CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Having discussed theological issues related to the Qur’ān and scrutinizing al-Bāqillānī’s thoughts in response to those problems, we can summarize certain significant findings concerning his thoughts and role in the history of Islamic theological discourse. In this field too, we are able to investigate his contributions in developing the Ash’arite theology, whose formulation he attempted to elaborate. He also promoted his own ideas to refute a number of theologians from various schools of thought namely the Muʿtazilites, the anthropomorphists (Mujassima) and the Shiʿites. From these three groups, we can analyse how strong and revelant his theological formula was. Therefore, we would like to summarize the main points of this study.

It appears from our foregoing chapters that al-Bāqillānī’s theological method in his process of argumentation was based on the Qur’ān, hadīth, and rational argument. In responding to any theological issue, he described the problem in which he attempted to rebut by analyzing the core of the matter. He investigated through his examination of the Qur’ān and hadīth. He relied his arguments on the two revealed sources together with his explanation concerning the issue and its relationship. It is therefore very crucial to scrutinize his thoughts through both sources because they are the main foundations of Islamic theology. The Qur’ān is the first source of the principles of Islam while the hadīth is its explanation and they were delivered by the Prophet (peace be upon him). Besides relying on the Qur’ān and the Prophetic tradition, al-Bāqillānī also relied his analysis on rational argument. In this respect he used both analogy and Arabic linguistic rules to present his argumentation. Hopefully this could describe al-Bāqillānī’s theological position in the problem of the createdness of the Qur’ān, anthropomorphism, and the originality of the Qur’ān.
Al-Bāqillānī confidently rejected the createdness of the Qur’ān as believed by the Mu’tazilites. He refuted against the interpretations of a number of verses and hadīths which the Mu’tazilites used to depend for their belief in the createdness of the Qur’ān. Al-Bāqillānī proposed his own views regarding all aspects related to the concept of speech. He stated his definition, division, chartacteristics, and even how God’s speech was adressed to His prophets. Regarding his views on the speech of God, Al-Bāqillānī believed that the Qur’ān by nature is uncreated. It is the speech of God ascribed to His essence. God also has other attributes like seeing, willing, hearing, living and knowing. He defined speech as meaning that exists in the soul, expressed by these articulated sounds and arranged letters. This is contradictory to the definition of the Mu’tazilites who stated that the speech is merely sounds and words. This definition was also applied to the speech of God. To reject this notion, al-Bāqillānī argued that the activity of God’s speech is uncreated, unmade, and unproduced. It is eternal since it is one of God’s attributes. God’s speech does not need various instruments such as tongues, lips, throats, letters, and sounds. We can infer that al-Bāqillānī’s definition was more comprehensive than that of the Mu’tazilites. The speech which is only limited to the arrangement of letters and sounds, and solely related to the will and intention of the speaker, does not cover the definition of speech. The meaning of speech which is one of the essential elements in speech is left, simply changed by the will as well as the intention. Someone may speak whatever he intends and wills to say, yet the meaning sometimes does not exist in the speaking. If we follow the Mu’tazilite’s definition, consequently, we may equate between God’s speech and human speech which is unacceptable.

In addition, al-Bāqillānī’s theological arguments are also revelant to refute the contemporary Orientalists’ views, notably their study on the issue of the createdness of the Qur’ān. They stated that this topic is also associated with the doctrine of Christianity
relating to the Christian Logos. This was the word of God through which He incarnated into a person, Jesus of Nazareth. Hence, the divine Logos became the human flesh. This incarnation was aimed to save human beings in their lives in this world. Al-Baqqillānī strongly criticized this notion. He explained that God is eternal (qadīm), while Jesus is originated. He questioned how could the eternal incarnates with the originated one? If that God could incarnate into His creation, He could also contradict it. All these activities are contradictory to the nature of His attributes. The eternal is neither touchable nor mixture. The word of God (Logos), which is eternal, is better than the flesh of Jesus, which is originated. In the other words, they belittled the status of God by lowering His eternity of speech, which was incarnated into the body of Jesus. Furthermore, al-Baqqillānī also disagreed that through God’s personification into human beings, it means that the flesh of Jesus was able to turn into different status; half human and half divine, which is impossible for him. He further elucidated that the flesh and blood were always originated (muḥdath) even if they were embodied by the word of God (Logos) which is eternal. The same thing for His word, al-Baqqillānī questioned why it was still eternal even if it was personified in the body of Jesus? He concluded that this notion should be invalidated. Furthermore, in another place, al-Baqqillānī also elucidated his concept of God and human’s speech in contrast with the concept of the Christian word (Logos). These speeches are different in their nature. The former is pre-existent while the latter is originated. Their roles are also distinct. According to him, the speech of God is meaningful (mufīd). It is addressed to those present addressee and the absent one. It is delivered to his Prophets and become the main guidance for human beings to reflect upon them. This word is eternal in its nature. In contrast, the speech of human beings is also meaningful, having certain characteristics but it is originated.

Further findings from this study indicate al-Baqqillānī’s highlights on his critique on anthropomorphism. Al-Baqqillānī criticized their definition on the speech of God.
They affirmed that God speaks through His sounds and words which are similar to the speech of human beings. Those sounds and words are eternal in their nature. They did not differentiate between them. As a result, this principle might cause an investigator to conclude the eternity of the creature too. However, it is impossible that God has two contradictory attributes at the same time. In addition, al-Bāqillānī also criticized the Anthropophists’ affirmation on the other aspect that God’s speech is considered eternal, while the poem (sa‘j’) is the originated thing. The Quranic recitation of someone is considered as eternal, whereas when he recites the poem his recitation is thought to be originated. Those activities have different categories depending on the object of recitation. However, in response to this notion al-Bāqillānī stated such belief is problematic because their statement is inconsistent. They mixed between the eternal and the originated in one object (hulūliyya). Based on such ideas, this consequently invalidates the existing mushaf of the Qurʾān which we have. Our mushaf is written in words and recited by a reader, thus it is originated. That recitation is not the Qurʾān, the eternal one. Therefore, what we have is not the Qurʾān revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) which is also eternal. Hence, we do not have the eternal verses of the Qurʾān, and this is absolutely impossible, since, all the teachings of Islam rely on it. Through this argument, it seems he denied anthropomorphism by disapproving its weakness in combining the eternity and the createdness.

Another notion is al-Bāqillānī’s critique against the concept of body (jism). He asserted that this concept is disconnected to God. It is impossible that He has composed materials due to several reasons. If He has body which comprises many organs, then those parts of bodies should have space and activity. Those organs will make contact with each other depending on their necessity through that space. To him, those spatial bodies would precisely be inhere in substrate. These organs somehow are contradictory to the eternity of God, which is spaceless. The claim that God has parts of bodies is

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likening Him, the Creator, with His creatures as a result of which, it leads us to believe that He is originated by virtue of His spatial bodies, and this is contradictory to the Islamic theological mainstream.

Furthermore, we obtain al-Bāqillānī’s denial against the notion that God has corporeal body. It has organs together with their own properties. These attributes could be knowing and powerful, and at the same time they may also have contradictory attributes; unknowing and unpowerful. In addition, those parts of the body may also have different number of properties. This leads to confusion as to which one of these organs is being God because not every part has divine attributes. Conversely, if every organ of that body has those properties, then, as a consequence, it also illustrates that God is more than one. This is the same thing with what is believed in Christianity which maintains the Concept of Trinity. Furthermore, the spatial bodies are also contradictory when some parts of the body can move while the others are unmoved. Their movements, however, do not completely work. It seems al-Bāqillānī’s rejections against the Anthromorphists’ claim show several consequences. The idea that God has a physical body means that it is created from a number of thing since that is the substance of the body. In addition, it could also be inferred that it has accident (‘arad) and essence (jawhar) for its space and activity. Their routines also occur to be contradictory. The corporeal attributes of God is self-evident, that it is not God because it has lot of weaknesses.

Al-Bāqillānī’s refutation against anthropomorphism is also shown through his analysis of the mutashābihāt verses of the Qur‘ān. He analysed different verses in which he commented that God’s seat on the throne is not similar to His creatures. He believed that the throne has neither space nor place because God is continuously exists. In addition, al-Bāqillānī also elaborated his thought pertaining to the abbreviated letters (al-Aḥruf al-Muqatta‘ah) whereby he rejected that the speech of God is in the form of
words. According to him, there are a number of chapters prefixed with those letters, scattered throughout the Qurʾān in different places. Many commentators either Muʿtazilite or Ashʿarite, like al-Zamakhshārī and al-Baydāwī, have interpreted them differently, yet their meanings are not clearly known by all readers. Some of their interpretations stated that the Qurʾān is eternal by virtue of those letters. However, al-Bāqillānī denied such notion because it has a consequence that the speech of God is solely manifested in the words.

Al-Bāqillānī responded too to ḥulūliyya. He promoted a number of arguments to reject their notion which maintained that the speech of God may embody into human beings. They argued that since the pre-existent attributes have certain possibilities to personify into creatures, they may change, move, develop, and even fill the void. These activities is prove that God’s speech might be fused into human beings but it is unknown which one is belong to God and which to His creatures. He then clarified the meaning of the Prophet’s saying, “don’t travel to the land of the enemy carrying the Qurʾān.” This hadīth, according to al-Bāqillānī, delineated that the companions should not go to the enemy’s place carrying the musḥaf. This is also supported by the last statement of that saying “afraid of its (the Qurʾān) loss and preserved to their hands”. It does not mean that the speech of God which is eternal would move from the land of the Muslims to the land of the enemies. This codex is termed by the Qurʾān, due to its content. This is in conformity with the other relevant report of the Prophet (peace be upon him) regarding his prohibition to touch the Qurʾān unless we are in pure condition. In other words, al-Bāqillānī attempted to illustrate the position of the Qurʾān and its status as elucidated in that hadīth. He argued that the codex should be preserved in the Muslim society, because it is their holy scripture. The Muslims know very well its value, hence, they respect it by not touching it without having ablution.
Another argument, as al-Bāqillānī asserted, is that many Arabic structures have certain hidden words which should also be understood properly following the meaning of the content of the text. It could be analysed from the above hadīth, “do not travel and you bring the writing of the Qurʾān,” which means that we are not allowed to bring the Qurʾān when we are in particular place where many non-Muslims stay. Al-Bāqillānī added further proof by illustrating that a memorizer of the Qurʾān has memorization in his heart. It is clear that this case does not indicate that God’s speech, which infuses into His body, is a kind of the unity between human and God. However, the Prophet himself did not forbid them to travel to the land of the enemy. Only, he was worried that the codex that mentioned the verses of the Qurʾān would be taken over from the hand of the Muslims to their enemies. It could be inferred that it is impossible that the eternal thing infuses into the originated matters.

Al-Bāqillānī further elaborated his proof to deny the union of God into His creatures which resulted from his analysis of relevant hadīths of the Prophet (peace be upon him). One of them is the Prophet’s statement that the Qurʾān is cannot be burned when it is written on skin. In response to this information, he attempted to infer with different possibilities. Firstly, he said that this only occurred during the life time of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), and that it was his miracle which was specially granted by Allāh to show his prophethood. It was only proven in his time, because no one was able to do that other than him. In addition, as a Prophet, he also had other miracles to empower his status amongst his people like the ability to split the moon by his hands. This sort of inimitability, however, no longer exist after he died. Furthermore, according to al-Bāqillānī, this hadīth may also elucidate the merit of the memorizers of the Qurʾān. The memorization belongs to those who have memorized it in their hearts, and saved them when they make contact with fire. Hence, they cannot be burned. The same thing happened to Prophet Ibrāhīm (peace on him) who was thrown
into the fire after he was found guilty by his people. Therefore, it seems from the foregoing arguments based on his understanding of those two different reports, al-Bāqillānī strongly maintained that those who memorized the Qurʾān would be safe from the hell fire. His skin would not be burned, due to the intercession of the Qurʾān. Al-Bāqillānī also presented the Qurʾān cannot be burned when it is written on the skin or any other stuff. He clarified that the Qurʾān is truly mentioned on them, which does not incarnate as if it is a unifying body to other elements. This is the same thing for those people who try to write one of the names of God on any space which can be thorn, burnbed, and drowned. Their writings, colors, and all other aspects would be damaged, yet, the real thing stated in that space is Allāh, the Almighty, which is eternal in nature. Therefore, the idea of the union of God with His creatures is invalidated.

Al-Bāqillānī’s arguments are also valid to refute the Orientalists’ support of the practice of the ḥulūliyya. Their appreciation of this doctrine is employed by those Anthropomorphist ṣūfis due to their union of the soul with experience of bliss to express their love for each other on this earth. In another place, it is also claimed that this practice is similar to the core doctrine of Christianity. God has incarnated into His creature, Jesus, to show His union between divinity and humanity. This similarity, perhaps, makes him appreciated such concept. However, to this notion, al-Bāqillānī responded by addressing a question on how the speech of God, which is only one, could unite with human beings’ flesh and blood. It is impossible that His attributes are combined with a number of human attributes. This sort of principle is even worse than the belief of Christianity. He criticised, according to this religion, their theologians who held that only one pre-existent word (kalimah) was combined with one body of Jesus, until his body has the attributes of God (lāhūt), and at the same time it also has humanity aspect (nāsūt) from the side of Maryam. The combination of the eternal
existence with the originated one is like the perfect mixture between water and milk. Hence, he rejected this views.

Furthermore, this study also finds al-Bāqillānī’s principle in rebutting the early Twelver Shi‘ites who claimed that the Qur’ān is incomplete. He gave many arguments to clarify a number of issues related to the mentioned claim. Historically speaking, al-Bāqillānī explained the process of how the Qur’ān was compiled by Abū Bakr and preserved in his house. After that, ‘Uthmān also instructed the compilation of the Qur’ān in the form of the mushaf which was also agreed by ‘Alī ibn Ṭālib. Al-Bāqillānī maintained that ‘Alī’s mushaf was not different from the mushafs collected by some companions. The mushaf of ‘Alī also comprised the same verses as others. It was evidenced by the report of Ibn Shihāb that ‘Alī said that he did not have any book except the book of God called by sahīfa, which hung on his sword. By virtue of this fact, al-Bāqillānī disproved the Shi‘ites’ claim about incompleteness of the Uthmānī Mushaf and their version of the Mushaf of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.

Furthermore, al-Bāqillānī also showed his defense to the perfect compilation of the mushaf employed by Uthmān. He criticized the Shi‘ites’ view on principle that only their Imāms possessed the complete verses of the Qur’ān as reported by al-Kulainī in his collection. It is said that no one could claim to have collected the whole of the Qur’ān in a book form as it was revealed. If anyone could come up with such a claim, he is a liar. No one would be able to collect this Holy Book and memorize it except ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and the Imāms after him. According to al-Bāqillānī, this was an exaggerated account because the authenticity of the above narrative was essentially untrue. He believed that this information was only produced by the Shi‘ites to assert that their version of the Qur’ān was the only valid mushaf, while, the other mushafs belonging to their opposite groups were not authentic.
Another finding on al-Bāqillānī’s refutation against the claim of the Shi’ites is that the mushaf of the Qur’ān was eaten by a domestic animal. To him, this is absolutely rejected. In defending the authenticity of the Qur’ān he arguably maintained the integrity of the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Those people were the earliest generation of Muslims who seriously learned the revelations directly from the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself. They lived with him for more than twenty years. They sacrificed their lives for the religion of Islam and were devoted in spreading this religion all over the place. Every time they had a problem, they would consult the Prophet (peace be upon him) immediately. They were really aware that the revelations that revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) were great messages from God to human beings which were unchallenged by anybody in this world. Furthermore, some of those companions industriously preserved the revelations through memorizing and writing them as their personal collection like Ubay ibn Ka‘ab, Ibn Mas‘ūd, and ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṣāliḥ. This kind of preservation was a fact not only from their own initiative, but also firm instructions from the Prophet (peace be upon him) to all companions. During the descending of revelations, he used to ask a number of his scribes to write down what was revealed. Therefore, those people had special merits because of their closeness to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the status of the people of the Qur’ān (ahl al-Qur’ān). It seems from these facts that the companions were very careful in collecting and preserving the verses of the Qur’ān. They meticulously memorized and recorded in their writings, which were specially guided by the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself. This, however, was contradictory to the claim of the Shi’ites who belittled their role in the history of Islamic civilization.

Al-Bāqillānī’s thought is also revelant to respond to contemporary Orientalists’ claim on the unoriginality of the Qur’ān because of political reasons. Michael Cook, a British Orientalist, concluded that a single mushaf existed in the history of Islam,
indicating that it was due to the authority of the state. Al-Bāqillānī responded against such claim long before the claim appeared. It is proven by the fact that during the process of its compilation, Uthmān’s instruction to burn all personal collection of the maṣāḥif of the Qur’ān, and commanded the Muslims to solely rely on his mushaf was aimed to preserve the Qur’ān and its reading standard. He further argued that the claim of missing verses of the Qur’ān as believed by the Shi‘ites as well as the Orientalists also resulted in the imperfectness of the teachings of Islam. This is, however, contradictory to the verse of the Qur’ān regarding the completeness of the Shariā. Through this obvious argument too, we can conclude that it would be possible that the teachings of Islam are more than what we have now. A number of lost verses might also become sources of the Islamic jurisprudence which are not only limited to these obligatory acts; prayer (ṣalāh), fasting (ṣaum), and giving alms (zakāh). This, nevertheless denies the verse in al-Māidah: 3 regarding the perfection of Islamic laws.

Al-Bāqillānī was an important successor of his teachers in the Ash‘arite theology who laid down the logical premises and presented the significance of the notion of metaphysical principles in theological discourse. He was praised by Ibn Taymiyya for his endeavour in developing the Asharite principle by saying “the best of the Ash’arī Mutakallimun, having no competitor by any predecessor or successor.” It is proven to certain extent his thoughts has impacted to al-Juwaynī. This is known through his acknowledgment that he had memorized the whole content of al-Taqrīb and he attempted to summarize it in Kitāb al-Talkhīṣ.

Al-Bāqillānī is one the Ash‘arite followers. His theological position on the Ash‘arite school is the most acceptable one in the great majority of Muslim community. This school takes the middle position between the Anthropomorphists (Mujassima) and the Mu’tazilites in which the former emphasized more on the application of the literalist approach in understanding the statements of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, while the latter
affirmed the more pronounced rationalistic method. The Ashʿarite theological position stands between those schools which apply the rationalistic way in understanding revelation. A combination of both methods - of applying revelation and reason in a harmonious and appropriate way - makes this school more flexible and correct, and hence acceptable in the Muslim community. This school was established by Abu al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī after his conversion to mainstream theological position, away from Muʿtazilism. The elaboration of the details of the theological position of the school was done by later scholars of the mainstream discourse. During his life, al-Bāqillānī actively participated in various polemics facing his adversaries coming from various groups such as naturalists, astrologers, dualists, Magians, Christians, Jewish scholars, and Muʿtazilites. Having studied about his thoughts as presented in this work, the present researcher concludes that he had deep and vast knowledge on Islamic theology, the Qurʾān, hadīth, rhetorics and so on. He also played a significant role in developing the metaphysical foundation of the Ashʿarite school. Future research should focus on his thoughts in various other domains.