has naturally disposed me with two characteristics that God loves'."[86]

Therefore, Bukhārī and others argued for the creation of the acts of servants with His statement—Exalted is He —"Surely, the human being was created fretful; when evil touches him anxious; when good touches him, grudging" (Q. 70:19–21). He-Exalted is He—reported that He created humankind according to this description. [69] Others argued from the statement of the Friend [i.e. Abraham]—Peace be upon him —"O my Lord! Make me one who establishes prayer, and from my offspring" (Q.14:40), and from his statement, "Our Lord! Make us submissive to You, and from our offspring, a community submissive to You" (Q. 2:128).

The response of al-Awzāʿī is more correct than the response of al-Zubaydī because al-Zubaydī denied compulsion while Awzāʿī refused to utter it seeing that this verbal form might bear a correct meaning, in which case its denial could entail denial of [both] truth and falsehood.

Similarly, al-Khallāl mentioned in the book al-Sunna what 'Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad [ibn Ḥanbal] mentioned. ['Abd Allāh] said, "Muḥammad ibn Bakkār related to us; Abū Maʿshar related to us; Yaʿlā related to us, from Muḥammad ibn Kaʿb who said, '[God] is only named Compeller (al-Jabbār) because He compels creatures to do what He wills'."[87] So, if he refrains from openly stating an indeterminate (mushtabih), [merely] conceivable (muḥtamal), and ambiguous (mujmal) verbal form, the difficulty disappears, and it is better than denying it, even if it is apparent that the corrupt meaning is probable, for fear that he be thought to deny the two meanings completely.

The same thing is said about denying the ability (ṭāqa) to do what is commanded. Establishing compulsion to do what is forbidden is equivalent to negating the ability to

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[85] Sufyān ibn Saʿīd ibn Masrūq al-Thawrī (d. 161/778), a prominent source of Qurʾanic exegetical traditions and a major figure in Kūfan circles who emphasized Hadith in law; see H.P. Raddatz, "Sufyān al-Thawrī," EI2, 9:770–772.

[86] The ḥadīth does not appear in full in Muslim, but see Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-Īmān (1), Bāb al-Amr bi'l-Īmān bi-Allāh, taʿālā... (6). Fuller but not exact versions are found in Abū Dāwūd, Sunan, Kitāb al-Adab (43), Bāb Qublat al-Rijl (162); and Aḥmad, Musnad, Musnad al-Shāmiyyīn, Ḥadīth Wafd ʿAbd al-Qays ʿan al-Nabī (17373).

[87] al-Khallāl, al-Sunna, 3:557.

do what is commanded. Imām Aḥmad and others among the *imām*s of the Sunna used to speak likewise.[88]

[70] Al-Khallāl said, "Al-Maymūnī informed us and said, 'I heard Abū ʿAbd Allāh, that is, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, debating Khālid ibn Khidāsh[89] over predetermination. They mentioned a man, and Abū ʿAbd Allāh said: I dislike that he says that God compels'."[90]

[Al-Khallāl] said, "Al-Marwazī informed us, 'I said to Abū ʿAbd Allāh: A man says that God compels servants. [Abū ʿAbd Allāh] said: We do not say that. He condemned that and said, "He leads astray whomever He wills, and He guides whomever He wills" (Q. 16:93)'."[91] [Al-Khallāl] said,

> Al-Marwazī informed us and said, "'Abd al-Wahhāb wrote to me concerning the affair of Ḥasan ibn Khalaf al-ʿUkbarī.[92] He said that he was avoiding the inheritance of his father. A Qadarī said, 'Indeed, God does not compel servants to commit sins'. Aḥmad ibn Rajāʾ refuted him and said, 'Indeed, God compels his servants to do what He wills'. By that he intended to affirm predetermination. Then, Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī wrote a book to argue [the point]. I took it to Abū ʿAbd Allāh and told him the story. He said, 'He wrote a book?!' And he condemned both of them together—Ibn Rajāʾ when he said, 'He compels servants', and the Qadarī when he said, 'He does not compel'. He condemned Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī for writing his book and his argument; he commanded him to emigrate for writing the book; [71] and he said to me, 'Ibn al-Rajāʾ must ask forgiveness from his Lord for saying that He compels servants'. So, I said to Abū ʿAbd Allāh, 'So, what is the response to this question?' He said, 'He leads astray whomever He wills, and He guides whomever He wills' (Q. 16:93)."
> [In another report], al-Marwazī said with regard to this question that he heard Abū ʿAbd Allāh [speak about it]. When he condemned the one who said, "[God] does not compel," and the one who replied to him [saying], "God compels," Abū ʿAbd Allāh said, "Whenever a man innovates an innovation, the people are able to respond to it," and he said, "Let anyone who refutes them with something novel seek forgiveness from his Lord." He condemned whoever refuted something of [this] kind of discourse since he has no *imām* preceding him in it. Al-Marwazī said, "It was not long before Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī arrived from ʿUkbarā[93] and with him shayhks and a book from the people of ʿUkbarā. I introduced Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī to Abū ʿAbd Allāh, and he said, 'O Abū ʿAbd Allāh! This is the book. I am turning it over to Abū Bakr [al-Marwazī] so

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[88] In other words, one should not deny impossible acts, that is, those acts that one is not able to do (*lā yuṭāq*), just as one should not affirm compulsion. Instead one should simply not speak about these terms so as to avoid getting confused over the truth and falsehood involved in their usage.

[89] Khālid ibn Khidāsh ibn ʿAjlān (d. 223/838), a transmitter of Hadith from Iraq; see al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 10:488–489.

[90] al-Khallāl, *al-Sunna*, 3:549, with variations.

[91] al-Khallāl, *al-Sunna*, 3:550.

[92] We could not identify the persons in this story with certainty.

[93] Ukbarā was a town north of Baghdad; see Yāqūt ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, 5 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1397/1977). 4:142.

that he can cut it up, and I will ascend the pulpit of 'Ukbarā and seek the for-giveness of God—Exalted and Majestic is He'. Then, Abū 'Abd Allāh said to me, 'They must accept it from him and return to him'."[94]

We have elaborated discussion of this point elsewhere,[95] and we have talked about the corrupt foundation that those who are divisive assume, which is that affirming the true meaning of what they call compulsion negates [72] command and prohibition to the point that the Qadarīs deem it to negate command and prohibition absolutely, and a fac-tion of the Jabrīs deems it to negate the [ethical] goodness and badness of the [human] act. [The Jabrīs then] turn that into part of their basis for denying that the goodness and badness of an act subsisting in it is known by reason.[96] It is known that [compulsion] does not negate that, at least not to negate it in the sense of the act being suitable and profitable for the agent and its being incompatible with and harmful for the agent. It is known that this meaning—which they call compulsion—does not negate that the act is profitable and harmful, beneficial and corrupting, and attracts pleasure and pain. It is known that it does not negate the goodness and badness of the act. So too, it does not negate that, no matter whether that goodness is known by reason or is known by revela-tion or that the revelation establishes it, not [just] unveils it.

[The revelation provides unambiguous guidance in the foundations of religion that differentiates between truth and falsehood]

As for the statement of the inquirer, "What is the wisdom in there being no unambig-uous text (naṣṣ) pertaining to [the foundations of religion] from the Law-giver, which would guard against falling into peril, [when in fact the Prophet] had been indeed eager to guide his community?"

We say that this query is based on an anterior, corrupt foundation constructed out of turning away from the Book and the Sunna and seeking guidance in the statements of those who differ with each other and oppose each other in denying and affirming inde-terminate and ambiguous expressions, those about whom God said, "Indeed, those who differ over the Book [73] are in extreme dissension" (Q. 2:176); He—Exalted is He—said, "The people were but one community, and then they differed" (Q. 10:19); He—Exalted is He—said, "Those who were given the Book did not differ until after knowledge came to them, out of rivalry" (Q. 3:19); and He—Exalted is He—said, "They split up their affair between them into sects, each party rejoicing at what they have" (Q. 23:53).

Attention has been drawn previously to the source of going astray in this query and the likes of it, and to the indeterminate, ambiguous, and innovated expressions involved in

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[94] al-Khallāl, *al-Sunna*, 3:552–553.

[95] We could not find a fuller treatment of these reports from al-Khallāl's *Sunna* in Ibn Taymiyya's writ-ings than this. There is however a similar discussion of al-Khallāl's reports in Ibn Taymiyya, *Sharḥ Ḥadīth al-Nuzūl*, MF 5:321–584 (430–432), and shorter discussions in other texts identified in Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 170 n 136.

[96] On this issue, see Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 34–39, and especially 115–118.

that, whether the novelty be in the verbal form [itself] and its signification (*dalāla*) or in the usage of that verbal form in that meaning. Take for example the verbal form "foundations of religion" (*uṣūl al-dīn*). Each group introduces into it whatever propositions and proofs it thinks belongs to the foundations of its [own] religion, even though they do not belong to the foundations of the religion with which God raised up His messengers and sent down His books, as we have mentioned. So, if uttering these ambiguous and novel [verbal forms], whether to deny or to affirm, is disallowed, and if inquiry is made into their interpretation and [things] are set forth in detail, the correct path becomes plain.

With that, it becomes plain that the Law-giver—Blessing and peace be upon him—set out everything that guards against peril unambiguously so as to preclude excuse. He—Exalted is He—said, "It is not for God to lead a people astray after He has guided them until He makes plain to them what they should fear" (Q. 9:115); He—Exalted is He—said, "Today, I have perfected your religion for you; I have completed my blessing upon you; and I am well pleased for Islam to be a religion for you" (Q. 5:3); He—Exalted is He—said, "So that humankind has no argument against God, after the messengers" (Q. 4:165); He—Exalted is He—said, "Nothing is incumbent upon the Messenger but clear communication" (Q. 24:54); He—Exalted is He—said, [74] "Indeed, this Qur'an guides to that which is most upright" (Q. 17:9); He—Exalted is He—said, "If they had done what they had been admonished to do, it would have been better for them and stronger in confirmation [of their belief]. Then We would have bestowed upon them from Us a great wage, and We would have guided them on the straight path" (Q. 4:66–68); and He—Exalted is He—said, "A light and a plain book has indeed come to you from God. God guides by means of it those who follow His good pleasure to the ways of peace" (Q. 5:15–16).

Abū Dharr [al-Ghifārī] said, "The Messenger of God—God bless him and give him peace—has passed away, and no bird flaps its wings in the sky but that reminds us of knowledge from him."[97] In the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim, "Some of the associationists said to Salmān [al-Fārisī], 'Your prophet has taught you everything, even defecation'. He said, 'Yes indeed'."[98] He—God bless him and give him peace—said, "I have left you upon the [path of] brightness, whose night is like its day. No one will deviate from it after me except the perishing."[99] He said, [75] "I have talked to you about everything that will bring you close to Paradise, and I have talked to you about everything that will take you away from the Fire,"[100] and he said, "God has only ever raised up a prophet such that he

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[97] Aḥmad, *Musnad*, *Musnad al-Anṣār*, *Ḥadīth Abī Dharr al-Ghifārī* (20854).

[98] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-Ṭahāra* (2), *Bāb al-Istiṭāba* (17).

[99] Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, *al-Muqaddima* (introduction, unnumbered), the *ḥadīth* containing *qad taraktum ʿalā 'l-bayḍāʾ* (unnumbered).

[100] This *ḥadīth* is not found in the canonical Sunnī collections, nor in Aḥmad's *Musnad*, but similar wording is found in Ibn Abī Shaybā, *al-Muṣannaf*, eds. Ḥamad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Jumʿā and Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Laḥīdān, 16 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1425/2004), 12:160 (*Kitāb al-Zuhd, Bāb mā dhukira ʿan Nabiyyinā. . .*, 35335); and in al-Bayhaqī, *al-Jāmiʿ fī Shuʿab al-Īmān*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ḥāmid, 14 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1423/2003), 13:19 (*Bāb fī 'l-Zuhd wa-qaṣr al-amal*, 9891).

should guide his community to the good that he knows is good for them and prohibit them from the evil that he knows is evil for them."[101]

The detail of all this is known by investigation, examination, deduction, induction, and seeking knowledge pertaining to these propositions in the Book and the Sunna. He who seeks that will find in the Book and the Sunna unambiguous texts precluding excuse in these propositions. In that is the utmost of guidance, elucidation, and healing. That is by means of two things. The first of them is knowledge (*ma'rifa*) of the meanings of the Book and the Sunna, and the second is knowledge of the meanings of the verbal forms with which those who differ speak so that one is able to compare between the meanings of the revelation and the meanings of those who delve into the foundations of religion. Then in that case, it will become plain to him that the Book is an arbiter among the people over that in which they differ, as He—Exalted is He—said, "The people were one community. Then, God raised up prophets bringing glad tidings and warning, and with them He sent the Book with the truth to arbitrate between the people concerning that over which they differed" (Q. 2:213); He—Exalted is He—said, "That over which you have differed [76], its ruling belongs to God" (Q. 42:10); and He—Exalted is He—said, "If you have disputed over something, refer it to God and the Messenger if you believe in God and the Last Day. That is better and finer in the end. Have you not seen those who allege that they believe in what has been sent down to you and in what was sent down before you? They want to refer judgment to the tyrant even though they were commanded to disbelieve in it? Satan wants to lead them far astray. When it is said to them, 'Come to what God has sent down and to the Messenger', you see the hypocrites turn away from you sharply" (Q. 4:59–61).

Because of this, prohibition against uttering [the term] under dispute, whether to deny or to affirm, is found often in the discourse of the *salaf* and the *imām*s. That is not because the two opposites are devoid of truth, nor [on account of] negligence or short-coming in elucidating the truth, but because that expression is among the ambiguous, indeterminate verbal forms that include truth and falsehood. So, in affirming it, one affirms truth and falsehood, and in denying it, one denies truth and falsehood. So, both utterances are disallowed, unlike the divine unambiguous texts, which are a differentiator (*furqān*) by which God differentiates between truth and falsehood. Therefore, the *salaf* of the community and its *imām*s have deemed the speech of God and His Messenger to be the reference (*imām*) and the differentiator that must be followed. They affirmed what God and His Messenger affirmed, and they denied what God and His messenger denied. They deemed it disallowed to utter novel, ambiguous, indeterminate expressions, whether to deny or to affirm. They did not utter the verbal form, nor deny it until after inquiry was made into the interpretation and [things] were set forth in detail. If the meaning became plain, its truth was affirmed and its falsehood denied. [This is] unlike the speech of God and His Messenger, which is truth that must be accepted, even

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[101] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-Imāra* (33), *Bāb al-Wafāʾ bi-Bayʿat al-Khulafāʾ*... (10).

if its meaning is not understood. Speech that is not protected [from error] does not need to be accepted until its meaning is understood.

[God censures those whose foundations of religion differ from the Book and the Sunna]

[77] As for those who differ over the Book, oppose it, and agree to differ with it, each faction deems what they have made into a foundation among the foundations of their innovated religion to be the reference that must be followed. [Each faction] deems the texts of the Book and the Sunna that oppose that to be among the ambiguous and indeterminate [texts] that are not permissible to follow. On the contrary, it is necessary to interpret them according to what agrees with their foundation that they have innovated or to turn away from them and leave off meditating on them.

These two types [i.e. those who require interpretation to agree with their foundations and those who turn away from the Book and the Sunna] resemble what God has mentioned in His statement, "Are you so eager that they should believe you, seeing that a faction of them had heard the speech of God and then knowingly twisted it after having comprehended it? When they meet those who have believed, they say, 'We have believed', but when they meet with one another in private, they say, 'Do you speak to them about what God has opened up to you so that they can argue with you by means of it before your Lord? Do you not comprehend?!' Do they not know that God knows what they keep secret and what they make public? Among them are common folk who do not know the Book apart from mere wishes; they know nothing but conjecture. Woe to those who write the Book with their hands and then say, 'This is from God', in order to sell it for a small price. Woe to them from what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they acquire" (Q. 2:75–79).

Indeed, God censures those who twist (*yuḥarrifūn*) words from their places, seizing whoever interprets the Book and the Sunna according to the false innovations that he takes as foundations. He censures those who do not know the Book apart from mere wishes. He seizes whoever leaves off meditating on the Qur'an and knows nothing but mere recitation of its letters. He seizes whoever writes a book by his hand that opposes the Book of God for worldly gain and says that it is from God and says something like, "This is the revelation and the religion; this is the meaning of the Book and the Sunna; this [78] is what the *salaf* and the *imām*s say; and these are the foundations of religion that must be firmly believed either individually or communally (*kifāya*)." He seizes whoever hides what he has of the Book and the Sunna so that his opponent cannot argue by means of them for the truth that he says. These things are very frequent among the people of caprice generally, like the Rāfiḍīs [Shīʿīs], the Jahmīs, and such like among the people of caprice and the *kalām* theologians, and specifically among the people of caprice, like many who belong to the jurists along with a group in the [same] situation as the people of caprice. These things mentioned in [this] response have been elaborated in another place. And God knows better.