

elaborate on this model.¹⁶ The premise of Ibn al-Qayyim is that the Quran and Sunnah should guide us to the sound way of disputation: the explanation of legal causes, *bayān al-ʿilal*, the distinctions, *furūq*, and the invalidation of the argument by circle, *dawr*, or by infinite regress, *tasalsul*.¹⁷ Moreover, Ibn al-Qayyim states that the Prophet Muḥammad was the first to formulate answers to objections.¹⁸ Ibn al-Qayyim refers here to a terminology and argumentation techniques that he learned from juridical dialectics and later *kalām*. In the first step of his reasoning, Ibn al-Qayyim reconstructs a straw-man argument in which he depicted a general and incomplete model of disputation.¹⁹ In Ibn al-Qayyim's understanding, this legacy was not to be sanctioned, which would be the case if he admitted coexistence between the *jadāl* model and scriptural disputation. For him, however, these are two competing and exclusive ways of disputation. The reason he uses this terminology and these argumentation techniques is to prove that the scriptures contain them in the most perfect way. Hence the second part of his argument, which stated that Muslims must not have recourse to the *jadāl* model.²⁰ By defending the scriptural way of disputation, he aims to restore trust in the scriptures and discard the need to use the way of the theologians, let alone that of the philosophers. Thus, his method is clearly a process of re-traditionalization.

Ibn al-Qayyim re-traditionalized *munāẓarah* by recalling early theologians and jurists, especially Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 935). A human being, he asserted, is either an inquirer, *nāẓir*, or a debater, *munāẓir*, and disputation is either praiseworthy or blameworthy. The praiseworthy disputation is the one where a debater explains to other participants the guiding proof in case they look for truth; he silences them, or invalidates their objections. The other purpose is to incite the opponent to investigate the proofs of truth. If the debater neither knows the truth nor seeks it, it is the case of a blameworthy debate.²¹ Thus, Ibn al-Qayyim traditionalizes al-Ashʿarī and al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111) to allow himself a better position in front of later philosophizing Ashʿari theologians. He assigns a normative function to disputation with two purposes. On the one hand, similar to a fighting sport, disputation should serve the orthodox faith. On the other, praiseworthy disputation excludes dialecticians because they neither defend scriptural truth nor seek it.

¹⁶Ibid., 1533–1610.

¹⁷Ibid., 1533.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Alina Kokoschka and Birgit Krawietz call this process appropriation; see “Appropriation of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya: Challenging Expectations of Ingenuity,” in *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law*, ed. Krawietz and Tamer, 1–33.

²⁰Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Badāʾiʿ al-fawāʾid*, 1533.

²¹Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Al-Ṣawāʾiq al-mursalāh*, 1274–75.



The keyword in Ibn al-Qayyim's conception is truth, and this should be the law that rules over the debaters. It is not a rational and deliberated truth, but a scriptural one. Therefore, disputation is a category of calling to Islam, *da'wah*.²² He states that according to the status of the target, disputation is of three sorts: wisdom (*ḥikmah*), preaching (*maw'izah*), and disputation (*jidāl*). If the person called seeks truth sincerely he should be called by wisdom, *ḥikmah*, and there is no need to use preaching or disputation with him. If he went away one should preach to him using enticement and intimidation, *targhīb wa-tarhīb*. If he is stubborn and disputatious, then one has to use disputation with him. In the case that disputation does not work with him, then he has to be punished. If the weapon of the tongue does not persuade him, he should be persuaded by the sword. This is so because disputation with a proponent of falsehood, *mubṭil*, has two benefits. On the one side, it could turn him from his falsehood to truth. On the other, it should stop his evil and enmity so that people would see that he is false.²³

Ibn al-Qayyim plainly turns disputation into a fighting sport in the way of traditions. To delegitimize the competing model of disputation of later theologians and philosophers, he readjusts Sunni materials to include al-Ash'arī and traditional Ash'aris, such as Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī (d. 1083), who weigh heavy in the history of *jadāl*, as well as al-Ghazzālī, critical as he was of dialectics. A passage in Ibn al-Qayyim's *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-mursalāh* illustrates well his reasoning. The *salaf* did not reject *kalām* for using a specific terminology or following certain techniques of argumentation. Actually, they argued, speculated, and disputed with others. They did so, however, with an aim to reach the divine and to understand His speech. They would observe the signs of God and extract rational proofs from them making reason and revelation coalesce.²⁴ Disputation of theologians and philosophers should not oppose revelation because it produces only objections, but not knowledge and guidance.²⁵ Inherent to this argument is a fideistic and spiritualist concept of knowledge, in the manner of al-Ghazzālī. Ultimately, *jadāl* does not produce certainty and that is sufficient to discard it.

2. Practice

Ibn al-Qayyim related ten debates in which he was involved. Sometimes he provides details such as the place, the identity of the adversary, and the outcome of the debate. On occasion, the debate serves as an alibi to long critical discussions of his opponents. Ibn al-Qayyim masters the literary *munāẓarah* in which

²²Ibid., 1276.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., 1274.

²⁵Ibid., 1277.



imaginary objects contest with one another, such as the sky and the earth or the heart and the eye. Thus, he is quite familiar with this flourishing genre of Mamluk literature.²⁶ He is also aware of the didactic use of the virtual debate in order to explain issues on which there are different positions. In the following, I will only deal with actual debates of Ibn al-Qayyim or at least what he narrates as such.

PARTICIPANTS	ISSUE OF DISPUTATION	SUBJECT	SOURCES
IQ vs. a Jewish scholar	Muḥammad's prophethood	Theology	<i>Hidāyat al-ḥayārā</i> ²⁷
IQ vs. a Christian scholar	What prevents Christians from becoming Muslims?	Theology	<i>Hidāyat al-ḥayārā</i> ²⁸ <i>Al-Tibyān</i> ²⁹
IQ vs. a Christian scholar ³⁰	Muḥammad's prophethood	Theology	<i>Al-Ṣawā'iq al-mursalāh</i> ³¹
IQ vs. a prominent Samaritan	The Samaritan direction of prayer	Theology	<i>Badā'i' al-fawā'id</i> ³²
IQ vs. a later Ash'ari	The speech of God	Theology	<i>Al-Ṣawā'iq al-mursalāh</i> ³³

²⁶Thomas Bauer depicts concisely and accurately the literary environment of Mamluk literature in "Mamluk Literature: Misunderstandings and New Approaches," *MSR* 9 (2005): 105–32. However, his article does not cover the genre of *munāẓarah* and its particular importance in Mamluk Arabic literature.

²⁷Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā fī ajwibat al-yahūd wa-al-naṣārā*, ed. 'Uthmān Jum'ah Ḍumayriyah (Mecca, 2008/2009), 200–2.

²⁸Ibid., 39 and 272.

²⁹Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Al-Tibyān fī aymān al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Abd Allāh ibn Sālim al-Baṭāṭī (Mecca, 2008/2009), 270–74.

³⁰For aspects of Ibn al-Qayyim's apologetic against Christians and Jews, see Jon Hoover, "The Apologetic and Pastoral Intentions of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's Polemic against Jews and Christians," *The Muslim World* 100 (2010): 476–89.

³¹Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-mursalāh*, 327.

³²Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Badā'i' al-fawā'id*, 1606–7.

³³Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-mursalāh*, 1037.



IQ vs. a determinist (likely to be a later Ash'ari) ³⁴	Determinism	Theology	<i>Shifā' al-'alīl</i> ³⁵
IQ vs. a proponent of free will (likely to be a Mu'tazili)	Free will	Theology	<i>Shifā' al-'alīl</i> ³⁶
IQ vs. a proponent of <i>taqlīd</i> (likely to be a Shafi'i-Ash'ari adversary)	Following the Prophet or the later scholars	Theology and law	<i>A'lām al-muwaqqi'in</i> ³⁷
IQ vs. a proponent of <i>taqlīd</i>	<i>Taqlīd</i>	Theology and law	<i>Madārij al-sālikīn</i> ³⁸
IQ vs. a proponent of the impurity of sperm	Whether the sperm is pure or not	Law	<i>Badā'i' al-fawā'id</i> ³⁹

2.1 External Evaluation

A first look at these debates shows the importance of theology (including interreligious debates) for Ibn al-Qayyim. The tone of these debates is harsh, categorical, and Manichaeist. If *munāzarah* is *da'wah*, then it should be primarily with non-Muslims or with heretics. Practice shows then that Ibn al-Qayyim seriously takes disputation as a fighting sport. Truth here is either with them or with his book (the Quran) and either with rationalism or traditionalism.

Ibn al-Qayyim seems to have some trouble with his memory. He narrates the same debate on Muhammad's prophethood in his *Zād al-ma'ād* (an earlier work) as if it were with a Christian Scholar, then in *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā*, the opponent is a Jewish scholar. At the end of this debate, he promises his reader to write a book

³⁴Livnat Holtzman thoroughly analyzed this debate in "Debating the Doctrine of *jabr* (Compulsion): Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya Reads Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," in *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law*, ed. Krawietz and Tamer, 61–93.

³⁵Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Shifā' al-'alīl fī masā'il al-qaḍā' wa-al-qadar wa-al-ḥikmah wa-al-ta'līl*, ed. al-Ḥassānī Ḥasan 'Abd Allāh (Cairo, 1975), 285–306.

³⁶Ibid., 307–57.

³⁷Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *A'lām al-muwaqqi'in 'an rabb al-'ālamīn*, ed. Mashhūr ibn Ḥasan 'Al Salmān (al-Dammām, 2002/2003), 3:470, 4:36.

³⁸Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Madārij al-sālikīn bayna manāzil iyyāka na'budu wa-iyyāka nasta'in*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiḳī (Beirut, 1973), 2:388.

³⁹Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Badā'i' al-fawā'id*, 1040–52.



about the proofs of Muḥammad's prophecy (which is most probably his *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā*).⁴⁰

Later Ash'arism caused more theological concerns for Ibn al-Qayyim. The Ash'ari-Hanbali rivalry is at work in Ibn al-Qayyim's disputation (as it was in Ibn Taymiyah's writings). By making the apology of traditionalist theology, he puts philosophizing Ash'aris in the axis of evil. Yet, the war he fought against Ash'arism was literary; it compensates for inferiority in front of the overwhelmingly dominant position that Ash'arism occupied in the Sunni world through long debates.

Taqlīd is an important issue represented by two debates. For this particular issue, Ibn al-Qayyim uses disputation as a literary device to refute his adversaries. The length of the debates and their comprehensiveness indicate the weight of the question in his time. Ibn al-Qayyim means by *taqlīd* imitation of later jurists, theologians, and Sufi masters instead of traditions. That is to say, Ibn al-Qayyim stands against opposing living authorities to the traditions of *salaf*. Ibn al-Qayyim's re-traditionalization, contrary to *taqlīd*, substitutes living authorities with past authorities who should be followed because religion was revealed to them. Therefore, they should be the perfect model of understanding and knowledge. Ibn al-Qayyim is at his best when it comes to *taqlīd*. He combines his outstanding mastery of hadith literature and *fiqh* to give the impression that he attempts to revive Islamic law (a misunderstanding of contemporary readings). His core thesis is that, if you are going to follow someone, you should follow "the banners of those who undersign on behalf of God" (hence the title of his book, *A'lām al-muwaqqi'īn 'an rabb al-'ālamīn*).

Here, law is insignificant. It might even be said that he considers the juridical dialectics of al-'Amīdī's an evil. If that is the case, it is surprising that juridical debates do not have a fair share in his practice. In fact, the reason behind his criticism of al-'Amīdī is that the latter rationalized juridical dialectics, transforming *jadāl* into an art of disputation with no room for traditions.

Ibn al-Qayyim does not mention any internal Hanbali debate, since if he wishes to mobilize forces for his war of ideas, there should be no discord inside the Hanbali school, which he perceived as the vanguard of traditionalism. Moreover, here, Ibn al-Qayyim seems to be almost completely forsaking Ibn Taymiyah's mantle, claiming pride and skill in argumentation. It is him against the others (although he still adheres to Ibn Taymiyah's project). At the thematic level, he also differs from Ibn Taymiyah who was keener on the theological issues of divine attributes.

⁴⁰Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Zād al-ma'ād fi hady khayr al-'ibād*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arnāūt and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Arnāūt (Beirut, 1998), 3:559–61.



2.2 Internal Evaluation

Unsurprisingly, Ibn al-Qayyim does not use logic to support his claims. His argument with non-Muslims is based on sophistry. A recurrent device is the argument from silence (*argumentum e silentio*)—where the final proof is the silence of the opponent, failing to counter argue, thus admitting defeat. Ibn al-Qayyim ends the debate saying that his opponent is unable to speak. In his debate with the Jewish scholar he uses retrospective determinism to maintain that Muḥammad’s prophethood was God’s destiny. Since the victory of Muḥammad indeed occurred, it must have been inevitable and wanted by God. Otherwise, God would not have allowed it. He therefore infers from something that happened that something is good. With his Christian counterpart, he uses an *argumentum ad populum*: namely that most people in the east are Muslims, therefore Islam is true and Christianity is false. Finally, against the Samaritans he uses a proof of alteration, *tahrīf*, since they changed the Jewish direction of prayer, *qiblah*, which was the original one.

As for his debates with Muslims, Ibn al-Qayyim frequently uses three procedures. First is a shotgun argumentation, in which he mobilizes dozens of “proofs” (which he calls *wujūh*) to support his position with the hope that the appeal to this quantity of arguments would destroy his opponent’s position or push him into silence. Also, he relies on transmitted proofs—arguments from authority—because appeal to traditions effectively persuades a Muslim audience. Besides, it confirms his belief in the superiority of scriptural argumentation. He fully exploits traditions and the Companions’ opinions to compete with his rationalist opponents, being able as he is to endlessly quote traditions, far beyond Ibn Taymīyah’s capacity. As a result, Ibn al-Qayyim’s argument often turns into a compilation of traditions, digressions, and redundancy. Third, Ibn al-Qayyim employs the art of contradiction making, *ilzām*, a classic of *kalām*, based on *argument ad absurdum*.⁴¹ For instance, in the issue of *taqlīd* he often argues that a *muqallid* should not engage in a debate because this undermines the very basis of his position, *taqlīd*. This is a contradiction which, in the final analysis, shows the absurdity of *taqlīd*.

Conclusion

The internal assessment of Ibn al-Qayyim’s disputation shows his reliance on theological dialectics, especially on rhetorical devices and contradiction-making. Classical theologians and jurists such as al-Ash‘arī and Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī practiced these techniques and compiled them. These are the weapons Ibn al-Qayyim

⁴¹On this procedure, see Richard M. Frank, “The *Kalām*, an Art of Contradiction-Making or Theological Science? Some Remarks on the Question,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88 (1968): 295–309.



uses against the syllogistics of later theologians such as al-Rāzī and al-Ṭūsī. Obviously, al-Ash‘arī and al-Shīrāzī do not belong to the *salaf*, but they are traditionalist or semi-traditionalist scholars. In Ibn al-Qayyim’s view, their method should be free of logic and philosophy and closer to the method of *salaf*.

The struggle Ibn al-Qayyim engages in against non-Muslims and later Ash‘aris is as valid as *jihād*. Ibn al-Qayyim’s disputation does not take part in the “humanist” characteristics of disputation that flourished in Abbasid literary councils such as empathy, cooperative ethics of inquiry, and belief in reason. He constantly reminds his reader that the tongue should strive as much as the sword against opponents. His disputation is martial and exclusivist. Armed with his enthusiasm and belief in traditionalism, he fought against the dialectics of the philosophizing theologians. In his disputation, Ibn al-Qayyim appears as a traditionalist who attacks on all fronts to restore the imagined community of early Muslims. He appeals to the past, which is supposed to represent a perfect model of reasoning and believing on the basis of transmitted traditions.

Thus, there is no case for claiming as Langermann did that Ibn al-Qayyim naturalizes science. Ibn al-Qayyim perceived logic as the enemy, and especially in the hands of later theologians, as it meant the end of traditionalism. In his view, the weapon itself, logic (or science in general), should be opposed with a traditionalist weapon (made by early or classical Sunni scholars). For this reason, it is appropriate to call his enterprise re-traditionalization and de-naturalization of science. It is an apology of traditionalism: Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal in the coat of al-Ash‘arī.

