

A Chapter in the Development of Māturīdite Theology: Abū l-Yusr al-Bazdawī (d. 493/1100) on the Divine Attributes

Sheridan Polinsky

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
Religions and Cultures

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Religions and Cultures) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

July 2020

© Sheridan Polinsky, 2020

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Sheridan Polinsky

Entitled: A Chapter in the Development of Māturīdite Theology:
Abū l-Yusr al-Bazdawī (d. 493/1100) on the Divine Attributes

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts – Religions and Cultures

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

_____ Examiner

Dr. Dr Ayman Shihadeh
School of History, Religions and Philosophies
SOAS University of London

_____ Examiner

_____ Thesis Supervisor(s)

Dr. Lynda Clarke

_____ Thesis Supervisor(s)

Approved by _____
Dr. Carly Daniel-Hughes, Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

Dean, Dr. Pascale Sicotte

Date _____

Abstract

Abū l-Yusr (d. 493/1100) on the Divine Attributes

Sheridan Polinsky

The problem of the divine attributes has been central to Islamic theology. In the Quran, God is ascribed various qualities and actions, but the nature of their relationship to Him is not elucidated. It has therefore been the task of theologians and other thinkers to clarify this matter in accordance with their conceptions of God's unity (*tawḥīd*) and transcendence (*tanzīh*). This thesis examines the discourse on the divine attributes of the early Māturīdite theologian Abū l-Yusr al-Bazdawī, whose aim is to uphold two key tenets concerning this problem: 1) the nature of all attributes of essence and act as eternal entities subsistent in God's essence, primarily against the Mu'tazilite rejection of this; and 2) God's incomparability and incorporeality, mainly against the Karrāmites' spatialization of Him. His reliance on both tradition and rational argumentation to support his views demonstrates his contribution to the emergence of Māturīdism and at times produces conflict in his thought as he tries to negotiate between these two sources of religious knowledge, resulting in nuanced and unique approaches to certain aspects of the topic.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest thanks to Dr. Lynda Clarke, whose extensive guidance and assistance enabled the completion of this project. Special thanks also to Dr. Abdul Muthalib of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta for his mentorship and enlightening discussions; all professors in the Department of Religions and Cultures who have contributed to my academic progress in the past two years, including Dr. Richard Foltz, Dr. Ira Robinson, Dr. Lorenzo DiTommaso, and Dr. Naftali Cohn; Tina Montandon for her aid with all administrative issues at the university; and the Power Corporation of Canada and Concordia University, whose graduate fellowship facilitated the execution of this research and my Master's studies overall. Lastly, I would like to thank my mother and father for their constant love and their support for this and all other projects.

Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	vii
List of Abbreviations	viii
A Note on Transliteration	ix
Chapter 1: Life and Theology of Abū l-Yusr al-Bazdawī.....	1
1.1 Life.....	1
1.1.1 <i>Education, Works, and Activity.....</i>	<i>1</i>
1.1.2 <i>Family and Students.....</i>	<i>5</i>
1.2 Theological Affiliation and Approach.....	8
1.2.1 <i>Ḥanafite Theology and Māturīdīsm</i>	<i>8</i>
1.2.2 <i>Abū l-Yusr as a Proponent of Sunnism</i>	<i>12</i>
1.3 Uṣūl al-dīn	18
1.3.1 <i>Authorship.....</i>	<i>18</i>
1.3.2 <i>Structure and Content</i>	<i>20</i>
1.4 Context and Method of This Thesis	22
Chapter 2: God’s Attributes	24
2.1 Introduction.....	24
2.2 Substantive Attributes ≠ Multiplicity.....	26
2.3 Quranic Proofs for God’s Substantive Attributes	27
2.4 Inferring the Unseen from the Seen	29
2.5 Refutation of Negative Theology	31
Chapter 3: Speech, Hearing, Vision, Will.....	34
3.1 Introduction.....	34
3.2 Definitions of Speech.....	35
3.2.1 <i>The Ḥanafite Definition</i>	<i>35</i>
3.2.2 <i>Refutation of the Mu‘tazilite Definition</i>	<i>36</i>
3.2.3 <i>Refutation of the Definition of Ibn al-Rāwandī and the Ash‘arites</i>	<i>38</i>
3.3 The Eternity of God’s Speech	39
3.4 The Manifestations of God’s Speech	40
3.4.1 <i>Refutation of the Karrāmite Doctrine</i>	<i>40</i>
3.4.2 <i>Scripture as a Manzūm</i>	<i>43</i>

3.4.3 <i>God’s Conversation with Moses</i>	50
3.5 Hearing and Vision	51
3.6 Will	54
3.6.1 <i>Introduction</i>	54
3.6.2 <i>The Intra-Ḥanafite Dispute over Mashī’a and Irāda</i>	55
3.6.3 <i>Refutations of Other Views</i>	56
Chapter 4: Attributes of Act	60
4.1 Introduction	60
4.2 Proofs for the Ḥanafite Position	62
4.3 The Problem of Eternity	64
4.4 Other Refutations	65
4.4.1 <i>A Negative Approach</i>	65
4.4.2 <i>Karrāmites</i>	66
4.4.3 <i>Mu‘ammar</i>	66
Chapter 5: Incomparability and Incorporeality	68
5.1 Introduction	68
5.2 Opponents	69
5.3 Proofs for God’s Incomparability and Incorporeality	71
5.4 Interpreting the Anthropomorphic Expressions	74
5.5 Refutation of the Later Karrāmite Doctrine	80
Conclusion	85
Bibliography	88
Primary Sources	88
Secondary Sources	91
Appendix	96

List of Tables

Table 1. Structure and Content of <i>Uṣūl al-dīn</i>	20-21
Table 2. Structure and Content of Chapters on the Divine Attributes.....	21-22

List of Abbreviations

Q = Quran

*EI*² = Brill's *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition

A Note on Transliteration

All Arabic names and terms have been transliterated according to the guidelines of the Third Edition of *Encyclopaedia of Islam (EI³)*. Only common terms found in an English-language dictionary have not been transliterated, such as Quran and hadith.

Chapter 1: Life and Theology of Abū l-Yusr al-Bazdawī

1.1 Life¹

1.1.1 Education, Works, and Activity

Abū l-Yusr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Mūsā b. Mujāhid al-Bazdawī (hereafter Abū l-Yusr) was born in 421/1030. His surname, “al-Bazdawī”, derives from a fortified area known as Bazda located roughly 35 km from Nasaf (modern-day Qarshi, Uzbekistan) on the road to Bukhara,² though it is not clear whether he originated from there or elsewhere. He appears to have first studied with his father, Abū l-Ḥasan, who he tells us had learned from his grandfather, ‘Abd al-Karīm (d. 390/999), a direct student of the great Transoxanian Ḥanafite of the previous century, Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944).³ Abū l-Yusr explains that ‘Abd al-Karīm retrieved from al-Māturīdī the doctrines (*ma‘ānī*) set forth in the books of the Transoxanian Ḥanafites (*aṣḥābinā*) as well as in al-Māturīdī’s key theological work, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, and his exegesis of the Quran, *Ta’wīlāt al-Qur’ān*.⁴ His father’s

¹ For medieval and pre-modern Arab biographical sources on Abū l-Yusr’s life, see Abū Sa’d ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad b. Manṣūr al-Tamīmī al-Sam‘ānī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 2 (Hyderabad: al-Fārūq al-Ḥadītha lil-Ṭabā‘a wa-l-Nashr, 1397/1977), 201-2; Shams al-Dīn Abī ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Uthmān al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa-l-a‘lām*, vol. 10, ed. Bithār ‘Awwād Ma‘rūf (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1424/2003), 746; Muḥyī l-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Naṣrallāh b. Sālim Ibn Abī l-Wafā’, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍīyya fī ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīyya*, vol. 4, ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāh Muḥammad al-Ḥulw (N.p.: Hujar lil-Ṭabā‘a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī‘ wa-l-I‘lān, 1413/1993), 98-9; Abū l-Fidā’ Zayn al-Dīn Qāsim b. Quṭlūbughā, *Tāj al-tarājim*, ed. Muḥammad Khayr Ramaḍān Yūsuf (N.p.: Dār al-Qalam, 1413/1992), 275; Abū l-Ḥasanāt Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Laknawī, *al-Fawā’id al-bahīyya fī tarājim al-Ḥanafīyya*, ed. Muḥammad Badr al-Dīn Abū Firās al-Nu‘mānī (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, n.d.), 188. For modern sources, see Hellmut Ritter, “Philologika. XIII: Arabische Handschriften in Anatolien und İstanbul,” *Oriens* 2, no. 2 (Dec., 1949): 305; Hans Peter Linss, *Probleme der islamischen Dogmatik: Das Kitāb uṣūl al-dīn des Abū ‘l-Yusr Muḥammad al-Bazdawī* (Essen: Thales Verlag, 1991), 8-13; Aḥmad b. ‘Awḍallāh b. Dākhil al-Lahībī al-Ḥarbī, *al-Māturīdiyya: dirāsatan wa-taqwīman* ([Riyad]: Dār al-‘Āshima lil-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī‘, 1413 [1992 or 3]), 115-8; ‘Abd al-Qādir b. Yāmīn b. Nāṣir al-Khaṭīb, introduction to *Ma‘rifat al-ḥujaj al-shar‘īyya*, by Abū l-Yusr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bazdawī (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risāla lil-Ṭabā‘a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī‘, 1420/2000), 3-9; Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqā, “Sīrat Abī l-Yusr Muḥammad al-Bazdawī, mu‘allif *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn*,” in *Uṣūl al-dīn*, by Abū l-Yusr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bazdawī, ed. Hans Peter Linss, amended and annot. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqā (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya lil-Turāth, 2002), 9-12 (a translation of most of Linss’ chapter); Éric Chaumont, introduction to *Kitāb fīhi ma‘rifat al-ḥujaj al-shar‘īyya; Livre où repose la connaissance des preuves légales*, by Abū l-Yusr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bazdawī, ed. Marie Bernand and Éric Chaumont (Cairo: al-Ma‘had al-‘Ilmī al-Faransī lil-Āthār al-Sharqiyya/Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 2003), 5-8; Angelika Brodersen, *Der unbekannteste kalām: Theologische Positionen der frühen Māturīdiya am Beispiel der Attributenlehre* (Munich: LIT Verlag, 2014), 26-7. ² al-Sam‘ānī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 2, 201.

³ Abū l-Yusr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Hans Peter Linss, amended and annot. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqā (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya lil-Turāth, 2002), 14. Abū l-Yusr also mentions that he learned a couple of hadiths from his father. See al-Bazdawī, 159 and 162.

⁴ al-Bazdawī, 14.

instruction thus initiated him into a strong family scholarly tradition that, as we will see below, continued with the following Bazdawī generation.

Besides his father, only two of the Transoxanian scholars Abū l-Yusr received tutelage from can be identified: Ya‘qūb b. Yūsuf b. Muḥammad al-Sayyārī al-Nīsābūrī⁵ and Ismā‘īl b. ‘Abd al-Ṣādiq (d. 494/1101).⁶ Little information can be gathered from Arab biographical works about either figure. Al-Nīsābūrī studied jurisprudence with a certain Abū Ishāq al-Nawqadī. He was known as one of the most outstanding memorizers of the Quran (*ḥuffāz*) in Transoxania and participated in the transmission of at least two books. Al-Ṣādiq is described as a “god-fearing jurist” and a student of Abū l-Yusr’s great-grandfather, ‘Abd al-Karīm. The latter point is questionable since if the year given for al-Ṣādiq’s death (494/1101) is correct, he almost certainly was not the student of ‘Abd al-Karīm, who passed away more than a hundred years earlier in 390/999. This inconsistency might reflect the Ḥanafite biographers’ interpretation of the Arabic term *jadd*, which could mean either grandfather or ancestor. Here, they seem to have understood it in the former sense when saying that al-Ṣādiq was the student of Abū l-Yusr’s *jadd* ‘Abd al-Karīm. In any case, what can be established with certainty is that whether as ‘Abd al-Karīm’s student or Abū l-Yusr’s teacher, al-Ṣādiq appears to have had some role in the transmission of knowledge in the Bazdawī family.

Certainly, this meager amount of information that can be retrieved about Abū l-Yusr’s education and teachers leaves much to be desired about the course of his intellectual formation. We can add, however, that at least in terms of theology, he appears to have engaged in some degree of independent study of the works of several major Muslim theologians and philosophers. He tells us that he examined (*naẓartu*) some such works and came across (*wajadtu*) others. These include the writings of the Muslim philosophers (*falāsifa*), such as Abū Yūsuf al-Kindī (d. 252/866) and Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfīzārī (fl. mid-fourth/tenth century);⁷ those of the Mu‘tazilites, such as Abū Ishāq al-Nazzām (d. 220-30/825-35), Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī (d. 303/915-6), Abū l-

⁵ Linss, *Probleme*, 8. On him, see al-Sam‘ānī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 7, 328-9; Ibn Abī l-Wafā’, *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 3, 641; al-Laknawī, *al-Fawā’id*, 233.

⁶ On him, see Ibn Abī l-Wafā’, *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 1, 416; al-Laknawī, *al-Fawā’id*, 46.

⁷ Al-Isfīzārī was in the tradition of al-Kindī, though almost nothing is known about his life. The only surviving work of his is a book covering twenty-eight metaphysical topics, namely, the *Kitāb masā’il al-umūr al-ilāhiyya wa-hiya thamāniyya wa-‘ishrūn mas’ala*. See Elvira Wakelnig, “Die Philosophen in der Tradition al-Kindī: al-‘Āmirī, al-Isfīzārī, Miskawayh, as-Siġistānī, und at-Tawḥīdī,” in *Islamische Philosophie im Mittelalter: Ein Handbuch*, ed. Heidrun Eichner, Matthias Perkams, and Christian Schäfer (Darmstadt: WBG [Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft]), 2013), 239.

Qāsim al-Ka‘bī (d. 319/931), and Qādī ‘Abd al-Jabbār (d. ca. 415/1025); and those of the *mujassima* (corporealists), such as Muḥammad b. Hayṣam (d. 419/1019).⁸ To be sure, he did not treat these writings as sources for the development of his ideas, for he found nothing impressive therein. The writings of the Muslim philosophers, he believed, lead to destruction and are filled with idolatry (*shirk*), even if composed under the pretext of establishing God’s unity (*tawḥīd*); those of the Mu‘tazilites give rise to doubts about and weaken one’s faith, as well as justify adherence to heresy; and the *mujassima* are simply the vilest heretics. For these reasons, he forbids the ownership and perusal of the works of any of these figures or their fellow school proponents.⁹

The thought of two other Muslim scholars that Abū l-Yusr reports having been acquainted with, namely, ‘Abdallāh b. Sa‘īd Ibn Kullāb (d. ca. 241/855) and Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī (d. 324/935), contributed more to his theological edification, at least on a conscious level. Although, as will be discussed below, Abū l-Yusr does not quite consider them Sunnites, whom he himself claims to represent, he estimates that their opinions and those of their followers are largely in harmony with Sunnite doctrines. He thus permits the ownership and perusal of their works as long as one understands their errors in certain matters of faith. While he admits to not having been in direct contact with Ibn Kullāb’s writings, he says that he came across around two hundred of al-Ash‘arī’s books on *kalām* and reports that *al-Mūjiz al-Kabīr* encompasses the content of all the others.¹⁰

⁸ The term *mujassima*, which I have translated as “corporealists”, but may be more literally rendered as “those who make corporeal”, was applied by Muslim scholars to figures and groups they believed conceive of God as a body, even if their notions of “body” did not necessarily involve physicality. See W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973), 247-8. Ibn Hayṣam was a Karrāmīte scholar responsible for the transformation of his group’s teachings in the fourth/tenth century. See Ulrich Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie in Samarkand* (Leiden; New York; Köln: E.J. Brill, 1997), 87; Ulrich Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī and the Development of Sunnī Theology in Samarqand*, tr. Rodrigo Adem (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015), 80. For Abū l-Yusr, the *mujassima* include, in addition to Ibn Hayṣam, the respective followers of three figures: Muḥammad b. Karrām (d. ca. 255/868), Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767), and Hishām b. al-Ḥakam (d. 179-99/795-815). See al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 258-9. Although he does not call them *mujassima*, he also attributes the view that God is a body to the Jews. See al-Bazdawī, 33. See also Chapter 5 of this thesis where these attributions are discussed in more detail.

⁹ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 13.

¹⁰ *Wa-qad wajadtu li-Abī l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī kutuban wa-ghayrahu fī hādihā l-fann mina l-‘ilm, wa-hiya qarīb min mi‘āyat kitāb; wa-l-Mūjiz al-Kabīr ya ‘ī ‘alā ‘amma mā fī jamī‘ kutubihī.* I read *ghayrahu* as *wafīra* (many) since if it were to refer to *kutub*, it should be *ghayrahā* with the feminine object pronoun. It seems unlikely that Abū l-Yusr had access to and read through all of these writings; thus, perhaps *anna* should be inserted between *wajadtu* and *li* so that his statement reads, “I found that Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī has many books in this field; that is, around two hundred.” See al-Bazdawī, 14 and 250. *Al-Mūjiz al-Kabīr* has yet to be recovered. The Ash‘arīte Ibn ‘Asākir (d. 571/1176), who simply calls it *al-Mūjiz*, explains that it consisted of twelve volumes arranged according to the subject matter of the views of al-Ash‘arī’s Muslim and non-Muslim opponents. This seems to validate Abū l-Yusr’s

Despite Abū l-Yusr's strong acquaintance with Islamic theology and philosophy, they were not his main areas of concentration. Only one of his nine known works, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, deals with theology; the rest have to do with jurisprudence.¹¹ Among these, only two have been published, namely, the *Kitāb fīhi ma'rifat al-ḥujaj al-shar'iyya*,¹² which focuses on legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), and a treatise on determining the qibla, which has been translated and analyzed by David A. King.¹³ The others are: *al-Muraṭṭab*, a commentary on the *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaghīr* of the early Ḥanafite jurist Abū 'Abdallāh al-Shaybānī (d. 189/804); *al-Wāqī'āt*, about legal cases (*wāqī'āt*); and *al-Mabsūṭ*, about legal rules (*furū'*). In his *K. fīhi ma'rifa*, Abū l-Yusr twice refers to his book *al-Ghinā'*,¹⁴ as well as vaguely to a “brief, abridged book” (*kitāb ṣaghīr mukhtaṣar*) and a “medium-sized book” (*kitāb wasaṭ*),¹⁵ both on legal theory. Additionally, one of his most prominent students, Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142), averred, hyperbolically, that “the East and West are filled with his writings in theory (*uṣūl*) and practice (*furū'*)”.¹⁶ However, whether this implies that the number of his works is more than nine and, if so, how much more, is unclear.

Besides writing, Abū l-Yusr engaged in other professional activities. In 481/1088, he was appointed as a judge (*qāḍī*) in Samarqand,¹⁷ where he speaks of having witnessed the invasion of the Saljuk sultan Malik Shāh I (r. 465-85/1072-92; d. 485/1092) during the same year.¹⁸ He says that he came to Samarqand in 473/1080-1,¹⁹ but it appears that he may have alternated between

claim about it. See Abū l-Qāsim 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Hibatallāh b. 'Asākir, *Tabyīn kadhib al-muftarī fīmā nusiba ilā-l-Imām Abī l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī and Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Qudsī (Damascus: Maṭba'at al-Tawfīq, 1347 [1928]), 129. Of course, Abū l-Yusr was also well aware of the theological writings of his fellow Transoxanian Ḥanafites and those of al-Māturīdī. His perspective on some of these works are discussed below. For a full list of the sources Abū l-Yusr cites in *Uṣūl al-dīn*, including on theology, Quranic exegesis, hadith, and jurisprudence, see Linss, *Probleme*, 18-20.

¹¹ Linss, 12 and 12n26.

¹² Abū l-Yusr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bazdawī, *Kitāb fīhi ma'rifat al-ḥujaj al-shar'iyya; Livre où repose la connaissance des preuves légales*, ed. Marie Bernand and Éric Chaumont (Cairo: al-Ma'had al-'Ilmī al-Faransī lil-Āthār al-Sharqiyya/Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2003).

¹³ David A. King, “Al-Bazdawī on the Qibla in Early Islamic Transoxania,” *Journal for the History of Arabic Science / Majallat Tārīkh al-'Ulūm al-'Arabīyah* 7 (Jan., 1983): 3–38

¹⁴ al-Bazdawī, 31 and 49.

¹⁵ al-Bazdawī, 3.

¹⁶ Ibn Abī l-Wafā', *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 4, 99; Ibn Quṭlūbughā, *Tāj al-tarājim*, 275. *Uṣūl* and *furū'* might also be translated as “theology” and “jurisprudence”, respectively. In any case, it is clear that Abū l-Yusr's legal writings were influential amongst subsequent jurists. In the introduction to his edition of *K. fīhi ma'rifa*, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Khaṭīb mentions fifteen, mostly Ḥanafite legal works in which Abū l-Yusr's legal opinions are cited. See al-Khaṭīb, introduction to *Ma'rifat al-ḥujaj al-shar'iyya*, 10-2.

¹⁷ Linss, *Probleme*, 11.

¹⁸ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 265.

¹⁹ King, “Al-Bazdawī on the Qibla,” 9.

there and Bukhara since he reports having been in the latter city in 478/1085-6,²⁰ where, in addition to being one of the most skilled disputers, he taught jurisprudence and dictated his teachings and hadiths at a madrasa known as al-Dār al-Jūzjāniyya,²¹ presumably named after Abū Sulaymān al-Juzjānī (d. after 200/815)²² or his student and al-Māturīdī's teacher, Abū Bakr al-Juzjānī.²³ It was also in Bukhara that Abū l-Yusr passed away on 9 Rajab 493/May 20, 1100 at roughly seventy years of age.

1.1.2 Family and Students

With this scanty amount of information available about the life of Abū l-Yusr, we can only draw up a rough portrait of this scholar's life and accomplishments. It is therefore helpful to briefly survey some of the prominent members of his family and his notable students to better understand his background, significance, and legacy.

With respect to his family, we have already mentioned his great-grandfather 'Abd al-Karīm. Little more can be said about him since neither the Ḥanafīte biographers who mention him²⁴ nor Abū l-Yusr attribute any works or particular teachings to him. His prime significance thus appears to lie in his role as a student of al-Māturīdī and transmitter of his doctrines, even if only or primarily through the Bazdawī family. This, of course, was no small feat, since it contributed not only to the erudition of his descendant Abū l-Yusr, but also to that of the latter's brother, Abū l-'Uṣr 'Alī (d. 482/1089). Abū l-'Uṣr was considerably more prolific than Abū l-Yusr. He authored an eleven-volume *al-Mabsūṭ*;²⁵ two commentaries, one on al-Shaybānī's *al-Jāmi' al-kabīr* and the other on his *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaghīr*;²⁶ and the *Kanz al-wuṣūl ilā ma'rifat al-uṣūl*, a handbook of Ḥanafīte legal theory that quickly became a classic in the field of jurisprudence together with 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Aḥmad al-Bukhārī's (d. 730/1330) extensive commentary.²⁷ Ḥanafīte biographers offer us little other information about Abū l-'Uṣr, though the

²⁰ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 261.

²¹ al-Sam'ānī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 2, 202; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 10, 746; Ibn Quṭlūbughā, *Tāj al-tarājim*, 275.

²² On him, see al-Laknawī, *al-Fawā'id*, 216.

²³ On him, see al-Laknawī, 14. For the place of each Juzjānī in the lines of theological transmission amongst the Eastern Ḥanafītes up to the time of al-Māturīdī and his students, see Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie*, 161; Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī and the Development*, 147.

²⁴ Ibn Abī l-Wafā', *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 2, 458; al-Laknawī, *al-Fawā'id*, 101. On him, see also Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie*, 157-9; Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī and the Development*, 144-6.

²⁵ Ibn Abī l-Wafā', *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 2, 595; Ibn Quṭlūbughā, *Tāj al-tarājim*, 206.

²⁶ Ibn Abī l-Wafā', *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 2, 595; Ibn Quṭlūbughā, *Tāj al-tarājim*, 206.

²⁷ Chaumont, introduction to *Kitāb fihī ma'rifa*, 5. *Kanz al-wuṣūl* is likely the work of Abū l-'Uṣr that both Ibn Abī l-Wafā' and Ibn Quṭlūbughā ambiguously refer to as "a well-known book" on legal theory. See Ibn Abī l-Wafā', *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 2, 595; Ibn Quṭlūbughā, *Tāj al-tarājim*, 206.

fact that his coffin was brought to Samarqand and buried at the gate of a mosque²⁸ indicates the standing he enjoyed in his society. He evidently passed on his intellectual passion to his son, Abū Thābit al-Ḥasan (d. 557/1161-2), who, being about twelve years old at the time of his father's death, was brought to Bukhara, where he was raised and educated by Abū l-Yusr together with the latter's son, Abū Ma'ālī (d. 542/1147).²⁹ Both of these young Bazdawī boys would eventually become distinguished figures in their own right. Like his father, Abū Ma'ālī was appointed as a judge in Bukhara and for a time dictated his teachings there.³⁰ He also taught hadith in Baghdad and, on his way to perform the hajj, stopped in Merw, where he likewise served as a judge; upon returning from the pilgrimage, he died in Sarakhs.³¹ Abū Thābit, then in Merw, assumed his cousin's position as a judge in Bukhara for a while before retiring to Bazda, where he eventually died in 557/1161-2.³²

The passing of Abū Thābit appears to have brought that of the Bazdawī scholarly tradition as well; no other representative can be identified after him.³³ But their influence continued through their writings and students. With respect to Abū l-Yusr, the most distinguished of his pupils was undoubtedly the abovementioned Abū Ḥaṣṣ 'Umar al-Nasafī. Although Abū Ḥaṣṣ claims to have had more than 500 teachers and devoted one book to listing them (i.e., *Ta'dād shuyūkh 'Umar*),³⁴ the following comment he made about Abū l-Yusr implies that he had a special reverence for him: "He was the master of our companions in Transoxania. He was absolutely the 'imam of the imams', the one to whom many flocked (*al-mawfūd ilayhi*) from distant lands."³⁵ Nonetheless, in seeking knowledge, Abū Ḥaṣṣ traveled beyond Transoxania to Baghdad and Mecca, during the course of which he met up with the famous grammarian and Mu'tazilite exegete, Abū l-Qāsim al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144).³⁶ In total, Abū Ḥaṣṣ is thought to have composed around 100 works.³⁷ The twelve of these mentioned by Brockelmann cover a wide range of topics, including jurisprudence, theology, Quranic exegesis, and history.³⁸ The

²⁸ Ibn Abī l-Wafā', *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 2, 594.

²⁹ Ibn Abī l-Wafā', 76; Ibn Abī l-Wafā', vol. 4, 407.

³⁰ Ibn Abī l-Wafā', vol. 1, 309.

³¹ al-Sam'ānī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 2, 202; Ibn Abī l-Wafā', *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 1, 309.

³² Ibn Abī l-Wafā', vol. 2, 76.

³³ Linss, *Probleme*, 6-7.

³⁴ al-Ḥarbī, *al-Māturīdiyya*, 121; Brodersen, *Der unbekannte kalām*, 34.

³⁵ Ibn Abī l-Wafā', *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 4, 99.

³⁶ Brodersen, *Der unbekannte kalām*, 33-4.

³⁷ al-Ḥarbī, *al-Māturīdiyya*, 121; Brodersen, *Der unbekannte kalām*, 34.

³⁸ Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1937), 758-62; Carl Brockelmann, *History of the Arabic Written Tradition*, vol. 1, tr. Joep Lameer (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), 478-80.

most popular and influential of his writings is without doubt his Māturīdīte creed known as *al-‘Aqā’id al-Nasafīyya* (or simply *al-‘Aqā’id*). It helped ensure the preservation and development of al-Māturīdī’s teachings and has been commented on by a number of scholars, the most important of whom is Sa‘d al-Dīn al-Taftazānī (d. 792/1410).³⁹ In 1590, it was translated into Malay, making it, according to Sayed Naquib al-Attas, the oldest known Malay manuscript.⁴⁰

Although the creed essentially consists of a collection of phrases taken from his teacher Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī’s (d. 508/1114) *Tamhīd li-qawā‘id al-tawhīd*,⁴¹ Abū l-Yusr’s influence on Abū Ḥafṣ reveals itself in the latter’s Sufi heresiography. Nine of the eleven deviant Sufi sects as well as the one righteous Sufi sect identified by Abū Ḥafṣ are also found in Abū l-Yusr’s Sufi heresiography (contained in his *Uṣūl al-dīn*) with the same or similar descriptions. In fact, apart from adding two sects, Abū Ḥafṣ lists them in almost exactly the same order as Abū l-Yusr.⁴² Abū Ḥafṣ’ treatise was eventually twice reproduced, nearly verbatim, for opposite purposes, first by the Shi‘ite scholar Muḥammad al-Ḥurr al-‘Āmilī (d. 1104/1692) to refute Sufism, and then by the Turkish Sufi and scholar İbrahim Hakkı Erzurumī (d. 1194/1780) to defend it.⁴³ If only indirectly, then, Abū Ḥafṣ contributed to the influence of Abū l-Yusr’s scholarship long after his death.

Two other students of Abū l-Yusr less important than Abū Ḥafṣ but nonetheless worthy of mention are ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Ṣabbāghī and Aḥmad al-Khulmī (d. 547/1152). Al-Ṣabbāghī authored a commentary on Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Qudūrī’s (d. 428/1037) famous Ḥanafīte legal handbook, *Mukhtaṣar*, as well as possibly *Ṭilbat al-ṭalaba*, a book about Ḥanafīte legal terminology that has also been attributed to Abū Ḥafṣ.⁴⁴ Al-Khulmī studied with Abū l-Yusr in Bukhara and occasionally even stood in for him as a judge.⁴⁵ The extent of his literary production

³⁹ Brodersen, *Der unbekannte kalām*, 35.

⁴⁰ See his *The Oldest Known Malay Manuscript: A 16th Century Malay Translation of the ‘Aqā’id of al-Nasafī* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 1988).

⁴¹ Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie*, 279n88; Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī and the Development*, 252n85.

⁴² In the published edition of the treatise, the Mutakāsila come immediately before the Mutajāhila, whereas in *Uṣūl al-dīn*, they come immediately after them. However, as the editor of the treatise, ‘Alī Akbar Diyā’ī, points out, Abū Ḥafṣ should have put them in the opposite order since they are listed that way in the introduction to the published edition as well as in another manuscript of the treatise. Hence, it is likely that the sequences of the two heresiographies were originally the same. See Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar b. Muḥammad al-Nasafī, *Risāla fī bayān madhāhib al-taṣawwuf*, ed. ‘Alī Akbar Diyā’ī, *al-Turāth al-‘Arabī* 12, no. 46 (1412/1992): 133–41 and 141n51; al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 259–62.

⁴³ See Hamid Algar, “Impostors, Antinomians, and Pseudo-Sufis: Cataloguing the Miscreants,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 29, no. 1 (2018): 36–8 and 44–6, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etx063>.

⁴⁴ Linss, *Probleme*, 12–3.

⁴⁵ Ibn Abī l-Wafā’, *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 1, 259.

is not clear, but a certain Abū Sa‘d recounts having met him in Balkh and received from him a large, multi-volume book comprising the dictations of three scholars, including Abū l-Yusr, whom he studied with in Bukhara.⁴⁶

1.2 Theological Affiliation and Approach

1.2.1 *Hanafite Theology and Māturīdism*

Abū l-Yusr is recognized today as a Māturīdīte theologian. To understand the meaning of this title as well as his place in and contribution to Māturīdism, some background on the emergence and development of this theological school is necessary.

The seed of Māturīdism was planted in Iraq with the theological teachings of the famous scholar Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767). These teachings have come down to us in primary form via two brief epistles attributed to him. The first epistle,⁴⁷ which is widely believed to be authentic, primarily concerns the subject of belief and sin. He aligns himself with the Murji‘ites by distinguishing between faith and deeds, meaning that the latter, whether good or bad, cannot alter the degree of the former. The second epistle,⁴⁸ the authenticity of which is more doubtful, yet plausible, centers around the issue of free will and determinism; specifically, Abū Ḥanīfa aims to establish a mediate position between the conflicting extremes that total power over human action belongs to either human beings or God.⁴⁹

Abū Ḥanīfa’s Murji‘ite leanings detectable in the first epistle ensured the development of a theological tradition in his name. This development did not take place in Iraq due to the Murji‘ites’ rapid decline there during the second/eighth century; instead, it occurred in Northeastern Iran and Transoxania where this group enjoyed considerable success. Out of admiration of Abū Ḥanīfa for accepting at least some of their opinions, Murji‘ite scholars from those regions traveled to Kufa to study with him before returning to their homelands with some of his other teachings. Two of these figures, Abū Muqātil al-Samarqandī (d. 208/823) and Abū Muṭī‘ al-Balkhī (d. 199/814), are worth mentioning here, for they each left behind an important

⁴⁶ Ibn Abī l-Wafā’, 259.

⁴⁷ Abū Ḥanīfa, “Risāla ilā ‘Uthmān al-Battī,” in *al-‘Ālim wa-l-muta‘allim*, by Abū Muqātil al-Samarqandī, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Anwār, 1368/1949), 34-8. For a German translation of the epistle, see Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*, vol. 5 (Berlin; New York: W. de Gruyter, 1991-1997), 24-9.

⁴⁸ See the German translation of it in van Ess, 34-5.

⁴⁹ For this paragraph, see Ulrich Rudolph, “Hanafī Theological Tradition and Māturīdism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2-4, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199696703.013.023>.

treatise aimed at propagating their master's theology. Abū Muqātil wrote *al-‘Ālim wa-l-muta‘allim*⁵⁰, which takes up the questions covered in Abū Ḥanīfa's first epistle but is more extensive, nuanced, and argumentative towards opponents. The *al-Fiqh al-absaṭ*⁵¹ of Abū Muṭī‘ elaborates on the subjects treated in both of Abū Ḥanīfa's epistles, especially free will and determinism, and discusses some matters new to Ḥanafite theology, such as the principle of commanding right and forbidding wrong (*al-amr bi-l-ma‘rūf wa-l-nahy ‘ani l-munkar*).⁵²

The efforts of such scholars as Abū Muqātil and Abū Muṭī‘ to transmit and build on Abū Hanīfa's theology soon paid off. By the close of the second/eighth century, Northeastern Iran and Transoxania had become the new center of Ḥanafite theology. At the turn of the fourth/tenth century, this theological tradition was embraced by the Sāmānid governors of Khurasan and Transoxania. One of these governors commissioned a Ḥanafite scholar by the name of al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī (d. 342/953) to write a summary of the Ḥanafite principles of faith. He produced the *Kitāb al-Sawād al-a‘ẓam ‘alā madhhab al-Imām Abī Ḥanīfa*⁵³ which, enumerating the various beliefs found in the abovementioned texts in creedal form, served as a strong, clear, and accessible expression of mainstream Eastern Ḥanafite theology.⁵⁴ The enduring popularity of the creed amongst subsequent generations of Eastern Ḥanafites is attested by, among other things, the fact that it was translated into Persian mere decades after its composition and repeatedly reprinted in the Islamic East into Ottoman times.⁵⁵

However acclaimed the *K. al-Sawād al-a‘ẓam* was as an articulation of Ḥanafite doctrine, it was not finally definitive, for active at the same time and in the same milieu as al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī was none other than al-Māturīdī. His theological masterpiece, *K. al-Tawḥīd*, stood out from the works of his Ḥanafite predecessors in two major ways. First, he described and refuted the opinions of a host of theological opponents, primarily other Muslim thinkers, such as the Mu‘tazilite Abū l-Qāsim al-Balkhī al-Ka‘bī (d. 319/931) and the Ismā‘īlite Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī (d. 332/942), but also Christians; Jews; dualists, such as Zoroastrians and

⁵⁰ Ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Anwār, 1368/1949), 8-32.

⁵¹ In *al-‘Ālim wa-l-muta‘allim*, by al-Samarqandī, 39-60. An unpublished English translation of this text is available online. See Abū Muṭī‘ al-Balkhī, *al-Fiqh al-absaṭ*, tr. Muhammad Huzaifah ibn Adam aal-Ebrahim, Internet Archive, last modified July 1, 2017, https://archive.org/stream/AlFiqhAlAbsat_201707/Al-Fiqh%20Al-Absat_djvu.txt.

⁵² For this paragraph, see Rudolph, “Ḥanafī Theological Tradition,” 5-6.

⁵³ Published under the title *al-Sawād al-a‘ẓam fī l-kalām* ([Istanbul]: Maṭba‘at Ibrāhīm, n.d.)

⁵⁴ For what has thus far been mentioned in this paragraph, see Rudolph, “Ḥanafī Theological Tradition,” 5-7.

⁵⁵ Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie*, 108-9 and 109n74; Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī and the Development*, 100-1 and 101n71.

Manichaens; the Hellenistic philosophical tradition; and disparate groups, such as the Sabeans and Sumāniyya (i.e., Buddhists). Second, he structured it more or less according to the standard organization of *kalām* works developed by the Mu‘tazilites in the early third/ninth century. This means that he not only engaged issues long central to Eastern Ḥanafite theology, such as sin and belief or freedom and determinism, but also expounded on problems hardly or not at all touched on by earlier Eastern Ḥanafites, such as the divine attributes and the creation and physical constitution of the world. In other words, al-Māturīdī was interested not only in presenting and defending well-established Eastern Ḥanafite convictions, but also in truly practicing speculative theology. As a result, he became largely responsible for introducing *kalām* into Transoxanian theology.⁵⁶

In spite of its sophistication and comprehensiveness, the *K. al-Tawḥīd* was, unlike al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī’s creed, little recognized at first. With few exceptions, most notably al-Māturīdī’s student Abū Salama al-Samarqandī, who wrote a kind of summary of the text,⁵⁷ most Transoxanian scholars continued to follow the traditional approach of the *K. al-Sawād al-a‘zam* and earlier Ḥanafite works. Indeed, they even neglected to mention al-Māturīdī or his *K. al-Tawḥīd*. This situation only began to change roughly a century and a half after al-Māturīdī’s death with the theological productions of two authors, our Abū l-Yusr and his more (theologically) prolific contemporary Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114). Each scholar followed the *kalām* style of the *K. al-Tawḥīd* and, moreover, praised it and its author. Abū l-Yusr tells us that al-Māturīdī is “among the leaders of the Sunnites” and a “worker of miracles”, miracles related to him by his father, who learned of them from his grandfather ‘Abd al-Karīm, a direct student of al-Māturīdī as noted above. As for the *K. al-Tawḥīd*, if not for being a bit obscure, prolix, and poorly arranged, it would be satisfactory.⁵⁸ Abū l-Mu‘īn’s praise for the Samarqandi master is far more extensive and lavish: “If amongst them [the Eastern Ḥanafites] there was only Imam Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī—who plunged into the seas of knowledge and extracted their pearls, and established the proofs of religion so that it was graced with his eloquence, abundance of knowledge, and excellence of natural disposition...that would be

⁵⁶ For this paragraph, see in particular Rudolph, “Ḥanafī Theological Tradition,” 10. See also Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie*, 349-52; Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī and the Development*, 313-5; Claude Gilliot, “La théologie musulmane en Asie Centrale et au Khorasan,” *Arabica* 49, no. 2 (2002): 156 and 158.

⁵⁷ *Jumal min uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Ilhām Qāsimī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2015).

⁵⁸ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 14.

enough.”⁵⁹ He proceeds to list a number of al-Māturīdī’s works, beginning with *K. al-Tawḥīd*, and concludes that whoever surveys them will know that God endowed their author with miracles, gifts of grace, and guidance, since normally the religious and philosophical knowledge that he held alone is not possessed by many scholars altogether.⁶⁰

The question is why two generations of Transoxanian scholars remained largely silent over al-Māturīdī’s accomplishments until Abū l-Yusr and Abū l-Mu‘īn suddenly took note of them. Ultimately, this change was due to the rise of a new theological challenge in the form of the Ash‘arites, who established a center in Nishapur at the end of the fourth/tenth century.⁶¹ The Ash‘arites and Transoxanian Ḥanafites disagreed, as we shall see, on several points, but especially the nature of God’s attributes of act (*ṣifāt al-fi‘l*), which were discussed through a focus on one in particular, that of creation. In the view of the Ash‘arites, God does not possess an eternal attribute of creation; rather, this attribute, which is merely a description of God’s act of creation, becomes applicable to Him when He creates something. In contrast, the Ḥanafites hold that God’s attribute of creation is an eternal entity subsisting in His essence, so that God has always been a creator, even though the objects of His creation have not always existed.⁶² By the end of the fifth/eleventh century, when Abū l-Yusr and Abū l-Mu‘īn were composing their theological works, this dispute had become particularly intense, as the Ash‘arites of Nishapur attacked the Ḥanafites’ view and disparaged them for espousing it.⁶³ In response, both Abū l-Yusr and Abū l-Mu‘īn explicitly appealed to the authority of al-Māturīdī and his defence of the Ḥanafite position. Abū l-Mu‘īn’s comments cited above are a part of one of his arguments in favour of the Ḥanafite opinion in which he lists all the Transoxanian and Khurasanian leaders of Abū Ḥanīfa’s followers, from the time of Abū Ḥanīfa himself down to the end of the fourth/tenth century, and claims that they held the same views on God’s attributes as he himself holds.⁶⁴ Abū

⁵⁹ Abū l-Mu‘īn Maymūn al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat al-adilla fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Muḥammad al-Anwār Ḥāmid ‘Īsā (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya lil-Turāth, 2011), 556.

⁶⁰ al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīra*, 556-7. For this paragraph, see in particular Rudolph, “Ḥanafī Theological Tradition,” 12-4; Ulrich Rudolph, “Das Entstehen der Māturīdīya,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 147 (1997): 397-402. See also Gilliot, “La théologie musulmane,” 159-60.

⁶¹ Rudolph, “Ḥanafī Theological Tradition,” 13-4; Rudolph, “Das Entstehen,” 398-402; Gilliot, “La théologie musulmane,” 159-60.

⁶² See Chapter 2 of this thesis for the distinction between God’s attributes of essence (*ṣifāt al-dhāt*) and attributes of act as well as Chapter 4 for more details about the attributes of act, the dispute surrounding them, and Abū l-Yusr’s discussion of them.

⁶³ Gilliot, “La théologie musulmane,” 160.

⁶⁴ al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīra*, 551-9; Rudolph, “Ḥanafī Theological Tradition,” 14; Rudolph, “Das Entstehen,” 401.

l-Yusr states that al-Māturīdī confirmed (*ṣahḥaha*) the Ḥanafite doctrine and points out that he was earlier than al-Ash‘arī.⁶⁵

With the next generation of Transoxanian theologians, beginning around the turn of the sixth/twelfth century, Māturīdīsm fully sprouted. They composed several *kalām* works and creeds setting forth the doctrines of their school; although they continued to think of themselves as the “followers of Abū Ḥanīfa” (*aṣḥāb Abī Ḥanīfa*), they were in fact closer to being those of al-Māturīdī and his later followers like Abū l-Yusr and Abū l-Mu‘īn.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, the Turks ruling over large swaths of territory in Central Asia had come to accept Māturīdīte doctrine.⁶⁷ When they began their expansion into the central Islamic world in the middle of the fifth/eleventh century, they brought that theology with them, ensuring its spread throughout western Persia, Iraq, Anatolia, Syria, and Egypt.⁶⁸ Many Transoxanian and other Eastern Ḥanafite scholars resettled and taught in these areas between the late fifth/eleventh and eighth/fourteenth centuries, so that Māturīdīsm eventually became dominant amongst Ḥanafites everywhere.⁶⁹ In a remarkable twist of fate, then, the theology that Transoxanian scholars such as Abū Muqātil and Abū Muṭī‘ had traveled to Kufa to retrieve from Abū Ḥanīfa back in the second/eighth century underwent a long and transformational period of development only to be transported back to the land from which it originated and beyond.

1.2.2 *Abū l-Yusr as a Proponent of Sunnism*

Clearly, Abū l-Yusr played a key role in the formation of a school of fundamental importance in the history of Islamic theology. He adopted al-Māturīdī’s method and style at a time when few of his fellow Transoxanian Ḥanafites had done so, thereby contributing to the emergence of Māturīdīsm in the next generation. He was not, of course, aware of the nature or extent of his participation in this process. Rather, he had his own perspective on his tradition and

⁶⁵ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 77; Rudolph, “Ḥanafī Theological Tradition,” 13; Rudolph, “Das Entstehen,” 400; Gilliot, “La théologie musulmane,” 160.

⁶⁶ Rudolph, “Ḥanafī Theological Tradition,” 15. They did not perceive their custom of calling themselves as such problematic, because they considered al-Māturīdī to be merely a representative of Transoxanian Ḥanafism. Al-Māturīdī’s case thus differs from that of al-Ash‘arī who was more readily acknowledged as the founder of a new school because of his abandonment of Mu‘tazilism and rejection by the Ḥanbalite traditionalists whose theology he claimed to be defending. See Wilferd Madelung, “The Spread of Māturīdism and the Turks,” in *Actas do IV Congresso de Estudos Arabes e Islamicos, Coimbra-Lisboa 1968* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), 123; *EP*, s.v. “Māturīdiyya.”

⁶⁷ Madelung, “The Spread,” 117-8.

⁶⁸ Madelung, “Māturīdiyya,” 847.

⁶⁹ Madelung, “Māturīdiyya,” 847.

his place therein that corresponds only in a few instances to the development of Ḥanafism and Māturīdīsm outlined above but is nevertheless worth surveying to better understand his positionality and, later, his discussion of the divine attributes.

To begin with, Abū l-Yusr defined himself not as a Māturīdīte⁷⁰ or even Ḥanafīte, but rather as a representative of the Sunnites (*ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā'a*). He believed that his Sunnite theological position was shared with a total of six groups and one individual: the jurists (*fuqahā'*), Quran reciters (*qurrā'*), Sufis, traditionists (*aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*), the Prophet's Companions and Successors, and the Prophet himself. Obviously missing from this list are the Ash'arites, the group usually recognized as the other main proponent of Sunnite *kalām*. Abū l-Yusr indeed recognizes that al-Ash'arī and his followers claim to be Sunnites, but he deems them to fall somewhat short of earning the title because of al-Ash'arī's errant opinions on certain issues. In addition to his misconception of the nature of God's attributes of act, he also believes al-Ash'arī to espouse incorrect views about God's attitude toward disobedience (*'isyān*) and infidelity (*kufṛ*), the nature of faith, and one's state (happy or miserable) as determined by one's faith or lack thereof.⁷¹

What makes the true Sunnites worthy of the name is, in Abū l-Yusr's view, their emulation of the custom (*sunna*) of the Prophet, Companions, Successors, and the pious (*ṣāliḥūn*), as evinced by two proofs. First,⁷² Quranic verses and hadiths reveal that they share the theological positions of these four on different issues, such as God's attributes, predestination (*qadar*), the vision of God in the afterlife (*ru'yat Allāh*), and the Prophet's intercession for believers on the Day of Judgment (*shafā'a*). Furthermore, the Quran indicates that the early pious folk (*māḍiyūn*) did not contradict the sacred text in calling the Muslim community to act in accordance with it. Abū l-Yusr's point here seems to be that since they emulate the early pious folk, the Sunnites' theological opinions are thus also not at variance with the Quran. The second proof⁷³ is that Sunnite doctrine constitutes a "middle way" (*wasat mina l-madhāhib*) as demonstrated by its adoption of mediate positions between two extremes on at least four issues:

⁷⁰ A title that in fact only appears to have become common in the eighth/fourteenth century with al-Taftazānī. See Madelung, "Māturīdiyya," 847.

⁷¹ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 250 and 252-3. For Abū l-Mu'in's attitude toward the Ash'arites, see Wilferd Madelung, "Abū l-Mu'in al-Nasafī and Ash'arī Theology," in *Studies in Medieval Muslim Thought and History*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Farnham, England: Ashgate Variorum, 2013), 318-30

⁷² al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 244-5.

⁷³ al-Bazdawī, 135 and 244-5.

the divine attributes, the attribution of responsibility for human actions (i.e., to God and/or humans), the fate of the grave sinner in the afterlife, and the status of the Companions. Although Abū l-Yusr does not elaborate, he seems to be implying that the Prophet, Companions, Successors, and the pious after them also espoused a middle way in theology. Indeed, he explains that rational beings (*‘uqalā’*) choose the most moderate thing (*awsaṭ al-ashyā’*), including in attire, food, drink, and personal qualities (*khiṣāl*), such as courage. For instance, ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644) exhibited this tendency in his order to the Companion Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī (d. 42-53/662-73): “Be strong without brutality, gentle without weakness.”⁷⁴ Therefore, while for Abū l-Yusr being a Sunnite means abiding by the custom of the Prophet, Companions, Successors, and early pious Muslim community in theological matters, it is also rational to do so because it is the way of moderation.

In declaring Abū Ḥanīfa the leader of the Sunnites, Abū l-Yusr is right in line with his Ḥanafite predecessors. He makes this clear in the very first chapter of *Uṣūl al-dīn*: “We follow Abū Ḥanīfa, for he is our leader and exemplar in theology (*uṣūl*) and jurisprudence (*furū’*).”⁷⁵ He later expresses this in even stronger words when discussing one of the topics concerning human action: “Abū Ḥanīfa is a leader in this and every [other] matter for the Sunnites; indeed, the entire body of Sunnite doctrine has been transmitted by Abū Ḥanīfa.”⁷⁶ However, this is, to some degree, rhetoric designed to demonstrate respect for Abū Ḥanīfa as an illustrious forebear since Abū l-Yusr rejects his distinction between the meanings of the terms *mashī’a* and *irāda*.⁷⁷ The same can be said of his remark about al-Māturīdī’s *K. al-Tawḥīd* being adequate apart from aspects of its style since he also disagrees with al-Māturīdī on a number of issues, such as al-Māturīdī’s belief in the obligation of human beings to believe in and thank God before the coming of prophets,⁷⁸ denial of God’s primordial covenant with humankind (*mīthāq*),⁷⁹ and theory about sensible bodies being made up of “natures” (*ṭabā’i’*), which Abū l-Yusr rejects in favour of an atomistic conception.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ al-Bazdawī, 244.

⁷⁵ al-Bazdawī, 16.

⁷⁶ al-Bazdawī, 120.

⁷⁷ al-Bazdawī, 52-3. For Abū Ḥanīfa, *mashī’a* means “will” and *irāda* means “desire”, whereas for Abū l-Yusr and the majority of Ḥanafites, they both signify “will”. See al-Bazdawī, 52-3. See also Chapter 3 of this thesis.

⁷⁸ al-Bazdawī, 214.

⁷⁹ al-Bazdawī, 218.

⁸⁰ al-Bazdawī, 24; Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie*, 285-6; Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī and the Development*, 257-8; Rudolph, “Ḥanafī Theological Tradition,” 14.

Abū l-Yusr thus had a firm conception of the theological tradition to which he belonged and its main authorities as well as, to some extent at least, his freedom to define his own stance within it. But he was also aware of the distinct contribution that he could make to it. He found not only the *K. al-Tawḥīd* inadequate, but also the *kalām* works of the Samarqand scholars more generally.⁸¹ His purpose in writing *Uṣūl al-dīn* was to address these shortcomings: “I thus decided to write an abridged, elucidatory book in accordance with Sunnite doctrine in order that they [the Sunnites] would not stray from the earnest way and deviate from guidance. One who keeps to what I set forth in this book is on the way of the Sunnites, which is the way of the Prophet, Companions and the pious after them.”⁸²

I noted above the significance of this project for the formation of Māturīdīsm, but it may be even better appreciated after hearing what Abū l-Yusr has to say about the poor standing of *kalām* in his region (*fī diyārinā*) during his age. He tells us that the majority of jurists and imams there prevented people from studying it in public and from teaching and debating in it.⁸³ Scholars mostly concentrated on jurisprudence and blamed, despised, and forsook those who delved into *kalām*.⁸⁴ He is likely referring to the intellectual environment of Bukhara since he seems to have spent a considerable portion of his life there and because the scholars of that city are known to have exhibited anti-rationalist tendencies in theology, in contrast to the more rationalist scholars of Samarqand.⁸⁵ This divergence in approach is reflected in their positions on several issues. One is the anthropomorphic expressions about God in the Quran and hadiths, such as His “sitting” (e.g., 20:5) or “hand” (e.g., 48:10) and “eyes” (e.g., 52:48). According to Abū l-Yusr’s contemporary, Abū Shakūr al-Sālimī (fl. second half of 5th/11th century), the early Bukharans (*mutaqaddimūna min mashā’ikh Bukhārā*) insisted that such expressions must be thought to be describing attributes, the modality of which should not be speculated on (*bi-lā kayfa*), whereas the Samarqandis permitted interpreting them (*yajūzu an-yata’awwala l-mutashābih*).⁸⁶ Another, apparently more provocative question they disputed was whether faith (*īmān*) is created or

⁸¹ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 14.

⁸² al-Bazdawī, 14.

⁸³ al-Bazdawī, 15.

⁸⁴ al-Bazdawī, 264.

⁸⁵ Madelung, “The Spread,” 117n30.

⁸⁶ Abū Shakūr Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Sayyid b. Shu‘ayb al-Sālimī, *Kitāb al-Tamhīd fī bayān al-tawḥīd wa-huwa hidāya li-kull mustarshid wa-rashīd*, in *Zwischen Māturīdīya und Aṣ‘arīya: Abū Šakūr as-Sālimī und sein Tamhīd fī bayān at-tauḥīd*, by Angelika Brodersen (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press LLC, 2018), 135-6.

uncreated.⁸⁷ The Samarqandis were unanimously of the view that it is created and deemed one who believed the opposite to be ignorant. The Bukharans, in contrast, agreed that it is uncreated and prohibited praying behind one who claimed the opposite; the scholars of Farghana adopted the Bukharan stance and went a step further in sanctioning their opponents by forbidding one not only to declare faith to be created, but even to remain undecided about its status.⁸⁸

This conflict over theological approaches appears to have impacted the development of Abū l-Yusr's own method and ideas in *Uṣūl al-dīn*. On the one hand, he is firm in his endorsement of *kalām* for certain purposes.⁸⁹ He believes it is obligatory for one to learn and teach *kalām* if one has difficulty comprehending some theological issues and a simple declaration about them by an imam without a supporting rational proof does not help him. Furthermore, when a dhimmi seeks rational proofs for theological doctrines in order to convert to Islam, it is necessary to provide him with them. Therefore, studying *kalām* is permissible (*mubāḥ*) and indeed a collective duty (*farḍ kifāya*); that is, a duty that only a certain number of individuals within the community are required to fulfill.⁹⁰ The only condition is that the aspiring *kalām* student must not learn from just anybody, but rather one who is known to be a Sunnite and is both a specialist and counted among the "leaders of religion" (*a'immat al-dīn*) in *kalām*.

Judging by his own remarks, Abū l-Yusr was certainly qualified to be such a teacher. He tells us that he has a great deal of knowledge in the science that not just anybody can attain to, and that even if the most talented heretics were to gather together and debate him, he would prevail.⁹¹ He further claims to have baffled many of the most eminent Ash'arites with his

⁸⁷ See al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 158.

⁸⁸ al-Bazdawī, 158. According to Abū l-Yusr, Bukhara had not always been a hotbed of traditionalist theology. Around the end of the Sāmānid period (i.e., close of the fourth/tenth century), it had in fact become a center for the rationalist Mu'tazilites and Qadarites. This changed through the efforts of a Sunnite teacher of the vizier, the latter having otherwise favored these two groups. Positioning the vizier behind a curtain in the governing palace, the teacher first brought in a group of Sunnite imams and asked them whether a ruler should be deposed when he oppresses, commits adultery, drinks alcohol, and follows young male servants while he is aware that these actions are forbidden. They replied that he should not be removed from power but rather repent from such disobedience. The teacher then sent out the Sunnite imams and invited in Mu'tazilite and Qadarite ones. He asked them roughly the same set of questions and they responded that the ruler should indeed be removed from power. Having heard all this, the vizier ordered the Mu'tazilites and Qadarites to be rounded up and subdued, and he set about extirpating them until "there did not remain in Bukhara an eye that blinked" that did not belong to a Ḥanafite. See al-Bazdawī, 197. If true, this story might help explain the anti-rationalist zeal of the Bukharan scholars in Abū l-Yusr's time, less than a century after this alleged event.

⁸⁹ See al-Bazdawī, 16.

⁹⁰ In contrast to an individual duty (*farḍ 'ayn*), such as ritual prayer or fasting, the execution of which is incumbent on each person. On both terms, see *EF*, s.v. "Farḍ."

⁹¹ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 264.

arguments against their view of the relationship between God's attribute of creation and the created being,⁹² as well as a *kalām* expert passing through Bukhara for business with his challenge to the expert's rejection of the possibility of seeing God in the afterlife.⁹³

On the other hand, Abū l-Yusr at times reveals himself to be allied with or at least sympathetic towards the anti-rationalist scholars of his region. He defends the Bukharan doctrines that faith is uncreated⁹⁴ and that nothing is incumbent upon human beings before the missions of prophets;⁹⁵ while he interprets anthropomorphic expressions about divine actions figuratively, he considers the hand(s), eye(s), and face ascribed to God in the Quran to be attributes.⁹⁶ And although he vehemently rejects the view, which he attributes to a group of traditionists (*ahl al-ḥadīth*) and a Sufi faction, that the letters (*hurūf*) of the Quran are uncreated, he recognizes that a part of the reason they claim so is their worry that ordinary Muslims would be unable to distinguish between these letters and God's speech, so that in holding them to be created, they would also think that God's speech is created. He thus permits teaching ordinary people that the Quranic letters are uncreated if they cannot differentiate between such letters and God's speech, though they should also be ordered to believe that God's speech is uncreated.⁹⁷

Ultimately, a key concern behind Abū l-Yusr's formulation of his theology is to maintain the integrity and dominance of the group he defined as the Sunnites. He can thus both be an avid practitioner of *kalām* and appreciate the opposition towards it of many of his fellow Transoxanian scholars: their intention—"may God love them"—is only to strengthen the Sunnites in order to prevent the rise of heretics in the area, for persons of little understanding may not be able to comprehend the rational proofs used by the Sunnites to support their views and thus end up espousing heretical opinions.⁹⁸ His interest in protecting that which he believed to be orthodox appears to have been just as strong when it came to legal matters. He famously declared that it was forbidden for a Ḥanafite to follow a Ṣhāfi'ite in prayer on the basis of a report from Abū Ḥanīfa that raising one's hands before and after the bowing of the head (*rukū'*) invalidates one's

⁹² al-Bazdawī, 264.

⁹³ al-Bazdawī, 92.

⁹⁴ al-Bazdawī, 158-9.

⁹⁵ al-Bazdawī, 214-7.

⁹⁶ al-Bazdawī, 37-9 and 251. See also Chapter 5 of this thesis.

⁹⁷ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 69-70. See also Chapter 3 of this thesis.

⁹⁸ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 264.

prayer; although some Ḥanafites accepted Abū l-Yusr's ruling, many others discounted it.⁹⁹ Therefore, Abū l-Yusr was a scholar committed to defending the beliefs and practices of his party against the opposing ones of outsiders. While he was ready to allow for certain disagreements within his party, he was careful to draw and maintain clear lines between it and those who stood beyond it.

1.3 *Uṣūl al-dīn*

1.3.1 *Authorship*

In spite of having thus far treated Abū l-Yusr as the author of *Uṣūl al-dīn*, it must be noted that, in recent years, his authorship of the text has been questioned. Hans Peter Linss completed his edition of it in 1952 based on a single manuscript preserved in Ankara dating from 486/1093.¹⁰⁰ He attributed it to Abū l-Yusr, presumably because the manuscript had his name recorded as the author. In 2003, however, in the introduction to his and Marie Bernand's edition of the *K. fīhi ma'rifa*, which they also attributed to Abū l-Yusr, Éric Chaumont pointed out two disparities between the two texts making it likely that they do not belong to the same author.¹⁰¹ The first concerns their language and style; those of *Uṣūl al-dīn* are simple and clear, while those of *K. fīhi ma'rifa* are awkward and, at times, abstruse. The second is that the author of *Uṣūl al-dīn* equates the meanings of the terms *mashī'a* and *irāda*,¹⁰² while that of *K. fīhi ma'rifa* distinguishes between them.¹⁰³ Chaumont thus suggests that *Uṣūl al-dīn* may have been written by Abū l-Yusr's brother, Abū l-'Uṣr, noting that the copyist of the only known manuscript of *K. fīhi ma'rifa* attributed it to Abū l-Yusr, while the copyist of another, later manuscript of *Uṣūl al-dīn* preserved in al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem attributed it to Abū l-'Uṣr.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Madelung, "The Spread," 125n39. His passion over this issue even manifests in *Uṣūl al-dīn* when recounting the visit of a member of a deviant Sufi sect he calls the "Ilhāmiyya" to Bukhara. Despite just previously blaming this group for their antinomianism, their claim that their hearts speak to them about God, and their propagation of Karmathian teachings to the masses for a profit, what seems to outrage Abū l-Yusr most about this individual is that he raises his hands before and after the bowing in prayer, since for Abū l-Yusr this action indicates his abandonment of the school of Abū Ḥanīfa. See *Uṣūl*, 261-2.

¹⁰⁰ Linss, *Probleme*, vorwort. The manuscript was discovered by Hellmut Ritter, who described it in an article published a few years before Linss completed his edition. See Ritter, "Philologika. XIII," 305-8. For the copyist's remarks about his job, see al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 265.

¹⁰¹ Chaumont, introduction to *Kitāb fīhī ma'rifa*, 6, 6n6, 11, and 11n39.

¹⁰² al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 52-3.

¹⁰³ al-Bazdawī, *Kitāb fīhī ma'rifa*, 71.

¹⁰⁴ Bernand, who wasn't aware of this dilemma, having passed away before the completion of the edition of *K. fīhi ma'rifa* she initiated and Chaumont took over, remarked in 1982 that it was uncommon for the same author to produce a work in theology (*uṣūl al-dīn*) and legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). See Marie Bernand, "Manuscrits inédits 'd'uṣūl al-dīn' et 'd'uṣūl al-fiqh'," *Arabica* 29, no. 2 (June 1982): 218.

After Chaumont, Brodersen discussed this problem in her 2014 study of the divine attributes amongst early Māturīdites.¹⁰⁵ According to her, a manuscript preserved in Rampur Library in India under the title *Kitāb al-Muyassar fī ‘ilm al-kalām* and attributed to Abū l-‘Uṣr¹⁰⁶ is in fact another copy of *Uṣūl al-dīn*, the two only differing in their conclusions. She also cites an *‘Aqīda Abī l-Yusr al-Bazdawī* preserved in al-Aqsa Mosque,¹⁰⁷ the initial and closing passages of which match those of the Rampur manuscript, suggesting that it is likely yet another copy of *Uṣūl al-dīn*. However, as she notes, the other manuscript mentioned by Chaumont cannot be located in the al-Aqsa catalogue.

Oddly enough, neither Chaumont nor Brodersen refer to the statement of the author of *K. fīhi ma ‘rifa* that he composed it in the month of Ramaḍān 486/October 1093,¹⁰⁸ four years after the death of Abū l-‘Uṣr and seven years before that of Abū l-Yusr. This seems to be a strong indication that at least this book was written by Abū l-Yusr. Yet, if the copyist of the Ankara manuscript did attribute it to Abū l-Yusr, this would also seem to be accurate since he completed it in Ramaḍān 486/October 1093 while Abū l-Yusr was still alive. This suggests that both works were penned by Abū l-Yusr; to that effect, Brodersen mentions the possibility that *irāda* and *mashī’a* were conceived of differently in theological and juristic contexts.¹⁰⁹ However, as Chaumont recognizes, if one considers his observations about the language and style of the two works alongside the stories behind the brothers’ respective nicknames (*kunan*), a partially different conclusion may be reached. Abū l-Yusr, “father of simplicity”, is said to be called so because of the simplicity of his writings, while Abū l-‘Uṣr, “father of difficulty”, is said to be called so because of the difficulty of his writings.

Ultimately, as Chaumont concludes, the dilemma is essentially impossible to resolve today, being at bottom caused by the unique occurrence of two brothers on the same intellectual scene. In light of this situation, I maintain Abū l-Yusr as the author of *Uṣūl al-dīn* and echo Brodersen’s suggestion for a new critical edition of the book based on, in addition to the Ankara manuscript, the Rampur and al-Aqsa manuscripts that Linss was unaware of.

¹⁰⁵ Brodersen, *Der unbekannte kalām*, 29-30.

¹⁰⁶ Imtiyaz Ali Arshī, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in Raza Library Rampur*, vol. 2 (Rampur: Rampur Raza Library, 1996), 188-9. It was listed earlier by Brockelmann, *Geschichte*, vol. 1, 638.

¹⁰⁷ Khaḍīr Ibrāhīm Salāma, *Fahras Makhtūṭāt maktabat al-Masjid al-Aqṣā*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Maktabat al-Masjid al-Aqṣā, n.d.), 77.

¹⁰⁸ al-Bazdawī, *Kitāb fīhi ma ‘rifa*, 86.

¹⁰⁹ Brodersen, *Der unbekannte kalām*, 552.

1.3.2 Structure and Content

To understand the context and significance of Abū l-Yusr's discourse on the divine attributes within *Uṣūl al-dīn*, it is helpful to provide a rough outline of the book's structure and content.¹¹⁰

Table 1. Structure and Content of *Uṣūl al-dīn*

Introduction (pp. 13-14)	Theological and <i>falsafa</i> literature review
Chapter 1 (pp. 15-16)	Learning, teaching, and writing on <i>kalām</i>
Chapters 2-8 (pp. 17-23)	Epistemology
Chapters 9-11 (pp. 24-30)	The nature and constitution of the world
Chapters 12-22 (pp. 31-94)	The divine attributes and related issues
Chapters 23-25 (pp. 95-103)	The messengers
Chapters 26-32 (pp. 104-129)	The actions of humans and other created beings
Chapter 33 (pp. 130-133)	Nothing is binding on God
Chapter 34 (p. 134)	Why God created the world
Chapters 35-36 (pp. 135-147)	Grave sins (<i>al-kabā'ir</i>)
Chapters 37-42 (pp. 148-159)	Faith
Chapters 43-51 (pp. 160-171)	Eschatology
Chapter 52 (p. 171)	Destiny
Chapter 53 (pp. 172-176)	The infallibility of prophets and messengers
Chapter 54 (pp. 177-182)	The alteration of happy and miserable states in accordance with one's faith or lack thereof
Chapters 55-58 (pp. 183-190)	Positions on the Rightly Guided Caliphs
Chapters 59-67 (pp. 191-198)	The imamate and caliphate
Chapter 68 (pp. 199-202)	The best human beings after the Prophet Muḥammad and all other prophets and messengers
Chapters 69-70 (pp. 203-204)	Positions on 'Alī, Mu'āwiya I (r. 41-60/661-80; d. 60/680), and Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya (r. 60-64/680-3; d. 64/683)
Chapter 71 (pp. 205-207)	Superiority of Muslims to angels
Chapter 72 (pp. 208-209)	Ranks of human messengers, angel messengers, and the best human beings
Chapter 73 (pp. 210-211)	The fate of jinn
Chapter 74 (pp. 212-213)	The nature and function of reason
Chapter 75 (pp. 214-217)	Whether reason obligates belief in God
Chapter 76 (pp. 218-220)	The primordial covenant (<i>mīthāq</i>)
Chapter 77 (pp. 221-222)	Non-existents (<i>ma'dūmāt</i>)
Chapter 78 (pp. 223-225)	Moral status of one's mere contemplation of performing an evil act

¹¹⁰ For a summary of the positions taken on each of the following issues by Abū l-Yusr and his opponents as well as Abū l-Yusr's heresiographies and doxography, see Linss, *Probleme*, 33-74.

Chapter 79 (p. 226)	Whether language has divine or human origins
Chapters 80-81 (p. 227)	The miracle and benefit of the Quran
Chapter 82 (p. 228)	Relationship between Islam and faith (<i>īmān</i>)
Chapter 83 (p. 229)	The difference between a prophet and a messenger
Chapter 84 (p. 230)	The things God possesses but has no need of
Chapters 85-87 (pp. 231-233)	Spirit, life, and wind
Chapter 88 (p. 234)	The actions of jinn and devils
Chapter 89 (p. 235)	When repentance is accepted
Chapter 90 (pp. 236-238)	The miracles of saints
Chapter 91 (p. 239)	The fate of deceased children in the afterlife
Chapter 92 (p. 240)	The impossibility of two atoms occupying one place
Chapter 93 (p. 241)	Religious law and reality
Chapter 94 (pp. 242-243)	The possibility of knowing one aspect of a thing and being ignorant about another aspect of it
Chapter 95 (pp. 244-245)	Using the title “Sunnite”
Chapter 96 (p. 246-8)	Non-Muslim heresiography
[Chapter 97] (pp. 249-263)	Muslim doxography and heresiography
[Epilogue] (pp. 264-265)	Final remarks on <i>kalām</i> ; some notes on the composition, copying, and review of the book, as well as their historical context, by Abū l-Yusr and the copyist

What should first be noted about this outline is its confirmation of why, beyond his explicit references to al-Māturīdī, Abū l-Yusr has earned the title “Māturīdite”. Clearly, like his great predecessor, he did not restrict himself to merely enumerating the essential articles of faith, as was typical for the Eastern Ḥanafites of his time. Instead, he sought to provide a comprehensive, albeit condensed, theological treatise touching on a wide range of themes, including epistemology, ontology, prophetology, politics, natural science, human action, heresy, and more.

The divine attributes occupy a central place in the book, making up about one quarter of its content. A more detailed outline of these chapters offers a preview of what will be discussed in the rest of the thesis.

Table 2. Structure and Content of Chapters on the Divine Attributes

Chapter 12 (pp. 31-32)	Unity
------------------------	-------

Chapters 13-14 (pp. 33-42)	Incomparability and incorporeality
Chapter 15 (pp. 43-44)	Hearing and seeing
Chapter 16 (pp. 45-50)	The existence of eternal, substantive attributes subsisting in God's essence
Chapter 17 (p. 51)	Will
Chapter 18 (pp. 52-61)	What God wills
Chapter 19 (pp. 62-75)	Speech, the Quran
Chapter 20 (pp. 76-82)	Attributes of act
Chapter 21 (pp. 83-92)	The vision of God in the afterlife
Chapter 22 (pp. 93-94)	The name, naming, and the named thing

Chapters 12, 18, 21, and 22 are not covered. Unity is not included because it is a quality that all Muslims agree belongs to God and thus falls outside of the intra-Muslim discourse on the divine attributes that is our main focus. As for the issue of what God wills, it is a moral problem and hence does not pertain to our concern with the metaphysical dimension of the divine attributes, while the problem of the vision of God only indirectly concerns His attributes since it is a question of whether or not He will be seen in the afterlife. Lastly, while the divine names are not unrelated to the attributes, they are ultimately a distinct topic.

1.4 Context and Method of This Thesis

The divine attributes in Islamic theology have long been the subject of numerous studies in Western languages. Many of these studies concern Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite discussions of the topic; far fewer look at Māturīdite ones.¹¹¹ By examining Abū l-Yusr's discourse, this thesis aims to address this lack. Thus far, only two studies have looked at his discourse. The earliest is Maziah Mustapha's doctoral thesis in English submitted to the International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur in 2005.¹¹² She compares the opinions of Abū l-Yusr and al-Ash'arī on the attributes of creation, will, and speech, as well as on the anthropomorphic expressions about God

¹¹¹ Besides the two works mentioned below, Western scholarship on Māturīdite discussions is limited to sections of broader works and mostly pertains to al-Māturīdī's ideas. See, in chronological order, Manfred Götz, "Māturīdī und sein Kitāb Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān," *Der Islam* 41 (Oct. 1965): 49-51; Fathalla Kholeif, *A Study on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and His Controversies in Transoxiana* (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq Éditeurs, 1966), 89-130; Farouq 'Omar 'Abd-Allah al-'Omar, "The Doctrines of the Māturīdite School with Special Reference to *as-Sawād al-A'zam* of al-Ḥakīm as-Samarqandī," PhD diss., (University of Edinburgh, 1974), 67-74; Mustafa Cerić, *Roots of Synthetic Theology in Islam: A Study of the Theology of Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī*, ed. Sharifah Shifa al-Attas (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1996), 149-99; Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie*, 298-334; Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī and the Development*, 268-300; Madelung, "Abū l-Mu'īn al-Nasafī," 324-30. This situation reflects the general lack of scholarship on the lives, thought, and religious and cultural environments of both al-Māturīdī and his followers; in fact, many of the writings of his followers have yet to be edited. See Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī and the Development*, 17.

¹¹² Maziah Mustapha, "The *Sunni* Position on Selected Issues in *Kalam*: A Comparison between the Views of al-Ash'ari and al-Bazdawi," PhD diss., (International Islamic University, 2005).

in the Quran and hadiths. Then, as alluded to above, in 2014, Brodersen published an extensive study in German on the divine attributes amongst early Māturīdites, in which she first presents the views of Abū l-Yusr and seven other early Māturīdites separately and then analyzes them together.¹¹³ This thesis seeks to build on these two works by focusing its analysis solely on Abū l-Yusr's ideas.

As indicated by the outline of Abū l-Yusr's discussion of the divine attributes, it is a complex topic with multiple dimensions. Accordingly, it has generated a variety of approaches to and views on the problems it poses. It is well beyond our scope to review all of this variety here. Rather, I begin the following chapters with a brief account of the basic issue(s) surrounding the attribute(s) under discussion and then present and analyze Abū l-Yusr's opinions and their supporting arguments. I contextualize the more specific issues he addresses as they occur in this presentation. These chapters are themed as follows: Chapter 2) the nature of God's attributes; Chapter 3) speech, hearing, vision, and will; Chapter 4) attributes of act; and Chapter 5) anthropomorphic descriptions of God. The Appendix comprises a translation of Abū l-Yusr's chapter on God's speech.

¹¹³ Brodersen, *Der unbekannte kalām*.

Chapter 2: God's Attributes

2.1 Introduction

At the core of Muslim discourse on the divine attributes lies a fundamental disagreement over the very meaning of “attribute” as represented by the Arabic *ṣifa*. The word, in fact, does not occur in the Quran; it was borrowed from the grammarians, who understood it to include mainly two types of adjectives, the active and passive participles (*ism al-fā'il* and *ism al-maf'ūl*), but other types as well, such as those in the forms of *fa'l*, *fa'il*, and *fa'īl*, or the superlative *af'al*, which were treated as words that resemble participles (*al-mushabbaha bi-asmā' al-fā'il wa-l-maf'ūl*).¹¹⁴ The Mu'tazilites maintained precisely this meaning of *ṣifa* established by the grammarians when applied to God¹¹⁵ and distinguished between His “attributes of essence” (*ṣifāt al-dhāt*) and “attributes of act” (*ṣifāt al-fi'l*).¹¹⁶ Under the first category, most of them included such adjectives as knowing (*'ālim* or *'alīm*), powerful (*qādir* or *qadīr*), and living (*ḥayy*), and under the second one they included adjectives such as creator (*khāliq*), provider (*rāziq*), and actor (*fā'il*).¹¹⁷ A key difference between the two types of attributes, according to the Mu'tazilites, is that those of essence, being one with God, are eternal, while those of act only become applicable to Him when He performs their corresponding actions. In other words, God is eternally knowing, powerful, and living via His essence, but only becomes a creator when He creates something or a provider when He provides something.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Michel Allard, *Le problème des attributs divins dans la doctrine d'al-Aṣ'arī et de ses premiers grands disciples* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1965), 2-3; Daniel Gimaret, *La doctrine d'al-Ash'arī* (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 1990), 235.

¹¹⁵ Gimaret, 235 and 237.

¹¹⁶ On this distinction, see Otto Pretzl, *Die frühe islamische Attributenlehre: Ihre weltanschaulichen Grundlagen und Wirkungen* (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1940), 9; van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 4, 443; Josef van Ess, *Theology and Society in the Second and Third Centuries of the Hijra: A History of Religious Thought in Early Islam*, vol. 4, tr. Gwendolin Goldbloom (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2019), 496-7.

¹¹⁷ Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ismā'īl al-Ash'arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn wa-ikhtilāf al-muṣallīn*, ed. Hellmut Ritter (Višbādin: Dār al-Nashr Frānz Shtāynir, 1963), 164-5 and 179-80.

¹¹⁸ Although the Mu'tazilites were the most well-known proponents of this doctrine, it was not exclusively held by the them. Al-Ash'arī reports that it was also espoused by the majority of Khārijites, many Murji'ites, and some Zaydites. See his *Kitāb Maqālāt*, 164-5. Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 128/746) is also said to have denied that God has substantive attributes but was more rigorous than most Mu'tazilites in limiting the extent to which God can be qualified. He argued that it is unacceptable to describe God with an adjective that can be applied to anything other than Him, for doing so would involve likening God to His creation (*tashbīh*). Hence, God is neither a thing, living, knowing, nor willing; however, He is powerful, acting, creating, enlivening (*muḥyī*), and deadening (*mumūt*). See Abū Manṣūr 'Abd al-Qāhir b. Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayna l-firaq wa-bayān al-firqa al-nājiya min-hum: 'aqā'id al-firaq al-Islāmiyya wa-ārā' kibār a'lāmihā*, ed. Muḥammad 'Uthmān Khisht (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Sīnā, n.d.), 186; Abū l-Faṭḥ Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-l-nihal*, vol. 1, ed. Aḥmad Fahmī Muḥammad (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1992), 73. According to van Ess, however, this doctrine was

Despite this distinction, in the opinion of the Mu‘tazilites, God’s attributes, whether of essence or act, are nothing more than words that describe His being or action.¹¹⁹ This point as concerns the attributes of essence was strongly disputed by Sunnite theologians. In their view, these attributes are not identical with God’s essence but rather eternal entities subsisting in His essence that make it possible for one to apply the corresponding adjectives to Him. Thus, God is knowing, powerful, and living via substantive attributes of knowledge, power, and life subsisting in His essence. As for the attributes of act, the Ash‘arites sided with the Mu‘tazilites, while the Ḥanafites and Māturīdites extended to them the formula for the attributes of essence that they shared with the Ash‘arites, so that God is, for instance, creating, providing, and acting via eternal, substantive attributes of creation, provision, and action subsisting in His essence.¹²⁰ Therefore, as Abū l-Yusr aptly puts it, for his party the two types of attributes are really just the same.¹²¹

Abū l-Yusr’s outline of the Mu‘tazilite position highlights the philosophical basis on which they established it.¹²² This is the argument that, if God has substantive attributes,¹²³ they must be either eternal or temporally originated. If they are eternal, then multiple eternal beings exist; if they are temporally originated, then God is a substrate for the inherence of temporal

likely developed amongst his followers, the Jahmites, rather than espoused by Jahm himself. See *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 3, 501; *Theology and Society*, vol. 2, 564. Lastly, the Muslim philosophers likewise rejected that God has substantive divine attributes, a view that Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) made the target of one of his attacks in his famous treatise against their doctrines and for which he accused them of contradicting the entire Muslim community except the Mu‘tazilites. See his *The Incoherence of the Philosophers = Tahāfut al-falāsifah: A parallel English-Arabic text*, tr. Michael E. Marmura (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2000), 96. See also *EP*, s.v. “Falāsifa.”

¹¹⁹ *EP*, s.v. “Şifa.”

¹²⁰ For these Sunnite views, see Gimaret, *La doctrine*, 237; *EP*, s.v. “Allāh,”; *EP*, s.v. “Şifa,”; Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie*, 312-3; Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī and the Development*, 281-2. The notion of substantive divine attributes was also not only postulated by Ash‘arites and Māturīdites. It was held much earlier by two Shī‘ite theologians, Hishām b. al-Ḥakam (d. 179/795-6) and Sulaymān b. Jarīr (fl. second half of second/eighth century), as well as Ibn Kullāb (d. ca. 241/855), who synthesized the ideas surrounding it into a coherent system that two generations later was taken up by al-Ash‘arī and his contemporary Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Qalānisī. See Gimaret, *La doctrine*, 237; van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 4, 443-4; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 4, 497-8; *EP*, s.v. “Ibn Kullāb.” According to Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) as well as his student and Shādhilī Sufi Ibn Mughayzil (d. 894/1488-9), many Sufis held the view of the Ḥanafites and Māturīdites about the attributes of act. See Jalāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Ta’yīd al-ḥaqīqa al-‘aliyya wa tashdīd al-ṭarīqa al-Shādhiliyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1971), 42; ‘Abd al-Qādir b. al-Ḥusayn b. Mughayzil, *al-Kawākib al-zāhira fī ijtimā‘ al-awliyā‘ yaqzatan bi-Sayyid al-Dunyā wa-l-Ākhira*, ed. ‘Āşim Ibrāhīm al-Kayyālī (Beirut: Kitāb Nāshirūn, 2013), 330.

¹²¹ al-Bazdawī, *Uşūl*, 55-6.

¹²² al-Bazdawī, 46.

¹²³ While for the sake of precision I often write “substantive attributes” here, Sunnites like Abū l-Yusr customarily spoke of mere “attributes” when describing both their position and the Mu‘tazilite one. Hence, they could accuse the Mu‘tazilites of “denying the attributes” and portray themselves as “those who affirm the attributes” or the “adepts of the attributes”, despite the fact that the Mu‘tazilites also extensively discussed God’s attributes as they understood them. On this, see *EP*, s.v. “Şifa.”

beings. Both of these conclusions are untenable; therefore, God cannot be said to have substantive attributes. As Abū l-Yusr explains, it is precisely because of this view that the Mu‘tazilites call themselves “the people of unity” (*ahl al-tawhīd*) and believe that positing the existence of eternal, substantive divine attributes constitutes polytheism (*shirk*).

The accusation of polytheism is very strong, for it implies the exclusion of the Sunnites from the Muslim community. But of course, the Sunnites had their own arguments, both in defence of their opinion and against that of the Mu‘tazilites. In this chapter, we will examine some of these arguments as set forth by Abū l-Yusr as well as his refutation of the negative theology of the early Mu‘tazilite Ḍirār b. ‘Amr (d. 200/815).

2.2 Substantive Attributes ≠ Multiplicity

The first argument that Abū l-Yusr sets forth on this topic seeks to expose the baselessness of the Mu‘tazilite belief that positing substantive attributes for God is equivalent to positing the existence of multiple eternal beings.¹²⁴ He points out that two distinct beings (*al-ghayrayn*) are two separate existents (*mawjūdān*), of which it is possible to imagine one existing without the other. Two proofs are provided for this assertion. The first is a verse of the first chapter of the Quran: “The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, those other (*ghayr*) than those who have evoked [Your] anger or those who have gone astray,” (1:7). According to Abū l-Yusr, here God refers to infidels as being “other” than believers, which means that it is possible for Muslims to exist and infidels not to. The second proof is based on reason: the world is different from God; at one point, God existed and the world did not.

The purpose of these remarks is to contrast the distinct existence of two separate beings with the relationship between God and His attributes. God’s attributes, Abū l-Yusr explains, are of the kind that is neither distinct from nor identical with Him. He adduces the movement of a mobile being (*mutaḥarrik*) as an example of this relationship; its movement is neither different from nor identical with it. Similarly, the number ten consists of several numbers, yet they are all neither different from nor identical with the number ten itself. This principle, he argues, equally holds for God’s attributes. They are neither identical with nor different from His essence; it is impossible to conceive of His essence without His attributes and, furthermore, any of His attributes without the others. For instance, one cannot imagine His essence without His

¹²⁴ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 46-7.

knowledge and power; His knowledge without His essence; His knowledge without His power; His power without His life; and so on for the rest of His attributes. Therefore, positing substantive attributes for God does not involve assertion of otherness within Him and consequently the existence of multiple eternal beings, but rather only one eternal being.

Abū l-Yusr also points out that, in maintaining their view, the Mu‘tazilites contradict their belief that non-existents (*ma ‘dūmāt*) are things (*ashyā’*).¹²⁵ They based this doctrine on the nature of the divine act of creation as described in two verses of the Quran (16:40 and 36:82): when God wants a thing (*shay’*) to be, he simply says “Be!” to it and it is. In their view, that “thing”, although still a non-existent, must somehow be present before God creates it in order for Him to be able to say “Be!” to it.¹²⁶ Therefore, they allowed that “things” are eternal. Abū l-Yusr thus simply asks what prevents them from admitting that God’s attributes are entities that are eternal along with Him, even if this means positing the eternity of things, since they do not believe that violates God’s unity (*ishrāk*).

2.3 Quranic Proofs for God’s Substantive Attributes

Having thus shown that the Mu‘tazilites’ objection to the Sunnite view is rationally indefensible and inconsistent with their own theology, Abū l-Yusr proceeds to show that the Quran is in full support of the Sunnite position.¹²⁷ He does this wisely, citing five verses that mention verbal nouns (*maṣādir*; s. *maṣdar*) as divine attributes rather than adjectives. The Mu‘tazilite opponent is thus faced with explaining what precisely the nouns in those verses refer to if not substantive divine attributes. Abū l-Yusr’s systematic presentation of these verse-proofs, this opponent’s objections to them, and his responses to these objections lends itself to the following schematic layout of these exchanges.

Quranic Proof #1

Verse: “Verily, God is the Provider, the Possessor of Strength (*dhū l-quwwa*), the Firm,” (51:58).

Objection: God is the “Possessor of Strength” in that He is the creator and master (*mālik*) of the strength that He created for His servants. This is in the same way that it is said that a man is a “possessor of wealth” (*dhū māl*) in the sense that he is its owner (*ṣāhib*) and master.

¹²⁵ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 47.

¹²⁶ Other theologians, in contrast, insisted that only what exists can be said to be a “thing”. On their respective views, see Robert Wisnovsky, *Avicenna’s Metaphysics in Context* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2003), 148-9.

¹²⁷ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 47-8.

Rebuttal: This objection is valid with respect to bodies, but not attributes. When it is said that one is the possessor of (*dhū*) a certain attribute, such as knowledge or strength, that attribute subsists in him. The same applies to God and His attributes.

Qurānic Proof #2

Verse: “He is greater than them in strength (*quwwatan*),” (41:15).

Objection: This verse signifies that God is stronger than them. Indeed, God is truly the Strong (i.e., via His essence).

Rebuttal: In ordinary speech, saying that so-and-so is greater in strength than so-and-so amounts to an ascription of strength to the former person.

Qurānic Proof #3

Verse: “To God and His messenger belongs might (‘*izza*),” (63:8).

Objection: This means that God is the Fortifier. Fortification (*i‘zāz*) belongs to and originates from Him.

Rebuttal: In this verse, God assigns the attribute of might to Himself. Fortification is indeed also one of God’s attributes, but it is not identical with His might: fortification is an attribute of act, while might is an attribute of essence.

Qurānic Proof #4

Verse: “They do not encompass anything of His knowledge (‘*ilmihī*),” (2:255).

Objection: His knowledge here refers to the objects of His knowledge (*ma‘lūmuhu*) because it is these which may be encompassed, not His knowledge.

Rebuttal: First, God’s knowledge may be encompassed in the sense of being known about (*yu‘lam*), because His attributes, like His essence, are known about. Second, when the term “knowledge” is used, it obviously refers to knowledge as an attribute. This particular verse, however, does clearly refer to what God knows and not His knowledge, for God says, “They do not encompass *anything* (*bi-shay’*) of His knowledge,” and that which is known can be conceived of as a “thing” (*shay’*), while knowledge cannot.

Qurānic Proof #5

Verse: “He sent it [the Quran] down with His knowledge (‘*ilmihī*),” (4:166).

Objection: Descent does not occur with knowledge, but rather with power. This verse thus means that God sent the Quran down and is knowing about it; it is His known thing.

Rebuttal: The verse provides clear proof that He has knowledge. Its meaning is that God sent the Quran down and His knowledge of it is complete (*muḥīṭ*). Additionally, just as “wondrous acts” (*af‘āl ‘ajība*) in this world indicate the existence of a knowing actor and the actor’s knowledge, God’s wondrous acts indicate that He is knowing and has knowledge.¹²⁸

Clearly, in Abū l-Yusr’s mind, his Mu‘tazilite opponent can do nothing but offer figurative interpretations of the verses to avoid lending any support to the Sunnite position. Hence the opponent argues that God “has” strength in the sense that He created it and allotted it to His creatures, while His might is in fact His fortification and His knowledge is merely His known thing. Abū l-Yusr considers literal interpretation of the sacred text to be justified and more powerful, and thus in the last three rebuttals, draws his opponent’s attention to the letter of the text. In the first two rebuttals, he analogizes between ordinary and divine language. Conversely, as we will see in Chapter 5, that same strategy is crucial to support his own non-literal readings of anthropomorphic expressions in the Quran and a hadith. It appears then that Abū l-Yusr’s religio-textual hermeneutic is just as fuelled by rational considerations as that of his Mu‘tazilite opponent; it is just that the wording of the verses he chooses here happens to accord with his views.

2.4 Inferring the Unseen from the Seen

For the Mu‘tazilites, a key principle of reasoning was the “analogy of the unseen to the seen” (*qiyās al-ghā’ib ‘alā l-shāhid*): what can be said of the creature can, in some cases, also be said of God.¹²⁹ The principle also became important for Sunnites,¹³⁰ including al-Māturīdī, who devoted a special chapter of his *K. al-Tawḥīd* to laying down the rules for its application, in contrast to his Ḥanafite predecessors who merely claimed that it could be used to infer the existence of the Creator but did not comment on its scope.¹³¹ Although Abū l-Yusr, like these earlier Ḥanafites, does not specify when it should be used, he is clearly aware of its potential to support both the Sunnite and Mu‘tazilite positions. This is evinced by its employment in the fifth

¹²⁸ The interpretations of these five passages of the Mu‘tazilite exegete al-Zamakhsharī largely parallel those made in the objections. See his *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf ‘an ḥaqā’iq al-tanzīl wa-‘uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta’wīl*, ed. Khalīl Ma’mūn Thīmā (Beirut: Dār al-Ma’rifā, 2009), 1055, 967, 1110, 145 and 272-3, respectively.

¹²⁹ *EP*, s.v. “Mu‘tazila.”

¹³⁰ *EP*, s.v. “Mu‘tazila.”

¹³¹ al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 92-4; Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie*, 295-8; Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī and the Development*, 266-8.

rebuttal above as well as in several arguments designed to uphold one or the other of the two positions and which take knowledge as an example for the rest of the attributes.¹³²

In reply to a claim that a knower in this world can be knowing without knowledge and thus, it is implied, God can be knowing simply through His essence and not an attribute of knowledge,¹³³ Abū l-Yusr explains that people who are less or more knowledgeable, or even ignorant, are so because of differences in the state of their attribute (*ma'nā*)¹³⁴ of knowledge, just like things that are less or more white, black, in motion, in rest, and so on, are so because of differences in the states of the corresponding attributes; accordingly, one is not knowing in some instances and ignorant in others because his essence has changed or because the attribute of knowledge does not exist. Therefore, since a knower in this world always possesses an attribute of knowledge, so it must be with God.

Naturally, one would expect that this claim to which Abū l-Yusr responded was made by a Mu'tazilite. This is not the case, however, because while the Mu'tazilites shared the Sunnite conception of *ṣifāt* as entities when applied to created beings, they refused to extend that conception to God.¹³⁵ A second argument¹³⁶ that Abū l-Yusr must address seems to offer us at least one reason why they refused to do so. This argument affirms Abū l-Yusr's assertion that a being in this world is knowing through an attribute of knowledge since one may be knowing in some instances and ignorant in others. But it contends that the same cannot be true for God because He is knowing at all times and thus must be knowing via His essence.

Abū l-Yusr admits, of course, that God is knowing at all times, noting that ignorance is impossible for Him. However, he maintains that, like one in this world, He is knowing in each instance through knowledge, not His essence. Indeed, if God were knowing via His essence, His essence would be knowledge. This, however, is not the case, because when something is qualified by a thing, that thing is its attribute; for instance, a mobile being is qualified by movement, and thus movement is its attribute. Therefore, God is not knowing via His essence. Furthermore, the idea of a knower without knowledge is equivalent to the idea of a rational being

¹³² al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 48-50.

¹³³ al-Bazdawī, 49.

¹³⁴ Sunnites used *ma'nā* and *ṣifa* synonymously. See Gimaret, *La doctrine*, 237.

¹³⁵ Gimaret, 237.

¹³⁶ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 49-50.

without reason, a mobile being without movement, and something white without whiteness; it is therefore false, and to accept it is in fact to deny that God is even knowing.¹³⁷

Certainly, then, Abū l-Yusr's frequent use of the principle of reasoning about God on the basis of matters in this world in defence of the Sunnite doctrine, here and, as we shall see, in other chapters on the attributes, vindicates al-Māturīdī's efforts to ensure its proper employment by future scholars.

2.5 Refutation of Negative Theology

There existed amongst the Mu'tazilites different views about how their unanimous rejection of substantive divine attributes and ideas about the existence and/or nature of certain attributes should be formulated. Some of these views are countered by Abū l-Yusr in *Uṣūl al-dīn*, the first of which he ascribes to Abū Ishāq al-Nazzām (d. 220-30/835-45).¹³⁸ Al-Nazzām was born and educated in Basra, mostly within the scholarly circle of his uncle, the important Mu'tazilite Abū l-Hudhayl al-'Allāf (d. 227/842). He later moved to Baghdad where he was active in the court of the caliph al-Ma'mūn (r. 198-218/813–33; d. 218/833). His theology, unlike his poetry, was not popular since it was founded on complex philosophical speculation. In his heresiography, the Ash'arite Abū Manṣūr al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) reports that all rationalist and traditionist groups (*jamī' firqat al-umma min farīqay al-ra'y wa-l-ḥadīth*) as well as the Khārijites, Shī'ites, Najjārites, and most Mu'tazilites considered al-Nazzām an infidel, and that al-Ash'arī wrote three books refuting his ideas.¹³⁹

In spite of the contempt in which he appears to have been held by most theologians, al-Nazzām made an important contribution to the development of basic Mu'tazilite doctrine on the divine attributes. He reformulated Abū l-Hudhayl's phrase, "God is knowing via knowledge that is identical with Him (*huwa 'ālim bi-'ilm huwa huwa*),"¹⁴⁰ as "God is always knowing, living, powerful, hearing, seeing, [and] eternal via Himself (*bi-nafsihi*), not via knowledge, life, power, hearing, vision, [and] eternity."¹⁴¹ His version was subsequently adopted by the majority of

¹³⁷ al-Bazdawī, 49-50.

¹³⁸ al-Bazdawī, 50. On him, see *EP*, s.v. "al-Nazzām."

¹³⁹ al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq*, 120-1. Of course, one should bear in mind that al-Baghdādī's tone is strongly polemical throughout his heresiography. He also writes, for instance, that the types of errors propagated by the Karrāmites in his day were "more than thousands and thousands". See al-Baghdādī, 189.

¹⁴⁰ al-Ash'arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt*, 165.

¹⁴¹ al-Ash'arī, 486-7.

Mu'tazilites in Basra and Baghdad.¹⁴² Most important for us, however, is his comment that in affirming the attributes mentioned in his formula, he was both affirming God's essence and denying Him ignorance, death, weakness, deafness, and blindness,¹⁴³ and that this method of affirmation and denial applied to all essential attributes.¹⁴⁴ In other words, he saw God's attributes as both positive statements about Him and negations of their opposites.¹⁴⁵

Given al-Nazzām's stance on the divine attributes, it is a surprise to find Abū l-Yusr credit him with a different view. Abū l-Yusr phrases it thus: "We do not say that He is truly knowing. Rather, we mean [by saying that He is knowing] that He is not ignorant. Hence, if He is not truly knowing, it is not necessary that He has knowledge'." As we just saw, while al-Nazzām did indeed deny that God is ignorant and has an attribute of knowledge, he affirmed that He is truly knowing. The view related by Abū l-Yusr instead seems to have belonged to al-Nazzām's senior contemporary, Ḍirār b. 'Amr. He believed that to say that God is knowing means that He is not ignorant, that He is powerful means that He is not weak, and that He is living means that He is not dead.¹⁴⁶ He appears to have extended this principle to all divine names in the Quran, thereby arriving at a strictly apophatic theology. He was driven by a concern about making analogies between such names and their significations in human language¹⁴⁷ as well as his belief that while God's existence (*anniyya*) is known, His quiddity (*māhiyya*) is not fully known, just as one's human nature is not fully known by others.¹⁴⁸ Abū l-Yusr in fact states in *Uṣūl al-dīn* that Ḍirār considered only God to know His quiddity,¹⁴⁹ but evidently he was not aware of the negative theology that in part followed from this view.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴² van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 3, 399; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 3, 433. Shortly after their emergence, the Mu'tazilites split into the Basran and Baghdad schools. Over time, both spread well beyond their original homes and came to include distinct early and later periods of thought. See *EIF*, s.v. "Mu'tazila."

¹⁴³ And temporality, presumably.

¹⁴⁴ al-Ash'arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt*, 166-7 and 486-7.

¹⁴⁵ van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 3, 399; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 3, 433.

¹⁴⁶ al-Ash'arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt*, 166; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal*, vol. 1, 77.

¹⁴⁷ van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 3, 37-8; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 3, 40-1.

¹⁴⁸ *EIF*, s.v. "Ḍirār b. 'Amr."

¹⁴⁹ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 257

¹⁵⁰ It thus appears that at least one Mu'tazilite did not conceive of the attributes of essence as adjectives truly descriptive of God's being. This may or may not be the case since Ḍirār's identity as a Mu'tazilite has been disputed by several Mu'tazilites and non-Mu'tazilites alike. Josef van Ess, however, who has extensively studied Ḍirār's theology, considers him a Mu'tazilite. See van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 3, 35-6; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 3, 37-8. The ambivalence over categorizing him happens to be reflected in *Uṣūl al-dīn*. Abū l-Yusr first associates him with the Mu'tazilites, but later identifies the Ḍirāriyya as a Qadarite branch who agree with the Mu'tazilites on all but a few issues. See *Uṣūl*, 24, 249, and 257.

Abū l-Yusr's response to ʿDirār's doctrine consists of three brief proofs. These are not directed against the ultimate conclusion of the argument he ascribes to al-Nazzām that God does not have an attribute of knowledge; rather, they simply demonstrate that God is truly knowing. First, he again offers literal readings of descriptions of God in the Quran, which this time merely involve adjectives: God calls Himself the Knowing (*'alīm*) and the Aware (*khabīr*) in several verses. Second, he reminds us that wondrous actions only originate from a knower. And third, he alludes to the self-defeating effect of ʿDirār's claim: every essence that is not knowing is ignorant, while every essence that is not ignorant is knowing.

Chapter 3: Speech, Hearing, Vision, Will

3.1 Introduction

It was important for Abū l-Yusr to demonstrate that God's attributes are eternal entities subsisting in His essence, for he made thereby a decisive claim about the nature of each attribute. This was, however, only the first of several tasks he had to perform to shore up the Ḥanafite doctrine on the divine attributes as he conceived of it since certain attributes pose additional and finer problems requiring more specific claims and arguments. The most complex and notorious of these is undoubtedly speech. There are two basic topics of discussion concerning this attribute. The first is the nature of the attribute itself, and the second is its manifestations in the form of scriptures, most notably the Quran, along with God's speaking to Moses as recorded in Q 28:29-35. In both cases, the central question is whether the attribute and its manifestations are created or uncreated.

Once again, the debate is chiefly between the Mu'tazilites and Sunnites. For the Mu'tazilites, the whole matter is rather straightforward. Not only, they argued, does God not possess a substantive attribute of speech; He is not even to be qualified as eternally speaking via His essence. Instead, for most Mu'tazilites, God's speech is an accident (*'araḍ*) that He creates in a substrate (*maḥall*)¹⁵¹ so that the attribute and manifestations are one and the same. Sunnites, in contrast, speak of a substantive and eternal attribute of speech subsistent in God's essence via which He speaks.¹⁵² While they disagreed, as will be detailed below, over precisely what such speech consists of, the more pressing and intricate problem they faced was its relation to its manifestations in time.

Abū l-Yusr was well aware of the significance of this topic. He subtly criticizes traditionists who saw no need to label the Quran created or uncreated by insisting that it is a momentous and particularly delicate question (*min adaqq al-masā'il*) that has been discussed by early and later scholars (*al-mutaqaddimūn wa-l-muta'akhhirūn*) as well as the Rightly Guided Caliphs.¹⁵³ At roughly sixteen printed pages, his own discussion constitutes the longest chapter in *Uṣūl al-dīn*. Most of his criticism is aimed at the Mu'tazilites, although he also refutes the opinions of several other groups and individuals, such as the Ash'arites and Karrāmites as well as

¹⁵¹ *EI*², s.v. "Mu'tazila."

¹⁵² *EI*², s.v. "Kalām."

¹⁵³ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 62 and 75.

certain Sufis and traditionists. The three themes he covers are discussed in corresponding sections below: definitions of speech, eternity of God’s speech, and the manifestations of God’s speech. We will then look at his brief discussions of God’s hearing, vision, and will.

3.2 Definitions of Speech

3.2.1 *The Ḥanafite Definition*

The first step Abū l-Yusr takes to establish the Ḥanafite doctrine on divine speech is to provide a definition of speech. He certainly does not get any help from the Mu‘tazilites, since he considers that their definition as “arranged letters and sounds articulated in a particular manner” (*hurūf manzūma wa-aṣwāt muqatta‘a bi-taqī‘ khāṣṣ*)¹⁵⁴ is conceptually wrong. Furthermore, it only allows God to be called a speaker in a metaphorical sense by virtue of His creation of speech in another being, just like the one who orders others to build, rather than building himself, is called a builder.¹⁵⁵ What Abū l-Yusr is seeking instead is a notion of speech that permits it to be applied to both God and His creatures. He begins with three similar definitions current amongst

¹⁵⁴ The more common formulation appears to be simply “arranged letters and articulated sounds”. See Ibn Aḥmad al-Asadābādī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-‘adl*, vol. 7 (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1961), 3; *EI*², s.v. “Mu‘tazila.” Abū l-Yusr also attributes this concept of speech to “the affirmers of the createdness of the Quran”, presumably those to whom he previously ascribes the view that God’s speech is created, namely, the Khārijites, Murji‘ites, Shī‘ites (*rawāfiḍ*), Jabbārites (including Jahm b. Ṣafwān and Bishr al-Marīsī [d. 218/833]), and Karrāmites. See al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 62-3. In his list of those who prescribed to the doctrine of the created Quran, al-Ash‘arī mentions only the first three of these groups. See his *Kitāb Maqālāt*, 582. *Rawāfiḍ* (sing. *rāfiḍa*) is a term generally used to refer to either the “proto-Imāmites” (and later the Twelver Shī‘ites) or various Shī‘ite sects. It was originally meant to be pejorative, but the Imāmites quickly transformed it into an honorific title. See *EI*², s.v. “al-Rāfiḍa.” Abū l-Yusr seems to apply the title to both categories of Shī‘ites. As a doctrine shared between different Shī‘ite sects, he cites the view that ‘Alī is more knowledgeable, god-fearing, courageous, and noble than all other Companions of the Prophet, and details some opinions held exclusively by either the Imāmites, Zaydites, or certain extremist sects (*ghulāt*). See al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 254-5. According to al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), an early and major Twelver Shī‘ite scholar, all Imāmites, with the exception of a few deviants, believed that God’s speech and the Quran are created. See al-Shaykh al-Mufīd Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nu‘mān b. al-Mu‘allim, *Awā‘il al-maqālāt*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī (Mahar: al-Mu‘tamar al-‘Ālamī li-Alfiyyat al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, 1413 [1992-3]), 52-3. The label “Jabbārites” (*jabbāriyya* or *mujbira*) is derogatory and was arbitrarily applied by Muslim theologians to opponents whom they believed to espouse the doctrine of *jab* (compulsion), namely, the belief that only God truly acts, not human beings. Hence, the Mu‘tazilites applied it to traditionists, Ash‘arites and others who rejected their conception of free will, while Ash‘arites applied it to the Jahmites. See *EI*², s.v. “Djabriyya.” Abū l-Yusr classifies the Jabbārites into two groups, the Jahmites and Marīsites, each named after its respective leader, Jahm b. Ṣafwān and Bishr al-Marīsī. See al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 249 and 258. Jahm is in fact believed to be the first figure to have explicitly professed the doctrine of the created Quran; Bishr was eventually called a Jahmite for his adoption of it. See *EI*², s.v. “Bishr b. Ghiyāth al-Marīsī.” Lastly, the Karrāmites had a nuanced and unique understanding of God’s speech and the Quran, which is discussed below. Whether all these groups and their various adherents espoused the Mu‘tazilite definition of speech as Abū l-Yusr suggests is beyond the scope of our investigation here. It is enough for our purposes to frame the debate on God’s speech and its manifestations as being between the Mu‘tazilites and Sunnites overall since they have historically been its key participants.

¹⁵⁵ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 63-4.

the Ḥanafites.¹⁵⁶ The first is that speech is that which muteness and silence lack.¹⁵⁷ The second supplements the first, adding that speech is also heard (*masmūʿ*) and precludes muteness and silence. And the third posits that speech is both heard and comprehensible (*mafḥūm*) and that muteness and silence lack it.

Although these definitions emphasize the difference between speech on the one hand and muteness and silence on the other, we would be misled if we supposed that, in the view of the Ḥanafites, speech thus necessarily comprises sound. In fact, Abū l-Yusr explains, neither sound nor a specific structure (*bunya makhṣūṣa*) are conditions for it; rather, its only absolute condition is a permanent essence (*dhāt bāqin*). However, if an act of speech is volitional, it also requires life because volition needs life. This principle is in fact not unique to speech but roughly applies to all attributes. Knowledge, for instance, does not require a brain, heart, or specific structure to exist, but rather only a permanent essence and life.¹⁵⁸

3.2.2 Refutation of the Muʿtazilite Definition

The Ḥanafite understanding of speech as described by Abū l-Yusr may sound quite strange to a reader accustomed to think of vocal enunciation as an essential component of speech. But the goal, again, is to allow speech to be ascribed to God, something very important to Abū l-Yusr and his fellow Ḥanafites, perhaps because it preserves the idea of a personal God whom the ordinary believer can easily comprehend and relate to. The importance of this capacity for these theologians is highlighted by four arguments Abū l-Yusr raises against the idea of God being a speaker in a purely metaphorical sense.¹⁵⁹ First, God attributes speech to Himself in many verses of the Quran; for instance, “And God spoke to Moses directly,” (4:164). Second, God commands, prohibits, informs, and inquires, actions that are only possible for a speaker. Third, speech is among the praiseworthy attributes of a thing, and God is truly the Praiseworthy One (*al-*

¹⁵⁶ al-Bazdawī, 63.

¹⁵⁷ *al-kalām mā yanbaghī bi-hi l-kharas wa-l-sukūt*. This rather puzzling phrase might be rendered in at least two other ways. First as, “Speech is that which requires muteness and silence.” However, besides being illogical, this rendering does not accord with the other details Abū l-Yusr provides about speech. Second, reading *mā* with its negating function, as, “Speech does not require muteness and silence.” But this conflicts with a part of the third definition without the use of *mā*, namely, *yanbaghī bi-hi l-kharas wa-l-sukūt*, which, if read in the same sense, posits that speech “requires muteness and silence”. Brodersen (*Der unbekannte kalām*, 323) simply substitutes *yunāfi* (precludes), which Abū l-Yusr uses in the second definition and later on in his discussion (p. 68), for *yanbaghī bi-hi*.

¹⁵⁸ As for the speech of inanimate beings (*jamādāt*), Abū l-Yusr explains that if it is volitional, then God created life (*ḥayāt*) in them because life is a condition for volition; if it is not volitional, it is possible that it exists without life. See al-Bazdawī, 64.

¹⁵⁹ al-Bazdawī, 67.

mamdūh). And fourth, a being's lack of speech is a deficiency, for such a condition is connected with muteness, silence, and ignorance, and constant silence is a defect in this world because it is due to the inability either to speak or to properly express oneself, while also meaning that the being does not command, prohibit, or inform, which is another deficiency.

From these objections, it seems that, as far as Abū l-Yusr is concerned, for one to say that God only speaks in a metaphorical sense is to say that He does not speak at all. This assessment, of course, would not be appreciated by the Mu'tazilites, who readily and earnestly spoke of God's speech and His role as a speaker.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, two prominent Mu'tazilites, Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī and his son Abū Hāshim (d. 321/933), circumvented the criticism about metaphor by defining a speaker as "one who makes speech (*man fa'ala l-kalām*)" rather than "one in whom speech subsists (*man qāma bihi l-kalām*)".¹⁶¹

Yet even if these four arguments are not enough to take down the Mu'tazilite position, Abū l-Yusr could always fall back on three additional ones directed at the Mu'tazilite definition of speech itself.¹⁶² The first of these arguments concerns the first two parts of the definition (arranged letters and articulated sounds) and the other two concern its third part (in a particular manner). To begin, letters cannot be "arranged", because they are various sounds. For instance, the letter "kāf" (ك) is a sound occurring (*yaqa'u*) in the uvula, the letter "hā" (ح) is a sound occurring in the throat, and the letter "bā" (ب) is a sound occurring on the lip. Letters are called so because "letter" (*ḥarf*) means "side" (*jānib*), and letters occur on the sides of the mouth in the form of sound. Although this latter statement (that letters occur on the sides of the mouth in the form of sound) appears to contradict the claims of the preceding sentence, it is perhaps best explained with reference to the concept of letters espoused by classical Arab philologists that Abū l-Yusr appears to be drawing on. In their view, letters are simply sounds that originate in the chest and are transported up the throat and through the mouth by the breath, being shaped in the meantime into their specific pronunciations by the articulatory organs.¹⁶³ Hence, what Abū l-Yusr

¹⁶⁰ 'Abd al-Jabbār, for instance, describes the standard Mu'tazilite doctrine as follows: "God's speech is a type of speech intelligible in this world (*min jins al-kalām al-ma'qūl fī-l-shāhid*), namely, arranged letters and articulated sounds. It is an accident [that] God creates in bodies in a way that makes it heard and its meaning understood. The angel conveys it to the prophets in accordance with the extent to which He commands through it and knows it will benefit [humankind]. It encompasses orders, prohibitions, reports, and all types [of communication], just like human speech." See his *al-Mughnī*, 3.

¹⁶¹ al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal*, 67; Gimaret, *La doctrine*, 310; Brodersen, *Der unbekannte kalām*, 565.

¹⁶² al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 63-4.

¹⁶³ J.R.T.M. Peters, *God's created speech: A study in the speculative theology of the Mu'tazilī Qādī l-Quḍāt Abū l-Ḥasan 'Abd al-Jabbār bn Aḥmad al-Hamaḍānī* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 296.

seems to mean is that, while the three letters listed above are formed into their specific pronunciations by the uvula, throat, and lip, respectively, they eventually exit via one's mouth and thus pass the sides of it.

Having thus established that letters are actually sounds, Abū l-Yusr next explains that sounds are accidents (*a'rāḍ*), which means that, due to their impermanence, they cannot be arranged, and they cannot be articulated, since articulation is only possible for bodies (*ajsām*).

In refuting the third part of the Mu'tazilite definition of speech, Abū l-Yusr presents a more complete version of it, namely, one that adds the phrase, "In a particular, unknown manner that is impossible to explain." In his view, failing to specify the manner of the articulation invalidates this definition for it leads to the sounds of, for instance, a trumpet and thunder being considered arranged letters and articulated sounds. Moreover, the purpose of a definition is to make something known (*lil-i'lām*). Trying to make an unknown thing known through another unknown thing is unsound and, frankly, completely stupid.

3.2.3 Refutation of the Definition of Ibn al-Rāwandī and the Ash'arites

In spite of how crucial Abū l-Yusr believed it to be to provide a definition of speech that allows it to be literally ascribed to God, he opposes a concept of human speech that equally exhibits this capacity, which he attributes to Abū l-Ḥusayn Ibn al-Rāwandī (d. middle or end of the fourth/tenth century)¹⁶⁴ and "some Ash'arites", who he claims relay it from al-Ash'arī himself.¹⁶⁵ As Abū l-Yusr describes it, human speech subsists in the heart (*qalb*); what is spoken with the tongue is an expression (*'ibāra*) of that speech but not identical with it and thus may only be said to be speech in a metaphorical sense.

This is indeed precisely how Ibn al-Rāwandī seems to have conceived of speech.¹⁶⁶ Al-Ash'arī drew on his thinking as well as that of Ibn Kullāb to arrive at a more elaborate view: speech is an entity (*ma'nā*)¹⁶⁷ subsisting in the soul (*nafs*); letters, sounds, and the words they

¹⁶⁴ Ibn al-Rāwandī was a highly controversial thinker. Originally a member of the Mu'tazilite school, he left it and wrote refutations of its doctrines before turning to Shī'ism for a time and then engaging in free thought. Among the contentious aspects of his thought are his criticism of prophethood, especially that of Muḥammad; his belief in the irrationality and therefore unacceptability of religious dogmas; his insistence that the miracles of the prophets are fabricated; and his assertion that the Quran is not revealed scripture. He covered up his adherence to these views by claiming that they were the statements of the Brahmans (*barāhima*). See *EP*, s.v. "Ibn al-Rāwandī."

¹⁶⁵ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 67.

¹⁶⁶ See van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 4, 310; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 4, 349.

¹⁶⁷ I.e., substantive attribute.

form, as well as writing (*kitāba*) and signs (*ishārāt*), give expression to this speech.¹⁶⁸ Notable is the location of speech in the “soul” (*nafs*) rather than the heart (*qalb*) because this permitted it to be analogized with God whose *nafs* could be thought to represent His essence.¹⁶⁹ By virtue of this term, al-Ash‘arī’s theory became known amongst his followers as *kalām al-nafs* (or *ḥadīth al-nafs*), gaining special prominence in ‘Abd al-Malik al-Juwaynī’s (d. 478/1085) *Kitāb al-Irshād*, where he employed it against the Mu‘tazilite and Karrāmīte views.¹⁷⁰

Abū l-Yusr’s criticism of this concept of speech is brief and sharp. He judges the idea that speech subsists in the heart to be so manifestly wrong that it requires no explanation. Suffice it to say that it amounts to ascribing to a human being what is the opposite of speech, for the “thing” (*shay’*) in the heart that the definition refers to (i.e., supposed speech) is actually silence. Since one who is silent is not speaking, that thing can in no way be speech.

The brevity of these comments suggests that Abū l-Yusr is appreciative of the fact that, although conceptually false, ascribing such speech to God would not necessarily compromise the transcendence and eternity of His speech as does the Mu‘tazilite definition. The enormous threat that the Mu‘tazilite definition poses to these aspects of the attribute affirmed by all Sunnites is illustrated by another argument against it, this time aimed specifically at its preclusion of the eternity of divine speech.

3.3 The Eternity of God’s Speech

Abū l-Yusr presents and defends one proof for the eternity of God’s attribute of speech.¹⁷¹ It is based on Q 16:40: “Indeed, Our word to a thing when We intend it is but that We say to it, ‘Be!’ and it is.” What this verse means, he explains, is that God creates things through His utterance of the word “Be” (*bi-kalāmihī “kun”*). Thus, if the word “Be” were created, it would have to have been created through a preceding “Be”, which itself would had to have been created through a preceding “Be”, and so on *ad infinitum*, so that nothing at all could ever have been created. Therefore, this verse demonstrates that God’s attribute of speech is uncreated.

To avoid arriving at this conclusion, a Mu‘tazilite could interpret the meaning of the verse in at least two ways. First, he could argue that it is a metaphor illustrating the rapidity of creation

¹⁶⁸ Gimaret, *La doctrine*, 201 and 204-5.

¹⁶⁹ Gimaret, 203-4.

¹⁷⁰ ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Abdallāh al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Irshād ilā qawāḥi’ al-adilla fī uṣūl al-i’tiqād*, ed. Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Sāyih and Tawfīq ‘Alī Wahba (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 2009), 95-115; Allard, *Le problème*, 391-2; *EI*, s.v. “Kalām.”

¹⁷¹ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 65-6.

because things are created through God’s act of creation, not through His speech. For Abū l-Yusr, this interpretation is wrong because while the verse does indeed illustrate the rapidity of God’s act of creation, this act occurs through His speech. In fact, with God’s statement that He creates things with His word “Be”, a distinction is made between His act of creation, as it occurs through the utterance of “Be”, and the created thing; this is a proof against another doctrine held by most of this opponent’s fellow Mu‘tazilites, namely, that God’s act of creation is identical with the created being.¹⁷²

The second possible Mu‘tazilite interpretation of Q 16:40 is that it establishes that God’s speech is not pre-eternal (*azalī*) since it states that God’s utterance of “Be” succeeds His will; that is, God first wills something to be and then says “Be!” and it is.¹⁷³ Given his conviction that all the divine attributes are eternal, this reading poses no challenge to Abū l-Yusr. Neither God’s will nor speech, he retorts, are temporally originated, and thus it is impossible that one of them could precede the other.¹⁷⁴

3.4 The Manifestations of God’s Speech

3.4.1 Refutation of the Karrāmite Doctrine

Although as a Sunnite it was crucial for Abū l-Yusr to demonstrate the eternity of God’s speech, that tenet raises another problem, namely, the relationship between eternal speech and its manifestations in time. Before examining Abū l-Yusr’s solution to this dilemma, we may look at why he refuses to accept the solution set forth by the Karrāmites.¹⁷⁵ They argued that God’s speech (*kalām Allāh*) is His capacity to speak (*al-quḍra ‘alā l-takallum*) and is eternal; in contrast, His “utterance” (*qawl*), or an instance of speech resulting from the employment of this capacity, such as the Quran, is temporally originated (*ḥādīth*), but uncreated and subsists in

¹⁷² al-Bazdawī, 66. A clearer version of this argument is found in al-Bazdawī, 78-9. As I will discuss in Chapter 4 of this thesis, the expression, “the act [or attribute] of creation is identical with the created being” (*al-ṭjād huwa ‘ayn al-mawjūd*) was used by Ash‘arites and most Mu‘tazilites to deny that God has a substantive attribute of creation through which He creates things. In their view, this attribute, which is simply a description of His action, only becomes applicable to Him when He creates something.

¹⁷³ This is one of the many arguments ‘Abd al-Jabbār makes for the temporality of God’s speech. See his *al-Mughnī*, 168; Peters, *God’s created speech*, 380.

¹⁷⁴ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 66.

¹⁷⁵ The Karrāmites were a theological, juristic, and ascetic group active primarily in the region of present-day Iran and Afghanistan from the third/ninth to the seventh/thirteenth centuries. For a brief outline of their historical development and main doctrines, see Aron Zysow, “Karrāmiyya,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1-13, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199696703.013.29>.

God.¹⁷⁶ To prove this doctrine, they cited certain events recounted in the Quran.¹⁷⁷ God must have commanded Moses to throw down his cane (27:10) after He created Moses, gave him the cane and the cane was in his hand. Likewise, God must have declared that Adam disobeyed his Lord (20:121) after He created him. These verses thus testify to the temporal origination of speech from God (i.e., His utterance), though He is pre-eternally (*fī l-azal*) capable of speaking.¹⁷⁸

Another version of this scriptural argument draws attention to the acts of informing (*ikhbār*) and commanding (*ṭalab*) in these two verses as well as of inquiring (*istikhbār*) in another verse.¹⁷⁹ God informed us that Adam disobeyed Him and went astray (20:121), commanded Moses to throw down his cane (27:10), and inquired what was in Moses' right hand (20:17). How, therefore, could His speech (i.e., His utterance) not have originated in time while His acts of informing, commanding, and inquiring did?

Given the Ḥanafite definition of speech as outlined above, it is already clear why Abū l-Yusr must reject this Karrāmīte doctrine. He begins his refutation by pointing out its lack of logic. Just as the capacity to move is not movement itself, the capacity to speak is not speech itself; one merely capable of speaking is thus not necessarily speaking. Hence, what the Karrāmīte view in fact implies is that God's speech is temporal.¹⁸⁰

Abū l-Yusr next shows that the metaphysical grounds of the Karrāmīte doctrine are just as weak. For one thing, God cannot be a substrate for temporal beings (*ḥawādith*) because He would then change as they changed, and change for the Eternal (*al-qadīm*) is impossible since He is at

¹⁷⁶ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 62. See also al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq*, 192; Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 300-2; Zysow, "Karrāmiyya," 10. Abū l-Yusr specifically names Ibn Haysām as a Karrāmīte who held this view.

¹⁷⁷ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 65.

¹⁷⁸ Abū l-Yusr also ascribes this view of God's speech and the Quran as well as the accompanying argument to the Ḥanbalites, but this ascription is questionable. For one thing, they did not conceive of God's speech as His capacity to speak, but rather as eternal words and sounds subsisting in His essence. See A.S. Tritton, "The Speech of God," *Studia Islamica* 36 (1972): 8. As for the Quran, they believed it to be uncreated but, unlike the head of their school, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), came to explicitly equate its uncreatedness with its eternity. This equation was strongly rejected by the later Ḥanbalite Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), who instead proposed a teaching that resembles that of the Karrāmītes. He contended that God's speech is eternal in its species (*jins*) but not in its particular manifestation (*'ayn*). Thus, as God spoke the Quran in time, the Quran is not eternal; however, it is uncreated because His speech acts subsist in His essence. See Wilferd Madelung, "The Origins of the Controversy concerning the Creation of the Koran," *Orientalia Hispanica sive studia F.M. Pareja octogenario dicata*, ed. J.M. Barral, vol. I/1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), 523-5 and 524n4. For Ibn Taymiyya's view, see also Jon Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 17-8, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199696703.013.014>.

¹⁷⁹ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 74.

¹⁸⁰ al-Bazdawī, 62.

every instant necessarily existent with His attributes.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, to contend that the Quran is temporal yet uncreated is even more evil than to simply assert that it is created, for while origination in time (*ḥudūth*) through an act of creation is conceivable, it is impossible without it.¹⁸² What Abū l-Yusr considers to be evil is perhaps not only the misconception of the nature of creation involved in this view, but also its possible implication (even if not embraced by the Karrāmites) that the Quran simply came to be on its own, thus severing its direct connection to God.

Neither do the Karrāmites' scriptural references make their view any more convincing for Abū l-Yusr, who is careful to rebut each version of the argument based on them.¹⁸³ As to the first version, he explains that God speaks with an eternal and single (*wāḥid*) speech without beginning and end. With this speech, He speaks with people at different times, such as Moses after He created him when He commanded him to throw down his cane. How precisely this works, however, ultimately cannot be explained since there is no "howness" (*kayfiyya*) for His speech just as there is no howness for His essence, and inquiring about the howness of that for which there is no howness is impossible. Thus Abū l-Yusr, despite offering a definition of speech that can be literally ascribed to God, emphasizes that divine speech is finally beyond human comprehension.

To the second version of the Karrāmite argument, Abū l-Yusr offers two responses, each of which is represented as the view of some Sunnites.¹⁸⁴ In the first response, the reduction of speech to mere acts of informing, commanding, and inquiring that the argument seems to imply is rejected, and the Ḥanafite notion of speech as that which precludes muteness and silence and is heard and understood is reiterated. Such speech has been established for God and in its divine form is forever atemporal (*lam yazal ghayr ḥādith*), eternal, and single. With it, God informed us about Adam's disobedience, commanded Moses to throw down his cane, and asked Moses what was in his right hand.

In the second response, it is conceded that speech consists of informing, commanding, and inquiring. Via His one eternal speech, God informs, commands, and inquires in pre-eternity, the present, and the future. He informed in pre-eternity that He is the Glorious, Holy, and Lord of

¹⁸¹ al-Bazdawī, 67 and 73-4.

¹⁸² al-Bazdawī, 65.

¹⁸³ al-Bazdawī, 74-5.

¹⁸⁴ al-Bazdawī, 74-5.

the angels and spirit, and bore witness to His oneness; He informed us about Adam's disobedience in the present;¹⁸⁵ and He will speak with the believers in heaven. While this concession seems to dismiss the definition of speech espoused by Abū l-Yusr and other Ḥanafites, it maintains a distinction between God's speech as an eternal entity and the different communicative acts He performs with it. Naturally, then, Abū l-Yusr considers the second response to be as valid as the first one.

3.4.2 *Scripture as a Manzūm*

The Mu'tazilite conception of the Quran as a purely created entity is no more appealing to Abū l-Yusr than the Karrāmite one. But that does not mean that he is able to simply ignore it. This is because certain aspects of scriptures the Mu'tazilites point to in order to demonstrate their createdness are undeniable: the Quran has a beginning and end; the Quran is made up of parts, some of which abrogate others; the Quran was sent down from the Preserved Tablet to the worldly heaven;¹⁸⁶ there is Arabic scripture and Hebrew scripture; and scriptures are written, recited, memorized, heard, transported from one place to another and erased after having been written down.¹⁸⁷ Additionally, they enlist verses of the Quran for support.¹⁸⁸ First, 43:3 states, "We made it (*ja 'alnāhu*) an Arabic Quran." They argue that the verbal noun *ju 'l*, derived from the infinitive *ja 'ala*, commonly meaning "to make" or "to produce",¹⁸⁹ and of which the plural first person, past tense form is used in this verse (*ja 'alnā*), means "creation" (*khalq*) and "existentiality" (*ijād*). Second, 3:7 mentions that the Quran includes "ambiguous" verses (*mutashābihāt*), and these bear the marks of temporal origination (*ḥudūth*). And third, in 21:2 the Quran is called a "created revelation (*dhikr muḥdath*)."¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ "He informed [us] about Adam's disobedience with His pre-eternal speech, not in pre-eternity." What Abū l-Yusr seems to mean is that God spoke of Adam's disobedience at the moment when He revealed his story in the Quran.

¹⁸⁶ Q 85:22 affirms that the Quran is *fī lawḥ maḥfūz*, which could mean either "in a Preserved Tablet" or "preserved in a tablet". In Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī's (d. 310/923) view, there is little difference between the two readings since both indicate that the Quran is protected from alteration. See *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, s.v. "Preserved Tablet."

¹⁸⁷ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 65.

¹⁸⁸ al-Bazdawī, 65.

¹⁸⁹ As a first definition of the verb, William Lane writes, "He made a thing," and mentions *ṣana'a* as a synonym for it, though he notes that it has a more general meaning than *ṣana'a* as well as *fa'ala* and their equivalents. However, in some of his examples of the verb in use, he translates it as "created" and "brought into being". See his *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, bk. 1, pt. 2 (London; Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1865), 430-1.

¹⁹⁰ Needless to say, this is not how *muḥdath* in this verse is usually translated into English; it is instead often rendered as "new" or "recent". But this translation captures the sense in which the Mu'tazilites interpret its meaning here. For their references to 43:3 and 21:2 in support of their doctrine, see also, respectively, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī: al-mushahhar bi-l-tafsīr al-kabīr wa-mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, vol. 27 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 194; al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī*, vol. 22, 140.

To respond to these proofs, Abū l-Yusr introduces the concept of *manzūm* (pl. *manzūmāt*), “composition”.¹⁹¹ Essentially, the term as he uses it designates a communication, whether human or divine. This communication or *manzūm* may be in the form of a text, such as the poem of a poet or a scripture such as the Quran, or simply a transmitted message, such as the sermon of a preacher or message of a messenger. Most importantly, the *manzūm* does not involve the actual speech of its composer, but rather is only indicative of (*dāllan ‘alā*) that speech.

Besides these general details, Abū l-Yusr offers little information about the nature of the Quranic *manzūm*. He insists that it is unnecessary to explain further. It is enough, he says, to know that it is a *manzūm* that God has composed; His composition of it is His action, and He is eternal with His actions. It is created because that which is other than God (*ghayr Allāh*) is created, and it is other than God because it is not a divine attribute. It might have been created in the Tablet or in an angel, but that is also not necessary to specify. The important thing is that its creation does not compromise the transcendence of God’s speech because while it is called the Book of God as well as the Quran, it is not God’s speech itself, but merely indicative of (*dāllan ‘alā*) it. In other words, it may be said to be God’s speech in a purely metaphorical sense in virtue of its being indicative of His speech.¹⁹²

With this notion of the *manzūm* in place, Abū l-Yusr is now in a position to address the proofs for the createdness of scripture cited by his Mu‘tazilite opponent. He does this with precision, designating them one by one as aspects of a divinely authored *manzūm* and thereby disassociating them from God’s attribute of speech itself.¹⁹³

To begin with, God’s *manzūm* has a beginning, end, number, and parts, and is transported from one place to another; in contrast, His speech is single; subsistent in His essence; devoid of beginning, end, number and parts; and not transported.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 68.

¹⁹² The last two sentences are based on the 1963 edition of *Uṣūl al-dīn*, which reads as follows: *Wa-hādhā l-manzūm yusammā Kitāb Allāh ta‘ālā, wa-yusammā l-Qur‘ān, wa-huwa ghayr kalām Allāh ta‘ālā; bal, huwa dāll ‘alā kalām Allāh ta‘ālā. Wa-yuṭlaqu ‘alā hādhā l-manzūm anna-hu kalām Allāh ta‘ālā bi-ṭarīq al-majāz li-kawnihi dāllan ‘alā kalāmihi.* In the 2002 edition that I mainly use, *Kitāb Allāh* reads *kitāb lil-lāh*, and the portion from *bal* to the fourth *ta‘ālā* is omitted. This makes Abū l-Yusr to say, rather nonsensically, that the Quranic *manzūm* is “not God’s speech in a metaphorical sense in virtue of its being indicative of His speech.” See al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 68; Abū l-Yusr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Bazdawī, *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Hans Peter Linss (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya, 1383/1963), 61.

¹⁹³ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 68-71.

¹⁹⁴ al-Bazdawī, 68 and 70.

As for abrogation, it concerns God’s legal rules (*ḥukm*) and their durations, which they have because God rules (*yaḥkumu*) whatever and whenever He wishes to. As the abrogation of God’s speech itself is impossible, it applies to His *manzūm* through which His legal rules are stipulated. This abrogation consists of the annulation of the recitation of a passage that was originally a part of the scripture (*raf’ hiḏ al-tilāwa ‘an qulūb al-‘ibād*). An example is provided in the following statement of ‘Umar: “Among that which was recited in the Quran is, ‘When an old man and old woman commit adultery, stone them as an exemplary punishment from God. God is Mighty and Wise’.”¹⁹⁵

God’s *manzūm*, not His speech itself, descended (*anzala*) from the Preserved Tablet to the worldly heaven, and from there to the earth. Confirmation of this is Q 44:2-3, “By the Clear Book (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*), We indeed sent it down (*anzalnāhu*) on a blessed night.” The “Book” here is a name for the Quranic *manzūm* for “book” (*kitāb*) signifies a written thing (*al-maktūb*), and the Quranic *manzūm* is a written thing. This is similar to how it is said that a vizier “sends down” (*anzala*) the speech of a ruler from the citadel when he delivers (*anzala*) the ruler’s message (*kitāb*).¹⁹⁶

God’s speech itself does not exist in any language. Arabic, the language of the Quran, and Hebrew, the language of the Torah, are attributes of the Quranic and Torahic *manzūmān*, respectively. However, it is in virtue of such languages that God’s speech is written in books, memorized in hearts, recited with tongues, and heard with ears, though it does not inhere (*ghayr ḥāllin*) in any of these entities. Rather, it subsists in God’s essence because speech, whether divine or human, subsists in the essence of its speaker and does not disjoin from it. Nonetheless, one who writes, memorizes, recites, and hears God’s *manzūm* truly, not metaphorically, writes, memorizes, recites, and hears God’s speech. The evidence for this is how the occurrence of these actions is expressed in ordinary language. One is said, for instance, to have memorized the speech of another person when he has memorized the poetry (i.e., the *manzūm*) that the person composed (*naẓama*); the same scenario applies to reciting and hearing.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ al-Bazdawī, 69. For a similar version of this narration, see Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, “Sahih Muslim 1691 a,” Sunnah, accessed March 28, 2020, <https://sunnah.com/muslim/29/21>.

¹⁹⁶ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 69.

¹⁹⁷ Presumably also writing, which seems to have been noted where there is a gap in the manuscript. For this paragraph, see al-Bazdawī, 70-1.

It is hard to reconcile the claim that one truly deals with God’s speech in performing these actions with Abū l-Yusr’s previous statement that the speech of a *manzūm* is indicative rather than constitutive of the speech of its composer. In the case of hearing God’s speech, Abū l-Yusr supports it by proposing a kind of divine intervention. He relates, with approval, the view of some Ḥanafites that it is possible that God causes his speech to be heard (*yusmi’ kalāmahu*) in the recitation of the Quran so that His speech and the reciter’s speech are witnessed simultaneously (*mushāhad ma’an*); this is because God’s speech is permanent (*bāqin*), unlike human speech, which is an accident (*‘araḍ*).¹⁹⁸ In holding this view, however, Abū l-Yusr stood alone amongst his fellow early Māturīdites who rejected the possibility of truly hearing God’s speech.¹⁹⁹

Finally, as for the verses of the Quran cited by his Mu‘tazilite opponent, Abū l-Yusr does not feel the need to offer alternative interpretations. Like the empirical aspects of scripture, he can simply claim that they all refer to the Quranic *manzūm* and not God’s speech.²⁰⁰

So far, Abū l-Yusr demonstrates his capacity to defend his conception of the relationship between God’s speech and scripture against the proofs of his Mu‘tazilite opponent for the createdness of scripture not by refuting or denying these proofs, but rather incorporating them into his own theory.²⁰¹ His final step in consolidating his notion of the Quranic *manzūm* is to briefly discuss the revelation and canonization of the Quran.²⁰² Specifically, he wants to prevent any misunderstanding of the compilation of the Quran by Abū Bakr and ‘Uthmān that compromises its divine authorship. To begin with, he explains that Gabriel transmitted the verses and chapters of the Quran to the Prophet Muḥammad. Gabriel explained to the Prophet that so-and-so verse belongs to so-and-so chapter and that so-and-so chapter is to come after so-and-so chapter. Its verses and chapters were dictated by various people, so Abū Bakr gathered them together in a book (*maṣḥaf*) after the Prophet’s death, and then ‘Uthmān ordered the writing of several copies (*maṣāḥif*), compared them with the version put together by Abū Bakr, and sent

¹⁹⁸ al-Bazdawī, 72.

¹⁹⁹ Brodersen, *Der unbekannte kalām*, 572.

²⁰⁰ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 73. However, he thinks that 21:2 might also concern legal rulings (*aḥkām*). Alternatively, *aḥkām* might be read as *iḥkām*, “strengthening”. According to al-Māturīdī, some scholars understood *muḥdath* in 21:2 as *muḥkam*, “strengthened”, meaning that God strengthened the Quran so that neither falseness can penetrate it nor anyone produce the like of it. See Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Māturīdī, *Ta’wīlāt al-Qur’ān*, vol. 9, ed. Murād Sulūn (Istanbul: Dār al-Mīzān, 2007), 256.

²⁰¹ With the exception of the proof that scripture is erased after having been written down, which Abū l-Yusr mentions but does not respond to. We can safely assume that, in his view, the object of this act is the Quranic *manzūm*, not God’s speech.

²⁰² al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 72-3.

them off to distant lands. Therefore, neither Abū Bakr nor ‘Uthmān devised the arrangement of the Quran (*ann al-naẓm waḍa‘ahu Abū Bakr aw ‘Uthmān*) or compiled its chapters (*al-suwar jami‘āhā*); rather, the Quran is God’s *manẓūm* and its chapters are His compilation (*majmū‘ Allāh*).

3.4.3 *The Letters and Utterance of the Quran*

On the spectrum of the debate over the nature of the Quran, the theologians who stood at the far end away from the Mu‘tazilites were those who sought to maintain the absolute uncreatedness of all forms and worldly aspects of the sacred text, including its letters, utterance, numbered pages, binding material, and the parchment on which it was written.²⁰³ The first two of these forms are discussed by Abū l-Yusr. He attributes the view that the letters are uncreated to a group of traditionists (*qawm min ahl al-ḥadīth*) and a group of Sufis (*farīq mina l-ṣūfiyya*). These groups likely include Ḥanbalites or those influenced by their theology since they conceived of God’s speech as eternal words and sounds subsisting in His essence.²⁰⁴ This conception implies, of course, that the letters of God’s speech are also eternal, which is indeed rather forcefully voiced by the early Ḥanbalite ‘Ubaydallāh Ibn Baṭṭa (d. 387/997): “And one who contends that [even] one letter of it [the Quran] is created without doubt disbelieves”. Furthermore, he states, wherever the Quran is written, whether on children’s chalkboards or a stone, it is the uncreated word of God; whoever denies this disbelieves in God and may be executed.²⁰⁵ Approximately a century later, the Ḥanbalite Sufi Khwāja ‘Abdallāh Anṣārī (d. 481/1089) wrote a commentary on the Quran that, although no longer extant, served as the source for the like work of the little-known Sufi Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī (d. 467-93/1075-1100).²⁰⁶ While Maybudī, like Abū l-Yusr, does not consider himself a Ḥanbalite but, rather, simply a Sunnite, he expresses the same doctrine about the Quranic letters in his interpretation of the three ambiguous letters beginning the second chapter of the Quran: “The *ahl al-sunnat* say that these letters give evidence and clear [proof] of the fact that the Qur’ān has letters and is eternal in its letters, and whosoever says other

²⁰³ al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal*, 96; Tritton, “The Speech of God,” 8-9.

²⁰⁴ Tritton, “The Speech of God,” 8.

²⁰⁵ Hoover, “Ḥanbalī Theology,” 6; Abū ‘Abdallāh ‘Ubaydallāh Ibn Baṭṭa, *al-Sharḥ wa-l-ibāna ‘alā uṣūl al-sunna wa-l-diyāna*, ed. Riḍā’ b. Na’sān Mu‘tī (Medina; Damascus: Maktabat al-‘Ulūm wa-l-Ḥikam, 2002), 202-5.

²⁰⁶ Annabel Keeler, “Mystical Theology and the Traditionalist Hermeneutics of Maybudī’s *Kashf al-Asrar*,” in *Sufism and Theology*, ed. Ayman Shihadeh (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 15.

than this is being insolent and stubborn in the face of God, which makes him a heretic (*mulhid*).”²⁰⁷

Abū l-Yusr is no less forthright than Ibn Baṭṭa and Maybudī in his rejection of the Ḥanbalite belief concerning the letters of the Quran: it is completely wrong and forbidden for one to assert.²⁰⁸ All rational people (*‘uqalā’*) believe the opposite, the proof of which is that letters are, similar to what was explained earlier, in fact the sides of the mouth (*jawānib al-fam*),²⁰⁹ and the sounds that occur on the sides of the mouth are also called letters, while both the sides of the mouth and sounds are created. Additionally, letters written on paper, which are called “letters” because they are indicative of the letters/sounds that occur on the sides of the mouth, are simply created ink.

Abū l-Yusr is, however, more understanding of his opponents’ stance than the two Ḥanbalites of theirs. He attributes their inadequately thought-out arguments to a sincere desire to avoid asserting that God’s speech is created and thus possibly misleading the common people. In Abū l-Yusr’s eyes, that concern is legitimate because ordinary people would have difficulty distinguishing between the letters of the Quran and God’s speech. Thus, it may indeed be necessary to indoctrinate (*yujri*) them to believe that both God’s speech and the letters are uncreated.

Abū l-Yusr’s response to the doctrine that the utterance (*lafẓ*) of the Quran is uncreated, which he attributes to “some traditionists” (*ba‘ḍ aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*) and “some jurists”, is similar.²¹⁰ Again, we may suppose the Ḥanbalites to be among those scholars; indeed, it is stated in one of the creeds attributed to Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) himself that whoever believes the utterance and recitation of the Quran to be created is a Jahmite and infidel.²¹¹ For Abū l-Yusr,

²⁰⁷ Abū l-Faḍl Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī, *Kashf al-asrār wa-‘uddat al-abrār*, vol. 1, ed. ‘A. Ḥekmat (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1331-9 [1913-21]), 43, in Keeler, “Mystical Theology,” 17. Later in the text, Maybudī condemns the Ash‘arites for rejecting this view and holding instead that the Quran is merely eternal in meaning. See Keeler, 27n16.

²⁰⁸ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 69-70.

²⁰⁹ Before he mentioned that “letter” (*ḥarf*) means “side” (*jānib*), and that letters (*ḥurūf*) become letters (*ḥurūf*) in virtue of their occurrence on the sides of the mouth (*ḥurūf al-fam*) as sound. See al-Bazdawī, 63.

²¹⁰ al-Bazdawī, 73.

²¹¹ Abū l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. Abī Ya‘lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, vol. 1, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiḳī (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, n.d.), 29; Allard, *Le problème*, 100; Watt, *The Formative Period*, 293. According to Saud al-Sarhan, this creed was likely penned by Ibn Ḥanbal’s student Ḥarb b. Ismā‘īl al-Kirmānī (d. 280/893). See Saud al-Sarhan, “The Creeds of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal,” in *Books and Bibliophiles: Studies in honour of Paul Auchterlonie on the Bio-Bibliography of the Muslim World*, ed. Robert Gleave (Cambridge: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2014), 34-7.

the falseness of this doctrine is evident from the fact that all human acts are created by God.²¹² But once again, he defends those he criticizes, though more staunchly: they also are trying to protect the masses, who cannot distinguish between an utterance (*lafẓ*) and its referent (*al-malfūz*), but in their case it must not be thought that that they lack understanding.

It should be kept in mind that, from Abū l-Yusr's perspective, the traditionists, Sufis, and jurists all belong to the Sunnites. This may explain why he seems rather embarrassed by their espousal of these doctrines and attempts, in effect, to exculpate them. He is also sincerely willing to overlook what he considers incorrect teachings in order to safeguard the eternity of God's speech, that being his overriding concern throughout his discussion of the attribute. This concern emerges once again in his response to the question of whether or not the Quran is created. Previously, we saw him categorically affirm that the Quranic *manzūm* is created, but he is more cautious now that he must directly enter into the notorious debate over the ontological status of this scripture:

The Quran occurs in (*yaqa'u 'alā*) reading, recitation, and this *manzūm*, and it occurs as God's speech... This being the case, it is not proper for anyone to say that the Quran is uncreated. Rather, what one must say is, 'The Quran is God's speech, and God's speech is uncreated.' [But] if one says in an absolute sense (*muṭlaqan*), 'The Quran is uncreated,' that is fine and harmless, even though the reading, recitation, and utterance of the Quran are created, because the absolute sense (*al-muṭlaq*) here ultimately pertains to God's speech [itself].²¹³

What these remarks confirm is that, in spite of Abū l-Yusr's toleration of those who affirm the uncreatedness of the Quran, his concept of the Quranic *manzūm* is remarkably close to the Mu'tazilite view of the Quran. Yet the difference that remains makes all the difference: whereas for the Mu'tazilites the Quran is the created speech of God and nothing else, for Abū l-Yusr it is speech indicative of eternal speech subsisting in God's essence.

²¹² His arguments in favour of this view and against opposing opinions are presented in a separate chapter. See al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 104-14.

²¹³ al-Bazdawī, 73. These remarks, and Abū l-Yusr's concept of the Quranic *manzūm* overall, contrast starkly with al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī's comments on the Quran in his famous Eastern Ḥanafite creed. He writes: "The Quran is the uncreated speech of God, for the Quran is truly God's speech, not metaphorically. One who says that the Quran is created is like one who says that an attribute of God is created, and this is disbelief because the Quran is God's speech and His attribute." Among his proofs for this opinion are several hadīths in which the Prophet declares that one who considers the Quran to be created is a disbeliever. See al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī, *al-Sawād*, 11-2. However, Abū l-Yusr's claim that one truly deals with God's speech in writing, memorizing, reciting, and hearing the Quran might be seen as a compromise with al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī's position.

3.4.3 God's Conversation with Moses

The conversation between God and Moses recorded in Q 28:29-35 generated yet another debate over the nature of divine speech. Here, God does not address humankind as He does with scripture, but rather a single human being. Once again, theologians debated whether this instance of God's speech is created or uncreated, but now, in constructing their arguments, had to pay particularly close attention to the description of the event in the Quran. This was complicated by the fact that the scripture seems to lend support to both interpretations. On the one hand, many Sunnites pointed to the use of the verbal noun (*maṣḍar*) *taḳlīmān* as an adverb in 4:164 to characterize the manner of God's address to Moses: "God spoke to Moses *taḳlīmān* [in actual speech or words]." Invoking the Arabic grammatical rule that the employment of the *maṣḍar* in this way, termed in technical language the "absolute passive participle" (*maḳ'ūl muṭlaq*), is to negate the possibility of a metaphor,²¹⁴ they argued that God must have truly spoken directly to Moses.²¹⁵ On the other hand, Mu'tazilites could refer to a more detailed description of the event in 28:30 in which the divine address seems to be transmitted to Moses via sound from the external world: "He was called by a voice from a tree in a blessed spot, on the right side of the valley: 'O Moses, I am God, Lord of the Universe'." This account accorded perfectly with their understanding of God's speech as being partly made up of articulated sounds, as illustrated by the Twelver Shī'ite 'Alī al-Faḍl al-Ṭabarsī's (d. ca. 548/1155) exegesis of this verse who, like many of his fellow Twelvers, was strongly influenced by Mu'tazilite theology.²¹⁶ He writes, "Moses heard the call and speech from the tree because God made (*fa'ala*) speech in it and made (*ja'ala*) the tree a substrate (*maḥall*) for the speech, as speech requires a substrate [to inhere in] since it is an accident (*'araḍ*)."²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Muḥyī l-Dīn al-Darwīsh, *I'rāb al-Qur'ān al-Karīm wa-bayānuhu*, vol. 2 (Homs: Dār al-Irshād lil-Shu'ūn al-Jāmi'iyya, 1992), 382.

²¹⁵ See, for instance, Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān wa-l-mubayyin limā taḍammanahu minā l-sunna wa-āy al-furqān*, vol. 7, ed. 'Abdallāh b. 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī and Muḥammad Riḍwān 'Araqsūsī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 2006), 224-5; Jamāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad Abū l-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-Masīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr*, vol. 2 ([Beirut]: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, n.d.), 256. The difficulty 4:164 posed to the Mu'tazilite view is suggested by the fact that al-Zamakhsharī, a Mu'tazilite commentator and renowned grammarian, offers no interpretation of it. See his *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*, 272.

²¹⁶ *EP*, s.v. "Mu'tazila."

²¹⁷ 'Alī l-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, vol. 7 (Beirut: Dār al-Murtaḍā, 2006), 314. Similarly, the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (d. ca. 45-50 CE) believed that God addressed Moses and his people through a voice he commanded to be created in the air. See Wolfson, *The Philosophy*, 275-6; Madelung, "The Controversy," 507.

The Mu‘tazilite perspective was in fact even attractive for Sunnites such as al-Māturīdī who also believed that God’s address to Moses was communicated with created letters and sound, but, remaining loyal to Sunnite doctrine, considered that through these letters and sound Moses heard God’s uncreated speech.²¹⁸ Abū l-Yusr, however, will have nothing to do with al-Māturīdī’s opinion, instead insisting, like many other Sunnites, on the direct involvement of God’s speech itself. He explains that God caused Moses to hear and understand His self-subsistent speech, devoid of sound and letter, via the “subtlety of His craftsmanship and perfection of His ability”.²¹⁹ He supports this explanation with three arguments demonstrating that God’s communication with Moses did not entail sound.²²⁰ The first argument involves a claim about the nature of a “call” (*nidā’*), as Moses is said in the Quran to have been “called” (*nūdiya*) by a voice. This, Abū l-Yusr says, is a type of speech, and speech does not (necessarily) require sound. Speech is marked (*yukhtaṣṣ*) not by sound, but by a speaker; sound is merely accessory to speech because there is nothing in sound that is heard. Rather, it is speech that is heard, whether it includes sound or not. God’s call to Moses is an instance of speech without sound.

Abū l-Yusr’s second argument appeals to his conviction that an attribute subsists in the being to which it belongs. As an attribute itself, speech subsists in its speaker; thus, if God had created a sound in the tree for Moses to hear, the tree would have been the speaker rather than God, whereas God makes clear that He was the speaker. And lastly, Abū l-Yusr contends that the statement in the verse that Moses was called from the right side of the valley means—“and God knows best”—that Moses’ location near a tree on the right side of a valley made it *as if* he heard God’s speech from the tree. He thus sees no choice but to resort to a figurative interpretation of this part of the verse to support his view.

3.5 Hearing and Vision

All Muslim theologians agreed that God speaks, even though they disagreed over the nature of His speech. They did not, however, all agree that God is hearing (*samī’*) and seeing (*baṣīr*),²²¹ despite the numerous descriptions of Him as such in the Quran (e.g., 17:1). For some

²¹⁸ al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 122; Cerić, *Roots*, 186-7.

²¹⁹ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 71.

²²⁰ al-Bazdawī, 71-2.

²²¹ *Samī’* and *baṣīr* fall into a class of words known in Arabic as *ṣiġh al-mubālagha*, a type of active participle (*ism al-fā’il*) used for intensiveness or multiplication (‘*inda qaṣd al-mubālagha aw al-takthīr*). This is why, when applied to God, they are often rendered as “All-Hearing” and “All-Seeing”, respectively. Here, I translate them as “hearing”

theologians, these adjectives could be accepted only as representative of other attributes.²²²

Refuting their view and, consequently, affirming the Sunnite opinion that God is truly hearing and seeing is the focus of Abū l-Yusr's brief chapter on these attributes.²²³

Abū l-Yusr identifies "some Mu'tazilites" as those who denied that God was hearing and seeing and names al-Nazzām and Abū l-Qāsim al-Balkhī al-Ka'bī (d. 319/931). This is only partly accurate since, as was noted earlier in the outline of al-Nazzām's conception of the divine attributes, he did not deny that God is hearing and seeing, but rather affirmed those attributes alongside his denial of their opposites, deafness and blindness.²²⁴ In admitting their existence, he stood in agreement with his fellow Basran Mu'tazilites,²²⁵ who further specified that God sees bodies (*ajsām*) and colours and hears speech and sounds.²²⁶ In contrast, al-Ka'bī and other Baghdad Mu'tazilites believed that God is hearing and seeing in the sense that He is knowing about objects of hearing (*masmū'āt*) that beings other than Him hear and objects of vision (*mur'ayāt*) that beings other than Him see.²²⁷

Abū l-Yusr relates and responds to one of the arguments that was evidently made in favour of the Baghdad Mu'tazilite view. This argument applies the principle of reasoning about God on the basis of matters in this world, specifically the nature of hearing and seeing. Hearing occurs when sound joins to the ears (*ittiṣāl al-ṣawt bi-l-udhun*) and seeing occurs when the light of vision (*daw' al-baṣar*) comes upon a visible object (*al-mur'ā*);²²⁸ hence, hearing requires ears

and "seeing" because Abū l-Yusr's main concern is to show that God is hearing and seeing, not that He hears and sees everything. On *ṣiḡh al-mubālagha*, see Fu'ād Ni'ma, *Mulakhkhaṣ qawā'id al-luḡha al-'arabiyya*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa al-Islāmiyya, n.d.), 42.

²²² In this discussion of hearing and vision, I use the term "attribute" in the sense of an adjective rather than substantive. This is because, due to the nature of his opponent's view, Abū l-Yusr only speaks of "hearing" and "seeing". We know, of course, that he, as well as other Ḥanafites and Māturīdites, believed that all adjectives applied to God have corresponding substantives subsisting in God's essence. In the creed near the end of *Uṣūl al-dīn*, Abū l-Yusr does mention the substantives hearing (*sam'*) and vision (*baṣar*). See al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 250.

²²³ al-Bazdawī, 43-4.

²²⁴ al-Ash'arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt*, 173-4.

²²⁵ Ibn Aḥmad al-Asadābādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*, ed. 'Abd al-Karīm 'Uthmān (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 1996), 168. According to Daniel Gimaret, this book, which 'Uthmān attributed to 'Abd al-Jabbār, is actually the commentary on 'Abd al-Jabbār's treatise by his Zaydite follower Mānkḍīm (d. 425/1034), the real title of which is *Ta'līq sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*. See Daniel Gimaret, "Les *Uṣūl al-ḥamsa* du Qādī 'Abd al-Ġabbār et leurs commentaires," *Annales Islamologique* 15 (1979): 50-7.

²²⁶ al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq*, 159.

²²⁷ al-Ash'arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt*, 175; al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq*, 159; 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ*, 168; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal*, 67.

²²⁸ This theory of vision, known as "extramission" theory, was predominant in the Islamic optical tradition until Ibn al-Ḥaytham (d. 430/1040) established his highly influential "intromission" theory in which he broke down the visible object into point sources, each of which emits its ray to the eyes. See David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1976), 33, 59-60, and 85-6. Hearing was less discussed by

and seeing requires eyes. Therefore, God, being devoid of such organs, is only hearing and seeing in the sense that He is knowing about all objects of hearing (*masmū'āt*) and vision (*mubṣarāt*). This is parallel to God not smelling and tasting because He does not have a sense of smell (*shamm*) or taste (*dhawq*), even though these are means of acquiring knowledge. Instead, God is knowing about all objects of taste (*madhūqāt*), smell (*mashmūmāt*), and touch (*malmūsāt*).

On this matter, the Baghdad Mu'tazilites thus value rational considerations over the literal word of scripture. For Abū l-Yusr, in contrast, the numerous times that God describes Himself as hearing and seeing in the Quran constitute the principal proof that He is so. The fact that He does not describe Himself, nor does any imam describe Him, as smelling, tasting, and touching, is also why He is not to be considered as such.

Rational argument does, however, play a supporting role. With regard to smelling, tasting, and touching, this role is negative in that there simply is no indisputable proof that obligates one to believe that God possesses these attributes. As for hearing, neither ears, sound, nor the meeting of sound with the ears are conditions for it. This is because speech is what is heard, and speech is not sound; sound is only incidentally (*ittifāqan*) a means for hearing. For vision, too, neither the eye nor the meeting of the light of vision with a visible object are conditions. The proof of this is that one sees a mountain from a distance of about ten parasangs (about 55 km), while the light of vision cannot reach that far.²²⁹ In fact, these aspects of hearing and vision are analogous to those of other attributes, such as acting and knowing. Bodies are only incidental means for the performance of actions, not necessary conditions; and the heart and brain are only incidental means by which knowledge arises, not conditions necessary for it to occur.

Another proof that hearing is not what the opponent claims it to be again appeals to the notion that an attribute subsists in the being to which it belongs. Speech subsists in the speaker and does not disjoin from him, thus being heard without joining to the hearer (*min ghayr ittiṣāl bi-l-sāmi*). In the same way, when speech is expressed with sound (i.e., articulation), the sound subsists in the speaker and is his attribute that does not disjoin from him, meaning that it is impossible for it to join to someone else's ears. To explain this with reference to the Stoic theory

Muslim scholars. The theory mentioned by Abū l-Yusr resembles that espoused by al-Nazzām. He thought that sounds are bodies that must move to and into our ears in order for us to hear them. See van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 3, 356-7; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 3, 387.

²²⁹ This seems to be what he means by *wa-ḍaw' al-baṣar lā yujāwizu bi-a'yun*. Brodersen reads this similarly, "Der Blick selbst aber nicht so weit reicht." See her *Der unbekanntes kalām*, 241.

of hearing, which may have had some influence amongst Muslim scholars and which Abū l-Yusr indeed appears to be drawing on, hearing does not occur through the contact of sound with our ears, but rather with that of the sphere-shaped waves produced by the impact of an object generating sound on the air around it.²³⁰

By demonstrating that what makes hearing and vision possible in this world is not always necessary for them to occur, Abū l-Yusr opens the way to understanding God as hearing and seeing in alternative yet literal modalities. While he notes that God hears speech and sees existent things as He wishes, he does not comment further on the nature of these modalities, ultimately contenting himself with affirming what is said of God in scripture.²³¹

3.6 Will

3.6.1 Introduction

The topic of divine will in Islamic theology has two dimensions, one metaphysical and the other ethical. The metaphysical dimension concerns the existence and nature of the attribute, whereas the ethical one pertains to its connection to what comes to be and occurs in the world, especially human evil, such as disobedience to and disbelief in God.

The ethical aspect of this problem is beyond the scope of our discussion here. Suffice it to say that Abū l-Yusr devotes a chapter to it in which he argues for the Ḥanafite position that God wills all good and evil beings and events but is only content with and loves the good ones. His main opponents are the Mu‘tazilites, who insist that God does not will disobedience because that would make Him unjust, and al-Ash‘arī, who believes that God is also content with and loves disobedience.²³²

Abū l-Yusr’s treatment of the metaphysical aspect may be divided into two parts, each covered in corresponding sections below: his position within the intra-Ḥanafite dispute over the meanings of the terms *mashī’a* and *irāda*; and his arguments for conceiving of God’s will as an eternal and substantive attribute.

²³⁰ See Havard Løkke, “The Stoics on Sense Perception,” in *Theories of Perception in Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Simo Knuuttila and Pekka Kärkkäinen (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), 42.

²³¹ In other words, he applies the famous “without [speculating] how” (*bi-lā kayfa*) approach to these two attributes. On this approach, see Binyamin Abrahamov, “The ‘Bi-lā Kayfa’ Doctrine and Its Foundations in Islamic Theology,” *Arabica* 42, no. 3 (Nov., 1995): 365-379.

²³² al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 52-61.

3.6.2 *The Intra-Ḥanafīte Dispute over Mashī'a and Irāda*

Theological disagreements amongst the Ḥanafītes are nothing unusual; one finds numerous instances throughout *Uṣūl al-dīn* itself. But their disagreement over the meanings of the terms *mashī'a* and *irāda* is special because it involves Abū l-Yusr and the majority of Ḥanafītes facing off against the head of the school, Abū Ḥanīfa. The majority of Ḥanafītes believe the meaning of both *mashī'a* and *irāda* to be “will”, whereas Abū Ḥanīfa defines *mashī'a* as “will” and *irāda* as “desire”.

Abū l-Yusr relates Abū Ḥanīfa's argument as follows: “[When] one says to his wife, ‘I will (*shi'tu*) to divorce you’ and intends the divorce, the divorce occurs. [But] if he says, ‘I want (*aradtu*) to divorce you’ ...[even if] he intends the divorce, [the divorce] does not occur.”²³³ For Abū Ḥanīfa, then, “to will” (*shā'a*) something involves the realization of the thing, whereas “to want” (*arāda*) it merely expresses a desire for it to be realized. We also learn from Abū l-Yusr that Abū Ḥanīfa considered *irāda* to be a kind of exploration (*mina l-rawd*) or, more precisely, seeking (*ṭalab*), while *mashī'a* does not entail seeking. Additionally, he thought that *irāda* belongs to the genus of love and contentment (*min jins al-maḥabba wa-l-riḍā'*) and not to that of *mashī'a*. In other words, as applied to God, He wants (*arāda*) only that which He loves and is content with, such as faith and obedience, whereas He wills (*shā'a*) both such things as well as that which He dislikes and is displeased about, such as unbelief and disobedience.²³⁴

The Ḥanafīte majority cites Q 6:125 in support of their view: “Whoever God wants (*yurid*) to guide, He opens his breast to Islam; and whoever He wants (*yurid*) to lead astray, He makes his breast tight and constricted.”²³⁵ Abū l-Yusr does not explain how this verse

²³³ al-Bazdawī, 52. In contrast, the author of *K. fīhi ma'rifa* says that this is the argument of “our companions (*aṣḥābunā*)”. See al-Bazdawī, *Kitāb fīhi ma'rifa*, 71. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Brodersen suggests that the conflicting claims about *mashī'a* and *irāda* in *Uṣūl al-dīn* and *K. fīhi ma'rifa* may be due to the different theological and legal contexts in which they were interpreted. Alternatively, they might indicate that the authors of the two texts are not the same and that they occupied different regions or cities in Transoxania, such as Samarqand and Bukhara. In any case, the fact that Ḥanafītes made this argument is surprising since it contends that both intent and the use of a specific word is required to begin the divorce process, whereas it is generally thought that classical Ḥanafīte law teaches that if a husband unambiguously announces that he will divorce his wife, the procedure for divorce immediately commences, regardless of his intention. See *EI*², s.v. “Ṭalāk.” Perhaps the argument was peculiar to certain Ḥanafīte circles in Transoxania.

²³⁴ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 52. Lane's remarks on the two terms accord with Abū Ḥanīfa's understanding. He says that in spite of the fact that the *mutakallimūn* make no distinction between them, they are “[said to be] [*sic*] originally different”. In ordinary language, he explains, *mashī'a* means “the causing to be or exist” and *irāda* means “the willing, wishing, or desiring”, for which a synonym is *ṭalab*. See Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, pt. 3, 1625. This is perhaps why the Ḥanafīte majority only references the language of the Quran to substantiate its opinion.

²³⁵ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 52.

demonstrates that *mashī'a* and *irāda* are identical, but the reason seems to be that it shows that “wanting” a thing can lead to its realization, just as Abū Ḥanīfa claimed that “willing” it does. Abū Ḥanīfa was aware of the threat that this verse poses to his position and thus presented his own interpretation.²³⁶ He claimed that what is meant by *irāda* (as in *yurid*) is in fact *mashī'a* in a metaphorical sense. This is because the two terms are similar enough that it must be that one is intended literally and the other metaphorically.

Abū l-Yusr is clearer about his reason for rejecting Abū Ḥanīfa’s understanding of desire as seeking (*talab*), at least with respect to God.²³⁷ He explains that His seeking, different from that of humans, always involves a command (*lā yakūnu illā bi-l-amr*), whereas His *irāda* does not involve a command but rather is equivalent to His will (*mashī'a*).²³⁸

Abū l-Yusr shows signs in his two chapters on divine will of trying not to tarnish the image of Abū Ḥanīfa, who is, after all, his leader in theology. He initially presents Abū Ḥanīfa’s view as that of all Ḥanafites before revealing that the majority of them in fact do not embrace it. He also consistently employs both *mashī'a* and *irāda*, even after arguing that they have the same meaning.²³⁹ Placing too much emphasis on this difference of opinion would not only undermine Abū Ḥanīfa’s authority, but ultimately Ḥanafite harmony and strength overall. It would, furthermore, take away attention from the errant ideas of others about divine will more urgently in need of refutation.

3.6.3 Refutations of Other Views

The first doctrine about God’s attribute of will that Abū l-Yusr counters²⁴⁰ is the simple denial that He is willing, which he ascribes to “some Mu‘tazilites”. It appears to have originated with the Baṣran Mu‘tazilite al-Nazzām before being taken up by many Baghdad Mu‘tazilites.²⁴¹ In their view, God wills His action in the sense that He performs it and wills a human action in

²³⁶ al-Bazdawī, 52-3.

²³⁷ al-Bazdawī, 53.

²³⁸ As for what precisely “will” signifies, Abū l-Yusr says that there is no need to specify this, but rather only that it is different from contentment (*riḍā*) and love (*maḥabba*). However, he states that “some of them”, presumably some Sunnites, describe will as that which precludes weakness and absentmindedness (*sahw*) (and not displeasure and contentment) and necessitates existence. See al-Bazdawī, 61. This explanation is little different from the figurative conceptions of divine will detailed below, which Abū l-Yusr, at least implicitly, rejects.

²³⁹ Which may be contrasted with the Ash‘arite al-Baghdādī’s approach to discussing this attribute. After equating the meanings of *irāda*, *mashī'a*, and *ikhtiyār*, he only uses *irāda*. See his *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn* (Istanbul: Dār al-Funūn al-Tūrkiyya, 1346/1928), 102-4.

²⁴⁰ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 51.

²⁴¹ al-Ash‘arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt*, 190-1 and 509-10; al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq*, 160.

the sense that He orders it. Some of the Baghdadis formulated the denial differently. ‘Amr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiz (d. 255/869) contended that God is willing in the sense that it is untrue that His actions are performed with absentmindedness (*sahw*) and ignorance and impossible that He be overpowered (*yughlab*, *yuqhar*) in performing them.²⁴² ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Khayyāt (d. ca. 300/913) considered that God is willing in the sense that He is knowing and powerful and neither unwilling (*kāriḥ*) nor forced (*mukrah*) to perform His actions.²⁴³ In all cases, there is a combination of figurativism and negative theology.

Abū l-Yusr does not mention any of these accounts. Thus, his response is concerned only with establishing that God is indeed willing, first with reference to four verses of the Quran:

- 1) “And you do not will (*tashā’ūna*) except that God wills (*yashā’*),” (76:30).
- 2) “If God wills (*yashā’*), He will seal your heart,” (42:24).
- 3) “God wants (*yurīd*) ease for you,” (2:185).
- 4) “Whoever God wants (*yurīd*) to guide, He opens his breast to Islam,” (6:125).

These verses, Abū l-Yusr explains, establish that God has a will and thus is willing, just as one who has movement is moving. This reasoning seems oddly inverse since the verses seem to more readily support the belief that God is willing rather than the specific manner in which He is so. But it has the effect of both refuting his opponent’s position and reinforcing the Sunnite understanding of divine will as a substantive attribute, which the Quran cannot directly help prove since it does not mention the substantives *mashī’a* and *irāda*.

The second argument against the Mu‘tazilite view presented by Abū l-Yusr once again employs the principle of reasoning about God on the basis of matters in this world, specifically as concerns “wondrous actions (*af‘āl ‘ajība*)”. Earlier, we saw that these actions are indicative of a knowing actor in possession of knowledge. Here we learn that they are only possible by means of a living, knowing, and powerful being possessing freedom of choice (*ikhtiyār*), which requires will. Abū l-Yusr fails to draw a conclusion from this claim, but its import for the topic at hand is clear: God, as the author of wondrous actions, must therefore be living, knowing, powerful, freely choosing, and willing.

Abū l-Yusr next tackles the view that God is willing through a temporally originated will not subsisting in anything (*ghayr qā’im bi-shay’*). He attributes this view to Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī

²⁴² al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal*, 65.

²⁴³ al-Shahrastānī, 66-7.

and his son Abū Hāshim, though it in fact originated with Abū l-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf (d. 226/840-1).²⁴⁴ According to al-Baghdādī, it was rejected by other Basran Mu‘tazilites who, while agreeing that God’s will is temporally originated, insisted that it requires a place to subsist in.²⁴⁵

Abū l-Yusr’s initial comment on this doctrine reveals how ridiculous he understood it to be: all rational people (‘*uqalā*’) agree that an attribute cannot subsist on its own. Then, because something can only be described with an attribute when the attribute subsists in it, God is described as willing in virtue of a will subsisting in Him. Consequently, His will must be eternal because God, for the reasons stated by Abū l-Yusr in his refutation of the Karrāmīte concept of divine speech,²⁴⁶ cannot function as a substrate for temporally originated beings.

Lastly, Abū l-Yusr takes aim at the position of Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Najjār (d. ca. 220/835). This figure and the *kalām* school that developed in his name (the Najjārītes) were important rivals to later Eastern Ḥanafītes such as al-Māturīdī because they were also Ḥanafītes and were based in nearby Western Iran, particularly Rayy. But their theology never gained a major following farther east, perhaps because al-Najjār only partially grounded his doctrines in the writings of Abū Ḥanīfa and his first theological students, instead drawing extensively on Mu‘tazilite teachings, especially those of Ḍirār.²⁴⁷

With respect to the divine attributes, al-Najjār embraced the Mu‘tazilites’ view that they are reducible to God’s essence²⁴⁸ but differed from them in adding that God is also eternally willing, speaking, truthful, and generous via His essence.²⁴⁹ The significance of this divergence, however, is lessened by the fact that he interpreted the nature of these attributes with Ḍirār’s apophatic method.²⁵⁰ In the case of will, he contended that God is willing in the sense that He is neither forced (*mustakrah*) nor dominated (*maghlūb*).²⁵¹ His opinion thus resembles that of al-

²⁴⁴ al-Ash‘arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt*, 369; al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq*, 115; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal*, 45; van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 3, 241 and 241n5; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 3, 260 and 260n5.

²⁴⁵ al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq*, 115. However, the famous representative of the Basrans, ‘Abd al-Jabbār, as well as his Zaydīte pupil Mānkḏīm (granting that he is the author of the *Sharḥ* ascribed to ‘Abd al-Jabbār), would later defend it against their fellow Mu‘tazilites and other opponents. See ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, vol. 6, pt. 2, 104-213; ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ*, 440-56.

²⁴⁶ That is, because He would change along with the temporal beings, whereas change is impossible for Him because He is at every instant necessarily existent with His attributes. See al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 67 and 73-4.

²⁴⁷ Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie*, 180-3; Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī and the Development*, 163-6; Rudolph, “Ḥanafī Theological Tradition,” 7-8.

²⁴⁸ al-Ash‘arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt*, 285; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal*, 75.

²⁴⁹ van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 4, 159; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 4, 180.

²⁵⁰ *EI*², s.v. “al-Nadjdjār.”

²⁵¹ al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal*, 75.

Khayyāṭ noted above, and so he may also be considered to have essentially denied that God is willing.

Abū l-Yusr was evidently not fully aware of the character of al-Najjār's view. He states that it should be rejected for the same reasons that the idea that any of God's other attributes are identical with His essence should be, but he does not refer the reader back to his refutation of Ḍirār's negative approach.²⁵²

²⁵² al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 51.

Chapter 4: Attributes of Act

4.1 Introduction

In the debates over the attributes covered in the last two chapters, the Mu‘tazilites were Abū l-Yusr’s main opponents. This is because they refused to conceive of those attributes as eternal entities subsisting in God’s essence and, in some cases, as truly applicable to Him. The nature of Abū l-Yusr’s opposition, however, changes when he addresses the attributes of act. On this issue, he opposes not only a majority of Mu‘tazilites,²⁵³ but also the Ash‘arites. Whereas the Ash‘arites rejected that the attributes of act are eternal entities subsisting in God’s essence, the Mu‘tazilite majority denied both this and that they constitute aspects of God’s essence. According to both schools, God’s attributes of act and their objects are identical (as they often phrased it). What this means is that the attributes of act only become applicable to God when He performs their corresponding actions, such as the attribute of creation when He creates something. Thus, they are merely words that characterize His actions, or, as the Ash‘arite Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) writes, words that indicate the occurrence of one of the effects of God’s power (*al-alfāz al-dālla ‘alā ṣudūr athar mina l-āthār ‘an qudrat Allāh*).²⁵⁴ In contrast, the Ḥanafites and Māturīdites maintained that God’s attributes of act, just like His attributes of essence, are eternal entities subsisting in His essence. Consequently, they distinguish between these attributes and their objects that originate in time. Abū l-Yusr devotes most of his chapter on the attributes of act to defending these two interrelated tenets against his Mu‘tazilite and Ash‘arite opponents.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, there is an important historical dimension to this debate as it occurred between the Ḥanafites and Ash‘arites. It in part led the Ḥanafites, most notably Abū l-Yusr and Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī, to emphasize the authority of al-Māturīdī in theology and draw

²⁵³ Among the Mu‘tazilites who disagreed with the majority view were Bishr b. al-Mu‘tamir (d. 210-26/825-40), Mu‘ammar b. ‘Abbād (d. 215/830), and Abū l-Hudhayl (d. 227/841). They all maintained that God’s attribute of creation is distinct from the created being but disagreed over other details. Bishr believed creation to be God’s will (*irāda*) for a thing which exists prior to the created being. Mu‘ammar and Abū l-Hudhayl, in contrast, held that creation comes into being simultaneously (*ma‘a*) with the created being. Abū l-Hudhayl thought that creation consists of God’s will (*irādatuhu*) for a thing and His utterance of “Be”. He considered God’s act of will and utterance of “Be” to be accidents and thus created, though only in a figurative sense since His willing is not itself willed and the “Be” does not require the utterance of a preceding “Be” to exist. See al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 76; al-Ash‘arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt*, 364 and 510; van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 3, 280-2; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 3, 302-4. Mu‘ammar’s view, and Abū l-Yusr’s refutation of it, are detailed below.

²⁵⁴ Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Rāzī, *Kitāb Lawāmi‘ al-bayyināt sharḥ asmā’ Allāh ta‘ālā wa-l-ṣifāt*, ed. Muḥammad Badr al-Dīn Abū l-Firās al-Nu‘mānī al-Ḥalabī (Egypt: al-Maṭba‘a al-Sharafiyya, 1323 [1905]), 24.

on his teachings, which, in turn, contributed to the emergence of Māturīdism in the next generation. Abū l-Yusr's statement on the controversy confirms its importance:

[The attributes of act] are a momentous question. The Ash'arites have written several works on it. I saw that one of them wrote nearly a whole tract (*daftar*) on it in which he mentioned that a group of traditionists (*ahl al-ḥadīth*) appeared in Khurasan and stated, '[God's attribute of] creation is other than the created being...[and] it is eternal.' Sheikh Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī debated the issue with the Mu'tazilites and confirmed (*ṣahḥaha*) the doctrine (*madhhab*) that the Sunnites espouse: [God's attribute of] creation is other than the created being and is not temporally originated; rather, it is pre-eternal. [Sheikh al-Māturīdī] was earlier (*aqdam*) than al-Ash'arī, and this is the view of Abū Ḥanīfa and his followers. Verily, this is the issue on which the Ash'arites hold their most abominable view.²⁵⁵

These remarks imply that Abū l-Yusr was familiar with the views and reasoning of his opponents through their writings and those of his Ḥanafite predecessors; he also became familiar with them via first-hand experience, telling us that he discussed the issue extensively with the Hayṣamites and Ash'arites.²⁵⁶ In Transoxania (*fī diyārīnā*), he says, the Hayṣamites renounced their position out of fear of being killed by the Ḥanafites, while the Ash'arites refused to give up theirs. Nonetheless, Abū l-Yusr's assessment of the Ash'arite doctrine is mild, at least in comparison to that of his senior Ḥanafite contemporary Abū Shakūr al-Sālimī, who declared it to be disbelief (*kufīr*).²⁵⁷ Some Ash'arites had a similarly negative perspective on the Ḥanafite stance. Abū l-Mu'īn reports, with considerable dismay, that an Ash'arite detailed it in a book about belief in the eternity of the world.²⁵⁸ The issue was provocative enough that al-Rāzī became intimately involved in disputing it during his travels in Transoxania, claiming to have perplexed and shamed Nūr al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Ṣābūnī (d. 580/1184) and the judge of Ghazna with his sophisticated argumentation.²⁵⁹ Clearly, then, the controversy over God's attributes of act not

²⁵⁵ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 77.

²⁵⁶ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 82. I am unable to find any information about the Hayṣamites. Presumably, they are the followers of the Karrāmīte Ibn Hayṣam. Abū l-Yusr describes their school as a combination between the Qadarite and Karrāmīte schools. They had followers as far as Firuzkuh (modern-day Jam, Afghanistan), where Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī is reported to have debated with their leader, 'Abd al-Majīd Ibn 'Umar, known as Ibn al-Qudwa, who subsequently set off a riot against al-Rāzī. See Sonja Brentjes, "The Vocabulary of 'Unbelief' in Three Biographical Dictionaries and Two Historical Chronicles of the 7th/13th and 8th/14th Centuries," in *Accusations of Unbelief in Islam: A Diachronic Perspective on Takfīr*, ed. Camilla Adang, Hassan Ansari, Maribel Fierro and Sabine Schmidtke (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), 135-7.

²⁵⁷ al-Sālimī, *Kitāb al-Tamhīd*, 119.

²⁵⁸ al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat al-adilla*, 504.

²⁵⁹ Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Rāzī, *Munāzarāt Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī fī bilād Mā Warā' a l-Nahr*, ed. Fathallāh Khalīf (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1966), 17-22; translated and discussed by Fathalla Kholeif in his *A Study*

only further distanced the Ḥanafites and Māturīdites from their usual Mu‘tazilite and Karrāmīte opponents, but also caused a serious breach in the otherwise strong affinity between them and the Ash‘arites.

In what follows, I discuss Abū l-Yusr’s treatment of the attributes of act under three headings: proofs for the Ḥanafite position; the problem of eternity, or the relationship between eternal actions and their temporally originated objects; and other refutations, including of a negative approach and the views of the Karrāmītes and the Mu‘tazilite Mu‘ammar b. ‘Abbād. The attribute of creation serves, as it does in *Uṣūl al-dīn*, as the focal point of our discussion and representative of the other attributes of act.²⁶⁰

4.2 Proofs for the Ḥanafite Position

Abū l-Yusr raises three proofs for the Ḥanafite position, two of which are based on scripture and one on the principle of reasoning about God on the basis of matters in this world. The scripture-based proofs aim to show that God’s act of creation is distinct from its object, the created being. First, in Q 18:51, God states, “I did not make them witness (*mā ashhadtuḥum*) either the creation of the heavens and earth or the creation of themselves.”²⁶¹ Here, Abū l-Yusr explains, God differentiates between creation and the created thing (*makhlūq*) by bringing the former into relation with the latter.²⁶² Furthermore, God says that He did not make them witness the *creation* of the heavens and earth, while He indeed has made them witness the heavens and earth themselves.

Abū l-Yusr next presents and responds to two alternative readings of Q 18:51 that preclude the conclusion he draws.²⁶³ The first posits that the meaning of the verse is that God did not make them witness the heavens and the earth *while* He created the two. This is because one

on *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and His Controversies in Transoxiana* (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq Éditeurs, 1966), 39-45 and 89-104.

²⁶⁰ In the course of his chapter on the attributes of act, Abū l-Yusr uses five terms for the attribute of creation: *khalq*, *ījād*, *takwīn*, *takhlīq*, and *iḥdāth*. The fact that they all signify the same attribute is clear from his discussion, and it is confirmed by the following comment made by Abū l-Mu‘īn in one of his treatments of the topic: “Know that *takwīn*, *takhlīq*, *khalq*, *ījād*, *iḥdāth*, and *ikhtirā‘* are synonymous terms for which one meaning is intended, namely, the drawing out (*ikhrāj*) of a non-existent (*ma‘dūm*) from non-existence (*‘adam*) into existence (*wujūd*).” See his *Tabṣīrat al-adilla*, 491.

²⁶¹ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 78.

²⁶² *Aḍāfa l-khalq ilā l-makhlūq*. Abū l-Yusr is referring to the genitive construction in the verse in which the first noun (creation) is connected with the following noun or pair of nouns (the heavens and earth; themselves); that is, its reference to the creation *of the* heavens and earth and the creation *of* themselves. In Arabic grammar, the first noun is known as the *muḍāf* and the second noun (or set of nouns) is called the *al-muḍāf ilayhi*. See Ni‘ma, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, 98-9.

²⁶³ al-Bazdawī, 78.

can only be made to witness a created thing, not the act of creation (*fi'l al-khalq*) itself, since witnessing (*shuhūd*) involves presence (*ḥuḍūr*) and proximity (*muqāraba*), which are only possible for substances (*a'yān*).

For Abū l-Yusr, this reading is wrong because it contradicts the letter of the verse. God says that He did not make them witness the *creation* of the heavens and earth, not that He did not make them witness the heavens and earth themselves.²⁶⁴ Therefore, this reading is not an interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of the verse, but rather a modification or invalidation of it. At the same time, that one cannot be made to witness the act of creation itself may be true; after all, God Himself denies this in the verse.

The other alternative reading of Q 18:51 contends that it is possible for something to be brought into relation with itself. In Q 50:16, for instance, God says of a human being that “We are closer to him than [his] jugular vein (*ḥabl al-warīd*).” Although two terms, *ḥabl* and *warīd*, are used in the verse, they are in fact identical. The implication of this claim is that, although the wording of Q 18:51 brings creation into relation with the created being (and thus they must be two distinct things), they are identical.

Abū l-Yusr refutes this second reading by undermining the basis for its analogy in Q 50:16. Equating *ḥabl* and *warīd*, he says, neither honors the true meanings of the terms nor accords with how people ordinarily use them. In reality, *warīd* is an attribute (*ṣifa*) of *ḥabl*, just as *jāmi'* is an attribute of *masjid* in the term *masjid al-jāmi'* (congregational mosque). This is because a described thing may be brought into relation with an attribute (*al-mawṣūf yuḍāfu ilā l-waṣf*).

The other verse of the Quran that Abū l-Yusr cites as a proof for the Ḥanafite position is 16:40: “Indeed, Our word to a thing when We intend it is but that We say to it, ‘Be!’ and it is.”²⁶⁵ Here, he explains, God informs us that He creates things with a word (*qawl*); hence, creation and the created thing are distinct. Furthermore, since God’s word is eternal, as this verse was previously shown to demonstrate,²⁶⁶ His creation must be as well since it is executed through it.

²⁶⁴ Although not in the text, I add the second mention of “earth” to accord the second part of the sentence with the first one.

²⁶⁵ al-Bazdawī, 78.

²⁶⁶ al-Bazdawī, 65-6.

An objection to these claims about Q 16:40 contends that the belief that creation is accomplished by means of a word necessitates the rejection of God's actions.²⁶⁷ This appears to have been raised by an Ash'arite, if we understand the reasoning behind it to be that God's utterance of "Be" does not constitute an act itself since it is simply one instantiation of His eternal, essential attribute of speech. Abū l-Yusr finds this accusation so intolerable that he devotes a lengthy, four-part response to disproving it.²⁶⁸ First, he argues, it is the consensus of the Muslim community that God created the world and substances (*a'yān*). Second, from start to finish, the Quran provides numerous indications of God's actions, such as, "Indeed, the punishment of your Lord is painful," (85:12); "Verily, His seizure is painful, severe," (11:102); and, "God refuses except to perfect His light," (9:32). Third, it is obligatory to describe God as acting because this description is cause for praise and glorification, whereas its absence is a reason for humiliation and abasement. It thus being established that God is acting, He must, given what has been explained about establishing His attributes,²⁶⁹ have attributes of act. Lastly, origination in time (*hudūth*) without creation is impossible; therefore, it must be granted that God created the world and has an attribute of creation.

The method of reasoning about God on the basis of matters in this world can once again support either side of the debate, depending on how those matters are viewed.²⁷⁰ On the one hand, an Ash'arite or Mu'tazilite could argue that, just as in this world an act (*fi'l*) is identical with its object (*al-maf'ūl*), so it is for a divine act. On the other hand, Abū l-Yusr maintains that, just as in this world an act subsists in its actor,²⁷¹ so does God's act subsist in Him. Consequently, since that which subsists in a thing is the thing's attribute, God's act is His attribute.

4.3 The Problem of Eternity

A key reason the Ash'arites refused to see the attributes of act as eternal entities and the Mu'tazilites refused to see them as aspects of God's essence was they believed these views imply the eternity of the objects of those attributes. They contended that this would be so because

²⁶⁷ al-Bazdawī, 79.

²⁶⁸ al-Bazdawī, 79.

²⁶⁹ That is, that one is only qualified as something in virtue of a corresponding substantive attribute, such as a knower in virtue of knowledge. See al-Bazdawī, 49.

²⁷⁰ al-Bazdawī, 79-80.

²⁷¹ The text reads, "In the visible world, the act (*fi'l*) subsists in the act (*fi'l*)." This appears to be a typographical error since Abū l-Yusr proceeds to state, "And the same for the unseen world, [that is], it is necessary that [the act] be subsistent in the actor (*fā'il*)." Furthermore, the 1963 edition has "actor (*fā'il*)" in place of the second *fi'l*. See al-Bazdawī, *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn*, 73.

creation without a created being is impossible, just as breaking (*kasr*) without a broken object (*al-maksūr*) and striking (*ḍarb*) without a struck object (*al-maḍrūb*) are impossible. The Ash‘arites, in addition, observed that the eternity of God’s creation would negate His power (*qudra*) because the power to create (*al-qudra ‘alā l-ijād*) implies free exercise of capacity, which God cannot have if He is effectively compelled to incessantly create. They compared this with the fact that God is not described as capable of speaking, hearing, or seeing since these are eternal attributes of essence.²⁷² Therefore, they concluded, since creation is not eternal, and it cannot be thought to have originated in time (as an entity in the divine essence), it is not God’s attribute.

In response to these claims, Abū l-Yusr distinguishes between God’s single, atemporal act (*fi’l wāḥid ghayr ḥādith*) with which He creates things at their designated times (*fi awqātihā*), and His one power (*qudra*) with which He is *capable* of creating things at their designated times. Although His act and power are distinct, pre-eternal attributes, they bear an essential relationship to one another since acts, just like speech, hearing, vision, and creation, are impossible without power; and because God’s acts, just like these other attributes, are eternal, so is His power.²⁷³

As for the assertion that creation is impossible without a created object, Abū l-Yusr concedes that creation never lacks (*laysa bi-khālin*) a created being. However, it is only necessary that the created being follows from (*mu‘qib*) creation, not that it be together with (*ma‘a*) it, just as it is only necessary that a broken or struck object follow from breaking or striking rather than occur simultaneously.

4.4 Other Refutations

4.4.1 A Negative Approach

An Ash‘arite could argue that God’s essence and attributes are known by way of necessity (*bi-ṭarīq al-ḍarūra*) through the negation of their opposites. For instance, the opposite of power is weakness; of knowledge, ignorance; of vision, blindness; of speech, muteness and silence, and of hearing, deafness.²⁷⁴ Actions, however, do not have opposites and thus cannot be divine attributes.²⁷⁵

²⁷² al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 77.

²⁷³ al-Bazdawī, 80-1.

²⁷⁴ See, for instance, Abū l-Faḥ Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb Nihāyat al-iqdām fi ‘ilm al-kalām*, ed. Alfred Guillaume (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 2009), 167. See also Gimaret, *La doctrine*, 260.

²⁷⁵ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 81. A similar argument was made by the Mu‘tazilites. They contended that God’s actions cannot be His attributes because both they and their opposites, such as creating and not creating, are applicable to

In Abū l-Yusr's view, this method of reasoning about God's essence and attributes on the basis of their opposites is invalid. For one thing, God's essence in fact does not have an opposite yet is still known. His attributes, moreover, are known through necessary proofs (*dalā'il darūriyya*), two of which he mentions here. First, action is a perfection and the lack of it is a deficiency and despicable, whereas God is truly worthy of perfection and glory. Second, the Quran, from beginning to end, indicates that God is acting and has action. Nonetheless, the opponent's method may be applied inversely to deny God the opposites of, for instance, knowledge and power; that is, since, as established through necessary proofs, God has knowledge and power, He does not have ignorance and impotence.²⁷⁶

4.4.2 *Karrāmites*

The Karrāmites conceptualized God's attributes of act in the same way as His speech. God is pre-eternally creating in the sense that He is pre-eternally capable of creating (*qādir 'alā l-khalq*). His specific acts of creation are uncreated (*ghayr muḥdath*) but originate in time (*ḥādith*) and subsist in His essence.²⁷⁷ Given this correspondence between their two doctrines, Abū l-Yusr simply re-deploys some of the arguments he made against their view of divine speech.²⁷⁸ Origination in time (*ḥudūth*), he says, is impossible without creation (*iḥdāth*). Additionally, conceiving of God as a substrate for temporally originated beings implies change in His essence, whereas God's essence is eternal, and the Eternal (*al-qadīm*) cannot change because He is necessarily existent (*wājib al-wujūd*) and change contradicts His unity (*tawḥīd*).

4.4.3 *Mu'ammār*

Mu'ammār was a leading Mu'tazilite of the Basran school during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd (170-93/786-809). He held a unique view about God's attribute of creation. He believed that it is distinct from and originates together with (*ma'a*) the created being, and that it is created by a preceding act of creation, which is in turn created by a preceding act of creation, and so on *ad infinitum*.²⁷⁹

Him, unlike the attributes of essence and their opposites, such as knowing and ignorant. See Pretzl, *Die frühislamische Attributenlehre*, 9.

²⁷⁶ al-Bazdawī, 81.

²⁷⁷ al-Bazdawī, 76-7 and 81; al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq*, 192.

²⁷⁸ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 81-2.

²⁷⁹ al-Bazdawī, 76; al-Ash'arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt*, 253; van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 3, 81; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 3, 87-8.

Abū l-Yusr clearly did not consider this doctrine to be much of a threat to the Ḥanafite view. He merely comments that the infinite regress of creative acts is impossible and, in fact, asserts the pre-eternity of creation.²⁸⁰

²⁸⁰ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 82.

Chapter 5: Incomparability and Incorporeality

5.1 Introduction

We saw in the previous chapters that the principle of divine unity (*tawhīd*) figured prominently in the debates over God's attributes of essence and act. To a lesser extent, these debates also concerned the notion of God's transcendence (*tanzīh*) from the world. This is especially so with respect to the attributes of speech, hearing, and vision, which, due to their obvious connection to the body in their worldly forms, raised the problem of anthropomorphism more forcefully than other attributes, such as knowledge or life. But a more significant source for the Muslim discourse on anthropomorphism is the descriptions of God in the Quran and hadiths with, as ordinarily understood, corporeal features, such as hands, eyes, and a side, as well as actions that seem to imply that He is a spatialized body, such as "coming", "sitting", and "descending".²⁸¹ Hence, a major component of theologians' treatment of anthropomorphism consists of exegeses of these descriptions,²⁸² which many of them referred to as "ambiguities" (*mutashābihāt*), thus signaling the difficulties they raised.

Abū l-Yusr devotes two chapters of *Uṣūl al-dīn* to discussing such anthropomorphic expressions.²⁸³ In the first, he aims to show that God neither resembles anything nor does anything resemble Him and, relatedly, that God is not a body; while in the second, his goal is to demonstrate that God does not exist in any direction or place. Thus, in contrast to his chapters on the attributes of essence and act, he is mainly concerned with *denying* God certain attributes. Another key difference between the two groups of chapters is the nature of his opposition. The Mu'tazilites, who themselves abhorred anthropomorphism, are no longer a target. His adversaries

²⁸¹ Emotions, the ascription of which to non-humans is also known as "anthropopathy", were not a major topic in this discourse. Many early theologians considered mercy, wrath and satisfaction as fundamental elements of God's being, but, over time, emotions that seemed incompatible with His perfection and sovereignty, such as cunning (Q 3:54, 4:142), mockery (Q 2:15, 9:79), forgetfulness (Q 9:67), and patience, came to be seen as problematic. See van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 4, 374-5; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 4, 417-8; *EP*, s.v. "Tashbīh wa-Tanzīh." The debate over "passive" anthropomorphism, or that in which God is the object of human perception, was particularly intense around the question of whether God will be seen in the afterlife since the Quran itself raised it by stating that on the Day of Judgment faces will be "radiant, looking at their Lord," (75:22-3). The Sunnites insisted this vision is possible, while the Jahmites, Mu'tazilites, Khārijites, and Zaydites, as well as most Murji'ites and Imāmites, rejected it. See *EP*, s.v. "Ru'yat Allāh"; *EP*, s.v. "Tashbīh wa-Tanzīh." Abū l-Yusr devotes a special chapter to arguing for the Sunnite position. See al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 83-92.

²⁸² van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 4, 374; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 4, 417; *EP*, s.v. "Tashbīh wa-Tanzīh."

²⁸³ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 33-42.

are rather a diverse set of Muslim and non-Muslim groups and individuals whom he considers to hold anthropomorphic views.

I examine Abū l-Yusr's discussion in these two chapters under four headings, which may be summarized as follows: a list of opponents and description of their views; proofs for God's incomparability and incorporeality; interpretations of some of the anthropomorphic expressions in the Quran, along with one hadith; and refutation of the Karrāmīte doctrine that God is "elevated" (*fī l- 'uluww*).

5.2 Opponents

Abū l-Yusr identifies seven opponents whom he accuses of likening God to His creation.²⁸⁴ The first are the Jews. According to Abū l-Yusr, the majority of the Jews believe that God is a body with flesh and blood in human form (*fī ṣūrat al-ādamā*), which they base on Daniel 7:9, rendered by Abū l-Yusr as follows: "I saw the Ancient One (*qadīm al-ayyām*), with a white head and body, sitting on the Throne (*'arsh*) [and] placing His two feet on the Footstool (*kursī*)."²⁸⁵ Needless to say, his perception of the ubiquity of anthropomorphism in Jewish thought is highly distorted, but it was one he shared with many Muslim scholars.²⁸⁶ In reality, the anthropomorphic expressions in the Torah generated a level of controversy among Jewish interpreters similar to that among Muslims in regard to the Quran and hadiths. While some Jews understood these expressions literally and even elaborated them, others interpreted them metaphorically.²⁸⁷

The second opponent identified by Abū l-Yusr is Muqanna' (d. 166/783), leader of a failed rebellion in Transoxania against the caliph al-Mahdī (r. 158-69/775-85). Muqanna' is reported to have claimed that God manifested in various individuals, including Adam, Abraham, Noah, Jesus, Muḥammad, and, finally, himself.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ al-Bazdawī, 33-4.

²⁸⁵ The NRSV translation of the verse reads: "As I watched, thrones were set in place, and an Ancient One took his throne, his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and its wheels were burning fire."

²⁸⁶ van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 4, 375-6; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 4, 419.

²⁸⁷ Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Anthropomorphism in Hellenism and in Judaism," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 127, no. 507 (July-September 1970): 215-8. A good example of a Jewish scholar who adopted the metaphorical approach is the Karaite Ya'qūb al-Qirḳisānī (fl. ca. 285-340/900-50). He devoted several chapters of his Arabic magnum opus to refuting anthropomorphic ideas he attributed to rabbinical scholars, such as that God is a body with a surface (*misāḥa*) and limbs (*a 'dā'*). See his *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-marāqib*, vol. 1, ed. Leon Nemoy (New York: The Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1939), 15 and 165-79.

²⁸⁸ See also *EP*, s.v. "al-Mukanna'," where Seth, 'Alī, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya (third son of 'Alī; d. 81/700), and Abū Muslim (an 'Abbāsīd leader; d. 137/755) are also mentioned as loci of God's manifestation.

The next three opponents are listed together: the Karrāmites, Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767) and the Shī'ite Hishām b. al-Ḥakam (d. ca. 795-815). Abū l-Yusr states that each of them conceive of God as a body (*jism*), though in different ways, with some believing that God is flesh and blood in human form, some that He is light (*nūr*), and others that He is like a clear crystal (*ka-l-billawra fī l-ṣafā'*).

It appears that the first view was held by Muqātil. In al-Ash'arī's version of the doctrine, God's body is also said to have hair, bones, a hand, a leg, a head, and two eyes.²⁸⁹ The other two views seem to have belonged to Hishām. His understanding of God as a body is embedded in a comprehensive, complex ontology, according to which all that exists are bodies and their characteristics (*ṣifāt*). By "characteristics", however, he did not mean qualities like colours, smells, and so on, since he also considered these to be bodies; rather, he meant movements, such as standing and sitting, and actions, such as obedience to God and sinning. He contended that God must be a body because characteristics are always caused and He is not; that He is corporeal because a body is a "thing" (*shay'*) and every "thing" is corporeal; and that, as a "compact, luminous body" (*jism ṣamadī nūrī*), He radiates light capable of penetrating the earth and making contact with objects of perception, processes by which He acquires knowledge. Hishām's description of God as a crystal was likely meant to capture the perfection of His three-dimensional form, as suggested by his description of the crystal as perfectly round (*mustadīr*) and uniform in appearance from every direction.²⁹⁰

The doctrine that God is a body was held by early members of the Karrāmite school. They believed that the cosmos is a plenum; that is, it consists of nothing but bodies in contact with other bodies and thus is devoid of empty space. As a body Himself, they claimed, God is in physical contact with the Throne. Ibn Karrām (d. 255/869), the head of the school, argued for this on the basis of the interpretation by Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687-8), the Companion of the Prophet legendary for his knowledge of exegesis, of the term *istawā* in the statement, "The Most Merciful

²⁸⁹ al-Ash'arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt*, 152-3 and 209. According to Mun'im Sirry, the image of Muqātil as an extreme anthropomorphist conveyed by many Muslim theologians, and upheld by some modern scholars, is not accurate. As one proof of this, he notes that while Muqātil interpreted some of the anthropomorphic expressions in the Quran literally, he understood others figuratively or refrained from commenting on them. In Sirry's view, the image might be motivated by non-theological factors, such as contempt for Muqātil's closeness to the ruling powers and his free use of *isrā'īliyyāt* (i.e., narratives believed to be of non-Muslim origin) in his exegesis of the Quran. See Mun'im Sirry, "Muqātil b. Sulaymān and Anthropomorphism," *Studia Islamica* 107, no. 1 (2012): 38-64.

²⁹⁰ For these points about Hishām's ontology, see van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 1, 355-64; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 1, 417-27. Abū l-Yusr says that Hishām was the first Muslim to believe that God is a body.

istawā on the Throne,” (Q 20:5), as *istaqarra*, “settle”. However, later Karrāmites, faced with immense criticism from opponents, eventually adopted atomism. The concept of the void allowed them to distance God from the Throne, at first a finite amount, but later, thanks to Ibn al-Hayṣam, infinitely. According to Ibn al-Hayṣam and his followers, the nature of God’s relation to the Throne is unknown and in fact beyond the grasp of reason. They simply described His location as “above” (*fawqa*) or “elevated” (*fi l-‘uluww*), and while they continued to call Him a body, they insisted that He is unique in being the only body not made up of atoms. In other words, they held that God is a body in name (*tasmiyyatan*) but not in reality (*lā haqīqatan*) or “a body unlike [other] bodies” (*jism lā ka-l-ajsām*).²⁹¹

The final opponent (apart from the Karrāmites) Abū l-Yusr accuses of likening God to His creation is a Sufi group that he calls the “Ḥulūliyya” (Incarnationists).²⁹² According to him, they believe that a divine attribute inheres (*taḥullu ṣifa min ṣifāt Allāh*) in a young boy with a beautiful face, whom they are compelled to embrace and kiss because of their witnessing that attribute in him. In Abū l-Yusr’s view, their belief is close to the Christian conviction that elements of the divine (*āthār al-rubūbiyya*) manifest in Jesus, although it is worse because their infidelity is due to maintaining that such elements manifest in every young boy.²⁹³

5.3 Proofs for God’s Incomparability and Incorporeality

Despite the different ways in which Abū l-Yusr’s opponents liken God to His creation, he responds to their views collectively by demonstrating God’s incomparability and incorporeality. Before turning to scripture for help with this task, he lays the rational grounds for the two principles.²⁹⁴ An essential attribute (*ṣifa dhātiyya*), he explains, is one that an essence requires to exist. For instance, compositeness (*tarkīb*) is an essential attribute of a composite being (*al-murakkab*); the existence of a composite being without compositeness is inconceivable. Now, the likeness (*mathal*) of a thing is that which resembles it in all its essential attributes, not just some

²⁹¹ For these points, see Zysow, “Karrāmiyya,” 5-8; al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 34 and 41.

²⁹² This title was pejorative and applied by Muslim theologians to those they believed to assert God’s inherence in creatures. Sunnites and Shī‘ites alike applied it to Christians, certain extremist Shī‘ite and Sufi sects, and monists (*ittihādiyya*). See *EP*, s.v. “Ḥulūl.”

²⁹³ He later adds that the Ḥulūliyya permit singing and dancing. See al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 259. Many Sufi writers also condemned Sufi Ḥulūliyya. Abū l-Ḥasan al-Hujwīrī (d. ca. 465-9/1072-7), for instance, declares that anyone who thinks that staring at beardless youth is lawful is an unbeliever, and that by institutionalizing the practice, the Ḥulūliyya have stained the reputation of the saints and Sufi aspirants. See Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. ‘Uthmān al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, tr. and ed. Is‘ād ‘Abd al-Hādī Qandīl (Cairo: al-Majlis al-‘Alā lil-Thaqāfa, 2007), 506 and 665.

²⁹⁴ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 34-5.

of them. For instance, white is not the likeness of black, for while it shares several essential attributes with black, such as being an accident (*'araḍ*) and impermanence, it does not share all essential attributes with it. The likeness of each colour is therefore only itself. Similarly, God and the world do not resemble each other, because one of God's essential attributes is eternity (*qidam*), whereas one of the world's essential attributes is temporal origination (*hudūth*).

From this argument for God's incomparability, Abū l-Yusr develops his main argument for His incorporeality. Atoms (*jawāhir*), he says, are all alike because they resemble one another in their essential attributes, namely, insusceptibility to division (*lā tatajazza'u*) and receptivity of accidents (*taqbalu l-a'rāḍ*). They only differ from one another with respect to the (non-essential) attributes that subsist in them. For instance, a dog resembles a goat with respect to its atoms but differs from a goat with respect to the attributes subsisting in it. Now, a body is simply an aggregate of atoms (*jawāhir mujtama'a*); bodies thus resemble one another with respect to their atoms. But neither does God resemble anything nor anything resemble Him; therefore, He is not a body. Furthermore, a body, at the very least, consists of two atoms, whereas God is one.

An opponent might find this argument for God's incorporeality too complex. Applying the principle of reasoning about God on the basis of matters in this world, he could simply argue that, since one never witnesses an actor (*fā'il*) in this world who is not a body, God, being an actor Himself, must be a body, just as since one only ever witnesses an actor in this world who is living, powerful, and knowing, God must be living, powerful, and knowing.²⁹⁵

In Abū l-Yusr's view, this method of reasoning about God's nature is invalid. He retorts that we do not establish that God is living, powerful, and knowing because we only ever see a free actor in this world who is living, powerful, and knowing, just as we do not establish that God sickens, dies, and sleeps because we see people in this world sicken, die, and sleep. Rather, we establish that God is living, powerful, and knowing from the fact that a freely performed action is orderly (*'alā tartīb ḥasan*), a feature which makes its occurrence impossible without a living, powerful, and knowing being. He adds that it is not necessary for that being to be a body, but rather only to be existent; indeed, an action proceeds from a body in this world because the body is existent, not merely because the actor is a body. An additional proof that God is living,

²⁹⁵ al-Bazdawī, 35.

powerful, and knowing is that He describes Himself as such in the Quran, and the Quran is validated by a necessary proof, namely, the inimitability of its structure and content.²⁹⁶

Abū l-Yusr points out that, on the contrary, God does not describe Himself as a body in the Quran nor does the Prophet describe Him as such in any “well-known” hadith (*khābar mashhūr*).²⁹⁷ Moreover, according to the lexicologists, “body” is a term for an entity possessing size and heaviness, features which only exist through the aggregation of substances, whereas God, exalted be He, is far above (*munazzah*) that. For these reasons, Abū l-Yusr deems it impermissible to call Him a body. In contrast, he notes that God describes Himself in the Quran as a “thing” (*shayʾ*) and “self” (*nafs*) and thus may be referred to as either: “Say, ‘What thing (*shayʾ*) is greatest in testimony?’ Say, ‘God’,” (6:19);²⁹⁸ and in Jesus’ remark to God, “You know what is within myself (*nafsī*) and I do not know what is within Yourself (*nafsika*),” (5:116). The application of these two terms to God is also supported by what they signify in ordinary language. “Thing” simply denotes existence (*wujūd*); hence, when it is said, “there is nothing” (*lā shayʾ*), negation (*nafy*) and non-existence (‘*adam*) are meant. “Self” (*nafs*) is merely a name for an existent entity (*al-mawjūd*); hence, we say “the speech itself” (*nafs al-kalām*), “the question itself” (*nafs al-masʾala*), and “the faith itself” (*nafs al-īmān*).²⁹⁹ In other words, neither term necessarily signifies something with size, heaviness, or other features indicating corporeality.

Abū l-Yusr now goes on to discuss Q 42:11, “There is nothing like Him,” (*laysa kamithlihi shayʾ*). It is surprising that he takes this long to cite the verse since it would seem that it is most effective for proving God’s incomparability and incorporeality. According to al-Māturīdī, some anthropomorphists (*ahl al-tashbīh*), arguing that the letter *kāf* (like) refers to *mithl* (likeness), interpreted this verse to mean that there is nothing like God’s likeness.³⁰⁰ Although Abū l-Yusr does not mention this view, his comment on the verse is clearly aimed at refuting it. He says that both *kāf* and *mithl* are used to indicate resemblance (*lil-tashbīh*); thus, *kāf* is

²⁹⁶ al-Bazdawī, 35.

²⁹⁷ A *mashhūr* hadith may either signify one transmitted by at least three distinct lines of narrators, in which case it is also known as a *mustafīd* (diffused) hadith; or one that was originally recorded by one or more people and subsequently became popular. See Dīb al-Khudrāwī, *Qāmūs al-ʿAlfāz al-Islāmiyya: ʿArabī – Inkīlīzī, Inkīlīzī – ʿArabī; Dictionary of Islamic Terms: Arabic – English, English – Arabic* (Damascus; Beirut: al-Yamāma, n.d.), 108.

²⁹⁸ Usually, “God” is translated as the subject in the rest of the sentence that Abū l-Yusr omits, which thus reads, “Say, ‘What thing is greatest in testimony?’ Say, ‘God is witness between me and you.’” Some translations, however, do convey the sense in which Abū l-Yusr is reading it, such as that of Aisha Bewley, “Say: ‘What thing is greatest as a witness?’ Say: ‘Allah. He is Witness between me and you.’”

²⁹⁹ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 35-6.

³⁰⁰ al-Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān*, vol. 13, 172.

employed to emphasize rejection that a “thing” (*shay*) is like God. He adduces the fact that there is no difference in ordinary language between “like” being represented by *mithla* or *ka-mithli*, such as in the expression, “so-and-so is not like (*mithla* or *ka-mithli*) so-and-so.”³⁰¹

Finally, according to Abū l-Yusr, some Muslim philosophers (*falāsifa*) contend that since God is not a body, and it is impossible for Him to be an accident, He must be a substance (*jawhar*) because all existent things fall into one of these three classes of being.³⁰² Abū l-Yusr counters this view by explaining that this classification scheme applies to all *created*, existent things, whereas God is eternal and thus different from what is created. Furthermore, he explains, a substance is that in which an accident, such as compositeness (*tarkīb*), subsists, whereas God, exalted be He, is far above such things. Nonetheless, God’s difference from the world does not mean that the world is His opposite. Indeed, God does not have any opposite, because the opposite of a thing is that which stands directly opposite to it (*yuqābiluhu*) and contradicts it (*yu’arīduhu*), such as white being the opposite of black or sweetness the opposite of bitterness, whereas there is nothing that stands directly opposite to or contradicts God.³⁰³

5.4 Interpreting the Anthropomorphic Expressions

Having thus established that God is incomparable and incorporeal, Abū l-Yusr can now deal with the anthropomorphic expressions in the Quran and a hadith adduced by his anthropomorphist opponent to prove that God is a body. The performance of this task is essential for, as he notes, these expressions cannot simply be ignored, because, at least with respect to the Quran, God must be described as He describes Himself.³⁰⁴

The anthropomorphic expressions concern three divine actions and two divine features. The first of the actions is represented by the infinitives *atā* and *jā’a*, which Abū l-Yusr’s

³⁰¹ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 36.

³⁰² It is not clear which Muslim philosophers Abū l-Yusr has in mind. According to Diego R. Sarrió Cucarella, Muslim scholars, theologians, and philosophers alike did not permit the application of the term *jawhar* to God, because they usually considered it to signify that which occupies a space and receives accidents. It was rather Arab Christian scholars who applied it to God, which they often justified with an argument similar to that related by Abū l-Yusr. They contended that an existent thing is either a substance, meaning that which can subsist by itself, or an accident, meaning that which can only subsist in a substance; thus, God, an existent and independent being, is a substance. See Diego R. Sarrió Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics across the Mediterranean: The Splendid Replies of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī* (d. 684/1285) (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015), 136. Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), perhaps the most famous and important Muslim philosopher, denied that God is a substance. Similar to Abū l-Yusr, he argued, in one case, that only a contingent being is either a substance or accident. See Muḥammad Legenhausen, “Ibn Sina’s Arguments against God’s Being a Substance,” in *Substance and Attribute: Western and Islamic Traditions in Dialogue*, ed. Christian Kanzian and Muḥammad Legenhausen (Frankfurt: Ontos, 2007), 120.

³⁰³ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 36.

³⁰⁴ al-Bazdawī, 37.

opponent understands to mean “come” via locomotion (*intiḡāl*) in the following verses: “God came (*atā*) at their building from its foundations,” (16:26); “God came (*atā*) at them from where they had not expected,” (59:2); and “Your Lord comes (*jā’a*) and the angels, row upon row,” (89:22). In contrast, Abū l-Yusr insists that *atā* and *jā’a* simply mean “appear” (*ḡahara*). Hence, he says, 16:26 means that the effects of God’s displeasure appeared in their buildings; 59:2 that the effects of God’s power and subdual appeared in them; and 89:22 either that God and the angels will appear, since the reference is to an event in the afterlife, or that the effects of God’s power will appear from heaven and hell on the Day of Resurrection.

It is not enough, however, for Abū l-Yusr to simply propose these alternative readings. He must also justify them in the face of potential criticism from his opponent that he is departing from the literal message of the verses: first, by understanding *atā* and *jā’a* as “appear” rather than “locomote”; and second, by making “God” represent “God’s effects”.

With respect to the first point, Abū l-Yusr insists that the literal meaning of *atā* and *jā’a* is “appear” rather than “locomote”. The proof of this is that they are used in expressions about both bodies and attributes; for instance, it is not only said that “the camel comes” and “the clouds come”, but also that “the illness comes” and “health comes”.³⁰⁵ Furthermore, the locomotion of attributes is inconceivable but their appearance is not, and even when it is said that something (i.e., a body) “comes”, it is not meant just that it locomotes, but also that it appears.

As for reading “God” as “God’s effects”, Abū l-Yusr notes that he did not do so in his first interpretation of 89:22 in which he interpreted the verse to mean that God and the angels will appear in the afterlife, which is, he says, the interpretation he and his colleagues prefer (*wa-‘alayhi i’timādunā*). At the same time, he justifies reading “God” as “God’s effects” as in his second interpretation of 89:22 (in which he takes “God” to mean God’s effects appearing from heaven and hell on the Day of Resurrection) and other verses by pointing out that the “coming” of a subject is not always understood literally by the language speakers (*ahl al-luḡha*). For instance, it said that a ruler comes to a town when his army comes there, and that a city comes when its lands and sights appear. Therefore, since people speak like this or employ such metaphors in ordinary usage, it is valid to interpret “God” as “God’s effects”.

³⁰⁵ He only mentions *jā’a* in these examples but implies that he is also speaking of *atā* by using *ityān* (coming), the verbal noun of *atā*, when introducing them.

Abū l-Yusr follows a similar pattern of reasoning in his explanations of the other two anthropomorphic expressions denoting divine actions; that is, he provides a definition of the verb representing the action and justifies it with reference to usage of the verb in other expressions. The first of these remaining two actions concerns God's relation to the Throne, it being said in several verses of the Quran that He *istawā* on the Throne. As noted above, Ibn Karrām understood *istawā* in these verses to mean *istaqarra*, "settle". Abū l-Yusr attributes this view also to the Ḥanbalites, the Karrāmites (i.e., early Karrāmites), the Jews, Hishām and Muqātil.³⁰⁶ The meaning of *istawā* was indeed a major point of dispute among theologians,³⁰⁷ as illustrated by the emphasis placed on it in the first of the six creeds Ibn Abī Ya'lā attributes to Ibn Ḥanbal:

The Throne of the Merciful is above the water, and God is on His Throne. His feet rest upon the stool...God is on His Throne high above the seventh heaven, behind the veils of lights, of shadows, of water, and of everything that He knows better than anyone. If an innovator or heretic relies upon the words of God such as: "We are nearer to him than the jugular vein," (Q 50:16); "He is with you wherever you are," (Q 57:4); "Three men conspire not secretly together, but He is the fourth of them, neither five men, but He is the sixth of them, neither fewer than that, neither more, but He is with them, wherever they may be," (Q 58:7) or similarly ambiguous verses, one must say to him: What that signifies is knowledge, for God is on the Throne above the seventh heaven and His knowledge embraces everything. God is separate from His creation, but no place escapes His knowledge. The Throne belongs to God, and the Throne is supported by those who carry it. God is on the limitless Throne.³⁰⁸

According to Abū l-Yusr, the meaning of *istiwā'*, the verbal noun of *istawā*, is "mastery" (*istīlā'*) and "subdual" (*qahr*). One proof of this is God's comment about Moses, "When he reached his full strength and *istawā*, We granted him [a sense of] judgment and knowledge," (Q 28:14); this, he explains, refers to when Moses' condition (*ḥāluhu*) became strong with the fullness of his physique. Additionally, it is said that one's affair *istawā* when it reaches its climax

³⁰⁶ al-Bazdawī, 40. The last two figures being meant by the phrase, "and one who says He is a body," whom he previously (p. 33) mentioned believe that God is a body. As for Ibn Ḥanbal himself, Abū l-Yusr considers him to have been a pious man who did not liken God to His creation (*lam yaqul bi-l-tashbīh*). See al-Bazdawī, 259.

³⁰⁷ A.J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2008), 67; van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 4, 407-8; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 4, 455-6.

³⁰⁸ Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, vol. 1, 28-9; translated by Mary Ann Danner in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed. (2005), s.v. "Attributes of God: Islamic Concepts." For a French translation of this excerpt, see Allard, *Le problème*, 99-100. Hishām thought that what is called the Throne in Quranic language is the particular space God created for Himself and which He occupies in a particular direction. See van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 1, 363-4; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 1, 426-7. Muqātil indeed interprets *istawā* as *istaqarra*. See Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr Muqātil b. Sulaymān*, vol. 3, ed. 'Abdallāh Maḥmūd Shīḥāta (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Tārīkh al-'Arabī, 2002), 20-1.

(*tanāhā*); and when *mustawī*, the active participle of *istawā*, is used to describe one's act of sitting on a chair, it signifies mastery (*istīlā*). Therefore, God *istawā* on the Throne in the sense that He mastered it (*istawlā 'alayhi*) after its creation with an eternal act of mastery (*istīlā 'qadīm*) subsisting in His essence, just as He created the world with His eternal act of creation. Although, of course, God possesses mastery over the entire universe, He specifically mentioned His mastery over the Throne because it is the greatest, noblest, and most exalted of things.

While this understanding of *istawā* as *istawlā* is enough for Abū l-Yusr to deny that God's relationship to the Throne is physical, he raises two further arguments against the idea that God is settled on the Throne.³⁰⁹ First, if we suppose that God settled on the Throne after creating the world, then, through His conveyance from one place to another, change occurred in His essence; but that is impossible for the Eternal because He is necessarily existent with all of His attributes. Second, the Quran depicts God in multiple places, such as in the following verses: "There is in no private conversation three but that He is the fourth of them, nor are there five but that He is the sixth of them, and no less than that and no more except that He is with them wherever they are," (58:7); "Do you feel secure that the One in the heavens will not cause you to sink into the earth," (67:16); and "It is He who is God in the heavens and God in the earth," (43:84). Ultimately, Abū l-Yusr concludes, God's purpose with these verses is not to inform us that He is in any particular place, but rather that He possesses mastery (*mustawlin*) over the entire universe.³¹⁰

The final anthropomorphic expression involving an action cited by Abū l-Yusr's opponent occurs in a hadith. It is represented by a conjugated form of the infinitive *nazala*, which the opponent understands to mean "descend" via locomotion: "God the Highest descends (*yanzilu*) to the worldly heavens on the night of mid-Sha'bān."³¹¹ For some, Abū l-Yusr tells us,

³⁰⁹ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 40-1.

³¹⁰ Abū l-Yusr makes the same kind of argument against the view that God is in every place (*fī kulli makān*), which he attributes to al-Najjār and the Muslim philosophers. Since, according to him, they adduce Q 58:7 as a proof for their view, they should be referred to Q 67:16 as well as Q 20:5, in which God is said to be on the Throne; these two verses indicate that God is not in every place. Again, he concludes, the meaning of all such verses is that God possesses mastery over the entire universe. See al-Bazdawī, 41. Al-Najjār believed that God is in every place with His essence, not in the sense that He inheres in every place, but rather because He is infinite. On his view, see al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal*, 77; van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 4, 159; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 4, 180.

³¹¹ The hadith continues, "And forgives more [sins] than the number of hairs of a sheepdog." See Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Yazīd b. Māja, *Sunan Ibn Māja*, vol. 1, Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī ([Cairo]: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, n.d.), 444 (no. 1389). The night of mid-Sha'bān refers to the feast held on the night of the middle day of the month of Sha'bān in the Islamic calendar. See "Food and Feasts," in *The Islamic World: Past and Present*, ed.

this hadith does not pose any theological challenge.³¹² This is because they believe that a hadith must be “well-known” (*mashhūr*) in order to yield knowledge, which this tradition is not. Abū l-Yusr, however, does not share that perspective. In his view, it is forbidden for the sake of sincerity to reject hadiths, even if they are transmitted by a relatively small number of people (*mina l-āḥād*).³¹³ Thus, he instead resorts to a linguistic argument to deal with this anthropomorphic expression. *Nuzūl* (a noun derived from *nazala*), he contends, is not an attribute of a body, because it does not signify locomotion but rather the contact of a thing with another thing or its effect upon it. Of course, one would assume that contact between two things could involve locomotion, but the two examples of common usage Abū l-Yusr cites, “the common cold reached (*nazala*) so-and-so,” and, “the illness reached (*nazala*) him,” avoid giving that impression. His examples of expressions about the effect of the contact of a thing with another thing show once again that a subject may represent its effects rather than itself: it is said that the displeasure or anger of so-and-so “reached (*nazala*) me” in the sense that the effects of one’s displeasure or anger reached the person, not the displeasure or anger itself.

Having thus made clear his understanding of this problematic term, Abū l-Yusr applies it in his interpretation of the hadith in question, even though that means, as he admits, contradicting the literal word of the Prophet. God *nazala* to the worldly heavens on the night of mid-Sha‘bān, he explains, in the sense that the effects of His power, mercy, and anger reach the worldly heavens on the night of mid-Sha‘bān because the means of sustenance (*arzāq*) of human beings are decreed and their destinies (*ājāl*) written on this night.³¹⁴ As confirmation of this, he claims that exegetes agree that the “blessed night” mentioned in Q 44:3 is the night of mid-Sha‘bān: “Verily, We sent it down (*anzalnāhu*) on a blessed night. Indeed, We warn [humankind with it].

John L. Esposito, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, accessed April 26, 2020, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t243/e111>.

³¹² Presumably, he is referring to some of his fellow Ḥanafites. But the Mu‘tazilites were also critical of hadiths with weak lines of transmission. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, for instance, does not consider hadiths related by a single transmitter (*khabar al-wāḥid*) or a relatively small number of transmitters (*khabar al-āḥād*) to constitute true Sunna, that is, the Prophet’s custom in belief and practice. See Binyamin Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 45.

³¹³ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 37-8. On *āḥād* hadiths, see *EP*, s.v. “Ḥadīth.”

³¹⁴ This is partly based on the 1963 edition, which reads: *Fa-yakūnu ma‘nā qawlihi, ‘inn Allāh ta‘ālā yanzilu ilā samā’ al-dunyā laylat al-niṣf min Sha‘bān, ‘ ayy, yattaṣilu āthāru qudratihi wa-āthāru raḥmatihī wa-āthāru ghaḍābihī ilā samā’ al-dunyā laylat al-niṣf min Sha‘bān. Fa-inna hādhihī laylat yuqṣamu fī-hā arzāq al-‘ibād wa-yuktabu fī-hā l-ājāl*. See al-Bazdawī, *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn*, 27. In the 2003 edition, the portion from the first “Sha‘bān” to the second one is omitted.

In it every wise matter is distinguished. An order from Us. Truly, We are ever sending,” (44:3-5).³¹⁵

Abū l-Yusr’s interpretations of these anthropomorphic expressions are close to those of the Mu‘tazilites, who held that all such expressions must be interpreted symbolically to avoid conceptualizing God as a body.³¹⁶ Al-Zamakhsharī, for instance, understands God’s “coming” (*ityān*) in Q 16:26 and 59:2 as the coming of His order (*amr*),³¹⁷ and the claim that *istawā* means *istawlā* was the standard Mu‘tazilite explanation of God’s relation to the Throne.³¹⁸ The Mu‘tazilites also offered philological arguments and cited figures of speech to support their interpretations.³¹⁹ Abū l-Yusr also aligns himself with the Samarqandi scholars who, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, permitted interpreting the anthropomorphic expressions. This was in contrast to the Bukharans, who held that they must be simply accepted without speculating about their meanings. Nevertheless, he favours the Bukharan approach in his treatment of the anthropomorphic features ascribed to God in the Quran, specifically the eye (*‘ayn*) and hand (*yad*).³²⁰ While noting that one must affirm the existence of these features just as God does Himself, he terms each of them a “special attribute” (*ṣifa khāṣṣa*) and stresses that neither is a limb (*jāriha*). Additionally, although he acknowledges that some Ḥanafites permit these attributes to be spoken of in a language other than Arabic as long as one does not believe them to

³¹⁵ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 38-9. This was certainly not the view of all exegetes. According to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, the majority opinion was that the “blessed night” is the Night of Power (*laylat al-qadr*) on which the Quran was sent down. Only the Successor ‘Ikrima (d. 105/723-4) and disparate groups (*tā’ifa ākharūn*) believed it to be the night of mid-Sha‘bān. After enumerating five proofs used to support the majority opinion, al-Rāzī says that he never saw any proof cited for the minority view, its proponents merely transmitting it from “some people” (*ba’ḍ al-nās*). See his *Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī*, vol. 27, 238-9. Neither does this view appear to have been common amongst Eastern Ḥanafite scholars. Al-Māturīdī does not mention the idea that the “blessed night” is the night of mid-Sha‘bān, though the second of the four possibilities he suggests for what the object pronoun “it (*hu*)” refers to in “We sent it down (*anzalnāhu*)” might imply so: 1) the Quran; 2) the two ambiguous letters (*ḥām-mīm*) beginning the chapter in the sense of the decrees for all that will occur in the coming year, such as those concerning death, life, means of sustenance, and the like; 3) the letters *ḥām-mīm*, simply in the sense of what God has willed to be included in those letters (*mā ḍummina fī qawlihi* “*ḥām-mīm*” *alā mā arāda bi-hi*); and 4) something (*shay’*, *amr*) that the Prophet and His Companions had knowledge of but which God did not disclose, because we do not need to know about it. See his *Ta’wīlāt al-Qu’rān*, vol. 13, 291.

³¹⁶ al-Sālimī, *Kitāb al-Tamhīd*, 134; *EP*, s.v. “Mu‘tazila.”

³¹⁷ al-Zamakhsharī, *Tafsīr al-kashshāf*, 578 and 1092.

³¹⁸ al-Ash‘arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt*, 157; ‘Alī b. Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal fī l-milal wa-l-ahwā’ wa-l-niḥal*, vol. 2 ([Cairo]: Maktabat al-Salām al-‘Ālamiyya, n.d.), 97; Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology*, 23.

³¹⁹ *EP*, s.v. “Allāh.”

³²⁰ He refers to these two attributes in the singular, but the Quran mentions God’s “eye” (20:39) and “eyes” (e.g., 11:37) as well as His “hand” (e.g., 3:73), “two hands” (e.g., 5:64), and “hands” (e.g., 36:71).

be limbs, he sides with other Ḥanafites who forbid this,³²¹ evidently concerned that the condition might not be fulfilled.³²²

Although brief, these comments on God’s hand and eye are not insignificant. For one thing, Abū l-Yusr appears to make a distinction between God’s ordinary attributes, such as knowledge or power, and these two attributes by describing them as “special”. This approach differs from that of, for instance, his fellow Māturīdite Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī who treats all of God’s attributes in the same manner: “The hand is among the pre-eternal attributes, without [speculating] how (*bi-lā kayfa*) and likening [it to God’s creation], like hearing, vision, knowledge, power, life, will, and speech.”³²³ Furthermore, Abū l-Yusr does not criticize the Mu‘tazilites’ symbolic interpretations of these anthropomorphic features, such as that God’s hand represents His power (*quwwa*) or grace (*ni‘ma*) and that His eyes represent His knowledge.³²⁴ This absence of criticism is not only at variance with his readiness to attack other Mu‘tazilite positions on the attributes, but also with the discussions of these anthropomorphic features of some other Māturīdites, such as al-Sālimī and Abū l-Mu‘īn, who explicitly reject and raise arguments against the Mu‘tazilite interpretations.³²⁵ Hence, it may be that just as Abū l-Yusr adopted the rationalist position concerning the letters and utterance of the Quran but sympathized with the traditionalist one that some Sunnites espoused, here he embraces the traditionalist view but sympathizes (albeit not expressly) with the rationalist one that the Samarqandi Sunnites hold.³²⁶

5.5 Refutation of the Later Karrāmīte Doctrine

We saw above that the later Karrāmītes rejected that God is settled on the Throne, positing instead that He is merely “above” or, as Abū l-Yusr puts it, “elevated” (*fī l-‘uluww*). In

³²¹ Such as Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī, who specifically insists that the hand must not be spoken of in Persian. See his *Baḥr al-kalām*, ed. Walī l-Dīn Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Farfūr (Damascus: Maktabat Dār al-Farfūr, 2000), 105.

³²² al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 39.

³²³ al-Nasafī, *Baḥr al-kalām*, 105. However, in the creedal statement at the end of *Uṣūl al-dīn*, Abū l-Yusr simply refers to God’s hand, eye, and face (*wajh*, e.g., Q 27:55) as “attributes” (*ṣifāt*) though does not list them together with His other attributes. See al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 251.

³²⁴ They also considered God’s side (*janb*, Q 39:56) to symbolize His command (*amr*), and some, including Abū l-Hudhayl, thought that God’s face stands for God Himself. See al-Ash‘arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt*, 218; al-Sālimī, *Kitāb al-Tamhīd*, 134.

³²⁵ al-Sālimī, 134-5; al-Nasafī, *Baḥr al-kalām*, 106.

³²⁶ Al-Māturīdī, for instance, a Samarqandi scholar, considers God’s “eyes” in Q 11:37 to represent either His protection (*ḥifẓ*) and supervision (*ri‘āya*) or His advice (*i‘lām*). He thinks that the statement, “From what Our hands have done,” (Q 36:71) might refer to what the hands of human beings have done, such as farming, which God attributes to Himself, or that “Our hands” stands for God’s power (*quwwa*). See, respectively, his *Ta’wīlāt al-Qur’ān*, vol. 7, 170-1 and vol. 12, 108.

other words, while He has no particular place (*lā makāna la-hu*), He exists in one direction (*la-hu jiha wāḥida*), namely, upwards.³²⁷ For this doctrine, Abū l-Yusr enumerates and refutes five proofs.³²⁸ The first four of these proofs are not detailed arguments, but merely references to statements or events that imply that God is elevated.

First, the later Karrāmites point out that Q 35:10 states that to God “ascends (*yaṣ‘adu*) good speech and righteous work raises it”. In contrast to his approach to the anthropomorphic expressions denoting God’s actions, Abū l-Yusr does not offer any definition of *ṣa‘ada* (infinitive of *yaṣ‘adu*) or its derivatives. Instead, he seems to simply accept that it involves locomotion, for he concedes that the reality of this verse ultimately cannot be known because the ascent (*ṣu‘ūd*) of speech, especially human speech due to its impermanence, is inconceivable. This means, on the one hand, that God’s intention with the verse is unclear, which renders its meaning ambiguous (*mujmal*) and makes it an inadequate proof for the Karrāmite view. On the other hand, its ambiguity makes it possible for it to be interpreted metaphorically in at least one of two ways. First, it may be describing the exaltedness of good speech which, subsisting in its speaker, raises the esteem of that speaker and makes him close to God by way of an elevated state and standing, not by way of essence (*min haythu ‘uluww al-ḥāl wa-l-rif‘a, lā min haythu l-dhāt*), just as in this world one is close to a sultan by way of standing and position, not by way of essence and place. Second, “good speech” may refer to the Islamic testimony of faith (*shahāda*), “There is no God but God, Muḥammad is God’s messenger,” which surpasses all creeds (*adyān*), as indicated by Q 9:33, “To make it [Islam] prevail over all religions, even if the polytheists despise [so].” But again, Abū l-Yusr reminds us, “ascent” (*ṣu‘ūd*) here is by way of nobility (*sharaf*) and spiritual proximity to God (*qurb al-ḥāl*), not closeness in essence and place.

The second Karrāmite proof refers to how the Quran is said to have been “sent down” in Q 44:3, “We sent it down on a blessed night,” and a hadith, “The Quran was sent down according to seven letters (*‘alā sab‘a aḥruf*).”³²⁹ Abū l-Yusr responds to this proof by explaining that the Quran was sent down as a whole from the Throne to the worldly heaven, and then from there to

³²⁷ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 41.

³²⁸ al-Bazdawī, 41-2.

³²⁹ The hadith continues, “So recite of it what is easy.” See Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Damascus; Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2002), 1276 (no. 4992). The “seven letters” refer to the seven readings of the Quran accepted by all Sunnite authorities as *mutawātir*, that is, transmitted by sets of reliable authorities proceeding back to the Prophet himself, and thus believed to be the Prophet’s true word. See Yasin Dutton, “Orality, Literacy, and the ‘Seven Aḥruf’ Ḥadīth,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 23, no. 1 (2012): 2.

the Prophet in segments. By leaving out mention of God Himself in this series of descents, he eliminates any opportunity for the later Karrāmites, who agreed that God is not on the Throne, to base their position on the revelatory process.³³⁰

The third Karrāmite proof concerns the event known as the Prophet's Ascension (*mi'rāj*), during which, according to the standard account, the Prophet journeyed through the seven heavens, where he encountered angels and prophets, saw heaven and hell, and finally met God.³³¹ The event is not detailed in the Quran, but some passages have been thought to allude to it. One is 17:1, which mentions the Prophet's Night Journey (*isrā'*) from Mecca to Jerusalem believed to precede the Ascension: "Glory be to Him who made His servant travel by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Furthest Mosque, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him some of Our signs. Truly, He is the Hearing, the Seeing." Some interpreters argued that "Our signs" might refer to what the Prophet witnessed during his time in the heavens or even His encounter with God.³³² Another passage is 53:1-18, which speaks of two of the Prophet's visions, which some interpreters considered the object of to be God.³³³

The aspect of the Ascension that the later Karrāmites cite is the Prophet's journey beyond the Throne, presumably when he met God. It is helpful to quote Abū l-Yusr's rebuttal to this proof for it is not entirely straightforward and, at least at first glance, rather surprising:

As for the Prophet's Ascension (*i'rāj*) to heaven (*samā'*) and beyond, it did not occur, because God is beyond the universe. Rather, it was [a means of] ennobling him (*tashrīfan lahu*) and manifesting the effects (*āthār*) of His power. Indeed, Moses was not made to ascend to heaven, but rather ordered to climb the mountain, and for them,³³⁴ God is neither above nor on the mountain; rather, He specified a place for him [as a means of] ennobling him. The same holds true for the Chosen One.³³⁵ And in the same way, people are ordered to visit the Ka'ba,

³³⁰ However, it is not clear how Abū l-Yusr's response accords with his earlier remark that the Quranic *manzūm* may have been created in the Preserved Tablet or an angel since here it seems to be implied that the Quran first appeared at the Throne. Perhaps he made a connection between the locations of the three based on Ibn 'Abbās's remark that the words (*kalām*) of the Tablet are bound to the Throne and its root (*aṣl*) is in the lap of an angel. See Abū l-Firā' Ismā'il b. 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, vol. 8, ed. Sāmī b. Muḥammad al-Salāma (Riyad: Dār Ṭayyiba, 1420/1999), 373.

³³¹ William Chittick, "Mi'rāj," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0538> (accessed April 28, 2020).

³³² Josef van Ess, "Vision and Ascension: *Sūrat al-Najm* and its Relationship with Muḥammad's *mi'rāj*," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999): 48.

³³³ van Ess, "Vision and Ascension," 48-51.

³³⁴ I.e., the later Karrāmites.

³³⁵ I.e., the Prophet Muḥammad.

while for them,³³⁶ God is not at the Ka‘ba; rather, they are ordered to visit it [as a means of] glorifying God.³³⁷

From this, then, it would seem that Abū l-Yusr rejects the reality of the Ascension. This would align him with the Mu‘tazilites, who also rejected it, while affirming the reality of the Prophet’s Night Journey from Mecca to Jerusalem because of its basis in Q 17:1.³³⁸ This approach appears to have been adopted also by some Eastern Ḥanafītes. Al-Māturīdī himself writes in his exegesis of Q 17:1 that, on the one hand, the Sunnites (*naḥnu*) affirm what has been said about the Ascension in the hadiths, such as the Prophet’s meeting with previous prophets and other details (*wa-mā dhukira fī-hā*), just as Abū Bakr (*al-ṣiddīq*) affirmed all that; but on the other hand, if it turns out that Abū Bakr did not in fact affirm all those details, then the Sunnites merely accept that the Prophet traveled by night to al-Aqsa Mosque as mentioned in Q 17:1 and nothing more because the other details are transmitted in hadiths narrated by a relatively small number of people (*āḥād*), and thus it is not permissible to attest to their veracity (*lā tasa ‘u l-shahāda la-hu*).³³⁹ Despite this statement, however, rejecting the Ascension does not seem to have been so popular in Transoxania, at least not during al-Māturīdī’s lifetime. His contemporary al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī declares in his famous creed that anyone who rejects the Ascension and the verses of the Quran pertaining to it is an infidel, while one who accepts these verses and the Prophet’s voyage to Jerusalem, but rejects the Ascension or remains undecided over whether it occurred or not, is a heretic (*mubtadi‘*).³⁴⁰ This may be why Abū l-Yusr later affirms the orthodox view: “The Ascension (*mi‘rāj*) is real. The Prophet was made to ascend in the heavens (*fī-l-samāwāt*) to the place that God intended [him to ascend to], as narrated in the hadiths.”³⁴¹ Of course, that he expresses conflicting opinions on this issue in the same book is strange; it may be that the rationalist and traditionalist positions are both appealing to him and he is wavering between the two.³⁴² In any case, both views are effective for refuting the Karrāmīte argument since neither concedes that the Prophet journeyed beyond the Throne.

³³⁶ I.e., the later Karrāmītes.

³³⁷ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 42.

³³⁸ al-Nasafī, *Baḥr al-kalām*, 206; van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 4, 596; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 4, 663.

³³⁹ al-Māturīdī, *Ta‘wīlāt al-Qur‘ān*, vol. 8, 224.

³⁴⁰ Abū l-Qāsim Iṣḥāq b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī, *al-Sawād al-a‘zam fī l-kalām* ([Istanbul]: Maṭba‘at Ibrāhīm, n.d.), 14.

³⁴¹ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 252.

³⁴² This discrepancy could perhaps be explained by Abū l-Yusr’s reference to the Ascension with *i‘rāj* in his first set of comments and *mi‘rāj* in the second set if he had intended with these terms precisely the meanings al-Sālimī

The fifth Karrāmite proof is that all Muslims raise up their hands toward heaven when they request something from God. Abū l-Yusr denies what the Karrāmites see as the implication of this act by substituting God's mercy for Himself. People raise their hands upward, he explains, because heaven is the place of descent of God's mercy; the command to supplicate in this manner, just like the command to face the Ka'ba during prayer, is thus merely for the purpose of worship (*ta'abbudan*). Although Abū l-Yusr thus seems to anthropomorphize mercy in place of God, which he indeed regards as one of God's eternal attributes,³⁴³ at least on a purely linguistic level, he again refutes the idea that God Himself is elevated.

The sixth and final Karrāmite proof is, in contrast to the preceding proofs, a rational argument. It contends that God must have created the world in some direction from Himself (*fī jiha min jihātihi*), and creating it in a direction below Him is wiser; thus, He must be in the upwards direction (*fī jihat al-'uluww*). Abū l-Yusr rebuts that a direction is a side of a place (*jānib mina l-makān*), whereas neither is God in a place nor did He create the world in a place. Therefore, what the argument asserts is impossible.

assigns them. He defines the *mi'rāj* as the Prophet's journey from the earth to the seventh heaven and the *i'rāj* as his journey from the seventh heaven to the Throne. Somewhat differently, Abū l-Yusr speaks of the *mi'rāj* "in the heavens" and the *i'rāj* "to heaven". See al-Sālimī, *Kitāb al-Tamhīd*, 233.

³⁴³ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 76.

Conclusion

Abū l-Yusr al-Bazdawī was an important Māturīdite theologian of the fifth/eleventh century. He lived at a time of transition for Eastern Ḥanafite theology in which the rationalist *kalām* method introduced by al-Māturīdī was gaining dominance over the traditionalist method applied by scholars such as Abū Muṭī‘ al-Balkhī and al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī. His contribution to this transition is well illustrated by his discussion of the divine attributes. Like al-Māturīdī, he not only affirmed important tenets about God’s nature through reference to scripture and other forms of tradition, but also sought to prove them with rational arguments. According to his own testimony, this was not a simple task, for *kalām* was not yet popular in his immediate intellectual and social environment; a scholar of his region who pursued the science risked exposing himself to the disapproval and sanctions of many of his fellow Ḥanafites. In this context, his efforts are all the more impressive.

Abū l-Yusr was clearly motivated to engage in *kalām* by a desire to combat what he perceived to be heresy. He considered most heresies concerning the divine attributes to be propagated by the Mu‘tazilites. Most significantly, he opposed their identification of the divine attributes with the divine essence, insisting that the attributes are eternal entities subsisting in God’s essence, neither wholly identical nor different from it. He made rational arguments for his case, such as those based on unseen-seen analogy (*qiyās al-ghā’ib ‘alā l-shāhid*), and cited references in the Quran to attributes with nouns, such as knowledge and might. He also dismissed Ḍirār’s apophatic approach, explaining that God’s attributes are known through both revelation and reason.

Abū l-Yusr equally rejected the Mu‘tazilite belief in the createdness of divine speech. He asserted that God truly speaks through an eternal attribute of speech, providing a definition of the attribute that allowed it to be ascribed to Him literally. But he recognized the created elements of scripture that the Mu‘tazilites adduced to support their view and managed to incorporate them into his theory of the *manzūm* whereby scripture, although basically created, retains an essential connection to God’s eternal speech. Nonetheless, he tolerated the designation of the Quran as uncreated and sympathized with those who maintained the uncreatedness of its letters and utterance while recognizing the falseness of these opinions, ultimately concerned about preserving the transcendence of divine speech. Furthermore, he held that even though scripture is indicative rather than constitutive of divine speech, it is in virtue of it that one truly writes,

memorizes, recites, and hears God’s speech. In the case of hearing, he proposed a kind of divine intervention in which God causes his own speech and that of the reciter to be heard simultaneously, and argued that Moses heard God’s eternal speech directly, without the mediums of sounds and letters; with the first view he opposed all of his fellow early Māturīdites and with the second al-Māturīdī himself.

Abū l-Yusr’s discussion of God’s hearing and vision was much briefer. Against the Baghdad Mu‘tazilite doctrine that God is hearing and seeing in the sense that He is knowing about all audible and visible things, he affirmed that God is truly hearing and seeing as indicated in the Quran. He justified his contention by arguing that eyes and ears and the processes associated with them that make hearing and vision possible in this world are not conditions for their occurrence. He did not, however, elaborate the nature of these two attributes, essentially applying the “without [speculating] how” (*bi-lā kayfa*) approach.

With respect to divine will, Abū l-Yusr aligned himself with a majority of Ḥanafites against the revered leader of the school, Abū Ḥanīfa. The majority, citing the Quran, considered both *mashī’a* and *irāda* to mean “will”, while Abū Ḥanīfa, basing himself on their usage in ordinary language, understood *mashī’a* as “will” and *irāda* as “desire”. Yet this disagreement did not detract from Abū l-Yusr’s respect for the school master as indicated, for instance, by his continual employment of both *mashī’a* and *irāda* throughout his chapter on the attribute. He was more concerned about proving the existence of an eternal attribute of will and thereby refuting errant ideas about the attribute espoused by non-Ḥanafites, including the Baghdad Mu‘tazilite belief that God is not willing; the conviction of some Basran Mu‘tazilites that God is willing through a temporally originated will subsisting nowhere; and al-Najjār’s view that God is willing via His essence.

As the subject shifted to the attributes of act, so did Abū l-Yusr’s opposition change. He now stood at odds not only with a majority of Mu‘tazilites, but also the Ash‘arites, both of whom denied the existence of attributes of act, whether as aspects of the divine essence or entities subsisting therein. Abū l-Yusr noted the intensity of the debate as it occurred between his party and the Ash‘arites but made no concessions. He defended the Ḥanafite belief in eternal attributes of act with arguments based on scripture, the unseen-seen analogy, necessary proofs, and even al-Māturīdī’s primacy.

The anthropomorphic expressions shifted the focus from God's unity to His transcendence. Abū l-Yusr produced an extensive list of opponents whom he accused of holding anthropomorphic ideas about God. He refuted their ideas by demonstrating on mainly rational grounds that God is incomparable to His creation and incorporeal before turning to the anthropomorphic expressions. He interpreted God's "coming", "sitting", and "descending" figuratively by reading "God" as "God's effects" and furnishing definitions of the verbs that preclude locomotion as a necessary component, while classing the hand and eye attributed to God in the Quran as special attributes. Several aspects of his discussion reveal his closeness to the Mu'tazilite approach to anthropomorphism, such as his understanding of *istawā* as *istawlā* and reference to ordinary usage of the problematic terms to justify his definitions of them. He also drew nearer to the Mu'tazilites in his refutation of the later Karrāmite view that God is "elevated" with his rejection of the reality of the Ascension, despite affirming it later on in the book.

Although Abū l-Yusr acknowledged al-Māturīdī's accomplishments and embraced the *kalām* method he introduced, he opposed him on several theological issues. I mentioned some of these in Chapter 1, and we may now add his belief that Moses heard God's speech without sounds and letters and that the hand and eye ascribed to God are attributes. His readiness to depart from al-Māturīdī's views shows that his contribution to the Māturīdite discourse on the divine attributes is unique, developed through personal reflection on the problems raised by the topic and influenced by certain tendencies and tensions in his immediate environment and thought. As such, his discourse demonstrates the value of studying the ideas of the early Māturīdites as they negotiated and shaped the dynamic theological tradition to which they belonged, consequently producing their own interpretations of it.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- ‘Abd al-Jabbār, Ibn Aḥmad al-Asadābādī. *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-‘adl*. Volume 7. Edited by Ibrāhīm al-Ibyārī. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1380/1961.
- . *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*. Edited by ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Uthmān. Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 1996.
- Abū Ḥanīfa. “Risāla ilā ‘Uthmān al-Battī.” In *al-‘Ālim wa-l-muta‘allim*, by Abū Muqātil al-Samarqandī, edited by Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī, 34-38. Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Anwār, 1368/1949.
- Abū Muqātil al-Samarqandī. *al-‘Ālim wa-l-muta‘allim*. Edited by Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī. Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Anwār, 1368/1949.
- al-Ash‘arī, Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Ismā‘īl. *Kitāb Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn wa-Ikhtilāf al-Muṣallīn*. Edited by Hellmut Ritter. Vīsbādin: Dār al-Nashr Frānz Shtāynir, 1963.
- al-Baghdādī, Abū Maṣṣūr ‘Abd al-Qāhir b. Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad. *al-Farq bayna-l-firaq wa-bayān al-firqa al-nājiya min-hum: ‘aqā’id al-firaq al-Islāmīyya wa-ārā’ kibār a’lāmihā*. Edited by Muḥammad ‘Uthmān Khisht. Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Sīnā, 1988.
- . *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn*. Istanbul: Dār al-Funūn al-Tūrkiyya, 1346/1928.
- al-Balkhī, Abū Muṭī‘. *al-Fiqh al-absaṭ*. In *al-‘Ālim wa-l-muta‘allim*, by Abū Muqātil al-Samarqandī, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī, 39-60. Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Anwār, 1368/1949.
- . *al-Fiqh al-absaṭ*. Translated by Muḥammad Huzaifah ibn Adam aal-Ebrahim. Internet Archive. Last modified July 1, 2017.
<https://archive.org/stream/AlFiqhAlAbsat201707/Al-Fiqh%20Al-Absat%20djuv.txt>
- al-Bazdawī, Abū l-Yusr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad. *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn*. Edited by Hans Peter Linss. Cairo: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya, 1963.
- . *Uṣūl al-dīn*. Edited by Hans Peter Linss. Amended and annotated by Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqā’. Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya lil-Turāth, 2002.
- . *Kitāb fīhi ma’rifat al-hujaj al-shar‘iyya; Livre où repose la connaissance des preuves légales*. Edited by Marie Bernand and Éric Chaumont. Cairo: al-Ma‘had al-‘Ilmī al-Faransī lil-Āthār al-Sharqiyya/Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 2003.
- . *Ma’rifat al-hujaj al-shar‘iyya*. Edited by ‘Abd al-Qādir b. Yāmīn b. Nāṣir al-Khaṭīb. Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla lil-Ṭabā‘a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī‘, 1420/2000.
- al-Bukhārī, Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Damascus; Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2002.

- al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Uthmān. *Tārīkh al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa-l-a‘lām*. Volume 10. Edited by Bithār ‘Awwād Ma‘rūf. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1424/2003.
- al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *The Incoherence of the Philosophers = Tahāfut al-falāsifah : A parallel English-Arabic text*. Translated by Michael E. Marmura. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2000.
- al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī, Abū l-Qāsim Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad. *al-Sawād al-a‘zam fī l-kalām*. [Istanbul]: Maṭba‘at Ibrāhīm, n.d.
- al-Hujwārī, Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. ‘Uthmān. *Kashf al-mahjūb*. Translated and edited by Is‘ād ‘Abd al-Hādī Qandīl. Cairo: al-Majlis al-A‘lā lil-Thaqāfa, 2007.
- Ibn Abī l-Wafā’, Muḥyī l-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Naṣrallāh b. Sālīm. *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya fī ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīyya*. 5 volumes. Edited by ‘Abd al-Fattāh Muḥammad al-Ḥulw. N.p.: Hujar lil-Ṭabā‘a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī‘ wa-l-I‘lān, 1413/1993.
- Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, Abū l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad. *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*. Volume 1. Edited by Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Faqī. Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, n.d.
- Ibn ‘Asākir, Abū l-Qāsim ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Hibatallāh. *Tabyīn kadhib al-muftarī fīmā nusiba ilā-l-Imām Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī*. Edited by Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī and Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Qudsī. Damascus: Maṭba‘at al-Tawfīq, 1347 [1928].
- Ibn Baṭṭa, Abū ‘Abdallāh ‘Ubaydallāh. *al-Sharḥ wa-l-ibāna ‘alā uṣūl al-sunna wa-l-diyāna*. Edited by Riḍā’ b. Na‘sān Mu‘ṭī. Medina; Damascus: Maktabat al-‘Ulūm wa-l-Ḥikam, 2002.
- Ibn Ḥazm, ‘Alī b. Aḥmad, and Abū l-Faṭḥ Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī. *al-Fiṣal fī-l-milal wa-l-ahwā’ wa-l-niḥal*. Volume 2. [Cairo]: Maktabat al-Salām al-‘Ālamiyya, n.d.
- Ibn al-Jawzī, Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad Abū l-Faraj. *Zād al-masīr fī ‘ilm al-tafsīr*. Volume 2. [Beirut]: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, n.d.
- Ibn Kathīr, Abū l-Firā’ Ismā‘īl b. ‘Umar. *Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān al-‘Aẓīm*. Volume 8. Edited by Sāmī b. Muḥammad al-Salāma. Riyadh: Dār Ṭayyiba, 1420/1999.
- Ibn Māja, Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Yazīd. *Sunan Ibn Māja*. Volume 1. Edited by Muḥammad Fu‘ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī. [Cairo]: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya, n.d.
- Ibn al-Mu‘allim, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nu‘mān. *Awā‘il al-maqālāt*. Edited by Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī. Mahar: al-Mu’tamar al-‘Ālamī li-Alfiyya al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, 1413 [1992-3].

- Ibn Mughayzil, ‘Abd al-Qādir b. al-Ḥusayn. *al-Kawākib al-zāhira fī ijtimā‘ al-awliyā‘ yaqẓatan bi-Sayyid al-Dunyā wa-l-Ākhira*. Edited by ‘Āṣim Ibrāhīm al-Kayyālī. Beirut: Kitāb Nāshirūn, 2013.
- Ibn Quṭlūbughā, Abū l-Fidā’ Zayn al-Dīn Qāsim. *Tāj al-tarājim*. Edited by Muḥammad Khayr Ramaḍān Yūsuf. N.p.: Dār al-Qalam, 1413/1992.
- al-Juwaynī, ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Abdallāh. *Kitāb al-Irshād ilā qawāṭi‘ al-adilla fī uṣūl al-i‘tiqād*. Edited by Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Sāyih and Tawfiq ‘Alī Wahba. Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 2009.
- al-Laknawī, Abū l-Ḥasanāt Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥayy. *al-Fawā’id al-bahiyya fī tarājim al-Ḥanafīyya*. Edited by Muḥammad Badr al-Dīn Abū Firās al-Nu‘mānī. Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, n.d.
- al-Māturīdī, Abū Mansūr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad. *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*. Edited by Bekir Topaloğlu and Muhammed Aruçi. Beirut; Istanbul: Dār Şādir; Maktabat al-Irshād, n.d.
- . *Ta’wīlāt al-Qur’ān*. 18 volumes. Edited by Bekir Topaloğlu et al. Istanbul: Dār al-Mizān, 2005-7.
- Muqātil b. Sulaymān. *Tafsīr Muqātil b. Sulaymān*. Volume 3. Edited by ‘Abd Allāh Maḥmūd Shihāta. Beirut: Mu’assasa al-Tārīkh al-‘Arabī, 2002.
- al-Nasafī, Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar b. Muḥammad. *Risāla fī bayān madhāhib al-taṣawwuf*. Edited by ‘Alī Akbar Ḍiyā’ī. *al-Turāth al-‘Arabī* 12, no. 46 (1412/1992): 133-141.
- al-Nasafī, Abū l-Mu‘īn Maymūn. *Baḥr al-kalām*. Edited by Walī l-Dīn Muḥammad Şālīḥ al-Farfūr. Damascus: Maktabat Dār al-Farfūr, 2000.
- . *Tabṣirat al-adilla fī uṣūl al-dīn*. Edited by Muḥammad al-Anwār Ḥāmid ‘Īsā. Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya lil-Turāth, 2011.
- al-Qirqīsānī, Ya‘qūb. *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-marāqib*. Volume 1. Edited by Leon Nemoy. New York: The Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1939.
- al-Qurṭubī, Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr. *al-Jāmi‘ li-ahkām al-Qur’ān wa-l-mubayyin limā taḍammanahu mina l-sunna wa-āy al-furqān*. Volume 7. Edited by ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī and Muḥammad Riḍwān ‘Araqsūsī. Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 2006.
- al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Umar. *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-l-muta’akhhirīn mina l-‘ulamā’ wa-l-ḥukamā’ wa-l-mutakallimīn*. Edited by Ṭāhā ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf Sa’d. Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azhariyya, 1975.
- . *Munāzarāt Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī fī bilād Mā Warā’a l-Nahr*. Edited by Faṭḥallāh Khalīf. Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1966.

- . *Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī: al-mushahhar bi-l-tafsīr al-kabīr wa-mafātīḥ al-ghayb*. 32 volumes. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981.
- al-Sālimī, Abū Shakūr Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Sayyid b. Shu‘ayb. *Kitāb al-Tamhīd fī bayān al-tawḥīd wa-huwa hidāya li-kull mustarshid wa-rashīd*. In *Zwischen Māturīdīya und Aš‘arīya: Abū Šakūr as-Sālimī und sein Tamhīd fī bayān at-tawḥīd*, by Angelika Brodersen, 1-400. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press LLC, 2018.
- al-Sam‘ānī, Abū Sa‘d ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad b. Manšūr al-Tamīmī. *al-Ansāb*. 13 volumes. Hyderabad: al-Fārūq al-Ḥadītha lil-Ṭabā‘a wa-l-Nashr, 1397/1977.
- al-Samarqandī, Abū Salama Muḥammad b. Muḥammad. *Jumal min uṣūl al-dīn*. Edited by Ilhām Qāsimī. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2015.
- al-Shahrastānī, Abū l-Faṭḥ Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm. *Kitāb Nihāyat al-iqdām fī ‘ilm al-kalām*. Edited by Alfred Guillaume. Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 2009.
- . *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*. 3 volumes in 1. Edited by Aḥmad Fahmī Muḥammad. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1992.
- al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr. *Ta’yīd al-ḥaqīqa al-‘aliyya wa tashdīd al-tarīqa al-Shādhiliyya*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1971.
- al-Ṭabarsī, ‘Alī al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan. *Majma‘ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur‘ān*. Volume 7. Beirut: Dār al-Murtaḍā, 2006.
- al-Zamakhsharī, Abū l-Qāsim Jārallāh Maḥmūd b. ‘Umar. *Tafsīr al-kashshāf ‘an ḥaqā’iq al-tanzīl wa-‘uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta’wīl*. Edited by Khalīl Ma’mūn Thīmā. Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, 2009.

Secondary Sources

- Abrahamov, Binyamin. *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998.
- . “The ‘Bi-lā Kayfa’ Doctrine and Its Foundations in Islamic Theology.” *Arabica* 42, no. 3 (Nov., 1995): 365-379.
- Algar, Hamid. “Impostors, Antinomians, and Pseudo-Sufis: Cataloguing the Miscreants.” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 29, no. 1 (2018): 25-47. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etx063>.
- Allard, Michel. *Le problème des attributs divins dans la doctrine d’al-Aš‘arī et de ses premiers grands disciples*. Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1965.
- Allen, Roger. *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Arshi, Imtiyaz Ali. *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in Raza Library Rampur*. Volume 2. Rampur: Rampur Raza Library, 1966.
- Attas, Sayed Naquib. *The Oldest Known Malay Manuscript: A 16th Century Malay Translation of the ‘Aqā’id of al-Nasafī*. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 1988.

- Bernand, Marie. "Manuscripts inédits 'd'uṣūl al-dīn' et 'd'uṣūl al-fiqh'." *Arabica* 29, no. 2 (June 1982): 215-220
- Brentjes, Sonja. "The Vocabulary of 'Unbelief' in Three Biographical Dictionaries and Two Historical Chronicles of the 7th/13th and 8th/14th Centuries." In *Accusations of Unbelief in Islam: A Diachronic Perspective on Takfīr*, edited by Camilla Adang, Hassan Ansari, Maribel Fierro and Sabine Schmidtke, 105-154. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016.
- Brockelmann, Carl. *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*. Volume 1. Leiden: Brill, 1937.
- . *History of the Arabic Written Tradition*. Volume 1. Translated by Joep Lameer. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016.
- Brodersen, Angelika. *Der unbekannte kalām: Theologische Positionen der frühen Māturīdīya am Beispiel der Attributenlehre*. Munich: LIT Verlag, 2014.
- Cerić, Mustafa. *Roots of Synthetic Theology in Islam: A Study of the Theology of Abū Maṣū'ir al-Māturīdī*. Edited by Sharifah Shifa al-Attas. Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1996.
- Chaumont, Éric. Introduction to *Kitāb fīhi ma'rīfat al-hujaj al-shar'iyya; Livre où repose la connaissance des preuves légales*, by Abū l-Yusr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bazdawī, edited by Marie Bernand and Éric Chaumont, 5-11. Cairo: al-Ma'had al-'Ilmī al-Faransī lil-Āthār al-Sharqiyya/Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2003.
- Chittick, William C. "Mi'rāj." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*. *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*. <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0538>. Accessed April 28, 2020.
- Cucarella, Diego R. Sarrió. *Muslim-Christian Polemics across the Mediterranean: The Splendid Replies of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 684/1285)*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015.
- al-Darwīsh, Muḥyī l-Dīn. *I'rāb al-Qur'ān al-Karīm wa-bayānuhu*. Volume 2. Homs: Dār al-Irshād lil-Shu'ūn al-Jāmi'iyya, 1992.
- Dutton, Yasin. "Orality, Literacy, and the 'Seven Aḥrūf' Ḥadīth." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 23, no. 1 (2012): 1-49.
- Gilliot, Claude. "La théologie musulmane en Asie Centrale et au Khorasan." *Arabica* 49, no. 2 (2002): 135-203.
- Gimaret, Daniel. *La doctrine d'al-Ash'arī*. Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 1990.
- . "Les Uṣūl al-ḥamsa du Qāḍī 'Abd al-Ġabbār et leurs commentaires." *Annales Islamologique* 15 (1979): 47-96.
- Götz, Manfred. "Māturīdī und sein Kitāb Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān." *Der Islam* 41 (Oct. 1965): 27-70.

- al-Ḥarbī, Aḥmad b. ‘Awḍallāh b. Dākḥil al-Lahībī. *al-Māturīdiyya: dirāsatan wa taqwīman*. [Riyād]: Dār al-‘Āṣima lil-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī‘, 1413 [1992 or 3].
- Hoover, Jon. “Ḥanbalī Theology.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, edited by Sabine Schmidtke, 1-27. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199696703.013.014>.
- Keeler, Annabel. “Mystical Theology and the Traditionalist Hermeneutics of Maybudī’s *Kashf al-Asrar*.” In *Sufism and Theology*, edited by Ayman Shihadeh, 15-29. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007.
- al-Khaṭīb, ‘Abd al-Qādir b. Yāmīn b. Nāṣir. Introduction to *Ma‘rifat al-ḥujaj al-shar‘iyya*, by Abū l-Yusr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bazdawī, edited by ‘Abd al-Qādir b. Yāmīn b. Nāṣir al-Khaṭīb, 3-21. Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risāla lil-Ṭabā‘a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī‘, 1420/2000.
- King, David A. “Al-Bazdawī on the Qibla in Early Islamic Transoxania.” *Journal for the History of Arabic Science / Majallat Tārīkh al-‘Ulūm al-‘Arabīyah* 7 (Jan., 1983): 3–38
- al-Khudrāwī, Dīb. *Qāmūs al-Alfāz al-Islāmiyya: ‘Arabī – Inkīlīzī, Inkīlīzī – ‘Arabī; Dictionary of Islamic Terms: Arabic – English, English – Arabic*. Damascus; Beirut: al-Yamāma, n.d.
- Kholeif, Fathalla. *A Study on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and His Controversies in Transoxiana*. Beirut: Dar el-Machreq Éditeurs, 1966.
- Lane, Edward William. *An Arabic-English Lexicon*. Book 1, 8 parts. London; Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1863-1893.
- Legenhausen, Muḥammad. “Ibn Sina’s Arguments against God’s Being a Substance.” In *Substance and Attribute: Western and Islamic Traditions in Dialogue*, ed. Christian Kanzian and Muḥammad Legenhausen, 117-143. Frankfurt: Ontos, 2007.
- Lindberg, David C. *Theories of Vision from al-Kindi to Kepler*. Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1976.
- Linss, Hans Peter. *Probleme der islamischen Dogmatik: Das Kitāb uṣūl al-dīn des Abū ‘l-Yusr Muḥammad al-Bazdawī*. Essen: Thales Verlag, 1991.
- Løkke, Havard. “The Stoics on Sense Perception.” In *Theories of Perception in Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy*, edited by Simo Knuuttila and Pekka Kärkkäinen, 35-46. Dordrecht: Springer, 2008.
- Madelung, Wilferd. “Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī and Ash‘arī Theology.” In *Studies in Medieval Muslim Thought and History*, edited by Sabine Schmidtke, 318-330. Farnham, England: Ashgate Variorum, 2013.

- . “The Spread of Māturīdism and the Turks.” In *Actas do IV Congresso de Estudos Arabes e Islamicos, Coimbra-Lisboa 1968*, 109-168. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971. 109-168.
- Mustapha, Maziah. “The Sunni Position on Selected Issues in Kalam: A Comparison between the Views of al-Ash‘ari and al-Bazdawi.” PhD diss. International Islamic University, 2005.
- Ni‘ma, Fu‘ād. *Mulakhkhas qawā‘id al-lughā al-‘arabiyya*. 2 volumes in 1. Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa al-Islāmiyya, n.d.
- al-‘Omar, Farouq ‘Omar ‘Abd-Allah. “The Doctrines of the Māturīdite School with Special Reference to *as-Sawād al-A‘zam* of al-Ḥakīm as-Samarqandī.” PhD diss. University of Edinburgh, 1974.
- Peters, J.R.T.M. *God's created speech: A study in the speculative theology of the Mu‘tazilī Qādī l-Quḍāt Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Jabbār bn Aḥmad al-Hamadānī*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976.
- Pretzl, Otto. *Die frühe islamische Attributenlehre: Ihre weltanschaulichen Grundlagen und Wirkungen*. Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1940.
- Ritter, Hellmut. “Philologika. XIII: Arabische Handschriften in Anatolien und İstanbul.” *Oriens* 2, no. 2 (Dec., 1949): 236-314.
- Rudolph, Ulrich. *al-Māturīdī and the Development of Sunnī Theology in Samarqand*. Translated by Rodrigo Adem. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015.
- . *al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie in Samarkand*. Leiden; New York; Köln: E.J. Brill, 1997.
- . “Das Entstehen der Māturīdīya.” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 147 (1997): 394–404.
- . “Ḥanafī Theological Tradition and Māturīdism.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, edited by Sabine Schmidtke, 1-21. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199696703.013.023>.
- Salāma, Khaḍir Ibrāhīm. *Fahras Makḥṭūṭāt maktabat al-Masjid al-Aqṣā*. Volume 1. Jerusalem: Maktabat al-Masjid al-Aqṣā, n.d.
- al-Saqā, Aḥmad Ḥijāzī. “Sīrat Abī l-Yusr Muḥammad al-Bazdawī, mu‘allif *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn*.” In *Uṣūl al-dīn*, by Abū l-Yusr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bazdawī, edited by Hans Peter Linss, amended and annotated by Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqā, 9-12. Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya lil-Turāth, 2002.
- Sarhan, Saud. “The Creeds of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal.” In *Books and Bibliophiles: Studies in honour of Paul Auchterlonie on the Bio-Bibliography of the Muslim World*, edited by Robert Gleave, 29-44. Cambridge: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2014.
- Sirry, Mun‘im. “Muqātil b. Sulaymān and Anthropomorphism.” *Studia Islamica* 107, no. 1 (2012): 38-64.

- Tritton, A.S. "The Speech of God." *Studia Islamica* 36 (1972): 5-22.
- van Ess, Josef. *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*. 6 volumes. Berlin; New York: W. de Gruyter, 1991-1997.
- . *Theology and Society in the Second and Third Centuries of the Hijra: A History of Religious Thought in Early Islam*. 4 volumes. Translated by Gwendolin Goldbloom and John O’Kane. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2017-9.
- . "Vision and Ascension: Sūrat al-Najm and its Relationship with Muḥammad's *mi‘rāj*." *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999): 47-62.
- Wakelnig, Elvira. "Die Philosophen in der Tradition al-Kindīs: al-‘Āmirī, al-Isfizārī, Miskawayh, as-Siğistānī, und at-Tawḥīdī." In *Islamische Philosophie im Mittelalter: Ein Handbuch*, edited by Heidrun Eichner, Matthias Perkams, and Christian Schäfer, 233-252. Darmstadt: WBG (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft), 2013.
- Watt, W. Montgomery. *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973.
- Wensinck, A.J. *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development*. Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2008.
- Wisnovsky, Robert. *Avicenna’s Metaphysics in Context*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- Wolfson, Harry Austryn. *The Philosophy of the Kalam*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976.
- Yamauchi, Edwin M. "Anthropomorphism in Hellenism and in Judaism." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 127, no. 507 (July-September 1970): 212–22.
- Zysow, Aron. "Karrāmiya." In *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, edited by Sabine Schmidtke, 1-21. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199696703.013.29>.

Appendix

A Translation of Chapter 19 of *Uṣūl al-dīn*: “God is Eternal with His Speech”³⁴⁴

The Sunnites say, “God speaks with a speech and He is eternal with His speech, just as He is eternal with all of His attributes. His speech is in no way created (*makhlūq, mukhtalaq, muḥdath*) or temporally originated (*ḥādīth*).”

The Mu‘tazilites, Khārijites, Murji‘ites, Shī‘ites (*rawāfiḍ*), and Jabbārites, including Jahm [b. Ṣafwān] and Bishr al-Marīsī, say, “God’s speech is created.” However, they disagree over whether it is a body (*jism*) or accident (‘*araḍ*). Some of them say that it is a body, while others say that it is an accident that subsists in God or the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*). When they attempt to explain their doctrine, they are at a loss to do so, and this is why they disagree.

The Karrāmites, including Muḥammad b. Hayṣam, say, “God’s speech (*kalām*) is eternal, but the [divine] utterance (*qawl*) is temporally originated, uncreated, and subsistent in God.” By “speech”, they mean the capacity to speak. Therefore, the real purport of their doctrine is that God’s speech is temporally originated since one who is capable of speaking is not [necessarily] speaking, and the capacity to speak is not speech, just as the capacity to move is not movement.

Hishām b. al-Ḥakam says, “God possesses speech, but I do not say that it is created or uncreated.” It is narrated that Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Balkhī and ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak [also] held this [view], and it is the doctrine of some traditionists (*ahl al-ḥadīth*). They say, “There is no need to declare whether it is created or uncreated.” This is a momentous, delicate question that the early and later scholars (*al-mutaqaddimūna wa-l-muta’akhhirūna*) discussed, and the Rightly Guided Caliphs joined in [the debate] over it. The caliph al-Ma’mūn affirmed the creation of the Quran and forced people to affirm so [as well]. The caliph al-Wāthiq bi-llāh [likewise] affirmed its creation and compelled people [to affirm so]. It is narrated that the caliph al-Ma’mūn retreated from his view because of a debate that took place in his presence between Muḥammad b. Muqātil al-Rāzī and Bishr al-Marīsī. Bishr al-Marīsī was defeated, so al-Ma’mūn ordered his crucifixion and al-Marīsī was crucified on a beam. Thus, they say, “This is an indication of retreat because the debate that occurred between the two concerned the creation of the Quran, God’s speech.”³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl*, 62-75; al-Bazdawī, *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn*, 53-69.

³⁴⁵ As Linss points out, the historicity of this event is doubtful since the doctrine of the Quran’s creation was endorsed by the state. Moreover, in al-Ma’mūn’s political testament, incomplete upon his death in Rajab 218/August

According to the Sunnites, speech is that which muteness and silence lack.³⁴⁶ Some of them add [to this], saying, “It both precludes muteness and silence and is heard (*masmū*’).” And some of them say, “It is heard and understood, and muteness and silence lack it.”

According to those who affirm the creation of the Quran, speech consists of arranged letters (*hurūf manzūma*) and sounds articulated in a particular manner (*aṣwāt muqaṭṭa‘a bi-taqṭī‘ khāṣṣ*). They argue, “In the visible world (*al-shāhid*), we find [speech to be] like this; thus it is [with speech] in the unseen world (*al-ghā‘ib*).” However, in the view of the Mu‘tazilites and Jabbārites, this speech does not subsist in God; rather, it subsists in the Preserved Tablet or a speaker. In the view of the Murji’ites, [in contrast], it subsists in God.

The Karrāmites likewise believe that God’s speech is temporally originated, consists of arranged letters and sounds articulated in a particular manner, and subsists in God.

The Sunnites say, “Speech is that which is preclusive of muteness and silence and is heard and understood.” No one can argue, “Sometimes a man hears speech and doesn’t understand it,” because it is comprehensible, even if that man cannot grasp it, just as speech is audible even if some people do not hear it themselves. What the Mu‘tazilites and others propose as a definition [of speech] is false and baseless because the arrangement of letters is inconceivable since letters are in fact various sounds. [The letter] “*kāf*” is a sound that occurs in the uvula, “*hā*” is a sound that occurs in the throat, and “*bā*” is a sound that occurs on the lip. It is for the reason that “letter” (*ḥarf*) means “side” (*jānib*) and these letters (*hurūf*) become letters through their occurrence on the sides (*ḥurūf*) of the mouth as sound that they are called “letters” (*ḥurūf*), while God creates sounds, as He does all temporal beings, and they are accidents, the permanence of which is inconceivable and thus also their being arranged. Just so, one cannot conceive of the articulation of sounds, because they are accidents and only bodies can be articulated, while, [as just explained], letters are [not bodies but] in fact sounds [and thus also cannot be articulated]. Therefore, their concept of “arranged letters and articulated sounds” is wrong. [As for] their phrase, “in a particular manner that is impossible to explain,” without [explaining] this, the definition is not valid for the sounds of a trumpet and thunder [could then also be considered]

833, he encourages the continuation of his politico-religious work. According to Linss, Bishr’s debate partner was in fact ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Kinānī al-Malikī (d. 235/849). See Linss, *Der Probleme*, 10-1 and 11n16; *ET*, s.v. “al-Ma‘mūn b. Hārūn al-Rashīd.”

³⁴⁶ *al-kalām mā yanbaghī bi-hi l-kharas wa-l-sukūt*. See note 154 in Chapter 3 for alternative renditions of this phrase.

arranged letters and articulated sounds. Furthermore, defining something while declaring that part of it is unknowable is extremely absurd because the purpose of a definition is to make something known (*lil-i 'lām*), while [trying to] make something unknown known on the basis of an unknown element is futile and doesn't make anything known; indeed, it is utterly stupid.

If they say, "In the visible world, only sound is heard," we respond: that is not so. Rather, both sound and speech are heard.

If they assert, "Speech does not exist without sound," we counter that neither sound nor a special structure (*al-bunya al-makhṣūṣa*) are required for speech to exist. Rather, the condition for speech is the existence of a permanent essence. In addition, if speech is volitional, life is necessary; if it is not volitional, life is not necessary.

[Concerning] what has been related about the speech of inanimate beings (*jamādāt*), if it is volitional, then God has created life in them; if it is not volitional, it is possible that it exists without life because life is a condition [only] for volition. As for sound and a special structure, they are not conditions for the existence of speech. The same [scenario] applies to all attributes. Knowledge does not require the existence of a brain, heart, or special structure; rather, it requires the existence of a permanent essence and life, even though in the visible world, knowledge is only found in beings with hearts, brains, and special structures. Thus we say that God is knowing even though He does not possess these instruments (*ālāt*), which occur in the visible world only incidentally (*ittifāqan*) and not as conditions [for the existence of attributes]. It is so simply because God made it the custom of things (*ajrā l- 'āda*); that is, that a human being acts only through an instrument and tool (*adāt*). This is how things are. Thus, if they [the Mu'tazilites and others] maintain their definition of speech, it cannot be applied to God, and so, for them, He does not literally speak; rather, He is considered a speaker in a metaphorical sense by being the creator and existentiator (*mūjjid*) of speech in what is other than Him. Therefore, [for them], He is called a speaker in the same way as one who orders someone else to build is called a builder.

According to the Karrāmites, God truly speaks in a temporal speech subsisting in Him. They [thus] make possible the temporal origination of things in God.

The sophism of the Mu'tazilites as well as the Jabbārites among the Jahmites and Marīsites regarding this issue is the same as that regarding the issue of the [divine] attributes, which we refuted in [our discussion of] that issue.

A sophism specifically pertaining to this issue is as follows: “The Quran possesses a beginning, end, and parts, which are the marks of a created thing. In the same way, some parts of it are abrogated by others and it was sent down from the Tablet to the worldly heaven, which is also conceivable only for a created thing. And it consists of letters, some Arabic and some Hebrew, which are likewise attributes of created things. And finally, it is written, read, memorized, heard, conveyed from one place to another, and erased after being written, which are, again, attributes of created things. Indeed, God says, ‘We made it an Arabic Quran,’ (Q 43:3); and ‘There comes not to them a created revelation (*dhikr muḥdath*)³⁴⁷ from their Lord,’ (Q 21:2). He thus called it a created revelation and mentioned that He made a Quran, while ‘making’ (*ju‘l*) is, semantically, creation and existentiatio. He also says, ‘In it are clear verses,’ (Q 3:97), and that ‘they are the foundation of the Book, while others are ambiguous,’ (Q 3:7); ambiguity is a mark of createdness.”

The Karrāmites and Ḥanbalites say, “It [the Quran] is uncreated,” but add, “It is temporally originated.” This is more evil than the belief in [it being] a created thing, for while temporal origination through creation is conceivable, it is impossible without it. Their sophism [is as follows]: “[It is impossible that] God commanded Moses, ‘Throw down your cane!’ (Q 27:10) when Moses and the cane did not exist, or that He said, ‘Adam disobeyed his Lord,’ (Q 20:121) when Adam and disobedience did not exist. [Indeed], He would have had to command Moses after He created him and gave him the cane so that the cane was in his hand; and likewise, He would have had to say to Adam, ‘Adam disobeyed his Lord,’ after He created him. These are therefore instances of temporal origination of speech from Him, though He is pre-eternally capable of speaking.”

The proof adduced by Sunnites is God’s statement, “Indeed, Our word to a thing when We will it (that is, when We will its existence) is that We say to it, ‘Be!’ and it is,” (Q 16:40). In this verse, God informs us that He creates things with His word, namely, “Be”. Thus, if His word was created, it would have had to have been created with another word, and that [word] with another [word], endlessly, with the result that nothing at all would ever have been created. Therefore, this verse demonstrates to us that His speech is uncreated.

³⁴⁷ *Dhikr muḥdath* translated as such to reflect Mu‘tazilite belief. More common translations include “new revelation” and “reminder”.

If they say, “This [expression] signifies the rapidity of creation for things are created by God’s act of creation, not by His speech. Furthermore, His speech is not pre-eternal, because by saying, ‘Indeed, Our word to a thing when We will it is but that We say to it, “Be!” and it is’ (that is, once We will the existence of a thing, We [then] say to it, “Be!” and it is), God confirms that His speech (*qawl*) follows His will.

Then we respond: according to you, things are not created through God’s act of creation since, in your view, the act of creation is identical with the created being, not different from it. Therefore, this verse is a proof against you because God informs us that He creates things with His word “Be”, which is truly a [distinct] existent thing. [In contrast], we hold that He creates temporal things with His word as well as His act (*fi’l*), and He is truly the creator.³⁴⁸

And [to] their statement, “This [expression] signifies the rapidity of creation,” [we respond]: yes, indeed, but [creation occurs] through speech. [As for] their claim that this [expression] indicates that speech and the word [“Be”] follow will, we respond: neither God’s will nor His speech is temporally originated; therefore, the occurrence of one before the other is inconceivable. Furthermore, neither is separate from the other (*laysā bi-ghayrayn*);³⁴⁹ thus, the precedence of one of them is inconceivable.

The rational proof for this question is that God attributes speech to Himself [by] saying, “God addressed Moses directly,” (Q 4:164); and, “He was called by a voice from a tree in a blessed spot, on the right side of the valley, ‘O Moses, I am God, Lord of the Universe’,” (Q 28:30). His speech must thus be temporally originated or created, whether subsisting in Him or not; or not temporally originated or created, but, rather, pre-eternal; or God speaks with a speech He created in what is other than Him.

It is impossible that God speaks with a speech He created in that which is other than Him while it also subsists in Him, for the reason that it is impossible for God to be qualified with an attribute subsisting in what is other than Him. Indeed, every attribute subsists in a being, and that being is qualified with it, not [with] something else. For instance, when God creates movement in a being, that being is qualified with movement, not God; and likewise [for] the attributes of white and black. Therefore, [the notion] that He speaks with a temporally originated speech subsisting

³⁴⁸ The last sentence is only found in the 1963 edition. See al-Bazdawī, *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn*, 58.

³⁴⁹ I.e., they both eternally subsist in God’s essence.

in what is other than Him is incorrect, and it is not possible that He speaks with a temporally originated or created speech subsisting in Him.

According to the Mu‘tazilites and Jahmites, speech does not subsist in Him, because, in their view, God is not a substrate for temporal beings. As for the opinion of the Karrāmites that God is indeed a substrate for temporal beings, it is wrong because, as we have explained, change is inconceivable for the Eternal (*al-qadīm*) since He is necessarily existent (*wājib al-wujūd*) with His attributes at every instant, which indicates that His speech is pre-eternal (*azalī*). What they say cannot be accepted also because origination in time without an act of creation is impossible. And finally, since they do not say that it [His speech] is created, it must be pre-eternal and not temporally originated.

If they say, “In our view, God speaks in a metaphorical sense through His creation of speech in what is other than Him, it being impossible that He [truly] speaks since speech consists of arranged letters and sounds articulated in a particular manner, which is only conceivable in a body, while God is not a body.”

We respond: God attributes speech to Himself in many verses. It is among the attributes of praise (*ṣifāt al-madh*), and He is truly the Praised One (*al-mamdūh*); thus, the affirmation [that He truly speaks] is obligatory. This belief is lent further weight by the fact that, as we have explained, speech is heard, understood, and preclusive of muteness and silence; [attributing] this to God is valid. This is the response to their statement, “He is called a speaker in a metaphorical sense.” Since it is possible to attribute speech to God literally, it is not to be attributed to Him in a metaphorical sense.

The proof that He necessarily speaks [in a literal sense] is that He commands, prohibits, informs, and inquires; these acts are only conceivable for an [actual] speaker. And because a being’s lack of speech is a deficiency, that being associated with muteness, silence, or ignorance...³⁵⁰ There is no doubt [that this is true] in regard to muteness and ignorance. And the same is true for constant silence since it is a deficiency in the visible world, where one is silent due to an inability to speak or ineptitude, and because silence contradicts His being commanding, prohibiting, and informing.

³⁵⁰ Gap in the text.

As for the sophism of the Mu‘tazilites, Jahmites, Marīsites, and others who believe in the creation of God’s speech, escaping it is easy. Indeed, they [the Sunnites] composed a book for the purpose of doing so, but here we [only] relate a bit from it to refute their sophism.

[To] their remark, “God’s speech possesses chapters and number (‘*adad*) as well as an end, a beginning and parts.”

We respond: God’s speech, like the speech of every speaker, subsists in His essence. Any chapter [of scripture] that has an end, beginning, number, and parts is not truly God’s speech, but rather a composition (*manzūm*) composed by God that is indicative of (*dāllan ‘alā*) God’s speech, just like Imru’ al-Qays’ composition, “Tarry, my two companions, and let us weep for the memory of a beloved and a place, at the sand-dune’s edge, between al-Dakhūl and Ḥawmal.”³⁵¹ Imru’ al-Qays’ composition is indicative of [his] speech, though it is not [actually] his speech. In the same way, the sermon of every preacher and the message of every messenger are compositions indicative of their speech, though not their speech itself. This is how things are. What subsists in God is one thing without a part, number, end, and beginning; indeed, God is eternal and permanent with His speech.

If they ask, “What is this Composition?”³⁵² We say: we have no need to explain it, though we have already made clear that it is a composition composed by God. His composition of it is His action, and, in the view of the Sunnites, He is eternal with His actions, as we will later demonstrate.

If they ask, “Is this Composition created or uncreated?” We say: what is other than God is created. This is other than God since it is not God’s attribute; thus, it is created.

If they ask, “Where did He create it?” We say: it is not necessary to explain that, though it is possible that He created it in the Tablet or in an angel. This Composition is called the “Book of God” and it is called the “Quran”. It is not God’s speech but rather indicative of His speech, [for which reason] it is termed “God’s speech” in a metaphorical sense.³⁵³

According to the Sunnites, the speech of a human being subsists in his essence, and it is heard, understood, and preclusive of muteness and silence.

³⁵¹ Translated by Roger Allen in his *An Introduction to Arabic Literature* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 103. “Imru’ al-Qays” was a nickname for several Arab poets (up to twenty-five, according to Ḥ. Sandūbī). See *EP*, s.v. “Imru’ al-Qays.”

³⁵² Henceforth, I refer to the scriptural composition as “Composition”.

³⁵³ The translation of this paragraph is partly based on the more complete version of it in the 1963 edition. See al-Bazdawī, *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn*, 61.

Ibn al-Rāwandī says, “The speech of a human being is what subsists in his heart. What he says with his tongue is an expression of speech but not speech itself; it is [thus] called speech in a metaphorical sense.” This is [also] the view of some Ash‘arites, who relate it from Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī. It is manifestly wrong; there is no need to explain its wrongness for it qualifies human beings with that which is the opposite of speech when it posits [the existence of] a thing in the heart, which is [actually] silence. Indeed, it is said [of someone who is not speaking that he is] “silent”, which indicates that silence is not speech.

As for abrogation, it applies to legal rules (*ḥukm*); that is, the legal rules of God, who legislates them with His speech, are abrogated, not [His] speech itself. Abrogation is the specification of the duration of a legal rule, as we explained in *Principles of Jurisprudence (Uṣūl al-fiqh)*, and God rules (*yaḥkumu*) whatever He wants at any moment. Abrogation applies to the Composition itself,³⁵⁴ and it is the effacement of the memory of the recitation [of some part of the Quran] from one’s mind (*raf‘ ḥifẓ al-tilāwa ‘an qulūb al-‘ibād*), such as what has been narrated by ‘Umar, “Among that which was recited in the Book of God is, ‘When a married man and married woman commit adultery, stone the two of them as an exemplary punishment (*nakālan*) from God. God is Mighty and Wise’.” As for God’s speech [itself], it is impossible for it to be abrogated.

As for the descent (*inzāl*) from the Preserved Tablet to the worldly heaven, and from there to the earth, it also pertains to this Composition. God says, “Ḥā-mīm. By the Clear Book. Verily, We sent it down (*anzalnāhu*) on a blessed night,” (Q 44:1-3). He caused the Book to be “sent down” (*munzal*), and “The Book” (*al-kitāb*) is a name for this Composition since “book” is a name for something written and the Composition is something written. So the term “descent” (*inzāl*) is applied to God’s speech in virtue of the descent of the Composition indicative of it, [similar to how] when a minister delivers a ruler’s message from the citadel, it is said that he “sends (*anzala*) it down”.

As for letters, they are not [components of] God’s speech, since even human speech, as we have explained, is not marked by letters; so how could God’s speech contain them? Rather, letters belong to the Composition in the sense that it is written and recited with letters. They are created, in the view of the majority of rational people (*‘uqalā’*), except a traditionist group (*qawm min ahl al-ḥadīth*) and a group of Sufis, who claim that they are not. However, they claim [this]

³⁵⁴ I.e., the legal rules stipulated therein.

due to insufficient reflection, fleeing from the doctrine of the creation of God's speech and preventing the common people from [adopting] it. Indeed, the common people [would] hardly [be able to] distinguish between letters and God's speech. Nonetheless, their view is totally wrong and it is forbidden to espouse it. It is necessary to indoctrinate (*yujri*) the common people to regard the letters as created, or if they cannot distinguish between speech and letters, uncreated; and they must be ordered to believe that God's speech is uncreated.

The proof that the letters [of scriptures] are created is that letters are in fact the sides of the mouth (*jawānib al-fam*), and the sounds that occur on these sides are [also] called letters, while both the sides of the mouth and sounds are created. Furthermore, what is written on paper is called letters because it is indicative of those letters [that occur on the sides of the mouth], while the ink [used to write letters] is fabricated and created. Arabic and Hebrew are also attributes of the Composition, and not of God's speech. God's speech is neither in Arabic nor Hebrew, since they are languages, and God's speech is not in any language. Rather, the Composition that is indicative of God's speech in Arabic is the Quran, while the Torah in Hebrew is [also] a Composition.

As for conveyance from place to place, it also pertains to the Composition, not God's speech.

[To] their statement, “[It is created because] it is written, memorized, read, and heard,” we respond: God's speech is indeed written in our books (*maṣāḥif*), memorized in our hearts, heard with our ears, [and] recited with our tongues, [but it] does not inhere in any of these entities; rather, it subsists in the essence of the Almighty Creator. We say likewise about human speech that it is written on paper, recited with the tongue, memorized in the heart, and heard with ears, [but it does not inhere in any of these entities, instead subsisting in the speaker].

Writing speech means writing what is indicative of speech so that speech becomes written through the writing of it and...³⁵⁵ God's speech, and writing this Composition is writing God's speech. Thus, God's speech becomes written through the writing of this Composition, not metaphorically, but truly, for the writing of speech can only be [accomplished] in this way, even though speech subsists in the essence of the speaker [and] does not disjoin from it.

As for the memorization of speech, it consists of memorizing what is indicative of speech, namely, a composition; thus, in memorizing it, one is memorizing speech. It is said, “So-and-so

³⁵⁵ Gap in the text.

memorizes the speech of so-and-so,” when he memorizes his poetry that he composed. Thus, one who memorizes this Composition that God composed becomes through his memorization a memorizer of God’s speech. This, also, in a true and not metaphorical sense for this is what the memorization of speech is.

As for the recitation of speech, it is also the recitation of that which is indicative of speech, namely, the composition that the speaker composed; in reciting it, one becomes a reciter of his speech. It is said, “So-and-so recited and read the speech of so-and-so,” when he [recited and] read his composition indicative of his speech. Thus, one who recites this Composition indicative of God’s speech becomes a reciter of God’s speech. This, also, in a true and not metaphorical sense because the recitation of speech is like this.

As for hearing speech without the presence of the speaker, it is also hearing the composition indicative of speech. When one listens to a man’s poetry and his sermon without the speaker being present, people say, “He heard the speech of so-and-so from so-and-so.” When he hears from a reciter God’s composition indicative of His speech, namely, the Quran, he hears God’s speech. This, [also], in a true and not metaphorical sense because there is no way but this to hear speech without the speaker.

As for Moses, he heard God’s speech from God [directly], without the intermediary of the speech of a speaker other than Him [and] without sound and letter. Indeed, as we have explained, God caused Moses to hear His self-subsistent speech through the subtlety of His craftsmanship (*ṣanʿ*) and perfection of His ability, and Moses heard and understood it.

If they say, “God called Moses, namely, ‘O Moses,’ and His call required sound. [Indeed], God [explicitly] says, ‘He was called, “O Moses,”’ (Q 20:11).”

Then we respond: a call is a type of speech. Speech does not require sound. Sound is accessory to it as speech is not marked by sound; rather, it is marked by a speaker because there is nothing in sound to be heard. Speech is heard, whether it is accompanied by sound or not.

If they say, “[There are] indications in the Book of God that Moses heard sound. God says, ‘He was called by a voice from a tree in a blessed spot, on the right side of the valley, “O Moses,”’ (Q 28:30). The call from the tree could not have occurred unless He created sound in the tree, which Moses then heard.

We respond: it was not like that. If it had been like that, the tree would have been the speaker, not God, because the speech would have subsisted in the tree, not God, whereas God

states that He was the speaker; so this [objection] is not valid. [As for] His remark, “He was called from the right side of the valley,” it means—and God knows best—that God caused Moses to hear His speech while Moses was on the right side of the valley near the tree. It was thus as if he heard [God’s speech] from the tree on the right side [of the valley] because of his nearness to it.

Some Sunnites say, “It is possible that God causes His speech to be heard during the [Quran] reciter’s recitation, so that one simultaneously witnesses God’s speech and that of the reciter. [This is] because God’s speech is permanent, so it is possible for it to be heard during the reciter’s recitation.” This is one of al-Ash‘arī’s two views, [which] contrasts with [his view about] Moses, [namely], that he heard God’s speech without the intermediary of human speech, whereas we hear with the intermediary of human speech. Thus, a disagreement arises between us and him. In this [second view], the speech of a human being differs from God’s speech for, according to this view, when the speech of a human being is heard (*sumi ‘a*) from someone else, it is not [truly] heard (*lā yusma ‘u*); but, according to the first view, it is heard because human speech is an accident and thus does not last.

The majority of Sunnites hold the first view because it is plainer and more appealing. We say the same about the entire Quran, [namely], that it constitutes a Composition, not God’s speech, [and yet God’s speech is experienced through it].

[When] scholars say that Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq and ‘Uthmān compiled (*jami ‘a*) the Quran, they do not mean that Abū Bakr and ‘Uthmān devised the arrangement [of the Quran] or compiled [its] chapters, because the Quran is God’s Composition and [its] chapters are His compilation. Gabriel transmitted the verses and chapters to the Messenger of God and explained to him that this verse belongs to that chapter and this chapter follows that. The verses and chapters, however, were dictated by people in various manners, so Abū Bakr gathered them together in a book (*maṣḥaf*) after the Prophet’s death. It is well known that ‘Uthmān then ordered the writing of copies of the Quran (*maṣāḥif*), compared them with the copy that Abū Bakr put together, and sent them to distant lands. The Quran occurs in (*yaqa ‘u ‘alā*) reading, recitation, and this Composition, and it occurs as God’s speech. [With respect to it], we say, “To read (*qara ‘a*), he reads (*yaqra ‘u*), reading (*Qur ‘ān*), and recitation (*qirā ‘a*).” This being the case, it is not proper for anyone to say that the Quran is uncreated. Rather, what one must say is, “The Quran is God’s speech, and God’s speech is uncreated.” [But] if one says in an absolute sense

(*muṭlaqan*), ‘The Quran is uncreated,’ that is fine and harmless, even though the reading, recitation, and utterance of the Quran are created, because the absolute sense (*al-muṭlaq*) ultimately pertains to God’s speech.

Some traditionists (*aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*) and jurists state, “We do not say that the utterance of the Quran is created,” [and indeed] do not permit the application of the term “created” (*makhlūq*) to the recitation and utterance of the Quran. However, they forbid this because the common people would not [be able to] distinguish between an utterance (*lafẓ*) and the referent of an utterance (*al-malfūz*). [In other words], they take this approach so people will not come to believe in the creation of God’s speech. But it is undeniable that an utterance is created for human acts are created by God. It must not be thought that this is difficult for them [to understand]; rather, their intention may be what we mentioned.

[As for] God’s statement, “We made it an Arabic Quran,” (Q 43:3) it refers to this Composition, not to God’s speech. In the same way, “There comes not to them a created revelation from their Lord,” (Q 21:3) refers to the Composition, not God’s speech, or it refers to legal rulings (*aḥkām*). And His remark, “In it are clear verses—they are the foundation of the Book—and others are ambiguous,” (Q 3:7) also refers to the Composition, not to His speech.

As for [what] the Karrāmites’ sophism [posits], [it is] impossible because origination in time without an act of creation is impossible. [Furthermore], God’s essence is not a substrate for temporal beings, because, [if it were], He would change with the temporal beings when they inhaled in Him, while it is impossible for the Eternal to undergo change. As for their argument, “[It is impossible that] God commanded Moses, ‘Throw down your cane!’” (Q 7:117) when Moses and the cane did not exist,” we respond: some Sunnites claim, “God speaks with an eternal speech for He is eternal with His speech and His speech is single. With [this] single speech, He speaks with people at various times, and He also speaks and there is no beginning and end to His speech. He commanded Moses with His pre-eternal speech after He created him, “Throw down your cane!” (Q 27:10).

If they ask, “How could that be?” We reply: there is no “howness” (*kayfiyya*) to His speech, just as there is no howness to His essence. Inquiring about the howness of that which has no howness is impossible.

If they say, “Speech consists of informing, inquiring, and commanding. God’s informing is His statement, ‘Adam disobeyed his Lord, so he went astray,’ (Q 20:121); His commanding is

His order to Moses, ‘Throw down your cane!’ (Q 27:10); and His inquiring, ‘What is that in your right hand, O Moses?’ (Q 20:17). Therefore, how did [God’s] speech not originate in time while [His] informing, inquiring, and commanding did? It is impossible that He informed us about Adam’s disobedience when Adam and disobedience did not exist; commanded Moses to throw down the cane when Moses and the cane did not exist; [and] asked, ‘What is that in your right hand?’ when that hand did not exist.”

We respond: speech, as we have explained, is that which muteness and silence lack, and it is heard and understood. It has been proven that God possesses it, [and] it is forever atemporal (*lam yazal ghayr ḥādīth*). Informing, commanding, and inquiring occur through speech. God with His eternal and single speech informed [us] that Adam disobeyed [Him]; commanded Moses to throw down the cane; and asked Moses, “What is that in your right hand, O Moses?” (Q 20:17). Thus, against their view, speech is not [merely] informing, inquiring, and commanding. This is the opinion of some Sunnites.

Some of them say, “Speech consists of informing, inquiring, and commanding. But God with His single, eternal speech informs, inquires, and commands in pre-eternity, the future, and the present. He informed in pre-eternity that He is the Glorious, Holy, and Lord of the angels and Spirit, and bore witness to His oneness; He informed [us] about Adam’s disobedience with His pre-eternal speech [in the present when He revealed His scriptures], not in pre-eternity; and He [will] speak with the believers in heaven with His pre-eternal speech.” This is also the view of some Sunnites. Each of these views is acceptable and good.

If they say, “By claiming that God is always speaking (*mutakallim*), do you not then also imply that He is always addressing (*mukallim*)?”

We respond: some Sunnites do maintain that He is always addressing, just as He is always speaking. Al-Ash‘arī maintains this [as well].

[However], a group among the Sunnites believes that He is always speaking [but] not always addressing; rather, with His eternal speech, He addresses an addressee after his existence. Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh b. Sa‘īd al-Qaṭṭān affirms this view, and against the view of those who claim that God is always addressing, he argues that He addresses people [periodically] by establishing a connection [with them] (*bi-ṭarīq al-idāfa*). The majority of Sunnites espouse the view that al-Qaṭṭān inclines toward.

This [whole] issue [of God's speech] is among the most delicate of topics. We have set forth an exposition of it in accordance with Sunnite doctrine that every judicious, dignified, contemplative, and just Sunnite [will] comprehend.