



HISTORICAL CHARACTERIZATION OF KALĀM

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Abstract *In its classical times, kalām, Islamic theology, was known or even notorious for its dialectical character, namely its problematic, speculative, and disputatious way of discourse. In this long period, however, kalām always remained essentially a discipline of fiqh, one that aims “understanding” the Islamic revelation. Since its inception, kalām has been faced with many challenges caused by dialectic, which it owned much as well, but this particular method has never been its essential character as the “new kalām” movement in modern period has proved. This article is an attempt to characterize what we may call the “classical kalām” in terms of methodology and from a historical point of view.*

Key Words: Kalām/Islamic Theology, dialectic.

Introduction

In contemporary Western scholarship, *kalām* is often identified with the classical times of Islam and the methodological character that *kalām* maintained throughout this pre-modern period. Some scholars prefer “doctrinal theology,” some “scholastic theology,” and others “dialectical theology,” but all these definitions relate *kalām* to the Islamic past.¹ There seem to be here at least two points of reduction. One is to confine *kalām* into a particular period in history and neglect its continuation throughout modern times. The second is to restrict it to a particular method that once prevailed but not survived. The modern “new *kalām*” movement, especially effective in the late 19th and early 20th centuries before it yielded the contemporary *kalām*, shows that both reductions are flawed.² The transformation of what we can aptly call the “classical *kalām*” into a non-classical one has proved this Islamic discipline to be independent of its traditional character and not to be identified with pre-modern times at all.

¹ For the definitions, see Tim Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 2; Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (tr. Liadain Sherrard. London & New York: Kegan Paul International, 1993), 105; Josef van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology* (tr. Jane Marie Todd. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 2.

² For an extensive analysis of the new *kalām* movement, see M. Sait Özervarlı, *Kelamda Yenilik Arayışları* (Istanbul: Isam, 1998).

The classical *kalām* is generally said to be dialectical in nature; this is its traditional character.³ Dialectic seems to be a good term to refer at once to the three-fold method of classical *kalām*, namely its problematic, speculative, and disputatious way of discourse.⁴ In modern period, *kalām* can be said to have left behind this “obsolete” way of discourse to a large extent. Then what has remained after the transformation? I would argue that the remainder is *kalām*’s essential character, namely *fiqh*, the general title given to the study of Islamic revelation for the purpose of “understanding” the divine teaching.⁵ The traditional definition of *kalām* seems to support this argument. According to the perhaps most commonly accepted definition, *kalām* is “a science to study God’s person and attributes, and the conditions of all creation in terms of the beginning and the end, in accordance with the Islamic canon.”⁶ There are two elements in the definition: first, the subject of the science, which is divinity that includes metaphysics; and second, its essential character, which is being based on Islamic revelation.

The phrase “Islamic canon” (*qānūn al-Islām*) in the traditional definition is to locate *kalām* among the disciplines of *fiqh*, as it is commonly considered to be.⁷ In fact, all different schools of *kalām* throughout history have always justified their theology by the claim of conformity with Islamic revelation. Unlike *falsafa* or the Muslim speculative philosophy, *kalām* has always held that divine revelation is a major source of knowledge without which human reason cannot determine the divine and metaphysical realities in their elaborate nature.⁸ Nonetheless, in classical times, the same *kalām* was always criticized for its dialectic by the members of other

³ See Henry Corbin, *ibid.*, 105.

⁴ Here I use “problematic” in contrast to “systematic,” and “speculative” in contrast to “positive.” I use “positive” in the sense of “based on research.”

⁵ Concerning this essential character, Bekir Topaloğlu, a representative of contemporary *kalām*, writes: “To properly define and elucidate the Islamic creeds, it should be an immutable condition that we take the Qur’anic statements as our determinant principles.” See, *Kelam Ilmi: Giriş* (Istanbul: Damla, 1996), 93.

⁶ See al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta’rīfāt* (Beirut, 1983), “al-kalām” entry.

⁷ A modern version of this traditional classification has been suggested by the contemporary Moroccan philosopher and methodologist Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī. He classifies *kalām* under the category of what he calls *al-bayān*, a term that he uses in place of *fiqh* and in contrast to what he calls *al-‘irfān* for the way of mysticism and *al-burhān* for the way of philosophy. See *Takwīn al-‘aql al-‘Arabī* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥdah al-‘Arabiyya, 2006).

⁸ The three major sources of knowledge recognized in *kalām* are the intellect or reason (*al-‘aql*), the healthy senses (*al-ḥawāss al-salīma*), and true news (*al-khabar al-ṣādiq*). The last specifically refers to the news conveyed by God’s messengers. See al-Māturīdī, *al-Tawḥīd* (ed. Fetḥullah Khulayf. Beirut, 1986), 7.

disciplines of *fiqh*, especially Ahl al-ḥadīth, the scholars of Prophetic tradition. What does this perennial criticism mean in respect to the character of the classical *kalām*? This question is what I seek to answer in this article. I attempt here to characterize the pre-modern period of *kalām* as a discipline of *fiqh* imbued with dialectic. To this end, I will basically analyze this “dialectical *fiqh*” from a historical perspective with a focus on the the challenges it brought with.

1. Emergence of Dialectical Theology

The very early period of Islam, often called “the age of happiness,” can be characterized by the community’s common understanding of the revelation and focus on its proper practice. It seems that the Muslims of the time felt virtually no need for theoretical argument on the principles of the religion, thus witnessed no controversy in matters of faith.⁹ The legacy of this ethos during the following decades is well exemplified by the attitude of Yūnus ibn ‘Ubayd (d. 139/756), a spiritual leader of the second generation. When he was reminded of those who were arguing on divine predestination (*al-qadar* in Arabic), he responded, “If their sins concerned them enough, they would not argue.”¹⁰ The same legacy should explain why the conservative scholars of the time were astonished and terrified with the emergence of theological debates towards the end of the first century of *Hijra*. Those debates seemed to them needless and useless, as well as contrary to the value of “submission,” the very nature of being Muslim.¹¹

The expansion of the Muslim state generated a vastly multi-cultural and multi-religious society. Among the new generations and the new converts from the conquered lands were many people whose intellectual motives differed from the conservative scholars. Such people might demonstrate new ways of interpretation of the original sources of the religion. In this context, the social mind was severely traumatized by the consecutive murders of the three caliphs, the political battles that set Companions against each other, and the cruel murders of the Prophet’s grandson and other family members by the ruling Umayyad dynasty. Religious debates began to emerge over particular matters such as the faith status of someone who has committed a grave sin, such as fighting or killing a Muslim.¹² And the Umayyad dynasty attempted to spread its own theological speculations designed to eliminate the social discontent, such as the doctrine that whatever happened in the political

⁹ See al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-firaq* (Cairo, undated), 14; al-Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-īmān* (Beirut, 1990), I, 203.

¹⁰ Abū Nu‘aym, *Hilya al-awliyā’* (Cairo: Maṭba‘a al-Sa‘āda, 1974), III, 21.

¹¹ See Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Qaḍā’ wa al-qadar* (Beirut, 1990), 218.

¹² See Muḥammad al-Bahiy, *al-Jānīb al-ilāhī min al-taḥkīm al-Islāmī* (Cairo, 1982), 41.

realm was necessarily God's decree.¹³ A group of politically active scholars, including Ma'bad al-Juhanī (d. 80/699), Ja'd ibn Dirham (d. 124/742), Jahm ibn Ṣafwān (d. 128/745), and Wāṣil ibn 'Aṭā' (d. 131/748) confronted those speculations by publicly speaking about destiny and other theological subjects, and thus caused an intellectual movement. The participants of the movement also attended the newly established inter-religious intellectual circles and defended the principles of Islamic faith by dialectical discourse against the arguments of Christian and Zoroastrian theologians.¹⁴

The movement spread in Basra and Baghdad in the early second century of *Hijra* and was often called al-Mu'tazila, literally meaning "those who separate themselves."¹⁵ The separation attributed to the movement referred to the "innovations" (*bid'a*) that its members promoted on the controversial matters mentioned above, not to their faith or practice. In fact, history remembers most if not all of them as religiously enthusiastic and pious.¹⁶ While arguing for the principles of Islamic faith against both the Umayyad caliphate and non-Islamic groups, the Mu'tazilī scholars not only adopted the philosophical method of dialectic, but also adapted the problematic agenda of speculative theology from the foreign religious traditions in the region. In the course of the second century, this attitude of theological debate, now called *kalām*, became quite popular.¹⁷ It is most likely that *kalām*, which literally means "speech," was chosen to correspond to the Greek word *logos*, which had been used to define fields of study such as *theologia*.¹⁸ Nonetheless, the term *kalām* was somehow associated with *jadāl* or dialectic, the nature of which is to speak over and again. This was suggested by the fact that the people of *kalām* were called *al-mutakallimūn*, literally meaning those who speak by profession.¹⁹

2. Imbuing *Fiqh* with Dialectic

Signifying the intellectual activity of this emerging movement at its early stage, *kalām* was different in character to some extent from the conventional way of

¹³ Majid Fakhry, *Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Mysticism* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997), 14.

¹⁴ See Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Khayyāt, *al-Intisār* (ed. Albert N. Nader. Beirut, 1957), 21.

¹⁵ Al-Isfarāyīnī, *al-Tabṣīr* (Beirut, 1983), 68.

¹⁶ See 'Alī Sāmī al-Nashar, *Nash'a al-fikr al-falsafī fi al-Islām* (s.l. Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1966), 337, 352, 357, 432.

¹⁷ Aḥmad Maḥmūd Subḥī, *Fī 'ilm al-kalām* (Beirut, 1985), I, 18.

¹⁸ Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalām* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 1.

¹⁹ See Josef van Ess, *ibid.*, 2.

studying the Qur'an and Sunna, a way that was generally called *fiqh*. Literally meaning “understanding” or “comprehension” and famous for the title of Islamic jurisprudence, *fiqh* originally applied to all fields of religious study. This is why Abū Hanīfa (d. 150/767), the founder of the Hanafī school of law, allegedly called the study of the foundations of the religion (*‘ilm usūl al-dīn*) as *al-fiqh al-akbar*, “the greater understanding” in comparison to the study of law.²⁰ These “foundations” were not but the issues of faith, but what Abū Hanīfa envisioned seems not to be *kalām* in some ways. The reason is clear: As a problematic, speculative, and disputatious way of treating a subject, dialectic contrasts with the ideal of *fiqh*, namely the systematic, positive, and contemplative understanding of the revelation. In its mentioned character, *kalām* was distinguished by the long-lasting disputations that took the form of thesis vs. antithesis, where systematic and positive study of the revelation could hardly be maintained and, as al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) points out, the moral and spiritual purposes of faith were generally lost.²¹

The conventional way of study had already constituted the primitive forms of what would be later called *al-tafsīr*, study of the Qur'anic commentary, *al-hadīth*, study of the Prophetic tradition, and *al-fiqh*, study of the religious law. One readily apparent difference of *kalām* from all these was the attitude of ardent and bold dispute regarding matters of faith. But more significantly, the dialectical discourse inevitably encouraged speculation on the divinity. The *mutakallimūn* typically took a currently disputed problem and made speculations, comparing theses with antitheses.²² This process often converted one theoretical problem into many, and in this way the theology was complicated more and more. For instance, the question of whether God will be seen in Paradise, a matter that is called *ru'yatullāh*, could be disputed endlessly over the course of hundreds of pages.²³ Dialectical speculation was conducted under the name of *al-'aql*, the reason, or more specifically, *al-istidlāl*, deductive reasoning. Ja'd ibn Dirham, who set forth questions about the divine attributes, justified his method by saying, “I am collecting knowledge for the reason.”²⁴ Undoubtedly, his voice echoed the famous motto in Mu'tazilī literature

²⁰ Abū Hanīfa, *al-Fiqh al-akbar* (Istanbul, 1992).

²¹ Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqiz min al-dalāl* (Damascus, 1939), 82.

²² For an interesting example, occurred between the two branches of al-Mu'tazila, see Abū Rashīd al-Nīsābūrī, *al-Masā'il fī al-khilāf bayn al-Basriyyīn wa al-Baghdādīyyīn*, (ed. Ma'n Ziyāda. Beirut, 1979), 28 et seq.

²³ See al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī* (Cairo, 1361-1365), IV, 33-240.

²⁴ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya* (Beirut, 1982), IX, 350.

that “God is known by reasoning.”²⁵ This short sentence signifies much about the insertion of philosophy into the way of *fiqh*.

In the midst of speculative arguments, it was easy to overlook the elaborate content of the Qur’an and not to take its own logic seriously. As a matter of fact, the Mu‘tazilī theologians many times employed the Qur’anic verses in their discourse to formally legitimize their speculative predicates; these references were often made as quick asides, not foundations for justification. At times they appeared to care little for the authentic meaning and even the linguistic properties of the verses they referred to. Besides, they became notorious for completely neglecting the Prophetic tradition by almost never observing how the Prophet himself and Companions had understood the revelation in detailed matters of faith.²⁶ The well known case exemplifying this oversight is the denial of what is called *al-qadar*, the creed that all in existence including human affairs are wisely and justly determined by God, which, as a teaching if not as a term, is quite clear in the Qur’an and repeatedly emphasized in the Sunna. For instance, despite the fact that God is abundantly attributed in the Qur’an as “*al-wakīl*,” meaning the one who is entrusted with affairs, Hishām ibn ‘Amr (d. 218/833), a famous Mu‘tazilī theologian, insisted that God could not be called *al-wakīl* because human individuals were completely responsible for and even to create their actions.²⁷ The denial of *al-qadar* became such a landmark of al-Mu‘tazila that the movement was also called al-Qadariyya, those who deny *al-qadar*.

Among the Mu‘tazilī theologians were linguists. They must have seen that at least some of their speculative comments did not comply with what the Qur’an clearly stated. They were expected by their conservative colleagues to authentically investigate the linguistic properties of the Qur’an and take its logic seriously. However, they moved forward. They attempted to “interpret” the explicit statements of the Qur’an that contrast with their thoughts. They called their new way of interpretation *ta’wīl*, a word that is mentioned in the Qur’an (3:7) in regard to the interpretation of inexplicit verses (*al-mutashābihāt*). Obviously, their reference to *ta’wīl* was not appropriate whenever they applied it to verses with clear meaning.²⁸ For instance, the Mu‘tazilīs of Baghdad, whose theology did not allow God to have any attributes associated with humanity, “interpreted” all the Qur’anic statements about God as being all-seeing and all-hearing, claiming that those statements simply

²⁵ Al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa* (ed. ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Uthmān. Cairo, 1965), 39.

²⁶ See Jamāl al-dīn al-Qāsimī, *Tārīkh al-Jahmiyya wa al-Mu‘tazila* (Beirut, 1981), 19.

²⁷ See Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Khayyāt, *al-Intiṣār*, 48; Fakh al-dīn al-Rāzī, *I’tiqādāt firaq al-muslimīn wa al-mushrikīn* (Beirut, 1982), 43.

²⁸ Cf. ‘Alī ibn Sa’d al-Duwayhī, *Ārā al-Mu‘tazila al-uṣūliyya* (Riyadh, 1995), 84.

referred to God as all-knowing, without really seeing and hearing.²⁹ Some examples of *ta'wīl* generated absurdities. To mention one of them, some Mu'tazilī scholars, for the same reason indicated above, asserted that the “source” (*maḥall*) of the divine acts of willing, speaking, seeing, hearing, commanding, etc. must have been nowhere, or somewhere that was not in God.³⁰

3. Opposition to Speculative Dialectic

When the authentic meaning of the Qur'anic verses seemed to have been disturbed by the Mu'tazilī *ta'wīl*, conservative scholars stood up in discontent. They embarked on a counter-discourse and authored counter-treatises to protect the public from what had been called *kalām*.³¹ In doing so, perhaps they did not recognize that they adopted, at least in part, two aspects of the method of their opponents, namely the problematic and disputatious way of discourse. It was possibly this opposition that turned the face of the Mu'tazilī theologians from non-Muslim groups to their fellow Muslims. A new age of debates was initiated. In time, two main attitudes emerged on the conservative side. One was the absolute denial of the speculative dialectic of *kalām*. This was held mostly by a group of *hadīth* scholars whose movement would be later called al-Salafiyya (those who follow the predecessors) for their emphasis on the faith of the early generations. The other was the adoption of the way of *kalām* for the purpose of defeating al-Mu'tazila by their own methodology. This latter approach ended with the foundation of what is called the *kalām* of Ahl al-Sunna, or the Sunnī *kalām*, by the early fourth century. It was primarily an anti-Mu'tazilī movement, led by two outstanding intellectuals: Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935) in Baghdad and Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944) in Khorasan.³² From that time on, the term *al-mutakallimūn* started to be used to refer to the dialectical theologians of both al-Mu'tazila and Ahl al-Sunna.

The core principle of the early Salafī theology, if this can be called “theology” at all, was to understand the Qur'an and Sunna without any *ta'wīl* and even without any elaboration. Their motto was “keeping the tongue” (*al-imsāk*) from “interpretation.”³³ It seems that the early Salafī scholars extended the rule of *al-*

²⁹ Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* (Cairo, 1969), I, 235, 256.

³⁰ See al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 440, 535; al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtisād fī al-i'tiqād* (Ankara, 1962), 103.

³¹ See Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Radd 'alā al-Zanādiqa wa al-Jahmiyya* (Alexandria, 1971); Ibn Quṭayba, *al-Ikhtilāf fī al-laḥẓ wa al-radd 'alā al-Jahmiyya wa al-mushabbihā* (Egypt, 1349); 'Uthmān al-Dārimī, *al-Radd 'alā al-Jahmiyya* (Kuwait, 1995).

³² 'Irfān 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, *Dirāsāt fī al-firaq wa al-'aqāid al-Islāmiyya* (Beirut, 1984), 146.

³³ See 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī, *al-Iqtisād fī al-i'tiqād* (Madina, 1993), 116; Ibn Qudāma, *Dhamm al-ta'wīl* (Kuwait, 1995), 222.

imsāk to the necessary explanation of the revealed statements. This manifests itself in the typical structure of their literature, which mainly consisted of the successive quotations from the Qur'an and Sunna without any considerable elucidation.³⁴ What is more, they often included figurative meaning (*majāz*) in the scope of *ta'wīl* and took the metaphorical language of the Qur'an and Sunna in literal way. This led to a corporeal perception of metaphysics and anthropomorphic description of God.³⁵ This proves that, in Salafī terminology, *ẓāhir*, the explicit meaning of a statement, could be attained only by what is called *aṣl al-lughā*, the literal meaning of a term in dictionary. It is strange that they ignored the universal linguistic fact that an explicit meaning is often provided in a figurative way.

4. Flourishing of Dialectical Theology

The Salafī opposition to speculative dialectic could not stop the passion for *kalām* among anti-Mu'tazilī intellectuals. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, who had formerly renounced al-Mu'tazila and "repented" at the age of forty, passionately wrote treatises to promote *kalām* as a necessary way to overcome the Mu'tazilī theology.³⁶ Echoing al-Ash'arī's call, the *mutakallimūn* of Ahl al-Sunna adapted the problematic agenda of al-Mu'tazila and constructed their own arguments. They built the Sunnī literature of *kalām*, which, like the Mu'tazilī literature, generally consisted of successive argumentations around speculative problems.³⁷ Speculative dialectic often overwhelmed the realistic approach to the topic, generating an imaginary sphere of discourse. For instance, in regard to the problem of creation, one of the primary points of controversy was whether the divine act of creation (*takwīn*) was identical with the created thing (*mukawwan*).³⁸ But the same literature had virtually no discussion about the meaning and purpose of creation. As a result, despite the promise of a counter-discourse against the Mu'tazilī theology, the *kalām* of Ahl al-Sunna followed a similar pathway: both were stuck in speculative dialectic and faced with its many challenges.

Sunnī *mutakallimūn* many times employed *ta'wīl* almost the same way al-Mu'tazila had done. The motive was also the same, namely commitment to certain speculative arguments. Perhaps the foremost of such arguments was *hudūth*, which

³⁴ For an example, see Ibn Khuzayma, *al-Tawḥīd wa ithbāt ṣifa al-Rabb* (Beirut, 1983).

³⁵ For examples, see al-Harawī, *al-Arba'īn fī dalā'il al-tawḥīd* (s.l. 1984), 57-77.

³⁶ Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, *Risāla fī istiḥsān al-ḥawḍ fī 'ilm al-kalām* (ed. Richard Yūsuf al-Yasū'ī. Beirut, 1953).

³⁷ For an example, see al-Shahristānī, *Nihāya al-aqdām fī 'ilm al-kalām* (Oxford, 1934), 13 et seq.

³⁸ See Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī, *Tabṣira al-adilla fī uṣūl al-dīn* (ed. Claude Salāma. Damascus, 1993), I, 400 et seq.

had been developed to prove the temporality of the universe and thus creation *ex nihilo*. It was al-Ash‘arī himself, one of the two founders of the Sunnī *kalām*, that appealed for the first time to a Mu‘tazilī kind of *ta‘wīl* as a consequence of the argument from *hudūth*, long before al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), who is often said to be the first. For instance, al-Ash‘arī, as well as his followers, denied the real meanings of the spiritual attributes of God, such as the divine compassion, love, and anger. They argued that the real meanings of these attributes described God in likeness of creatures and made Him subject to space and time, something unacceptable due to the divine eternity and uniqueness. Consequently, they “interpreted” all statements in the Qur‘an that clearly speak of God’s spiritual attributes, claiming, for example, that God’s compassion in essence is His will of forgiveness and God’s anger His will of punishment.³⁹ This is why, in Sunnī *kalām*, the list of the divine attributes does not include *raḥmah*, mercy or compassion, one of the most emphasized attributes of God in the Qur‘an. It was reduced in the divine will by means of *ta‘wīl*.⁴⁰ What the Māturīdī theologian al-Uṣmandī (d. 552/1157) writes in the matter of divine attributes seems to be a key: “This is a matter of reason. We must depend on the definite knowledge. We cannot take the apparent meaning of the Qur‘anic verses, which are subject to interpretation.”⁴¹ The once-criticized Mu‘tazilī maxim of rationalism, “God is known by reasoning,” eventually became the golden principle of the *kalām* of Ahl al-Sunna.

By the time of al-Ghazālī, namely the fifth century of *Hijra*, when the “danger” of al-Mu‘tazila had passed, Sunnī *kalām* opened a new frontline. It was against the Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic tradition of philosophy that had been increasingly influential in the intellectual life of the Muslim societies. The *mutakallimūn* of Ahl al-Sunna this time adapted the speculative agenda of the mentioned philosophical traditions and adopted their rational instruments, including the syllogism. The result was an intensely philosophical theology, maintaining its speculative dialectic in character.⁴² In opposition to this final destination of the classical *kalām*, al-Salafiyya resurged. Being led by Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), the late Salafī theology harshly criticized the way of *kalām* and argued for the non-dialectical way of faith witnessed in the early period of Islam, emphasizing that

³⁹ See Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad maqālāt al-Shaykh Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī* (ed. Daniel Gimaret. Beirut, 1987), 45, 73; al-Bāqillānī, *al-Tamhīd* (Cairo, 1947), 48 and *al-Inṣāf* (Beirut, 1986), 38, 61.

⁴⁰ The traditional list of the divine attributes includes *al-ḥayāh*, life, *al-‘ilm*, knowledge, *al-irāda*, will, *al-qudra*, power, *al-sam‘*, hearing, *al-baṣar*, seeing, and *al-kalām*, speech. See al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-‘Aqāid al-Nasaḥiyya* (Damascus, 1974), 36.

⁴¹ Al-Uṣmandī, *Lubāb al-kalām* (ed. M. Sait Ozervarlı. Istanbul, 1998), 76.

⁴² For an exemplary discourse, see al-Dawwānī, *Risāla fī ithbāt al-wājib* (s.l. and undated).

there could not be contradiction between the revelation and the reason.⁴³ Nonetheless, just as their predecessors, the late Salafī scholars could not fully avoid dialectic in their counter-discourse, since theirs too was problematic and disputatious, if not speculative.⁴⁴

Conclusion

When its classical period is concerned, the methodological character of *kalām* can be aptly defined with what I call “dialectical *fiqh*.” With this phrase, we can refer to the classical *kalām*’s problematic, speculative, and disputatious way of discourse, but only locating it among the disciplines of *fiqh*. It would argue that this three-fold character is not only fully shared by all Mu‘tazilī and Sunnī schools of theology, and also in part by their opponents, the early and late Salafiyya. In its entire history, *kalām* has always claimed to be a science dedicated to the study of Islamic faith in accordance with Islamic revelation; and as a single discipline with this claim, it has proved to be the “Islamic theology.” Nonetheless, this latter title was seriously challenged by the very nature of dialectical method in classical period. It can be argued that, in pre-modern times, *kalām* had been too problematic, speculative, and disputatious to be fully a systematic, positive, and contemplative study of the Islamic faith. The “new *kalām*” movement emerged in modern period not only as an action taken against the rise of anti-Islamic philosophies, but also as a reaction to the challenges of the classical method.

⁴³ See Ibn Taymiyya, *Muwāfaqa ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl li ṣarīḥ al-ma‘qūl* (Beirut, 1985).

⁴⁴ For an example, see Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Qaḍā’ wa al-qadar* (Beirut, 1991), 47 et seq.

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