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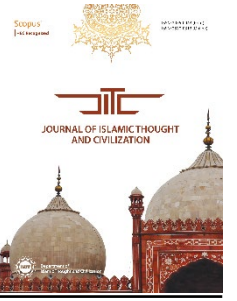

Title: **Eternity of the Word of God: Exploring a Common Theme in Judeo-Christian and Muslim Theological Discourse**

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Eternity of the Word of God: Exploring a Common Theme in Judeo-Christian and Muslim Theological Discourse

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Abstract

Emerging religions typically lack an established theology initially. Their theology develops gradually; and Islam exhibits traces of influence from earlier belief systems. Therefore, some novel concepts in Muslim theology emerged through the contributions of converts from other faiths. The second and third centuries AH were the formative periods, after which thought degenerated into a split of hairs. Religion was in a ferment, which brought in many strange ideas. Nonetheless, some Muslim scholars disagree that even Judaism and Christianity had some influence on certain Muslim worldviews. Focusing on the doctrine of eternity of the Qur'ān, this paper finds out the extent to which not only Judaism and Christianity but even Greek philosophical principles had some influence on certain Muslim beliefs. The methodology was historical reasoning and analysis of facts in Greek, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The aim is to go beyond the semantic surface into the inner reaches of these traditions to see exactly where the notion of scriptural eternity is anchored. The paper draws attention to the fact that examining the theories about the Qur'ān in the light of inter-textual reasoning with the bible and pre-biblical literature produces interesting data for the Islamic theology of inclusivism although cross-cultural nexus with certain theories about the Qur'ān and Islam in general is rejected by Muslim researchers. The paper revisits the debate and traces the origin of the doctrine arguing that it has possible connections with Greek and Judeo-Christian beliefs. It also appraises some of the arguments of the principal theological groups that defended or refuted the doctrine, respectively.

***Keywords*:** Christianity, eternity, Greek, Islam, Qur'ān, theological perspective

Introduction

One important aspect of the Islamic interpretation of the Qur'ān is exclusivism. However, the study of the nature, theory, composition, and representation of the Qur'ān in the light of inter-textual reasoning with other scriptures like the bible as well as the ancient non-biblical literature produces fascinating and insightful data about its application and understanding in the Islamic theology of inclusivism. Unfortunately, as a known fact, the cross-cultural nexus between certain theories about Islam, particularly, the Qur'ān, is rejected outright and overlooked by researchers on Qur'ānic hermeneutics. Such an "oversight is lamentable, not only because of the simple neglect of available

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information, but also the mode of presentation presents the scholar with supplementary insight not available through [traditionally] written text alone."[1]

One such reality is the doctrine of eternity of the Qur'ān. We need to note, however, that a confrontation with the most important, the most profound, and ultimate is only possible when one decides to challenge the existing tradition and cultural paradigms.[2] Dogmatic doctrines around the Qur'ān frustrate academic attempts to investigate the interweaving of unoriginal theories about it. Several scholars, both Muslim and non-Muslim, however, argue that there is more to this nexus than the level of scriptural defense staged by traditional scholars in distinguishing the two mediums, the Qur'ān and the Hadith.[3] The attempts by traditional *Sunnī* scholars to uphold the divinity of the Qur'ān and its relationship to Prophet Muhammad has, however, been facilitated and shaped by the evolution of two doctrines, namely: the doctrine of eternity of the Qur'ān and its inimitability (*I'jāz*).[4] While the theory of inimitability could be deemed to have been originally developed by Muslims, a similar thing cannot be said of the theory of eternity without any measure of reservation. Interestingly, scriptural eternity is a common belief among followers of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

This paper aims to revisit and examine the doctrine of eternity of the Qur'ān with a special focus on how cross-cultural or cross-religious orientations and influences nourished and shaped this perception and how it has affected the nature of critical scholarship on the Qur'ān.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

The word eternity used in this paper must be clearly understood. People often use expressions like: "back in eternity", "eternal future", and "from eternity." For example, people make statements like "this has been with man from eternity." The above constructions give wrong and misleading impressions because they do not establish the meaning of "eternity." The word does not refer to the sense in which one often hears people use it, such as the above. Eternity does not refer to the distant past before creation or the distant future when the universe will be transformed.[5] Time is not a determinant of eternity as eternity is not subject to time. Nonetheless, that is not to say that eternity is timeless. Eternity could be conceived simply as consisting "of multi-layered time."[6]

[1]Robin Margaret Jensen, "The offering of Isaac in Jewish and Christian tradition: Image and Text," *Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches* 2, no. 1 (1994): 85.

[2]Mirosław Patalon, "Introduction," In M. Patalon (ed.), *The philosophical Basis of Inter-Religious Dialogue: The Process Perspective* (1-4) (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2009), 1.

[3]C. H. M. Versteegh, *Greek Elements in Arabic Linguistic Thinking* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), 46; Patricia Crone, M.A. Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: C.U.P, 1980), 19; Irfan Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 184; Farid Esack, *The Qur'ān: A Short Introduction* (London: Oneworld, 2002), 101; Justin Paul Heinz, *The Origins of Muslim Prayer: Sixth and Seventh Century Religious Influences on the Salat Ritual* (Columbia, Mo: University of Missouri, 2008), 115, 123, 125, 133, 141-142; Ibn Warraq, ed., *Christmas in the Koran: Luxenberg, Syriac, and the Near Eastern and Judeo-Christian Background of Islam* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2014), 149.

[4]Esack, *The Qur'ān*, 101.

[5]Peter Ditzel, "A Rebuttal to George M. Ella's 'John Gill and Justification from Eternity'," (2009), Accessed from: A Rebuttal to George M. Ella's "John Gill and Justification from Eternity" (wordofhisgrace.org), 20/12/2023.

[6]Ted Peters, "Time in Eternity and Eternity in Time," In Jennifer Baldwin, ed., *Embracing the Ivory Tower and Stained Glass Windows: A Festschrift in Honor of Archbishop Antje Jackelen* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2015), 3.

According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, eternity refers to time without beginning or end or an infinite time.[7] It is often understood to mean an unlimited state of existence otherwise known as "immortality." Therefore, it is usually compared with other terms like "infinity", "perpetuity," "everlastingness," "sempiternity," and "immortality." All the above words narrow down to one logical conclusion, which is: the quality or state of having no end. However, the meaning of eternity transcends beyond just not having an end as the meanings of the above words boil down to. It is also different from "perpetuity" or "immortality." All of these terms relate to everlastingness. While immortality and perpetuity, for example, talk of no end, they always had a beginning. Contrary to the above, eternity has neither a beginning nor an end.[8] It is a continuum of experience in which events permeate from the future through the present and to the past with no limit. It is the totality of time, conceived as having no beginning and no end. Thomas Aquinas considers eternity as "nothing else but God Himself."[9] On the other hand, Horvath states: "Eternity is God and God is eternity."[10] Thus, eternity is conceived here as a type of existence that features a permanent "duration."[11] The duration of time is measured. However, the duration of eternity is either immeasurable or is not even subject to duration in the first place to warrant measuring.

This raises the question regarding the meaning of "time" which contrasts with "eternity" in this paper. Time is part of creation. As part of creation, therefore, it was created by eternity but not the other way round; that time created eternity. Eternity can be said to transcend beyond time.[12] There is, however, a philosophical dispute about whether or not the word "eternity" should be contrasted with time (that is, not to be conceived as an unlimited quantity of time) but rather as a sort of timelessness.[13] The Neo-Platonists advocated the interpretation of God's existence in non-temporal terms, while Boethius, for example, distinguished between sempiternity (infinite temporal existence or everlastingness) and eternity.[14] For him, "'… our 'now', as though it is running, creates time and sempiternity, whereas the divine 'now' stays without movement and creates eternity.'"[15] He, therefore, opined that eternity is beyond description but its apprehension lies in mystical contemplation. On the other hand, Aristotle also argued that matter, motion, and time existed in

[7]"Eternity," *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language,* 4th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 168.

[8]J.M. Quinn, "Eternity," in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Thomas Gale, 2003), 381; Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, eds., *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2nd Ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 594.

[9]Thomas Aquinas, (St.) *Summa Theologica*, vol. 1, trans. by: Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers Inc., 1947), Pt. I, q. 10, a. 2 & a.3.

[10]Tibor Horvath, *Eternity and Eternal Life: Speculative Theology and Science in Discourse* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1993), 117.

[11]Eleonore Stump, and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity", *Journal of Philosophy* 78, no. 8 (1981): 431.

[12]Peters, "Time in Eternity," 3.

[13]Adrian E.V. Langdon, "God the Eternal Contemporary: Trinity, Eternity, and Time in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics" (PhD Thesis, McGill University, 2008), ii, 13; Li Qu, "Newton, Einstein and Barth on time and Eternity," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 67, no. 4 (2014): 436-449.

[14]Boethius, *De trinitate*, in *Boethius: The Theological Tractates*, ed. H. F. Stewart, E. K. Rand (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926), 4.71-74, 22 cited by Brian Leftow, "The Eternal Present," in *God and Time: Essays on the Divine Nature,* ed. Gregory E. Ganssle and David M. Woodruff (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 24.

[15]Boethius, *De trinitate*, 4.71-74, 22: as cited by Leftow, "The Eternal," 24.

eternity.[16] Religious-minded people have argued that God's existence is eternal.[17] However, the understanding one gathers here depends on the meaning one assigns to the word "eternity." On the one hand, God may exist in eternity, a beginningless or endless existence in which speculations of the past, the present, and the future would not apply. It is in this sense that the word eternity is used in this paper. Some Muslims have held that the Qur'ān has existed with God in eternity. This is the view referred to in this paper as the 'doctrine of eternity of the Qur'ān.' The question, however, is: can anything, apart from God, be said to exist with no respect to or independent of time and space? Can a piece of information be said to exist without or independent of God's Power of creation? If so, what would be the nature, content, and purpose of such an information? How did this idea come to exist among Muslims?

3. Origin of the Doctrine of Eternity

The concept of eternity of the Qur'ān started life as a theological discourse that revolved around the question of the nature of the Qur'ān as *Kalām-al-Lāh* (the Speech of Allah) in respect of whether it was a divine attribute or not.[18] This was, however, very obscure and non-assertive. It must have been the speculation of the not-so-learned.[19] As time went on, however, a more expressive dimension of this speculation: as to whether it was created (*makhlūq*) or it was not (*laysa bi makhlūq*) began to gain a greater significance. It must have now caught the attention of the learned. During the first half of the ninth century, the non-assertive *laysa bi makhlūq* (not created) came to be replaced by the definitive *ghayr makhlūq* (uncreated). [20] It then came to be accepted unquestionably and unconditionally in *Sunnī* Islam without any difficulty. However, another challenging speculation seeking to find an answer to the question of whether it coexisted with God in eternity arose. This clearly indicates that this inquiry appeared among Muslims only in the post-prophetic period, i.e. after 632 C.E.[21]

In the words of Farid Esack, "No controversy has influenced Islamic scholarship in general and Qur'ānic scholarship in particular as decisively as this one."[22] In spite of this, one needs to acknowledge that this inquiry started on an indifferent premise. In other words, no clear doctrinal difficulty called for it. Contrary to the doctrine of predestination (*taqdīr*), for example, which debate somehow became necessary because the Qur'ānic verses that referred to it swayed between divine decree[23] and free will,[24] while various *ahādīth* even complicated that further, the doctrine of the Qur'ān's eternity has no definite precedence in either the Qur'ān or the traditions of the Prophet, even

[16]W. Von Leyden, "Time, Number, and Eternity in Plato and Aristotle," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 14, no. 54 (1964): 35, see also Yasuhira Yahei Kanayama, "Approach to Time in Ancient Greek Philosophy," *JSL* 13 (2017): 17.

[17]*Genesis* 21:33; *Exodus* 3:14; *Romans* 11:33, 1; *Timothy* 1:17; *Qur'ān*: al-Ikhas 112: 3, etc.

[18]Esack, *The Qur'ān,* 105.

[19]This polemic is said to have been issued by John of Damascus (Yuhanna al-Dimashqi), a Christian who was employed as a chief administrator during the Umayyad regime (see: Muhammad Abu Zahrah, *Tarikh al-Madhahib al-Islamiyyah* (Cairo: Daral-Fikr al-Arabi, n.d.), 148. This was his response to the criticism issued by the Qur'ān to Christians (for more details, see: Safrudin Ediwibowo, "The Debates of the Createdness of the Qur'ān and its Impact to the Methodology of Qur'ānic Interpretation," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 19, no. 2 (2015): 356-357.

[20]Esack, *The Qur'ān,* 105

[21]See Ediwibowo, "The Debates: 356; Sabine Schmidtke, "Mutazila," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurān,* vol. 3*,* Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Boston: Brill, 2001), 466-467.

[22]Esack, *The Qur'ān,* 105.

[23]Al-Qurān al-Maida 5:17-18; al-An'ām 6:101; ar- Ra'ad 13:12; al-Furqan 25:2; az-Zumar 39:62, etc.

[24]Al-Kahaf 18:29; al-Muzammil 73:19; al-Mudassir 74:37, ad-Dahar 76: 29; al-Anfal 8:53, etc.

though, after this, one would find proponents reasoning out their arguments with Qur'ānic passages. It is, therefore, likely to have been influenced by religious traditions and cultural orientations other than the cultural surrounding of the Qur'ān itself.

Looking at the period within which this question arose, it is pertinent to look beyond the religious and cultural surroundings of the Qur'ān to find exactly where the notion of scriptural eternity must be anchored. One must first bear in mind that the doctrine of eternity of the Qur'ān developed during the period of intense theological speculation that accompanied a "tangle of dogmatic commentaries,"[25] which sought to disconnect Qur'ānic texts from the "spirit that pervades its true essence."[26] Rationalism and scriptural reasoning based on proof were acquiring greater significance than *taqlīd* (unconditional adherence to the principles of faith). Many principles of Islam that crawled on the goodwill of *taqlīd*, including the divine origin of the Qur'ān, were under serious threat fuelled by the Mu'tazilite's insistence on proof rather than mere elucidation,[27] which had been the order of the day. One then realizes at this point that it would be increasingly necessary for the defenders of the faith to preserve the age-old belief in the divine origin of the Qur'ān against the polemics.

Polemics on the Qur'ān were, hence, caused by cross-cultural contact with especially the Greeks and, subsequently, the application of the Aristotelian, Platonic, and Neo-platonic culture of rational reasoning as well as people of other faiths. It became inescapable that the development of Islamic thought would be influenced by other cultural orientations.[28] With the expansion of Islam (which was, itself, a product of its earlier social as well as cultural background), interaction with non-Muslim thoughts and beliefs accelerated the formulation of certain Muslim thoughts and these left their indelible marks on existing ideas. For example, in an encounter with Christological realities and their theological underpinnings, Muslims could no longer limit themselves to the Qur'ān,[29] and this paved the way for engaging not only Judeo-Christian theological frameworks but even to transcend beyond them to employ "Greek conceptions and intellectual tools."[30] This view is more succinctly expressed by E. N. Hahn in the following words: "It is, of course, no mere coincidence that Muslim concerns regarding God, His eternal Word, and the Qur'ān were analogous to Christian concerns about God…there was an extensive interchange of theological and philosophical thought among Muslims and Christians."[31]

Even though this theory of foreign influence is a matter of unconcluded discussion among Muslim scholars, the subsequent argument in this paper will call to question the ideas of the upholders of the theory of the Qur'ān's eternity by proposing that the atmosphere or background of that doctrine is foreign to the Muslim theological framework and worldview. Rather, Greek, Jewish, and Christian upbringing and sacred experiences may have ultimately played a role in the evolution of this doctrine in the Islamic world.

4. Eternity of the Word of God: A Nexus with Pre-Qur'ānic Theories

[25]Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, trans. Andreas Ruth Hamori (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 67.

[26]Goldziher, *Introduction*, 67.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Esack, *The Qur'ān,* 106.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid., 105.

[31]Ernest N. Hahn. "God, His Word, and the Qur'ān in Islam: Clues for a Christian Interpretation of the Gospel for Muslims," Modified Version of a Paper presented at the Reformed Bible College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, 1982, acknowledging Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 32 and 33.

As it has already been stated, the belief in the doctrine of eternity of the Qur'ān was established in the post-prophetic period, i.e. more than two centuries after the death of Prophet Muhammad.[32] In other words, the Prophet was not heard to have said that the Qur'ān was eternal or it was not; neither does the Qur'ān itself do so. It rather started when intense theological conjecturing, theories, and guesswork dominated the Muslim discussion.[33] That means that the formulation of the whole doctrine drew no significant divine merit. It also means that its premise is that of *mubah* (merely permissible or indifferent surroundings). In order words, the scholarly attempt to question its originality in Islam does not constitute disbelief (*kufr*) or make one an apostate (*Murdad*); neither does arguing against its originality or generally questioning a theory about the Qur'ān overrule its sanctity as an unadulterated Word of Allah and question or cast doubt about its divine origin. The divine origin of the Qur'ān or its sanctity must not be misjudged or misconstrued with its academic prerogative.

That Islam has gone through some form of Judeo-Christian as well as other cultural influences is undeniable and this is the background against which the formulation of the doctrine should be judged. In the Qur'ān, Allah says: "Verily, when He intends a thing, His command is 'Be', and it is![34] For to anything We have willed, We but say the word, 'Be,' and it is.[35] To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth: when He decrees a matter, He says to it [*yaqūlu lahu*]: "Be" [*kun*], and it is [*fayakūn*]."[36]

These constitute the source of the greatest theological conjecturing that has ever plagued Islamic scholarship.[37] These verses revolve around at least one theoretical or hypothetical conclusion: things come into existence through the "command", "word", or "order" of God. In the view of Yusuf Ali, "God's 'word' is in itself the deed."[38] In other words, it is that which created everything by the Will of Allah. Better still, existence or actuality lies in wait for Allah's plan, intention, and command. When He Wills a thing, that Will manifests as His word and its command brings it forth.[39] According to Ibn Kathir, this command is issued only once and a thing becomes reality.[40] Also, in the *Musnad* of Ibn Hambal, a Hadith *qudsi*, quotes Prophet Muhammad as saying thus: "Allah... says: ... My giving is a word and My punishment is a word. When I want a thing to happen, I merely say to it 'Be!' and it is."[41]

Now, let us do some linguistic analysis here to make the above facts relevant to our purpose. The metaphor of the "word," "command," or "speech" is representative of God's Power to create. The Qur'ān is referred to as *Kalām-al-Lāh* (the Speech or Words of Allah). The word *kalām*, as a speech, is used as the masculine plural form of "word" (i.e. collection of words) and is used interchangeably with the feminine, *kalimāt* (singular: *kalimah*). Concerning Allah, *kalām* is used as a collective noun form of a plurality of words so that *Kalām-al-Lāh* translates as "the Word of Allah." Thus, here, *kalām* (word), as a collective noun, represents an entire speech. In its technical sense, *kalām* refers to speculative, dogmatic, or scholastic theology and this makes it applicable to dialectic

[32]Schmidtke, "Mutazila," 466-467; Esack, *The Qur'ān* 107; Ediwibowo, "The Debates, 356;
[33]Esack, *The Qur'ān,* 107.
[34]Yasin 36:82.
[35]An-Nahl 16:40.
[36]al-Baqarah 2:117.
[37]Esack, *The Qur'ān,*106.
[38]A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān, Text, Translation and Commentary* (Brentwood, Maryland: Amana, 1983), 666
[39]Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān*, 666.
[40]Safiur-Rahman al-Mubarakpuri, *Tafsir ibn Kathīr (trans. & abridged),* vol. 5. (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2000), 466. See also: *Tafsir ibn Kathir (abridged),* vol. 8, 327.
[41]Al-Mubarakpuri, *Tafsir ibn Kathir*, vol. 8, 227-228.

as well.[42] It can be realized from the foregoing discussion that the theory or phenomenon of the "Speech" or "Word" of Allah as the originating principle of the universe was a well-developed theme in the Qur'ān, and for that matter, the prototypical Islamic tradition. The connection of this "Word of Allah" to time without end (eternity) is, however, uncertain and may not be original to Islamic thought. Therefore, it needs a revisit seeking to identify its logical connection with "neighboring religions" and cultures in which this theory prominently featured to properly place it where it belongs.

It is most probable that the formulators of Islamic lore were influenced by the Judeo-Christian tradition of the uncreatedness of the "word" (John 1:3), itself influenced by the Greek philosophy of the "logos" (spelled in Greek as λόγος). According to H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, the word *logos* refers to "a word," "speech," "account," or "statement," "right of speech," "story," or "narrative."[43] This word featured as a technical term in the philosophical writings of Heraclitus (535-475 B.C.) who proposed it as the principle of order and knowledge.[44] In the writings of Aristotle, he used it for his "reasoned discourse"[45] The Stoics also labeled it as a divine animatronic principle (*anima mundi*) permeating the cosmos and animating it.[46] They also posited that each human being possesses a portion of this divine *logos*.[47]

After Judaism came under the hold of Hellenistic culture, Philo Judaeus, also known as Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C-40 C.E.), a Jewish philosopher born in Alexandria and inspired by Hellenistic or Greek philosophy, used the facility of metaphor and symbolism to harmonize Greek philosophy with Judaism[48] and subsequently adopted the term into Judaism.[49] Philo used *logos* to refer to a transitional or intermediary being and other beings which, in line with the Platonic theory distinguishing between imperfect matter and perfect idea, were important for linking the material world with God.[50] Platonism relates very well with Philo as it was from Plato that he drew his theory of *anima mundi*.[51] Philo's *logos* was the highest of these intermediary beings, and was thus known as "the first-born of God,"[52] and this must be born in mind in attempting to understand the New Testament concept of "son of God" personified by Jesus in Christianity. He also theologized thus:

[42]Esack, *The Qur'ān,* 105.

[43]Henry George Liddell, and Robert Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1889); See *logos*. See also: Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Revised and ed. Roderick McKenzie (Oxford at Clarendon Press, 1983).

[44]Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1999); see Heraclitus; F. E. Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms* (New York: New York University Press, 1967), 33.

[45]P.A. Rahe, *Republics of Ancient and Modern: The ancient Regime in classical Greece* (Chapel Hill: North University Carolina Press, 1994), 21.

[46]Danielle Follett, "The Tension between Immanence and Dualism in Coleridge and Emerson," in *Romanticism and Philosophy: Thinking with Literature*, ed. Sophie Laniel-Musitelli and Thomas Constantinesco (New York: Routledge, 2015), 217; Jeff Kochan, "Animism, Aristotelianism, and the Legacy of William Gilbert's *De Magnete,*" *Perspectives on Science* 29, no. 2 (2021): 180.

[47]A. Tripolitis, *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 2002), 37-38.

[48]Philo of Alexandria, *The Works of Philo, the Contemporary of Josephus*, Trans: Charles Duke Yonge [London: George Bell & Sons, 1800 (reprint 1993)], passim.

[49]Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1999); see Philo Judaeus.

[50]F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 1 (London: Continuum International, 2003), 458-462.

[51]James Lindsay, *Studies in European Philosophy* (Hesperides Press, 2006), 53.

[52]Lindsay, *Studies*, 53.

"The *logos* of the living God is the bond of everything, holding all things together binding all the parts, and preventing them from being dissolved and separated."[53]

He then identified this *logos* with the expression "Angel of the Lord" found in the Old Testament, which appears in Zechariah 12:8, Genesis 16:7, 11, 22: 11, 15, 31:11-13, etc., just as the later Justin the Martyr also did.[54] He harmonized Jewish exegesis with stoic philosophy and perspectives and even though his approach did not gain popularity, his works, which were enthusiastically received by the early Christians, sharply influenced perspectives. His Greek-inspired theory of the *logos* as the imaginative wellspring or determining antecedent of God's Will and intention inspired early Christological theorizing. Some scholars, however, disagree about direct influence but concur that both Philo and early Christianity borrowed from a common source.[55] Philo's effort draws significant merit for this discussion because he was contemporary to Jesus Christ and the Apostles.[56]

Philo further expounded that *logos* (the word) was God's "blueprint for the world" and a pervading scheme of things. The Apostle John (who was himself a contemporary of Philo) also connected this *logos*, by which everything came to exist to the divine (*theos*)[57], and subsequently identified Jesus Christ as the embodiment of this *logos*. Therefore, the fact that the New Testament itself, in which this theory features prominently, was originally written in Greek makes this logical connection rather curious, remarkable, and noteworthy. Interestingly, the *Atlas: English-Arabic Electronic Dictionary* translates the word *logos* as *Kalimatu-l-Lāh* (Word of Allah) and *Al-Masīh*, among others.[58] It is, however, worthy to note that the above lexical meaning is very relevant because the Arabic word *Al-Masīh* is the equivalent of the English word Messiah which is used for Jesus. It, therefore, refers to the Arabic rendition of the Christian perspective of Jesus as a metaphor for the 'word of God'. Now, in the post-Jesus period, John the Apostle adds another dimension to this *logos* theory, which transcends far beyond Philo's. This is the eternity of the *logos*. In the Gospel of John, we read: "In the beginning was the *logos* (word), and the *logos* was with God, and the *logos* was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made."[59]

The early translators like Martin Luther, Jerome, and Augustine, decided to, after initial difficulties in the choice of precise words or group of words that conveyed the meaning of *logos* as it was used in the Gospel of John, choose "word" and subsequently "living word."[60]

[53]Gerald Friendlander, *Hellenism and Christianity* (London: P. Valentine, 1912), 114-115; see also Vladimir de Beer, "The Cosmic Role of the Logos, as Conceived from Heraclitus until Eriugena," *Philosophy and Theology* 27, no. 1 (2015): 3-24.

[54]E. R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* (Harcourt: Houghton Mifflin, 2009), 139-175.

[55]C.S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 343-347.

[56]Philo of Alexandria, *The Works of Philo,* (reprint 1993); see the foreword by David M. Scholer; Sterling M. McMurrin, "Comments on the Theological and Philosophical Foundations of Christianity," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 25, no. 1 (1992): 41.

[57]Herbert G. May & Bruce M. Metzger (eds), *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha: Revised Standard Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 37.

[58]See also Munir Baalbaki, and Rohi Baalbaki, *Al-Mawrid Al-Qareeb, A Pocket Arabic-English and English-Arabic Dictionary,* 15th ed. (Beirut: Dar El-Ilm Lilmalayin, 2017).

[59]*John* 1:1-3.

[60]David L. Jeffrey, *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 460.

The eternity of the "word" or "Speech of God"; thereafter, became an entrenched theme in Christendom and theologians argued to defend it as such. Those who studied the bible in their sacred devotional municipality went along with the concerns of that community with full knowledge of other interest groups possibly of diverse religious orders. Such a phenomenon had featured in the spread of Judaism and Christianity at the time the young Islam was developing from its embryo. Jewish and Christian converts to Islam tried to find Islamic meanings to some of these traditions. During the time of Prophet Muhammad, he always responded to such quest for inclusive meaning and several prophetic traditions suggest the extent of acceptability or unacceptability of the theological opinions of the Jews and the Christians. After Prophet Muhammad, however, such issues could only be clarified through Qur'ān and Hadith and in their absence, through theological debate. No inquiry had been made about the nature of the Qur'ān as the "Speech of God" at the time of Prophet Muhammad[61] and no pressing problem had cropped up necessitating an inquiry in that regard.

The scientific interpretation of the Qur'ān fueled by the philosophical adventures of the ninth-century Hellenistically inspired Muslim thinkers that seemed to overstretch the implications of rational thinking too far fell short of saluting the spiritual perspective of the sacred texts of the Qur'ān.[62] For this reason, the guardians of Islam undeviatingly found their faith under threat from the forces unleashed from the quarters of philosophical rationalism just like the case of the Bible and the wave of enlightenment.[63] They, therefore, felt the need to defend the sanctity of the Qur'ān from the onslaught of rationalism against the central religious texts. The doctrine of eternity of the Qur'ān must, therefore, have been formulated under unoriginal inspiration to emphasize the sanctity and peculiarity of the Qur'ān to disable the attack of the rationalists. The doctrine, therefore, generated a hot debate whose repercussion on Islamic scholarship is unparalleled in history.[64] One will now wonder whether the Qur'ān, as a literary piece, existed with God in eternity or not but this became a bone of contention.

5. Eternity as a Bone of Contention

Let us briefly digest some of the arguments of the theological schools. Two principal schools, the Asha'rites and the Mu'tazilites were noted for their succinct arguments. The Asha'rite defended the view that the Qur'ān was uncreated.[65] They depended on Qur'ān 7: 54 where Allah says: "Your Guardian Lord is God, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and is firmly established on the Throne (of authority): He draws the night as a veil over the day, each seeking the other in rapid succession: He created the sun, the moon, and the stars (all) governed by laws under His Command. Is it not His to create and to govern? .... "[66]

According to M.S. Sheikh, the above verse clearly distinguishes creation (*khalqun*) from the command (*Amrun*) and can imply that the Qur'ān is uncreated because Allah's command issues from His word, therefore, Qur'ān as Allah's word is eternal.[67] Here, God talks of the command (*amrun*)

[61]Esack, *The Qur'ān,* 105.

[62]Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 79; Mohammed Abed al-Jabiri, *The Formation of Arab Reason: Text, Tradition and the Construction of Modernity in the Arab World* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris & Co., 2011), 290-291.

[63]J. Magonet, "The Biblical Roots of Jewish Identity: Exploring the relativity of Exegesis," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 17, no. 54 (1992): 3.

[64]Esack, *The Qur'ān,* 105.

[65]Mehmet Ata Az, "A Heated Controversy in the Second/Eighth Century: Khalq al-Qurʾan (The Createdness of Qurʾan)," *Ulūm: Journal of Religious Inquiries* 3, no. 1 (2020): 71.

[66]M. Saeed Sheikh, *Islamic Philosophy* (London: Octagon Press, 1982), 7.

[67]Sheikh, *Islamic*, 8.

as something other than the art of creation (*khalqun*), and for the Asha'rites, this command of the Creator (Allah) "does not belong to the category of created things."[68] Better still, Allah's command comes from his words or speech, *kalām*, wherein is derived *kalām-al-Lāh*. It, therefore, implies that Allah's word is uncreated.[69] Thus, they defended their view with the following logic:

Allah is uncreated.
Allah's Word (*logos*) is uncreated.
Qur'ān is Allah's Word (*logos [Kalām-al-Lāh]*).

The logical conclusion, therefore, is that the Qur'ān is uncreated. The Mu'tazilites, however, argued that Allah alone is eternal and, in obvious defense of absolute monotheism, maintained that anyone who upholds the uncreatedness of the Qur'ān and its co-existence with Allah takes to himself two gods and is hence guilty of polytheism.[70] They held that the "Speech of Allah" is created[71], invented, and brought into being.[72] On the other hand, the Asha'rite held that the Qur'ān is beginningless and is an unchanged speech of Allah which is uncreated, not of recent origin in time, nor was it brought into being, and that the alphabet of its writing, the material on which it was written, the color of its beauty, and the voice of its recitation (*tilāwah*) are all created, originated and produced.[55] This view drifts away from that of the Mu'tazites and yet sets itself apart from that of the Hashwiyyah who stressed that the characters, the papers, the color of the writing and all that is in between the two covers are beginningless and pre-existent.[73] This finds favor with al-Ghazzali who opined in his *Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id* and *Ihyā' 'Ulūm-ud-Dīn* that "the Qur'ān is read by tongues, written in books, and remembered in the heart, yet it is uncreated and without beginning, subsisting in the essence of Allah,...."[74] Here, one reasonably, realizes that to say that such a speech is created is to liken God to human beings who have naturally been endowed with the power of creativity in speech as literary work of art.

The Mu'tazilites, however, countered this by arguing that Allah says that He is the Creator of everything, and since the Qur'ān is a thing, it was created by Allah. They, therefore, defended this argument with the following logic:

Allah is the Creator;
Allah creates everything;
Qur'ān is a thing.

It, therefore, logically follows that Qur'ān, as an existing thing, was created. For them, Allah as the Originator or Creator is the only Being or "Thing" that existed when nothing existed and, therefore, to say that the Qur'ān is uncreated (which implies that the Qur'ān existed with God in His eternity) is to say, in effect, that something else existed with God, and this calls to question the central message of the Qur'ān itself, the unity of Allah (*tawhīd*). However, a revisit or review of the Ash'arite position brings to light the fact that the Mu'tazilite conclusion above is grossly invalid and is therefore logically defective. The argument that one's speech lives with him does not make him a double entity. The word or speech is in him not beside him and, therefore, wherever he is, he is with the word; the

[68]Ibid., 7.
[69]Ibid., 7-8.
[70]Sheikh, *Islamic*, 8.
[71]Abd al-Jabbar, *Al-Mughni fi abwab al-Tawhid wal Adl* (Cairo, s.n., 1961), 5/3-4; Ata Az, "A Heated Controversy," 72; 70-92.
[72]Abu al-Qasim ibn Asakir, *Tabyīn Kadhib al-Muftari fita Nusiba ila al-Imam Abi al-Hasan al-Asha'ri*, ed. M Z. al-Kawthari (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1984): 149-54.
[73]Ibn Asakir, *Tabyin*, 148-50.
[74]Abu Ḥamid Muḥammad al-Ghazzali, *Iḥya al-'Ulūm al-Din* (Beirut: Dar al-Maʿrifah, 1982), 91.

word is himself. Once he ceases to issue the word (i.e. talk), he cannot be deemed to be (he is dead). The logic of the Mu'tazilites is valid but their refutation of the above view of their opponent is also not convincing.

Even so, the Ash'arites tried to strike some compromise between their views and those of their opponents by contending that if the Qur'ān is created then it is so for its wording (*tilawah*) but not the meaning which is a microcosm of the hidden intent of Allah, which, of course, no one is privy to. For them, Allah created everything with the word *kun* ("Be") and therefore, the word itself could not have been created, and this implies that the Qur'ān, as the Word or Speech of Allah, is uncreated.[75] The Asha'rites, again, argued that the Qur'ān indicates that Allah created the universe with the word "Be" (*kun*) implying that if the Qur'ān, which is the word, was created, then it must have followed that it would be created with the word "Be" but here, the word or command, "be" is the Qur'ān itself and it would be ridiculous to say that the "Word" (Qur'ān) created itself. From the logic of this view, therefore, it would be possible for another word or command to be issued to another word, here the Qur'ān, to bring it into existence.[76] It would then follow that each word would count on another to an infinite regression and this, according to the Asha'rite, is not only unimaginable, ridiculous and improbable[60], but also, will imply the incompleteness of the word of revelation, the Qur'ān.

By reducing every theory of their opponents to mere nonsense, therefore, the Asha'rites asserted their proof of the theory in question, i.e. the eternity or uncreatedness of the Qur'ān. The Mu'tazilites, however, accused the Asha'rites of calling the Christian idea of *logos* into Islam and subsequently veering into polytheism.[77] They argued that this doctrine would make the Qur'ān coeternal with Allah, which calls to question the *status quo* that only Allah existed when nothing was existing. With the belief of the Mu'tazilites in absolute monotheism, therefore, this opinion would create dissonance for them because it is tantamount to ascribing partners to Allah. Surprisingly, the Asha'rites also accused the Mu'tazilites of betrayal and hypocrisy arguing that whoever insisted on the createdness of the Qur'ān sought to favour the earlier view of the Qurayshi infidels that the contents of the Qur'ān were Prophet Muhammad's creation.[78]

The eternity of the Qur'ān was, therefore, affirmed by *Sunnī* Muslims almost immediately after the contrast to that was affirmed by Jad Ibn Ditham and Jahm Ibn Safwan of the Mu'azilites somewhere in the first three decades of the 8th century and it became an entrenched view among the majority of the *Sunnī*.[79] It is, however, worthy to note that the affirmation of this doctrine by the majority of Muslims did not happen without implications.

6. Implications of the Doctrine

The doctrine had some serious implications that cannot be overlooked in this discussion. In the first place, Islam upholds the unity of God (*tawhīd*). This endorses the teaching that God can be compared to none.[80] That He alone existed when nothing was created.[81] The Qur'ān itself affirms the theory of cause and effect; indeed, He is the only cause of all effects.[82] In other words, everything that has existed was created by Him. Hence, there is nothing that exists which was not created.

Contrary to this logic, however, there exists a certain difficult theoretical puzzle that needs to be disentangled first before any meaningful argument can be put forward. The Qur'ān is a collection

[75]Sheikh, *Islamic*: 16.
[76]Ibid.
[77]Ibid.
[78]Qur'ān al-Mudassir 74: 25; see: Sheikh, *Islamic*, 16.
[79] Esack, *The Qur'ān,* 107.
[80]Qur'ān al-Ikhlas 112:4.
[81]al-Ikhlas112:2.
[82]Al-Hadīd 57:22.

of God's words or speech. Logically, *wherever God is, His word is in His "head"*, and that means that the word is with Him. If He has existed in eternity, it makes sense to say that His Word, which is always in His "*Head"* also existed with Him in eternity. Unfortunately, in this case, the word itself cannot be said to exist until it is issued when an effect is intended. The effect is caused by the word which is issued from His "*Head*." The word therefore cannot be deemed as an existing thing until a thing is to be brought forth.

By the logic of this argument, therefore, the word is only an "instrument" which is used by God to create an effect. In other words, it is caused to also cause an intended effect. By this argument; therefore, a thing that is caused to cause an effect cannot be deemed not to have been caused to exist because the instrument itself is created to help create other things. The inference is that causes are not independent in creating their effects; the real cause, in the true sense of the word, is only Allah. The word (Qur'ān) itself makes it clear that the creation and the command are His.[83] The word therefore cannot be the same with the one from whom it originated. The doctrine therefore creates some confusion for two basic reasons.

1. If the word existed with God in eternity, or better still, it was not caused to exist, the impression is that if this is the word that was used by God to bring all things into being, then God only "implored" the labor of the Word. The conclusion, therefore, is that God created everything together with something else. Yet, according to the Word (i.e. Qur'ān) itself, God is independent on anything.[84]
2. If the Qur'ān pre-existed, then reasonably, it must follow that all the events and facts, including transgressions and destruction of people of old that are mentioned in it, were pre-ordained (pre-recorded by the pen of fate). That would subsequently mean that all the players of these events would have their fate sealed even before birth.[85] Would Fir'aun (Pharaoh) and Qarūn, for example, then be held responsible?[86]

Another significant implication of the doctrine is to be seen in the "compelling nature of the controversy", which culminated in the theological inquisition (*mihnah*) that was mounted to overturn Muslim theological disunity getting to the end of Al-Ma'mūn's reign.[87] However, a more significant implication was a polemical interest in the Qur'ān, especially, during the reign of Al-Ma'mūn.

7. Polemic Scholarship on the Qur'ān

In delineating the meaning of polemics in the Qur'ān, Farid Esack created the following interesting allegory: the polemicist is the one who is:

> ... besotted with another woman, either the bible or secularism. Having seen his own beloved exposed as purely human-although with a divine spirit in the case of the former, i.e. the bible as beloved-and terrified of the prospect that his Muslim enemy's beloved may be attracting a growing number of devotees, he is desperate to argue that 'your beloved is as human as mine.' Having tried in vain for centuries to convince the Muslim of the beauty

[83] Al-A'raaf 7:54.

[84] Al-Ikhlas 112:2; az-Zumar 39:7; Muhammad 47: 38; al-Ankabut 29:6, etc.

[85] Esack, *The Qur'ān,* 107.

[86] For if their actions were recorded in an eternal Qur'ān, it means Allah had it pre-recorded (predestined) even before they were born onto this earth. Will it then make sense for one to argue that, by those actions of theirs, they were rendering service to Allah by obeying His "eternal" command?

[87] Esack, *The Qur'ān,* 107.

> of his own beloved (the bible), he now resorts to telling the Muslim how ugly his (i.e. the Muslim's) beloved is.[88]

From the extract, one gathers that polemics on the Qur'ān have originated from non-Muslim circles. This has unfortunately slammed the door to reasoning at the faces of both uncritical as well as critical scholars of the Qur'ān.[89] From time immemorial, Muslims have viewed polemics on the Qur'ān as part of the sustained western onslaught on Islam[90] having recorded a historical bearing to this from the time of Peter the Vulnerable as far back as the 12th century. The objective of Peter the Venerable's intellectual warfare was arguably the conversion of Muslims found within territories then controlled by the Christian monarchs, while simultaneously protecting the Christians from Islamic conversion.[91] However, modern polemics on the Qur'ān, spring, essentially, from the columnist undertaking and, especially, the so-called post-enlightenment critique or (for want of a better term, call it) review of all religious thinking[92] of which the bible has tasted a shaper edge.[93] David Tracy, perhaps puts it in a better way: "We are in the midst of a deconstructive drive designed to expose the radical instability of all texts and the inevitable intertextuality of all seemingly autonomous texts."[94]

A critical study of the Qur'ān grandly opened after the encounter with the West, particularly, neo-platonic and Aristotelean philosophical ideas. This began when the Mu'tazilites reduced the doctrine of unconditional adherence to the principles of faith, *taqlīd*, to mere unreasonable absurdity. The introduction of rationalism into Islamic thinking was, in effect, a disablement of a bundle of perceived *dogmatic superstitions*. With the disablement of the hitherto unquestioned *taqlīd*, and having succeeded in putting forward an antithesis of the eternity of the Qur'ān, the Mu'tazilites engineered a reinterpretation of many Qur'ānic verses using rationalism, which for them, was the only way to make sense of those verses. The belief in the Qur'ān's eternity and its co-existence with God in eternity, however, effectively repelled this effort. It heavily frustrated the rationalistic or critical study of the Qur'ān, which drew the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites into those hot and extensive debates with each other. Those debates reached new intellectual and emotional heights during the reign of the Abbassid Caliph, Al-Ma'mun, and allegedly threatened the Muslim intellectual unity. This finally led to another implication, the *mihnah*, which reinstated uniformity in the Muslim intellectual experience at the time of Caliph Al-Ma'mun.[95] Unfortunately, it did not favor the "patrons", the upholders of the Qur'ān's eternity.

8. The *Mihnah*

The *mihnah* ultimately marked itself as one of the most defining moments of Islamic history. This was an official inquisition that not only probed but forced the patrons to profess their belief in the createdness of the Qur'ān in contrast to the view of eternity. Many scholars submitted although

[88]Ibid.

[89]Fazlur Rahman, "Some Recent Books on the Qur'ān by Western Authors," *The Journal of Religion* 64, no. 1 (1984): 88.

[90]J. B. Yusuf, and H. A. Abdulsalam, "Time, Knowledge, and the Clash of Civilizations: An Islamic Approach," *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies* 1, no. 1 (2011): 46-58.

[91]Sabrina Lei, "The notion of Islam as "Heresy" in Peter the Venerable's Writings in the Historical Frame of the Conflict between Christianity and Islam in the Middle Age," *The International Research Journal of Islamic Civilization* 1, no. 1 (2021): 1.

[92]Esack, *The Qur'ān,* 9.

[93]Magonet, "The Biblical Roots," 3.

[94]David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 12

[95] John A. Nawas, "A Reexamination of Three Current Explanations for al-Maʾmūn's Introduction of the Mihna," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no. 4 (1994): 615-629.

they secretly continued to uphold belief in an uncreated Qur'ān.[96] Those who professed the belief in eternity openly were flogged. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, the last of the four schools of *Sunnī* Muslim law and theology is reported to have tasted the sharp edge of this misfortune.[97] The most significant implications of this particular theological discourse were, however, as follows:

1. The transitional or middle positions and canonical or dogmatic uncertainties and doubts were subdued.
2. Some of the theological theories and suppositions have today been more or less a yard-stick for making sense of certain debatable doctrines in Islam.
3. It actually reshaped the Qur'ānic science of hermeneutics, such as intercultural interpretation seeking to rationally make Qur'ānic verses compatible with cultural peculiarities but within Muslim listenership. This is known as reception hermeneutics.
4. It also opened the Muslim mind to the critical re-reading of the Qur'ān, which positively affected the varied degrees of commentaries (*tafāsīr*).
5. Despite the breezing storm of rationalism, the authenticity of the traditional source of the Qur'ān remained unquestionable. The introduction of rationalism to Qur'ānic scholarship has led to several polemics being unleashed on the Qur'ān, yet, its nature and origin have all escaped questioning.

Islamic philosophy (*falsafah al-Islamiyyah*), which was different in meaning from *hikmah*,[98] now became a blend of Hellenistic rationalism and Islamic thought; and had the chance to grow at this time. The Mu'tazilites, therefore, reached the peak of their intellectual awakening. There was, however, a sudden reversal of fortune for the Mu'tazilites after 833 C.E., especially when Al-Mutawakkil (847-861) ascended the caliphate as he cancelled the *mihnah.*[99] With the repression of the *mihnah*, orthodoxy reasserted itself with an unprecedented rigidity. The Mu'tazilites fell out of favor. The subsequent implication even transcended to the following: *man shaka fī kufiruhum fahuwa kāfir* (whoever doubts their disbelief is also a disbeliever).

9. Conclusion

This paper examined the doctrine of scriptural eternity as a common theme in Judeo-Christian and Islamic discourse with emphasis on the well-known doctrine of eternity of the Qur'ān. Through

[96]Farid Esack, "Qur'ānic Hermeneutics: Problems and Prospects," *The Muslim World* 83, no. 2 (1993): 132; 118-141; Esack, *The Qur'ān,* 107.

[97]Wilferd Madelung, "The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Qur'ān," in *Religious Schools and Sects in Islam* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985); W. M. Patton, *Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and the Mihnah* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1897)

[98]In the mainstream Islamic thought, *hikmah* (philosophic/metaphysical wisdom) has been used. However, *hikmah* was more frequently used by the Sufis and the theologians (*Mutakallimin*). *Falsafah* (philosophy) appeared in Muslim lexicon following the Arabic translations of Greek literature for use in the Muslim world during this period (i.e. the Abbassid 8th and 9th centuries). Like the theologians, Muslim philosophers have sometimes also referred to their field as *hikmah* (wisdom) (see, for example, Ibn Arabi, *Fūsūs al Hikam* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1980) alongside *kalām* and *ma'rifah*, among others [(for more details, see: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Encyclopeadia of Islamic Philosophy* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2002): 21-22)].

[99]Abu Ja'far Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1976): 645; Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics Under the Early Abbasids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunni Elite* (Leiden: Brill, 1997): 113; M. Hinds, "Mihna," in *Encylopedia of Islam*, vol. 7, ed. C.E. Bosworth, E. Van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, et-al (NewYork: Brill, 1993), 3-6.

historical/scriptural reasoning and analysis of facts in Greek, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, this paper puts forward the hypothesis that the doctrine of eternity of the Qur'ān was influenced by Greek and Judeo-Christian beliefs. This sprung from the examination of the writings of the chief propagators of the eternity of the divine word, tagged *logos*. The study conceptually located the discourse and its intended outcomes. It was found that the doctrine emerged as a notion from the three faiths in conversation around their scriptures and that each inherited from the doctrinal theories of the pre-descending brothers in faith starting from Judaism (itself a metamorphosis of Greek doctrines). It revisited the debate on the doctrine to re-establish its proper basis/origin. The Muslim contact with Greek intellectual ideas as well as Judeo-Christian beliefs had a significant influence on Islamic civilization and thought. From this hybrid intellectual culture came a new breed of Muslim theologians who tried to find an Islamic definition for many interesting ideas, particularly, the doctrine of eternity of the Qur'ān, which the early Muslim scholars nurtured so well and pushed into the core domains of *Sunnī* Islamic beliefs after the collapse of the *mihnah*. Nonetheless, the doctrine has had far-reaching implications for Qur'ānic scholarship and Muslims in general to this day.

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