

Qur'ān and Hadith

EVERY VOLUME IN THE VAST LIBRARY of Islamic religious literature owes its inspiration, thematic content, and “technical” vocabulary in some measure to the Qur'ān and Hadith and to the countless scholars who dedicated their life's work to elucidating those sources. Knowledge of key themes in the Qur'ān and Hadith, and of the hermeneutical questions they raise, is essential to a fuller appreciation of the distinctly theological import of Islam's immense Prophetic legacy. The present chapter supplies the fundamentals of that knowledge.

THEOLOGICAL THEMES IN THE QUR'ĀN

A good deal of the Qur'ānic text is of genuinely theological significance, whether inherently or by implication. The overall *concept* of divine revelation comprises the single largest theological category. At its broadest, it embraces not only a host of self-referential observations on the nature of the revealed text itself but a large number of narrative texts on some two-dozen prophets, ranging in length from a few lines to the whole of sūra 12 with its literarily unified story of Joseph. Numerous brief texts allude to the Qur'ān's divine origin, purity, clarity, veracity, and undeniability (e.g., 2:2, 10:1–2, 15:1, 24:1, and *passim*). References to Muḥammad's role over some twenty-two years form the single largest subset of prophetic texts. Perhaps the second-most numerous category of theological texts consists of scores of often brief allusions to God's nature and relationship to His creation. References to a variety of specific “doctrinal” matters, from the nature of faith to eschatological themes, comprise a third major theological category.

Among the more important specific theological themes suggested in the Qur'ān are divine transcendence and immanence; revelation in creation and through prophets; and the question of human responsibility even in the face of God's perfect knowledge, freedom, and power. The first two themes, divine transcendence and immanence, bookend what is arguably the most fundamental of theological paradoxes—God's complete otherness melded with intense divine involvement with created realities. These two concepts, *tanzīh* (difference) and *tashbīh* (similarity), overlap in such a way that the distinction employed in this chapter is a matter of emphasis rather than an absolute dichotomy—a “coincidence of opposites.” The second pair, modes of divine disclosure, illustrates the pervasive nature of God's communication. And the last two concepts, divine omnipotence in tandem with human moral accountability, represent one of the most contentious of conundrums. All of these themes eventually became grist for the theological mill of subsequent generations of Muslims, some generating veritable storms of controversy. They represent a very small sample of the full array of theologically charged texts in this scripture. Here are some of the numerous, typically brief, passages that illustrate these themes.

Transcendence: Divine Throne and Footstool

God's transcendence and unlikeness to all that is not God (*tanzīh*) is fundamental to any understanding of Islamic theology. Countless short scriptural texts advert to the perfect divine transcendent unity (*tawhīd*), including several, like the celebrated Throne Verse, that incorporate important metaphors. Beginning with that text, here is a sample of key passages.

Texts

God—there is no deity but He; the Living, the Everlasting. Neither slumber nor sleep overcomes Him. To Him belong all that heavens and earth encompass. Who can intercede with Him, except by his leave? He knows all that surrounds [created beings], when they can grasp nothing of what He knows, except as He chooses. His Throne stretches across heaven and earth; sovereignty over them tires Him not, for He is the Exalted, the Magnificent. (2:255)

It is God who elevated the heavens without visible supporting pillars, then established Himself on the Throne, and made the sun and moon His subjects. Each [natural feature] moves along for a designated term, all matters under [divine] administration and [nature's] signs meticulously detailed so that perhaps you will believe in [your future] encounter with your Lord. (13:2)

It is God who fashioned the heavens and the earth and all that is between in six days, then established [Himself, or “sat”] upon the Throne. Apart from Him you have no protecting patron or intercessor. Will you not therefore be mindful? (32:4)

They do not measure accurately God’s true sovereignty: on Resurrection Day the entire earth will be [no more than] one handful [lit., a grasping], and the heavens will be enclosed in His right hand. Glory to Him who far transcends what the [idolators] associate with Him. (39:67)

Blessed be the one who owns dominion, whose power is all-pervasive. It is He who created death and life, to discern who among you were loftiest in action. He is the mighty, the forgiving. He spread out the seven heavens, and the merciful Lord’s work leaves nothing lacking. Examine it as you like, you will discover no blemish. (67:1–3; see also 57:1–6)

Worship the one who oversees all things. No [human] vision can encompass Him; rather it is He who encompasses all vision, and He is aware [of all things] in minutest detail. (6:102–3)

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In addition, a number of texts beautifully combine divine transcendence and immanence, thus providing a transition to a clearer articulation of immanence. Here is one such text: “Who responds to the one who calls out to Him in dire straits? And who removes evil [from you] and makes you [pl.] vicegerents of the earth? Is there [another deity] beside God? How little attention you pay. And who leads you in profound darkness on land and sea? And who dispatches, from the [depths of] His mercy, the winds with good news? Is there [another deity] beside God? God far transcends anything [idolaters] equate with Him” (27:62–63).

Immanence: The Verse of Light and God’s Anthropomorphic Features

Often less appreciated by non-Muslims are the numerous allusions to God’s accessibility and affinity with His creation (*tashbih*). Here the images of pervasive light and references to God’s face, eyes, and hands offer a sense of this dimension of the divine being. On the other hand, texts describe human beings as capable of surprisingly intimate connection with the Creator.

Texts

God is the light of heaven and earth. Picture His light as a niche within which there is a lamp, and the lamp is within a glass. And it is as though the glass were a glittering star lit from a sacred olive tree neither of east nor west, whose oil would fairly radiate even without the touch of fire. Light upon light, and God guides to His light whom He will. (24:35)

To God belong the east and the west and no matter where you turn, there is the face of God. Truly God is all-suffusing. . . (2:115)

I am truly near: I answer the prayer of the petitioner who beseeches me. Therefore let them respond to me and have faith in me, that they might receive guidance. (2:186)

Everything on earth perishes; but the face of your Lord remains, majestic and most revered. (55:26–27)

We created the human being and are aware of his most intimate thoughts; we are nearer to the individual than the jugular vein. Indeed, to his right and his left sit two [angels] intent on [his thoughts]; no expression of his eludes an attentive guardian. (50:16–18)

Your Lord knows what is concealed in the [idolaters'] inmost beings, and what they disclose. (28:69)

[God explains to Moses how He saved the prophet as an infant, telling his mother to cast the baby into the river, which would then deposit the vessel on the bank:] I surrounded you with my love so that you would be nurtured under my eye. (20:39)

The Jews say, "The hand of God is shackled." May their hands be shackled, and cursed may they be for what they assert! On the contrary, His two hands are expansive in their reach [so that God] lays out resources as He wishes. (5:64; see also 51:47)

God's hand rests on the hands of [those who pledged themselves to Muḥammad at Ḥudaybiya]. (48:10)

Know that God intervenes between the human being and his heart. (8:24)

There is no living being that God does not grasp by the forelock. (11:56)

It was He who fashioned the heavens and the earth in six days, and then sat upon the Throne. He knows what goes into the earth and what emerges from it, what descends from heaven and what ascends to it. He is with you wherever you may be, and God's vision (*baṣīr*) includes all you do. (57:4)

Do you not see that God knows what is in the heavens and what is on earth? Never will three converse privately but that He is the fourth; nor five,

but that He is the sixth—nor among fewer or more, but He is with them wherever they may be. (58:7)

Whether you conceal what is in your inmost being or divulge it, God knows it. (3:7)

When my servants ask you [Muḥammad] about Me, I am indeed near; I respond to the invocation of every petitioner who calls out to Me. (2:186)

On that Day, faces [of some will be] radiant as they gaze upon [or: toward] their Lord. (75:22–23)

Revelation in Creation and through Prophets

God's commissioning of an unbroken line of prophetic emissaries beginning with Adam forms the most evident theological medium of revelation in the formal sense. But the Qur'ān's consistent use of the striking imagery of signs (*āyāt*) on the horizons and within the individual person expands the concept of revelation considerably. One of the most evocative scriptural verses (*āyāt*) in this context even suggests that one could think of the earth herself as God's "first prophet." Referring to apocalyptic signs that the end has come, the text says, "On that day, she [earth] will publish her news, for your Lord will have revealed [that] to her" (99:4–5). The term translated here as "revealed" is from a root otherwise used almost exclusively to denote revelation to prophets (*awḥā*)—apart from the human prophets, God has communicated thus only with the earth and, curiously, the bee. I begin here with a sample of the many self-referential texts in which the Qur'ān describes its own revelatory credibility and a longer text on the specific issue of the scripture's "inimitability" (a hermeneutical theme to be addressed more fully in the next chapter) in the context of the public's demand for "miracles" from Muḥammad.

Texts

Truly this is a sending-down of the Lord of the Universe, with which there also descended to your heart the Trustworthy Spirit [i.e., Gabriel], so that you might be among those who give warning, in a pellucid Arabic tongue. (26:192–96)

[This is] a Book sent down to you [Muḥammad]—and let there be no constriction in the core of your being (*sadr*) because of it—so that through it you might warn the believers and bring them to mindfulness. [Addressed now to the people:] Adhere to what has been sent down to you [pl.] and do not pursue protecting friends other than Him. How fleeting is your mindfulness. (7:2–3)

[This is] a Book whose signs/verses are unambiguous, then laid out in detail by the One who is Wise, Aware. [Its message is that] you must not serve any but God. [Say, Muḥammad:] Truly to you [pl.] I have been sent from Him as a warner and a herald. (11:1–2)

These are the signs/verses of the clear Book. We have sent it down as an Arabic recitation [Qurʾān], so that perhaps you will understand. (12:1–2)

These are the signs/verses of the Book, and what has been sent down to you from your Lord is the perfect truth, though most human beings do not believe. (13:1)

[This is] a Book that We have sent down to you [Muḥammad], so that you might bring humankind out of darkness into the light, by permission of their Lord, to the Path of the One Almighty and Praiseworthy. (14:1)

When We substitute one sign/verse in place of another, and God knows best what He sends down [progressively], they say [to Muḥammad] “You are nothing but a charlatan [or: forger],” but most of them do not understand. Say: the Sanctified Spirit [Gabriel] has brought it down from our Lord in truth, in order to affirm those who believe and as a guidance and good news for those who surrender [to God]. Truly We know that they say, “A mere mortal instructs him.” The language to which they allude cynically is patently foreign, whereas this is a pellucid Arabic tongue. (16:101–3)

Say [Muḥammad:] Were all of humankind and the Jinn to assemble for the purpose of bringing the likes of this Qurʾān, they would not bring forth its counterpart, even if they colluded intently. And in this Qurʾān, we have truly explicated for humankind all manner of similitude. Still, the majority of humankind receives it ungratefully at best. They say, “We will not believe you [Muḥammad] until you bring forth a spring welling up from the earth for us; or [until] you own a garden of date palms and grapes, and make the rivers within them flow freely and copiously; or [until] you make the firmament fall, as you claim it will to put us to shame; or [until] you bring God and the angels forth; or [until] you own an ornate palace, or ascend into the heavens. No, indeed, even if you ascend, we will not believe until you send down to us a book that we can read.” Say [to them]: “Glory to my Lord! Am I anything other than a mortal man and a messenger?” (17:88–93)

Behold, in the heavens and the earth are signs for those who believe. And in your creation, and all the wild creatures He has scattered over the earth, are signs for a people of firm faith. And the alternation of night and day, and the sustenance that God sends down from the sky, to revive the earth after its death, and the shifting of the winds—these are signs for a people who

understand. . . . Here is vision for humankind, guidance and mercy. . . . (45:3–5, 20)

Among His signs are night and day, sun and moon. Do not bow to sun and moon in worship; worship instead the God who created them, if indeed you are among His servants. And even though human beings are [too] haughty, some in God's presence never tire of prostrating themselves before Him night and day. (41:37–38)

And in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variety of your languages and ethnicities, are signs of God for every living being. In the quotidian pattern of repose in sleep, too, and in your drive to gather good things are signs for those who are attentive. And in the lightning whose appearance engenders apprehension and longing in you, and in the resuscitating rain falling from the firmament are signs for those who seek understanding. . . . We have sent messengers before you [Muḥammad], each bringing to a people manifest proofs of their mission. . . . It is not you [Muḥammad] who make the dead attentive, or alert the deaf to the message if they stubbornly reject it. It is not you who lead the blind forth from their intransigence. You can nudge to attentiveness only those who give credence to Our signs and who have [already] surrendered to God. (30:22–23, 47–53 intermittently)

We believe in God and what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham and Ismā'īl and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and what was given to Moses and Jesus and what was given to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction among them and to Him do we surrender gratefully [lit., we are *muslims* to Him]. (2:136; see also 29:46)

[God speaking to Muḥammad:] It is not fitting that God should speak to a human being except by inspiration [*wahy*, a technical term indicating revelation given to a prophet], or from behind a veil, or in commissioning a messenger that he might deliver a revelation by God's leave. . . . So by our command we have revealed to you spiritually. You knew neither the scripture nor the faith, but we have made of it [the Qur'ān] a light by which we guide whomever we choose among our servants. And it is you who guide to the Straight Path, the Path of God to whom belong what is in the heavens and what is on earth. Do not all things move toward God? (42:51–53)

Divine Freedom and Human Responsibility

Many brief Qur'ānic texts not only emphasize God's absolute control but also suggest an almost capricious freedom in determining the ethical course

of individual people. Given the larger context, however, these paeans to God's untrammelled supremacy are far more about who God *is* than what human beings are *not*. The Qur'ān frequently underscores the divine prerogative by declaring in numerous general comments that God "guides whom He will and leads astray whom He will" (14:4), occasionally offering a brief further specification of the theme, as, for example: "One whom God guides is thus guided, but for one whom God leads astray you will encounter no patron who can suggest a course correction" (18:17). As we shall see, texts such as the following would become pivotal to later discussions of theological ethics.

Texts

To every people We sent a messenger [to say] "Serve God and repudiate evil." Among them were some whom God guided, while for others wandering in error was inevitable. Therefore make your way across the earth and observe the outcome of those who rejected [the message]. If their guidance is a concern to you, indeed God does not guide those He causes to wander in error, and they have none to assist them. (16:36–37)

Indeed, you [Muḥammad] will not provide guidance to those you love, but God does guide whom He will and knows best those who benefit from guidance. (28:56)

Do you see one who chooses mere whim as his deity? Because God knows [this condition], He has sealed that person's hearing and heart and placed blinders on him. Who [under these circumstances] can guide such a person after God [has ceased to guide]? (45:23)

Here is a reminder: Let whoever so wishes pursue a path to his Lord. But you have no power of will apart from what God wills. Indeed God is knowing and wise. (76:29–30)

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Other texts, however, present a more nuanced picture, hinting at some measure of self-direction.

Texts

[To those who are convinced their deeds will entail no recompense:] On the contrary, those who choose wickedness and surround themselves in sinfulness will be the denizens of the Fire [of Hell] where they will reside eternally;

while people of faith and good deeds will inhabit the Garden [of Paradise] forever. (2:81–82)

God tasks no soul beyond its capacity. To each redound both the benefits and the liabilities of its choices. [One ought to pray:] “O our Lord, do not dismiss us if we succumb to forgetfulness or sin. Our Lord, do not burden as you did our forebears. Our Lord, do not encumber us beyond our capability.” (2:286; also 6:152, 7:42, 65:7)

God has promised people of faith and good deeds forgiveness and abundant reward, but those who refuse to believe and call Our signs lies will abide in Hell. (5:9–10)

God does not change a people’s state till they change their own soul’s thoughts. (13:11)

We will assuredly reward those who endure in patience with recompense commensurate with the comeliness of their deeds. Every believer, male or female, who does righteous deeds We will enliven with a good life and will indeed bestow [on them] a reward proportionate to the goodness of the preponderance of their actions. (16:96–97)

Anyone who performs upright deeds [does so to the good] of his soul, and anyone who does evil [does so to] its detriment; and your Lord does no injustice to [His] servants. (41:46)

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All things considered, the added ingredient in the Qur’ān’s consistent language of accountability for one’s actions at judgment and the certainty of reward or punishment seems to suggest something of an ethical balance: God indeed possesses all power to dispose, but human beings are not simply constrained to one course or another. If not for that sliver of responsibility, divine justice would be merely a cruel hoax. As for references to specific kinds of actions that will have an effect on one’s prospects for salvation, the Qur’ān does offer concrete options. In earlier texts especially, it seems to emphasize aspects of social justice, as in the following text.

Text

What will convey to you what the Steep Ascent is? It means freeing a slave, and feeding in time of hunger an orphan of your extended family, or a poor person on hard times [lit., in the dust], and to be among people of faith who encourage each other to patience and urge each other to deeds of compassion. Such

as these will have a place on the right, while those who reject our signs will find themselves on the left, around whom there will be a wall of fire. (90:12–19)

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Many other texts of the Qurʾān consistently require Muslims to share their resources with the needy (e.g., 3:134, 51:19, 76:8–9) as an essential ingredient in the ethical life. During the Medinan period (622–32) the Muslim community grew from minority to majority status. Behavioral requirements increasingly came to include actions more formally “religious,” as suggested by countless texts that emphasize the centrality of performing ritual prayer, almsgiving, profession of faith, and fasting. Other texts, however, place greater stress on inward transformation, as in sūra 49.

Text

The Bedouin say, “We believe.” Respond [to them]: “You are not [truly] believers; say [instead], ‘We have surrendered [lit., we are *muslims*],’ for faith (*īmān*) has not entered your hearts. If you obey God and His Messenger, He will by no means minimize your actions. Indeed, Allāh is the Forgiving, the Merciful.” Believers are those who put faith in God and His Messenger and have had no doubts thereafter, and have exerted themselves through their outward possessions and inner selves in the Way of God. It is these who manifest authenticity [in faith]. . . . They insist they have given you [Muḥammad] a gift by surrendering. Tell them, “Do not consider your *islām* as a gift to me. On the contrary, Allāh has given you [all] the gift of guiding you to the faith, if indeed you behave authentically.” (49:14–15, 17)

THEOLOGICAL THEMES IN THE HADITH

Hidden amid the ore of traditions attributed to Muḥammad and his Companions are dozens of theologically sparkling gems.¹ Long-standing Muslim tradition teaches that the Hadith, like the Qurʾān, communicate a divinely revealed message, but, unlike the scripture, the articulation of the content is that of Muḥammad himself. From a theological perspective, the most telling texts are those that deal explicitly with a variety of attitudes and values underlying the countless rituals and other practices with which many thousands of Hadiths deal. Sections in the major Hadith collections most

likely to contain such themes are those on God's transcendent unity (*tawḥīd*); faith (*īmān*); the virtues or excellent qualities (*faḍā'il*) of Muḥammad and his Companions and of the Qur'ān; virtuous behavior (*adab*); God's dominion over human affairs (*qadr*); the active remembrance of God (*dhikr*); piety/asceticism and the "softening of hearts" (*zuhd*, *ar-raqā'iq*); repentance (*tawba*); and eschatology (*al-qiyāma*, "resurrection"; *al-janna*, "garden"; *an-nār*, "fire"; *al-fitan*, "end-time strife"; *as-sā'ah*, "the Hour").

Here we have space to deal with only a limited selection of these theologically relevant traditions. A signature Hadith, one that opens the first section of Muslim's collection in the *Book of Faith*, sets the overall context for theological themes. Known as the Hadith of Gabriel, the extended anecdote recounts a gathering at which a number of Muḥammad's Companions had joined him. Note the revealing angel's "Socratic method" as he draws responses from the Prophet.

Text

God's Messenger said [to the Companions], "Ask me [about matters of religious import]," but out of reverence for him they declined to question him. Then a man arrived, sat knee to knee [with the Prophet], and said, "Messenger of God, what is *islām*?" [Muḥammad] replied, "Not associating anything with God, and performing the ritual prayer, and giving alms, and fasting during Ramaḍān." [The man] responded, "You are correct. Messenger of God, what is *īmān*?" [Muḥammad] said, "Believing in God, and His angels, and His Book, and [eventually] meeting Him, and His messengers; and believing without reservation in the divine destiny." [The man] said, "You are correct. Messenger of God, what is *iḥsān*?" He replied, "Fearing God as though you saw Him, for even if you don't, He surely sees you." [The man] said, "You are correct. Messenger of God, when will the Hour arrive?" He answered, "The one you have asked knows no more about that than the questioner. But I will inform you about its characteristics. When you see the indentured woman giving birth to her master, that is one of its signs. And when you see those who are barefoot, unclothed, deaf and mute rulers of the earth, that will be one of its signs. And when you see herders of black camels living luxuriously in buildings, that will be one of its signs. [The Hour] is among the five things so mysterious none but God knows." Then he recited, "Indeed, God alone has knowledge of the Hour, and it is He who sends down the rain and knows what is in the wombs. No individual knows what he may

gain tomorrow, and no one knows in what land he will die. Indeed, [it is] God who is knowing and aware” (21:34). [Abū Hurayra, the narrator (d. 678)] went on: Then the man stood [and left]. So God’s Messenger said, “Bring him back to me.” So they searched for him but did not find him. God’s Messenger then said, “This was Gabriel wanting to teach you, when you declined to ask.”²

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Many of the Hadiths bearing on human freedom and responsibility seem to tip the balance decidedly toward predetermination of human acts, one of the ingredients of *īmān* in the Hadith of Gabriel. Witness, for example, a text that states quite starkly the dilemma of predestination.

Text

[It may be that] one of you behaves like the inhabitants of Paradise until he is barely an arm’s length from it, when his recorded destiny overtakes him so that he [suddenly] behaves like the people of Hell-fire and therefore enters it [instead]; [conversely] one of you [might] behave like the denizens of Hell-fire until he is barely an arm’s length from it, when his recorded destiny overtakes him so that he [suddenly] behaves like the people of Paradise and thus he enters it.³

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Note the striking implication that no matter how one leads one’s life, a power far greater than individual choice is at work. As parts 2 and 3 of this volume discuss further, this thorny matter would become a major point of debate among systematic theologians during the third and fourth centuries after Muḥammad’s death. Not surprisingly, traditions that feature this theme appear in sections of Hadith collections called the Book of Divine Foreordainment (*kitāb al-qadr*).

Texts

A man asked [Muḥammad], “O messenger of God, can one distinguish the People of the Garden from the People of the Fire?” He replied, “Yes.” Then [the questioner] asked, “Then why do [people bother to] do [good] deeds?” [He replied,] “All individuals will [be inclined to] do what they were made for or what is easy for them.”⁴

Someone asked God's Messenger about the children of unbelievers, and he said, "God knows what they are inclined to do." . . . [Muḥammad also] said, "Every child is born with the disposition to Islam (*fiṭra*), then his parents turn him into a Jew or a Christian, much as when you assist birthing of beasts. Will you find any [of those offspring] mutilated before you yourself make a brand on them?" They replied, "O Messenger of God, What is your view of those who die young?" He replied, "God knows what they would have done [had they survived]."⁵

ʿĀ'isha asked God's Messenger about the plague. He replied, "It was a punishment that God inflicted upon whomever He so chose. For believers, however, He made it a mercy: any servant living in a region (*balad*) afflicted by it, who stays there and does not leave the region, exercising long-suffering and counting on [God's mercy], knows that he will not suffer harm except insofar as God has ordained it [lit., written for him] and would [in any case] receive a reward equal to that of a martyr."⁶

God's Messenger said, "Indeed, the hearts of all the children of Adam are between two of the fingers of the Merciful, as if [they were] a single heart that He orients as He wishes." Then God's Messenger said, "O God, turner of hearts, orient our hearts toward obedience to You."⁷

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One intriguing Hadith combines two important theological themes: God's control of all human dispositions and an aspect of the interrelationships among the great prophets.

Text

According to Abū Hurayra, the Messenger of God said: Adam and Moses had an argument in the presence of their Lord, and Adam got the better of Moses. Moses said, "Are you the Adam whom God fashioned with His hand and into whom He breathed some of His spirit, and to whom He caused the angels to prostrate themselves, and whom He settled comfortably in the Garden? [And was it you who] then bound humankind to the earth as a result of your fault?" Adam replied, "Are you the Moses whom God chose for delivering his message and to converse with Him, and to whom He entrusted the tablets containing clear explanation of all things, and whom He brought near in intimate conversation? How long before I was created do you think God wrote the Torah?" Moses replied, "Forty years." Said Adam, "And did

you see there the words, ‘Adam rebelled against his Lord, and was misled’” (20:121)? [Moses] said, “Yes.” [Adam] went on, “And [yet] you condemn me for performing an act that God had written, forty years before I was created, that I would do?” God’s Messenger added, “Thus did Adam get the better of Moses.”⁸

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On the other hand, a minor subgenre within the corpus of Hadith are sayings emphasizing the priority of God’s mercy, even for individuals whose record of detrimental choices in life has destined them for Hell in the hereafter. Unlike the first selection of Hadiths above, many of which occur in sections of major collections dedicated to the theme of divine foreordination (*qadr*), more hopeful Hadiths appear in sections on faith (*īmān*) and repentance (*tawba*). One intriguing Hadith combines a variety of eschatological themes with a narrative that underscores God’s susceptibility to the entreaties of human beings so desirous of a heavenly reward that they persist in badgering God regardless of the limits He has imposed on them.

The Hadith opens with people asking Muḥammad whether they would “see” God at resurrection—an issue that arises both in the creeds (see part 2) and the works of systematic theology (see part 3). Muḥammad asks whether the questioners would have any difficulty seeing the full moon, or the sun on a cloudless day. Just so, he explains, they would see God, and He would explain that all people follow what they worship, whether the moon, the sun, or demons. God would appear among the Muslim community in “a form not His own” and announce “I am your Lord,” to test them. True believers would “take refuge in God” from what must surely be a deception and insist on staying put until their Lord came in a form they would recognize as God. Then God would appear “in His own form,” and after the believers acknowledged that this was indeed their Lord, they would follow him on a tour of the infernal realm. God would then ask angels to bring out of Hell those who had clearly never worshipped any but God, as evidenced by the traces of prostration on their foreheads, marks that God had commanded the Fire to refrain from effacing. At length the final man to emerge from Hell stands before God to plead for his release, but continues to stand facing Hell. Here we pick up the text of this lengthy narrative as the man entreats God insistently, much as Abraham refused to give up when seeking the salvation of the just at Sodom and Gomorrah.

Text

“O Lord, avert my face from the Fire, whose fumes have poisoned me and whose flames have scorched me.” Then he will implore God as God wishes him to supplicate. God the Blessed and Exalted will say, “Were I to do [as you request], you might just ask for more.” Then [the man] will say, “I won’t ask for more,” and will provide his Lord such covenants and assurances as God desires. Then God will avert [the man’s] face from the Fire. When [the man] turns to the Garden and beholds it, he will cease to speak as long as God desires his silence. Then [the man] will say, “O Lord, advance me to the gate of the Garden.” And God will say to him, “Did you not agree and assure me that you would not ask for more than I have granted you? Woe to you, most deceitful Son of Adam!” And [the man] will say, “O my Lord,” and will go on supplicating God until He replies, “If I accede to that request of yours, perhaps you will ask for more.” Then [the man] will say, “No, by your might,” and will provide his Lord agreements and assurances. And [God] will bring him to the gate of the Garden. And as the man stands at the gate of the Garden, the Garden will spread wide before him and he will see the good things and evil in it. He will hold his peace so long as God wishes him to do so, then he will say, “O my Lord, grant me entry into the Garden.” And God the Blessed and Exalted will say to him, “Did you not make a solemn pact that you would not ask for more than you have been given? Woe to you, most deceitful Son of Adam!” Then [the man] will say, “O my Lord, let me not be the most unfortunate of your creatures, and he will go on entreating God until God, the blessed and exalted, laughs at him. Then God will laugh at him, and say, “Enter the Garden.” And when [the man] has entered, God will say to him, “Make your request,” and he will ask his Lord for what he desires, until God reminds him of this and that [which the man will have left out]. And when [the man] has run out of things to ask for, God the exalted will say, “[All] that is for you, and that much again.”⁹

. . .

Many Hadiths make it clear that people’s actions toward others influence how they can expect God to act toward them when they are called to account at judgment.

Text

According to Abū Hurayra, the Prophet said, “Once there was a man who loaned money to people, and who used to say to his assistant, ‘When you

encounter a person going through hard times, go easy on him, and perhaps God will go easy on us.' And [Muḥammad went on] when he came to meet God, God went easy on him."¹⁰

. . .

Some Hadiths emphasize that regardless of an individual's sinfulness, in the end, attitude trumps actions.

Text

Abū 'd-Dardā' (d. 652) reported that he heard the Prophet delivering a sermon from the *minbar*, saying, "Anyone who fears being in the presence of his Lord will receive two Gardens." [Abū 'd-Dardā'] asked, "Even after fornicating and stealing, Messenger of God?" Then [the Prophet] repeated, "Anyone who fears being in the presence of his Lord will receive two Gardens." [Abū 'd-Dardā'] asked again, "Even after fornicating and stealing, Messenger of God?" Again [the Prophet] repeated, "Anyone who fears being in the presence of his Lord will receive two Gardens." A third time, [Abū 'd-Dardā'] asked, "Even after fornicating and stealing, Messenger of God?" And [Muḥammad] replied, "Even in spite of Abū 'd-Dardā'."¹¹

. . .

The question of prophetic *intercession*, and intercession in general, has been a much-discussed theme in Islamic theological texts. Numerous Hadiths on the subject lean decidedly toward Muḥammad's intercessory prerogative, describing his superiority over the previous prophets in this respect. An important narrative form of this theme opens with a setting in which Muḥammad and a group of Muslims are discussing the subject of the Day of Resurrection, and the Prophet asserts that he will lead all humankind on that day. The narrative then unfolds with a description of how people in great travail and anguish on the Day will cast about for an intercessor and progress from Adam through a succession of major prophets until at length they discover that only Muḥammad can fulfill their need. The following version foregrounds the theme of Muḥammad's insistence on effecting maximum assistance for believers residing in Hell, until He secures God's assurance that even a virtually imperceptible quantity of faith will suffice.

Text

[The famous traditionist Anas ibn Mālik (d. ca. 710) recounted the Hadith of Intercession, reporting the words of Muḥammad as follows:] On the Day of Resurrection, people will encounter one another in agitation [lit., heaving like waves]. They will come to Adam, saying, “Intercede for your descendants.” He will reply, “That is not for me to do. You must approach Abraham, for he is God’s Intimate Friend (*khalīl*).” So they will go to Abraham, but he will say, “That is not for me to do. You must go to Moses, for he held direct conversation with God (*kalīm*).” So they will approach Moses, but he will reply, “That is not for me to do. You need to approach Jesus, for he is the Spirit and Word of God.” So to Jesus they will go, but he will say, “That is not for me to do. You need to see Muḥammad about this. So they will come to me, and I will say, “That is my prerogative, and I will hasten to seek permission of my Lord, and he will allow it. Then I will stand in His presence, and laud Him with praises the likes of which I am now unable [to express], but with which God will inspire me. I will then fall prostrate, and [He will say] to me, ‘O Muḥammad, lift your head; proclaim and you will be heard; ask and it will be granted; make intercession and intercession will be made.’ Then I will say, ‘My Lord, my community! My community!’ And the reply will come, ‘Go forth, and bring out whoever has faith in his heart the weight of a grain of wheat or barley seed,’ and I will hasten to do so. Then I will return to my Lord and laud Him with that praise [that He will teach me then], and I will fall prostrate before him. Then the words will be said, ‘O Muḥammad, lift your head; proclaim and you will be heard; ask and it will be granted; make intercession and intercession will be made.’ Then I will say, ‘My Lord, my community! My community!’ And the reply will come, ‘Go forth, and bring out whoever has faith in his heart the weight of a mustard seed,’ and I will hasten to do so. Then I will go back to my Lord and laud Him with that praise [that He will teach me then], and I will fall prostrate before him. Then the words will be said, ‘O Muḥammad, lift your head; proclaim and you will be heard; ask and it will be granted; make intercession and intercession will be made.’ And I will say ‘My Lord, my community! My community!’ And the reply will come, ‘Go forth, and bring out whoever has faith in his heart the minutest fraction of a miniscule grain of mustard seed,’ and I will hasten to do so.”¹²

. . .

Some Hadiths comment on specific texts of the Qur’ān and function as examples of ad hoc exegesis. In this tradition, for example, Companion Ibn

‘Abbās (d. ca. 687), also among the earliest authors of a formal exegetical commentary, reports on the meaning of one such scriptural verse.

Text

When the following verse was revealed, “Whether you divulge what is within your mind, or keep it hidden, God will hold you responsible for it” (2:284), something penetrated their hearts the likes of which had never before penetrated their hearts. The Prophet said, “Proclaim: We have heard and obeyed and surrendered.” [Ibn ‘Abbās] went on: Then God introduced faith into their hearts and God most high revealed [the verse], “God tasks no soul beyond its capacity. To each redound both the benefits and the liabilities of its choices (2:286). [One ought to pray:] “O our Lord, do not dismiss us if we succumb to forgetfulness or sin.” [The Lord] said, “So I acted accordingly.” [Prayer continues:] “Our Lord, do not burden us as you did our forebears. . . . And forgive us and be merciful to us, [for] you are our protector” (2:286). [The Lord] said, “So I acted accordingly.”¹³

. . .

It is hard to imagine how anyone could read chapters on “repentance” in the Hadith collections and conclude that the God to whom Muslims pray is cold and capricious and that human choice and moral responsibility are a sham. Many Hadiths on the subject of repentance turn on the conviction that God so intensely desires repentance as a reason for forgiving humankind that if His creatures did not sin, He would arrange a pretext for forgiving.

Text

God’s Messenger said, “By the One who holds my life, if you did not commit sin, God would surely dispense with you and would replace you with a people who would sin. They would then ask God’s forgiveness and He would grant his pardon.”¹⁴

. . .

Some traditions emphasize that God’s mercy can counterbalance even the most desperate human attempts to circumvent the divine justice, as in the following remarkable narrative of a man who was convinced that God could not possibly forgive the depth of his sinfulness.

Text

A man who had done absolutely nothing good for his family said [as a last will and testament]: “When [my body] is dead, burn it. Then scatter half of it on land and half at sea.” He swore that if God got hold of him He would punish him as He had never punished anyone in the two worlds. And when the man died, they did as he had stipulated. But then God ordered the land to gather what [had been scattered] over it, and commanded the sea to bring together what [had been scattered] over it. Then [God] asked [the man], “Why did you do this?” He replied, “Out of [fear of] your reckoning, O Lord, but you know [that].” So God forgave him.¹⁵

. . .

Muslim tradition presents the unmistakable underlying conviction that “God’s mercy outweighs His wrath.”¹⁶ In fact, one Hadith insists that God in effect “foreordained” that orientation for Himself, “writing it in His Book” at the very moment He created the world while sitting on His Throne.¹⁷ Forgiveness is one of God’s favorite pastimes, as in this brief Hadith: “Each night, during the third watch, God descends to the lowest heaven and asks, ‘Is there anyone who calls me that I might answer? Who makes a request of me that I might grant it? Who seeks my forgiveness that I might forgive?’”¹⁸ Indeed virtually all of creation is composed of divine mercy, even with God holding ninety-nine percent of the total in reserve for Resurrection Day.

Text

On the day He created the heavens and the earth, God fashioned a hundred mercies, every one of which could span the distance between heaven and earth. One of these mercies he planted in the earth, and by means of it the mother expresses affection toward her child, and the wild beasts and birds show tenderness to one another. So on the Day of Resurrection, He will complete those [ninety-nine] mercies with this [earthly] mercy [i.e., He will apply the whole of His storehouse of mercy].¹⁹

. . .

Many other Hadiths highlight God’s forbearance and mercy, as well as a strong sense of the individual’s moral responsibility in choosing his or her

course of action. Here there is no question but that in God's eyes the benefit of even the intent to do good far exceeds the damage done by an evil deed contemplated and consummated.

Text

God's Messenger said that God said: "When a servant of mine takes a notion to do good, but does not do it, I record a good deed for him; but if he does it, I record from ten to seven hundred goods to his credit. And if he considers doing evil but does not do it, I do not record it against him; but if he does the evil deed, I record him [as responsible for] one evil deed."²⁰

. . .

The prior Hadith begins to reveal an important level of historical and theological complexity in the literature, suggesting important but too little appreciated facets of the divine interest in human welfare. Many other Hadiths offer a sense of God's irresistibility and attractiveness, as in the refreshingly direct, "God is beautiful and He loves Beauty."²¹ But there is yet another dimension of the literature that underscores the divine accessibility in a way that deserves special attention. Tucked away among some of the sayings attributed to the Prophet are sayings in which Muḥammad reports striking revelations not considered part of the Qur'ān. Quoting God, as it were, Muḥammad discloses arresting insights into the Creator's complex relationships with His creation at every level. As in the prior Hadith about the centrality of moral intention, these Sacred Hadiths typically emphasize God's mercy, immanence, and affection for humankind and a willingness to meet human beings more than halfway. Here are several Hadiths that describe God's intimate relation to creation and to humankind, concluding with one that reprises the essential connection between many Hadiths and the sacred scripture.

Texts

I am in the midst of my servant's thoughts of me [or perhaps: I conform to my servant's image of me], and I am with him when he brings me to mind. Should he remember me privately, I remember him in private; and if he recalls me in public, I bring him to mind in public in a still better way.²²

My servant comes ever closer to me through works of devotion [i.e., other than those prescribed as religious duties]. When anyone comes toward me a

hand's breadth, I approach a forearm's length; if anyone comes toward me a forearm's length, I approach by the space of outstretched arms; if anyone comes toward me walking, I will come running. Then I love that person so that I become the eye with which he sees, the ear with which he hears, the hand with which he takes hold. And should that person bring to me sins the size of the earth, my forgiveness will be a match for them.²³

Abū Dharr (d. 652) reported: God's Messenger recounted that God the Exalted says, "My servants, apart from those I have guided, you are all wandering in error; but if you petition Me, I will show you the way. Except for those I have enriched, you are all impoverished; but if you petition Me, I will provide you sustenance. Except for those I have kept [from sinning], you are all sinners; but if anyone aware of my power to forgive asks my forgiveness, I will forgive that person without question. If all of you from first to last, living or dead, young or old, were as pure in heart as my most pure-hearted servants, it would not amplify my sovereignty by even a gnat's wing. If all of you from first to last, living or dead, young or old, were as false-hearted as the most false-hearted of my servants, it would not detract from my sovereignty by even a gnat's wing. If all of you from first to last, living or dead, young or old, assembled in an open plain, and every one pleaded for everything his hopes could embrace, and I responded with all that every person had requested, my sovereignty would no more diminish than would the sea if one of you walked by, dipped a needle in and withdrew it. For I am beneficent and exalted, and I do whatever I will. My very speech brings about both reward and punishment. When I desire something, I need only say 'Be' and it comes to be."²⁴

[A Hadith that enshrines direct citation of God:] According to Abū Hurayra (d. 678), God's Messenger said: "Whoever prays the ritual prayer without reciting as part of it the 'Mother of the Qur'ān' [i.e., Sūrat al-Fātiḥa], then [that prayer] is defective [he said this three times] and incomplete." So someone said to Abū Hurayra, "But we are behind [i.e., following the lead of] the imam." So he replied, "Recite it to yourself, for I have heard God's Messenger say, 'God Most High has said, "I have divided the ritual prayer in two parts between Me and my servant, and my servant will get what he asks for. So when the servant says, 'Praise to God, Lord of the Universe,' God Most High says, 'My servant has praised Me.' And when [the servant] says, 'The Compassionate, the Merciful,' God Most High says, 'My servant has extolled me.' And when he says, 'Master of the Day of Judgment,' [God] says, 'My servant has given me glory,' or sometimes 'My servant has given his life

over to me.’ Then when [the servant] says, ‘It is You we serve and from You we ask assistance,’ [God] replies, ‘This is between me and my servant, and my servant will get what he asks for.’ And when [the servant] says, ‘Guide us along the straight path, the path of those to whom you have been gracious, not of those who have incurred your anger or of those who wander in error,’ [God] says, ‘This is for my servant, and my servant will get what he asks for.’”²⁵

EXEGETICAL HADITHS

As the prior Ḥadīth Qudsī suggests, some of the earliest commentaries on individual texts of the Qur’ān are those enshrined in sections of the great Ḥadīth collections called the *Book of Exegetical Commentary* (*Kitāb at-tafsīr*) and the typically shorter *Book of the Excellent Qualities of the Qur’ān* (*Kitāb faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*). I will later comment further on theological resonances relating to the latter. Bukhārī’s edition of the Ḥadīth includes one of the larger assortments (more than 350) of exegetical comments in the genre. Most of the relevant traditions offer information as to early views on the “circumstances of the revelations” (*asbāb an-nuzūl*) with short anecdotes describing the context in the life of the Prophet or one of the Companions.²⁶ Here are examples of Ḥadīths on the theme of the power and excellence of the Qur’ān.

Texts

The Prophet of God said to his Companions, “Do any of you experience difficulty in reciting a third of the Qur’ān in a single night?” That [question] was hard for them, and they replied, “O Messenger of God, which of us can do that?” So he said [alluding to key terms opening sūra 112], “God the One, the besought of all . . .” amounts to a third of the Qur’ān.²⁷

Abū Hurayra said, “God’s Messenger delegated me to look after the alms donated during Ramaḍān. Then someone came and began to purloin the [donated] food supplies. I got hold of him and said, ‘I’m taking you to God’s Messenger!’ . . . He said to me [attempting to offer me a reason for not doing so], ‘When you retire to your bed, you should recite the “Throne Verse” (2:255) so that a protector will descend to you from God, and Satan will not come near you till you awake.’ Then the Prophet said, ‘He was telling you the truth, even though he is a liar—that was Satan.’”²⁸

Usayd ibn Ḥuḍayr recounted that as he recited Sūrat al-Baqara (sūra 2) one night, while he had his horse tethered nearby, the horse became agitated. When [Usayd] stopped, the horse calmed down, and when he resumed reciting, the horse was again agitated. So he stopped again, and again the horse became calm. [Usayd] resumed reciting again, and once more the horse became riled and distressed. So he ceased [reciting] again, for his son Yaḥyā was nearby and he was concerned that [the horse] would step on him. When he removed the boy [from danger] he lifted his head toward the heavens, but could not see them. When he awoke, he related [this story] to the Prophet, who said, “Recite, Ibn Ḥuḍayr; recite, Ibn Ḥuḍayr!” Ibn Ḥuḍayr replied, “Messenger of God, I was concerned [the horse] would trample my son, Yaḥyā, who was nearby. I looked up as I turned to him. When I lifted my head toward the sky, [I saw] something like clouds in which there appeared to be lanterns, so I departed to prevent myself from seeing that.” [The Prophet] asked, “Do you understand what that was?” [Ibn Ḥuḍayr] answered, “No.” [The Prophet] said, “That [cloud] was angels attracted to your voice. Had you continued reciting, it would have remained till dawn so that people would have observed it because it would not have disappeared from [their sight].”²⁹

HERMENEUTICAL HINTS IN THE HADITH

Chapter 2 features primary texts of various scholars explicitly concerned with a range of hermeneutical issues adumbrated in the Qur’ān and Hadith. Here are two examples of how a number of Hadiths raise these questions in a non-theoretical way.

In addition to the many Hadiths that offer commentary on various verses of the Qur’ān, others provide insight into important and sometimes contested matters of how the sacred text was revealed. One such point of interest has to do with Muḥammad’s manner of responding to texts as they were being revealed and another with the so-called seven readings of the Qur’ān. The first Hadith turns around Ibn ‘Abbās’s commentary on the Qur’ānic verse in which God instructs Muḥammad, “Do not move your tongue [in the recitation] in an attempt to hasten the process” (75:16; see also 20:114).

Texts

[Ibn ‘Abbās commented]: Whenever Gabriel came down to him with the revelation, he would move his tongue and lips, and it was a struggle for him

and one could tell accordingly [that God was communicating with him]. So God sent down the verse [in the sūra] that begins, “I swear by the Day of Resurrection” (75:1), “Do not move your tongue [in the recitation] in an attempt to hasten the process, for We will see to gathering it [in your memory] and the recitation of it” (75:16–17). In other words, it is up to Us to assemble [the message] in the core of your being and [make it possible for you] to recite it. “So when We have recited it, follow its recitation” (75:18) [means] “So when We have sent it down, listen attentively.” Then, “It is up to Us to clarify it” (75:19) [means] “It is up to Us to articulate it with your tongue.” Therefore, when Gabriel came to him, he would bow his head in silence, and when [Gabriel] departed, he would recite as God had promised him.³⁰

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 644) said, “I heard Hishām ibn Ḥakīm ibn Ḥizām reciting Sūrat al-Furqān when God’s Messenger was still living. I listened carefully to his recitation, and [noticed that] he recited it with many vocalizations (*ḥurūf*) with which God’s Messenger had not accustomed me to recite. I nearly set upon him during the ritual prayer, but held off for him to complete it. I then confronted him and said, ‘Who taught you to recite this sūra as I heard you reciting it?’ He replied, ‘God’s Messenger taught me to recite it.’ So I said, ‘You’re lying, by God! God’s Messenger [definitely] taught me to recite this sūra I heard you reciting.’ So I hustled him off to God’s Messenger, and I said, ‘O Messenger of God, I heard this man reciting Sūrat al-Furqān with vocalizations you did not teach me to recite, and it was indeed you who taught me to recite Sūrat al-Furqān.’ So he said, ‘Recite it, Hishām.’ Then he recited it as I had heard him recite it [earlier]. God’s Messenger then said, ‘It was sent down that way.’ Then he said [to me], ‘Recite,’ Umar.’ So I recited it as he had taught me to recite it, and God’s Messenger said, ‘It was sent down that way.’ God’s Messenger went on, ‘In truth the Qur’ān was sent down in seven vocalizations, so recite [pl.] in the manner that is easiest for you.’”³¹

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. See John Burton, *An Introduction to the Hadith* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1994), esp. “The Theological Dimension of the Hadith,” 92–105.

2. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1995), *Kitāb al-īmān*, 1:48–49 (#7). For a full discussion of another version of the Hadith, see Sachiko Murata and William Chittick, *The Vision of Islam* (New York: Paragon House, 1994), xxv–xxxix. Unlike that version, the present text alludes obliquely to the *shahāda* (not associating anything with God) and does not mention pilgrimage. Except where otherwise noted, translations in this chapter are the editor’s.

3. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-qadr*, 4:1616 (#1).

4. *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dār aṣ-Ṣādir, 2004), *Kitāb al-qadr*, 4:1168 (#6596).

5. *Ibid.*, 4:1169 (#6599).

6. *Ibid.*, 4:1172 (#6619). For similar traditions in another collection, see *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4:1616–29.

7. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-qadr*, 4:1623 (#17).

8. *Ibid.*, 4:1621–22 (#15). For a translation of Bukhari’s version of the same story, see Murata and Chittick, *Vision of Islam*, 143.

9. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-īmān*, 1:143–44 (#299). For a similar account with different details of the individual’s audacious persistence, see *ibid.*, 1:149–50 (#310).

10. *Ibid.*, *Kitāb al-masāʿa*, 3:979 (#31).

11. From online Arabic text of *Mishkāt al-maṣābiḥ*, 2:277 [13] 2376, www.maktabah.org/hadith/collections/293-mishkat-al-masabih.html.

12. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-īmān*, 1:155–56 (#326). See also *ibid.*, 1:154–55 (#322) and other variants in the same section.

13. *Ibid.*, 1:108 (#200).

14. *Ibid.*, *Kitāb at-tawba*, 4:1673 (#11).

15. *Ibid.*, 4:1676 (#24).

16. Various versions of the Hadith contain this quote. On the Ḥadīth Qudsī, see William Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam* (The Hague: Mouton, 1977), 184.

17. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb at-tawba*, 4:1674 (#14).
18. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word*, 177, Arabic text; cf. variant on 178.
19. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb at-tawba*, 4:1675 (#21).
20. Ibid., *Kitāb al-īmān*, 1:109 (#204).
21. Ibid., 1:89 (#147).
22. Ibid., *Kitāb adh-dhikr*, 4:1637 (#2). See also ibid., *Kitāb at-tawba*, 4:1670 (#1).
23. Ibid., 4:1642 (#22), and see variations there and in Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word*, 127–29.
24. From online Arabic text (see note 11) of *Mishkāṭ al-maṣābīḥ*, 2:263 [4] 2326; see also 2:270 [28] 2350. See also *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-birr wa’-ṣ-ṣilati wa’l-ādāb*, 4:1573–74 (#2077), for a text on “oppression” with a similar central section addressed to “O my servants.”
25. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb aṣ-ṣalāt*, 1:248 (#38).
26. See R. Marston Speight, “The Function of *Hadith* as Commentary on the Qur’an, as Seen in the Six Authoritative Collections,” in *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur’an*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 63–80.
27. *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, Faḍā’il al-qur’ān*, 3:924 (#5015).
28. Ibid., 3:923–24 (#5010).
29. Ibid., 3:925 (#5018).
30. Ibid., 3:928–29 (#5044).
31. Ibid., 3:928 (#5041). This mention of “vocalizations” is testimony to the ancient roots of the complex and much discussed matter of variant “readings” or “ways of recitation,” traditionally numbered at seven. The variations are typically very minor, including, for example, different spellings of the same word, use of a singular rather than a plural (or vice versa), or slightly different prepositions with essentially the same import.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Reprinted from Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qur’an and Its Interpreters, Volume 1* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 247–52. In the interest of smoother reading, I have deleted Ayoub’s in-text references to the primary sources of the individual exegetes; I have also inserted death dates of major exegetes.
2. From Avicenna, “On the Proof of Prophecies and the Interpretation of the Prophets’ Symbols and Metaphors,” trans. Michael E. Marmura, in *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, ed. Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi (Toronto: Collier-Macmillan, 1963), 116–17.
3. Not a quotation from Plato’s *Laws*.
4. Avicenna is quoting from the “correspondence” between Plato and Aristotle translated into Arabic from Hellenistic sources.
5. Reprinted from David Buchman, trans., *Al-Ghazālī: The Niche of Lights* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 39–41.

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