

# A HANBALĪ CRITIQUE OF ANTHROPOMORPHISM

Merlin Swartz

*Boston University*

Our understanding of Hanbalism has undergone something of a revolution over the past half century thanks in part to the discovery and publication of new sources (bearing on the history of the school) and, in part, to advances in scholarship (represented in the work of H. Laoust, G. Makdisi and others). In contrast to the older view of Hanbalism, reflected in 19th century scholarship and based to a large extent on non-Hanbalī and frequently anti-Hanbalī sources, the school that has emerged, especially in the scholarship of the last several decades, is one characterized by significant diversity and, moreover, a school that continued to evolve throughout the medieval period. It is now clear that one of the hallmarks of medieval Hanbalism was precisely its diversity — including differences over a range of questions both juridical and theological.

In the remainder of this paper, I would like to focus on a hitherto unpublished work from the 12th century that not only confirms this diversity but suggests that intellectual differences within the school may well have run deeper than anyone has so far suspected. The work in question, Ibn al-Ğawzī's *Kitāb Abh̄bār aṣ-ṣifāt*<sup>1</sup>, is a vigorous critique of anthropomorphist tendencies within the Hanbalī school, and an equally vigorous defense of *ta'wīl* (metaphorical exegesis)<sup>2</sup> as the most effective antidote to these tendencies. Ibn al-Ğawzī, the author of this work, was himself a Hanbalī<sup>3</sup>.

The only surviving copy of the work, which belongs to the Sehid Ali Pasha Collection in Istanbul (MS. no. 1561), consists of 42 folios including a title page and a

---

<sup>1</sup> For the sake of economy, I shall henceforth refer to the work simply as *Abh̄bār*. I am presently engaged in preparing a critical edition of the Arabic text along with a translation and study of the work — which I hope to publish in the near future. The occasional reference to paragraph numbers in the notes that follow are to my critical edition of the Arabic text.

<sup>2</sup> An admittedly loose rendering of the term. Among the terms used most commonly in *Abh̄bār* to refer to tropical language — i.e., the language for which *ta'wīl* is appropriate — are *mağāz* and *ist'āra*.

<sup>3</sup> He was born around 510 A.H. (A.D. 1116) and died on the 7th of Ramaḡān 597 (June 11, 1201). A convenient listing of the chief sources on Ibn al-Ğawzī's life can be found in Kaḡḡāla, n.d.: V–VI. 157–158. For a brief but valuable account of his life, see the article on him by Laoust 1972; as well as his remarks in Laoust 1959; for a more detailed treatment, see Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Quṣṣās* 15–38. Since the publication of these works a number of new studies on various facets of his life and work have appeared, among them *Miṣbāḡ* 17–39; and the important study by Hartmann 1986: 51–115. For a somewhat more popular treatment, see the short but interesting work by ʿAlī 1988.

colophon<sup>4</sup>. From all appearances, the manuscript is complete, and the internal evidence points clearly to a Ḡawzian authorship<sup>5</sup>. Though I cannot get into a discussion of the date of the work's composition here, the internal evidence suggests that it was written sometime between 570/1174 and 590/1193, i.e., sometime during the last 20 years of Ibn al-Ḡawzī's public life<sup>6</sup>.

It is difficult to classify the work in relation to the standard religious genres of the time. On the one hand, it is an intensely polemical work directed against three fellow Ḥanbalīs: Ibn Hāmid<sup>7</sup>, Abū Ya'la<sup>8</sup> and Ibn Zāgūnī<sup>9</sup> — men whom Ibn al-Ḡawzī

<sup>4</sup> Though the name of the copyist is not given, the copy appears to have been made in Damascus, and the copying, according to the colophon, was completed on the 17th of Raḡab in 890 (July 30, 1485). It is clear from the colophon that the genealogy of the manuscript consisted of several generations of manuscripts and that the oldest copy in this series was made by a certain Nūr ad-Dīn 'Alī b. Ḡamāl ad-Dīn b. 'Abdallāh aš-Šāfi'ī, a student of Šams ad-Dīn al-Muḥaddiṭ aš-Šāfi'ī, both of Damascus and possibly younger contemporaries of Ibn al-Ḡawzī.

<sup>5</sup> As it turns out, *Aḥbār* is a longer version of another of Ibn al-Ḡawzī's work, his *Daf'*. For reasons that are not entirely clear, *Daf'* has so far not attracted much attention from the scholarly community either in the West or in the Muslim world despite its publication already in 1926.

<sup>6</sup> He retired from public life in 590/1193, not willingly, of course, since in the summer of that year he was arrested and taken to Wāsiṭ where he remained under house arrest until the month of Ša'bān 595/June 1199. If *Aḥbār* was indeed written during the twenty-year period I have suggested, I am inclined toward a later rather than an earlier date, perhaps sometime in the 580s (i.e., between 1184 and 1193).

<sup>7</sup> Ḥasan b. Hāmid b. 'Alī Abū 'Abdallāh al-Warrāq (d. 403/1012), one of the most influential figures within the Ḥanbalī school of Baḡdād during the first half of the Būyid period. Among the more important sources on Ibn Hāmid and his influence within the Ḥanbalī school, see Abū Ya'la, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 171-177; al-Ḥaṭīb, *Tārīḥ Baḡdād* VII, 303; Ibn al-'Imād, *Šadārāt* III, 166-67; Ibn Kaṭīr, *Bidāya* XI, 373; Saṭṭī, *Muḥtaṣar* 26; Ibn Badrān, *Madḥal* 206; and Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Kāmil* IX, 242. For additional sources, see Sezgin 1967-84: I, 515; Laoust 1972; and Makdisi 1963: 227-232.

<sup>8</sup> Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. al-Farrā', known to his contemporaries as Abū Ya'la or simply the *Qādī*, was born 380/990 and died in 458/14 August 1066. A man of immense learning and a prolific writer, Abū Ya'la was a complex and controversial figure. Ibn al-Ḡawzī was not the first to accuse him of anthropomorphist sympathies. Ibn al-Aṭīr reports that Abū Muḥammad at-Tamīmī, an important Ḥanbalī of the period, was deeply offended by the views of Abū Ya'la on the question of the *ṣifāt* (*Kāmil* X, 52). Judging from references in medieval sources (cf. *Kāmil* IX, 460), it is quite likely that the work by Abū Ya'la which occasioned the anthropomorphist charges brought against him was his *Ibtāl at-ta'wilāt li-ahbār as-ṣifāt*, sometimes referred to simply as *Kitāb as-ṣifāt*, and its shorter version *Muḥtaṣar ibtāl at-ta'wilāt*. Unfortunately, these works have not survived, but we do have fragments of them quoted in other works. Ibn Abī Ya'la cites several lengthy passages from the *Ibtāl* in *Ṭabaqāt* (II, 211-212) as does Ibn Taymiyya (e.g., *Aqīda*, 454-455), and others. It seems likely that the unnamed work which Ibn al-Ḡawzī has in mind in *Aḥbār* when he criticizes Abū Ya'la is the *Ibtāl*. — In addition to the references cited above, see the notice in Abū Ya'la, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 193-230 (where Abū Ya'la is presented in a sympathetic light); also Ibn al-Ḡawzī's *Muntazam* VIII, 243-244; as well as his *Manāqib*, 520-521; al-Ḥaṭīb, *Tārīḥ Baḡdād* II, 256; Ibn Kaṭīr, *Bidāya* XII, 101; Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Kāmil* X, 52; Ibn al-'Imād, *Šadārāt* III, 306-307; Brockelmann 1937-42: I, 502; Suppl. I, 686; Laoust 1972b: 765-766; Makdisi 1963: 232-234 (and index); and, above all, Abū Ya'la's *Mu'tamad*. For an interesting perspective on Abū Ya'la and the intellectual evolution of medieval Ḥanbalism, see Gimaret 1977: 157-178.

regards as champions of anthropomorphism and whom he accuses of leading the school away from its original teachings in the direction of an anthropomorphist outlook<sup>10</sup>. The views of his opponents are detailed at length in the work and rebutted. It is also clear, however, that in some respects *Aḥbār* is a *kalām*<sup>11</sup> style work, in the sense that it accepts most, if not all, of the operative assumptions of the *mutakallimūn*<sup>12</sup>. At the same time, *Aḥbār* was clearly not meant to be a manual on *kalām* comparable to the *Muṭamad* of Abū Yaʿlā, for example, or the works of the great Aṣʿarite and Muʿtazilite theologians of the 10th and 11th centuries, but it does assume *kalām* as its frame of reference, and many of the arguments employed in the work come straight out of medieval works on *kalām*<sup>13</sup>.

The main body of *Aḥbār* is divided into two major parts:

1) In the first part (consisting of 11 folios) Ibn al-Ḡawzī sets forth a theory of knowledge (an epistemology) and lays out the general lines of his argument against anthropomorphism (*taṣbīḥ/taḡṣīm*). He argues consistently in this part (as he does throughout the work, in fact) that matters having to do with God's existence (*wuḡūd*), his essence (*dāt*) and his attributes (*ṣifāt*) must rest on peremptory evidence (*adilla qatʿiyya*), of which there are two kinds:

- (a) the evidence supplied by reason (*ʿaql*) and
- (b) the evidence contained in revelation.

Of these two, the evidence of reason enjoys a privileged position: it is the necessary starting-point for the establishment of God's existence, and it must be one's principal

<sup>9</sup> ʿAlī b. ʿUbaydallāh b. Naṣr b. as-Sarī Abū l-Ḥasan b. Zāgūnī (d. 527/1132), one of the most influential members of the school during the latter part of the 5th century (Makdisi 1963: 227). For a fuller account of this interesting figure, see especially the biographical notices on him in Ibn al-Ḡawzī, *Muntazam* X, 32; Ibn Raḡab, *Dayl* I, 180–184; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Sadarāt* IV, 80–81; Ibn Kaṭīr, *Bidāya* XII, 220; aṣ-Ṣaṭṭī, *Muḥtaṣar* 32; Makdisi 1963: 265–267, where a full list of sources may be found. For an interesting report on Ibn al-Ḡawzī's early study of *ḥadīṯ* under Ibn Zāgūnī, see Ibn al-Ḡawzī's *Maṣyaha*, 79–80 (cf. his *Manāqib* 529).

<sup>10</sup> The three Ḥanbalīs singled out as the chief advocates of anthropomorphism within the school were men who in many ways dominated 11th-century Ḥanbalism. They were the authors of numerous works on law and theology, and it was precisely because they had aired their "anthropomorphist" views in their writings that they were partly, if not largely, responsible in Ibn al-Ḡawzī's view for the widespread perception that Ḥanbalīs were *ipso facto* anthropomorphists.

<sup>11</sup> A technical term used in medieval sources to refer to the kind of theology done by the professional theologians (*mutakallimūn*). Following J. van Ess and A. I. Sabra, the term is commonly rendered "dialectical theology" since its literary form presupposed the give-and-take of academic disputation. See especially van Ess 1976: 23–30; and Sabra 1994: 1–42.

<sup>12</sup> He accepted their understanding of reason, their cosmology, their view of God and their style of argumentation.

<sup>13</sup> These two features of the work (its polemical character and its *kalām* orientation) are blended in such a way so as to produce an integrated perspective.

guide in deciphering the meaning of scripture. Since the authority of revelation rests on the prior establishment of God's existence — through the proofs provided by reason — it is only at a secondary stage that revelation comes into play. However, even then the use of revelation in establishing the divine attributes is a complicated and delicate matter, and ultimately depends on a correct "reading" of the text — or, as we would say, on an adequate hermeneutic.

While the traditions of the Prophet (the *ḥadīth*) fall into the general category of revelation (along with the Quran), they have to be used with greater care because one cannot assume *a priori* that all *ḥadīths* are authentic. A critical analysis of the *ḥadīth* is therefore inescapable<sup>14</sup>. Ibn al-Ğawzī's general operating principle is that only those traditions that rest on multiple authorities (i.e., those that are *mutawātir*) can be used to establish a divine attribute<sup>15</sup>.

The other major issue taken up in part I is the question of *taqlīd* — which I shall return to later in the paper.

2) The second part of *Aḥbār*, which consists of 31 folios and represents the main body of the work, is devoted to an exegetical examination of a series of texts from the Quran and the *ḥadīth* which, according to Ibn al-Ğawzī, had been used by his fellow Ḥanbalīs in defending their anthropomorphist views. It is in this part of the work that he details the charges against his Ḥanbalī colleagues. The two terms that he uses to characterize their views are *tašbīh* and *tağsīm*. Although Ibn al-Ğawzī does sometimes differentiate between the two terms, he frequently uses them interchangeably<sup>16</sup>. As used in *Aḥbār*, they mean taking finite bodies and, in particular, the human form (*ṣūra*), as the basis for conceiving the divine attributes — in short, conceiving the attributes in corporeal terms. In an effort to spell out the specifics of the charge against the three Ḥanbalīs, Ibn al-Ğawzī quotes frequently, and sometimes at length, from their writings<sup>17</sup>. In the passages which he cites, his opponents are portrayed as ascribing to God a human-like form (*ṣūra*) consisting of numerous members: a face, eyes, a mouth, hands<sup>18</sup>, thighs, feet, a front, a back, etc., etc. Moreover, they claim that each of these members constitutes an attribute (*ṣifa*) corresponding to something specific and real in the being of God. Consistent with this line of

<sup>14</sup> In general, it can be said, Ibn al-Ğawzī's analysis of the *ḥadīth* focused, primarily on the *ismād*, but he does not hesitate to scrutinize the *matn* when he believes it warranted. On the details of his approach to problematic *ḥadīth*, see especially his *Mawḍūʿāt* I, 29-104; and *ʿIlal*.

<sup>15</sup> Traditions that rest on a single authority (i.e., those labeled *āḥād*) are systematically set aside.

<sup>16</sup> Or, more precisely, he tends to assimilate *tašbīh* to *tağsīm*.

<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, he does not generally give the titles of the works of Ḥanbalīs from which he quotes. He does mention the *Muʿtamad* of Abū Yaʿlā, but this is an exception. We are thus left to speculate as to which of their writings Ibn al-Ğawzī has in mind.

<sup>18</sup> Both of which are "right" (*yamīn*).

reasoning, they maintain that God can both touch and be touched; that he occupies particular places (*amākin*) at particular points in time, that his existence in space (*taḥayyuz*) is defined by a particular orientation (*ḡiba*), and finally, that God's movements are spatially defined, i.e., they entail movement (*taḥarraka*) from one place to another. Throughout *Aḥbār*, Ibn al-Ḡawzī argues that the anthropomorphism of his opponents is problematic for a number of reasons which he details at some length. But the two criticisms he reiterates most often against anthropomorphism is that

1) it relies on a literalistic method (*zāhir*) of interpreting scripture (i.e., its rests on a flawed hermeneutic), and

2) it shows excessive and uncritical deference to the views of earlier authorities (i.e., it rests on an appeal to tradition (i.e., tradition with a small "t") — viz., the problem of *taqlīd*).

Let me expand briefly on these two criticisms and note the solutions proposed by Ibn al-Ḡawzī:

### 1. Literalism (*tafsīr 'alā z-zāhir*)

Anthropomorphic conceptions of God arise, in the first instance, because it is naively assumed that scripture is to be taken in its literal sense, i.e., that the surface meaning of the text is the real meaning. Hence, when the Quran refers to God's "hands" it must mean that God has hands. Likewise with the many other Quranic attributions of bodily features to God. Why is it that a literalist method of interpretation seems to lead inevitably to the attribution of material, corporeal features to God? Ibn al-Ḡawzī's answer is straightforward: the reason it does is that it is based on a materialist epistemology, i.e., it takes sense experience as its point of departure. In one passage, Ibn al-Ḡawzī goes so far as to suggest that the epistemology of his opponents is not fundamentally different from that of the *Dabriyya* (materialists)<sup>19</sup>. Sense experience is inadequate as a basis for conceiving the divine attributes because it is limited to the perception of bodies located in time and space, i.e., to finite bodies.

Since reason (and revelation, rightly understood) demonstrates conclusively that God is beyond time and space, literalism as an exegetical method must be abandoned. On the basis of the arguments from contingency and design, Ibn al-Ḡawzī attempts to show that reason is the only human faculty<sup>20</sup> that has the capacity to rise above the world of finite bodies to a God who is the necessary cause of all that exists. To the extent that revelation is concerned with a knowledge of God, it follows, there-

<sup>19</sup> They may draw different conclusions, but their starting point is the same.

<sup>20</sup> Together with the imagination, perhaps, since Ibn al-Ḡawzī does refer occasionally to it, though it is not clear that it is a distinct faculty separate from reason. More work needs to be done on this question.

fore, that reason must be one's principal guide in deciphering the meaning of revelation. Ibn al-Ğawzī is able to show, at least to his own satisfaction, that if reason is applied to Scripture properly, it necessarily leads to a "metaphorical" interpretation of those texts that appear to ascribe corporeality to God<sup>21</sup>. In *Aḥbār*, Ibn al-Ğawzī applies *ta'wīl* more or less across the board. Thus references to God's "face" (*wağh*) are to be taken as referring to his essence (his *dāt*); his "hand" (*yad*) as referring to his power (*qudra*); his "eyes" (*a'yan*) to his "knowledge" (*ilm*), his "side" (*ğanb*) to his authority/command (*amr*), etc<sup>22</sup>. The only scriptural texts pertaining to the divine attributes that may be taken "as they stand", without recourse to *ta'wīl*, are those that affirm the transcendence and oneness of God in clear, unequivocal terms — verses like sūra 42:11 (*laysa ka-miṭlihi šay'un*)<sup>23</sup>.

## 2. Excessive Reliance on "Tradition" (*taqlīd*)

In the second place, Ibn al-Ğawzī attributes the anthropomorphism of his opponents to *taqlīd*, that is, to an uncritical reliance on the views of the *salaf*. Although Ibn al-Ğawzī appears to allow for the use of a limited kind of *taqlīd*<sup>24</sup>, when it comes to matters such as the divine attributes, indeed, to all matters having to do with God, *taqlīd* is to be rejected out of hand. "*Taqlīd*, he says, is not allowable in matters having to do with the knowledge of God (*ma'rifat Allāh*)"<sup>25</sup>. In support of this position, he cites Ibn 'Aqīl<sup>26</sup> who maintained that in matters of faith "the only thing to be followed is the evidence (*dalīl*)"<sup>27</sup>. Since the knowledge of God must rest on peremptory evidence (*adilla qat'iyya*) — by which he means the evidence provided by reason and revelation — it follows that the views of earlier authorities, while not irrelevant, are of limited importance. He makes this point in an interesting way in connection with an incident involving Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855). When Aḥmad was once criticized for taking a position different from that of Ibn Mubārak

<sup>21</sup> Reason is critical to Ibn al-Ğawzī for it is precisely reason that makes possible the break between sense experience and the exegetical process.

<sup>22</sup> In suggesting these equivalences, Ibn al-Ğawzī is not saying anything new, of course. He is following a path charted by Mu'tazilite theologians as well as by some of the later Aṣ'arite theologians like al-Ğuwaynī, 'Abdalqāhir al-Ğağdādī and Ibn Fūrak.

<sup>23</sup> "There is nothing like him." Cf. S.112:4.

<sup>24</sup> Particularly in the area of applied jurisprudence.

<sup>25</sup> The Arabic makes the point even clearer: *lā yağūzu at-taqlīdu fī ma'rifat Allāh wa-d-dalīl 'alā mā qulnā al-Qur'ān wa-n-nayl wa-l-mā'nā* (fol. Sb).

<sup>26</sup> The 11th century Ḥanbalī theologian who in many ways was Ibn al-Ğawzī's principal mentor in matters theological.

<sup>27</sup> Presumably by "evidence", Ibn 'Aqīl means the teaching of Scripture (*naql*) and the conclusions derived from reason (*ʿaql*).

(d. 119/737), he replied: "The views of Ibn Mubārak did not come down from heaven". But if *taqlīd* is problematic because it weakens the influence of both reason and revelation, it is flawed also because it introduces an element of subjectivity into the quest for truth. Here Ibn al-Ğawzī points to an unassailable fact: frequently the *salaf* differed among themselves and sometimes individual *salaf* changed their views on important questions. Thus, if one is to take the teaching of the *salaf* as one's guide, one must not only decide which of the *salaf* to follow, but which of the views of individual *salaf* are to be taken as correct. In short, then, if *taqlīd* is to be practiced at all, it requires some kind of prior judgment.

Ibn al-Ğawzī's principal objection to *taqlīd*, however, is that it weakens the faculty of reason and, in the end, confuses the issue: it makes human beings the criterion of truth.

In concluding his discussion of *taqlīd* Ibn al-Ğawzī argues that there is no escape from having recourse to *iğtibād*, that is, to independent judgment based on a personal weighing of the evidence in the light of reason. He observes that this was the *modus operandi* of the prophets and, in one passage, even suggests that prophets are superior to others primarily because they used *iğtibād* more rigorously and more consistently<sup>28</sup>.

Although the *zāhir* method of exegesis and *taqlīd* are different<sup>29</sup>, their use leads to similar results: *zāhir* (by taking sense experience as its point of reference) and *taqlīd* (by following the lead of tradition)<sup>30</sup> work together to diminish the role of reason (*ʿaql*). The Ibn al-Ğawzī of *Aḥbār* is a rationalist to a very surprising degree — certainly more so than we are accustomed to expecting from a Ḥanbalī. While his Ḥanbalism was questioned by some within the school<sup>31</sup>, he certainly regarded himself as a Ḥanbalī and, I believe, with some justification. He was a firm believer in the essential correctness of Aḥmad's views (e.g., his *Manāqib*, especially chapters 20–22) — thoroughly convinced that Aḥmad had avoided the anthropomorphist trap<sup>32</sup>. Ibn

<sup>28</sup> Fol. 6a (critical edition, par. 21) — Ibn al-Ğawzī would have found absurd any suggestion that the "gates of *iğtibād*" had been closed.

<sup>29</sup> They entail two quite different operations and serve different purposes.

<sup>30</sup> Which ultimately means allowing other human beings (respected to be sure) to decide the issue.

<sup>31</sup> Abū l-Faḍl al-ʿAlī (d. 634/1236) is perhaps the most notable example but there were certainly others. al-ʿAlī's challenge stands out, in part, because Ibn Rağab documents it at some length (see his *Dayl*, II. 205ff.).

<sup>32</sup> Consider, e.g., the following statement: "Nothing has been attributed to Aḥmad in the sources that even remotely smacks of anthropomorphism (*taṣbīḥ*), for his position was that the traditions of the Prophet should be allowed to stand just as they are (without comment) (*wa-lam yunqal ʿan al-imām Aḥmad šayʿun min at-taṣbīḥ wa-lā yuqāribuhu wa-innamā kāna yaʿmuru bi-imrāri l-aḥādīṯ kamā ġāʿat [Aḥbār, fol. 6a]*). The problem, for Ibn al-Ğawzī, was that Ḥanbalism had been diverted from its founding principles by those who came later and who had strayed from the original teachings of the school. Ibn al-Ğawzī

al-Ğawzī accepted the authority of the *Sunna*, vigorously defended the doctrine of the uncreated Quran, and, finally, in matters of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) affirmed the principles laid down by the school's early formative thinkers<sup>33</sup>.

Whatever else one may say about *Ahbār*, it provides substantive evidence that Ibn al-Ğawzī, far from being a die-hard traditionalist, was a vigorous proponent of the principles of *ta'wīl* and *iğtibād*. Furthermore, the views advocated in *Ahbār* are not those of an isolated, member of the Ḥanbalī school. Contemporary sources make it clear that Ibn al-Ğawzī commanded a significant following within the school<sup>34</sup>, particularly during the last several decades of his public life — i.e., up until 590/1193<sup>35</sup>. Through his efforts as an author, teacher and preacher, he provided a significant voice for the more "progressive" elements within the school. But it is also clear that the views expressed in *Ahbār* made him a controversial figure among the more conservative elements of the school and it is not surprising that several Ḥanbalīs played a crucial role in eventually bringing about his banishment from Bağdād (590/1193). The sharpness of the cleavage between these two wings of the school is expressed rather graphically in a treatise written against Ibn al-Ğawzī (and particularly against views expressed in *Ahbār*) by Abū l-Faḍl al-<sup>c</sup>Alṭī, a member of the traditionalist wing of the school<sup>36</sup>. In this treatise<sup>37</sup>, al-<sup>c</sup>Alṭī accuses Ibn al-Ğawzī, in effect, of being a crypto-Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilī and charges that he and his followers had abandoned the doctrines of the Fathers. However, despite the criticisms levelled against him and de-

---

saw himself as calling them back to the principles on which the school was founded.

<sup>33</sup> Among the later varieties of Ḥanbalism, it was the strand represented by Ibn ʿAqīl that Ibn al-Ğawzī believed to be the most primitive and the truest. No other Ḥanbalī is quoted with approval more often in *Ahbār*.

<sup>34</sup> Even those hostile to him acknowledge his influence within the school.

<sup>35</sup> Precisely the period during which *Ahbār* was written.

<sup>36</sup> Ibn Rağab gives his name as Iṣḥāq b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ġānim Abū l-Faḍl al-<sup>c</sup>Alṭī and reports that he died in 634/1236 (H. Laoust and A. Hartmann read the *nisba* as al-<sup>c</sup>Ulṭī, though I have found no evidence in support of this reading in the sources). In addition to the substantial notice devoted to al-<sup>c</sup>Alṭī in Ibn Rağab's *Dayl* II, 205–211; see also ad-<sup>c</sup>Dahabī, *Tārīḥ al-islām* fol. 102a; al-Mundirī, *Takmila* III, 441; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Ṣaḍarāt* V, 163. Cf. also Laoust 1959: 120; Hartmann 1975: 192–193, also index (under al-<sup>c</sup>Ulṭī). The author of numerous polemical tracts (*rasā'il kaṭīra*), he was known to his contemporaries as a staunch traditionalist and an outspoken critic of tendencies he regarded as deviating from the strict interpretation of Ḥanbalism.

<sup>37</sup> Preserved in Ibn Rağab's *Dayl* II, 205–211. It is clear, however, that the text preserved by Ibn Rağab represents only part of a longer work. On the basis of references in the portions cited by Ibn Rağab it is possible to conclude that al-<sup>c</sup>Alṭī's *Risāla* was written late in Ibn al-Ğawzī's career but sometime prior to his banishment to Wasiṭ in 590/1193. It seems most likely that he *Risāla* was composed sometime between 585/1189 and 590/1193.

spite the precedent set by Ibn ʿAqīl in the preceding century<sup>38</sup>, there is no evidence that Ibn al-Ġawzī ever recanted the views advocated in *Aḥbār*. From all that I can tell, *Aḥbār* stands as Ibn al-Ġawzī's final word on the problem of anthropomorphism and the related issue of *ta'wīl*.

## REFERENCES

## A. Primary sources

- Abū Yaʿlā, *Muʿtamad* = Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. al-Farrāʾ, *al-Muʿtamad fi usūl ad-dīn*. Ed. and intr. by W. Ḥaddād.
- Abū Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt* = Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. al-Farrāʾ, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*. 2 vols. Ed. by M. Ḥāmid al-Fiḳī. Cairo: as-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1952.
- ad-Dahabī, *Tārīḥ al-islām* = Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿUṭmān b. Qaymāz Šams ad-Dīn ad-Dahabī, *Tārīḥ al-islām*. British Mus. Laud. no. 305.
- al-Ḥaṭīb, *Tārīḥ Baġdād* = Abū Bakr al-Ḥaṭīb, *Tārīḥ Baġdād*. 14 vols. Cairo: Saʿāda Press. 1950.
- Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Kāmil* = ʿAlī b. Abī l-Karam ʿIzz ad-Dīn Ibn al-Aṭīr, *al-Kāmil fi t-tārīḥ*. 9 vols. Cairo: Muniriyya Press, 1922 [13 vols. Cairo: Būlāq, 1873-1886].
- Ibn Badrān, *Madḥal* = Badrān b. Aḥmad al-Ḥanbalī, *al-Madḥal ilā madḥab al-imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*. Cairo: Muniriyya Press, 1920.
- Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Aḥbār* = ʿAbdarraḥmān b. ʿAlī Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Kitāb aḥbār as-ṣifāt*. Edited by Merlin Swartz, forthcoming.
- Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Dafʿ* = ʿAbdarraḥmān b. ʿAlī Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Dafʿ šubḥat at-tašbīḥ wa-r-radd ʿalā l-muġassima*. Damascus 1926.
- Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Ilal* = ʿAbdarraḥmān b. ʿAlī Ibn al-Ġawzī, *al-ʿIlal al-mutanāhiya fi l-ahādīṭ al-wāhiya*. Beirut 1983.
- Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Manāqib* = ʿAbdarraḥmān b. ʿAlī Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Manāqib al-imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*. Cairo: Saʿāda Press, 1930.
- Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Mašyaha* = ʿAbdarraḥmān b. ʿAlī Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Mašyaha*. MS Ḍāhiriyya. *Maġmūʿ* no. 101.
- Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Mawdūʿāt* = ʿAbdarraḥmān b. ʿAlī Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Kitāb al-mawdūʿāt min al-ahādīṭ al-marfūʿāt*. Medina 1966.
- Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Miṣbāḥ* = ʿAbdarraḥmān b. ʿAlī Ibn al-Ġawzī, *al-Miṣbāḥ al-Mudīʿ fi dawlat al-Mustadīʿ*. Edited by Nāġiyya ʿAbdallāh Ibrāhīm, Baġdad 1976.

<sup>38</sup> Who was forced to recant views similar to those championed by Ibn al-Ġawzī.

- Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Muntazam* = ʿAbdarrahmān b. ʿAlī Ibn al-Ğawzī, *al-Muntazam fī tāriḥ al-mulūk wa-l-umam*. 6 vols. Ed. by Krenkow. Hyderabad: Dāʿirat al-Maʿārif, 1938-40.
- Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Qusṣās* = ʿAbdarrahmān b. ʿAlī Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Kitāb al-Qusṣās wa-l-mudakkirīn*. Edited by Merlin Swartz, Beirut: Dār al-Mašriq, 1971
- Ibn Kaṭīr, *Bidāya* = Abū l-Fidāʾ Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar b. Kaṭīr ʿImād ad-Dīn, *al-Bidāya wa-n-nihāya fī t-tāriḥ*. 14 vols. Cairo: Saʿāda Press, 1929.
- Ibn Raġab, *Dayl* = Abū l-Faraġ ʿAbdarrahmān Ibn Raġab, *Dayl ʿalā ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*. 2 vols. Ed. and intr. by M. H. al-Fiḳī. Cairo: as-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1952-53.
- Ibn Taymiyya, *Aqīda* = Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. ʿAbdalḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Aqīda al-wāsiṭiyya*. Cairo: Salafiyya Press, 1927.
- Ibn al-ʿImād, *Šadarāt* = Abū l-Falāḥ ʿAbdalḥayy b. Aḥmad Ibn al-ʿImād, *Šadarāt ad-dahab fī aḥbār man dahab*. 8 vols. Cairo: al-Qudsi Press, 1931.
- al-Mundirī, *Takmila* = Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdalʿazīm b. ʿAbdalqawī Zakī ad-Dīn al-Mundirī, *at-Takmila li-wafayāt an-naqala*. Beirut 1981.
- aš-Šaṭṭī, *Muḥtaṣar* = Ğamīl b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad aš-Šaṭṭī al-Baġdādī, *Muḥtaṣar ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*. Damascus: Taraqqī Press, 1920.

#### B. Secondary sources

- ʿAlī, Ḥasan Ibrāhīm. 1988. *Ibn al-Ğawzī*. Baghdad.
- Brockelmann, C. 1937-42. *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*. 2 vols. 2nd ed. Leiden: E. J. Brill; *Supplement*, 3 vols.
- Ess, J. van. 1976. "Disputationspraxis in der islamischen Theologie. Eine vorläufige Skizze". *REI* 44.23-60.
- Gimaret. 1977. "Théories de l'acte humain dans l'école hanbalite". *BEO* 29.157-178.
- Hartmann, Angelika. 1975. *an-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh*. Berlin.
- . 1986. "Les ambivalences d'un sermonnaire ḥanbalite". *Annales Islamologique* 22.51-115.
- Kaḥḥāla, ʿUmar. n.d. *Muġam al-muʿallifīn*. Beirut: Dār al-Iḥyāʾ.
- Laoust, H. 1959. "Le ḥanbalisme sous le califat de Bagdad". *REI* 27.67-128.
- . 1972. "Ibn al-Djawzī". *EF* III.751-752.
- . 1972a. "Ibn Ḥāmid". *EF* III.784.
- . 1972b. "Ibn al-Farrā". *EF* III.765-766.
- Makdisi, G. 1963. *Ibn ʿAqīl et la résurgence de l'Islam traditionaliste au XIe siècle*. Damascus: Institut Français de Damas.
- Sabra, A. I. 1994. "Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islamic Theology". *ZGAIW* 9.1-42.
- Sezgin, Fuat. 1967-84. *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums*. 9 vols. Leiden: E. J. Brill.