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The Incarnation and the Water of Life

The Incarnation and the Temple of the Body

The Gospel of John seems to be direct about the Incarnation of the Word. If the Qur'an expects the Christians to follow the Gospel[s] (i.e., Qur'an 5:47, 5:66, 5:68), then what is in Muḥammad's mind that might reconcile the Incarnation of the Word? We need to search for possible clues in the Qur'an.

Ibn Taymiyyah wrote a response refuting the Christian faith and the Incarnation.¹ Within the mainstream Islamic context, the thought of God incarnating into human flesh is very foreign and to some extent sacrilegious.² This example textually compares the Qur'an concept of the creation of human flesh to the Gospel of John's understanding of the Incarnation. It brings to light that the Qur'an perhaps indeed emerged through the sectarian milieu of its time between the different churches as John Wansbrough suggests.³

Knowing Muḥammad's state of mind and his ability to link things together in an intertextual methodology using polysemy, we may search for subtle clues about incarnation within the Qur'an. This section illustrates that, textually, the Qur'an generally shows that the creation of human flesh is from clay, and then God establishes it (*sawwaytuhu*) using the same terminology as He establishes (*istawa*) on His Throne and then breathes into the clay from His Spirit. Perhaps this would be an inner-Qur'anic allusion that the flesh becomes as if it is the Throne of God or the Temple of God. The flesh is human, but the Spirit that resides within the flesh is God's. The Gospel of John portrays Jesus Christ as the Temple of the Body (i.e., John 2:21). If the Incarnation of the Logos is the union of the divine in human flesh, then perhaps we find Muḥammad speaking into the Christian milieu of his time. As Abdulaziz Sachedina argues, if Muslims continue solely to use their heritage from classical scholars as a basis of Christian-Muslim relations, then they will not be able to respond to today's notion of pluralism.⁴ Perhaps a similar argument can be made about Churches and their inherited traditions. As such, if we are to place a mediator in any Christian-Muslim dialogue, it perhaps should not be based on tradition and its early sources. The scriptural text in each of those faiths would probably be the best mediator.

Creation of human flesh

According to the Qur'an, the creation of human flesh seems to be forthright from clay (e.g., Qur'an 6:2, 22:5, 30:20, 35:11, 40:67). The Qur'an states that when God wanted to

create human flesh, He informed the angels about it and told them that as soon as He formed it (*sawwaytuhu*) and breathed into it from His Spirit, they were to bow down before it: "so when I have proportioned him (*sawwaytuhu*) and breathed into him of My Spirit, fall down before him prostrating."⁵

It is necessary to understand the meaning of the terms used in these Qur'anic verses, as perhaps Muḥammad is using inner-Qur'anic allusions. The term used for fashioning the human flesh is "*sawwaytuhu*." This term shares the same root as the term used by the Qur'an for God establishing (*istawa*) on His Throne (i.e., Qur'an 7:54, 10:3, 13:2, 20:5, 25:59, 32:4, 57:4). The term has a polysemous nature, in which "*sāwa*" is to be equal; "*sawwā*" means to form, and "*sawiyyā*" means upright.⁶ The Qur'an uses those various meanings in different verses. It is used to mean that people are to be made one (or equal) with the earth, as a metaphor of dying as if placed in a grave (i.e., Qur'an 4:42, 91:14). It is used to mean to be made equal (*yastawī / nusawwikum / yastawūn*) (i.e., Qur'an 4:95, 5:100, 6:50, 9:29, 11:24, 13:16, 16:75–76, 26:98, 32:18, 35:12, 35:19, 35:22, 39:9, 39:29, 40:58, 41:34, 57:10, 59:20). It is used to mean a place of equality or equal chances (*suwā*) (i.e., Qur'an 20:58). It is used to refer to resting or sitting, even besides God sitting on the Throne. The term "*istawat*" is employed to mean Noah's ark resting on the mountain after the flood (i.e., Qur'an 11:44) and "*istawayt*" is used to mean the people resting on or mounting Noah's ark or on the back of animals (i.e., Qur'an 23:28, 43:13). The term here means to form or to be made upright (*sawwaytuhu / sawwāk / sawwāhu / sawwā*) (i.e., Qur'an 15:29, 18:37, 32:9, 38:72, 75:4, 75:38, 79:28, 82:7, 87:2, 91:7). It functions to mean filling (*sāwa*), as when Dhul-Qarnayn filled between the two steep mountains (i.e., Qur'an 18:96). It is also used to mean upright (*sawiyyā*) (i.e., Qur'an 19:17, 19:43, 67:22). These are various morphologies of the term in the Qur'an.

In Hebrew, the term "*shwh*" also means to be equal, having the same meaning to its Aramaic cognate.⁷ Its meaning also includes to be even or level.⁸ This can also be seen in its Qur'anic usage using the terms "*istawa*" or "*istawat*," which in some ways hold the meaning to be even or level on whatever is being mounted, either the throne or an animal. This does suggest a similar Semitic etymology for the term, which is to be equal.⁹ Being even means to be on equal level. A similar term to "*shwh*" is "*mshl*,"¹⁰ which is cognate to the Arabic "*mthl*," meaning "to be like."¹¹ The question on how the term "*sawwā*" also came to mean "to form" might be understood from the term "*mthl*" and making something "like it." This is best understood from the term "*timthāl*," which typically means statue, and used in its plural form in Qur'an 21:52 and 34:13. A statue of a human or animal form is called "*timthāl*" because it is in the likeness (*mthl*) of what it is formed as. The term "*swy*," however, is not simply likeness, but also sameness, which is understood as equal or being on the same level. One might understand that the Qur'anic usage of "*sawwaytuhu*" does not only mean "formed," but perhaps more precisely, "made him equal and like Me." This might correspond with Genesis 1:26–27, where the human is made in the image and likeness of God.

Looking at the classical commentaries on the verses about forming human flesh (i.e., Qur'an 15:29, 38:72), al-Ṭabarī seems to have refrained from deeply analyzing its meaning.¹² This could either mean that he considered the meaning was self-evident requiring no interpretation, or that he considered the meaning so ambiguous that he

could not define it, or that he did not want to inquire into the theological implications of interpreting this verse. Al-Rāzī gives “*sawwaytuhu*” two possible definitions.¹³ He explains that it could mean “formed his image” or “made his body proportionate.” Al-Rāzī also explains that the breathing of God’s Spirit (*al-rūḥ*) into the flesh is like the wind (*al-rīḥ*) going through the cavities of a body, by which he does note the polysemous nature between the terms for spirit (*rūḥ*) and wind (*rīḥ*).¹⁴ In al-Rāzī’s commentary on the prostration of the angels, he states that some have suggested that Adam was like a *qiblah* (a focal point of prayer), and not the object of worship.¹⁵ Al-Rāzī dismisses any suggestion that the created flesh is likened to simply a *qiblah*, because this does not embrace the honor intended for that flesh.¹⁶ However, if the likening of the flesh to a *qiblah* is accepted, then the flesh can be considered similar to the Ka’bah in Makkah. If that is the case, then the honor given to that flesh is that it has become the House of God. Al-Mas’ūdī (d. 346/956) states that “God made Adam a place of prayer (*miḥrāba*), a Ka’bah, a gateway, and a *qiblah* in which prostrated to it the righteous, the spirituals, and the lights.”¹⁷ The prostration of the angels unto Adam gives him the honor that he is a *qiblah*, and he would be the connecting relationship between the angels and God, since he was created in God’s image.¹⁸

Although the Ka’bah is a *qiblah*, it still has its place of honor, having a greater honor than other mosques or houses of worship, according to a tradition attributed to Muḥammad.¹⁹ Hence, since the Ka’bah is a *qiblah*, it also brings along with it the notion of honor. Though the Ka’bah is honored, it still has lesser honor than human beings, according to Islamic tradition.²⁰ As such, there is a possibility to conclude, as al-Rāzī points out, that though people prostrate toward the *qiblah* that does not mean that the *qiblah* is more honored than them. Therefore, even if angels prostrate toward Adam, since Adam can be considered a *qiblah*, it does not necessarily mean he is more honored than the angels.²¹ This is the concept that al-Rāzī objects to, since people’s prostration toward the Ka’bah does not necessarily mean that the Ka’bah is more honored than they are, while the angels’ prostration to Adam is honorific. He concludes, therefore, that Adam cannot have been simply a *qiblah*. Otherwise, Satan would have had no problem prostrating toward him. Al-Sha’rāwī (d. 1419/1998) suggests that the prostration toward the Ka’bah is not because it has any sort of divinity, but that it was made honorable by God’s commandment.²² Similarly, he states that the angels’ prostration toward Adam does not prove that he is divine in himself, but that he was made honored by God’s commandment. Al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122) suggests that Adam is considered a *qiblah* to the angels.²³ Al-Rāzī suggests that since the prostration of the angels was for Adam (*li-Adam*) and not toward Adam (*ila Adam*), it cannot be perceived that Adam was simply a *qiblah*.²⁴ The Mu’tazilah maintains that Adam was considered a *qiblah*, though still more honored than the Ka’bah.²⁵ In Imām al-‘Askarī’s²⁶ (d. 260/874) commentary on the Qur’an, he reports that the angels’ prostration to Adam indicates his being a *qiblah* which, however, is still more honored than the angels.²⁷ Al-Majlisī (d. 1111/1698) also reports that the prostration of the angels to Adam is in such a way that he is considered a *qiblah*, but though just a *qiblah*, is still more honored than the angels.²⁸ Perhaps in this sense, Adam is not simply a Ka’bah, because the Ka’bah is a House of God built of stones by people’s hands, while Adam is a House of God made by the hands of God. It could mean that Adam is indeed a *qiblah* but very unlike that of the

Ka'bah, according to the Qur'an. The Ka'bah remains made of stones, while Adam is the dwelling place of the Spirit of God Itself. As such, it is a *qiblah* and also more honored than the angels, since the spark of divinity, which is the Spirit of God, dwells in him. Perhaps here, we are reminded by how the Qur'an could be alluding to the heart instead of the Ka'bah.²⁹ We are also reminded of the term "*ibn Allah*" that was also discussed in Chapter 5, in which would mean that the human has become a Temple of God.

Al-Ṭabarsī interpretation of "*sawwaytuhu*" is also similar to that of al-Rāzī, in which the term refers to the formation of the human flesh.³⁰ Similarly, the breathing of God's Spirit into the flesh is also portrayed as wind going through the bodily cavities. He also suggests that the Spirit of God was joined with Adam, as an honor.

Let us attempt to use intertextuality to understand the meaning of "*sawwaytuhu*." First, it is imperative to analyze the possible definition of forming. The term "*istawa*" is used in the Qur'an for Moses having grown into adulthood (i.e., Qur'an 28:14). It is not used necessarily for Moses being formed. Hence, there could be different meanings for the term "*sawwaytuhu*" and it can be understood as not necessarily meaning to form an image. Al-Ṭabarsī shows the variation of what people considered the age of "*istiḡā*," as some suggest thirty, others thirty-three, and some others forty.³¹ Al-Rāzī suggests that "*al-istiḡā*" of Moses is the completion of his strength and bodily uprightness.³² He argues that the human body is born in weakness and then grows to strength. He also suggests that after the human body has grown in strength for some time, it starts to wane again at old age. Hence, he assumes that "*istiḡā*" would be when the bodily strength is completed. However, the term "*sawwaytuhu*" can be understood from a different perspective, using the intertextual polysemy that Muḥammad might have been able to produce, given his psychological state. The terms for God establishing (*istawa*) on the Throne and the formation of human flesh are found within a close contextual proximity in the following verses:

⁴ God it is Who created the heavens and the earth and whatsoever is between them in six days. Then He mounted (*istawa*) the Throne. Apart from Him you have neither protector, nor intercessor. Will you not, then, remember? ⁵ He directs the affair from Heaven unto earth; then it ascends unto Him in a day whose measure is as a thousand years of that which you reckon. ⁶ Such is the Knower of the Unseen and the seen, the Mighty, the Merciful, ⁷ Who made beautiful all that He created, and Who began the creation of man from clay. ⁸ Then He made his seed from a draught of base fluid. ⁹ Then He fashioned him (*sawwāhu*), and breathed into him of His Spirit, and endowed you with hearing, sight, and hearts. Little do you give thanks!³³

In the above verses it is important to note that the Qur'an is first stating how God established (*istawa*)³⁴ on His Throne and then discusses the creation of the human flesh in a way similar to that in Qur'an 15:28–29 and Qur'an 38:71–72, in which the human flesh is created from mud (clay) and then is formed (*sawwaytuhu*) and breathed into from God's Spirit. Although the Qur'an does not usually have any special chronological order in its text, the above verses strikingly, and unusually, show that God first created the human from mud (clay), and then made his progeny from fluid (sperm), and only then he fashioned him and breathed into him from His Spirit. The

Qur'an uses the term "then" (*thumma*) in these verses, as if implying some sort of chronology. The creation from clay and perhaps the formation from clay is not "*istiwā*." Being created from sperm also is not "*istiwā*." It seems that only afterward the term "*sawwāhu*" and the breathing from God's Spirit occurs. This actually also resembles the following verse: "Indeed, We created you, then We formed you, then We said unto the angels, "Prostrate yourselves before Adam." And they all prostrated, save Iblis; he was not among those who prostrated."³⁵

The above verse also seems to contain a strange chronology, which is implied by the term "then" (*thumma*).³⁶ It appears as if the Qur'an shows that people were created and given shape, and only then were the angels commanded to bow down before Adam. Here again it shows the creation of the human and its progeny, and then the commandment was given to the angels to bow down before Adam. This is similar to the chronology seen in Qur'an 32:7–9, which also shows the creation of the human and its progeny, and then the "*istiwā*" of human flesh and breathing of God's Spirit occurs, implying the time when the angels were commanded to bow down. It is not clear whether the human progeny had already been created when the angels bowed down before Adam.³⁷

Using intertextuality to find any inner-Qur'anic allusions, especially since the terms "*istawa*" on the Throne and the fashioning of human flesh (*sawwāhu*) are located within a contextual proximity, it may be understood that God fashioned the human flesh (*sawwaytuhu*) in the same way that He established (*istawa*) on His Throne, since the terms share the same root meaning. The polysemous term "*sawwaytuhu*" may hold multiple valid definitions due to the rhetoric style of the Qur'an. However, if we keep in mind the suggestion that the bowing down to human flesh could be as if the human flesh is similar to a *qiblah*, and if we understand the notion that a *qiblah* is a House of God, then there could be a completely different understanding that we can obtain using intertextual polysemy.

Since the human flesh is formed (*sawwaytuhu*) in the same way that God established (*istawa*) on His Throne, then perhaps the human flesh may be understood as the Throne of God. In Muḥammad's use of symbolism, perhaps he is creating inner-Qur'anic allusions. When the Spirit of God is breathed into the human flesh, then It establishes (*istawa*) Itself inside the flesh, which becomes the Throne of God (*sawwaytuhu*). Because the Spirit of God resides within the flesh, the flesh becomes as if it is the House of God, where Its Throne is, and therefore, the *qiblah*. As such, the angels might have been commanded to bow down to the human flesh, not because the human flesh is to be worshiped, but because the human flesh has been honored to house the Spirit of God like a *qiblah* (House of God). Nonetheless, the human flesh is perhaps even more honored than the Ka'bah according to Muḥammad, as previously seen in the prophetic tradition; the reason might be because the Ka'bah is a House of God built with stones and made by human hands, whereas the human is a House of God built by the hands of God, and therefore, is even more honored.

Prostration to Adam or Jesus

Although the general commentators, including al-Rāzī, denote that the person in question in the verses about the creation of flesh and breathing into it from God's Spirit

is Adam, some of the verses do not explicitly name him (i.e., Qur'an 15:29, 38:72). Actually, al-Rāzī, while discussing this verse, explicitly refers back to sūrah al-Baqarah (i.e., Qur'an 2:34), which mentions Adam. Exegetes extrapolated that the creation of flesh mentioned in Qur'an 15:29 and 38:72 are references to Adam. Nonetheless, it is still important to note that these two verses do not mention the name. This brings to attention two possibilities. The obvious inference is that it does indeed refer to Adam. However, the story shares similarities to one in the New Testament, which perhaps refers to Jesus Christ. "Perhaps" because these verses in the New Testament do not mention the name of Jesus Christ, denoting him only as the Son. "And again, when God brings His firstborn into the world, He says, 'Let all God's angels worship him.'"³⁸ This verse in the New Testament might be related to a verse in Deuteronomy, which is currently not found in the Masoretic text, but it is still found in the Septuagint and the Dead Seas Scrolls: "Rejoice, ye heavens, with him, and let all the angels of God worship him; rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people, and let all the sons of God strengthen themselves in him."³⁹

Whether the flesh in question in the Qur'an is a reference to Jesus Christ or Adam is important to note, as to the possible difference in the storyline between Christians and Muslims. However, the Qur'an states that the creation of Jesus is likened to that of Adam, as seen in the following verse: "Truly the likeness of Jesus in the sight of God is that of Adam; He divided [created] him from dust, then said to him, 'Be!' and he is (*kun fa-yakūn*)."⁴⁰

If Jesus is created in a similar way as Adam, then this perhaps brings into question whether or not the Qur'an may assume that the creation of Adam and asking the angels to prostrate to him also took place with Jesus. It is difficult to understand who Muḥammad had in mind. The Throne of God is described in Ezekiel's vision, where above the Throne he sees the likeness of a human (*adam*) (i.e., Ezekiel 1:26). It should be well noted that the Hebrew usage of Adam may not always mean the first human, since the term for human in Hebrew is usually also understood as "*adam*."⁴¹ Therefore, when the Qur'an explicitly declares in some verses that God asked the angels to bow before Adam, is it to be understood the first Adam, or is it understood to be a human (*adam*)?⁴² This is especially important, because in the verses that use the term "*bashar*," instead of Adam, this term means flesh, but it can also be understood generally as a human. Therefore, if we do adopt the definition of Adam to be synonymous with "*bashar*," which means a human, then understanding the Qur'anic usage of Adam can be somewhat vague. From a linguistic perspective, Adam may be understood either as the first human or as simply a human, "*adam*," and more precisely, flesh (skin).⁴³

There is no evidence that the Akkadian usage of "*adam*" carries the meaning of man or human, but that it is used to mean dark, red, red soil, and red blood.⁴⁴ This meaning is also carried over in other Semitic languages.⁴⁵ Its relationship with blood (*dm*) is obvious in all Semitic languages.⁴⁶ There have been suggestions to its relation with "*dmh/dmy*,"⁴⁷ which is the term used in Genesis 1:26 stating that "*adam*" was created in the likeness (*demot*) of God. In Arabic, the term "*dm*" is rooted in "*d m y*,"⁴⁸ which also holds the meaning of likeness. This is attested in the usage of "*dumya*" for a statue or a doll, as in the sense that it is an image.⁴⁹ This brings further the relationship between Genesis 1:26, which states the creation of "*adam*" in the image and likeness (*demot*) of

God, and the Qur'anic usage of forming of flesh using the term "*sawwaytuhu*," which is made equal and like.

The term "*adam*" has various polysemous meanings:⁵⁰ "*adam*" can mean a mixture,⁵¹ and as such the name Adam is given as he is created from mud, which is a mixture of clay and water.⁵² Also, "*adam*" can mean meat or bread.⁵³ The term also means skin.⁵⁴ The term "*adamah*" means inner layer of the skin (dermis), while the surface layer (epidermis) is called "*bashrah*," which is rooted in "*bashar*."⁵⁵ Therefore, when the Qur'an discusses the prostration of the angels to "*adam*" (i.e., Qur'an 2:34, 7:11, 17:61, 18:50, 20:116) or to the "*bashar*" (i.e., Qur'an 15:28–29, 38:71–72) whom He is creating, is it referring specifically to the first Adam, or to a human whom God creates and breathes into from His Spirit (without specifying a name)? As discussed earlier, it is even possible to understand that if the Qur'an argues that the creation of Jesus is similar to that of Adam, then it might even be referring to Jesus and asking the angels to prostrate to him. Although the Septuagint translation of the Bible shows a verse speaking of a person whom the angels obey, it is important to note that the midrash relates that after the angels were told of the creation of Adam in God's image, some objected.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, after Adam's creation, the angels mistook him for a divine being and wanted to call him "Holy" (*kiddush*). As a result, God caused Adam to fall asleep, so that the angels would know that Adam is not divine.⁵⁷ In the Qur'an, the story is related that when the angels were told of the creation of Adam, they questioned this since they praised and called upon the name of God as "Holy," while the human was not righteous (i.e., Qur'an 2:30). There are various parallels in the story of Adam's creation between Jewish and Muslim literature, which are not within the scope of this example.⁵⁸

Throne of God

As seen earlier, it may be inferred from the Qur'an that the flesh is created in the same way that God establishes on Its Throne. Therefore, perhaps the human flesh before which the angels were asked to prostrate has become the Throne of God, where Its Spirit resides. There is a possibility that this is an inner-Qur'anic allusion. If we consider the human flesh to be the Throne of God, then it can also mean that the human flesh is the Temple of God. According to the Gospel of John, Jesus seems to have referred to his own body as a temple.

¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

²⁰ They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.⁵⁹

If we consider the creation of human flesh as described by the Qur'an as a description of the Throne of God or His Bodily Temple, then the Qur'anic text may not necessarily contradict the Gospel on the concept of the Temple of the Body, and this is especially seen in the example given in Chapter 5 about the term "*ibn Allah*." Muḥammad may not have been speaking against the concept of the Incarnation of the

Word, according to the Christian sectarian milieu of his time. Also, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Son and the Throne of God are brought together within the context of the angels' prostration (i.e., Hebrews 1:6–8).

The Presence of God is known as the *Shekhinah* in Judaic thought.⁶⁰ The *Shekhinah* is cognate to *al-Sakinah*, which is mentioned in the Qur'an (i.e., Qur'an 9:26, 9:40, 48:26). However, *al-Sakinah* is not typically understood as the Spirit of God by classical Muslim commentators. It is understood as the calmness and comfort that God bestows upon the hearts of believers.⁶¹ Classical commentators suggest that *al-Sakinah* is linguistically related to "*sukūn*," which means calmness.⁶² Al-Simnānī's (d. 736/1336) interpretations of *al-Sakinah* are that it is divine emanation (*fayḍ*).⁶³ Yet, the term "*sakinah*" is rooted in "*sakan*," which also means dwelling place.⁶⁴ Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī (d. 1402/1981) states the possibility that *al-Sakinah* is the Spirit.⁶⁵ It is possibly the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God dwelling (*sakan*) in the believer's heart. If the Spirit of God makes the heart inside the flesh Its dwelling place (*sakan*), then it may imply the heart becoming the House or Temple of God, and as such the place of the Throne of God. The inner-Qur'anic allusion of using the term "*sawwaytuhu*" and "*istawa*" may then bring this symbolic understanding in Muḥammad's state of mind. After all, the Hebrew term "*shwh*," cognate to the Arabic "*swy*," also holds the meaning of calmness (e.g., Psalm 131:2).

Incarnation of the Word

The Incarnation of the Word in the form of Jesus Christ is a mystery to the early Christian community. It was a subject of heated debates in the early Church and the cause of various theories (heresies) on the nature of Christ. Arius (d. 336 CE) considers the Son of God second in rank to God the Father. To Arius, the Son of God cannot be God, because the Son may change and swerve, while God in the Bible says, "I am, I am, and I change not."⁶⁶ Arius was denounced as a heretic in the First Council of Nicaea in 325. Athanasius (d. 373 CE) played a major role in denouncing Arius' views, and was credited with what has later been known as the pseudo-Athanasian Creed.⁶⁷ However, Christology or the nature of Christ is not an issue in this chapter.⁶⁸

Since the creation of human flesh is analyzed textually, above, from the Qur'an, it is also important to compare textually the Incarnation from the Bible. The theological nature of Christ is not precisely evident from the Bible. However, what is evident from the Gospel of John is that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (i.e., John 1:14). To keep it in simple terms, the Gospel of John seems to be talking about a Word, which is apparently divine in nature becoming flesh. The Qur'an seems to be talking about the Spirit of God also taking the form of flesh. "Seems" and "apparently" are used here because I am not comparing the theological schools of thought in their interpretation of these verses, but simply comparing the texts. Muḥammad would have had access to the text of the Gospels and would have made his creative allusions linguistically, but I cannot tell for sure.

As in the history of Christianity there have been various schools of thought on the nature of the Word and the relationship of the Son to the Father,⁶⁹ so within Muslim history there are also various theological schools of thought on the nature of the Spirit

of God, as to whether it is a creature (created) or of the same essence as God. Al-Dārmī (d. 255/893), for example, differentiates between the Word of God and the Spirit of God.⁷⁰ According to him, the Word of God is uncreated, while the Spirit of God is a creature. Abu Bakr al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990) relates that the spirits are created just as the bodies are created.⁷¹ However, in my opinion, there might be some confusion among classical Muslim scholars on the nature of the spirit (*rūḥ*) and the soul (*nafs*). Abu Bakr al-Kalābādhī, for example, does not discuss the nature of the soul. It seems that in his cosmology, a creature is made of body and spirit. Similarly, ‘Alī ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī (Ibn Ḥazm) also asserts that the spirit is a creature, by providing evidence that people’s spirits are punished in Hell.⁷² Here, again, it seems there might be some confusion between spirit (*rūḥ*) and soul (*nafs*). The Qur’an seems to imply the creation of souls (i.e., Qur’an 4:1), but does not imply the creation of the Spirit.⁷³ Actually, in the process of creation of human flesh, it seems that the Qur’an states that the flesh is created from clay, but the Spirit is breathed from God. It is not necessarily evident that the Spirit is equated with the soul according to the Qur’an, but that they are distinct entities. As such, it seems many classical Muslim scholars might have confused the spirit with the soul. Actually, Ibn Ḥazm explicitly claims that the terms “soul (*nafs*),” “spirit (*rūḥ*),” and “breath (*nasmah*)” are synonymous.⁷⁴

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah affirms that the Spirit is a creature.⁷⁵ He states that Christians believe that the Spirit of God is from God’s essence and that the same essence is inside the body of Christ.⁷⁶ As such, Christ is uncreated, because he is of the same essence as God. He even states that some Shī‘ī schools of thought consider the Spirit of Adam in the same way as Christians consider Christ; he argues against this Shī‘ī belief, and he even refers to Ibn Taymiyyah’s argument on the Spirit being a creature.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, in Twelver Shī‘ī thought, the Spirit of God, which is bestowed upon Adam, is also considered a creature.⁷⁸ It is also related by Imām al-Bāqir⁷⁹ (d. 144/733) and Imām al-ṣādiq⁸⁰ (d. 148/765) that the Spirit is a creature with vision, strength, and help that God bestows on the hearts of messengers and believers.⁸¹ Al-Majlisī explicitly responds to Christian theology by suggesting that the Holy Spirit is a creature and not uncreated.⁸² The Incarnation of the divinity is not completely alien in some Muslim thought, to which Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah might have been responding. The Ismā‘īlīs, and more specifically the Druze doctrine, have the concept of God in man (*lāhūt wa nāsūt*).⁸³

The Confession of Chalcedon asserts that Christ is acknowledged in two natures, which are united in one Persona and Subsistence.⁸⁴ Certain churches did not recognize this creed and have become known as non-Chalcedonian Churches or the Oriental Orthodox Churches.⁸⁵ The Coptic Church also retained Cyril of Alexandria’s formula of the Incarnation, where Christ is to be acknowledged *from* two natures, instead of *in* two natures. The Coptic Church maintains that at the union of the divine and human nature, Christ only had a single nature synthesized from those two. This is in contrast to the Confession of Chalcedon where both natures of Christ are preserved even in the union. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274 CE) wrote a full treatise dealing with the nature of the Incarnation in his *Summa Theologica*, stating:

As Damascene says, the Divine Nature is said to be incarnate because It is united to flesh personally, and not that It is changed into flesh. So likewise, the flesh is said

to be deified, as he also says, not by change, but by union with the Word, its natural properties still remaining, and hence it may be considered as deified, inasmuch as it becomes the flesh of the Word of God, but not that it becomes God.⁸⁶

If we take Thomas Aquinas' interpretation of Christology, it seems evident that he asserts the Confession of Chalcedon of the two natures of Christ united into a single persona, yet distinct. He clearly states that the flesh is deified just because it is united with the Word, but the flesh is not God. It is the Word that is inside the flesh that makes the flesh deified, but the flesh remains distinct and would not in itself be considered God. If we take that interpretation into consideration and compare it with the Qur'anic text, that God created the flesh and hence the flesh is not God, because it is created and only after creation is the flesh breathed into from God's Spirit, then it is possible to imagine that the Qur'an perhaps adopts a Thomas Aquinas interpretation of the union between a divine entity and human flesh. R. C. Zaehner interprets the Qur'an as thus:

The Incarnation of Christ, then, breathed from the Spirit of God, is thus regarded as an event as momentous as the original creation or the universal resurrection at the end of time. This would seem to indicate that Muḥammad must, again unconsciously, be reproducing the Christian idea of Christ as the new Adam and as the 'first fruits' of the resurrection.⁸⁷

Zaehner interprets Qur'an 3:59 and Qur'an 19:34 as follows: "Christ, then, in the Qur'ān, would appear to be both the Word of God and therefore divine, and truly man, but He is not the 'son' of God for reasons that we have already explained (i.e., Christ is not the physical son of God)."⁸⁸

This section deals with a textual comparison between the Gospel and the Qur'an. It appears that Christians and Muslims debate this issue, not because their scriptures necessarily contradict, but simply because of their interpretation of Christology. As shown in the earlier examples, Muḥammad might have had a different view of theology and Christology than that adopted by later Muslims. Later Muslims perhaps wanted to be distinct from their Jewish and Christian peers. As such, Muslim thought on the matter would not go far beyond the already existing debates between the early churches, where inherited tradition continues to have consequences to this day among the various denominations. However, what Muḥammad had in mind might have not necessarily been different to the already charged debates of the early Church.

The Qur'an does not explicitly show that the Spirit is created. As interpretations were attempted, various theological schools of thought, in both Christian and Islamic history, sprang up to attempt to understand the nature of the Spirit and the fusion of the Spirit into a human body. Those different theologies exist within each of those traditions. Just as Arianism and Nestorianism appear in the Christian tradition due to differing interpretations of, and not because they believed in a different, scripture, then perhaps seeming differences between the Qur'an and the Gospel[s] on the issue of the Incarnation of the Logos in the form of Jesus Christ are also dependent on the interpretation of the text. It does not necessarily show that scriptures themselves are in contradiction. This might mean that Muḥammad had some knowledge of the Christian

milieu, and appeared to adopt certain theology and Christology into the Qur'an without attempting to contradict the Gospel[s]. As some would be aware that if the Qur'an seems to somehow portray human flesh with a divine Spirit united together, then it may contradict the Qur'anic verses stating, "They indeed have disbelieved who say, 'God is the Messiah, son of Mary.'" ⁸⁹ However, it may be difficult to determine whether the Qur'an is stating that the Father is not equal to the Son, or as Günther Risse ⁹⁰ suggests, that the Qur'an in these passages is denying a Monophysite Christology. ⁹¹

Although this section does not deal with the theological implications of the Qur'anic interpretations on the Throne of God as a human being, it is interesting to note a dialogue between Abu Ra'ita and a Muslim on the theological implication of believing God sitting on the Throne and the Incarnation. A Muslim objection could be that God cannot be simultaneously in heaven and incarnated. However, Abu Ra'ita, a miaphysite Jacobite theologian in the early ninth century CE, attempted to find evidence from the Qur'an that agrees to such a Christian belief. ⁹² Abu Ra'ita focused on the Muslim belief of God establishing on His Throne as means for a theological dialogue with the Christian belief in Incarnation. The issue Abu Ra'ita was trying to convey is that if Muslims believe that God can be in heaven and on His Throne simultaneously without necessarily dividing God in parts, then theologically it would not be different to how a Christian believes that God is in heaven while incarnated simultaneously either. ⁹³

The Throne and the Temple

Apparently, the Qur'an considers Adam (or a human) to be created from clay. When he is "established" as God "establishes on His Throne," and God breathes into him from Its "Spirit," then the angels are to bow down before him. This could be perhaps an allusion that the said human has become a *qiblah*, the House or Temple of God, and the Throne of God. It is also apparent from the Qur'an that Jesus is made in the same way as Adam. Therefore, it might also be possible that God commanded the angels to bow before Jesus, according to the Qur'an. From the Qur'an, one might conclude that God created the human from clay, which is human in nature, but breathed into it from Its Spirit, which could be divine in nature. Therefore, this human whom God created and breathed into from Its Spirit might seem to have dual natures, a human nature and a divine. The Qur'an also explicitly portrays Jesus as a Spirit from God (i.e., Qur'an 4:171). The clay seemed to have been created, as the Qur'an explicitly suggests, but the Spirit is debatable, as the Qur'an is not explicit in its nature, and perhaps does not even want to discuss the matter deeply (e.g., Qur'an 17:85). If the Spirit was not a mystery and had a simple definition, perhaps the Qur'an would have defined it explicitly, as the interpreters have. Since the Qur'an does not explicitly define it, then this could be a cause of contemplation of the Spirit's nature. ⁹⁴ Do we interpret scriptures in light of theology or do we interpret theology in light of scriptures? This is a theologian's chicken and egg question.

Conclusion

If we leave theology aside and simply compare scriptures between the Gospel[s] and the Qur'an, then scriptures do not seem to be in contradiction on the matter of the

formation of Christ. Perhaps Jesus is flesh from clay, as even the Gospel[s] show that he had a body, although the Gnostics have argued against this in the past, but his spirit is God's Spirit.⁹⁵ Although the concept of the Incarnation is a mystery, if in simple terms it refers to some flesh from clay with God's Spirit or divine Logos inside it, then we can conclude something from that. The Qur'an also literally states that flesh is made from clay and breathed into from God's Spirit. Also, Qur'an 3:59 suggests that Jesus' body was from clay and then God says to it "be" (*kn*), which as described earlier is how the Qur'an interprets John's Logos. So this "*kn*" resided within that flesh. If that is what the Incarnation is all about, then scriptural texts do not contradict each other. Muslim theologians may have taken an Arian or a Nestorian Christology, but the texts alone do not necessarily contradict. This might mean that Muḥammad did not explicitly speak against the Gospel[s]' teachings, especially in light of the Qur'an asking the people of the Gospel[s] to follow the Gospel[s] (i.e., Qur'an 5:46, 5:66, 5:68).

By using intertextual polysemy for Qur'anic hermeneutics and identifying the possibility of using Qur'anic allusions that the flesh is perhaps the Throne of God, then it seems there is more to the Spirit than just mere creation and an invitation for further dialogue on the matter. The Christian-Muslim dialogue on the Incarnation does not seem to have arisen from contradictory scriptures, but from the interpretations thereof. Since the early churches had to undergo various ecumenical councils in an attempt to unite the churches, then we may not necessarily view Christian-Muslim debates to be anything but ecumenical councils, which are simply debating matters of Christology because of their interpretation of scriptures, and not because the text of their scriptures is necessarily in contradiction. As such, we must ask ourselves again whether we interpret theology in light of scriptures, or scriptures in light of theology.

The Water of Life, the Logos, and the Messiah

This example shows intertextualities between the Qur'an and the Bible, and perhaps more specifically of the Water of Life, its relationship with the Logos, and the Messiah, who as argued earlier the Qur'an interprets him being begotten through "*takwīn*" instead of "*tawlīd*." The intertextualities are somewhat intensive and would suggest that Muḥammad was in a state with low latent inhibition, making creative connections. The Qur'an states in the following passage that water makes every living thing. I postulate that this is perhaps a reference by the Qur'an for the Water of Life.

³⁰ Have those who disbelieve not considered that the heavens and the earth were sewn together and We rent them asunder? And We made every living thing from water. Will they not, then, believe? ³¹ And We placed firm mountains in the earth, lest it shake beneath them, and We made wide tracts between them as paths, that haply they may be guided. ³² And We made the sky a canopy preserved; yet they turn away from its signs. ³³ He it is Who created the night and the day, the sun and the moon, each gliding in an orbit. ³⁴ We have not ordained perpetual life for any human being before thee. So if thou diest, will they abide forever? ³⁵ Every soul shall taste death. We try you with evil and with good, as a test, and unto Us shall you be returned.⁹⁶

Looking carefully at these verses, the Qur'an seems to be saying that everything lives via water (i.e., Qur'an 21:30). It continues to state that no physical flesh (*bashar*) had eternal life (i.e., Qur'an 21:34) and that every soul (*nafs*) tastes death (i.e., Qur'an 21:35). Since the Qur'an is talking about life and death in these passages, then there is a likelihood that the water mentioned in Qur'an 21:30 is a reference to the Water of Life, in which it is not the physical flesh (*bashar*) that receives it according to Qur'an 21:34, but the soul (*nafs*), which is dead according to Qur'an 21:35.

There is a resemblance between these Qur'anic passages and the story of creation in Genesis. The first point of intertextuality is that the heavens and the earth were one and they were split. In Genesis 1:1 the term used for God creating the heavens and the earth is "*bara*." Among its various meanings, such as create, it specifically means to fashion by cutting or splitting.⁹⁷ *Lisān al-ʿArab* shows that "*bara*" is synonymous with the term "*khlq*."⁹⁸ Besides meaning to portion, to measure, and to make smooth, the term "*khlq*" also means to split and to divide, as it would mean fashioning or creating via the process of division and the Hebrew Bible uses the term "*khlq*" specifically in the meaning to split and to divide.⁹⁹ The Hebrew term "*br*," is also associated with the meaning to separate and to divide.¹⁰⁰ When Genesis 1:1 states that God "*bara*" the heavens and the earth, it would mean God divided the heavens and the earth. This presumes that the heavens and the earth were a single entity and then divided or that the heavens and the earth were each a single entity and split, as the heavens split with rain and the earth split with plants.¹⁰¹ Perhaps allegorically, the heavens and the earth were joined together and then split, just as Adam (made of earth) was in Paradise (in heaven) before the Fall, and then they were split apart from each other (i.e., Qur'an 2:35–39, 7:19–25, 20:117–123).

The second point of intertextuality between the above Qur'anic passages and Genesis is the term "*rtq*." In a tradition attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās, when he was asked what came first, day or night, he answered that the heavens and the earth were "*rtq*," defining "*rtq*" as darkness.¹⁰² This would also resemble Genesis 1:1, where darkness was over the face of the deep, before God said let there be Light in Genesis 1:3. The third point of intertextuality is the water in Qur'an 21:30 and Genesis 1:2, which I will return to after discussing the rest of the points of intertextuality. The fourth point is the term "*fijāj*," which resembles the Qur'anic call to Ḥajj that people will come from deep valleys (*fajj ʿamīq*) (i.e., Qur'an 22:27).¹⁰³ So, there is the earth, and there are the depths of the earth (*fijāj*). This resembles that there was darkness in the deep, according to Genesis 1:2. The midrash interprets the deep as Hell or the dwelling place of the dead,¹⁰⁴ connecting it with Daniel 2:22 and with this verse in Proverbs:¹⁰⁵ ¹⁰⁶ "But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are deep (*ʿimqi*) in the realm of the dead (*sheol*)."¹⁰⁶

Since Qur'an 21:35 discusses death and if Genesis 1:2 alludes to the deep, which is the place of death, according to the midrash, then it might further connect the Qur'anic passages with Genesis making it the fifth point of intertextuality. The sixth point of intertextuality between the above Qur'anic passages and Genesis is the heavens and the signs of the heavens. Qur'an 21:32 discusses the heavens as a ceiling, which would resemble the expanse in Genesis 1:6–8. Also, Qur'an 21:32 states that there are signs (*āyāt*) in the heavens, which are elaborated in Qur'an 21:33 to be the division (*khlq*) of

the night and day, and the sun and the moon. This would resemble the following verses in Genesis:

¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs (*utut*) to mark sacred times, and days and years,¹⁵ and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so.¹⁶ God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars.¹⁷ God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth,¹⁸ to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good.¹⁰⁷

Genesis 1:14 talks about signs in the heavens using the Hebrew term "*utut*," which is cognate to the Arabic "*āyāt*" mentioned in Qur'an 21:32. Also, Genesis 1:14 states that these signs are used to count seasons (*mo'adim*), days, and years, which is the purpose of having night and day, and the sun and moon in Qur'an 21:33. Genesis 1:16 is explicit that God made two great lights in the heavens, the greater light to rule the day, which is the sun, and the lesser light to rule the night, which is the moon. Also, counting seasons uses the term "*mo'adim*," which means appointed times, and is sometimes used for the times of festivals in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Leviticus 23:4), which brings us to the "*ahilla*" (new moons) in Qur'an 2:189 that are considered *mawāqīt* (appointed times) for Ḥajj. The midrash is specific that these signs for knowing the "*mo'adim*" in Genesis 1:14 are references to the three pilgrimages mentioned in the Torah.¹⁰⁸ The midrash connects Genesis 1:14 with this verse in the Psalms:¹⁰⁹ "He made the moon to mark the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down."¹¹⁰ Textually, Qur'an 21:30–35 show significant intertextuality with Genesis 1. This brings us back to the water, which is found in Qur'an 21:30 and Genesis 1:2. Similar to Genesis 1, which talks about the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days, the following Qur'anic verse also states the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days and that the Throne of God was on water, which may be similar to the Spirit of God hovering on the surface of the water in Genesis 1:2. "He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, while His Throne was upon the water, that He may try you as to which of you is most virtuous in deed. Yet if thou sayest, 'Truly you shall be resurrected after death,' the disbelievers will surely say, 'This is naught but manifest sorcery!'"¹¹¹

The midrash states that the Spirit of God that hovered over the face of the waters in Genesis 1:2 is a reference to the Messiah.¹¹² According to Rashi's (d. 1105 CE) commentary on Genesis 1:2, he interprets the Spirit of God as the Throne of Glory that was suspended in the air and hovered over the waters,¹¹³ making further intertextuality between Genesis 1 and Qur'an 11:7. However, since Rashi is a medieval Jewish scholar, he may or may not have been impacted by the Qur'an. If there is intertextuality between the above verse and Genesis 1, then we can also see further intertextuality between the that verse and Qur'an 21:30–35, in which both of these passages talk about death and life. There is a possibility, therefore, that the water that makes every living thing alive in Qur'an 21:30 is a reference to the Water of Life. When interpreting Genesis, the midrash states that the Throne of Glory was among the first things made, connecting it with

Psalm 93:2, and emphasizing the relationship between Qur'an 21:30–35, Qur'an 11:7, and Genesis 1.¹¹⁴ However, there is further intertextuality that may be perceived: all the Qur'anic passages that discuss the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days are allusions to Genesis. For example, consider the following passage:

Truly your Lord is God, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then mounted the Throne. He causes the night to cover the day, which pursues it swiftly; and the sun, the moon, and the stars are made subservient by His Command (*bi-amrih*). Do not creation and command (*al-amr*) belong to Him? Blessed is God, Lord of the worlds (*al-'ālamīn*)!¹¹⁵

As in the previous passages, the establishment on the Throne may be perceived as the Throne of Glory, which might be the interpretation of the Spirit of God hovering over the waters in Genesis 1:2. The creation of the sun, moon, and stars in the above passage is in connection with Genesis 1:14. Also, another keyword in this passage is the term "*amrih*" and "*amr*." This might also be an allusion to the Spirit of God corresponding to the Qur'anic definition of the Spirit, which is from the "*amr*" of God (i.e., Qur'an 17:85). Also, in Genesis, when it states that "God said," it also uses the Hebrew term "*amr*" (e.g., Genesis 1:3, 1:6, 1:9, 1:11, 1:14, 1:20, 1:24, 1:26, 1:28, 1:29).

There is also a possible connection between the above passage and Qur'an 21:34 in the discussion of eternal life. Although the term "*al-'ālamīn*" is used many times in the Qur'an and is assumed to denote the worlds,¹¹⁶ the word may also suggest eternity and everlastingness.¹¹⁷ The following Qur'anic passages that also mention the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days may also be an allusion to Genesis.

³ Truly your Lord is God, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then mounted the Throne, directing the affair (*yudabbir al-amr*). There is no intercessor, save by His Leave. That is God, your Lord; so worship Him! Will you not remember?

⁴ Unto Him is your return all together; God's Promise is true. Verily He originates creation, then He brings it back, that He may recompense with justice those who believe and perform righteous deeds. As for the disbelievers, theirs shall be a drink of boiling liquid and a painful punishment for having disbelieved. ⁵ He it is Who made the sun a radiance, and the moon a light, and determined for it stations, that you might know the number of years and the reckoning [of time]. God did not create these, save in truth. He expounds the signs for a people who know. ⁶ Surely in the variation of the night and the day and whatsoever God has created in the heavens and on the earth are signs for a people who are reverent.¹¹⁸

These passages also have much intertextuality between them and Genesis. Qur'an 10:3 discusses the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days, which is in relation to Genesis 1, as the first point of intertextuality. The establishment on the Throne is likened to the establishment on the Throne of Glory, which is the allusion of the Spirit of God hovering over the waters in Genesis 1:2, as a second point of intertextuality. Similar to the previous example, the use of the keyword "*amr*" is also an allusion to the Spirit of God, as a third point of intertextuality.

Another keyword used in Qur'an 10:3 is the term "*yudabbir*," which would be the fourth point of intertextuality. The term "*dabar*" is polysemous with various meanings. According to *Lisān al-ʿarab*, it means behind, back, or that which comes afterward, and much of the Arabic meanings sprout from this definition.¹¹⁹ It also means death or the plague,¹²⁰ as physical death typically comes afterward. The term "*tadabbur*" means "*tafakkur*" as it comes after obtaining knowledge and then discerning and contemplating it.¹²¹ The term "*yudabbir*" also means to talk and to speak.¹²² It also means to write.¹²³ In Hebrew and Aramaic, it also means speech or word, as speech is to say words,¹²⁴ or pasture and wilderness.¹²⁵ A "*dibr*" or "*dabbūr*" is a bee or a wasp,¹²⁶ and is possibly called that due to the stinger located on its back. In Hebrew, besides the above definitions of the root "*dabar*," the term also means rafts or floats.¹²⁷

The term "*yudabbir al-amr*" in Qur'an 10:3 has a multidimensional significance in its intertextuality with Genesis and the Gospel of John.¹²⁸ Since the term "*yudabbir*" means to speak and the term "*amr*" means to speak and to command,¹²⁹ as Genesis 1 shows plenteous times that God says commands using the term "*amr*," then the term "*yudabbir al-amr*" may be an allusion to Genesis 1. Since the Qur'an defines the Spirit with the term "*amr*" (i.e., Qur'an 17:85) and the midrash defines the Spirit of God in Genesis as the Messiah,¹³⁰ then the term "*yudabbir al-amr*" in Qur'an 10:3 might also be an allusion to the Messiah, especially since the Qur'an also defines the Messiah as a Spirit from God (i.e., Qur'an 4:171). Both the Qur'an and the Gospel of John define the Messiah as the Logos or the Word of God (e.g., Qur'an 4:171, John 1:1). Another term for the Word is "*dabar*." Andreas Köstenberger relates John's Logos with the Hebrew Bible's "*dbr*."¹³¹ John Ronning suggests that the Johannine Logos might be related to the Aramaic term for word (*ma'mara*), which shares the same root as "*amr*," that are found in Jewish targums.¹³² The term "*amr*" is sometimes rendered as "*logos*" in the Septuagint (e.g., Proverbs 1:2, Isaiah 41:26). In the Hebrew Bible, the term "*dbr*" is also sometimes used in the sense of commandments or regulations from God,¹³³ and is sometimes conjoined with the term "*amr*" (e.g., Psalm 147:15), which can also hold the same sense.¹³⁴ The Qur'an typically uses "*amr*" in the sense of command. Exodus 20:1 uses both terms "*dbr*" and "*amr*," when God reveals Himself and provides the Ten Commandments.

The Hebrew Bible sometimes uses the term "*dabar*" as a Word of God or a message from God (e.g., Judges 3:20, 1 Samuel 9:27, 1 Chronicles 17:3),¹³⁵ and the term in the Septuagint is sometimes also rendered as "*logos*" (e.g., Judges 3:20, 1 Chronicles 17:3). The term "*amr*" is also used as a vehicle for a message given by messenger(s) (e.g., Genesis 32:3–4, Judges 11:12–15).¹³⁶ As such, if the Qur'an considers the Messiah as a Word of God, then perhaps the word (*dbr* or *amr*) is a message and therefore, the Messiah might be the message (word) from God calling Jesus a "*rasūl Allah*" (messenger of God) (i.e., Qur'an 4:171). It might be understood that as the Word (*dbr* or *amr*) of God, the Messiah is both the message and the messenger. As such, textually, the Qur'an calling the Messiah a messenger of God (*rasūl Allah*) should not be seen as a derogatory term opposing any Christian Christology.

Etymologically, the term "*amr*" might mean to be bright, to make visible, to see, or to inform.¹³⁷ In Ugaritic, it means to see or to make visible, which has similar meanings in Akkadian and Ethiopic.¹³⁸ This suggests that this etymology is perhaps ancient, as it

crosses over different Semitic languages geographically. The Arabic term “*amārah*,” meaning sign,¹³⁹ would possibly descend from such an etymology. Genesis 1 shows the use of “*amr*” many times to bring into existence many things, as discussed earlier, and then calls some of these things, “*utut*” (signs), which is cognate to “*āyāt*” that the Qur’an uses. Perhaps the “*amr*” of God is understood as a sign (*āyah*). Perhaps, it is God making things visible or known. The TDOT discusses scholars considering speaking (*amr*) to be etymologically connected to making thoughts visible.¹⁴⁰

There are many forms of intertextual parallelism that can be obtained between the first chapter of Genesis and the first chapter of the Gospel of John, as discussed earlier.¹⁴¹ The first one is how John starts his Gospel by adopting the same phraseology as Genesis with, “In the beginning,” which is “*en arche*,” the same used in the Septuagint translation of Genesis. However, to add into this intertextuality, the Gospel of John states that everything was made through the Word (i.e., John 1:3). According to Genesis 1, every time God made something, it uses the term “*amr*.” If the Word is “*dabar*” and the Qur’an uses the term “*yudabbir al-amr*,” then the Qur’an might be alluding to the Messiah as the “*dabar*” (Word), which is the “*amr*” stated in Genesis 1. As such, everything was made through the word in Genesis attesting to John 1:3. Also, in the midrashic interpretation of Genesis 1:3, it states that the heavens were made through a word (*dabar*), citing this verse from the Psalms:¹⁴² “By the word (*debar*) of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath (*ruah*) of His mouth their entire host.”¹⁴³

As the midrash cites this verse in its interpretation to Genesis 1:3, it is worth noting the intertextuality between the term for breath and Spirit (*ruah*) in Genesis 1:2. The entire host of the heavens in Psalm 33:6 would be their luminaries, such as the sun, moon, and stars in Genesis 1:14. Therefore, since Psalm 33:6 equates the word (*dabar*) with the Spirit (*ruah*), and since the midrash equates the Spirit of God with the Messiah,¹⁴⁴ then the Messiah is the Word (*dabar*), and that word is the “*amr*” in Genesis 1, in which everything was made through. According to Genesis 1:3, the word that is uttered is “*yhy*,” which means “be.” According to Exodus 3:14, God identifies Himself with the term “be” in the following passage. “¹⁴ God said (*yo’mer*) to Moses, ‘I am who I am (*ehyeh asher ehyeh*).’ And He said (*yo’mer*), ‘Say (*to’mar*) this to the people of Israel: ‘I am (*ehyeh*) has sent me to you.’”¹⁴⁵

The name of God is further explicated in Exodus as Yahweh in the following passage: “² God spoke (*yedabbir*) to Moses and said (*yo’mer*) to him, ‘I am (*yhwh*).’ ³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name (*yhwh*) I did not make myself known to them.”¹⁴⁶

Genesis 1:3 states that God “said” using the term “*amr*.” The first thing said is the word “*yhy*.” God identifies Himself as the term “*ehyeh*” in Exodus 3:14 and as Yahweh in Exodus 6:2–3. Hence, God identifies Himself with the first word It says (*amr*) in Genesis. Therefore, linking Psalm 33:6 with Genesis 1:3, the first word (*debar*) that comes out of God’s breath (or Spirit) (*ruah*) is “*yhy*,” which is in itself identified as God, according to Exodus. As such, John identifies the Word (*dabar*) that God says (*amr*) as “*yhy*,” which in itself is the name of God, “*ehyeh*” or Yahweh, and that according to Genesis, God made everything through it. Perhaps with such interpretation and logical thinking by John, he states the following:

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was in the beginning with God.³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men.⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.¹⁴⁷

John starts his Gospel introducing the Messiah by interpreting Genesis. Genesis 1:2 states that darkness was over the face of the deep, which the midrash interprets as Hell or the realm of the dead, as discussed earlier. According to Genesis 1:3, the darkness was overcome when God said, "Let there be light." The midrash suggests that the light in Genesis 1:3 is a reference to the Messianic age.¹⁴⁸ As such, John 1:5 speaks of the light from Genesis 1:3 to overcome the darkness from Genesis 1:2. The darkness is also death, according to the midrash. Hence, as John contrasts the light with the darkness (i.e., John 1:5), so he is identifying the light specifically as life (i.e., John 1:4) to contrast it with death-like darkness. This brings us back to the Qur'anic passage that started all this. The water in Qur'an 21:30 has been argued earlier to be the Water of Life. As such, it confirms its own intertextuality not only with Genesis, but also with the Gospel of John, who is explicit in defining the light with life.¹⁴⁹

We have seen the extent of intertextuality between "*yudabbir al-amr*" in Qur'an 10:3 with other passages of the Qur'an that discuss the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days, as well as between it and the Hebrew Bible and the Gospel of John. In this analysis, it has been identified that "*dabar*" is the Word in John. There are other passages in the Qur'an that would support this argument. It has been argued that the Word in John is the Hebrew term "*yhy*," which is from its root "*h y h*." The Qur'an says the following about the term to "be," and its process in God's command (*amr*): "¹¹⁶ And they say, 'God has taken a child (*waladā*).' Glory be to Him! Rather, unto Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and on the earth. All are devoutly obedient to Him,¹¹⁷ the Originator of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees a thing, He only says to it, 'Be!' and it is (*kun fa-yakūn*)."¹⁵⁰

The above passages refer to the Messiah in that he is not begotten (*walad*) of God. To contrast it, Qur'an 2:117 talks about the primal origin of the heavens and the earth, making its allusion to the creation story in Genesis. It continues stating that the process of such origin is God's command (*amr*), which as described earlier is related to the Spirit (i.e., Qur'an 17:85) and to the creation story in Genesis, where the midrash defines the Spirit of God as the Messiah. Qur'an 2:117 continues to identify this "*amr*" with the term to "be" (*kn*). This makes the Qur'an identification of the commanding word of creation (*yudabbir al-amr*) with "*kn*," which is similar to John's interpretation that the Word is "*yhy*," as argued earlier. Here the Qur'an is attempting to distinguish between begotten from "*takwīn*" and begotten from "*tawlīd*." It denies that the Messiah "*tawallad*," but instead confirms that he is "*takawwan*," which could still mean begotten:

She said, "My Lord, how shall I have a child (*walad*) while no flesh [human] (*bashar*) being has touched me?" He said, "Thus does God create whatsoever He will." When He decrees a thing (*amran*), He only says to it, "Be!" and it is (*kun fa-yakūn*)!¹⁵¹

⁵⁹ 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 is¹⁵² (*kun fa-yakūn*).⁶⁰ The truth (*al-ḥaqq*) is from thy Lord; so be not among the doubters.¹⁵³

The above passages are in the same chapter and in an apparently similar context of introducing Jesus Christ. Similar to Qur’an 2:116–117, the above passages identify Jesus with the word “*kn*.” Another interesting keyword in Qur’an 3:60 is the use of the term “*al-ḥaqq*.” “He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in truth (*bil-ḥaqq*); and on the day He says ‘Be!’ and it is (*kun fa-yakūn*), His Word is the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*). And sovereignty is His on the Day when the trumpet is blown (*yunfakhu*), Knower of the Unseen and the seen; and He is the Wise, the Aware.”¹⁵⁴

The above passage is also related to Genesis, as it discusses the creation of the heavens and the earth through the word “*kn*.” Similar to Qur’an 3:60, it identifies this word or speech as the truth (*al-ḥaqq*). This may be seen to go in parallel with John 1:17, which states that the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁵ It relates the Messiah with truth. John 14:6 further identifies Jesus as the truth and the life. The *Mishnah* links “In the beginning God created” in Genesis 1:1 with this verse in the Psalms:¹⁵⁶ “The sum of Your word (*dabar*) is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.”¹⁵⁷

Here, the Psalm defines the Word (*dabar*) of God as truth. Another term to note in Qur’an 6:73 is “*yunfakh*,” which is also used for the Spirit of God (e.g., Qur’an 15:29, 21:91, 32:9, 38:72, 66:12). This might be an allusion to the Spirit of God in Genesis 1:2 and the Messiah. A different passage in the Qur’an also brings these keywords together: “³⁴ That is Jesus son of Mary—a statement of the truth (*al-ḥaqq*), which they doubt.³⁵ It is not for God to take a child (*walad*). Glory be to Him! When He decrees a thing, He only says to it, ‘Be!’ and it is (*kun fa-yakūn*).”¹⁵⁸

The above passages identify Jesus with the word of truth. Classical exegetes (*mufasssirūn*) provide two opinions on what the truth refers to, as some suggest that Jesus is himself the truth, while others opine that the statement made about Jesus is the truth.¹⁵⁹ If the Qur’an portrays that Jesus is the word of truth, it would be similar to John’s declaration that Jesus is truth and life (i.e., John 14:6). The Qur’an continues by denying that God begets using the term “*walad*” and instead affirms that God says the commanding (*amr*) word “*kn*” to generate, moving in parallel with the previous Qur’anic passages.

The Qur’anic passages discussed that state “*kun fa-yakūn*” are related to Jesus and the Messiah support the argument that the Qur’an interprets John’s definition of the Word as “be” (*kn*) (i.e., Qur’an 2:116–117, 3:47, 3:59–60, 19:34–35) with an indirect reference to the Messiah in Qur’an 6:73. The other Qur’anic references to the term “*kun fa-yakūn*” are references to resurrection, or in other words on the occasion of life and death. As discussed earlier, this may also be an allusion to John’s reference of the Messiah (i.e., John 1:4–5), while interpreting Genesis 1:2–3. For example, the following Qur’anic references may also be of the Word:

³⁸ And they swear by God their most solemn oaths [that] God will not resurrect those who die. Nay, but it is a promise binding (*ḥaqqan*) upon Him, though most

of humankind¹⁶⁰ know not.³⁹ [This is so] that He might make clear unto them that wherein they differed, and that those who disbelieved might know that truly they were liars.⁴⁰ And Our Word unto a thing, when We desire it, is only to say to it, "Be!" and it is (*kun fa-yakūn*).¹⁶¹

This passage uses the keyword "*ḥaqq*," which, as discussed earlier, may be a reference to the Messiah or to the word "*kn*" (be) complementing its use in Qur'an 3:59–60, 6:73 and 19:34–35. However, since the above passages discuss resurrection, then it would also complement Qur'an 21:34–35, as well as the interpretation of darkness in Genesis 1:2 by the midrash and the interpretation of Genesis 1:2–3 by John in his Gospel (i.e., John 1:4–5). The other passage in the Qur'an that uses the term "*kun fa-yakūn*" is the following. "He it is Who gives life and causes death. So when He decrees a thing (*amran*), He only says to it, 'Be!' and it is (*kun fa-yakūn*)."¹⁶²

Like the one before, this passage also discusses life and death, while implying that God can give life and death through the keywords "*amr*," which is related to the Spirit, and the commanding word "*kn*." As such, this might suggest that the water in Qur'an 21:30 is an actual reference to the Water of Life that resurrects a dead soul (and not necessarily flesh). Hereby, the intertextuality between the Qur'an, the Hebrew Bible, and the Gospel of John gives much of the interpretation of Genesis 1 and John 1 done by the Qur'an.