

THE QUR'ĀNIC DIALOGUE WITH THE MYSTICAL THEOLOGY OF LOGOS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

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Abstract: The Qur'ān, the “Holy Writ” of Islam, builds its rationale of revelation on the scriptural model of biblical tradition. Embracing direct divine intervention in worldly affairs as the first principle within the constrictions of monotheistic theology, the Qur'ān resurrects biblical purview of an intermediary agency linking the transcendent divine with the terrestrial human, which the author of John's Gospel identifies as “*Logos*”. This article argues that the Qur'ānic conception of *kalām-Allah*, at a conceptual level, engages with John's mystical theology of the divine origin of the *Logos*-incarnate and reinterprets the conception as well as its application. This cornerstone of John's theology formulates a crucial basis for the Qur'ānic narrator's self-reflection through both content and form of revelation as such. Biblical literature written prior to Johannine appropriation of *Logos* does not cohere with John's mystical paradigm, which the Qur'ān, on the other hand, brings to a whole new level of theological maturation. The Qur'ān dialogues with John's Gospel at multiple levels on the principal question of God's *personal* interaction with humanity and presents its nuanced metaphysical construct in conversation with the *Logos* principle, but in distinction from John's incarnation theology.

Keywords: Logos, Word of God, Book, Revelation, John, Christology, *kalimah*, *kalām*.

Introduction

The sacred scripture of Islam, *al-Qur'ān al-Majīd*,¹ “the Glorious Qur'ān,” is another religious text within the Abrahamic religious

¹ (a) It is one of the many names of the Qur'ān translated as “the Glorious Qur'ān.” In fact, the word “Qur'ān” is the title reserved for the special divine revelation, the

tradition that deals with the historical religio-philosophical ideology of the *Logos*. The concept of *Logos*² is, in fact, universally known and embraced for two writers of the first century, Philo and John, respectively representing the philosophical outworking of the Jewish and the Christian faiths. The Qur'ān too, on the other hand, appears to maintain a sound audience with the Bible in terms of receiving and incorporating the so-called Judeo-Christian religious heritage that renders the Qur'ān less than a stranger to the Western religious tradition.

A religious text in the Western understanding is a collection of words written down by human authors under divine inspiration that guides humanity into religious ethics of life and plays a normative function in the societal orders.³ This definition, however, leaves the Qur'ān out of the full spectrum and does not comprehensively elucidate the radioactive significance of the holy book of Islam within the entity of a community it conceives *ab initio* and lays out. Therefore, with this particular aspect in mind, the question that begs a definitive answer for an inquiry into the Qur'ānic revelation is: what is the Qur'ān? Linguistically, the word *Qur'ān* is derived from the Arabic root *qara'a*, “to recite,” according to the majority of philologists.⁴

“Word of God,” preserved in a book form in Islam, which means a “recital.” Each copy of the holy book is traditionally called *Muṣḥaf*, “collection of pages”. Some other names of the Scripture are *al-Kitāb*, “the Book,” *al-Furqān*, “the Standard,” and *al-Dhikr*, “the Remembrance,” See Cyril Glassé, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1989), 228.

(b) Special Arabic transliteration characters for long vowels, such as *ā*, *ī*, *ū*, are adopted in line with the standard practice in order to introduce clarity in the transliteration of the Arabic words. Apart from *Logos*, moreover, Word and Will of God are also capitalized due to their thematic significance in this article.

² The word *Logos* is italicized and capitalized throughout the article. The contention behind such an approach is to treat *Logos* as a living reality and present it to the readers as an entity central to the theological worldviews of both John's Gospel and the Qur'ān instead of reducing it to only a concept frozen in history. The Gospel of John formulates its *Logos* theology in the *Prologue*, which consists of the first eighteen verses of the first chapter—John 1:18.

³ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *What is Scripture?: A Comparative Approach* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 21.

⁴ The root *qara'a* has occurred 17 times in the Qur'ān with the meaning of “recitation” for the most part. The most profound example in this regard is found in Sūrah al-Qiyāmah 75:18 where God recites the Qur'ān to the Prophet Muhammad for ordaining his humanity to the prophetic standards. Hebrew language uses an identical root verb *q-r-'* (קָרָא), which means “to call, to proclaim.”

From a theological standpoint, on the other hand, the Qur'ān is the 'divine revelation as spoken and heard,' which 'is received as divine and effectively enters men's and women's lives, chiefly as rendered orally.'⁵ The Qur'ān, in other words, plays the same role in the *Muslim Ummah*, a concept of faith-based community similar to Christendom, to establish and regulate its identity as does the person of Christ in the Church.

Having emerged from the Semitic lineage, from the family of Abrahamic religions, Islam views the Judeo-Christian Bible as an important part of the special revelation to man from God, in its own likeness, which is a chain of religious texts precursor to Islam's own *revealed* scripture.⁶ The Qur'ān, therefore, recognizes the New Testament as the historical *injīl*, "the good news of Jesus," in its entirety and acknowledges various precepts and principles laid in the library of Christian scriptures as revealed and canonical.⁷ It is primarily this reason that the Qur'ān also extends partial acceptance to the Johannine recognition of the *Logos* that, historically speaking, the Fourth Evangelist inherits from the Jewish Wisdom and Hellenistic philosophy simultaneously and attempts to fashion an avant-garde theology of his own accord by blending the two existing, heterogeneous traditions.⁸ The theology of John, therefore, becomes the new face of the subsequent modular development within the monotheistic tradition in theological, philosophical, and mystical dimensions.

Such a theological milieu makes for a natural choice for a movement born at the helm of circumstances to correspond with the

It occurs in Isaiah 40:3 where it reads, "A voice of one calling: 'In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord.'"

⁵ Smith, *What is Scripture?*, 8.

⁶ The Qur'ān states its *affirmative* position with regard to acknowledging the truth of the "People of the Book" and their scriptures in a number of places. In fact, one of the titles the Qur'ān employs for itself is the "Reminder" (*Hijr* 15:9)—Reminder to the previously revealed scriptures. The recognition and confirmation of the Judeo-Christian scriptures by the Qur'ān is also established as a fact in the Qur'ānic text (*al-Mā'idah* 5:48).

⁷ The Christian New Testament is a library of 27 books, which, together with the 39 books of the Hebrew Old Testament, forms the entity of the Judeo-Christian Bible. The Qur'ān recognizes the Bible as *al-kitāb* and addresses its followers as *ahl al-kitāb*, "People of the Book/Bible."

⁸ Ronald H. Nash, *The Gospel and the Greeks* (Richardson, TX: Probe Books, 1992), 84-86.

realities of its day and process the challenges in all three dimensions, namely theological, philosophical, and mystical, in the light of the governing intellectuality, religiosity, and discourse. It is precisely what the event of Islam faced in the seventh century and the voice of the narrator in the Qur'ān thereby internalized while reflecting upon its own origin in dialogue with the theories of heavenly guidance in circulation.

John's Theology in the Qur'ānic Worldview

It may seem a bit of a stretch at first glance to propose that the Qur'ān inherits the idea of a "heavenly book" from the Jewish *Torah* and the idea of "Word" as God's revelation of an aspect of his *self* from the Gospel of John. The Qur'ān, as a matter of fact, does not distance itself from any one of the previous scriptures and claims to be the ultimate form and fruition of the entire divine communication accorded to mankind prior to the Prophet Muhammad. The Islamic Scripture, therefore, recognizes various salient features of all older scriptures and extends ownership to whatever truth is intact amidst human hand's power play with the sacred texts. The recognition of the *Logos* ideology specifically from the Johannine angle is, however, obscure in the Qur'ān, because the Qur'ān does not describe it in explicit terms with the same exquisiteness as is built around the incarnation aspect of the *Logos* in the Gospel of John.⁹ The Qur'ān puts the *Logos* in the background as a secondary phenomenon within the grand scheme of its metaphysics, which is contingent upon the primary cause, the Will of God.¹⁰ The Will of God (Arabic *qadā*) is distinct from the spoken Word of God (Arabic *kalimah*) because the former occurs before the latter, though both of them are *attributive* in nature rather than personal or essential in Islam. In this particular situation, the Islamic concept appears almost identical to the Jewish understanding of the *Logos* and does not seem to bear much affinity with the Christian concept in the John's Gospel.

What is unique to the Qur'ān in its response to the Johannine *Logos*-incarnate is, nevertheless, its reception of the historical concept

⁹ In its essence, the metaphysical idea of the *Logos* is the same as in John 1:1-2 that the Word is indistinguishable from God. However, the difference primarily lies in the articulation and implication of the concept in the Qur'ān.

¹⁰ Sūrah Yāsīn 36:82, "His Command when He desires a thing is only to say to it, "Be!" and it is."

with a crucial modification in keeping with the immediate religious environment of plurality that is far removed from the Johannine audience. The Qur'ān stipulates the theory of two epistemological levels of the manifestation of *Logos*, which are expressed through two related Arabic terms, *kalām* and *kalimah*.¹¹ Both of these terms are informed on their jurisdictional relevance by the same original principle, the *Logos*, and are identified in their individual contexts with the general biblical exposition of the Word of God. *Kalimah*, “word,” “proposition,” or “expression,” for instance, is a singular expression, which may or may not be meaningful in its lexical function.¹² It is a foundational unit of speech in the Arabic grammar, which plays out as a structural block in the formation of language that formulates a meaningful speech by joining similar other word-blocks. On the contrary, *kalām* is a “speech,” “saying,” or an “idea occurring in mind even if it is not expressed.”¹³ It is, therefore, characteristic of a meaningful discourse that bears a decodable communication (Arabic, *iblaḡh*) and allows for the audience to understand the content of a transmitted message and participate in the discourse. Apart from communication, moreover, the term *kalām* also stands for a discursive study of God and is combined with the word *‘ilm*, “knowledge,” as *‘ilm al-kalām*, “science of theology.”¹⁴

The Qur'ān is the literal, inimitable “Word of God” according to the unanimously declared creed of the orthodox schools of Islamic theology and law, which is addressed as the *kalām-Allah*.¹⁵ This articulate position of Muslim theologians is, with a few minor exceptions, universal and historical. Muslims of all geographies have, throughout Islamic history, subscribed to this ubiquitous doctrine of faith, which entails the belief that the Qur'ān is the Word of God preserved with the divine being for all eternity, and it was revealed (Arabic, *tanẓīl*) in the Arabic language to the historical person of the

¹¹ It is the flip side of the Christian understanding of the *Logos* or Word of God. An abstract idea and a book as two formative expressions of the Word of God contrast with a personified Word and a literal book as the Word of God.

¹² ‘Abdul Mannān ‘Omar, *Dictionary of the Holy Qur'an* (Hockessin, DE: NOOR Foundation International Inc., 2012), 496.

¹³ Ibid., 495.

¹⁴ Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, Vol. 2 (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998), 422.

¹⁵ Mufti Muhammad Taqī Usmani, *An Approach to the Qur'ānic Sciences* (Karachi: Darul Ishaat, 2000), 54.

Prophet Muḥammad, the final and universal Prophet of God, for the guidance of all mankind.¹⁶ In Islamic theology, the origin of such a belief in the eternity of the Word of God as known to Muslims in the form of a sacred book, the Qur'ān, is an obscure Qur'ānic reference to a celestial "Preserved Tablet" (Arabic, *lawḥ al-mahfūz*), a transcript of *princeps* that bears the archetype "glorious recital" (85:21-22).¹⁷

The Mu'tazilah Problem

Quite akin to the eternity of the Johannine *Logos* in Christian theology, the notion of *kalām-Allah* was also discoursed and debated in both theological and philosophical disciplines of Islamic studies from the angles of the transcendent eternal and the spatial-temporal. Beyond mere theological discourse, a more stringent philosophical debate built around the concept of the Qur'ān's eternity (Arabic, *qadīm*, "eternal," and *ghayr makhlūq*, "uncreated") raged in the Islamic world with the emergence of a philosophical school called the Mu'tazilites (Arabic, *al-Mu'tazilah*) in the eighth century.¹⁸ With such development towards a refined metaphysics, the intellectual drive of the Islamic world entered directly into the phase of John's *Logos* theology at this particular stage, for the dynamics of theological and philosophical debates exclusively centered around the nature of Godhead and its relation to the *Logos*. "The Mu'tazilites saw no harm in adopting rationalism and logic to sharpen the tools of dialectic theology in order to defend Islam against Christianity, Manichaeism, and other alien creeds," notes Iranian political thinker Hamid Enayat.¹⁹ The scope of their utmost focus was restricted to the divine

¹⁶ Theodor Nöldeke et al., *The History of the Qur'an*, ed. and trans. by Wolfgang H. Behn (Boston: Brill, 2013), 209.

¹⁷ (a) The Qur'ān declares the utmost nobility and purity of its revelation and preservation in these two verses: "Nay, it is a glorious Quran, upon a Preserved Tablet." See Dan Cohn-Sherbok (ed.), *Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths* (London, UK: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997), 46; see also Seyyed Hossein Nasr et.al. *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (United States: HarperOne, 2015), 1499.

(b) A similar concept is found in the Talmudic and Midrashic literature, as already discussed in the first chapter, which explicitly speaks of a heavenly *Torah* preserved with God. It is historically plausible that the Qur'ānic concept of Preserved (Heavenly) Tablet was an instilling of Hebraic influence.

¹⁸ Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2005), 8.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 8.

unity and divine justice, which they called the “genuine exponents.”²⁰ Theodicy, being directly proportional to the problem of divine justice, was one of the main obstacles for their rationalization of traditionally proposed metaphysical model, which they viewed as a challenge to enacting divine justice in an ideal form while simultaneously keeping the free will aspect intact.²¹

The Mu'tazilites argued against the eternity of the Qur'ān as perceived in the divine *Logos* construct and declared such a notion as inconsistent with Islam's cornerstone, *tawḥīd*, “unity of God.”²² It is, according to the Mu'tazilites, a form of associating another partner with the eternal *being* (Arabic, *shirk*) whose absolute *oneness* in essence and lordship is an established doctrine postulated in the Qur'ān itself (112:1-5). Accepting the eternity of the Word, i.e., the Qur'ān, like that of the Johannine *Logos*, in their model, is akin to setting up another eternal hypostasis within the essence of God, which raises the number of persons within the Godhead from one to two. Such a doctrinal position is, therefore, unacceptable in either theological or philosophical terms, for the event of the Qur'ān has to be one created and accidental (Arabic *ḥādith wa al-makblūq*) like other creatures, they contend.²³

The rationalist school of the Mu'tazilites earned official patronage under the Abbasid Caliph *Mā'mūn* (d. 833), the so-called *imām al-ḥudā*, who lent his support to the Mu'tazilah doctrine and banned all opposing doctrinal positions, particularly any opposition on the nature of the Qur'ān, within the Islamic Caliphate.²⁴ This event of purging, which led to the inquisition of orthodox scholars, is referred to as *mihnah* in the Islamic history.²⁵ Since the nature of the Qur'ān was a crucial theological issue, which would raise questions on the foundation of Islamic religion, the Caliph sent out letters with official seal to his governors to officially promote the doctrine of the

²⁰ Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1983), 46.

²¹ Sophia Vasalou, *Moral Agents and Their Deserts: The Character of Mu'tazilite Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 32.

²² Enayat, *Modern Islamic*, 8.

²³ Roger Allen, *An Introduction to Arabic Literature* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 39.

²⁴ Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of al-Ma'mūn* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 35.

²⁵ Glassé, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, 231.

Qur'ān's createdness.²⁶ In one of his letters to a governor, the Caliph cited the example of (Johannine) Christ and his reception among Christians as the eternal *Logos* (John 1:1-3) in order to rebuke such a position being held amongst Muslims for the Qur'ān and make a case for the more rational Mu'tazilah doctrine. His concern, like that of the Mu'tazilah metaphysicians, was that such a divine character, if attributed to the Qur'ān, would compromise Islam's original message of God's unity. He concluded that the belief in the uncreatedness of the Qur'ān resembled the belief of the church in the preexistence of Christ, because Christ was, according to the Christology derived from the Gospel of John, the *uncreated* Word of God.²⁷

Such a response of Muslims to the mystical Johannine theology during the formative period of Islamic theological and philosophical thought, which comprises multiple transitional phases, renders the entire doctrinal field subservient to the question of whether John's *Logos* is a historical context for Islam's own "Word of God" conception or it was only employed for developing Islamic metaphysics and apologetics in the face of foreign ideologies' onslaught. Apparently, there is no concrete historical answer to this question, given the lack of documented sources connecting the two doctrines, which may bring this debate to an absolute end.

Mystique of the Qur'ānic Introspection

The Qur'ān's own introspection narrates an unambiguous story of the origin and nature of the book, which informs on the conviction of its recipient, the Prophet Muḥammad. It reflects the highest level of conviction the prophet—qualitatively, any prophet—could ever possibly have attained regarding the content of his revelation as well as its source. The origin of the book, the Scripture of Islam, is thus

²⁶ This debate of Islamic history resembles in principle with the great Christian debate of third and fourth centuries on Christology. The origin, essence, eternity, and relation of the Son to the Father, i.e., the *Logos* to God, were the principal points of the debate. Quite similarly, the Muslim world witnessed an identical debate on the nature of the Qur'ān at both theological and philosophical levels. See Richard C. Martin and Mark R. Woodward, *Defenders of Reason in Islam* (London, England: Oneworld Publication, 1997), 76-79. See also Sohaira Z.M. Siddiqui, *Law and Politics under Abbasids* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 80-81.

²⁷ Glassé, *Concise Encyclopedia*, 231.

none other than God himself, per Islamic tradition.²⁸ In the theological discourse, such a Qur'ānic stance implies the rationale of “Word made book,” for the language is revealed and celestial, in imitation of Judaism that runs parallel to the Christian doctrine of “Word made flesh.”²⁹ Critically speaking, no other equation can draw a more conceptual balance on a standard scale between each side's doctrinal positions than that of the *Logos* establishing that, while the essence remains identical, the difference only lies at the application and interpretation levels.

The Qur'ān, despite the grammatical shifts known as *iltifāt*, characteristically has a monolithic structure in the choice of precepts, concepts, propositions, and narratives in addition to the organization of vocabulary and syntax.³⁰ Provided that such coherence of the discursive structure guarantees the scripture's intellectual appeal, the Qur'ānic focus does not shift in principle from the origin of the book being directly in the Godhead of the Supreme Being who communicated with the Prophet Muḥammad through a messenger and thereby promises and protects the truth of the revelation manifest in the Qur'ān.

Indeed, the Qur'ān is the revelation of the Lord of the worlds.
The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down upon your heart,
[O Muhammad]—that you may be of the warners. (Sūrah
Shu'arā 26:192-194)

The Qur'ān employs the appellation of “book” (Arabic, *kitāb*) for itself in a number of places, which is vital to the religious identity and core message of the religion of Islam. The second chapter, for instance, opens with the declaration that the Qur'ān is a book from

²⁸ Such a certitude regarding the source of the Qur'ān can be witnessed in various parts of the Qur'ān, such as Sūrah Yūsuf 12:2, Sūrah Shu'arā' 26:192-194, Sūrah Luqmān 31:27, Sūrah al-Shūrā, 42:7.

²⁹ David Emmanuel Singh (ed.), *Jesus and the Incarnation: Reflection of Christian from Islam Contexts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 4.

³⁰ Such a character, which might be understood as refined despite a complex interplay of *iltifāt*, emphasizes that the book is a work of one mind and there is no such evolution of text and thought-process that involves multiple individuals and revisions over a long span of time as suggested by John Wansbrough. Notwithstanding various challenges posed to this notion of the Qur'ān's uniformity, the author does not resolve to contend for or against any particular stipulation, simply, because it is beyond the scope of this work. For more on this subject, see Ahmad Von Denffer, *‘Ulum al-Qur'an: An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an (Koran)* (Leicestershire, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 2011), 117-121.

God that does not bear a fallacy nor an ideological threshold marred by doubts.

This is the book in which there is no doubt, a guidance for the reverent. (Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:2)

On another occasion, the Qur'ān eulogizes the Word of God concept in a unique fashion that seems sufficient to determine the pivotal role does the *Logos* play in Islam's religious consciousness.

If all the trees on earth were pens, and if all the sea and seven more added to it [were ink], the Words of God would not be exhausted. Truly God is Mighty, Wise. (Sūrah Luqmān 31:27)

In no less identical manner than the celebration of the unique and impeccable character of Christ in the Christian tradition, the Muslim theological psychology views the composition, manifestation, and character of the Qur'ān as divine.³¹ The *mutakallimun*, “philosophical theologians,”—more formally the metaphysicians—for instance, build their apologetic argument on the bedrock of the Qur'ān's own claim of its divine origin.³² The unique literary style of the Qur'ān is, as always emphasized, an exquisite character of unsurpassable eloquence that has articulated the bold notion of *i'jāz al-Qur'ān*, “the inimitability of the Qur'ān.”³³ This notion is not, by any means, derived through inference or analogy; it is, instead, established and given a proper (doctrinal) expression by the Qur'ān itself in the heart of a rhetorical structure consisting of questions and arguments and a dialectical commentary that follows it within the sacred text.³⁴ The Qur'ān's inimitability, therefore, shapes the nucleus of the Islamic worldview respecting the Word of God and its proposed *ultimate* transcendental nature. In order to determine the nature of the divine Word according to the paradigm introduced in the Qur'ān, therefore, it is absolutely necessary to look into the Islamic concept of revelation.

³¹ Ibid, 114.

³² Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 77-78, 235-236.

³³ Jonathan Owens (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Arabic Linguistics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 200.

³⁴ Sūrah Baqarah 2:23 “And if ye are in doubt as to what We (Allah) have revealed from time to time to Our servant (Muḥammad), then produce a Chapter like thereunto; and call your witnesses or helpers (If there are any) besides Allah, if your (doubts) are true.”

Principles of Revelation and Inspiration

The event of divine communication with man bears a subtle, though not fundamental, difference in Islam from that of the Judeo-Christian understanding of the revelation phenomenon within the metaphysical structure of their shared monotheistic paradigm.³⁵ The difference becomes particularly vivid and concrete when it comes to the Christian view of inspiration, which does not find an exact equivalent in the Islamic theology. The Islamic concept of revelation maintains that the Qur'ān is a divine dictation, which, in principle, grants *de jure* status of the literal Word of God to the Islamic scripture.³⁶ On the contrary, God speaks in the person of Jesus in Christianity, for Jesus is the *Logos*-incarnate in the John's Gospel and his presence among the peoples of the world is, in fact, the *de facto* presence of the divine partaking of the human experience (John 1:14). His words are, therefore, a manifestation of the timeless Word of God and his communication with other human beings is, thus, per high Johannine Christology, a God-man communication (cf. John 12:49). All other claims to the divine origin of a speech or text, such as laid by the Israelite Prophets, are not grounded in a direct revelation with reference to the quintessential status of the Christ's *Rhema* and, therefore, can only be termed as divinely inspired human work.³⁷

Insofar as the scriptural designation of Islam's sacred text as Qur'ān is concerned, a philological, as well as semantic similarity, may broadly be established between the Islamic scripture and the Jewish *Tanakh*. As a matter of fact, the Jewish Bible is often referred to by the Jews amongst their coreligionists as the *miqra*, "what is read"—more properly "a recital."³⁸ The word Qur'ān, too, as noted elsewhere, means "a recital." The case of the New Testament is, however, not identical in this recital category because of its overtly Hellenistic orientation and a contrastingly perceived ecclesial disposition. Such a lack of Semitic character makes the concept of the sacred text, *lingua sacra*, look less significant in the formation and

³⁵ Shabbir Akhtar, *The Quran and the Secular Mind: A Philosophy of Islam* (New York, NY: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2008), 5.

³⁶ Oliver Leaman (ed.), *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia* (New York, NY: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 81.

³⁷ Jack Cottrell, *The Faith Once for All* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 2002), 51-53.

³⁸ Smith, *What is Scripture?*, 8.

reception of the canonical New Testament from a strictly Islamic perspective. The Semitic mind, as it turns out, is more concerned with the (*grandeur* of) form, whereas the Hellenistic mind primarily concerns itself with the content and concentrates on the implication.³⁹ Such a difference contrasts the Qur'ān with the New Testament and the scriptural appeal for both of the sacred books, thus, emerges from mutually unrelated contexts.⁴⁰

While John puts the divine speech in the mouth of Jesus, the Qur'ān recurrently employs a widely understood Arabic term, *waḥī*, throughout its text for speaking to the phenomenon of God-man communication. Lexically, *waḥī* means “revelation,” “dictation,” “recording,” “writing,” “commanding,” “giving of sign,” and “making something known,” etc.⁴¹ Its triliteral root word has occurred in the text of the Qur'ān for no less than 78 times in various forms and meanings.⁴² The Qur'ān does not, on the other hand, employ another important Arabic term *ilhām*, “inspiration,” in the context of canonization, characterization, or illustration of the transmission and communication of God's special revelation—the term *ilhām* contrarily finds more popularity among the mystical branch of Islam, *taṣawwuf*.⁴³ According to the orthodox Islamic understanding, *inspiration* comes after *revelation*, and it bears largely different dynamics for application than the special revelation of the Qur'ān.⁴⁴ The Qur'ānic revelation, as a late medieval exegete of the Qur'ān, Aḥmad ibn 'Aḥibah, argues, ‘is not to be understood as inspiration, but as a Divine Reality.’⁴⁵ Inspiration, even though nonexistent in the Qur'ānic paradigm *per se*,

³⁹ Carl F.H. Henry, “God Who Stands and Stays,” *God, Revelation, and Authority*, Vol. 5 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 296.

⁴⁰ Akhtar, *The Quran and the Secular Mind*, 88-89.

⁴¹ El-Said M. Badawi and Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *Arabic - English Dictionary of Qur'ānic Usage* (Leiden, the Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 2008), 1016.

⁴² a. Ibid, 1016.

b. The thesis will, nevertheless, confine this topic to the meaning of “revelation” in this chapter.

⁴³ The Qur'ān does, in fact, use the term *ilhām* in Sūrah al-Shams 91:8, where, in the verb form of the word, it means “to cause one to gulp down.” The *ṣūfis*, more often than not, understand of *ilhām* as “intuitive knowledge,” which is a source of personal enlightenment. See John Renard, *Historical Dictionary of Sufism* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 2005), 120-121, 266.

⁴⁴ Diana Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy* (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 121.

⁴⁵ Nasr, *Study Quran*, 1290, footnotes.

still occupies importance in Islam when a holistic approach is adopted towards theology and epistemology. The composition of Judeo-Christian scriptures, for instance, falls into the category of *ilham* for the most part per theological response of Muslim scholarship to the question of the revelatory status of ancient scriptures, for, in the construct of Islamic tradition's theological vision, the scriptures prior to the Qur'ān do not bear divine dictation and thereby are wanting in divine reality.⁴⁶ Such a thing as a qualitative difference between the Qur'ān and the other scriptures, which is normally articulated through such expressions as God's *dictation* and God-inspired human writings, is widely held among the four *Sunni* and the *Salafi* schools of Islam in spite of the fact that the Qur'ānic text does neither legitimizes nor elucidates such a notion.⁴⁷ Three books in the biblical canon are, for instance, mentioned in the Qur'ān by name, whereto the Islamic scripture accredits the attributes of guidance, light, and truth. Such attributes are popular among the *ṣūfīs* because they align with ṣūfism's theory of knowledge and square with the mystical stations of *gnosis*. Moreover, some other scriptures, not found in the biblical canon are also referenced in the Qur'ān and are deemed as authoritative.⁴⁸ The biblical books mentioned and cited in the Qur'ānic text are the *tawrāt*, "Torah," *zabur*, "Psalms," and *injil*, "Evangel," whereas among the non-biblical scriptures are the *ṣuḥuf*, "scriptures" or "scrolls," of Abraham and Moses along with obscure allusions to certain other earlier prophetic writings (*ṣuḥufi ulā*).⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Cyril Glassé and Huston Smith, *The New Encyclopedia of Islam* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 86.

⁴⁷ The Qur'ān sounds articulate on its stance when it says: "Truly it is We Who have sent down the Reminder, and surely We are its Preserver" (Sūrah Hījr 15:9). This verse can also imply that the previous Scriptures held equal intrinsic authority as the Word of God and the Qur'ān is the final reminder to the whole history of God's communication with man. Interestingly, the traces of divine dictation can be spotted in the Old Testament, such as the books of Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel etc., where the proposition for the content is built upon the phrase "thus says the Lord" (cf. Deuteronomy 18:17-18, Isaiah 43:1, Jeremiah 9:23, Ezekiel 37:5).

⁴⁸ For instance, the *ṣuḥuf* of Abraham and Moses (Sūrah Ālā 87:18-19).

⁴⁹ A critical reading of the text will demonstrate that the *Injil*, "Gospel," is an obscure reference to the entire New Testament. The Qur'ān does not seem familiar with the Christian canon—four Gospels in particular. It, therefore, speaks of the Christian Scripture as *injil* throughout the text while engaging in dialogue with Christians (e.g., Sūrah Āl 'Imrān 3:48, Sūrah al-Mā'idah 5:47, 68).

Islam's presentation of a religious *weltanschauung*, as a whole, rests on the cornerstone of *nabī*, "revelation" (*surahs* 3:19, 85; 53:3-5). The truth or falsehood of this single concept has the ultimate power to decide whether or not Islam is what it claims to be. Critically speaking, if it is theologically possible to establish—or, at least, build a proposition for—the truth of Islamic revelation in the first place, what remains open to debate and critique is the nature of the Qur'ān in relation to the divine essence and its *tanẓīl*, the process of "sending down." Here it shares the problem with the Gospel of John and lands directly into the familiar territory of *incarnation* as arguably retrieved from John 1:14. In the line of this particular investigation, the historical-critical methodology is a useful tool to discern whether the Muslim community's spatiotemporal experience of Islam and its bedrock, the Book of God, is based upon the threshold of truly biblical hermeneutics within the *Logos* framework and whether or not it has a legitimate connection with the *Logos* of John. It is, for instance, rather more conducive to gratification from an intellectual standpoint to not conclude whether the revelation of the Qur'ān is discernable, in and of itself, from either epistemological or mystical or both of the noted standards.

Chief of the Mystics: The Prophet

Islam appears unapologetically disciplined in the declaration that only a divinely ordained individual, a prophet (Arabic, *nabī*), can be assigned with the responsibility of receiving and transmitting the special revelation of God.⁵⁰ The Qur'ān uses a variety of ornate terminology to illustrate the concept of God's interaction with mankind through select human representatives. Such terminology includes *nabī*, "prophet," *rasūl*, "messenger, envoy," *bashīr*, "harbinger of good news," *nadhīr*, "warner," and *hādī*, "guide," among the most recurrent epithets of the Qur'ān to describe the office of the deity's oracle. But, in fact, it is the historic term *nabī*, "prophet," that constitutes the inner core of the Qur'ānic model as the keystone of Islam's arch of revelation.⁵¹ Once an individual is elevated to the

⁵⁰ 'Omar, *Dictionary*, 549-550.

⁵¹ The Hebrew religion employs this term, which is usually pronounced as *Navi* (נָבִי), for introducing the paradigm of one God's message-communication to the Israelites, *allegedly* his people. The Qur'ān adopts not only the word, but also the concept associated with it to advance its own thesis of God's Word and the intermediary agency of a human messenger.

status of a prophetic-messenger, the revelation is coordinated toward him and with this very act of revelatory communication, the Will of God is transmitted to a particular group of mankind that is represented by an especially chosen recipient of the divine revelation. As a result of the above process, it becomes a binding on the audience to obey the prophet's call, argues Abul A'la Maududi, a modern Muslim scholar, when the truth of a prophet's call to ministry is acknowledged.⁵² The Qur'ān emphasizes that God does not leave a nation stranded without sending prophetic guidance and therefore no excuse can grant exemption from faith and obedience when communities and nations reach this particular stage of realization under the preaching of a prophet (10:47). Moreover, it is also important to note that Islam's scriptural disposition allegedly accommodates the whole of mankind as one nation in its scope, which lays the groundwork for introducing the concept of a universal revelation while framing revelation model in line with the Hebrew paradigm of the higher prophetic discourse (2:213).⁵³ The excerpt cited below from an apologetic work, *The Religion of Islam*, reflects how Muslim community posits its response to the Qur'ānic revelation.

Revelation in its lower forms, in the forms of inspiration or that of dreams or visions, is the universal experience of humanity, but even in its highest form, it is not, according to the Holy Qur'ān, limited to one particular man or to one particular nation. It is, on the other hand, most emphatically stated that just as God has given His physical sustenance to each and every nation, even so He has endowed it with His spiritual sustenance for its spiritual and moral advancement.⁵⁴

Another important aspect of the *Logos* concept in Islam is its qualitative aspect: knowledge. The Qur'ān puts unusual emphasis upon *'ilm*, "knowledge," both discursive and spiritual, in order for the

⁵² Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, trans. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Idara Tarjuman-ul-Qur'ān, 2001), 22.

⁵³ Gospel of John also speaks to mankind in general even though the frame of reference is the Johannine community itself. Verses 1:1-7, 1:14, and 3:16 imply a universal application of the Gospel's concepts. A more critical study of the history of concepts as discussed in John can, however, possibly yield different results, as hinted at above in the section on John, that John's reference to the *κόσμος*, "world," in all likelihood, is a reference to the Roman Empire itself.

⁵⁴ Maulana Muhammad Ali, *The Religion of Islam* (Dublin, Ohio: The Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc., 2009), 113.

human being to “know” his own “self.”⁵⁵ Such knowledge of the “self” leads to the knowledge of God.⁵⁶ ‘*Alim*, “the all-knowing,” is a special attribute (Arabic, *ʿilm*) of God in the Qur’ān, and even so, he does, in fact, bestow wisdom from his knowledge to his ordained individuals, the prophets, directly.⁵⁷ Matthew 11:27, Luke 10:22, and John 10:15, too, emphasize the aspect of knowing; but those assertions of the Gospels do not fall in line with the podium the Qur’ān builds up for the essence and role of knowledge. The Qur’ānic concept of epistemology is, for instance, communicated in one of the verses of the Qur’ān as below, which illustrates the meaning, role, and power of knowledge.

It is Allah who has created seven heavens and of the earth, the like of them. [His] command descends among them so you may know that Allah is over all things competent and that Allah has encompassed all things in knowledge. (Sūrah Ṭalāq 65:12)⁵⁸

Interestingly, the virtue of *ḥikmah*, “wisdom,” is associated with knowledge in the religious psychology of Islam, which, historically, inherits this particular understanding and character of wisdom from the Arabian lore.⁵⁹ The Qur’ān also recognizes the role of wisdom as an associative attribute of knowledge, which puts it on equal footing with the Jewish recognition of knowledge and wisdom with the *Logos* (Proverbs 8). This special aspect is, however, less frequented in the

⁵⁵ Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2004), 113.

⁵⁶ At this point, the Qur’ān may superficially appear to reflect similarities with Gnosticism due to its emphasis upon knowledge. However, what makes the epistemology of the Qur’ān different from Gnosticism is its overall soteriological makeup in which the argument of knowledge is channeled. It does not require knowledge for *salvation* in the first place, because the primary condition for *salvation* is faith through belief in the unity of God and the prophecy of Muhammad. Knowledge complements the Islamic doctrine of *Soteriology* and plays itself out in earning conviction of faith, as stipulated on a number of places in the Qur’ān.

⁵⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 297.

⁵⁸ See also Sūrah al-Rūm 30:22, “And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed in that are signs for those of knowledge.” (Translation: *Sabih International*) - Other Qur’ānic references to knowledge are al-Baqarah 2:31, 33, 151, 219; al-Tawbah 9:122; Yūsuf 12:55; al-Ra’d 13:16; al-Qaṣaṣ 28:78 etc.

⁵⁹ C.E. Bosworth et al., *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, Vol. 5 (Leiden, the Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1983), 811.

Gospel of John and does not appear among its central themes. Such an aversion from an emphasis upon knowledge in John's Gospel is likely due to the rise of Gnosticism in that period, which the writer of John attempts to counteract through a more centralized narrative emphasizing the redemptive power of the divine Christ's sacrifice.

The Messiah Motif

The narrator of the Qur'ān appears to be aware of the significance of the "Messiah" doctrine in the religious history of what was the ancient Near East. The Qur'ān bears the Messiah motif in the likeness of the Christian New Testament and identifies Jesus as the promised Messiah in agreement with Christianity. Such an undertaking, thus, leads the Qur'ān to assign Jesus the highest standard of infallibility—being the only person in the Islamic hierarchy of piety who is not subject to impurity (19:19). From a sociological perspective, nevertheless, it is not beyond historical plausibility to conclude that the religious center of Mecca was frequently visited by Christian missionaries who preached the New Testament doctrines to the local audience and littered the air of Arabia's pilgrimage center with Christian ideas and legends such as the virginal birth, sonship, trinity, crucifixion, salvation, ascension, and the miracles, etc. The presence of any New Testament documents into Arabic translation in the seventh century has, however, yet to be confirmed from historical sources, which, at least, brings about the scholarly agreement that the earliest Arabic translation of the Christian scriptures was done after the rise of Islam—in the late 8th century.⁶⁰ The historical probability links this phenomenon with the oral tradition built around the Johannine principle of *Logos*, which, being blended in with the Arabian lore and legend, did possibly play its part in the making of the Qur'ānic Jesus. The response of the Muslim scholarship to such a notion is, however, grounded in skepticism with respect to the question whether the Qur'ānic Jesus, also born of a virgin, is an imitation or continuation of the Johannine *Logos* doctrine that connects Christhood with Godhood.⁶¹

On a couple of important, but confounding, instances in the Qur'ān where it references Christology, Jesus is spoken of as

⁶⁰ Lejla Damiri (ed.), *Muslim Exegesis of the Bible in Medieval Cairo* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E.J. Brill Publishing, 2013), 63.

⁶¹ Nasr, *Study Quran*, 144, footnote 3:45.

kālimatuhū, “word from him,” i.e., word from God. The first such reference broadly meets the Johannine standard of an incarnate *Logos* and seems to corroborate John’s *Prologue* in spite of its overtly Synoptic makeup.⁶²

When the angel said, “O Mary, truly God gives thee glad tidings of a Word from Him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, high honored in this world and the Hereafter, and one of those brought nigh.” (Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān 3:45)

The presentation of the angelic tidings of Jesus’ birth in the above listed Qur’ānic verse closely resembles—even possibly imitates—Luke’s birth account of Jesus (1:26-37). It is also important to note that Luke 1:37 mentions “word from God” that never fails. It is not implausible, given the fluidity of religious thought in Abrahamic tradition’s stream of consciousness, that the Qur’ān styles its account after Synoptic pattern to harmonize between the *Logos* of John and a generic understanding of “word” as a divine command.⁶³ The second Qur’ānic reference, however, appears to be a thorough rebuttal of the Johannine *Logos* doctrine, which contains an explanatory note on the loosely described event of angelic good news in the *Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān* 3:45.

O People of the Book! Do not exaggerate in your religion, nor utter anything concerning God save the truth. Verily the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of God, and His Word, which He committed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers, and say not “Three.” Refrain! It is better for you. God is only one God; Glory be to Him that He should have a son. Unto Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth, and God suffices as a Guardian. (Sūrah Nisā 4:171)

Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (839-923), one of the most renowned classical commentators of the Qur’ān, is of the opinion that “his word” or “a word from him” is nothing except an announcement of

⁶² The Qur’ān grants a tacit acceptance to the theory of “incarnation” here, but at the same time it does not acknowledge it as a theological necessity that a word from God to a virgin implies the birth of God and that the incarnation of God’s own self into human form must be mandated through this principle. For the word “Synoptic,” see the following footnote.

⁶³ Besides John’s Gospel, the other three Gospels of the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are branded together as the “Synoptic Gospels” due to their shared literary, historical, and structural features.

the prophetic embassy of Jesus, the *risālah*.⁶⁴ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (c.1149-1209), a medieval philosophical exegete of the Qur'ān, concludes citing an early source that the mention of *kalimah*, "word," in the case of *sūrah* 4:171 is a reference to "revelation" or "divine writ."⁶⁵ The Qur'ānic conception of the Word, therefore, does not necessarily remain identifiable with the Johannine Word-incarnate in the person of Jesus, as the Qur'ānic exegetes also point out with reference to the above two Qur'ānic accounts, which may be confirmed from its other uses in the text of the Qur'ān.⁶⁶

The Analogy of *Kun*

The word original to the divine intent of creation in the Qur'ān is the Arabic imperative *kun*, "be." It is this particular term that is primarily identified with the *Logos* in the Qur'ān.⁶⁷ The command of *kun* occurs eight times in the Qur'ān and it appears always with a predicate *fayakun*, "it is (become)." The Qur'ānic narrator is convinced that once the *creative* divine command, "be," is uttered, the fulfillment of the decree takes place instantly as an effect of the power of the Word.⁶⁸ The Qur'ān introduces a simplistic version of theosophy in this regard and describes it as a process involving God's Will, Word, and the decreed creation that ensues. The following will offer a glimpse into the Qur'ānic sequence of the said process:

(God's) Intention—Be—It is

When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, "Be," and "it is."

(Sūrah Baqarah 2:117)

The Gospel of John's position is principally different in relation to the Islamic presentation of the historical concept of *Logos*. John would certainly not entertain the Islamic doctrine for not accommodating incarnation, which the Fourth Gospel views as crucial to the theology of *Logos* (1:14, 3:16). If the Johannine

⁶⁴ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān* (London, UK: The Book Foundation, 2003), 156, footnote 4:171.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 89, footnote 3:39.

⁶⁶ It is interesting to note that John the Baptist (Arabic, *Yahya*) is also entitled to the same honorific title *kalimatullah*, "a Word from God," in Sūrah Āl 'Imrān 3:38-39. It indicates that the Qur'ān does not follow the Johannine concept and structure in building its own *Logos* thesis.

⁶⁷ Nasr, *Study Quran*, 55, 144.

⁶⁸ It reflects the Will of God for something, which is given a symbolic expression in the human language with 'spoken word.' This spoken word brings about the fulfillment of God's Will.

presentation is independently viewed along the lines of the above delineated Qur'ānic sequence, it will look like as follows:

Godhead—Logos—Incarnate Son/Messiah

In the light of the Qur'ān's position, therefore, if we read the concept of the *Logos* back into the Gospel using the Qur'ānic terminology and rephrase the first three verses of the Prologue, it will appear as the following:

In the beginning was (said) the *Kalimah*, and the *Kalimah* was with God, and the *Kalimah* was the Divine *Kun* (Be).

Islam, on the contrary, being inherently obsessed with the problem of idolatry and polytheism, does not acknowledge the Johannine recognition of the *Logos* in the role of a deity as premised in the third verse of John's Prologue.⁶⁹ It views the sonship concept as a product of paganism at its worst and a pantheistic ideology at its best.⁷⁰

It is also noteworthy that a category of scholars, both from the Muslim and Christian echelons, sees a vividly historical connection between the *Logos* of John's Prologue and the *kalimah* of the Qur'ān.⁷¹ Such a position of historical interaction is, however, not well-grounded in the history of the evolution of Islamic thought, which renders this hypothesis untenable. The majority of the classical exegetes of the Qur'ān and the modern revivalist scholarship insist that the term in question does not, in any context of the expression, namely Word of God, yield a watermark of Christology.⁷² It is, instead, a generic rendering of the divine principle of creation recognized in the Qur'ān and identified with the Arabic word *kun*, as noted above. The reference to Jesus as *kalimah*, therefore, needs to be viewed from a strictly monotheistic perspective in order to reach a balanced conclusion compatible with Islam's *unitarian* doctrine that, namely, all creation is a contingent word from the only eternal and necessary being, the *one* God.⁷³

From a historical-critical standpoint, it is evident from the Qur'ānic references to the person of Jesus that the Arabian Prophet

⁶⁹ Leaman, *The Qur'ān*, 144-145.

⁷⁰ Singh, *Jesus and Incarnation*, 155-156.

⁷¹ Frederic Ntedika Mvumbi, *The Identity of Christ in Islam* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 2008), 94-95.

⁷² Nasr, *Study Quran*, 54-55.

⁷³ Geoffrey Parrinder, *Jesus in the Qur'ān* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 45-46.

had, at least, some cursory exposure to the Christology of John. The event of the Christian embassy from Najrān in CE 630 is one such event that brought Islam's Prophet in direct contact with Christianity and the two religions officially interacted on the timeline of history. The event was a diplomatic success, but a religious debacle on both ends. It landed both parties into a historical debate, referenced in the Qur'ān in *Al 'Imrān* 3:61, on the nature of the *Logos*, Christ's divinity, humanity and servanthood, and Islam's assertion of the role of complementing Christianity.⁷⁴

As a general principle, the Qur'ān promptly responds to the Christian doctrines then in practice in Arabia according to the nature of the occasion and attempts to resolve major theological issues between the two faiths. It especially deals with the discipline of Christology and interacts with the followers of Christianity in a dialogue within the framework of its monotheistic paradigm (*sūrah*s 3:64, 5:73, 17:111). It is important to note that the Islamic scripture addresses Christians with a geographical—and in all likelihood a historical term—as *naṣārā*, “the Nazarenes,” rather than as *masīḥīyūn*, “Christians.” While commenting on the Christian doctrine of virginal birth, the Qur'ān declares that the creation of Jesus is one of the “signs” of God, whereof there are numerous in the universe, and thus it does not earn him the attributed deity-like distinctiveness and a divine character. The Qur'ānic response to the question of Jesus' deity is instant but calculated, because, as Muslim theologians find it justified, it responds to the question by offering the scenario of Adam's special creation as a backdrop to the event of Jesus' elevated birth.

Truly the likeness of Jesus in the sight of God is that of Adam;
He created him from dust, then said to him, “Be!” and he was.
(*Sūrah 'Al 'Imrān* 3:59)

The most significant role the above Qur'ānic argument plays in the Islamic apologetics, especially in Muslims' interaction with Christians, is that it undergirds Islam's monotheistic ideology and salvific theology, which, in turn, configures Islam's counter-narrative to the Christological extrapolation of Jesus' miraculous birth. It helps to shape the general theological behavior of Islam towards Christianity, which is drawn upon by both Islamic apologists and polemicists in the attempt to build a hefty argument against

⁷⁴ Nasr, *Study Quran*, 268, footnote 4:171.

conventional Christology. Such a movement is aimed at making a case for Jesus' full humanity and prophetic ministry *sans* Johannine ingredients of incarnation and deity, as it seems to be the plot in the holy book of Islam for the story of Jesus, *a* word from God, to take place.⁷⁵

Concluding Remarks

The Qur'ānic thesis of *kalām-Allah* maintains a conceptual indifference to the mystically tuned *communion* theology of the Gospel of John because it concentrates on the relational and communicational aspects of the connection between the Creator and the creation. John's mystical appropriation of the philosophical *Logos* of Philo, the first-century Jewish philosopher, is an added spiritual dimension to the biblical tradition that is unique to Christianity alone, historically speaking. John's view of the incarnation of *Logos*, in fact, grants a new theological vista to the mystical slash salvific thought-process embedded in the Christian covenant that derives the vision of its soteriological goal being the communion of the divine and the human in the incarnation of the eternal *Logos* that was God—one with the Godhead (John 1:3). The Qur'ān's radical monotheism, on the contrary, bears an uncompromising nature, which functions much like a magnifying glass in terms of reinterpreting such religious ideas and positions of the biblical tradition as held central to the Judeo-Christian religion before the emergence of Islam. John's mystical doctrine of the *Logos*-incarnate may have had a strong appeal at a popular level in those perceptual trends of both religious spirituality and mysticism, but Islam distances itself from the metaphysical ideas that do not form a coherent rosary of meaningful concepts—hence doctrines—under the umbrella of strict Qur'ānic *tawhīd*.

It may be claimed of this article that it is a unique piece of writing in terms of the subject matter, because there is not much quality literature available on the comparative study of *Logos* in the Christian and Islamic traditions. Such scarcity of scholastic writings on this subject is a compelling reason to leave this topic open, at least to a degree, for the readers to reach their own conclusion. But what may, nonetheless, be concluded to the extent of scholastic certainty at length is that a strongly advocated position in this area of research will help to devise a threshold for projecting ideas that may lead to the

⁷⁵ Akhtar, *The Quran and the Secular Mind*, 32.

future studies on the *Logos/kalimah* question and contribute to the formation of a school of thought.

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