CHAPTER III: ANTHROPOMORPHIC APPROACH TO THE QUR’ĀN AND AL-BĀQILLĀNĪ’S RESPONSE

3.1. Introduction

The anthropomorphic understanding of God has existed even before the teachings of Islam arrived.¹ This issue was introduced to Islam as part of some theologians’ attempts in viewing their theological doctrines. However, this is one of which caused crucial problem in Islamic theological discourse that called for contradictory opinions amongst theologians. Some of them were Anthropomorphists (mujassima), who based their principle on corporeal bodies, maintaining that God’s attributes as well as His activities are based on the physical basis. It is due to their literal approach of the Qurʾān as well as certain tendency to refer their doctrines to other beliefs in Christianity and Judaism. Hence, their concepts most probably are also influenced by those two religions. Before we discuss further, we would like to elucidate the background of the role of anthropomorphism within Islamic intellectual polemic.

3.2. Background of the Anthropomorphic Approach to the Qurʾān

One of the problematic matters in understanding the Qurʾān is the existence of the mutashābihāt verses. The Qurʾān has two types of verses; the muḥkamāt and mutashābihāt. Each type could have different perspectives towards their meanings. Based on some sources, both terms have been perceived differently.² Here, we rely our definition on one of them as many researchers preferred. According to them, the muḥkam verses give clear meanings and do not show ambiguity. All of these verses are clearly shown and have been arranged systematically. Meanwhile, the mutashābih verses contain ambiguous meanings. The context also shows unbinding elements,

¹ Anthropomorphism is the belief that God has physical body and limb like a human. See James Hastings, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908), vol. 1: 573.
² Muḥkamāt is a verse that has clear meaning without further explanation. Mutashābihāt is verse having more than one meaning, hence, it needs further interpretation. See discussion of those concepts in Ahmad von Denffer, Ulum al-Qurʾān, (Leicestershire: The Islamic Foundation, 2007), 79-81.
hence, leading to differences of opinion. What happened is that most commentators of the Qur’ān as well as a number of theologians during their analyses and commentaries of those ambiguous verses (mutashābihāt) tended to differ amongst them, including the verses of the attributes of God.

In the course of the history of Islam, the Muslims have made contacts with other religions such as Judaism and Christianity. Based on those religions, especially Christianity, the doctrine on the attributes of God believes that God might be described in physical form. His attributes are also possibly likened to the attributes of human beings. Sometimes, people who converted from these religions to Islam tried to understand its teachings based on their previous beliefs. Their process of understandings might err in terms of their learning of their new religion. Somehow, such a thing may influence certain conception of Jewish and Christian doctrines, which causes misunderstanding by merging them with the teachings of Islam, notably dealing with the attributes of God for instance, as maintained in Christianity. In Islamic theological discourse, there were some sects which had similar opinions in viewing the attributes of God. They believed that God has certain physical body which could be explained through the anthropomorphic perspective. Those were the Mujassimate groups as represented by Ḥashwiyya, Muqāṭiliyya, and Karrāmiyya. Their theological

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5 This group was established by Muqāṭil ibn Sulaymān (d. 150 H/ 767 C.E.). His thought was not only inclined to Anthropomorphism but also Shi‘ism. See in Abū Bakr Ahmad al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal wa al-Nihal, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n. y), 104; ‘Abd Allāh Mahmūd Sahāta, “preface”, in al-Ashbāh wa al-Nāẓir, Muqāṭil ibn Sulaymān, (Egypt: al-Hā’ah al-Misriyyah al-Āmmah li a-Kitāb, 1994), 54-5; Wilferd Madelung and Paul E. Walker, An Ismaili Heresiography: the Bab al-Shaytān from Abū Tammān’s Kitāb al-Shajara, (Leiden, Brill, 1998), 62.
views basically adhered to Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, yet in certain extent they practiced literal approach to the text which is different from his principle. They developed their own perspectives in viewing certain issues based on the anthropomorphomorphic basis.

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was a pivotal traditionist (muḥaddith) who established the theological formula. He formulated his methodological approach to grasp the text of the Qurʾān and hadīth, especially of those mutāshabihāt verses without asking how (bilā kaifa). In this attempt he tried to understand the text by leaving the rational basis, and interpreting them as they are by authorizing to God (taḥwīd). Only He knows the real meaning of them. Hence, ibn Hanbal did not comprehend the text anthropomorphically. Some Orientalists claimed that Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was considered as an Anthropomorphist. It is argued that his compilation of hadīth mentioned lots of information of the Prophet (peace be upon him) pertaining to anthropomorphic sayings. God has been described in the physical term, like the hadīth of vision (ruʿya) and some of his commentaries in the chapter of al-Najm 1-18. Furthermore, having studied several of Ibn Hanbal’ books, Williams concludes that there is no single statement in those works that mentioned his balkafa formula. This is the main method used by those earlier scholars (salaf) to approach the Qurʾān and hadīth, which is also called by bilā kaifa (without asking how). Therefore, ibn Ḥanbal is considered as an Anthropomorphist who is very much influencing to other theologians after him, notably with his literalistic perspective that he promoted. However, the foregoing conclusion is invalid. To disprove this claim, we need to investigate Ibn Hanbal’s works and clarify his stance. His theological principle has been recorded by one of his followers, al-Khallāl, an

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authoritative compiler of ibn Ḥanbal’s teachings. He elucidated his concept of tafwīd disproving his anthropomorphic views. Al-Khallāl stated when Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was asked about the ḥadīth on descending (al-nuzūl) and vision (ru’yah) he said that he believed without asking how (lā kaifa) and meaning (lā ma’nā). He obviously delineated that ibn Ḥanbal in this tenet left the meaning to God (tafwīd), and clarified his theological basis. Such a stance stayed over the course of the time followed by later theologian, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash’arī as well as other followers. Al-Ashʿarī, in his work, confidently declared his position following ibn Ḥanbal in his theological formulation of bilā kaifa. This formula also set his notion in rejecting the Muʿtazilite’s perspectives. In addition, Al-Rāzī, in his delineation of a number of various different schools, also clarified Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal’s views which had been accused by the Muʿtazilites as having anthropomorphic basis in his principle. Al-Rāzī rejected such a claim and considered it as baseless. Because most of the hanābilites referred to God regarding those meanings when they had theological problems dealing with the mutashābihāt. Therefore, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal is a deanthropomorphist theologian who used the bilā kaifa principle in his method to approach the text of the Qurʾān and ḥadīth.

In the map of Islamic theological discourses, the Mujassimates resided at the opposite views of the Muʿzalilites and contradicted with the Ashʿarites. They relied

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14 Theologians are divided into three different kinds. First are those who preferred using rational argumentation. They are the Muʿtazilites. In rejecting the doctrines of Christianity and Judaism, they applied this method to defend the doctrines of Islam. However, later on several Muʿtazilite theologians associated with certain groups who deviated in religion and inclined to heresies. Second are those who preferred literal understanding. They are the Ḥashiyya. This group includes Karrāmīyya, Barbahāriyya, Sālimiyya, Mushābiḥa and Mujassima. The third group are that those who resided between the Muʿtazilites and Ḥashiyya. They are Ashʿarite theologians. Their doctrines are founded by the argument of the Qurʾān and ḥadīth, yet they also considered the rational basis to infer them. See further information in footnote of Kamāl al-Dīn Ahmad al-Baydawī, Isharāt al-Marām min Iḥārāt al-Imām:
their way of understanding the Qur’ān on the textual approach of humanistic perspective. On the contrary, the Mu‘tazilites built their principles by understanding the Qur’ān through the rational basis (ta’wīl). Even though they regarded the Qur’ān and ḥadīth, their tendency was to rely much on the reason. Those two groups placed the Ash’arites in between them. The Ash’arites applied the middle way in approaching the text which was neither liberal nor literal. They were people of the tradition (ahl al-Sunnah). The founder of this group, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī (d. 324 H/ 935 C.E.), was previously a supporter of Mu‘tazilite’s views for about forty years of his life. Yet, he finally declared himself to change his theological tendency to ahl al-Ḥaqq, adhering to ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Anṭānī’s principle. In this position, al-Ash‘arī disagreed upon the Mu‘tazilites’ principle who possessed rationalistic basis, as well as to the Mujassimates who had anthropomorphic perspective. Therefore, his followers tried to develop his ideas to reject their arguments on several issues against those groups, including Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403 H/1013 C.E.). He formulated his theological views addressing Mu‘tazilite’s principles, one of which is on the issue of the speech of God as elucidated above in Chapter Two. Here, we will elaborate further our discussion on his thoughts defending against the Anthropomorphists’ views on the problem of the Qur’ān. But, before we explain further his ideas, we will firstly deal with the doctrines of the Mujassimates.


15 Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddimah ibn Khaldūn, 463-4.

3.3. The Anthropomorphists and their Doctrines

To trace the doctrines of anthropomorphists, we have difficulty referring to their original works.\(^\text{17}\) A number of their principles were recorded by their opposing theologians who criticized their stance like the Ḥanābīlītes,\(^\text{18}\) Ashʿarītes,\(^\text{19}\) Shiʿītes,\(^\text{20}\) and Muʿtazilītes.\(^\text{21}\) Those people criticised their literalism in approaching the text of the Qurʾān as well as their reliance on the fabricated ḥadīths of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The doctrine of anthropomorphism dealing with several theological topics is based on their own method.

The anthropomorphists based their principle in approaching any text literally. They affirmed the textual interpretation without involving the rational argument. In this approach, they did not add any idea to those texts. They literally fathomed and formulated their views which were believed to be their theological concepts. Hence, they let the text spoke as it is. In such a way, they built their analytical conceptual doctrines. It is known through al-Shahrastānī’s account:

The anthropomorphists also say “We do not add anything of ourselves, nor do we pursue questions which our predecessors had not raised. They said, “what is between the two covers is God’s speech. This is also what we say.”\(^\text{22}\)

Here, he delineated how the Anthropomorphists approached either the Qurʾān or ḥadīth as their sources of theological doctrines. Hence, by virtue of such method they had their own principle mainstream which was contradictory to other theologians.

\(^{17}\) There were possibilities that their works were burnt by their opponents which were regarded as heretical views. Their thoughts could be investigated through those who criticized against their notions. See W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, (Edinburgh: The Edinburgh University Press, 1958), 59 and 109; Muhammad ʿAbd al-Sattār Nassār, “al-Karrāmiyyah”, in *Maussāʾah Firaq al-Islāmiyyah*, ed. Muhammad Zaqzūq, (Egypt: Wizārah al-Aqwāf, 2009), 561.


Originally, one of the sources from which we can trace their background is the circle of Abū al-Hasan al-Basrī (d. 110 H/728 C.E.). During his time a number of people had initiated in understanding the text literally. They used to have long discussions among them. Those people were called by other followers as the Hashwiyya. Over the course of time, this group was developed very quickly and subdivided into several sects, one of which was the Karrāmiyya. Some heresiographers also addressed them by other terms; Mujassima and Mushabbiha. Hence, all of these sects were grouped and referred to one main idea which is anthropomorphism. They dealt with several theological issues as elaborated next.

3.3.1. The Speech of God

The anthropomorphists asserted different views on the speech of God. Some believed that God originated His speech. Hence, His speech is created. The other groups maintained His speech is part of His attributes. It is one of God’s properties. Al- Baghdādī reported the Anthropomorphists maintained God’s speech is one variety of human speech and its words. God uttered by originating His speech as existing in His essence. To them, God’s essence is space which is available for the originated things. One of their figures, the follower of Zurārah ibn A’yān al-Rāfidī believed that God’s

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23 This group was established during the meeting in the circle of al-Hasan al-Basrī in Basra. When someone blundered on one particular issue, Al-Hasan said to his audience to seclude those people from his circle. After this time, a number of men discussed about that event by saying ‘al-Hashwiyya’ meaning ‘prolix and useless discussion.’ Hence, since then this term was used to refer to those people. They also affirmed the anthropomorphic approach to the text which they claimed following the earlier scholars. Unfortunately, their argumentation is also by adding a number of fabricated and weak hadiths in their doctrines. See introduction of Muhammad Zahīd ibn Hasan al-Kauthārī ibn Abū al-Qāsim ‘Alī ibn al-Hasan ibn Hibah Allāh ibn Asākir, Ṭabyīn Kadhib al-Muftarī, ed. Al-Kawthari, (Damascus: Matba’ah al-Tawfiq, 1928), p. 11; E. d, “Hashwiyya,” in Encyclopedia of Islam: New Edition, ed. B. Lewis et. al., (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 3: 269.
attributes are originated, hence, they are also part of human beings’ attributes. God does not have special properties of living, knowing, willing, hearing, and seeing. All these attributes are created in Himself similar to as human beings. Other Anthropomorphists, the Karramiyya, contradictorily maintained that the speech of God (kalām Allāh) is eternal, while His utterance (qawl) is originated consisting of words and sounds. God is able to talk and understand the other speeches with His power.

Furthermore, they maintained too that God is knowing (ʿalīm) with His knowledge (ilm), powerful (qadīr) with his power (qudra), living with His life (hayā), and willing with His will (mashīa). He also has another attributes like hearing, and seeing.

Al-Juwaynī also described Hashwiyya’s notion on the speech of God. They believed that His speech, which comprised sounds and words, is eternal. They also stressed that the heard (al-masmū) by a reader of the Qur’ān is the essence of His speech because it is the sound of God. If that speech is written and arranged on any part of the body, it is regarded an eternal thing. To them, even the body is originated, yet it may switch into an eternal one including its words and sounds. Essentially, these two things are pre-existent (qadīm). Furthermore, commenting on their views, al-Juwaynī stated that their method was based on the denial of necessary knowledge (juhd al-darūrāt). They held that the speech was eternal at the same time it was originated. It consists of sentences arranged by various different letters. Every letter could precede each other depending on the proper term. The first word possibly could be placed in the middle or the last. Hence, it could be concluded that such a theoretical approach obviously leads to conclusion on turning the created things into an eternal one. Having described those views, al-Juwaynī also analyzed their arguments and negated them. He

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29 Al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal wa al-Nihal, 112.
considered that notion as baseless and hence, rejected by his point of views. The critiques against his ideas will be further discussed below, together with those of other Ash‘arite theologians.

From the aforementioned reports of several theologians, we can conclude that the speech of God, according to the Anthropomorphists, contains words and sounds, either eternal or originated. They did not differentiate between them. However, it is also valid in another aspect in which they also affirmed the similarity of the terms ‘recitation’ (qirā’ah) and ‘recited’ (maqrū‘). This matter will be further elaborated.

3.3.2. The Similarity of the terms ‘Recitation’ (qirā’ah) and the ‘Recited’ (maqrū‘)
In the issue of the speech of God, the terms ‘recitation’ (qirā’ah) and the ‘recited’ (maqrū‘) have been differently fathomed by a number of theologians. The Anthropomorphists believed that those two terms are similar. It is argued that the meaning of God’s sounds and words are audible for the readers of the Qurʾān. They even believed that the sound of man is the sound of God. They affirmed too the sounds and attributes of creature are from the attributes of God.31

In another place, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728 H/1328 C.E.) further reported the principle of this group. They maintained that during the reading of the Qurʾān, they believed that they were articulating it. To them, the term ‘writing’ (kitāba) is ‘written’ (al-maktūb), the same thing to the recitation and the recited. In addition, they further believed that the Qurʾān only comprises words and sounds. The expressive sound is essentially heard from the reader. However, they denied the meaning therein.32 Furthermore, some Anthropomorphists maintained similar doctrine with the

32 Ibid., 12: 394.
Mu’tazilites who also affirmed that the speech of God is created, even though they admitted as the Ḥanābilites, the adherents of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. One of a well known Hanābilite theologians, Abū Ya’lā (d. 458 H./1066 A.D.), believed in the similarity of both terms ‘recitation’ (qirā’a) and ‘recited’ (maqrū’). He equated those two terms as well as ‘writing’ (kitāba) and ‘written’ (maktūb). It is evident from the verse in al-Mudathir: 25-26, that demonstrates how the people of the Quraish adressed their statements to the recitations (tilāwāt) of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) and regarded them as his own words. Their assumption later on was proven wrong, since those recitations are from the Qur’ān, which was revealed by God to him. Furthermore, Abū Ya’alā argued about the ḥadīth of the Prophet (peace be upon him) regarding the deliverance of the message of God to one particular community, as stated below:

It is narrated that Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh said: The Prophet (peace be upon him) showed himself to his people saying ‘is there any person who sends me to his people, while, the Quraish has rejected me to deliver the messages of God.

The foregoing ḥadīth, according to Abū Ya’lā, elucidated the Prophet’s statement about his recitation which is called the speech of God (kalām Allāh). By virtue of this fact, the Muslim people agreed calling the recitations (tilāwāt) as the speech of God because those who used to listen to these words would say that this message is the speech of God based on their audible sounds. He further argued that the ‘writing’ (kitāba) is the ‘written’ (maktūb) as it proven by the verse in al-Wāqi’ah: 77-79.

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33 Ibid.
35 Al-Mudathir: 25-26: It is nothing but the word of a mortal.” (as a result of his disbelief) I will cast him into the fire of hell!
37 Abū Ya’lā, Kitāb al-Mu’tamad fi Usūl al-Dīn, 88.
38 Waqi’ah: 77-79: “That (which is recited to you) is a most noble Qur’ān (which always teaches and provides guidance). In a Book well-guarded, which none can touch except the purified.”
called it as the writing of the Qur’an (*kitāba al-Qur’ān*). The same thing for those who swear by the Qur’an. In this sense they dealt with the speech of God. To those who attempted to write the Qur’an, if they are in state of impurity they would have sinned due to the inimitability of the Qur’an. It is also due to its holiness as everybody may not touch it casually. Only those who are pure are permissible to touch it. Abū Ya’lā further elaborated his argument in analyzing the term ‘memorization’ (*hīfẓ*), which, to him, is not similar to ‘memorized’ (*mahfūz*). Because it is knowledge of how the speech reaches the intellect of the memorizer (*hāfīz*) those who are unable to attain that particular status might not be regarded as a memorizer (*hāfīz*). In addition to this, he explained that someone’s knowledge is neither considered as memorization (*hīfẓ*) nor writing (*kitāba*) or reading (*tilāwa*) because each is sound and word. The sounds of the writing appear during its recitation, like the hand which demonstrates motion when it is regularly moved.39

Furthermore, Abū Ya’lā also rejected some Ash’arites’ notion on the prohibition of speaking with the speech of God.40 He argued that idea is contradictory to the *hadīth* of the Prophet (peace be upon him) as he stated “no slaves are beloved by God until they speak with His speech,”41 which is the Qur’an. This statement, according to him, is the obvious reason why we possibly utter it. It is also proven by the other *hadīths* that the Prophet (peace be upon him) allowed his companions to learn the Qur’an from certain knowledgeable persons.42 As a result of learning from those people, Abū Ya’lā concluded, it is permissible to speak with the speech of God. In this sense, he equated

40 Ibid., 90.
the meanings of reading (tīlāwah), comprehension (ifhām), and information (i’lām)\textsuperscript{43} based on the verses of al-Qasas: 3\textsuperscript{44} and al-Nisā’: 164.\textsuperscript{45} Therefore, God’s speech is immediately revealed in the heart of the Prophet (peace be upon him).\textsuperscript{46}

From the foregoing discussion, it seems that the doctrine of the Anthropomorphists on their equation between the recitation and recited affirms the similarity between the speech of God and the speech of human beings. Both speeches could be either eternal or originated. They also elaborated their views on the Qur’ān and its related characteristic.

**3.3.3. The Qur’ān and Its Characteristics**

Having defined the meaning of speech of God, we deal with the Anthropomorphists’ ideas about the Qur’ān and its characteristics. Based on the account reported by al-Shahrastānī, the Ḥashwiyya formulated their principles in viewing the Qur’ān and its features. According to them, the contents of the Qur’ān, which comprises the words, sounds and written numbers, are eternal in nature. No speech is comprehensible without these elements.\textsuperscript{47} This concept is contradictory to both the Mu’tazilites\textsuperscript{48} and the Ash’arites\textsuperscript{49} since they included certain aspects to be eternal which were excluded by both groups. Those features could be in the form of number, ink, paper and so on. They also proved their argument with the hadīth of the Prophet (peace be upon him). It is

\textsuperscript{43}Abū Ya’lā, Kitāb al-Mu’tamad fī Usūl al-Dīn, 90.
\textsuperscript{44}Al-Qaṣaṣ: 3: We recite to you some of the stories of Musa and Fir’āun setting forth the truth for people who believe.
\textsuperscript{45}Al-Nisā’: 164: And Allāh spoke to Musa directly (without any intermediary).
\textsuperscript{46}Abū Ya’lā, Kitāb al-Mu’tamad fī Usūl al-Dīn, 90. In this matter he also relied on verse of 26: 192-195: And indeed the Qur’ān (which consists among others of the previous stories) is revealed by Allāh, Lord of all the Worlds. It was brought down by the trustworthy Angel, Jibril. Into your heart, so that you (O Muḥammad) may be among those who give warning (to mankind).
\textsuperscript{47}Al-Shahrastānī, Al-Mīlal wa al-Nihāl, 106.
\textsuperscript{48}The Mu’tazilites held that the Qur’ān is the speech of God which is created and originated. See ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadānī, Shahr Usūl al-Khamsah, ed. ‘Abd al-Karīm Uthmān, (Egypt: Maktabah Wahbah, 1996), 526.
\textsuperscript{49}The Ash’arites believed that the speech is meaning existing in the soul. See ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, Nihāyā’ al-Iqdām fī ilm al-Kalām, ed. Alfred Guillaume, (n. c., Maktab al-Saqāfah al-Diniyyah, n. y.), 282–88.
stated in his saying that on the Day of the Judgment, God will call all creatures loudly, hence, everyone will hear and obey it.\textsuperscript{50}

In addition, the \textit{Hashwiyya} defended their principle on the revelation of the Qur’ān. They maintained that things between the two covers are the speech of God revealed to the Angel Jibril. It is written in the text as well as in the Preserved Tablet (\textit{Lauh al-Mahfūz}) and also heard by the Muslims in paradise from God without veil or mediation.\textsuperscript{51} Moreover, they also maintained that the Qur’ān which is uncreated is eternal existence. Its alphabetical words, bodies, colours, and sounds are created in nature by God.\textsuperscript{52} In this sense, His word (\textit{kalām}) is eternal while all those features are originating (\textit{hadīthah}) from Him.\textsuperscript{53}

Besides elucidating their doctrines of the Qur’ān, al-Shahrastānī also reported that the \textit{Hashwiyya} also asserted the process of communication between Prophet Moses with God. They maintained it occurred when to him he was revealed the holy book of \textit{Tawra}. They described how Prophet Moses was addressed by God in the holy place of Sinai mount.\textsuperscript{54} At the very beginning, he heard God’s Speech like the sound of dragging chain.\textsuperscript{55} According to Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. 150 H./767 C.E.),\textsuperscript{56} God spoke through His mouth (\textit{mushāfahā}) to Prophet Moses when he was 40 years old. When that communication was completed he was bestowed the \textit{Tawra} from which he told his people about the paradise and hell.\textsuperscript{57} Furthermore, a Hanbalite follower, Abū Ya’lā, also reported the \textit{Hashwiyya}’s notion on how communication between God and Prophet

\textsuperscript{50}“God the almighty will call in the day of judgment with sounds which are heard by people of all ages.” This hadith has been cited by al-Shahrastani without stating its transmitter. However, the author found slightly different text (\textit{matn}) in \textit{Sahih al-Bukhārī} “the Prophet said: “God will gather His creatures (\textit{ibād}) during the End of the Day, and He will call them with His sound which is audible from far and near…” See \textit{al-Bukhārī}, \textit{Sahih al-Bukhārī}, in The Book of Tawḥīd, no. 7481, 890.

\textsuperscript{51}al-Shahrastānī, \textit{Al-Milal wa al-Nihal}, 107.

\textsuperscript{52}Ibn Asākir, \textit{Tabyīn Kadhīb al-Muftārī}, 150.

\textsuperscript{53}Wolfson, \textit{The Philosophy of Kalam}, (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1976), 301.

\textsuperscript{54}Tāhā 11-12: “When he came near the fire, he was called by name “O Musa!, “I am your Lord! Take off your sandals, for you are now in the sacred Valley of Tuwa.”

\textsuperscript{55}al-Shahrastānī, \textit{Al-Milal al-Nihal}, 106.


Moses occurred. When God spoke to him, Prophet Moses was in a state of instability because he was shocked by this extraordinary event. Then, God decreed unto him to open his eyes. Prophet Moses found hundred steps in front of him. This information, however, was doubted by Abū Ya‘lā in his comment about this *ḥadīth*. It was merely an argument proposed by them to promote their doctrines.

Therefore, it seems from the foregoing explanation that what the Anthropomorphists claimed is invalid. The information has been falsified by Abū Ya‘lā because the status of this information is inaccurate. Their arguments may have been supported by the *ḥadīth*, yet one of their objectives is to support their mission. This also stated by the earlier figure Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, who related their ideas to physical aspects likening God with the human’s image and activity. Hence, by virtue of that the characteristic of their approach to the Qur’ān is relying on anthropomorphism.

3.3.4. The Anthropomorphic Attributes of God

Having discussed the aforementioned topic on the Anthropomorphists’ notion on the Qur’ān, here we deal with their principle of the attributes of God. It is obviously known from their theological framework that their main characteristic is likening God to the corporeal image.

Al-Shahrastānī reported that the Hashwiyya group maintained their theological principle on the attributes of God by relying on the physical description. They asserted God in a materialized matter by affirming that God is in the form of a physical body, either His spiritual or physical aspect. He may move from one place to another, descend

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59 Abū Hātim ibn Ḥībān also reported that Muqātil was the one who used to refer to the Jewish and Christian sources to approach the Qur’ān. In some other aspects, he also relied on the fabricated *ḥadīth* to study the teachings of Islam. See ini Sahāta’s introduction on Muqātil ibn Sulaymān al-Balkhī, *al-Ashbāh wa al-Nadār*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh Mahmūd Sahāta, (Egypt: al-Hai‘ah al-Misriyya al-‘Ammah Li al-Kitāb, 1994), 36.
and ascend, and steadily sit.\textsuperscript{60} In addition, they also held that their God is allowed to be touched and shaken. It is even possible for devoted men to embrace and hug Him in this world and the hereafter if they could reach the highest level of sincerity and unity after performing and struggling with spiritual exercise. They also believed God is visible in this world. They could even visit Him or vice versa. One of the Mujassimite figures, Daūd al-Jawāribī, said that God has His specific form. He has body, flesh, and blood. He also has physical and parts of a body like hands, feet, head, tongue, eyes, and ears. All those parts do not resemble any creatures. Furthermore, God also has been depicted as having certain characteristics in His body. He is hollow right from His head to the chest, yet His other parts are solid. He also has long, thick, and frizzy hair.\textsuperscript{61}

In addition to their doctrines, the Anthropomorphists interpreted the \textit{mutashabihat} verses based on their anthropomorphic principle. It is known through analyzing a number of verses which they commented to show their principle of understanding. They interpreted some verses, like God’s seat (\textit{istiwā‘}), face (\textit{wajh}), hands (\textit{yadain}), and descending (\textit{al-nuzūl}), in a way that they relied on corporeal basis. This is also valid in certain \textit{hadith} of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that they quoted to express their ideas. For instance, they stated the \textit{hadith} of God’s creation of Ādam, in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said in his statement, “(God) created Ādam in the form of the merciful (God).”\textsuperscript{62} Furthermore, they added information to cement their stance even if it is invalid. As al-Shahrastānī claimed, they said:

\begin{quote}
God was sad due to the great deluge of Noah which causes His eyes red, His throne creaking like a straddle of the animal, and He pleases from every side with his four fingers.\textsuperscript{63}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{60} Al-Shahrastānī, \textit{Al Milal wa Niḥal}, 105.  
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.  
\end{flushright}
In another place, al-Shahrastānī also narrated the Anthropomorhists’ assessment about the Prophet’s statement:

God met me, He shook hands with me, and, kissed me and put His hand between my shoulders until I felt His cold fingers.64

The aforementioned facts elucidate how God was described in humanistic manner. They likened Him to human beings who have physical and material elements. They believed that God sits on His chair where He puts His body that may cause noises because of His weight. The foregoing ḥadīth also explains that the Prophet met God as if He met His companions. He shook, kissed and even putting His hands to the Prophet’s shoulders. Al-Shahrastānī’s account clearly delineates the detailed principle of anthropomorphic doctrines. Even though he did not mention the status of the ḥadīth, it is based on the mainstream of that particular group during his time.

The concept of attributes of God, as believed by the Anthropomorphists could be traced back to non-Islamic sources. It was proven by the fact that Muqātil ibn Sulaymān’s commentary of the Qur’ān contains Jewish and Christian doctrines.65 His anthropomorphism is derived from those religions which complemented his interpretation. He was so much influenced by their doctrines, hence, he sometimes fabricated the ḥadīth of the Prophet (peace be upon him).66 For instance, al-Bukhārī mentioned Muqātil’s statement saying that Dajjāl would appear in 150 H. His statement was truly proven that he was a liar because Dajjal did not appear then.67 Furthermore, in elucidating his commentary Muqātil also relied on the isrā‘iyyat narrations. This category of ḥadīth is actually not used by a traditionist (muḥaddith) due to its fabrication and invalidity. For instance, he narrated the ḥadīth below:

64 Ibid.
This hadīth explains the physical activities of God and His angels during the day of resurrection which had not been narrated by any narrators. Another Anthropomorphist, Ibn al-Karrām, also maintained his theological belief relying on Christianity in terms of the concept of God. In Christianity, God is described in the form of an image. It is even possible to picture God as well as His attributes in humanistic manner. The Karrāmiyya also depicted God as the One who has a body. They believed it as He is self-existent. He knows physical and corporeal things. Therefore, according to them, He is a body who recognizes it similar form. Only the like can know the like. Some of their adherents also developed this doctrine maintaining that every two things existing by themselves must be either in contact or contradict with them. Like the accident and substance which require to occupy in space. They also reside in certain direction. Thus, God, who has body and self-existent, is in a high place of the world. In Him, everything could be originated. However, this concept is rejected by Ibn Jawzī. To him it is impossible for God to contradict or be in contact with other things in the physical aspect since it will belittle God’s existence which is merely occupying certain directions. His existence cannot be limited to certain space and time, therefore, He is powerful over all things. Further arguments of the Anthropomorphists would be elaborated in the discussion of their opposite ideas.


71 Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Sattār Nassār “al-Karrāmiyya” in Mawsu’a al-Firaq al-Islāmiyya, 566.


3.3.5. **Hulūliyya**

In the history of Islamic thought, the anthropomorphist did not only comprise theologians but also lot of ṣūfī figures. These people were divided into several different schools consisting of the extreme (Gulāh) of Shiʿite, Hallājia, Zarāmiyya, and Mubayyidah. All of them agreed upon the concept of Ḥulūl, which was rejected by a great number of Muslim scholars in the polemic of Islamic theological mainstream.

Concerning the doctrine of Ḥulūliyya, they believed in the concept of incarnation (hulūliyya). According to them, God may reincarnate in a human body. This appears in the form of man, as in the case of the Angel Jibrīl when he went to Maryam to tell her about pregnancy. Furthermore, the doctrine of Ḥulūliyya is also believed to originate from the experience of the Prophet (peace be upon him). It is proven his experience in seeing his God as it is narrated that Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) said, “I saw my God in the beautiful form.” The other source was also stated in the Tawra which happened to Prophet Mūsā. He was reported to have said, “I talked with God, and He replied so and so.” By virtue of those evidence the Anthropomorphists justified their notion of hulūliyya as part of their theological beliefs.

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76 Al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq baina al-Firaq*, 254-266.
77 Maryam: 17-20: “She made a wall to protect herself from them, We sent her Our Spirit who appeared to her in the resemblance of a perfect full grown man. Maryam said “I seek refuge in Allāh Most Gracious from you; if you are conscious of Him. He replied: “I am the Messenger from your Lord, and I have come to bestow upon you the gift of a son endowed with purity.”
79 Ibid.
The doctrine of *hulūliyya* historically was initiated by the extreme Shiʿite (*Gulāh*).\(^8^0\) They were divided into many different groups; *sabbāiyya*, *bayyāniyya*, *janāhiyya*, *khitābiyya*, *shariʿiyya*, and *namīriyya*. Each of them promoted the doctrine of the *hulūliyya* related to the people of the house (*ahl al-bait*). According to them, God’s spirit was reincarnated to the Prophet (peace be upon him), ʿAlī, Fātimah, Ḥasan, and Husein, hence, these people were considered possessing divine authority which was similar to God.\(^8^1\) In the course of time, this doctrine gradually spread throughout the Muslim world. Furthermore, in relation to the doctrine of *hulūliyya*, the Shiʿite also maintained that God was also reincarnated in their *imāms*. His spirit could go from one person to another. It may also go from the prophet to the *imāms*, and end up in ʿAlī. In certain situation that spirit might move again to other people.\(^8^2\) In other words, their belief is that God’s spirit went around in those people and ended up in someone who is regarded as a devout. As a result of this belief, they regarded that Angel Gabriel was wrong in sending God’s revelations, which were actually delivered to ʿAlī, conveyed to the Prophet (peace be upon him). According to them, this mistake made God shy. Therefore, He let the Prophet became His messenger and ʿAlī replaced him afterwards.\(^8^3\) This sort of doctrine, however, is still maintained by contemporary Shiʿītes in certain countries.\(^8^4\)

Furthermore, the ʿṢūfī Anthropomorphists affirmed that God might reincarnate in certain selected men. These people are mostly honoured by their community. Al-Baghdādī reported the *hilmāniyya* held that God personifies into a pious and good man. Hence, everytime they found a beautiful picture they bowed to it. In addition, these men who are able to achieve the highest level of spirituality will recognize their God. Hence,

\(^8^0\) al-Rāzī, *Iʿtiqād Firaq al-Muslimīn wa al-Mushrikīn*, 73.

\(^8^1\) Al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq baina al-Firaq*, 256.


\(^8^3\) Al-Malāfī, *al-Tanbih wa al-Radd*, 18.

\(^8^4\) See our discussion on their theological doctrines in Chapter Four.
in this position, they may do whatever they wish, even if it is prohibited for them.\textsuperscript{85} In another place, this heresiographer also told another significant group, \textit{ḥallājiyya}, who affirmed that those who purify himself in seeking God’s obedience and keep their patience against those joy and passion, their state is lifted and placed into groups of people who are intimate with God. If someone attempts to further refine himself until he achieve complete purification, in this position God’s spirit will inhere in himself. This is like the case of Prophet ‘Īsā, the son of Maryam, who had been incarnated by Him. Such a person may wish everything, because his act is God’s manifestation in himself.\textsuperscript{86}

Moreover, the state of being incarnated (\textit{ḥulūliyya}) occurs in the \textit{sufīs} during the condition of escapades (\textit{shatahāt}).\textsuperscript{87} The one who has attained this particular level expresses his fellings about God’s presence in his soul. His incarnation may happen in two different situations: \textit{al-ḥulūl al-jawārī} and \textit{al-ḥulūl al-sarayānī}. The first is the situation in which someone is contained in a container just like water in a pot while the second is like the union of a thing into another in which they will be mixed and blended like the fragrance of rose into the flower.\textsuperscript{88} During these two conditions, as reported by al-Hujwīrī, they believed that God will become their ears, eyes, hands, and even tongues. Their speeches are “words were the outward sign of his speech, but the speaker was God.”\textsuperscript{89} Such condition had occured to one of the important companions ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb. God spoke through his tongue as stated by His Apostle.\textsuperscript{90} Hence, these \textit{sūfī} Athropomorphists had been practicing different types of \textit{ḥulūliyya} doctrines. They had their own views based on their founders. Essentially, the principle of \textit{ḥulūliyya} was

\textsuperscript{85} Al-Baghdādī, \textit{al-Farq baina al-Firaq}, 259.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 263.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
similar but they are different in certain details. An Orientalist, Nicholson, commented on this problem by expressing his appreciation to the practice of ʻulūliyya as employed by those anthropomorphist sufis. Their union with the world-soul, to him, is the happiest feelings for a sufī to express his love to each other on earth. In another place, Nicholson also described that this practice was similar to the core doctrine of Christianity. God had incarnated into His creature, Jesus, to show His union between divinity and humanity. This similarity, perhaps, made him appreciate such concept. Even if this tradition had been practiced by a number of people in the Muslim world, a number of theologians and other scholars regarded it as religious malpractice. Therefore, the authority had sentenced al-Ḥallāj, one of the founders of ʻHallājia sufī school, to death due to his deviated doctrines of ʻulūliyya.

In short, the foregoing discussion elucidates the doctrine of Anthropomorphists in the Islamic theological discourse. They resided at the extreme opposite of the Muʻtazilites. However, they were also contradictory to the Ashʻarites school. Hence, in response to their principles and to defend the Ashʻarites’ position, al-Bāqillānī criticised their doctrines which will be elaborated below.

3.4. Al-Baqillānī’s Criticism to Anthropomorphism

Having described the theological doctrine of the Anthropomorphists, we would like to highlight al-Bāqillānī’s theological responses to that particular group. As an Ashʻarite theologian, it is known through his principal arguments that he could place his position between the Muʻtazilites and the Anthropomorphists. He was able to give the moderate solution in responding to the issues in the doctrinal polemic, which later on was

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91 He was an Orientalist who had spent most of his life researching on the Sufism. See his works; The Mystic of Islam, (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2002); translation of the Kashf al-Mahjūb: the Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism, (Leyden: E. J. Brill, 1911); Translation of The Mathnawī of Jalāluddin al-Rūmi, (Cambridge: Gibb Memorial Trust, 1985).


93 Ibid., 107.

followed and further developed by other Asharites theologians after him. As far as the doctrines of anthropomorphism are concerned, al-Bāqillānī seriously criticised through several topics which will be delineated below.

3.4.1. The Meaning of Speech

Al-Bāqillānī’s definition of speech is contradictory to both the Mu'tazilites and the Anthropomorphists. His rejection against the Mu'tazilites has been stated above in the previous chapter, where we dealt with al-Bāqillānī’s thoughts in rejecting them. We would like to highlight his refutation to the Anthropomorphists. In his works, al-Bāqillānī defined the speech:

الكلام هو معنى قائم في النفس يعبر عنه بهذه الأصوات المنظومة و الحروف المنظومة

Speech is meaning existing in the soul expressed by those articulated sounds and arranged letters.

His definition of speech was obviously not only addressed to criticise the Mu'tazilites, but also the Anthropomorphists. Al-Bāqillānī criticized the latter group which affirmed that God speaks through His sounds and words which are eternal (qadīm), the same thing to the sounds and words of human beings. They did not differentiate between them. As a result, this principle might cause an investigator to conclude the eternity of the creature. In addition, al-Bāqillānī also reported that Anthropomorphists affirmed God’s speech and considered it to be eternal, while the poem (saj') is the originated thing. They believed that our words and sounds during the reading of the Qur’ān are eternal (qadīm) while during reading of the poem (shi’r) is originated. The

95 See our discussion on al-Bāqillānī’s responses to the Mu'tazilites in Chapter Two.
97 His argument against the Mu'tazilites has been discussed in the Chapter Two.
98 Anthropomorphists defined speech comprising sounds and words. See their views on this concept in relation to the attributes of God in page 81-82 of this chapter.
100 Ibid., 163.
one who recites the Qurʾān, his recitation is eternal whereas when he recites the poem his recitation is originated. Those activities have different categories depending on the recited things. In the other words, he criticised their notion that the speech of God which in one perspective is considered as eternal, and in the other it is also originated. It is impossible for God at the same time to have two contradictory attributes.

Al-Bāqillānī also responded to the concept of anthropomorphism on the eternity of words and sounds. Some anthropomorphist groups believed that God speaks through the Qurʾān which comprises words and sounds.101 Both words and sounds are eternal in nature different from those which belong to human beings. 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 (ḥulūliyya). By virtue of such notion, this consequently invalidates the existing muṣḥaf of the Qurʾān which we have. Our muṣḥaf is written in words and recited by a reader which is originated. That recitation is not the Qurʾān, the eternal one. Therefore, what we have is not the Qurʾān revealed to the prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) which is also eternal. The same position to when we listen to those verses.102 The verses are created which we are able to read, touch, and hold. Hence, we do not have the eternal verses of the Qurʾān. However, this is absolutely impossible since all the teachings of Islam rely on it. They referred to the eternal Qurʾān which contains God’s messages.

Furthermore, al-Bāqillānī maintained the mainstream of Ashʿarite theological framework through his own analysis. He asserted that the Speech of God is neither originated nor created. According to him, someone could not say that God’s speech is a story or expression. He neither said that he told a story with God’s speech nor expressed with His speech too. Al-Bāqillānī affirmed that we recite the speech of God, write and

101 Al-Shahrastānī, al-Mīlāl wa al-Nīhal, 106.
102 Al-Bāqillānī, Al-İnşāf, 163.
memorize it. We cannot attach to His speech with the originated things; sounds and words. We cannot combine between the pre-existent (*qadīm*) with the originated ones. Through this argument, it seems he rejected anthropomorphism by providing their weakness in combining between the eternity and the createdness.

Al-Qurtubī reported that in his further argument against those anthropomorphists, al-Bāqillānī also clarified their stance saying that God speaks through His eternal words and sounds. The eternity of the sounds has sequential and arranged words from the reciters. God’s speech may also appear in the form of the unarranged words without any sequence. In response to this claim, al-Bāqillānī delineated that by nature all words are different. There is no any single letter which is the same. They are sequential in terms of their position, hence, they are absolutely originated. It is also valid that God speaks through various languages addressed to different communities. Those sounds may happen contradictorily which impossibly combined into single sound at the same time. Each community has its own language. All these elements clearly illustrate that every thing has its own existence. The words and languages function independently, without mixing with each other. In addition, al-Bāqillānī elaborated by showing the existence of the colour. To him, we cannot demonstrate white together with black since those colours are contrasting in nature. Hence, it is also true, Allāh is One and only in His essence. His singleness is pure without any combination, division, and composition. To make Him possible to inhere in a human’s body is committing a deviated theological principle which is rejected in the mainstream Islamic theological principle.

103 Ibid., 162.
105 Ibid., 174.
Another Ash'rite theologian, Al-Juwaynī (d. 478 H/1085 C.E.), upheld al-Bāqillānī’s definition on the concept of speech. Based on his account,106 he elucidated the Anthropomorphists of Hashiyya who believed that God’s speech, which comprises sounds and words, is eternal. They stressed that the thing heard (al-masmu”) by a reader is the essence of His speech because it is the sound of God. If that speech is written and arranged on any part of the body, it is regarded an eternal thing too. Although the body is originated, yet it could switch into an eternal one including its words and sounds. They believed that essentially these two aspects; the words and sounds, are pre-existent. According to al-Juwaynī, their method of understanding is based on the rejecting the necessity (juhd al-darārāt). It aims to deny two different tenets of existence; creation and eternity. During the activity of speaking, the structure of the sentence consists of certain words which precede each other. In terms of the sequence of the alphabets, some of those words are earlier and some precede others. Those sentences also have beginnings and endings which make them originated. Hence, he concluded that the existence of those words based on their sequence is originated. This sort of approach obviously leads to the conclusion of turning the created thing into eternal one.107 Their arguments on their own are invalidated because they mixed between the eternal and the originated.

His disciple, al-Ghazālī (d. 503 H/1111 C.E.), also supported al-Bāqillānī’s definition and rejected the Anthropomorphists’ notion on the concept of speech. According to him, the speech comprises two main things; meaning and word. In terms of the meaning of speech, it is eternal and related to its essence of God. It consists of His commands, prohibitions and information.108 Al-Ghazālī further rejected their notion on who affirmed God’s will and power existing in His essence which is also their substrate (maḥall). Those attributes are only available in God’s essence and inseparable.

106 Al-Juwaynī, Al-Irshād, 129.
107 Ibid.
108 Al-Ghazālī, al-Iqtisād, 114-5.
In other words, the Anthropomorphists held that God has two different aspects; the eternal and the originated one. The eternal is His essence while His attributes will, powerful, speech are originated in His essence which is their substrate. However, al-Ghazālī disagreed upon such notion. To him, God has eternal attributes which are neither His essence nor separated from His essence. These attributes are in His essence. He questioned, how does He speak yet does not have His speaking attribute?. The same question for other attributes like powerful, will, and knowing. In this stance, al-Ghazālī affirmed that all these attributes of God are eternal in His essence. His argument was also addressed to the Mu'tazilites who affirmed that God is powerful, living, and knowing with His essence. He further argued that all originated things (ḥadīth) are possible existence (jāiz al-wujūd), while the eternal one is necessary existence (wājib al-wujūd). If His attributes originate in His essence (hadīthah), then they are contradictory to the necessity of His existence. Therefore, His attributes and essence are eternal in nature. Al-Ghazālī elaborated his argument further by affirming that it is impossible for His essence to be the substrate (maḥāl) of the originated thing. It is impossible for Him to change His state from being eternal into originated one. It is impossible too for God that His essence has additional aspects attached to it. All these elements are possibly annihilated (munkīn taqdir ādamih), hence they are originated matters.

Abū Hanīfa (d. 150 H/772 C.E.), one of theologians who established the Hanafite school, also asserted his definition on the speech of God which is in line with the Ash'arite’s view. In his al-Fiqh al-Akbar as well as in Waṣiyyah, he stated:

...the Qur’ān is the speech of God, uncreated, and His revelation. It is neither He nor other. But, it is truly His attributes written on the texts, readable with tongues, preserved in the heart, not dissolvent in it. The ink, paper and writing all of which are created due to they are products of

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109 Ibid., 105
110 According to this group, God does not have any of those attributes in His essence. Hence, it is aimed to prove that there is not plurality in His essence.
111 Al-Ghazālī, Iqtiṣād, 106-8.
human acts. The speech of God is uncreated because its writings, words, and structures are indications of the Qur’ān for human’s needs to it. His speech existing in His essence... 

Al-Bayāḍī, in his Ishārāt al-Marām, explained Abū Ḥanīfa’s notions on the problem of speech of God as stated above. According to him, God is speaking which is different from our way of speaking. Our speech is sensible (al-kalām al-ṭiss), and we speak through means of sounds, words, including our zones of articulation (makhārij). As human beings, we need many mediums to utter our statement, like certain organs related to it; tongue and its muscle. We also require arranging the letters in the process of speaking. On the contrary, God speaks through His speech without any means due to His power and omniscience. He neither requires the words nor the sounds as His medium of speaking. If He needs such things, that means His speech is originated. This is impossible for Him since all words and sounds are successively arranged.

In addition, al-Bayāḍī added his explanation of Abū Ḥanīfa’s works by saying that the speech of God has meaning therein. To him, the meaning in the soul is that speech which is expressed thorough the different tongues. God’s speech is without all those means to deliver His messages to the prophets. This principle is also a rejection of these Anthropomorphists and the Mu’tazilites. Al-Bayāḍī, as a Maturidiyya, could disprove them by analyzing through the syllogistic approach to the problem. According to him, the Anthropomorphists of Ḥashwiyya denied the major premise of this matter by saying that every speech arranged by words and sounds is an originated thing. Hence, they believed that God’s speech is composed by such process. On the other hands, the Mu’tazilites denied the minor premise of the concept of speech. They believed that God speaks through His essence. His speech comprises systematic sounds and words

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114 Ibid.

115 Ibid., 139.
existing other than His essence.\textsuperscript{116} In other words, God is speaking by originating those words and sounds in any body like in the \textit{al-Lauh al-Mahfuz}, in which the Angel Gabriel had revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him). In this stance, they denied the meaning of speech (\textit{al-kalām al-nafṣī}). To them, it is unintelligible if the meaning of speech exists in the soul.\textsuperscript{117} Conversely, the Anthropomorphists of Karrāmiyya also denied the major premise of the concept of speech. They held that God’s speech is His attributes. It also consists of originated words and sounds existing in His soul.\textsuperscript{118} They had their own definition which combines the ideas of the Muʿtazilites and the Ashaʿarites. Thus, al-Bayḍāḥī had clearly illustrated Abū Ḥanīfa’s notions in rejecting both the Muʿtazilites and the Anthropomorphists concerning the meaning of speech within their theological doctrines. In this position Abū Ḥanīfa was in line with the Ashʿarite stance.

Al-Bāqillānī in another place further elaborated his views regarding the essence of speech. He maintained that the meaning that exists in the soul expressed by the symbol indicates its aspects. These could be in the form of speech which has been routinely spoken by a number of people and firmly established in community.\textsuperscript{119} Allāh has sent Mūsā (peace be upon him) to the people of Israel who spoke in Hebrew. He brought and delivered His messages in their language. The same thing for Prophet ʿĪsā (peace be upon him) who was also sent to his people who spoke in Shiriac. He delivered God’s messages in their language. This also occurred to the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) who was sent to the Arabs. His community spoke Arabic through which he propagated to his people. God’s messages were delivered to them following their language background too. As a result, the people recognized His commands and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 144.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 139. See Muʿtazilite’s view on ‘Abd. Al-Jabbār, \textit{Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Khamsah}, 527-528.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{119} This language has been used in a community as medium of communication amongst citizens including a number of the prophets who were sent to them by Allāh. See Ibrāhīm: 4: “and We have sent no Messenger but in the language of his own people, so that he might make clear to them (His message)...”
\end{itemize}
prohibitions very well. However, even though those messages were delivered in different languages like Hebrew, Shiriac, and Arabic, yet they are still one thing, the Speech of God. This speech does not change and contradict any object related to its relationship. In addition, al-Bāqillānī underlined that the meaning of this speech could also be grasped through its writing. The writing may express the meaning of the one who speaks in his own language.120 Even though the words in those languages are different, the meanings exist in the soul. In other words, the speech of God could be expressed and understood by the people of each prophet.121 Al-Bāqillānī also delineated other aspects of the speech expressed by signs and symbols. Someone could employ such an act by his gestures indicating his purposes. This was evident in the expression of Maryam during her silence in responding to her people when questioned the status of her son.122 The same case also occurred to Prophet Zakaria during his communication to his people.123 Both Maryam and Zakaria expressed the meaning of their speech existing in their soul with different facial expressions. Maryam replied to some questions addressed to her by using her hand, and Zakaria expressed to his people following the revelation from his God to praise Him (tasbīḥ). Both communicated to their people with different kind of communication similar thing to those who are dumb. They were able to communicate with others with their hands, expressions, and body language. Even if they were unable to speak, people around them were likely understand them.124 By virtue of all these facts their communication proved that speech consists of meaning although expressed in different ways.

120 See in al-Jātsiyah: 29: “This record of ours (written by the angels) speaks with truth against you, for we have (commanded the angels) to record all your actions (when you were in the world before)!.”
121 Al-Baqillani, Al-Inṣāf, 158.
122 Maryam: 29: So Maryam pointed to her son. They asked (in surprise): “How can we talk to a baby who is still in the cradle?
123 Al’Imran: 41: Prophet Zakaria said: “O Lord vouchsafe me a sign (to indicate that my wife has conceived).” Allâh said: “the sign is that you shall not speak to any man for three days (and three nights) except by signs...
124 Al-Baqqillani, Al-Inṣāf, 159.
However, al-Bāqillānī’s affirmation on the meaning of speech was strongly criticised by later Hanbalite theologian, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728 H/1328 C.E).\(^\text{125}\) He stated that even the Ash‘arites believed that speech comprises of words (\textit{lafẓ}) and meaning, yet they affirmed that the earlier were merely allegory (\textit{majāz}) while the latter was the substance (\textit{ma‘nā}). As a result, they fell into two dangerous positions; either to believe that the Qur’an is created or the Qur’an is not the speech of God.\(^\text{126}\) He also reported that speech merely indicated one meaning in the form of command, prohibition, and information. It is expressed in Arabic in the form of the Qur‘ān, in Hebrew which in the form of the \textit{Tawra}, and in Shiriac that is the Bible (the \textit{Injīl}). These three books of God considered the command and prohibition as elements of His speech. To him, the Ash‘arites would like to simplify the different meanings of speech into one single meaning. Having criticised them, he proposed his own concept by stating that the speech is divided into two; diction (\textit{inshā‘}) and information (\textit{khabr}). The \textit{Inshā‘} is subdivided into requesting the acts and leaving the acts while information is divided into two; negation and confirmation. The word ‘one’ (\textit{wāhid}) in the Ash‘arite concept is still unclear. It could be one in its type (\textit{naw‘}), category (\textit{jins}), and class (\textit{ṣinf}). Hence, their idea is rejected.\(^\text{127}\)

Ibn Taymiyya further argued to the Ash‘arites that Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) delivered the message of the Qur‘ān not only its meanings, but also its words. He criticized their arguments and said they could lead to believing that the Arab people learned the teachings of Islam from a non-Arab who merely delivered the meaning of the Qur‘ān. However, the verses of the Qur‘ān\(^\text{128}\) show that the Angel


\(^{128}\) Al-Naḥl : 102-103: “The Holy Spirit (Jibrīl) has brought the Revelation from your Lord setting forth the truth, to strengthen the faith of the faithful, and to give guidance and good news to Muslims. And We know well that pagans say: “actually, it is a human being who teaches him.” (But) he to whom they allude speaks a foreign tongue, whereas the Qur‘ān is in Arabic, pure, and clear.”
Gabriel revealed to him the Qur’ān which is in the Arabic language.\textsuperscript{129} All those who recited the Qur’ān also narrated its words and meanings. They did not read merely the meaning without words. If they recite only one aspect of them, then they were dumb people. They were able to express their will through their expression, without their words. However, such a case is inapplicable to Allāh, the Almighty because it will reduce His perfectness.\textsuperscript{130} Ibn Taymiyya further elaborated his arguments by affirming that the contradictory elements could not be combined in God’s attributes; seeing and unseeing, knowing and unknowing, and speech and dumb.\textsuperscript{131} Thus, His attributes are absolutely perfect without their opposites. Furthermore, if the speech of God is only its meaning, there would be no difference between God’s speaking to Mūsā and other prophets, nor the revelation behind the veil, nor the direct revelation by God too. It was employed immediately in the heart of the Prophets.\textsuperscript{132} In addition, the argument that the Qur’ān is only the meaning, it could demonstrate that the verses of the Qur’ān are divided into two different parts. Some of them are speech of God while the rest are not His speech. The meaning is His speech, while the words are otherwise. However, according to ibn Taymiyya, this is contradictory to the principle of the mainstream of theological belief of the Muslim people. The Angel Gabriel had come down to reveal all verses of the Qur’ān to the Prophet (peace be upon him) as his obedience to Allāh, the almighty to convey God’s messages to his messenger. He and the Prophet (peace be upon him) could not have fabricated any single word because their task was only to deliver His words to human beings.\textsuperscript{133} Moreover, in other places, ibn Taymiyya also asserted that the speech of God which was revealed in the Qur’ān consists of word and meaning. It is proven by the fact that an interpreter or translator could not consider that his works on its interpretation and translation as the Qur’ān itself. He may say that his

\textsuperscript{129} Ibn Taymiyya, \textit{Majmu’ Fatāwā}, 6: 536.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 537.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 538.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 540.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 541.
work as commentary and translation an sich. On the other hand, Ibn Taymiyya argued if the Qur’ān is only the meaning, hence, the translation could be also called the Qur’ān because it substitutes all its meanings.\textsuperscript{134}

In response to the aforementioned criticism, some theologians after al-Bāqillānī attempted to uphold the Ash‘arites by clarifying their stance. Al-Qurtubī (d. 671 H/1273 C.E.), a commentator of the Qur’ān, was one of them who cemented the Ash‘arites’ notions. Regarding the speech of God, he asserted that His speech is meaning existing in the soul which is expressed in the form of words and sounds. The meaning appeared in the scriptures revealed to the Prophets. God’s speech is one which is articulated in various different forms in those books based on the languages of their people. It is argued, according to Ibn Furāk, the single speech, comprising various different aspects; command, prohibition, information, inquiry, promise, and threat, is eternal which is impossible to change and contradict. This attribute is different from the speech of human beings that does not require any medium of speaking; lip and tongue.\textsuperscript{135}

Moreover, al-Qurtubī added that God has stated in the Qur’ān that He has many names\textsuperscript{136} and He was the one who revealed four different scriptures to His Prophets.\textsuperscript{137}

With this evidence, al-Qurtubī affirmed that we cannot say that those different names belong to a number of existence. On the contrary, those attributes merely belong to one name. They refer to the One God, the Almighty. His speech cannot be said as Arabic, Persian, or Hebrew. Only when it is articulated in Arabic it is the Qur’ān, when it is verbalized in Hebrew it is the Tawra, and when it is conveyed in Divine Power (rabbānīya) it is the Bible (al-injīl). In addition to this argument, he affirmed to the other aspects on which God is worshipped. God, Who is the One, has a number of

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 543.
\textsuperscript{135} Al-Qurtubī, \textit{al-Asnā Fī Sharh Asmāʾ Allāh al-Ḥusnā}, vol. 2:165.
\textsuperscript{136} Al-A‘rāf: 180: And only Allāh has the most beautiful (and noble) names, so call on (and pray to) Him by these names.
\textsuperscript{137} Al-Baqarah: 285: The messenger believes, and so do the believers, in the guidance revealed to him from his Lord: each of them believes in Allāh, and His angels, His Books, and His Mesengers. They say: “We make no distinction between any of His messengers.
attributes as stated in His beautiful names. He is worshipped in the heaven as well as on
the earth by all His creatures. They perform their obedience in different ways and
expressions. Some of them remember Him in various ways. Some others also differently
recite, interpret, and write the speech of God.\textsuperscript{138} It is proven by the verse of the
Qur‘ān.\textsuperscript{139} Some verses state that Allāh uses the plural term ‘We’ to represent His
singularity. These verses give clear illustration that God’s role in preserving the Qur‘ān
is also followed by those who memorize the Qur‘ān, the memorizers.\textsuperscript{140} Furthemore, al-
Qurtūbī also proved his arguments by relying on some Ash‘arite theologians concerning
the single speech of God. According to Ibn Furāk, God commanded human beings to
believe in Him, which implied that He prohibited His servants from disbelieving. His
instructions were similiar to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in which he had
to pray God facing to \textit{Bait al-Maqdis} in a specific period. At the same time He
prohibited praying Him other than that particular time. This argument is also valid for
other attributes like His vision. God’s vision of Prophet Ādam in paradise is the same
as His vision in this world. The same thing to His hearing of Zaid’s speech is the same
as His hearing of Amr’s speech, without any changes and differences in His essence.\textsuperscript{141}
Hence, God’s attributes are absolutely eternal and have not changed His essence.

Another support for the Ash‘arites is also shown by a later scholar of the Qur‘ān,
al-Alūsī. In his preface of commentary of the Qur‘ān, he delineated the concept of
speech in which he vindicates his position to al-Ash‘arite theological school. He agreed
with the notion that the speech has interrelated concept of the words and meanings. He
divided it into two; the process of speaking (\textit{al-takallum}) and the product of speech (\textit{al-

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{139} Luqmān: 27: And if all the trees on the earth were pens and the ocean (were ink) with seven more seas
to replenish it (as ink) the writing of Allāh’s words could never be exhausted. Truly Allāh the almighty, the
All-wise.
\bibitem{140} Al-Qurtūbī, \textit{al-Asnā Fī Sharh al-Asmā’ al-Husnā}, 169.
\bibitem{141} Ibid., 170.
\end{thebibliography}
mutakallam bih). The speech is the object of language which comprises word (lafzī) and mental activity of the speaker (nafsī). The first process is the one who is speaking in which he deals with his tongue (lisān) as well as his zones of articulation (makhārij). This process produces audible sound to a listener. Furthermore, the activity of speaking when it is meant the mental speaking (al-kalām al-nafsī) is the internal activity of the speaker in which he has not yet articulated through all the acts of the limbs (jawāriḥ). This activity is internal sound (sawt maʾnawī) produced by the soul. al-Alūsī further elaborated his notions pertaining to the nature of Speech of God. According to him, His speech is eternal, well arranged, limitless, and timeless. It is divine word which is mandatory statement to all creatures. When His speech (kalām Allāh) – the Qurʾān- is recited, it is articulated in the worldly dimension reflected in the Arabic language. All God’s messages to human beings are revealed through His speech which is in the form of words and meanings. As al-Alūsī stated:

The mental speech (al-kalām al-nafsī) is produced by a man who internally speaks through mental and arranged words which is in conformity with the articulated words...God’s Speech is divine Words comprise mandatory statements which are immaterial form. Those words are eternal, well arranged, not sequential in their nature…and when (the Qurʾān) revealed it is shown its mental words which is heard and written (in the mushaf)... He supported his argument by a number of verses in the Qurʾān as well as the hadīth of the Prophet (peace be upon him). They are verses dealing with this topic in Yūsuf: 77, 144 Zukhruf: 80, 145 al-Aʿrāf: 205, 146 and Āl Imrān: 154. 147 The hadīth of the Prophet (peace be upon him) narrated al-Bukhārī also affirm his notion, as shown below:

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143 Ibid., 11.
144 (Hearing this humiliating remark) Yusuf suppressed his feeling and did not reveal it to them. He said (in his heart): You are in a worse position.
145 Do they think that We cannot hear what they hide (in their hearts) and what they are saying (in whispers) to each other?
146 And remember your Lord deep in your soul with humility and awe...
147 ...they conceal within themselves what they do not disclose to you...
Al-Bukhārī also narrated the ḥadīth Qudsī in his Ṣaḥīḥ:

يقول الله عز و جل أنا عند ظنى عبدى بى و أنا معو إذا ذكرنى فإن ذكرنى فى نفسى ذكرته في نفسى وإن ذكرني في ملاء ذكرته في ملاء خير منهم

Allah the Exalted says: ‘I am as my slave expects me to be, and I am with him when he remembers Me. If he remembers Me inwardly, I will remember him inwardly, and if he remembers Me in an assembly, I will remember him in a better assembly (i.e., in the assembly of angels).

The text of the prophetic tradition obviously delineates the inner aspect of the speech which is instilled in someone’s heart. Hence, it seems from al-Alūsī’s arguments that the speech is not merely comprises words and meanings which both elements have interrelated concepts. They are product of pronounced speech (al-kalām al-lafzī) and the speech in the soul (al-kalām al-nafsī) by which are adressing to any listeners.

In conclusion, the aforementioned arguments stated by al-Bāqillānī as well as other Ash‘arites clearly delineate the meaning of speech and its related topics. Through their views too, they fundamentally disproved the Anthropomorphists’ notions of speech. Even though ibn Taymiyya had criticized the Ash‘arites about their notions on this topic, his accusation could be invalidated by analyzing their supporters’ notions of speech, like al-Qurtubī and al-Alūsī. Ibn Taymiyya’s criticism was influenced by his stance of being the follower of Hanbalite school of thought which preferred to rely more on the textual approach to the Qur‘an and avoid the rational way of understanding of the verses of the Qur‘ān.

3.4.2. Difference Between the Recitation (qirā‘ah) and the Recited (maqrū‘)

Having discussed al-Baqillānī’s thought on the meaning of speech, we proceed with our discussion in dealing with further topic pertaining to recitation (qirā‘ah) and the recited
This subject matter is commonly discussed in the problem of the speech of God and other related concepts.

In principle, the terms ‘recitation’ (qirā’ah) and ‘recited’ (maqrū’) are different concepts. A number of theologians asserted that each of them has its own conceptual basis. The former is not the same as the latter. However, according to the Anthropomorphists, the recitation (qirā’ah) is the recited (maqrū’). They believed that the recitation is originated, and the recited is eternal. Both terms are similar in their nature. So, the eternal is possibly attributed to the originated. By virtue of that, they believed that God’s speech is created in nature. They also argued that God is a reader. He reads to human beings His verses as exemplified in al-Baqarah: 252. To this claim, al-Bāqillānī replied with different arguments. First is that he clarified the meaning of the verse of the Qur’ān al-Baqarah: 252 by analyzing the obvious difference between the recitation and the recited. The word ‘al-ḥaqq’ (the truth) in this verse means His speech which is eternal while the recitation has not come into existence until it has been originated by the reciter. Hence, ‘al-ḥaqq’ (the truth) is the recited that exists together with its essence. The recitation is the consequence of reciting the recited. Al-Bāqillānī in this aspect affirmed the difference between both terms. To cement his stance, he quoted al-Isra’: 106 saying that the Qur’ān is revealed (mūḥā) to the prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). He was the one who recited and taught his people. In doing so, he was also involved in the recitation and deliverance to his companions. Therefore, this is the Prophet’s property (ṣifah) since he was also the reciter. The argument of al-Bāqillānī is stated as below:

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149 Al-Bāqillānī, Al-Insāf, 163.
150 Al-Baqarah: 252: Such are the revelations of Allāh which We recite to you (O Muḥammad) in truth, for indeed you are one of the Messengers (sent by) Allāh.
151 Al-Sajdah: 3: …in fact, the Qur’ān is the truth from your Lord (O Muḥammad), so that you may forewarn your people.
152 Al-Baqqillānī, Al-Insāf, 164.
153 Al-Isra’: 106: And We divided the Qur’ān into parts, so that you may recite it to the people in a slow and deliberate way. And we have revealed it in stages, by gradual revelation.
Allāh, the Almighty told that the Qur’ān was descended and revealed from Him, while, the messenger (Muhammad) recited and taught it. The revealed, descended and recited is the speech of God, the eternal and attribute of His essence. The recitation is the prophet’s activity which is also his attribute…the act of the prophet is deliverance (to his companions) which is his recitation.\textsuperscript{154}

Hence, it seems the aforementioned statement clearly elucidates the difference between the terms ‘recitation’ and ‘recited’. The recitation is the activity of the Prophet (peace be upon him) which is also part of his property\textsuperscript{155} while the recited is the speech of God. The Prophet himself in this context is the reciter and deliverer of the messages of God to his companions.

Another illustration of al-Bāqillānī’s concept could be analyzed from the aspect of how a man has been commanded to worship his God. God, as Commander (āmir), decreed the Prophet (peace be upon him) to pray to Him. In this matter, he, the commanded (al-ma’mūr), should perform His instruction (al-ma’mūr bih) which is in the form of prayer. The Prophet (peace be upon him) performed his devotion (ibādah) to the worshipped (al-ma’bud). The one who performs this activity is called the worshipper (al-ābid). All these terms have their own proper meanings. As a result, we cannot equate worship (ibādah) and the worshipped (al-ma’bud) since they signify different contexts.\textsuperscript{156} Furthermore, al-Bāqillānī also supported his argument on viewing the difference between both terms ‘tilāwah’ and ‘matlū’ by comparing them with other words like ‘remembrance’ (dhikr) and ‘the remembered’ (madhkūr).\textsuperscript{157} This is based on the verse al-A’rāf: 205,\textsuperscript{158} explaining the text that those terms are obviously different. The remembrance (dhikr) is the act of the rememberer (dhākir) whereas the

\textsuperscript{154} Al-Baqillānī, Al-Insāf, 127.
\textsuperscript{155} The meaning of ṣifah is a quality, an attribute, and a property. Under this term many words are included such as active participle (ism al-fā‘il), passive participle (ism al-maf‘ūl), and adjectives (ṣifah al-mushabbiha). See in E. W. Lane, Arabic Language Lexicon, (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Book Trust, 1984), 3054, entry “ṣifā’
\textsuperscript{156} Al-Baqillānī, Al-Insāf, 129.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 168.
\textsuperscript{158} Al-A’rāf: 205: “And remember your Lord deep in your soul with humility and awe (not transgressing His commands) and without raising your voice, in the morning and evening And do not be among the negligent.”
remembered (*al-madhkūr*) is God, the Almighty. By virtue of this content, the terms ‘recitation’ and ‘the recited’ are absolutely different. The recitation could differ and be contradictory, yet the recited is permanent. The recitation always refers to its reciter like in the case of the variant readings of the Qur’an; the readings of Ubay, Ibn Mas‘ūd, and so on. On the contrary, the recited cannot be referred to any of God’s creatures. It should be ascribed to His speech, the eternal one. It does not belong to anyone’s action too. Hence, we cannot say that the Qur’an belongs to Ubay or Ibn Mas‘ūd. The recitation is the act of someone whose God will reward, punish, or even praise.\(^{159}\) Another theologian after al-Baqillānī, al-Juwaynī (d. 478 H/1085 C.E.), underlined and cemented this aforementioned proof. He affirmed that recitation (*tilāwah*) is produced by a reader who reads the Qur’an and performs the prayer. It is prohibited for those who are in a state of impurity (*junub*) to recite it, and recommended to those who are pure (*tāhir*). Hence, the reader will be rewarded. According to him, the recitation (*qirā‘ah*) could happen in various different states. Sometimes it could be good, beautiful, sonorous, and interesting. The one who tries his best to read the Qur’an may sometimes make certain mistakes in his reading because there no one is always perfect in his reading.\(^{160}\) Al-Juwaynī developed his argument about another term ‘the recited’ (*al-maqrū‘*) where he believed that this term signifies the speech of God which articulates eternal speech showing the expression. The terms ‘recitation’ and ‘the recited’ are like the terms ‘remembrance’ (*dhikr*) and the ‘remembered’ (*al-madhkūr*). The former referred to the speech of those who use to remember God while the latter ascribed to God himself; each of which has different conceptual basis. Therefore, the poetic structure is called ‘anthem’ (*inshād*) while activity in relation to the unseen realm which

is not uttered practice is called ‘remembrance’ (dhikr). The recitation, in this matter, is the expression of the speech of God as indicated by the sounds.\textsuperscript{161}

In another place al-Bāqillānī also elaborated his notion concerning the difference between the recitation and the recited by interpreting other relevant verses. According to him, the word ‘you read’ (tatlū) in verse al-Imrān: 101\textsuperscript{162} refers to the one who reads the verses, His angel. The Angel Gabriel had read the Qur’ān to prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). Even though he was told by the angel, such instruction was actually ascribed to God. In many other verses, it also stated ‘the blower’ (al-nāfīkh),\textsuperscript{163} ‘the carrier’ (al-ḥāmil),\textsuperscript{164} and ‘the teller’ (al-qāṣī),\textsuperscript{165} all these were employed by His angel, yet the decree was from Him. Hence, the aforementioned contexts are recitations referring to God’s speech, one of His attributes.\textsuperscript{166} Moreover, the recitation has the possibility to change the meaning of words even though the recited things are unchanged. Al-Bāqillānī explained that the recitation (tilāwah) might change the meaning of certain texts, whereas the recited (al-matlū) remained.\textsuperscript{167} This alteration may also occur in the words, writing (al-rasm), or regulation (ḥukm) as well as the speech of God when it is recited, written, and inferred by any reader. On the contrary, the recited (al-matlū) is unchanged. It is the eternal speech of God which is attributed to His essence which is permanent in nature.\textsuperscript{168} In addition to rejecting the Anthropomorphists, al-Bāqillānī further elaborated his argument through the analysis of the concept of kitāba (writing) and the written (maktūb), instead of the recitation and the recited. He argued by asking do those who write the verses of the Qur’ān on paper with their ink,

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\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 132.
\textsuperscript{162} But how can you disbelieve when Allāh’s Revelations (the Qur’ān) are recited to you and His own Messenger (Muhammad) is in your midst?...
\textsuperscript{163} Al-Anbiya’: 91: And (remember) the woman who kept her chastity: We breathed into her a spirit of our (Creation), and We made her and her son a sign (of Allāh’s might) to all people.
\textsuperscript{164} Al-Haqqah: 11: Indeed! When the water (of the flood) rose high (above the mountains), We carried you (and saved your forefathers) in the floating Ark (which sailed fast).
\textsuperscript{165} Yūsuf: 3: We narrate to you (O Muhammad) the best narratives by revealing this Qur’ān, though before revelation you were indeed among those who were unaware of them.
\textsuperscript{166} Al-Baqillānī, \textit{Al-Insāf}, 165-6.
\textsuperscript{167} Al-Nahl: 101: When We substitute one verse (of the Qur’ān) with another…
\textsuperscript{168} Al-Baqillānī, \textit{Al-Insāf}, 124.
could they then claim that those writings are God’s?\(^{169}\) The Anthropomorphists replied affirmatively that God is incarnated in the writings. Hence, they equated both terms ‘kitāba’ and ‘maktūb’. In this problem, al-Bāqillānī strongly rejected their stance by stating that God does not embody on those words. He neither personifies His essence on the paper nor on in the ink. He is powerful and great in His position. His speech, even if it is written on our paper, swords, and preserved in our hearts, that does not mean that He inheres Himself to those materials.\(^{170}\) Those verses of the Qur’ān marked on those materials are solely to help someone in the process of learning the Qur’an. Therefore, it seems from the aforementioned arguments, al-Bāqillānī attempted to cement his principle on the affirmation that God is omnipotent and omniscient by differing between the recitation and the recited as addressed to the Anthropomorphists, who equated both terms.

Interestingly, Ibn Taymiyya, a Hanbalite theologian who used to criticise the Ash’arites, agreed with al-Bāqillānī’s critique against anthropomorphism. He reported the Anthropomorphists, who held that recitation (\(\text{t}l\text{i}w\text{h}\)) is the recited (\(\text{m}l\text{t}\text{ū}\)), argued the meaning of God’s speech is audible sounds and words produced by the reader of the Qur’ān. They even believed that sound is the sound of God. They also further asserted that the sound and attributes of creature are the essence of the attributes of God, as stated below:

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\text{the recitation (\(\text{t}l\text{i}w\text{h}\)) is the recited (\(\text{m}l\text{t}\text{ū}\)). This means that the essence of God’s speech, in which produced by words and sounds, is the audible sounds of the readers. This audible sound of a servant is the sound of God. They (further) stated the essence of the creature’s speech is the essence of God’s attribute.}\]

From the above statement, hence, Ibn Taymiyya accused the anthropomorphists them as practicing unionism (\(I\text{tīhād}i\text{yya}\)) and pantheism (\(\text{hulūl}i\text{yya}\)) in terms of the

\(^{169}\) Ibid., 198.  
\(^{170}\) Ibid.  
\(^{171}\) Ibn Taymiyya, \(M\text{ajmū’} \text{‘} \text{F}\text{atāwā}\), 12: 374.
attributes. According to him, they likened their doctrine to Christianity to a certain extent in terms of incarnation. However, there is no single group in Islam who believed in such a notion.\textsuperscript{172}

Al-Bāqillānī’s views are also relevant to reply Abū Ya’lā’s support to anthropomorphists in equalizing the terms ‘recitation’ (qirā’ah) and ‘the recited’ (maqrū’). Abū Ya’lā, a Hanbalite theologian affirmed the similarity of those concepts based on the hadīth of the Prophet (peace be upon him)\textsuperscript{173} which, according to him, claimed that the Prophet’s recitation is the speech of God or the recited (maqrū’). Hence, as a result, the Muslims agreed that the recitations (tilāwat) are the speech of God due to their assumption towards reading they heard from a reader. In this sense, they would assert that this reading is the speech of God (kalām Allāh).\textsuperscript{174} However, if we analyze by using al-Bāqillānī’s points of view, we can infer that Abū Ya’lā’s arguments seemed very weak and invalid. Al-Bāqillānī clearly explained in his discussion on this subject by elaborating his ideas on the concept of recitation (qirā’ah). According to him, the activity of recitation has various different standards such as valid, good, false, and inaccurate. Therefore, if someone does this activity, his recitation may be categorized in one of those standards while the recited (maqrū’) does not have any aspect as stated above. The recited is the speech of God which does not contradict and change. The same goes with the term ‘writing’ (kitāba) when it is ascribed to the Qur’ān. It is shown in the form of gold, silver, and perfume carved on various different objects. These writings are different in nature. It could not be equalized amongst them. Therefore, the recitation (qirā’ah) is the property of the man while the recited (maqrū’) is the speech of God. The recitation is also the thing which is rewarded by God, whereas

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{173} It is narrated that Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh said: The Prophet (peace be upon him) showed himself to his people saying “is there any person who sends me to his people, while, the Quraish has rejected me to deliver the messages of God.” See in Muḥammad Ismā’il al-Bukhārī, Khalq Af’īl al-Ibād, (Beirut: Muassasah al-Risālah, 1990), 1: 41.

\textsuperscript{174} Abū Ya’lā, Al-Mu’tamad, 88.
the recited is the object of reading. In addition, al-Bāqillānī also criticized the concept given by Abū Ya'latā on the possibility for human beings to speak with God’s speech. In this matter, Abū Ya'latā argued by relying on the hadīth of the Prophet (peace be upon him) saying that “no slaves are beloved by God until they speak with His speech,” which is the Qur’ān. Hence, he concluded that it is probable for man to speak with God’s speech. In response to this idea, we can scrutinize al-Bāqillānī’s argument as he responded to Abū Ya’latā’s claim, as stated below:

It is compulsory to know that it is forbidden to someone to say “indeed, I speak with the speech of God, I narrate the speech of God, I express the speech of God, I articulate the speech of God. My articulation of speech of God is neither created nor uncreated. The thing which is permissible is to be said: “truly, I recite the speech of God..., I memorize the Qur’ān...” The aforementioned assertion obviously explains that a man is not allowed to say that he speaks, expresses, and narrates with the speech of God. The thing which is possible to be uttered is that he might recite and memorize the Qur’ān. It is in line with the verses in al-Nāhāl: 98, al-Muzammil: 20, al-Naml: 92, and the hadīth of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). All these texts prove the possibility to practice both activities, recitation and memorization. In addition to this stance, al-Bāqillānī further elaborated his ideas by illustrating that someone is only able to speak with his own speech. It is impossible for him to speak with his colleague’s speech. For instance, supposing Zaid is speaking to somebody else, it is impossible for him to speak with Amr. In another aspect, it is invalid for Zaid to have black colour which belonged to

175 Al-Baqqillani, Al-Tamhid, 156.
177 Abū Ya’latā, Al-Mu’tamad, 90.
179 And when you recite the Qur’ān, seek refuge (first) in Allāh from the accursed Satan.
180 …Therefore, recite from the Qur’ān as much as is easy for you…
181 And so that I always recite the Qur’ān…
182 It is narrated that the Prophet asked one of his companion saying “Have memorization of the Qur’an. He replied: “I have memorized this and this verses...” See al-Bukhārī, Ṣahih al-Bukhārī, in The Book of Merit of the Qur’ān, no. 5030, 626.
Amr. Conversely, it is also illogical too for Amr to have Zaid’s colour. Hence, according to al-Bāqillānī’s views, Abū Ya‘lā’s argument might lead to dangerous consequence to liken the speech of God to the speech of human beings.\(^{183}\)

In relation the above matter, al-Ghazālī and al-Qurtubī also dealt with the difference between the concepts of recitation and the recited they affirmed on al-Bāqillānī’s argument by giving another illustration. Someone who utters the word ‘fire’ does not mean it is dealing with its essence, which is burning. It is perhaps only an indication (\textit{madlūl}) of that term. If his statement about this word is essentially fire, then his mouth must be burnt. However, that is not the case. The substance of fire is represented by its word ‘fire.’\(^{184}\) Another theologian, al-Qurtubī further affirmed that those who uttered the ḥadīth of the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not mean he spoke with the Prophet’s sounds.\(^{185}\) He merely narrated information of the Prophet (peace be upon him) regarding the certain teachings, which had been delivered to his companions. It is similar to those who recited the poetry of Imru’ al-Qais\(^ {186}\) or al-Mutanabbī.\(^ {187}\) Here, the reciter narrates and tells his poetry only as a matter of reading. The recited (\textit{maqrū’}) is read through his activity of reading (\textit{qirā’a}). His recitation does not mean he speaks with their speeches concerning several matters. Hence, those who read the poetry of Imru’ al-Qais and Mutanabbī’s poems and regarded as if they really spoke through their speeches, they were the same thing to those who recited the Qur’ān and claim that they also spoke with the speech of God. This case is impossible.\(^ {188}\) Everybody has his own speech. The process of speaking involves several related elements; mind, muscle, and tongue. Therefore, the foregoing proofs delineate the obvious arguments affirming the

\(^{183}\) Al-Baqillānī, \textit{Al-Inṣāf}, 157.

\(^{184}\) Al-Gazālī, \textit{Al-Iqtisād}, 96.

\(^{185}\) Al-Qurtubī, \textit{Al-Asnā fi Sharh}, 2: 178.

\(^{186}\) Imru’ al-Qais (d. 561-565 C.E.) was an Arabian poet in the pre-Islamic period. His \textit{Muallaqat} was very popular among the Quraish people. See in Philip K. Hitti, \textit{History of Arabs}, (London: MacMillan and Co. Limited, 1937), 85.


\(^{188}\) Al-Qurtubī, \textit{Al-Asnā fi Sharh}, 2: 178.
different concept of the recitation and the recited which lead to a consequence that the Creator is different from all His creatures.

3.4.3. His Arguments on the Speech of God
3.4.3.1. The Speech of God is not Words

Having discussed his notions on the recitation (qirā‘ah) and the recited (maqrū‘), al-Bāqillānī elaborated his thought pertaining the abbreviated letters (al-Aḥruf al-Muqatta‘ah) by which he rejected that the speech of God is in the form of words. There are a number of chapters that prefix with those letters, scattered throughout the Qur‘ān in 19 places. Many commentators have interpreted them differently since the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself did not clearly explain this matter. Those verses are included in the topic of mutashābihāt because their meanings are not clearly known by all readers. Some of their interpretations asserted that the Qur‘ān is eternal by virtue of those letters. Its eternity is due to the existence of those words to form the structure of the Qur‘ān.

However, al-Bāqillānī rejected the notion asserting that the Qur‘ān was formed by the alphabetical words as represented by those abbreviated letters. Al-Rāzī (d. 606 H./1209 C.E.) recorded number of opinions by commentators on the abbreviated letters (al-Aḥruf al-muqatta‘ah) of the chapters of the Qur‘ān. One of them was by Abū Bakr al-Tibrizī. He affirmed by saying:

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189 Ahmad Von Denffer, Ulūm al-Qur‘ān, 84.
194 He was an unknown scholar who was quoted by al-Razi in his commentary.
He said “God, the Almighty, knew that a group of this people said the eternity of the Qur‘ān by stating those letters as warning that His speech (the speech of God) is formulated from those words. Therefore, (the Qur‘ān) should be eternal.”

From this statement he propounded the speech of God is obviously formed by the alphabetical words. It is proven through the beginning of several chapters like al-Baqarah, ālī Imrān, Yāsin, and so on. By virtue of that, it also proves that the Qu‘rān is eternal in its nature. However, al-Bāqillānī rejected this claim. According to him, those who believed that the speech of God is formulated by the eternal words of the abbreviated letters (al-ahruf al-muqatta‘ah) might lead to a consequence that a non-Muslim is also able to produce a similar verse even if it is an eternal matter. He can write the word ‘alif’ and utter it correctly. To him, this is a simple thing for them to compete with other verses which may undermine the meaning of the Qur‘ān. He clarified that those Muslims who recited the Qur‘ān; i.e. Alif lām mīm or Hā mīm were dealing with the speech of God. In such an activity they could understand the meaning from the structural letters arranged in the verse of the Qur‘ān. This is also valid in other recitations, in which expressing the sounds and words of God’s speech in different languages occurred to several Prophets; Mūsā, Dāūd, Īsā, and Muḥammad (peace be upon them).

Further, al-Bāqillānī also elaborated his notion in rejecting the idea that the speech of God is formulated by letters. Those words may be either used or unused in certain readings. In the history of the Qur‘ān, one of the readers of the seven variant readings mentioned his views by highlighting the word ‘malik’ (without alif) in al-Fātiḥah chapter. Here, he omitted the letter ‘alif.’ Alternatively, other readers read ‘mālik’ instead of ‘malik.’ They differed in viewing that letter whether it was omitted or not in the reading. However, by virtue of that, the word ‘alif,’ which is probably

196 Al-Baqillānī, Al-Insāf, 174.
197 Ibid., 177.
excluded or included, is impossibly considered as an eternal letter by its nature. It was merely a matter of recitation employed by the readers to follow the mutawātir narration of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). The status of both recitations were valid, and approved by him. However, in this content the recited (maqrū‘) was still the same, either with alif or without because it is the speech of God. Moreover, al-Bāqillānī further argued by quoting relevant hadīth to support his notion. Here, he elucidated that the reward of God would be multiplied to those who read many verses of the Qurʾān. The words refer to the recitation and its features, not to the recited (maqrū‘). In addition, that hadīth also delineated the word (harf) as referring to the recitation (qirā‘ah), not to the recited (al-maqrū‘). It is proven that the memorizers of the Qurʾān, who are in the silence made still keep the speech of God in their hearts. However, in this context this hadīth does not elucidate that the memorizers would be rewarded by Allāh by virtue of their memorization of God’s speech in their hearts, but they are rewarded when they recite the Qurʾān. The ḥadīth of the Prophet (peace be upon him) stating, “the best of my people’s worship is the reciting of the Qurʾān.”

To disprove the claim that the Qurʾān merely the words, al-Bāqillānī claimed the role of the alphabetical letters and the seven variant readings. In reality, there are only 28 words known to human beings. Basically, he questioned whether they are available to express the speech of God which is unlimited. According to him, His eternal speech is limitless. If it is expressed only within 28 words, then His words are limited. Moreover, al-Bāqillānī argued too in other aspects that those words also have

199 It is narrated that Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), said: “Those who recited a single word of the Qurʾān he would be rewarded (from which) every word has ten good.” Abū ‘Isā Muḥammad ibn ‘Isā ibn Sūra, al-Ṣāhih: Sunan al-Tirmidhī, ed. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Hūf, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n. y.), no. 2910, 5: 161.
200 Al-Bāqillānī, Al-Insāf, 177.
201 This sort of condition is illustrated in the Qurʾān in al-Ankabut: 49: (There is no doubt that the Qurʾān is from Allāh), in fact, these are clear revelations preserved in the hearts of those who are endowed with knowledge. And none but the wrongdoers deny Our signs.
limitations in terms of their existence. They have beginning and ending, hence, they must be originated because such a thing is the property of creatures. Even though the number of alphabetical letters is unlimited, they cannot include the whole meaning of the speech of God. They are solely a means on which we write and recite the eternal speech of God as well as speech of human beings.\textsuperscript{203} Furthermore, al-Bāqillānī presented his proof against those who affirmed the eternity of words related to the speech of God by analyzing the hadīth pertaining to the seven variant readings of the Qur’ān.\textsuperscript{204} He argued that this hadīth did not explain the aspect of the 28 alphabetical words as elucidated above. The Prophet (peace be upon him) explained the fact that Allāh revealed the Qur’ān in the form of seven readings.\textsuperscript{205} This reality is proven by the number of readers of the seven variant readings of the Qur’ān. According to al-Bāqillānī, as he inferred from the hadīth of ‘Umar in which he had disputed with Hishām regarding their recitations,\textsuperscript{206} he concluded that their dispute was merely on the prohibition of the different readings of the Qur’ān. To him, ‘Umar did not deny the recited thing (maqrū’') which is the Qur’ān, yet he disagreed upon the recitation employed by Hishām. ‘Umar regarded his colleague’s recitation as invalid because it was different from what the Prophet (peace be upon him) had read to ‘Umar. However, after both companions reported this matter to the Prophet (peace be upon him) he approved both readings (qirā’ah). Again, the difference here is in their recitations of the Qur’ān, not the Qur’ān itself. This hadīth also gives information that the Qur’ān is allowed to be recited in seven different variant readings. Their differences do not mean difference of

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\textsuperscript{203} Ibid., 178.
\textsuperscript{204} Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘il al-Bukhārī, Sahih al-Bukhārī, chapter on The Book of the Merit of the Qur’ān, no. 5040, 627.
\textsuperscript{205} Many interpretations regarding this matter. See Chapter Four on the issue of seven variant readings in relation to the Shi‘ite doctrines.
\textsuperscript{206} Hadīth on his dispute on the different ways of reading of the Qur’ān. See in Sahih al-Bukhārī, ed. Muḥammad Fu‘ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī, (Egpt: Dār Ibn Hazm, 2010), Chapter on the Merit of the Qur’ān, no. 4992, 623.
\end{flushright}
the Qurʾān. The same thing for the recited (maqrūʾ), it is one, yet, the way of reading is possibly employed in seven ways.\footnote{Al-Bāqillānī, \textit{Al-Insāf}, 181.}

### 3.4.3.2. The Speech of God is Not Sounds

In constructing his argument against the Anthropomorphists, al-Bāqillānī complemented other aspects concerning the denial of sounds when it is related to the speech of God. This proof is to reject their notion which maintained, as reported by al-Rāzī,\footnote{Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, \textit{al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr}, 1: 39.} that the sounds which are heard from the man is the essence of God’s speech. To respond to this issue, al-Bāqillānī scrutinized certain prophetic traditions as well as the verses of the Qurʾān related to the topic, and then disproved the Anthropomorphists’ notions.

Al-Bāqillānī relied his stance by analyzing the \textit{ḥadīth} which had relevant context to the divine speech of God in relation to the Day of Judgment. According to him, those who believed that God’s speech comprises sounds had their proofs in this \textit{ḥadīth}:

\begin{quote}
God proclaimed, during the (coming) of the Day of the Judgment, with his sound which everybody, who are near and far, can hear (His proclaim).\footnote{The author did not find the anthroporphists’ argument on this related issue based on their understanding to that particular \textit{ḥadīth}. Only, it is claimed by al-Bāqillānī in his rejection of their notions. Al-Bāqillānī, \textit{Al-Insāf}, 183.}
\end{quote}

According to al-Bāqillānī, this \textit{ḥadīth} illustrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) neither said that Allāh spoke (takallama) through His sound, nor he uttered (qāla) that His speech is sound. The term used in this \textit{ḥadīth} is that Allāh proclaimed (nādā) with His sounds. In addition, he added that the \textit{ḥadīth} also appointed that the sound is not part of His existence, yet from somebody else whom He instructed. It is also known from the narration that when the Day of Judgment comes, Allāh, the Almighty, will assemble all creatures in one place. He will instruct one of His angels to proclaim them, and at the same time that angel will do it obediently. This case, according to al-Bāqillānī, described that the caller is the one who has been instructed to proclaim those

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\item \footnote{al-Bukhārī, \textit{Sahih al-Bukhārī}, in The Book of Tawhid, no. 7481, 890.}
\end{itemize}
creatures. His sound is heard by all creatures. It is also evidenced by the verses of the Qurʾān in chapter Qāf: 41-42,\(^{211}\) which delineate that the angel also proclaimed human beings through God’s instruction. The sound referred to the property of the caller, not to the commander who issued the proclamation, God, the Almighty.\(^{212}\) Therefore, it seems from the aforementioned texts that his proofs invalidated the Anthropomorphists’ principle that the speech of God is eternal sound.

Another proof, as al-Bāqillānī promoted, is his clarification concerning the ḥadīth on how revelation revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) which was heard by the sound of the bees and the ringing of the bell.\(^{213}\) This fact disproved that the speech of God is the audible sounds of those medium of revelation. It also proved that if we regard that His speech is sound, this ḥadīth would be contradictory to the earlier ḥadīth mentioned above.\(^{214}\) The audible sound, as stated in the earlier ḥadīth, was heard by anyone who is close and away from Him, while in this ḥadīth the sound was merely heard by certain limited angels. Therefore, it is impossible that the sound is one of God’s eternal attributes because remains changing, sometimes it is heard, some other time it is unheard.\(^{215}\) Al-Bāqillānī affirmed that when God revealed to His Prophet (peace be upon him) something was also heard which did not relate to His revelation, like the sound of bees and the ringing of the bell. This sort of event was preamble to revelation before it came down to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Here, things that should be fathomed is the difference between revelation (waḥy) and the revealed (māḥā). The first is an illustration of the process of the descending of the verses of the Qurʾān to inform God’s messages to human beings while the second is that

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\(^{211}\) And listen (to what is being explained to you about the Day of Resurrection) on the day when the Crier (the Angel) will call (all the dead) from near place (hence-which can be heard by All).

\(^{212}\) Al-Bāqillānī, Al-Insāf, 184.

\(^{213}\) Al-Bukhārī, Sahih al-Bukhārī, Chapter on the Book of Revelation, no. 2, 8.

\(^{214}\) “during the (coming) of the Day of the Judgment, God will proclaim with His sound which everybody could hear from near and far (His proclaim).” Al-Bukhārī, Sahih al-Bukhārī, the Book of al-Tawhid, no. 7481, 890.

\(^{215}\) Al-Bāqillānī, Al-Insāf, 185.
His speech is pre-existent and unchanged. Al-Bāqillānī also analyzed that ḥadīth and clarified the purpose of the sound as information coming from the revelation of God to His Prophet (peace be upon him). During the process of revelation, as mentioned in the above ḥadīth, before the revelation was sent down it was initiated by the sound of the bees and ringing of the bell. In another case, it was also revealed by the appearance of the great shiver of the heaven due to its fear to Allāh, the Almighty. Having listened to this event, all inhabitants of the heaven prostrated to Him immediately. In this situation the first who rose was Gabriel since he was the one whose task was to deliver God’s messages. After God revealed to him certain decrees, a number of angels asked him what did He say to all audiences. Gabriel replied that God the Almighty revealed the truth. As a result, they knew that God’s speech is not the sound of the shiver, even though they had heard it. That was only the sign of God who delivered His messages to His creatures. Hence, it does not mean that they heard God’s speech which is in the form of great shiver, but only Gabriel who was able to listen to His messages. There are a number other ḥadīths which are similar in their contents to the discussed matter. All those sounds do not refer to the speech of God, but they return to the related sources. Therefore, it seems from those aforementioned ḥadīths that al-Bāqillānī appointed the speech of God does not have any relation to the sounds. Those are merely signs.

In addition al-Bāqillānī scrutinized other significant ḥadīth related to his rejection against the idea of the speech of God in the form of the sound. He analyzed on the property of sound which could be either good or bad. It is created and attributed to the creatures. It is proven by information narrated by al-Awzā’ī saying that the best sound amongst God’s creatures is the sound of Angel Isrāfīl. When it is sounded, it will

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216 Al-Bāqillānī, Al-Inṣāf, 185-6.
218 Al-Bāqillānī, Al-Inṣāf, 186.
silence all seven heavens inhabitants.\textsuperscript{219} In this event, he will blow the trumpet as instructed by Allāh to declare the coming of the Last Day. His sound does not refer to God because he produced it by himself. It refers to his property of speech. So, it is the sound of the Angel, as creature, not the sound of the Creator.\textsuperscript{220} Moreover, al-Bāqillānī provided other proof that the speech of God is not in the form of sound but it is the attribute of human beings. He analyzed through the beautiful sound belonging to Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī, as reported below:

It is narrated that the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, together with ‘Ā’ishah one night they heard (Abū Mūsā’s recitation) and stood listening to his recitation. After that they passed by him. The next day, when the Prophet met Abū Mūsā he said “Abū Mūsā, last night, I and ‘Ā’ishah passed by you during your reading of the Qur’ān and we listened to it.” He replied “O the prophet of Allāh, if I knew you were around me I would have written for you.” The prophet said “you have been bestowed an oboe of the oboes of Dāwūd.”\textsuperscript{221}

It seems from this \textit{hadith} that the beautiful sound attributed to Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī is part of his property. Its beauty was likened to the oboe of Dāwūd which did not relate to the speech of God whatsoever. He was praised by the Prophet since his recitation of the Qur’ān had attracted him during his walk and made him listen to it. As a result, the following day the prophet commented about his beautiful sound. Based on this report, the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself did not deal with the speech of God, but he delineated the merit of Abū Mūsā al-Ashaʿarī notably in reading the Holy Qur’ān.

Thus, al-Bāqillānī’s concepts on the speech of God are related to words and sounds. He affirmed that His speech is neither words nor sounds. Here, he disproved by clarifying several reports dealing with these two aspects and explaining his views using those facts in accordance with His divine attributes.

\textsuperscript{220} Al-Bāqillānī, \textit{Al-Inṣāf}, 187.
3.4.4. The Rejection against Anthropomorphismic Attributes of God

The core of the Anthropomorphists’ doctrine is the belief that God has the bodily material which is contradictory to the mainstream of Ash‘arites’ theological basis. A number of theologians refuted their doctrines, and criticized them from different perspectives. Al-Bāqillānī, in his response, had delineated his stance in which he rejected their notions through different topics as discussed below.

3.4.4.1. The Concept of Body (Jism) and Attributes of God

The Anthropomorphists believed that God is in the form of corporeal body together with their parts. He has hands, head, tongue, and other organs. Their notion is centralized to the doctrine that God has bodily material. This doctrine was strongly rejected by al-Bāqillānī. In refuting the Anthropomorphists’ views, he promoted his ideas regarding the definition of jism as well as its relevant matters.

According to al-Bāqillānī, the term ‘body’ (jism) is a composed thing, which comprises measurement. This definition is also commonly introduced by other theologians. Al-Bāqillānī highlighted the concept of body (jism) and asserted that it is disconnected to God. Hence, it is impossible that God has composed materials. If He has body which comprises many organs, then those parts 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 inhere in substrate.

These organs somehow are contradictory to the eternity of God, which is spaceless. The claim that God has parts of bodies means comparing the Creator with the creatures, and

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223 Al-Shahrastānī, Al-Milal wa al-Nihal, 105.

according to al-Bāqillānī, this is a false concept because they believed that God in His eternity has spatial parts of body,\textsuperscript{225} which in turn is contradictory to the Islamic theological mainstream.

Furthermore, al-Bāqillānī also denied that God has corporeal body. As a result, He has organs with their own properties. These properties could be knowing, powerful, or having contradictory attributes; unknowing and unpowerful.\textsuperscript{226} By virtue of that fact, it leads to confusion as to which one of these organs is being God because not every part has divine attributes. On the contrary, if every organ of that body has those properties, then, as a consequence, it also indicates that God is more than one, which is similar doctrine believed in Christianity. Furthermore, the spatial bodies are also a contradictory fact when some parts of the body are moved while others are unmoved. Their movement, however, does not work perfectly.\textsuperscript{227} It seems al-Bāqillānī’s rejections against the Anthromorphists’ claim had shown some consequences. The idea that God has physical body means that He is created from a number of things because that is the substance of the body. Hence, it is impossible that He is eternal. In addition, it could also be inferred that it has accident ('arad) and essence (jawhar) for its substrate and activity. Their routines may also seem contradictory.\textsuperscript{228} The corporal attributes of God are self-evident that they are not part of God, since they have many weaknesses as obviously explained by al-Bāqillānī in his arguments.

Further proof, as al-Bāqillānī argued, to reject the Anthropomorphists’ notion is that he proposed the term ‘thing’ (shay’) instead of ‘body’ (jism) in describing God’s activity. He rejected the latter and allowed the use of the former addressed to Him. The term ‘shay’, when it relates to God, does not mean having particular species (jins) as well as the corporal elements while the term ‘jism’ is not applicable to be addressed

\textsuperscript{225} Al-Bāqillānī, \textit{Al-Tamhīd}, 220-1.
\textsuperscript{226} Ibid., 221.
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid., 222.
\textsuperscript{228} Muḥammad Ramadan ʿAbd Allāh, \textit{Al-Bāqillānī wa Arāuhū al-Kalāmiyyah}, (Baghdad: Matba’ah al-Ummah, 1986), 514.
altogether with His name since it has certain connotations indicating that He has physical objects. According to al-Bāqillānī, the usage of the term ‘body’ (*jism*) signifies everything related to corporeal bodies. It comprises many elements embodied into one object, yet His existence is One. Linguistically speaking, the term ‘thing’ (*shay‘*) is more general to appoint to either eternal aspects or originated things.\textsuperscript{229} Hence, their problem actually lies in naming God with such physical matters. Al-Bāqillānī noted the term ‘thing’ (*shay‘*) has general and multi-interpretations. When it relates to corporeal body it consists of composed materials. The same thing when it refers to accident, it also has essence. Therefore, naming something should be based on certain reasons since it has many consequences. Al-Bāqillānī further added his concept by affirming that the names of God have been revealed to us through true information of the Qur’ān and ḥadīth. His names are derived from these stated sources, even though they contradict our reason, like God as a deceiver (*al-mākir*)\textsuperscript{230} and a mocker (*al-mustahzi‘*).\textsuperscript{231} In this respect, we have to retain those names for Him, because Allāh told us to do so, yet all these things should be traced back to the origin of the statement. The Anthropomorphists’ reliance was on their speculative thought to God which is baseless from the revelation.\textsuperscript{232} The abovementioned argument illustrates clear proof that they wrongly termed in naming God as the existent possessing bodily elements. This statement definitely contradicted to the principle of theological framework, which created a number of criticisms from their opponents. Here, al-Bāqillānī through his concept of name (*al-ism*) and naming (*tasmiyya*), scrutinized the Anthropomorphists’ views.\textsuperscript{233} He

\textsuperscript{229} Al-Bāqillānī, *Al-Tamhīd*, 223.

\textsuperscript{230} Ali Imran: 54: And they (the unbelieving Jews) schemed (to kill Isa), but Allah schemed. And (remember that Allah) is the supreme schemer (and can fail any evil scheme).

\textsuperscript{231} Al-Baqara: 15: Allah will mock at them, leaving them to wander blindly on (to and fro) in their contumacy.

\textsuperscript{232} Al-Bāqillānī, *Al-Tamhīd*, 223.

\textsuperscript{233} Al-Bāqillānī, *Al-Inṣāf*, 92. To name of something involves name (*al-ism*), the naming (*tasmiyya*), and the named (*al-musammā*), each of which has different referent. The ‘name’ (*ism*) is word indicates of something, the naming (*tasmiyya*) is the activity of giving name to something, and the named (*al-musamma*) is the object of the name. See also in Abū Ḥamīd ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqsad al-
said that they did not realize their technical term which was loaded with certain conceptual principle. In this regard, he also criticized them that their notion caused theological simplification in delineating God’s existence as well as their naming of divine attributes and names.

In another place, al-Bāqillānī also elucidated his stance concerning *mutashābihāt* verses\(^{234}\) which were literally understood by the Anthropomorphists. He analysed verse Taha: 5,\(^{235}\) in which he commented that the God’s seat on the throne is not similar with His creatures.\(^{236}\) He believed that the throne has neither space nor place because God continuously exists. This is also evidenced by some texts narrated by both Abū Uthmān al-Maghrībī and al-Shiblī.\(^{237}\) They maintained that God has always been eternal (*lam yazal wa lā yazūl*) while His throne is originated.\(^{238}\) Al-Ghazālī (d. 450 H/1111 C.E.), in his theological principle, also supported al-Bāqillānī’s stance concerning that matter. He further commented that *mutashābihāt* verses are deanthropomorphism (*tanzīh*) of any claim that He settled down on the throne. Those who sat firmly there were precisely predestined whether they are greater, smaller or even similar in terms of its forms. When God is believed to have bodily elements, then He is touchable from any sides.\(^{239}\) Hence, these *mutashābihāt* verses cannot be regarded as justification of the anthropomorphic notion towards God.

Still in line with al-Bāqillānī, al-Ghazālī also asserted his other views in rejecting anthropomorphism. He elucidated clearly his theological principle in his *Iqtisād* affirming that God has different attributes from His creatures. He has neither

\(^{234}\) *Mutashābih* are verses which have multiple meanings. See al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-Ta’rīfāt*, 253.

\(^{235}\) Tāhā: 5: That is, (Allāh) Most Gracious, who is firmly established on the Throne (of authority).

\(^{236}\) Al-Bāqillānī, *Al-Insāf*, 64.


\(^{239}\) Al-Ghazālī , *Iqtisād fi al-I’tiqād*, 58.
bodily elements nor accidents. All physical aspects are composed from two or more substances. Al-Ghazālī further detailed that if God possesses a physical form, then He is counted with certain quantities. As a result, He will require specific and preferable form in which it alternates and assesses into one specific way. Therefore, in such a condition He will not be a Creator, which is absolutely impossible for God.²⁴⁰ Al-Ghazālī also argued in his other works,²⁴¹ that those verses which explain God’s physical descriptions do not mean the real meanings which signify the physical aspects. Those statements should not be interpreted literally, but they should be fathomed as following the proper and appropriate interpretations related to God, the Almighty. For instance, the word ‘movement’ (intiqāl) from one place to another does not mean that God has similar activity as human beings who move too but God has His own activities which are exclusively appropriate for Him using certain equivalent terms.²⁴²

A later theologian after al-Ghazālī, al-Rāzī (d. 606 H/1209 CE.), also cemented the position of Ash‘arites’ theological framework in rejecting anthropomorphism. Al-Rāzī reported that the Karrāmiyya, one school of Anthropomorphists, did not admit to saying that Allāh has corporeal body which indicates the composed matter comprising several parts of bodies.²⁴³ They meant by such term is that God does not require substrate, and it is a substance subsists by itself without any dependence of the body.²⁴⁴ According to him, their statement was unclear, since they used contradictory terms. However, according to al-Rāzī, following from their argument on the speciality of God’s attributes, it could be inferred that God requires space, direction, and all things perceived by the senses. So, He must be single or indivisible substance (al-jawhar al-fard) which is spaceless and undivided. However, their naming of such term by the so-called ‘body’ (jism) has illustrated that it seems that it has been produced by the

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 53.
²⁴¹ Al-Ghazālī, Iljām al-Awwām, 42-43.
²⁴² Ibid., 44.
²⁴⁴ M. Saeed Shaikh, A Dictionary of Muslim Philosophy, 48.
composition of a number of elements. It also has certain properties; long, deep, and broad related to any directions. This is humiliating and belittling His existence, since no one Muslim would agree upon such belief. Accordingly, their argument in claiming that God does not need the substrate was merely a due to their dissimulation (taqīyyah) and fear.245

From the aforementioned delineations, we can conclude that the Ash‘arite theologians, in rejecting anthropomorphism, had different basic theological principles. They attempted to deny the epistemological foundation on the terminological background of the concept of the body and the attributes of God.

3.4.4.2. His Criticisms against the Concept of Ḥulūliyya

Having discussed his rejection against the notion of speech of God held by anthropomorphists, al-Baqillānī also rejected the doctrine of incarnation (ḥulūliyya). This is his attempt to elaborate his concepts in refuting the principle of this group. In this issue, a number of ṣūfī schools, like ḥallājiyya and sālimiyya as well as the extreme (Ghulāt) Shi‘ites, maintained that God has the possibility to personify human bodies which have attained certain level of spirituality.246 This sort of personification (ḥulūl) may occur in two different conditions; al-ḥulūl al-jawārī and al-ḥulūl al-sarayānī. The former is a situation in which someone is contained in a container just like water in a cup while the second is that like the union of one thing into another, in which they will be blended like the aroma of rose into the rose of the flower.247 Al-Hujwirī reported that having reached this level, they believed that God will represent their hearing, sight, hands, and even speeches in the real sense.248 This notion could be seen in the ḥadīth of

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247 ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Badāwī, Shatahāt al-Sūfīyya, 15; M. Saeed Shaikh, A Dictionary of Muslim Philosophy, 56.
the Prophet (peace be upon him).  

Perhaps it is applied due to their misunderstanding of the *hadîth* pertaining to that particular practice. However, this *hadîth* could be interpreted differently. Some scholars also read this text and understood that it does not mean to the tenets, but otherwise. It might be known by investigating its background on the event (*asbâb al-wurûd*) related to the context of the discussion. This *hadîth* indirectly informs us that God does not become our hands, hearing and sight in the real sense as fathomed by the Anthropomorphists, but its metaphorical expression was addressed to those who had reached a certain level of spirituality.

Regarding the *hûlûliyya*, al-Bâqillânî presented a number of arguments to reject the notion of the Anthropomorphists who maintained that the speech of God may embody into the human speech. They argued that the pre-existent attributes have certain possibilities to be embodied into creatures, hence, they may change, move, develop, and even fill the void. These activities prove that God’s speech might be infused into human beings, that is unknown as to which one belongs to God and to His creatures. To prove this claim, they referred to the *hadîth* of the Prophet (peace be upon him):

Don’t travel to the land of the enemy carrying the Qur’ân.

According to the Anthropomorphists, the above *hadîth* demonstrates that the embodiment of God’s speech into the creatures. Therefore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) prohibited the companions from bringing God’s speech which is in the form of the

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249 Al-Bukhâri, *Sâhih al-Bukhâri*, the Book of Fineness on the chapter of Modesty, no. 6502, 780.
250 This *hadîth*, according to Ibn Hâjar al-Asqalânî, delineated how God protects and gives His privilege to those who have devoted themselves to Him. Hence, God will be their hands, hearing, and sight. This is merely a metaphor (*majâz*) and unequivocal expression (*kinâyah*) pertaining to His protection of them. See in Abû al-Fadl Ahmad ibn ‘Alî ibn Hâjar al-Asqalânî, *Fath al-Bâri*, ed. ‘Abd al-Azîz bin Bâz and Muḥammad Fuâd ‘Abd al-Bâqî. (Egypt: Maktabah Miṣr, 2010), 11: 279-80.
Qur’an because His speech has been materialized into the codex.253 However, the foregoing hadīth, as understood by al-Bāqillānī, delineated that the Prophet’s statement by his prohibition to carry the Qur’ān meant the codex as indicated by the last statement “afraid of its (the Qur’ān) 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 adversaries. This codex is coined by the Qur’ān due to its content. This is in conformity with other relevant report from the Prophet (peace be upon him) regarding his prohibition to touch the Qur’ān unless we are in pure condition.254 In other words, al-Bāqillānī attempted to illustrate the position of the Qur’ān and its status as elucidated in that hadīth.255 He further 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 in another place, 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 statement in hadīth ‘do not travel and you carry the Qur’ān,’ which means we are not allowed to bring the Qur’ān when we are in a place where many non-Muslims stay there.256 Al-Bāqillānī added further proof by illustrating that a memorizer of the Qur’ān has memorization in his heart. It is clear that this case does not indicate that God’s speech, which infuses into His body, is unity between humans and God. However, the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not forbid them to travel to the lands of the enemy. He was only worried that the codex that mentioned the verses of the Qur’ān would be taken from the hand of the Muslims to

253 Al-Bāqillānī, Al-Insāf, 192.
255 Al-Bāqillānī, Al-Tamhīd, 193.
256 This hadīth is also in conformity with verses of the Qur’ān like Yūsuf: 82: “ask the village in which we stay in.” It means its citizen, al-Nisā‘: 43: “do not approach the prayer and you are in the state of intoxicated,” it means its place, al-Isra: 60: “and the cursed tree in the Qur’ān”, it means its expert in the Qur’ān.
their enemies. Therefore, it could be inferred that it is impossible that the eternal thing infuses into the originated matters.

Al-Bāqillānī further denied the union of God into His creatures which resulted from his analysis of the other relevant ḥadiths of the Prophet (peace be upon him). One of them is the Prophet’s statement that the Qur’ān is cannot be burnt when it is written on skin. In response to this information, he attempted to infer with different possibilities. Firstly, he said that the skin cannot be burnt occurred during the life of prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him); 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 it 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 exists after he passed away. Furthermore, according to al-Bāqillānī, this ḥadīth may also elucidate the merit of the memorizers of the Qur’ān. The memorization belongs to those who have memorized in their hearts, and by virtue of that makes them cool, peaceful and saved when they make contact with fire. Hence, they are cannot be burned. The same case occurred to Prophet Ibrahim (peace on him) who was thrown into the fire after it was decided that he was a guilty man by his people.

Therefore, from the foregoing arguments we can scrutinize al-Bāqillānī’s understanding of those two different reports. He maintained that those who memorized the Qur’ān would be safe from hell fire. Their skin would not be burned, due to the intercession of the Qur’ān. Al-Bāqillānī also presented is that the Qur’ān cannot be

257 Al-Bāqillānī, Al-Tamhīd, 194.
259 This is also perhaps God has granted his servants those who attempted to memorize the Qur’ān. “what an excellent intecessor to those people of it (the Qur’ān) in hereafter.
260 Al-Anbiyā’: 68: (When they could not argue anymore, their leaders) said: “burn him and protect your gods, if you are going to do anything!”. We said: “O fire, be cool and safe for Ibrāhīm.”
burned when it is written on skin or any other stuff. He clarified that the Qur’ān is truly mentioned on them, which does not incarnate as if it is a uniting body to other elements. This is the same thing for those people who try to write one of the names of God on any element which can be torn, burnt, and drowned. All these can possibly happen. Their writings, colours, and all other aspects would be damaged, yet the real thing stated in that space is Allāh, the Almighty, which is eternal in nature. However, the Qur’ān proves otherwise. Therefore, the idea of the union of God with His creatures is invalidated.

In addition to his argument in rejecting the conceptual union of God and human existence, al-Bāqillānī criticized certain information regarding the relevant issue. According to him, the Anthropomorphists relied on certain information pertaining the fusion between the eternal speech of God, the Qur’ān, and the flesh of its memorizers. This is their claim concerning incarnation (ḥulūl) of God’s attribute into human body. To this notion, al-Bāqillānī responded by addressing a question on how the speech of God, which is only one, could unite with much of 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 mixed with one body of Jesus (peace on him) until his body had the attribute of God (lāhūt), and at the same time it also had humanity aspect (nāsūt) from the side of Maryam. The mixture of the eternal existence with the originated one is like a perfect mixture between water and milk. However, as al-Bāqillānī argued, the meaning of this hadīth explains the importance of the learning process done by children. At an early age, a child has the golden opportunity and ability to study. The memorization

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261 Al-Bāqillānī, Al-İnşāf, 196.
262 Al-Qasas: 88: Everything is perished, except the face of Allāh.
263 Al-Bāqillānī, Al-İnşāf, 196.
264 Ibid., 197.
during this age is better, stronger, and longer than that employed for an adult. It is due to the process of the mixing between blood and flesh with his memorization, and at the same time it is preserved in their hearts. This illustration is like those who love a calf.\textsuperscript{265} The calf itself does not unite into their hearts, yet it absorbs their love. Here, it is obviously impossible to unite between the object of the thing, which is the animal, and the inner aspect of human beings. He further argued proving his notion from other aspects of spiritual activities. For instance, a mosque where every Muslim prays is regarded by all Muslims as the holy place. To him, this does not mean it has eternal properties which unite into that mosque. They respect it accordingly due to its function to worship therein. Those who are impure are not allowed to enter the mosque, even doing circumambulation (\textit{tawāf}) in it.\textsuperscript{266} Therefore, all those aforementioned facts disprove the argument promoted by the Anthropomorphists.

Another disproval fact proposed as al-Bāqillānī proposed is that the Anthropomorphists used to affirm that the writing, paper as well as the ink on the \textit{mushaf} of the Qurʾān are eternal as God’s attributes.\textsuperscript{267} God descended from His thrown into those materials and embodied into them. These ideas are contradictory to mainstream Muslim theological dogmas believed by \	extit{ahl sunnah wa al-Jamā’ah}. According to al-Bāqillānī, anthropomorphists belittled God’s omnipotence because they attribute material objects to God. In addition to his proof, it also elucidated in another place that the Anthropomorphists’ notion had negative consequences. It was proven by the text that the statement of Fir’āun in the Qurʾān which is opposed the Almighty God is also considered as eternal.\textsuperscript{268} Other texts too like concerning the prohibition and command in approaching the wealth of the orphans in al-Thūr: 19,\textsuperscript{269} doing the meal

\textsuperscript{265} Al-Baqarah: 93: ...their hearts were filled with overflowing love of worshipping the calf...
\textsuperscript{266} Al-Bāqillānī, \textit{Al-Insāf}, 198.
\textsuperscript{267} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{268} Al-Nāzi‘āt: 24: He said: I am your Lord Most High.
\textsuperscript{269} Al-thur: 9: Do not approach to the treasuries of the orphan.
activity in al-An‘ām: 152,\textsuperscript{270} performing prayer and giving alm in al-Nis‘ā: 77\textsuperscript{271} and others are all included in pre-existent things (\textit{qadīm}). This sort of argumentation, as a result, leads to confusion whether a thing is eternal or not. However, in reality all the matters are created bodies. The writing, paper, ink, and all events described in the Qur‘ān are originated including Fir‘aun himself. God’s speech is eternal including His speech about Fir‘aun’s and his arrogant attitudes. The same thing in the approach of the orphans and his treasuries all these aspects are not considered as eternal ones, but they are originated. Hence, it seems that is clear difference between God’s and human’s speech. The former does not need whatsoever any other means as used by the latter; mouth, lips, words, and sounds.

3.5. Concluding Remarks

The foregoing discussions on anthropomorphism and its relation to the Qur‘ān have delineated al-Bāqillānī’s responses to that problem. His critique to the doctrines of the Qur‘ān, attributes of God, and \textit{ḥululīyya} held by the anthropomorphists seems to be driven by his attempt to maintain the mainstream of Ash‘arites’ theological doctrines. His arguments are also relevant to address certain arguments belonging to the Orientalists who tried to vindicate the practice of pseudo-\textit{sufī} and its relevant issues. Their claim was merely against the Islamic theological mainstream. Besides that, al-Bāqillānī also deals with the other issues of the Qur‘ān addressed to the Shi‘ites. In this discourse, he defended against their claim concerning the authencity of the \textit{Muṣḥaf} of the Qur‘ān which was compiled by ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān. This matter will be further explored in the following chapter.

\textsuperscript{270} Al-An‘ām: 152: …eat and drink…
\textsuperscript{271} Al-Nis‘ā: 77: and perform the prayer and give the alms…