

‘Fire Cannot Harm It’: Mediation, Temptation and the Charismatic Power of the Qur’an

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Orality and Corporality

The miraculous charisma of the Qur’an, both in this world and the next, forms part of a larger constellation of traditions recurrent throughout the body of literature focusing on the excellent qualities (*faḍā’il*) of the revelation to Muḥammad. This genre of writing starts to coalesce around the beginning of the third/ninth century,¹ as evinced by the respective *muṣannaf* collections of ʿAbd al-Razzāq (d. 211/827) and Ibn Abī Shayba (d. 235/849), both of which contain sections dedicated to the subject. With the *Faḍā’il al-Qur’ān* of Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām (d. 224/838), we have an early example of an entire monograph organised under this particular rubric. While the traditions gathered in these collections are drawn from sayings ascribed to the Prophet, the Companions and early jurists, which were in circulation during the second/eighth century,² the genre as a literary form comes to reflect theological concerns as they developed in the course of the third/ninth and forth/tenth centuries.³

These writings draw inspiration from the Qur’an, which itself repeatedly emphasises the special nature of the revelation as a central theme. Scholars such as William Graham and Daniel Madigan have pointed out that one of the unique characteristics of the Qur’an is its awareness of itself as a scripture very much configured in terms of an oral communication.⁴ A sustained focus within the Qur’an highlights the revelation as an otherworldly, inimitable articulation. The unbelievers (*mushrikūn*) consistently react to the Qur’an with the refrain *this is obvious magic (hādihā siḥrun mubīn)*,⁵ while when the jinn listen on they exclaim that this is *a wonderful recitation! (qur’ānan ʿajaban)*.⁶ This miraculous intrusion of the divine into human history is repeated in the Qur’an with the recurring challenge for humankind and the jinn to come together to try to produce something which could rival the divine revelation received by Muḥammad.⁷

As for the collection of the oral revelation into the physical form of writing, one of the central concerns surrounding early Muslim narratives on the codification of the Qur’an is the question as to what extent the written form of the text reflects the original divine communication to Muḥammad.⁸ According to Muslim accounts a bifurcation between oral and written lines of transmission, concomitant with the

variae lectiones (qirāʾāt) – themselves expressed both orally and textually – characterises the early dissemination of the Qurʾan.⁹ The dichotomous relationship between the oral and the textual is further accentuated in a leitmotif which runs throughout the Qurʾanic discourse concerning a divine *urschrift*, referred to as the original scripture (*umm al-kitāb*, Q. 43:4), preserved upon a heavenly tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*, Q. 85:22).¹⁰ This heavenly archetype is very much akin to the pre-existent Torah of Judaism,¹¹ and is a concept found in other scriptural traditions which stretch across the ancient religious landscapes of Mesopotamia.¹²

With the semantic nexus surrounding the words *inzāl* and *tanzīl*, the Qurʾan depicts the revelation as a downward movement from heaven to humanity. The charismatic quality of scripture in both oral and written terms is articulated in Q. 56:77–9, *It is a noble recitation (qurʾānun karīm) in a hidden scripture (kūtābin makhnūn), which only the pure touch (lā yamassuhu illāʾl-muṭahharūn)*. Thus, the unique and sanctified character of the revelation as manifest both aurally and textually is already expressed in the Qurʾan. The radical uniqueness of the revelation is repeated throughout the Ḥadīth literature surrounding the *faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān*, in the belief that divine presence and tranquility (*sakīna*), directly connected to the Hebrew *shekhīnā* and the Syriac *shekīnāthā*, descends over the body when reciting the Qurʾan.¹³

The Qurʾanic discourse refers to the revelation as glad tidings (*bushrā*), serving as a guide (*hudā*) and a mercy (*rahma*) for humanity.¹⁴ This configuration around the illuminating power of revelation points to the larger role of the Qurʾan in salvation history. The eschatological importance of the Qurʾan is also crystallised in early Ḥadīth literature. In the *faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān* section of Ibn Abī Shaybaʾs *Muṣannaf*, the Companion Abū Hurayra (d. ca 59/679) is recorded as saying, ‘Blessed is the interceding (*al-shafiʿ*) Qurʾan for the one who possesses it on the Day of Resurrection’.¹⁵ Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) relates on the authority of the companion Abū Umāma al-Bāhili (d. ca 81/700) a similar account, ascribed to the Prophet, ‘Recite the Qurʾan, for on the Day of Resurrection it will be an intercessor (*shāfiʿ*) for those who possess it (*li-aṣḥābihi*)’.¹⁶ The idea that the Qurʾan can intercede on behalf of the believer appears as a central feature to the eschatological currents running throughout the *faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān* literature.¹⁷ Abd al-Razzāq in his *Muṣannaf* and al-Dārimī (d. 255/869) in his Ḥadīth collection record a saying attributed to Ibn Masʿūd (d. 32/652–3), famous Companion and early reciter, that the Qurʾan is the ‘rope of God’, an intercessor, whose wonders never cease (*lā tanqaḍī ʿajāʾibuhu*).¹⁸ In other collections, a similar statement concerning the never-ending marvels of the Qurʾan is ascribed directly to the Prophet.¹⁹

Attitudes toward the special status of the Qurʾan, both in its oral articulation and its written form, go through a radical transformation with the controversy surrounding the question of the temporality of God’s speech and the createdness of the Qurʾan, which

comes to dominate theological debates by the end of the second/eighth century.²⁰ One of the consequences of this controversy is that the ways in which the oral and written forms of the Qur'an are conceptualised come to take on explicit theological meanings. Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), for example, in his *Ta'wīl mukhtaliḥ al-ḥadīth*, speaks directly to rationalist theologians (*aṣḥāb al-kalām*) when he argues that the Qur'anic aya *only the purified touch it* (Q. 56:77–9) and the Prophetic *ḥadīth* 'do not travel with the Qur'an into the land of the enemy' both demonstrate that the physical codex (*muṣḥaf*) is veritably one and the same as the divine, uncreated Qur'an, and not just an indication (*dalīl*) of it.²¹

In contrast, Dāwūd al-Iṣbahānī (d. 270/884), the founding leader of the Zāhiriyya, draws on the same Qur'anic aya to argue that the heavenly Qur'an, which is in a hidden book (*kitāb makhnūn*), is uncreated, while that 'which is in our midst' (*bayna aḥḥurīnā*) is created and temporal. From this, he claims that menstruants and those in a state of major impurity (*junub*) may indeed touch the *muṣḥaf*,²² an opinion which stands in contradistinction to the dominant juridical discourse on the matter.²³ Ultimately, this is a legal position upheld by the later Zāhiriyya.²⁴ Such is the case with Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), the prominent Zāhirī jurist of Cordoba, who contends that the Qur'anic aya *only the purified touch it* is not a prohibition (*nahī*), but a statement of fact, referring to how angels touch the heavenly scripture; and that the Prophet himself is known to have sent letters to ritually impure infidels (*kuffār*), containing Qur'anic ayas calling them to Islam.²⁵ Ibn Ḥazm takes this as justification for letting menstruants, those in a state of major impurity and infidels all handle the codex. The position of the Zāhiriyya on this issue reflects a broader process of trying to work out the relationship between the divine revelation and its material manifestation in human existence.

The growing significance of the *faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* literature, in a sectarian milieu marked by competing visions over the nature and function of scripture, suggests an attempt at delineating the centrality of the Qur'an, not only vis-à-vis the importance of Ḥadīth, but also within an increasingly tense theological debate concerning scripture itself. As a genre, the very function of the *faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* is to draw attention to the centrality of scripture, a centrality which is arguably part of the Qur'an's self-image, itself very much conceived of as an oral revelation.²⁶ We can trace within this literature, however, an effort to collapse together the oral and material expressions of the Qur'an as not only equivalent articulations, but as equally sanctified. This process of suturing the oral to the written develops out of a historical context where the use of writing in the spheres of learning and ritual praxis itself had been hotly debated.²⁷

Throughout this literature there is a recurring emphasis on the eschatological power of the Qur'an to intercede on behalf of humanity. This charismatic capacity is often

configured through a metaphoric language of corporality, which highlights a confluence between the oral and material expressions of scripture. The homiletic force of Abū ‘Ubayd’s *Faḍā’il al-Qur’ān* leaves no doubt that believers should embrace the Qur’an for its power of intercession, with an explicit eye toward the Day of Resurrection. The notion that one who possesses the Qur’an is protected come the end of time not only accords to the Qur’an a special role in the mediation between the divine and the human, but, as figurative language, speaks to the materiality of scripture, suggesting that through the process of memorisation (*hifẓ*) one internalises the Qur’an and thus comes to possess it and be protected by it.²⁸ Similarly, the common figurative expression found throughout these sources of ‘bearers of the Qur’an’ (*hamalat al-Qur’ān*) as a designation for those who have memorised and thus ‘carry’ scripture, underscores a further collapsing together of the oral and the physical in the discursive *imaginaire*.

As mentioned above, one of the main aims of the *faḍā’il al-Qur’ān* literature is to highlight the primary role of scripture in the course of human affairs. This centrality is echoed in a range of discourses, as, for example, is the case in the various writings detailing the Prophetic medicine (*al-ṭibb al-nabawī*) practiced by Muḥammad and the Companions, where the recitation of Qur’anic ayas is repeatedly used in conjunction with the preparation and ingestion of herbal remedies.²⁹ Such sentiments concerning the otherworldly power of the revelation, as expressed in the Qur’an, the Prophetic Ḥadīth and the sayings of the Companions, point not only to the power of the words, but also to the special nature of the physical object of the codex itself. Given its unique importance, it is not surprising to see, from an early period, the material Qur’an used in an entire range of theurgical practices, from amulets and talismans to bibliomancy (*fa’l al-Qur’ān*) and divination.³⁰ The practice, for example, of ingesting Qur’anic ayas written down on paper or other media comes under scrutiny by early jurists interested in maintaining the ritual purity of the Qur’an.³¹ The emphasis on internalising scripture, both literally and figuratively, gives rise to questions concerning the charismatic status of the physical Qur’an as a written text.

‘Fire Cannot Harm It’

These inquiries into the power of the Qur’an as text and object intersect not only with the issues of sanctity (*ḥurma*) and purity (*tāhira*), but also with a broad range of problems regarding the nature of the divine message. Of specific concern is the relationship between the Qur’an as divine speech and the physical codex as the receptacle for the word of God. Of the many sources of contention, one particular Prophetic *ḥadīth* serves as a site of a sustained debate. Tracing the reception and interpretation of this saying enables us to survey a diverse set of responses concerning the nature of the physical codex as a vessel of revelation.

Abū ʿUbayd is one of our earliest sources for this *ḥadīth*, which appears in his *Faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān*. He relates on the authority of the Companion ʿUqba ibn ʿĀmir (*fl.* first/seventh century), who heard the Prophet say, 'If the Qurʾan were on an untanned hide and then thrown into a fire, it would not burn' (*ʿlaw kāna al-Qurʾān fī ihāb thumma ulqiya fī l-nār la-mā iḥtaraqa*).³² This statement comes to engender an entire range of interpretations, all of which make some kind of claim about the nature of the charismatic power of the Qurʾan in relationship to the material world. For his part, Abū ʿUbayd interprets this saying figuratively to mean that the hide is the heart (*qalb*) of the believer, and is the vessel in which the Qurʾan is memorised. According to him, this *ḥadīth* affirms that the believer who has memorised the Qurʾan will not suffer hellfire on the Day of Judgment.³³

While this saying disseminates throughout the body of writings focusing on the *faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān* in particular, and *Ḥadīth* literature in general, it is with Ibn Qutayba in his *Taʾwīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* that we see a fuller exploration into the theological implications of this individual Prophetic tradition. It is of note that the discussion concerning the significance of this *ḥadīth* takes place in the context of an explicitly theological work, which, in the style of a heresiography, sets out to champion the partisans of Prophetic tradition (*ahl al-ḥadīth*) over the practitioners of speculative theology (*ahl al-kalām*).³⁴ The introduction of this work refutes the ways in which various factions (*firaq*), such as the Khawārij, the Murjiʿa, the Muʿtazila and the Shiʿa, have used and interpreted Prophetic *ahādīth* to advance positions which Ibn Qutayba holds to be heretical.³⁵

Ibn Qutayba opens his discussion by citing a group who argued that this *ḥadīth* is patently false, as Qurʾanic codices are known to burn just like other books.³⁶ In order to counter such a claim and to elucidate a saying which seems to invest the physical Qurʾan with a miraculous power to withstand fire, Ibn Qutayba advances three explanations. First, he quotes the Basran philologist al-Aṣmaʿī (d. 213/828), who argues, like Abū ʿUbayd in his *Faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān*, for an allegorical signification, where the hide stands in for a person. Ibn Qutayba explains this to mean that the body of a man who has memorised the Qurʾan will not be punished on the Day of Resurrection.³⁷ He draws his second explanation from an unidentified group of people who assert that, during the lifetime of the Prophet, fire indeed could not harm the physical Qurʾan. This, they explain, served as a miracle (*muʿjiza*) proving the veracity of Muḥammad's prophethood. In these two interpretations lies a divergence between an allegorical reading, supporting the figurative internalisation of the Qurʾan, versus a literal reading, which invests the physical *muṣḥaf* with miraculous power.

It is, however, in his last explanation where Ibn Qutayba engages most obviously with the question of the material form of the Qurʾan in relationship to divine speech. Here he argues that the antecedent of *mā iḥtaraqa* ('it would not burn') refers not to the

hide, but to the Qur’an. Such a distinction, between the hide and the text written on it, separates the Qur’an as the speech of God from the material medium on which it is recorded. Ibn Qutayba argues that while the leather and ink might burn, the Qur’an would not, for it is as though God has lifted it up right off the hide and protected it from the fire. This final line of argumentation alludes to the divine urtext of the Qur’an, as protected by God from all harm.³⁸

Ibn Qutayba, however, when suggesting that God lifts the Qur’an up off the hide, is quick to distance himself from the theologians (*aṣḥāb al-kalām*) who argue that the material codex is merely an indication (*dalīl*) of the true Qur’an, which due to its eternality cannot subside in a material manifestation. He stresses that the Qur’an does exist literally (*‘alā’l-ḥaqīqa*) and not figuratively (*‘alā majāz*) in its physical form.³⁹ Such a configuration suggests, as some of Ibn Qutayba’s later interpreters have understood, that the Qur’an as text does indeed have a miraculous power to withstand fire.⁴⁰ Needless to say, while this interpretation falls in line with Ibn Qutayba’s broader proto-Ḥanbalī theology,⁴¹ it would seem to run contrary to his position concerning the human, physical articulation (*lafẓ*) of the Qur’an, which he held to be created and temporal.⁴²

It is in the theological realm that a succeeding generation of scholars, such as al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933),⁴³ Ibn Maḥdī (d. ca 385/995)⁴⁴ and Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015),⁴⁵ come to interpret this saying, all within a discourse of resolving theological problems raised in the corpus of Prophetic traditions (i.e. *ta’wīl/sharḥ mushkil al-ḥadīth*).⁴⁶ Following in large part Ibn Qutayba, the Ḥanafī jurist al-Ṭaḥāwī offers two interpretations. The first gives a figurative meaning to the saying, explaining away any literal attempt to understand how a physical copy of the Qur’an could withstand fire. The second is akin to what Ibn Qutayba suggests in his third interpretation, namely, that God protects the Qur’an from burning by lifting the text of the Qur’an up off the hide.⁴⁷ Thus, it is the hide which burns and not the Qur’an.

In the case of this particular *ḥadīth*, we find with the Ash‘arī theologians Ibn Maḥdī and Ibn Fūrak an explicit rejection of the notion that the eternal Qur’an itself could reside in a material medium. They both argue, in contrast, that this saying supports the Ash‘arī position that the Qur’an, when written on a tablet or on leather, is not actually residing in a physical form, for it is not possible for divine speech to dwell within the vessel of writing.⁴⁸

This view of the speech of God and its relationship to the Qur’an serves as a standard position in Ash‘arī theology, where divine *kalām* is an eternal attribute, equivalent to God’s eternal commandment (*al-amr al-azalī*), whereas the Qur’an written down in a material form is an expression (*‘ibāra*) of divine, undifferentiated *kalām*.⁴⁹ Such a move links the heavenly tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz*) and the Qur’an written in codices as both mimetic copies of God’s eternal speech. Key to this distinction is the

separation of 'inner speech' (*al-kalām al-nafsī*), which is an eternal and an essential quality of God, and 'articulated speech' (*al-kalām al-lafẓī*), which is temporally expressed.⁵⁰

It is in such a light that the Ash'arī theologian al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) turns to this *ḥadīth* in his *al-Inṣāf fi-mā yujab i'tiqāduhu*, a credal and theological work aimed in large measure against Mu'tazilī and Ḥanbalī theologians. Al-Bāqillānī argues that by this saying the Prophet did not mean that the leather, the ink and the written letters of the Qur'an (*al-ḥurūf al-muṣawwara*) would not burn, but rather that the eternal speech of God, which is the Qur'an, cannot be harmed, for it is not conceivable for the eternal to be burned or destroyed. For al-Bāqillānī, this line of argumentation is explicitly set against those who argue that the eternal Qur'an dwells in the temporal vehicles of language and writing and, as such, addresses the Ḥanbalī notion that the human articulation of the Qur'an is veritably the same as God's eternal speech.⁵¹

Divine Deterrence and Demonic Temptation

Such a panoply of interpretations highlights how this particular *ḥadīth* is axiomatic of broader theological issues. One of the most provocative responses in this examination of the intersection of material existence and divine revelation comes from the Imāmī jurist, theologian and all around *adīb* of Baghdad, al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044). In his collected literary and theological lectures, the *Ghurar al-fawā'id wa-durar al-qalā'id*, he brings to the topic a perspective highly influenced by Mu'tazilī theology. Al-Murtaḍā challenges Ibn Qutayba's analysis of this saying by recounting a refutation offered by the philologist and exegete Ibn al-Anbārī (d. 328/940).⁵² In the process, al-Murtaḍā sets out to demonstrate the folly of both men, while putting forth an interpretation which to many would appear to be quite radical.

The focus of al-Murtaḍā's argument centres on the nature of the Qur'an as language and as a material object. Al-Murtaḍā refutes the claim that there is any charismatic element to the physical form of the Qur'an which would prevent it from being burned, either by God lifting up the text off the leather, or by the hide itself withstanding the flames.⁵³ He also goes on to reject the theory that the physical codex of the Qur'an was impervious to fire during the lifetime of the Prophet, for if that were the case, he argues, than why would this particular miracle have been hidden from all the Companions who related each of the Prophet's miraculous feats. Furthermore, al-Murtaḍā ridicules Ibn Qutayba's suggestion that anyone could just memorise the Qur'an and thus escape the fire of damnation. He concludes that if this were so, then everyone who was juridically bound to follow the religious law (i.e. *al-mukallaḥūn*) would need only to rely on memorising the Qur'an and could go about sinning completely safe in their minds, free from fear of punishment.

For al-Murtaḍā this *ḥadīth* functions as a rhetorical adage (*‘alā ṭarīq al-mathal*) used to aggrandise (*ta‘zīm*) the status of the revelation to Muḥammad.⁵⁴ Accordingly, the Qur’an has nothing to do with material elements, not the leather, nor the ink, and thus is distinct from the written object itself (*al-maktūb*).⁵⁵ As he argues:⁵⁶

The Qur’an in reality (*fi’l-ḥaqīqa*) does not reside (*yaḥull*) in leather; as it is not in leather, this *ḥadīth* can ascribe burning to leather and not to the Qur’an. And since this is case, [Ibn Qutayba’s] claim that the hide is burned and not the Qur’an is pointless, for this is the situation for all speech (*kalām*), which is written on a hide or any other material.

On this issue al-Murtaḍā stresses that the Qur’an has no special linguistic superiority (*maziyya*), which would separate it from any other form of speech, either poetry or prose. He argues that the oral and textual dissemination of any given linguistic expression depends upon temporal preservation. Accordingly, as a written articulation, it is like any oral expression which has been written down, such as the poetry of Imrū’ al-Qays (d. ca 550 AD) or the juridical teachings of al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/820).⁵⁷ Thus, al-Murtaḍā concludes, if the Qur’an were only written on a single leather hide and not preserved in the minds of humans, were that hide to burn, then the sacred text would be lost forever.⁵⁸

By locating the miracle in something other than the textual expression of revelation, al-Murtaḍā turns to the role that divine intervention plays in the formation of the Qur’anic challenge (*taḥaddī*). To fully understand al-Murtaḍā’s position on this *ḥadīth* and its implications for the oral and textual forms of the Qur’an, we must understand his broader approach to scripture and divine speech. As a student of the Imāmī scholar al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1032), al-Murtaḍā developed a theology heavily shaped by Mu‘tazilī rationalism, particularly with regard to the justice (*‘adl*) of God and the monotheistic emphasis on God’s oneness (*tawḥīd*) as determinate factors in the refutation of an eternal, uncreated Qur’an. Despite this close intellectual affinity with Mu‘tazilī thought, al-Murtaḍā spends a good deal of his energy questioning many of their teachings. To this end, he dedicates an entire monograph on the inimitability of the Qur’an, *al-Mūḍiḥ ‘an jihat i‘jāz al-Qur’ān*, aimed at challenging the theories promoted by such Mu‘tazilī theologians as Abū’l-Qāsim al-Balkhī (d. 319/931) and al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbar (d. 415/1024), who locate the miracle of the Qur’an in its linguistic arrangement (*naẓm*) and eloquence (*faṣāḥa*), respectively.⁵⁹ Throughout this work, which he summarises in his later theological compendium, *al-Dhakhīra fī ‘ilm al-kalām*, al-Murtaḍā sets out to promote the notion of divine deterrence (*ṣarfa*) as the probative dimension of Qur’anic inimitability.

There are several key points to keep in mind when considering al-Murtaḍā’s interpretation of this *ḥadīth*. As with his master al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, al-Murtaḍā distances himself from the early Shī‘ī claim that additional ayas were secretly added to

the Qur'an (*ziyāda*).⁶⁰ He too comes to reject the early Imāmī claim that the 'Uthmānic text is incomplete and contains omissions (*nuqṣān*),⁶¹ a position which gains favor amongst the Uṣūlīs.⁶² Al-Murtaḍā, influenced by the Mu'tazilī doctrine of the created Qur'an, believes the Qur'an to be temporally produced (*muḥdath*), and not eternal.⁶³ Furthermore, he upholds the theory of *ṣarfa*, namely the idea that God intervened to prevent humanity from rivaling the Qur'an, as the probative factor of its inimitability and of Muḥammad's prophethood. These positions taken together serve to situate the Qur'an as a temporally disseminated revelation, whose miracle lies neither in its language nor message, but in divine deterrence.

We should note that the theory of divine deterrence is a position promoted by a number of early Mu'tazila, such as Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām of Basra (d. ca 220/835),⁶⁴ along with many of the Baghdad Mu'tazila, as for example al-Rummānī (d. 384/994), who lists *ṣarfa* as one of the causes of inimitability in his treatise *al-Nukat fī i'jāz al-Qur'ān*.⁶⁵ However, a good number of the Mu'tazila object to this theory, as is the case with al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, who throughout his writings vocally champions linguistic superiority and eloquence (*faṣāḥa*) as explanations for Qur'anic inimitability.⁶⁶

Al-Murtaḍā, in contrast, argues that the Qur'an is ultimately made up of the eloquence of the Arabs, and though it might differ from their customary literary form, the difference is not so great that they would have been unable to match it.⁶⁷ He rejects the concept that the Qur'anic miracle is based upon events, future or past, that would have been unknown to the Prophet (*al-akḥbār 'an al-ghuyūb*),⁶⁸ as does he refuse to recognise the Qur'an as miraculous merely because it appeals to reason and contains no contradictions.⁶⁹ The premise that the miracle of the Qur'an lies in its character as the eternal, uncreated word of God means absolutely nothing to him, for he upholds the Qur'an as temporally contingent, consisting of letters and sounds, which are written, recited and heard.⁷⁰ Like all other forms of linguistic expression, the Qur'an is meaningful speech (*al-kalām al-mufīd*), which occurs in time through successive ordering of words, one word after another.⁷¹ In this regard al-Murtaḍā sees no difference between the linguistic position of the Qur'an and all other forms of language. For this reason he rejects that the Qur'an is miraculous either on stylistic or rhetorical grounds.

As for the question of *naẓm*, he turns to the theory of the Mu'tazilī theologian Abū'l-Qāsim al-Balkhī, who in his *'Uyūn al-masā'il wa'l-jawābāt* championed the stylistic arrangement (*naẓm*) and composition (*ta'lif*) of the Qur'an as being beyond the reach of humans, equal to raising the dead or healing the blind.⁷² For al-Murtaḍā what is meant by *naẓm* is the successive arrangement of words (*ḥurūf*) into a specific stylistic form, such that the *naẓm* of poetry differs from that of prose, as the words are arranged using a differing stylistic order (*tarkīb*).⁷³ Though al-Murtaḍā acknowledges

that the *naẓm* of the Qur’an differs from all other forms of speech (*ḍurūb al-kalām*),⁷⁴ he does not believe this is sufficient cause for the inimitability of the Qur’an. As he argues, whoever has the power of words is capable of arranging them and placing them in any given order. Without acknowledging it, al-Murtaḍā sides momentarily with °Abd al-Jabbār, when stating that the superiority of speech does not lie in its formal stylistic arrangement, as one poet might offer a better poem than a rival, though both poets share the same metre.⁷⁵

Though rhetorical eloquence (*faṣāḥa*), unlike formal genre, has a clear subjective dimension, for al-Murtaḍā it too does not sufficiently explain the problem of inimitability. On this issue, he challenges °Abd al-Jabbār’s premise that the superiority of the Qur’an occurs through its linguistic excellence. According to al-Murtaḍā, as mentioned above, the Qur’an is ultimately made up of the eloquence of the Arabs, and though it might differ from their customary literary form, the difference is not so great that they would have been unable to match it.⁷⁶ Al-Murtaḍā does not deny that the Qur’an is an eloquent expression, but he argues that there is not any form of eloquence which could be beyond the reach of humankind, and, as such, eloquence itself cannot form the basis of a miracle.⁷⁷

Having discounted all other theories, al-Murtaḍā turns to divine intervention as the only viable explanation as to why the Arabs were unable to meet the challenge. On this issue, he emphasises the absurdity of the claim that due to the superior eloquence of the Qur’an the Arabs were unable to produce something to rival even the shortest chapter, *Sūrat al-Kawthar*, which consists of only three ayas. Such a hypothesis is anathema to al-Murtaḍā’s notion of language and scripture. Though one of the obvious consequences of *ṣarfa* is the devaluation of the Qur’an as a special linguistic form, the power of God to intervene in the course of human history is in no way diminished. On this point al-Murtaḍā rejects the claim made by °Abd al-Jabbār and others which holds that if one believes in divine intervention then the Qur’an ceases to be a miracle.⁷⁸ Al-Murtaḍā refutes this by explaining that the Qur’an is indeed an inimitable miracle, which humankind is incapable of equalling or approaching, but that the cause of this inimitability is not located in the temporal medium of language. According to him the doctrine of *ṣarfa* is the only way of understanding why the Qur’an remains unrivalled.

Al-Murtaḍā pushes the point, claiming that there is no form of eloquence which would be beyond human capacity.⁷⁹ He holds that the Qur’an is not a miracle in and of itself (*bi-nafsihi*), nor does it break with the natural course of events (*°āda*) merely through its eloquence; rather, it is an indication of what is the miracle in truth (*°alā’l-ḥaqīqa*), namely that God has prevented humankind from achieving its likeness.⁸⁰

Furthermore, al-Murtaḍā sees the doctrine of *ṣarfa* as the only way to demonstrate that the Qur’an is not a demonic deception or temptation aimed at misleading the world.⁸¹

For him, the problem with the theory that eloquence is the cause of Qur'anic inimitability is that humans have no way of determining the degree of eloquence possessed by the Devil or the jinn.⁸² Since language is temporal and contingent, it is well within the Devil's power to master in order to tempt humanity. The notion that God prevented the Arabs from outdoing the Qur'an, according to al-Murtaḍā, sidesteps this problem altogether, as it locates the miracle not in language, which is necessarily contingent, but in a divine act.

The syllogistic logic buttressing his argumentation is based in the premise that God is just and does not seek corruption (*istiḥsād*);⁸³ thus no miracle of God can be evil;⁸⁴ as the Devil may readily be capable of using eloquent language to tempt humankind, it is not possible that the miracle of the Qur'an be based purely on a vehicle of expression within the Devil's capacity. Therefore, only a divine act which prevents humanity from rivaling the linguistic form of the Qur'an can serve as the miraculous proof of the truthfulness and benevolence of the revelation to Muḥammad.⁸⁵

Such a position concerning the status of the revelation as ultimately no different from any other linguistic form naturally divests the physical codex of the Qur'an of any charismatic power. It is for this reason that al-Murtaḍā is averse to the notion that the material form of the Qur'an possesses a miraculous capacity to withstand fire. Though al-Murtaḍā's support for *ṣarfa* gains a significant amount of support in Imāmī Shī'ī circles, eloquence (*faṣāḥa*) and stylistic arrangement (*naẓm*) are never entirely disregarded as probative causes of Qur'anic inimitability.⁸⁶ Furthermore, as within Sunnī traditions, there is a broad acceptance amongst the Shī'a of the miraculous power of the Qur'an as both a text and an object. The Akhbārī scholar al-Majlisī (d. 1110/1698), for example, in his monumental work the *Biḥār al-anwār*, outlines a range of charismatic powers accorded to the Qur'an, both as an oral revelation and as a physical form,⁸⁷ echoing a discourse already present in the *Kitāb al-kāfī* by the Shī'ī Ḥadīth scholar al-Kulaynī (d. 329/941).⁸⁸

Without an Intermediary?

In contrast to the Mu' tazilī, Ash'arī and Imāmī systems of thought, theologically the Ḥanābila are foremost in according to the Qur'an an eternal presence within the material world. Throughout the heresiographical literature, the followers of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal are infamously accused of believing in a kind of divine indwelling (*ḥulūl*), when they argue that there is no difference between the recitation of the Qur'an (*al-qirā'a*) and that which is recited (*al-maqrū'*). In many of the heresiographies, this notion is paralleled to the Christian doctrine of transubstantiation, positioning the sounds heard during recitation as themselves equal to divine speech, even though expressed through a human intermediary.⁸⁹

The Ash‘arī assertion that the material Qur’an, in its temporal form as text and sound, is an expression (*‘ibāra*) of the undifferentiated, eternal speech of God, is directed as much to the Mu‘tazilī argument for the created Qur’an as to an unrestricted Ḥanbalī belief that the eternal word of God manifests directly in the temporal plane of human existence. This theory of mimetic mediation is echoed in Māturīdī *kalām*, similar in many points to Ash‘arī thought. Thus, on the relationship between eternal divine speech and the temporal letters and sounds of the Arabic Qur’an, the Māturīdī theologian Abū‘l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1115), following in large part the Ash‘arī position, states that the Māturīdī imāms of Samarqand strongly disagree with the Ḥanbalīs, who, he argues, believe that that which is written in the codices and is recited from the Qur’an is the same as the eternal word of God.

According to Abū‘l-Mu‘īn, the Ḥanbalī belief suggests a divine indwelling in a temporal vehicle – a position that evokes a Christian-sounding notion of transubstantiation.⁹⁰ In contrast, Abū‘l-Mu‘īn advances the Māturīdī view that writing the Qur’an in codices, reciting it on the tongue, and preserving it in the heart all point (*dālla*) to divine speech as a mimetic reproduction (*ḥikāya*) and expression (*‘ibāra*), but that none of these activities truly make the essence of God’s eternal speech reside in temporal vehicles. He stresses that ‘the word “God”, mentioning God, worshipping God, and writing expressions which point to God, are not the same as God’s very essence’.⁹¹ To demonstrate this, Abū‘l-Mu‘īn draws on the analogy of translation to describe how it is that the speech of God, which is an eternal and indivisible divine attribute, can be expressed in the Arabic Qur’an. He argues that this reflects the same process as when ‘a translator (*tarjumān*) expresses (*yu‘abbiru*) through an expression (*‘ibāra*) which is not the same as the original expression and through a language which is not same as the original language’.⁹²

In contrast to this portrayal, which fails to perceive a heterogeneity amongst the Ḥanbalīs on this issue, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), the famed Ḥanbalī reformer, argues that while human recitation (*tilāwa*) replicates the uncreated speech of God, the temporal vessel through which it is articulated is created. Thus, the human voice and the ink in codices, which render the speech of God through the form of the Qur’an, are both created. Divine speech, he argues, is itself nonetheless uncreated.⁹³

Ibn Taymiyya records a debate between al-Qāḍī Ya‘qūb (d. 486/1093) and Ibn ‘Aqīl (d. 513/1119),⁹⁴ which is itself indicative of a movement amongst many Ḥanbalīs to distance themselves from the claim that the uncreated, eternal speech of God is manifested in temporal vessels such as the human voice and the written word.⁹⁵ Ibn Taymiyya, however, develops this argument further by explicitly reformulating the meaning of eternity as a description of God’s speech. Thus, he sets out to examine the equation of an uncreated Qur’an with an eternal Qur’an. In doing so Ibn Taymiyya does not wish to theologially strip the Qur’an, as the speech of God, of

its eternality; rather, he seeks to qualify the concept of what eternal, divine speech means.

To this end, the situation is slightly more complicated than Wilferd Madelung suggests when he argues that Ibn Taymiyya disavowed 'the Ḥanbalite school doctrine of the eternity of the Qur'an'.⁹⁶ To be sure, Ibn Taymiyya on various occasions argues that the pious forefathers (*salaf*) never explicitly stated that the speech of God was eternal (*qadīm*); rather, according to him, they only claimed that it was uncreated (*ghayr makhlūq*).⁹⁷ Yet, in the course of several legal opinions (*fatāwā*) where these ideas are formulated, Ibn Taymiyya recognises that the uncreatedness of divine speech is itself an indication of its eternality. To this end, he upholds, albeit in a qualified sense, that the speech of God is eternal and that the Qur'an is itself this divine speech.

As Ibn Taymiyya outlines several times, the pious forefathers believed that God continues to speak as He wishes ('*lam yazal Allāh mutakalliman idhā shā'a*'), and it is in this sense that he argues that divine speech is eternal.⁹⁸ In support of this claim, Ibn Taymiyya affirms that 'the words (*kalimāt*) of God have no end (*lā nihāya lahā*)'.⁹⁹ He makes this move in order to re-examine the meaning of *qadīm* as a qualifier of God's speech, arguing for the radical alterity of divine, uncreated *kalām*,¹⁰⁰ which begins in and returns to God.¹⁰¹ This is done in direct opposition to the Ash'arī and Māturidī theologians who characterise God's eternal speech as undifferentiated meaning (*ma'nā wāḥid*), a position which, as we have seen, ultimately suggests that the revelation to Muḥammad is a translation into Arabic made by Gabriel, insofar as the Arabic Qur'an is a temporal expression of the eternal, indivisible speech of God. Ibn Taymiyya repeatedly balks at such an idea as abhorrent.¹⁰² Furthermore, his qualification on the eternality of divine speech is also directed to those who, within the framework of Ḥanbalī theology, equate the ink of the codices and the sounds of the human recitation as being the very same as the eternal speech of God. This is also a notion which Ibn Taymiyya fervently rejects.¹⁰³

It is of note that, despite these vocal objections, the structural outline of Ibn Taymiyya's theology of divine speech strongly echoes Ash'arī and Māturidī frameworks, particularly regarding the notion of intermediation between divine, uncreated eternal speech and the material realm of temporal existence. As Ibn Taymiyya argues, the Qur'an is the speech of God, which is established in the codices (*huwa muthbat fī'l-maṣāḥif*). This divine speech disseminates from Him (*muballaghan 'anhu*); nonetheless it is heard from reciters (*qurrā'*), and not heard directly from God. To clarify this, Ibn Taymiyya draws the analogy of how humans can see heavenly bodies, such as the sun or moon, either directly (*bi-ṭarīq al-mubāshara*), or through an intermediary (*bi'l-wāsiṭa*), such as a reflection in water or a mirror. Likewise, he argues, humans hear uncreated, divine speech through an intermediary; however, just as the vision of the sun or moon in water is a reflection of

these heavenly bodies, so too is the speech of God through the intermediary of the physical codex and the human voice also a reflection of this divine, uncreated speech.¹⁰⁴

For Ibn Taymiyya this ‘reflection’ does not in any way distort the formal quality of the revelation; it is not translated from undifferentiated speech into Arabic, and in this regard his conception of mediation is distinct from the Ash‘arī and Māturīdī doctrinal position on this issue. As Ibn Taymiyya argues, the nature of the Qur’an, as unmediated divine speech, in its very essence is an Arabic articulation.¹⁰⁵ Such a delineation suggests a more immediate presence of the uncreated, eternal speech of God as it refracts through the material realm, written and intoned.

In a similar vein, the famous Ḥanbalī mystic ‘Uthmān ibn Marzūq (d. 564/1169) is recorded as having formulated a parallel distinction: ‘faith is uncreated in its words as well as in its works; the movements of man are certainly created, but the eternal looms (*yazhar*) in them, just as the speech [of God] looms in the utterances of man [when reciting the Qur’an]’.¹⁰⁶ It is thus not surprising to hear how Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal himself interpreted the *ḥadīth* that fire would not burn the Qur’an to mean that the person whose heart has memorised the sacred scripture would escape the fire of damnation,¹⁰⁷ suggesting that by internalising the Qur’an the body becomes a vessel protected by divine speech. As Ibn Taymiyya argues in his reformulation of the significance of the uncreated Qur’an, the speech of God is intoned in the body of the believer through acts of memorisation and recitation; to this end he cites, on several occasions, the Prophetic *ḥadīth* ‘a belly without a bit of the Qur’an in it is like a broken-down house’,¹⁰⁸ suggesting a full internalisation of divine speech within the temporal vessel of the human body.¹⁰⁹

While we can readily survey a broad theological spectrum concerning the status of revelation as manifested in a physical form, in terms of praxis the Qur’an in the daily lives of Muslims, both as text and object, often takes on an other-worldly power. Such sentiments concerning the unique role of the revelation, as expressed in the Qur’an, the Prophetic Ḥadīth, and the sayings of the Companions, not only point to the power of the words, but also to the special nature of the material form of the Qur’an itself.¹¹⁰ Given its unique importance, it is not surprising to see, from an early period, the physical Qur’an used in a wide array of practices, such as the making of amulets and talismans and the tradition of bibliomancy, not to mention the ingestion of specific *ayas* for medicinal and divinatory purposes.¹¹¹ Although such practices of veneration toward the Qur’an as a material object have a very early history, many already present in a nascent form by the second/eighth century, with the rise of Mu‘tazilī rationalism the power of the physical Qur’an emerges as a theological point of continued debate. It is thus inside the framework of what evolve into pre-existing categories that theologians came to question how it was that fire could not harm the Qur’an.

NOTES

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1 For a classification of this genre according to medieval authorities, see Ibn al-Nadīm (d. ca 388/998), *al-Fihrist*, ed. Yūsuf 'Alī Ṭawīl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1996), pp. 57–8, who ascribes the earliest work on the subject to the Companion Ubayy ibn Kaʿb (d. ca 35/656); while this attribution is certainly spurious, a collection of Prophetic sayings on the topic circulates, which was allegedly redacted by Ubayy, see al-Mustaghfirī (d. 432/1041), *Faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān*, ed. Aḥmad ibn Fāris al-Sallūm (2 vols. Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2006), vol. 2, pp. 775–93, cf. vol. 1, pp. 50–9. For further references to the genre, see al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), *al-Itqān fī ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (4 vols. Cairo: Maktabat al-Mashad al-Ḥusaynī, 1967), vol. 4, p. 102; Ḥājjī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-ẓunūn*, ed. Muḥammad Sharaf al-Dīn Yāltaqāyā and Rifʿat Bīlka al-Kilīsī (2 vols. Iṣtānbūl: Wikālat al-Maʿārif, 1941), vol. 2, p. 1277.

2 On the question of the historicity of the *muṣannaf* collection of ʿAbd al-Razzāq, see Harald Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence: Meccan Fiqh before the Classical Schools*, tr. Marion Katz, Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

3 See Asma Afsaruddin, 'The Excellences of the Qurʾān: Textual Sacrality and the Organization of Early Islamic Society', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122:1 (2002), pp. 1–24.

4 William Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Daniel Madigan, *The Qurʾān's Self-Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

5 Q. 34:43; Q. 37:15; Q. 43:30; Q. 46:7; Q. 74:24–5; c.f. Q. 5:110; Q. 6:7; Q. 10:76; Q. 27:13; Q. 61:6.

6 Q. 72:1.

7 Q. 2:23; Q. 10:38; Q. 11:13; Q. 17:88; Q. 52:34.

8 See Harald Motzki, 'The Collection of the Qurʾān: A Reconsideration of the Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments', *Der Islam* 78 (2001), pp. 1–34; Hossein Modarressi, 'Early Debates on the Integrity of the Qurʾān', *Studia Islamica* 77 (1993), pp. 5–39; John Burton, *The Collection of the Qurʾān* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), particularly, pp. 117ff.

9 See Yasin Dutton, 'Red Dots, Green Dots, Yellow Dots and Blue: Some Reflections on the Vocalisation of Early Qurʾanic Manuscripts Part 1', *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 1:1 (1999), pp. 115–40; Yasin Dutton, 'Red Dots, Green Dots, Yellow Dots and Blue: Some Reflections on the Vocalisation of Early Qurʾanic Manuscripts Part 2', *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 2:1 (2000), pp. 1–24.

10 On the significance of the various names of the Qurʾān, see al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392), *al-Burhān fī ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (4 vols. Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣrīyya, 2006), vol. 1, pp. 193–7; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, vol. 1, pp. 143–8; for the larger cosmographical significance of the divine tablet in the projection of salvation history, see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa'l-nihāya*, ed. Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Futayḥ (15 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1992), vol. 1, pp. 13–14.

11 See Arthur Jeffery, *The Qurʾān as Scripture* (New York: R.F. Moore Co., 1952), pp. 14–7; Francis Peters, *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: The Classical Texts and their Interpretation* (3 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), vol. 2, pp. 72–80;

Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft* (6 vols. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991–7), vol. 4, p. 626.

12 Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*, pp. 50–1.

13 al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, §5070 (vol. 3, p. 1054) in *Mawsū‘at al-ḥadīth al-sharīf* (10 works in 19 vols. Vaduz: Jam‘iyyat al-Maknaz al-Islāmī, 2000–1); Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-bārī* (17 vols. Cairo: Maktabat wa-Maṭba‘at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1959), vol. 10, pp. 439–40; Muslim (d. 261/875), *Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb ṣalāt al-musāfirīn*, §1892–3 (vol. 1, p. 314) in *Mawsū‘at al-ḥadīth al-sharīf* (10 works in 19 vols. Vaduz: Jam‘iyyat al-Maknaz al-Islāmī, 2000); al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan, Kitāb faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, §3126 (vol. 2, p. 727) in *Mawsū‘at al-ḥadīth al-sharīf* (10 works in 19 vols. Vaduz: Jam‘iyyat al-Maknaz al-Islāmī, 2000); Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, ed. Shu‘ayb al-Arna‘ūṭ, 2nd edn (52 vols. Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risāla, 2008), vol. 30, p. 424, p. 468, p. 553, p. 595, §18474, §18509, §18591, §18637. See Reuven Firestone, art. ‘Shekhinah’ in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*.

14 See for instance, *bushrā*, Q. 2:97; Q. 27:2; *hudā*, Q. 2:2; cf. Q. 5:44–5, Q. 17:2; and *rahma*, Q. 7:52; Q. 31:3.

15 Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, ed. Sa‘īd Laḥḥām (9 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1989), vol. 7, *Kitāb faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, p. 171; Abū ‘Ubayd, *Faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, pp. 35–6; al-Dārimī, *Sunan*, ed. Sayyid Ibrāhīm (2 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2000), vol. 2, *Kitāb faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, p. 303, §3311; Ibn Durays (d. 294/906), *Faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, ed. Ghazwa Budayr (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1987), p. 61; this *ḥadīth* is also ascribed directly to the Prophet, see al-Quḍā‘ī (d. 454/1062), *Musnad al-Shihāb*, ed. Ḥamdī ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Salafī (2 vols. Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risāla, 1985), vol. 2, p. 257, §816; al-Bāqillānī, *al-Inṣāf fī mā yujab i’tiqāduhu wa-lā yajūz al-jahl bihi* (Cairo: Mu‘assasat al-Khānjī, 1963), p. 139.

16 Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 36, p. 362, p. 531, p. 546, §22146, §22193, §22213; ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Ayman Naṣr al-Dīn al-Azharī (12 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2000) vol. 3, *Kitāb faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, p. 223; Ibn Ḍurays, *Faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, p. 59; al-Mustaghfirī, *Faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, vol. 1, p. 497; the interceding power of scripture is expressed in the Qur’an itself, see for instance, Q. 17:82, *wa-nunazzilu mina’l-Qur’āni mā huwa shifā’un wa-rahmatun li’l-mu’minīn*.

17 See for instance, al-Dārimī, *Sunan, Kitāb faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, §§3311–3 (vol. 2, pp. 303–4); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb ṣalāt al-musāfirīn*, §1910 (vol. 1, p. 317).

18 ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 3, *Kitāb faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, p. 230; al-Dārimī, *Sunan*, vol. 2, *Kitāb faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, p. 305, §3315.

19 See Abū ‘Ubayd, *Faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, ed. Wabbī Sulaymān Ghāwījī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1991), p. 21; Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 7, *Kitāb faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, p. 165, cf. p. 164; vol. 8, *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, p. 144; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan, Kitāb faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, §3153 (vol. 2, p. 732); also see al-Qurtubī quoting the no longer extant *al-Radd ‘alā man khālaf muṣṣaf ‘Uthmān* of Ibn al-Anbārī in his *Jāmi‘ li-aḥkām al-Qur’ān* (20 vols. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1985), vol. 1, p. 5.

20 See Wilfred Madelung, ‘The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran’ in J.M. Barral (ed.), *Orientalia Hispanica: sive studia F. M. Pareja octogenario dicata* (2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1974), vol. 1, pp. 504–25.

21 Ibn Qutayba, *Ta’wīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyi’l-Dīn al-Aṣḥar (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1999), pp. 291–2.

22 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghādī, *Ta’rikh madīnat al-salām*, ed. Bashshār ‘Awwād Ma‘rūf (17 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2001), vol. 9, p. 348; cf. al-Namarī, *al-Istidhkār*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Alī et al. (9 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2000), vol. 2, p. 483.

23 For an overview of the early juridical opinions concerning touching the Qur'an in a state of impurity, see my article, 'Touching and Ingesting: Early Debates over the Material Qur'an' (forthcoming in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*); also see M.J. Kister, 'Lā yamassuhu illā 'l-muṭaḥharūn... Notes on the Interpretations of a Qur'anic Phrase', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 34 (2008), pp. 309–34. I would like to thank Yohanan Friedmann for sharing with me a copy of this article prior to its publication.

24 See Ibn Rushd, *Bidāyat al-mujtahid*, ed. °Abd al-°Alī al-Sayyid Muḥammad (2 vols. Qumm: Mu°assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1999), vol. 1, p. 126.

25 Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Muḥallā*, ed. °Abd al-°Ghaffār Sulaymān al-Bindārī (12 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-°Ilmiyya, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 94–9, §116.

26 See for instance, Q. 4:153 and Q. 6:7. Daniel Madigan argues that the Qur'an depicts itself fundamentally as an oral articulation, and that the repeated recourse to such figures as *kitāb*, *ṣuḥuf* and *zabūr* fits into a broader semantic pattern of metaphors focusing on the central importance of orality. Thus, he concludes that the divine address 'bears the name *kitāb* not because of its form (which remains oral, fluid, and responsive) but because of its origin and its nature as a communication of God's knowledge' (Madigan, *The Qur'an's Self-Image*, p. 164).

27 On the early juridical resistance to reciting the Qur'an by reading from a *muṣḥaf* for the performance of ritual prayer or for leading a congregation in prayer, see °Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, vol. 2, *Kitāb al-°ṣalāt*, p. 278; Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, vol. 2, *Kitāb al-°ṣalāt*, p. 125; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn °Abd al-Sabḥān Wā'iz (2 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyya, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 652ff; this debate is recorded as archaic in al-Sarakhsī (d. ca 490/1096), *al-Mabsūt*, ed. Abū °Abd Allāh al-Shāfi°i (30 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-°Ilmiyya, 2001), vol. 1, pp. 360–1. For an overview of the practices and controversies surrounding the transmission of learning in the early stages of Islamic intellectual history, see Gregor Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, tr. Uwe Vagelpohl (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 62–86, pp. 111–41; Gregor Schoeler, *Écrire et transmettre dans les débuts de l'islam* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2002), pp. 31–41.

28 Abū °Ubayd, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, pp. 125–6; Ibn Abī Shayba collects a variety of sayings both from the Prophet and the Companions to the same effect, see *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 7, *Kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, pp. 164–5; see also °Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 3, *Kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, p. 223; Ibn Wahb (d. 197/812–3), *al-Jāmi°*, ed. Miklos Muranyi (3 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2003), vol. 3, p. 37; °Abd al-Rahmān ibn Aḥmad al-Rāzi (d. 454/1062), *Kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān wa-tilāwātihi*, ed. °Amr Ḥasan Ṣabri (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyya, 1994), pp. 152ff.; similar ideas are expressed in the Qur'an itself (eg. Q. 17:82).

29 See for example, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), *al-Ṭibb al-nabawī*, ed. °Ādil Azharī et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Fath, 1957), pp. 136–47, pp. 277–8; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, vol. 4, pp. 137–44; Toufic Fahd, *La divination arabe* (Paris: Sindbad, 1987), pp. 180ff.; Kathleen Malone O'Connor, art. 'Amulets' in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*; Astrid Meier, art. 'Waḳf' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn.

30 See for example, al-Būnī (d. 622/1225), *Shams al-ma°arif al-kubrā* (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-Thaqāfiyya, n.d.); °Abd Allāh ibn As°ad al-Yāfi°i (d. 768/1367), *al-Durr al-naẓīm fi khawāṣṣ al-Qur'ān al-°aẓīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Maḥajja al-Bayḍā°, 1999).

31 See Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 5, *Kitāb al-ṭibb*, p. 39; Abū °Ubayd, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, p. 231; al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, vol. 1, pp. 322–3; al-Qurṭubī, *Jāmi° li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 1, p. 31.

32 Abū °Ubayd, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, p. 23; cf. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 28, p. 595, p. 627, pp. 631–2, §17365, §17409, §17420 (with variants) and the editorial notes (vol. 28, pp. 595–6, pp. 627–8) for further references; al-Dārimī, *Sunan*, vol. 1, *Kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, p. 303, §3310; Ibn °Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 257/871), *Futūḥ al-Miṣr*, ed. Charles Torrey

(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922), p. 288; see al-Suyūṭī for a list of variants, *al-Itqān*, vol. 5, p. 103–5.

33 Abū ‘Ubayd, *Faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, p. 23.

34 Ibn Qutayba, *Ta’wīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, p. 47.

35 Ibn Qutayba, *Ta’wīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, pp. 47–142.

36 Ibn Qutayba, *Ta’wīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, p. 290.

37 Ibn Qutayba, *Ta’wīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, pp. 290–1; cf. al-Rāzī, *Kitāb faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, pp. 154–6; al-Sakhāwī (d. 643/1245), *Jamāl al-qurrā’ wa-kamāl al-iqrā’*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyya, 1999), pp. 388–90.

38 A similar notion is expressed in a *ḥadīth qudsī*, which states that God has revealed a scripture to Muḥammad, which water cannot wash away (‘anzaltu ‘alayka kitāban lā yaghsiluhu al-mā’); see ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, vol. 10, *Bāb al-qadr*, pp. 151–2; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīh*, *Kitāb al-jinna*, §7386 (vol. 3, pp. 1205–6); al-Nasā’ī, *Faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, p. 123; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 29, pp. 32–4, §17484; Ibn Fūrak, *Kitāb mushkil al-ḥadīth aw ta’wīl al-akhbār al-mutashābiha*, ed. Daniel Gimaret (Damascus: Institut français d’études arabes de Damas, 2003), pp. 152–3.

39 Ibn Qutayba, *Ta’wīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, pp. 291–2; cf. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, ed. Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā, 2nd edn (37 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2005), vol. 12, p. 172.

40 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā discusses Ibn al-Anbārī’s (d. 328/940) interpretation of Ibn Qutayba on this matter, *Amālī al-Murtaḍā: ghurar al-fawā’id wa-durar al-qalā’id*, ed. Muḥammad Abū’l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (2 vols. Beirut: al-Maktaba al-‘Aṣariyya, 2004), vol. 1, pp. 406–10, particularly the conclusion drawn by Ibn al-Anbārī that Ibn Qutayba’s argument necessitates the Qur’an is something other than what it is written (‘wa-hādihā yūjibu anna’l-Qur’ān ghayr al-maktūb’); al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, in contrast, believes that Ibn Qutayba’s interpretation signifies the exact opposite, namely that which is written is the very Qur’an itself (‘anna’l-maktūba huwa al-Qur’ān’) (*Amālī*, vol. 1, p. 409).

41 See G. Lecomte, art. ‘Ibn Qutayba’ in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn.

42 Ibn Qutayba explicitly seeks to separate Ibn Ḥanbal’s name from the claim that the recitation of the Qur’an was the very same as the uncreated, eternal speech of God; see *al-Ikhtilāf fi’l-laḥẓ*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid ibn al-Ḥasan Kawtharī (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li’l-Turāth, 2001), pp. 38–40; cf. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, vol. 12, p. 248; Josef van Ess, ‘Verbal Inspiration? Language and Revelation in Classical Islamic Theology’ in Stefan Wild (ed.), *The Qur’ān as Text* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 177–94, p. 185; and more broadly, van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 4, pp. 214–8.

43 al-Taḥāwī, *Sharḥ mushkil al-āthār*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Salām Shāhīn (4 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1995), vol. 1, p. 267.

44 In his introduction, Ibn Fūrak references the work of Ibn Mahdī (*Kitāb mushkil al-ḥadīth*, p. 7). Daniel Gimaret, in his edition, highlights the strong influence of Ibn Mahdī’s *Ta’wīl* on Ibn Fūrak; this work exists as a manuscript preserved in the Dār al-Kutub, Cairo (491 *majāmi‘*); see Ibn Fūrak, *Kitāb mushkil*, ‘Muqaddima’, pp. 23ff.

45 Ibn Fūrak, *Kitāb mushkil*, pp. 151–4.

46 This saying also appears in the *gharīb al-ḥadīth* genre, as with al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), who argues that this *ḥadīth* functions merely as metaphor (*tamthīl*) for how by memorising the Qur’an one internalises it and is thus protected from hellfire (al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Fā’iq fi’l-gharīb al-ḥadīth* (4 vols. Cairo: ‘Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1969), vol. 1, p. 67). Ibn al-Athīr (d. 606/1210), in contrast, views the saying as a reference to a miracle which occurred during the time of the Prophet as proof of the divine power of the Qur’an (Ibn al-Athīr,

- al-Nihāya fī gharīb al-ḥadīth, 2nd edn (2 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 2006), vol. 1, p. 90); as a miraculous proof of Muḥammad's message which occurred only during his life see al-Harawī (d. 401/1011), *Kitāb al-gharībayn fī'l-Qur'ān wa'l-ḥadīth*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazīdī (6 vols. Beirut: Dār al-ʿAṣariyya, 1999), vol. 1, p. 118; see also al-Baghawī (d. ca 516/1122), *Sharḥ al-sunna*, ed. Shu'ayb al-ʿArna'ūṭī (16 vols. Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1971), vol. 4, p. 437.
- 47 al-Taḥāwī, *Sharḥ mushkil al-āthār*, vol. 1, p. 267.
- 48 Gimaret comments how a large portion of Ibn Fūrak's interpretation of this ḥadīth is taken from Ibn Mahdī, who is quoted in the footnotes (Ibn Fūrak, *Kitāb mushkil*, pp. 152–4).
- 49 For an overview of the theological issue of mediating divine speech and the rise of the Ash'arī notion of mimetic representation, see van Ess, 'Verbal Inspiration?', pp. 177–94; van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 4, pp. 612–25.
- 50 al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), *Nihāyat al-iqdām fī 'ilm al-kalām*, ed. and tr. Alfred Guillaume (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp. 320–1; cf. p. 273, p. 325. On the notion of inner speech in linguistic discourse, see al-Suyūṭī, *al-Muzhir*, ed. Muḥammad Jād al-Mawlā et al. (2 vols. Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1971), vol. 1, p. 39.
- 51 al-Bāqillānī, *al-Insāf*, p. 100; cf. pp. 138–9.
- 52 Though al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā does not mention which of Ibn al-Anbārī's works is his source, according to the list of titles attributed to Ibn al-Anbārī in the *ṭabaqāt* literature there are several obvious candidates, chief among them are the *Gharīb al-ḥadīth*, his treatise *al-Radd ʿalā man khālaf muṣṣaf ʿUthmān* and the *Risalat al-mushkil*, said to refute both Ibn Qutayba and Ibn Abī Hātim, none of which appear to be extant; see Fuad Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (9 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1967–84), vol. 8, pp. 151–4.
- 53 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Amālī*, vol. 1, pp. 426–31; al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868–9) outlines a similar position in terms of the temporal nature of the physical Qur'an in *Rasā'il al-Jāḥiẓ*, ed. Muḥammad Bāsil ʿUyūn al-Sūd (4 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2000), vol. 3, *Risāla fī khalq al-Qur'ān*, pp. 220–1.
- 54 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Amālī*, vol. 1, p. 408, cf. p. 410.
- 55 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Amālī*, vol. 1, pp. 409–10.
- 56 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Amālī*, vol. 1, p. 409.
- 57 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Amālī*, vol. 1, p. 410.
- 58 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Amālī*, vol. 1, p. 410.
- 59 As for al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā's treatment of Abū'l-Qāsim al-Balkhī, see his *al-Mūḍiḥ ʿan jihat i'jāz al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad Riḍā al-Anṣārī al-Qummī (Mashhad: Majma' al-Buḥūth al-Islāmiyya, 1424/2003–4), p. 107; and his *al-Dhakīra fī 'ilm al-kalām*, ed. Sayyid Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī (Qumm: Mu'assasat al-Nāshir al-Islāmī, 1411/1990–1), p. 389. On ʿAbd al-Jabbār, see below.
- 60 While al-Shaykh al-Mufīd recognises that a large number of Imāmī theologians and jurists hold that the Qur'an is not complete, he maintains its integrity (al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *Kitāb awā'il al-maqālāt*, ed. Mahdī Muḥaqqiq (Tehran: Mu'assasa-i Muṭāla'āt-i Islāmī, 1993), pp. 30–1).
- 61 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Dhakīra*, pp. 361–4.
- 62 Ibn Bābawayh (d. ca 391/1001), for instance, famously stated that whoever claims that the Shī'a believe there to be something missing from the collected Qur'an is a liar (*kādhīb*) (Ibn Bābawayh, *Muṣannaḥāt al-Shaykh al-Mufīd* (14 vols. Qumm: al-Mu'tamar al-ʿAlamī li-ʿAlfiyyat al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, 1413/1992–3), vol. 5, *Risālat al-i'tiqādāt*, pp. 84–6). Ibn Bābawayh does, however, wrestle with the Shī'ī ḥadīth reports which affirm that a much larger version of the Qur'an had originally been revealed, stating that there are many revelations, not

all of which are the Qur’an (pp. 84–5). The result opens up a space for extra-Qur’anic revelation, effectively legitimising the traditions, for example, which affirm the rightful claims of ‘Alī as valid, though not themselves as part of the Qur’an which we now possess; presumably this was the fate of ‘Alī’s *muḥṣaf*, which Ibn Bābawayh asserts as the authentic copy of revelation, but which the early community ignored (p. 86). Cf. al-Ṭūsī, *Tibyān fī tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, ed. Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭīhrānī (10 vols. al-Najaf: al-Maṭba‘a al-‘Ilmiyya, 1957–63), vol. 1, p. 3; al-Ṭabrisī, *Majma‘ al-bayān li-‘ulūm al-Qur’ān* (10 vols. Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-‘Alamī li’l-Maṭbū‘āt, 1995), vol. 1, p. 43; see also Etan Kohlberg, ‘Some Notes on the Imāmite Attitude to the Qur’an’ in S.M. Stern, A. Hourani and V. Brown, *Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition: Essays Presented to Richard Walzer* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1972), pp. 209–24. On how modern Twelver Shī‘ī scholars have approached the issue concerning the integrity of the transmission of the Qur’an, see Abū’l-Qāsim al-Kū‘ī, *The Prolegomena to the Qur’ān*, tr. Abdulaziz A. Sachedina (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 135–62.

63 Many Imāmi Shī‘a held that the Qur’an was produced in time (*muḥdath*), but would not go so far to say it was created (*makhlūq*). For an overview of opinions on this subject, see al-Majlisī (d. 1110/1698), *Bihār al-anwār* (110 vols. Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1376/1957), vol. 92, pp. 118–21; cf. Martin McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufīd* (Beirut: Librairie orientale, 1978), pp. 90–1, pp. 353–5.

64 al-Ash‘arī relates that al-Nazzām argued, ‘the sign and wondrous affair (*u‘jūba*) in the Qur’an is what it contains in regard to accounts of the unseen realm; as for its structure (*ta‘līf*) and composition (*naẓm*) humankind would be capable of this, were it not that God prevented them by incapacitating them from achieving both’ (al-Ash‘arī, *Kitāb maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* ed. Hellmut Ritter (2 vols. Istanbul: Maṭba‘at al-Dawla, 1929–30), vol. 1, p. 225; see also al-Khayyāt, *Kitāb al-intiṣār*, ed. H.S. Nyberg (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1925), p. 28; Ibn Ṭāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1038), *al-Farq bayn al-firaq*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥamid (Cairo: Maktabat Muḥammad ‘Alī Subayḥ, n.d.), p. 229).

65 al-Rummānī, *al-Nukat fī i‘jāz al-Qur’ān* in Muḥammad Khalaf Allāh and Muḥammad Zaghlūl Sallām (eds), *Thalāth rasā’il fī i‘jāz al-Qur’ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1956), p. 69, p. 101; cf. Daniel Gimaret, art. ‘Mu‘tazila’ in *Encyclopaedia Of Islam*.

66 ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Tathbūt dalāl il al-nubūwa*, ed. ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Uthmān (2 vols. Beirut: Dār al-‘Arabiyya, 1966), vol. 1, pp. 86–91; ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa’l-‘adl* (20 vols. Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa’l-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1950), vol. 16, pp. 197–9; cf. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Khaṭīb, *I‘jāz al-Qur’ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1964), pp. 199–216.

67 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Mūḍīh*, pp. 36–7.

68 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Mūḍīh*, pp. 116–24; al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Dhakhīra*, pp. 402–3.

69 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Mūḍīh*, pp. 124–7; al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Dhakhīra*, pp. 403–4.

70 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Mūḍīh*, pp. 129–35.

71 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Mūḍīh*, p. 129.

72 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Mūḍīh*, p. 107; al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Dhakhīra*, p. 379, p. 400; see al-Mas‘ūdī (d. 345/956), *Murāj al-dhahab*, ed. Charles Pellat (Beirut: al-Jāmi‘a al-Lubnāniyya, 1965–79), vol. 1, p. 87, §159; Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, p. 528; Bayard Dodge (tr.), *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm: A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 817. Dodge’s note (n. 445) should be corrected, as the person referred to here as al-Balkhī is not Abū Zayd Aḥmad ibn Sahl (d. 322/934), the polymath renowned for his *al-Masālik wa’l-mamālik* (for whom see D.M. Dunlop, art. ‘al-Balkhī, Abū Zayd’ in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn). Rather this is the famous Mu‘tazilī theologian (see Albert N. Nader, art. ‘al-Balkhī, Abū’l-Ḳāsim’ in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn).

- 73 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Mūḍih*, p. 109; al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Dhakhīra*, p. 401.
- 74 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Mūḍih*, p. 42.
- 75 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Mūḍih*, pp. 42–3; al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Dhakhīra*, pp. 381–2; cf. °Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, vol. 16, pp. 197–9.
- 76 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Mūḍih*, pp. 36–7.
- 77 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Dhakhīra*, p. 385.
- 78 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Mūḍih*, pp. 248–55; cf. °Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, vol. 16, p. 218.
- 79 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Dhakhīra*, p. 385.
- 80 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Mūḍih*, p. 250; cf. p. 253.
- 81 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Mūḍih*, pp. 137–96.
- 82 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Mūḍih*, p. 137; al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Dhakhīra*, p. 386; such speculation forms a core focus of attention for the theologians of the period in regard to demonstrating the truthfulness of the revelation. See for instance al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-bayān °an al-farq bayn al-mu°jizāt wa°l-karāmāt wa°l-ḥiyāl wa°l-kahāna wa°l-sihr wa°l-nāranjāt*, ed. Richard McCarthy (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya, 1958), *passim*.
- 83 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Mūḍih*, p. 139.
- 84 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Mūḍih*, pp. 141–2.
- 85 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Mūḍih*, pp. 195–6.
- 86 Cf. al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān*, vol. 1, p. 3; al-Tabrisī, *Majma° al-bayān*, vol. 1, p. 42; Sa°id ibn Hibat Allāh al-Rāwandī (d. 573/1177–8), *al-Kharā°ij wa°l-jarā°ih* (3 vols. Qumm: Mu°assasat al-Imām al-Mahdī, 1409/1988–9), vol. 3, pp. 981ff., quoted in al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. 92, pp. 127ff.
- 87 al-Majlisī, *al-Bihār al-anwār*, vol. 92, pp. 179–84.
- 88 al-Kulaynī (d. 329/941), *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfi*, ed. °Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī (8 vols. Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1377/1957–1381/1961), vol. 2, *Kitāb faḍl al-Qur°ān*, pp. 596–635. Ibn al-Nadīm includes Shī°i authors, such as al-°Ayyāshī (d. ca 310/922), in his list of works on the *faḍā°il al-Qur°ān* (Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, pp. 57–8). As for an example of such Shī°i traditions, we have the portentous power of the codex related by al-Kulaynī with the account of how the *muṣḥaf* of the sixth Imām, Ja°far al-°Šādiq (d. 148/765), fell into the ocean, and when he retrieved it only Q. 42:53, *all matters end in God (ilā°llāhi taṣīru°l-umūr)*, remained (al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl min al-kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 632, quoted in al-Majlisī, *al-Bihār*, vol. 92, p. 35).
- 89 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (32 vols. Cairo: al-Maṭba°a al-Bahiyya al-Miṣriyya, 1934–62), vol. 2, p. 31; cf. al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-mīlal wa°l-nihāl*, ed. Ṣidqī Jamīl al-°Aṭṭār, 2nd edn (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2002), pp. 85–6.
- 90 Abū°l-Mu°in, *Tabṣira*, vol. 1, p. 299.
- 91 Abū°l-Mu°in, *Tabṣira*, vol. 1, pp. 284–5.
- 92 Abū°l-Mu°in, *Tabṣira*, vol. 1, p. 301. Compare this with Abū°l-Qāsim al-Samarqandī°s (d. 342/953) Ḥanafī creed, translated into Persian under the Sāmānid ruler Nūḥ ibn Maṣṣūr (*reg.* 366/976–387/997), which folds this question of mediation back onto the issue of whether or not the Qur°an can be destroyed when thrown into fire (Abū°l-Qāsim al-Samarqandī *Tarjuma-i al-Sawād al-a°zam*, ed. °Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī (Tehran: Bunyād-i Farhang-i Irān, 1969), pp. 116–7).
- 93 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū° al-fatāwā*, vol. 12, pp. 248–50; Ibn Taymiyya distinguishes that while the human recitation of the Qur°an is created, that which is recited is not (p. 250).

94 On al-Qādī Ya‘qūb and Ibn ‘Aqīl, see Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, ed. Abū Ḥāzīm Usāma ibn Ḥasan et al. (4 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1997), vol. 2, pp. 210–11, p. 222, respectively.

95 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, vol. 12, pp. 40–5; cf. Ibn Qutayba, *al-Ikhtilāf fī’l-lafẓ*, pp. 38–40.

96 Madelung, ‘The Origins’, p. 513. It is of note that Madelung only cites from a small selection of Ibn Taymiyya’s *fatāwā*, taken from Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā’s edition *Majmū‘at al-rasā’il wa’l-masā’il* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Manār, 1926), which is explicitly an abridgement; these same legal opinions, along with a fuller display of Ibn Taymiyya’s ideas on this issue, can be found in his complete collection of *fatāwā*.

97 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, vol. 12, p. 107, p. 248.

98 ‘*fa-kalāmuhu qadīm bi-ma‘nan annahu lam yazal mutakalliman idhā shā’a*’ (Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, vol. 12, p. 19). As he later argues, ‘the *salaf* state that God continues to speak if he wishes, and if it were said that the speech of God is eternal (*kalām Allāh qadīm*), in the sense that He is not speaking after He stops to speak, and that His speech is not created and that [His speech] is not an eternal indivisible meaning (*ma‘nā wāḥid*) residing in His essence, but rather He continues speaking if He wishes, then this statement is correct (*ṣaḥīḥ*)’ (vol. 12, p. 248).

99 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, vol. 12, p. 19, p. 260.

100 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, vol. 12, p. 45; pp. 108–9.

101 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, vol. 12, p. 19, p. 245.

102 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, vol. 12, pp. 56–7, pp. 243–5.

103 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, vol. 12, pp. 247–8, p. 255.

104 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, vol. 12, p. 64; Ibn Taymiyya’s notion of *ishāra* as an example of a further continuation of intermediation is very much akin to the structure of the Ash‘arī and Māturīdī deployments of ‘*ibāra* and *ḥikāya*’ (*Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, vol. 12, p. 108). Compare this also with Ibn Taymiyya’s investigation into the question of mediation between humanity and the divine (‘*al-Wāṣiṭa bayn al-khalq wa’l-ḥaqq*’, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, vol. 1, pp. 125–37).

105 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, vol. 12, p. 64.

106 The passage leading up to this quotation, found, according to Ibn Rajab, in one of Ibn Marzūq’s writings on *uṣūl al-dīn*, details a debate as to whether or not Ibn Marzūq upheld the actions of humanity to be eternal (Ibn Rajab, *al-Dhayl ‘alā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, ed. Abū Ḥāzīm Usāma ibn Ḥasan et al. (4 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1997), vol. 1, pp. 259–60, quoted by Wolfart Heinrichs, art. ‘Uthmān b. Marzūq’ in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn); as a technical term, the concept of immanence or manifestation (*zuḥūr*) is developed to explicitly address the problem of divine indwelling (*ḥulūl*) (see Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, vol. 12, p. 82, p. 173).

107 Ibn Hānī³ al-Nisābūrī (d. 275/888–9), *Masā’il Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, ed. Zuhayr al-Shāwīsh (2 vols. Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1400/1979–80), vol. 2, p. 187, §2019; see also al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066), *al-Asmā’ wa’l-ṣifāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2001), p. 337; and al-Baghawī, *Sharḥ al-sunna*, vol. 4, pp. 436–7.

108 See al-Dārimī, *Sunan*, vol. 1, *Kitāb faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, p. 302, §3302; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, *Kitāb faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, §3161; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 3, p. 417, §1947; al-Baghawī, *Sharḥ al-sunna*, vol. 4, p. 443.

109 Ibn Taymiyya quotes this *ḥadīth* and other Qur’anic ayas to support his argument that the pious *salaf* believed that ‘the Qur’an which God had brought down to His servant and Prophet

is the speech (*kalām*) of God, is revealed and not created (*ghayr mukhlūq*); from Him it begins and to Him it returns; it is in the hearts (*ṣudūr*) of humanity' (Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' al-fatāwā*, vol. 12, pp. 104–5; cf. p. 129). He also cites this *ḥadīth* to argue against the notion of divine indwelling (*ḥulūl*): 'whoever says that the Qur'an is in the codices and in the hearts has spoken correctly (*qad ṣadaqa*) ... whoever says the Qur'an is written in the codices and memorised in the hearts, has spoken correctly; but whoever says that the ink, the paper, the attribute of the worshipper or his action, or his memorising or recitation is eternal or uncreated, this is a grave error' (vol. 12, p. 247; cf. p. 105, p. 173).

110 On the broad religious and political implications of the *muṣḥaf* as a charismatic trace of the divine, see my article, 'From Drops of Blood: Charisma and Political Legitimacy in the *translatio* of the °Uthmānic Codex of al-Andalus', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 39:3 (2008), pp. 321–46.

111 See Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 5, *Kitāb al-ṭibb*, pp. 433–4; cf. Abū °Ubayd, *Fadā'il al-Qur'ān*, p. 231. For later examples of ingesting the Qur'an, see Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *al-Ṭibb al-nabawī*, pp. 277–8; al-Nawawī, *al-Tibyān fī ādāb ḥamalāt al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-°Arabī, 2002), p. 103, p. 112; al-Nawawī, *al-Majmū' sharḥ al-Muḥadhdhab*, ed. Muḥammad Najīb al-Muṭī'ī (23 vols. Riyadh: Dār °Ālam, 2006), vol. 2, p. 60, p. 138; al-Būnī, *Shams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā*, p. 218 and *passim*; °Abd Allāh ibn As°ad al-Yāfi'ī, *al-Durr al-naẓīm*, p. 11.