

Speech

Following the Quran and Sunnah, Muslims are unanimous that the most Praised One speaks. It seems that discussing this description is the first issue submitted for debates in the history of the science of logic, although this is not definitive. Divine speech issue, what it is, whether it is incidental or timeless, has occupied the minds of Muslim scholars and thinkers during the time of the first caliphs. Because of it, squabbles took place and even bloody clashes the details of which are recorded in history books. They were described as “محنة خلق القرآن” “trial of creating the Quran”, and we can point out two main factors behind it.

First: The Islamic invasions, in which the Muslims had to mix with others, became a principle for both Islamic and foreign cultures rubbing with each other. Within the tumult charged with contradictory ideologies, the issue of the speech of the most Praised One was submitted in Islamic circles.

Second: The caliphs disseminated the discussion of this issue and others like it so the thinkers would be thus diverted from criticizing the actions and deviations of these caliphs.

We have to point out the source of disseminating this idea in particular and say that discussing the truth about His speech, the most Praised One, first and, second, its being created or not, incidental or timeless, was raised by the Christians who were present in the entourage of the Umayyad dynasty headed by [يوحنا الدمشقي](#) John of Damascus. John used to cast doubt into the hearts of the Muslims about their creed.

Since the Quran indicated that Jesus son of Mary was “the word of Allah cast to Maryam,” this became a way for this man to spread the concept that this “word of Allah” was timeless. He did so in a particular way. He used to ask them, “Is the word of Allah timeless or not?” If they said it was timeless, he would say, “In this case, you are proving that Jesus is timeless, too.” But if they answered negatively, he would say, “But you have already claimed that His speech is created!”

For this reason, the Mutazilites rose to settle the material of the disputes, saying that the Quran was incidental, created, not timeless; it was created (by whom?) for Allah, Praise belongs to Him.

Since the issue was never submitted in past Islamic centuries, views in its regard branched out and contradicted one another, so much so that some very weak theories came out of it as will be stated later. But the theory of the Mutazilites was well received during the time period from the Abbasid ruler al-Mamun to that of al-Mutawakkil. But the matter turned upside down starting from the time of al-Mutawakkil till the period of the Mutazilites came to an end in favor of the people of *hadith* and of the Hanbalis.

During both periods, unfortunate incidents took place and innocent blood was shed. This distracted the Muslims from thinking about matters of the world and of the creed. This issue has many ones like throughout the Muslims' history!

Before delving into the objective, we have to first submit these matters:

First: The Asharis and Kilabis, who fixed for Allah timeless speech, have described speech as one of the entitative attributes (of the Almighty), unlike the Mutazilites and Imamites. According to the latter, it describes His actions, and you will see how this is justified. This dispute rose after noticing two contradictory measures. The Asharis followed the principle of *qiyas* (analogy):

His speech, the speech of the Almighty, describes Him, and everything that describes Him is timeless. Therefore, His speech, the Almighty that He is, is timeless. Others have followed a different analogy. The Almighty's speech is comprised of organized, different parts that are successive when it comes to existence, and anything such as this is eventual. Therefore, His speech is eventual, incidental.

The Asharis, in order to correct His being timeless, interpreted it as a meaning standing by itself called the self-speech. The Mutazilites and Imamites have adopted the second *qiyas* and said that His speech means that He is the One Who created letters and sounds in the outside. Therefore, it so occurred.

Some Hanbalis (or Hanbalites) issued a statement in this regard that combines both contradictory analogies. They have said that His speech is comprised of letters and sounds that stand through Him and, at the same time, are timeless. This is one of the odd statements and ideas.

Second: Explaining His speech, Praise belongs to Him, is not restricted to the three opinions quoted from the Asharis and Adlis (Mutazilis and Imamis) as well as from the Hanbalis. Rather, there is a fourth opinion that is supported by philosophical evidences and is explained by Quranic texts, and it is also indicated in traditions of the Imams from among the Ahl al-Bayt (as). Its summary is this: What informs of His essence and manifestations is His actions and, at the same time, His speech, and you will come to know how this theory is explained.

Third: The path towards the Asharis fixing this attribute is reason and towards the Adlis is hearing, and you will be acquainted with the evidence provided by the Asharis in this regard when we discuss their theory. As regarded citations, Quranic verses have collaborated it to describe Him with it. The Almighty has said,

“Among them are those to whom Allah spoke” (2:253);

“Allah spoke directly to Moses” (4: 164);

“When Moses came to the place appointed by Us, his Lord addressed him...” (7: 143)

and

“It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind a veil or by sending a messenger to reveal, with God’s permission, what Allah wills, for He is the Most High, the Most Wise” (42:51).

Allah Almighty has explained that His speech to the prophets is no more than fitting in the following categories:

1. “... other than inspiration (*wahi*),”
2. “... or from behind a veil”,
3. “... or He sends a messenger (angel).”

The Almighty refers to the speech that is cast into the souls of prophets swiftly and secretly as “inspiration.”

He has also pointed out saying “... or from behind a veil” about His speech which Moses, peace with him, which was heard at the blessed spot. The Almighty said,

“But when he came to the (fire), a voice was heard from the right bank of the valley, in the blessed spot of the bush (saying): ‘O Moses! Truly I am Allah, the Lord of the worlds...’” (Qur’an, 28:30).

He also pointed out saying, “... or He sends a messenger (angel)” in reference to the instruction in which the angel of revelation plays a role. The most Praised One has said,

“With it came down the Spirit of Faith and Truth to your heart and mind, so that you may admonish” (Qur’an, 26: 193–94).

In reality, the One Who is inspiring in all these three categories is Allah, Praise belongs to Him, once without a mediator by casting into one’s soul, or speaking from behind a veil so only voice is heard but nobody is seen, and once through messengers (of revelation, angels). These three categories exist in sacred verses.

Fourth: The truth about the speech of the most Praised One. You have already come to know that there is no dispute among Muslims in describing the most Praised One as speaking, but the dispute is about

its reality first, and from that there are branches of its taking place and whether it is timeless. So, the research must revolve within two situations:

First Situation: Truth of His Speech, the Most Exalted One

Following are the views submitted about the reality of His speech, that of the Almighty:

Theory of the Mutazilis

The Mutazilis have said that the speech of the Almighty is comprised of sounds and letters not standing by Him, the most High, but He creates them in others such as the Preserved Tablet, Gabriel, or the Prophet (S). This has been stated by Abdul-Jabbar, the judge, who said, “The reality of the speech (is) the organized letters and separated sounds, and this is similar to His vesting a blessing on someone else, bestowing sustenance on someone. Thus, He speaks by creating speech in others. It is not necessary that the doer is affected by the deed.”¹

Apparently, His being the speaker in this sense is not disputed, the dispute is about restricting His speech to this meaning. The author has said the following in his book *Sharh al-Mawaqif*: “What the Mutazilis have said is not denied. Rather, we, too, say it, and we call it articulated speech. We admit that it takes place and that it does not stand by Him, the most High, but we firm a matter beyond this.”²

It is noted about this theory that what is indicated about explaining the speech of the most Praised One being letters and sounds in things correctly applies to the speech with which the most Praised One addresses someone or some nation. Its way is what the Mutazilis have stated. The verses that we have indicated, about how the most Praised One addressed Moses or others, take this into consideration.³ But if there is no specific person or nation to address, His speech, the most Praised One, will be by way of absolution, which is His action, one that reflects His goodness, shows His perfection.

The Mutazilis contend themselves with the explanation which they had stated and which fits in the first category. As regarding the second category, it does not apply to it. His action by way of absolution is not similar to sounds and pronouncements. Rather, it is outside particularities, essences and occurrences. The most Praised One has called His actions “speech” in more than one verse, and this is the theory about which we indicate the following:

Theory of the Men of Wisdom

Undoubtedly, speech in the view of most people is comprised of letters and sounds produced by the speaker, the one through whom they stand, and it takes place when there are air waves and vibration, so much so that if these waves are gone, so is speech. But social man expands in the use of this term. He calls “speech” a quoted sermon or poetry cited from someone, saying that this is the speech of the Prophet or the composition of Imriul Qais although their speech is gone because its waves and

vibrations have gone. It only expands the application of the term, the witnessing of the impact on what is narrated or cited.

Thereupon, any action by the speaker that produces the same impact that his speech indicates, without manifesting the meanings and facts the doer hides within, is accurately labeled as speech by way of expanding and developing. You have come to know that the lamp was called as such even when its connotation was as simple as a twig burning. But since its effect, giving light, exists in the oil-fed, gas and electrical fixture, it is used for all.

Similarly is life the way we have explained it. So, if the label is right and such an expansion in both terms is sound, it applies to the term “speech”, too. It was applied for sounds and successive letters and sounds that reveal the meanings within the speaker’s conscience. Yet had there been something that described successive sounds and letters in a higher and more perfect way, it would have been correct to call it speech or statement.

This thing that stands in the place of articulated speech is the deed of a doer, and it is fit to be called actual speech, for every doer reveals the extent of knowledge, ability, greatness and perfection that he has. Yet the connotation of articulations of the innermost and the conscience is juridical, while the indication of magnanimity of actions and impacts, in as far as the doer and impacting factor are concerned, is formative.

For this reason, we see that the most Praised One describes Jesus son of Mary as “the world of Allah which He cast to Virgin Mary,” saying,

“Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah, and His Word which He bestowed on Mary” (Qur’an, 4: 171).

How can our master Jesus not be the word of Allah as He reveals His might, Glory to Him, how He creates a human in the womb of a woman without cohabitation between a male and a female? It is for this reason that the very existence of Jesus is regarded as a Divine Sign, a Miracle.

In the light of this basis, the most Praised One regards everything that exists in the cosmos as His words saying,

“Say: ‘If the ocean were ink (to write) my Lord’s words, the ocean would be exhausted before my Lord’s words are, even if We add another ocean like it for its aid” (Qur’an, 18: 109).

The most Praised One also says,

“And if all trees on earth were pens and the ocean (were ink), with seven oceans behind it to add to its (supply), God’s words would still not be exhausted (in the writing)” (Qur’an, 31:27).

Imam Ali (as) says, “He (the Almighty) says ‘Be!’ to whatever He wants to be, and it is, neither with an

articulated voice, nor with a call that is heard. Rather, His speech, the most Praised One, is His action, He initiates and forms it, a thing which had never been before. Had it been timeless, it would have been another god.”[4](#)

The Imam (as) is quoted as having explained the greatness of creating mankind in these verses of poetry:

*Do you claim that you are a small planet,
While the cosmos is summed up in you?!
And while you are the clear book wherein
What is hidden in its letters is manifest?!*

Everything in the tablet of the universe, anything that is or that can be, is His word. It tells us of the perfection, goodness, knowledge and might that exist from the very start.

Allama Tabatabai has made a statement in this regard which we would like to sum up thus:

“What people call speech, statement, sentence, is a speaker demonstrating a meaning which he has in his mind through composed sounds put forth to express a meaning. Once it is articulated, the addressed person or listener hears him, so the meaning of what is contained in the speaker’s mind moves to the mind of the listener or addressed person, achieving the purpose of that speech which is: getting someone to understand, to comprehend.

There is something interesting in this regard to which men of wisdom attracted attention. The truth of speech stands through a hidden and implied meaning. As regarding the rest of particularities, such as its being produced through sound which takes place in man’s chest, its passage through the throat and reliance on the mouth’s sectors and position, so as it can be heard, these particularities follow the confirmations and are not intruders into the truth of the meaning through which speech stands.

Articulated presented speech, which indicates what one has in mind, is speech. So is the signal that suffices to express a meaning; it, too, is speech. Also, your own making a signal with your hand to someone to sit, stand, etc. is an order and a statement. The same applies to outside existents. Since they indicate their presence by virtue of causation, through their particularities inherent within them, they become external existents. Since their existence is an example of completion of their cause, it is speech.

Thereupon, the whole of the world that occupies a space is the speech of Allah, Praise belongs to Him. He speaks it by bringing it into existence, creating it. Thus, what is hidden of the perfection of His Names and Attributes manifests itself. Also, the Almighty is the Creator of the world, and the world is His creation. Likewise, the Exalted One speaks through this world, manifesting the secrets of the Names, the Attributes; the whole world is His speech.”[5](#)

The Commander of the Faithful and Master of those who believe in the Unity of Allah, peace with him,

says the following in *Nahjul-Balagha*: “He informs but not through a tongue and palate; He hears but not through cracks and instruments. He says but does not pronounce, He preserves but does not take precaution. He wills and does not hide. He loves and is pleased without gentleness. He hates and is angered without an effort. He says to what He wants to be: ‘Be!’ and it is, not through a voice that hits ears, nor is it through a call that is heard; rather, His speech, the most Glorified One that He is, is an action which He initiates and for which He gives a form. It was not before, then it came to exist; had it been timeless, it would have been another god.”⁶

It is to this (meaning) that Sabzawari the critic points out in his poem saying,

*Your tongue is the path of eloquence tread,
Speech of the most Praised One is actions enacted,
If you know this much, you will know how to praise
Things, how His words to these things are appended.*⁷

Up to here, you have come to know the theory of the men of wisdom with regard to His speech, the most Praised One, and it is now time to look into the theory of the Asharis in this regard.

Theory of the Asharis

The Asharis have made speech one of the entitative attributes. They have described His speech, Praise belongs to Him, as the self speech. They say that self-speech is different from knowledge, self-will or unwillingness (the absence of will). They have been artistic about explaining what they term as “different arts”.

Before we quote their texts, we would like to draw a useful introduction in this regard. Undoubtedly, when the speaker tells something, there are many images and testimonies in doing so, all spelling out knowledge. As regarding imagination, it is bringing about the subject, the connotation and the mental relationship between them.

As regarding credibility, it is surrender in the same rate according to what is already known. Undoubtedly, imagining and believing are two branches of knowledge. Knowledge is divided into them. They have said: If knowledge is surrender by ratio, it is either belief or imagination. This is relevant to telling about something.

As for initiating, when it comes to bidding, it is a will in the mind, and when it comes to forbidding, there is disliking for it. When it comes to questioning, wishing, pleading, each has its own suitable case.

The Asharis say that in the informative statements, i.e. what is beyond knowledge, and in initiating, such as bidding and forbidding, beyond the will and the disliking, it is a thing in the mind of the speaker called self-speech, which is the true speech. As for articulated speech, it expresses it. This self-speech in man is incidental, its taking place follows the self. In Him, the most Praised One, it is timeless. In order to

explain the status, let us quote pillar Ashari men in this regard:

1. Al-Fadl al-Qawshaji has said this in his book *Sharh al-Tajreed* (explaining abstractions): “One who brings about the form of bidding, forbidding, calling, informing, inquiring about something or something else, finds in himself meanings which he expresses and which we call ‘sensed speech’. The meaning which he finds within himself and circles in his mind is not different according to the difference in situations and terms, and the speaker means it takes place on the listener accordingly, and this is what we call speech.”⁸

It is not hidden that what he stated in general does not express something clear. But al-Fadl ibn Rozbahan has stated something that is more clear.

2. In *Nahj al-Haqq*, al-Fadl has said, “Speech according to them has more than one meaning which they apply to combinations of heard letters once, and once they apply it to the meaning that stands by itself and is expressed by pronouncements. They say that it is speech in truth, which it stands on its own and is timeless. This speech has to be proven, since people in general do not understand speech to be anything but combined letters and sounds, so let us say the following:

Let one go back to himself if he wants to say something. Does he understand on his own that he organizes and fakes meanings that he intends to articulate? One who seeks audience of a ruler or a man of knowledge organizes inwardly meanings and things and tells himself that he is going to say this and that. A fair-minded person would not argue against it. Such is the self-speech.

Then we say by way of producing evidence that the pronouncements which we articulate carry connotations that stand by themselves, so we say that these connotations connote one’s own self speaking.”⁹

One may resign saying that what he (al-Fadl) says is accurate, but what is important is to prove that these meanings in conveying something are not akin to knowledge. This is not confirmed, rather, the opposite is. The meanings that circle in the speaker’s mind are nothing but envisioning individual or compounded meanings, or they represent a relative surrender (to one’s own intuition). So, the self-speech is rendered to envisioning and to testimonies.

Is here anything beyond knowledge so we may call it self-speech? Also, when a speaker organizes composed meanings, he does not organize anything but his own likes and dislikes, or what serves as an introduction to them, such as imagining a thing or believing in its benefit. Thus, the self-speech is rendered, in its composition, to liking and disliking. Is there anything else other than them, other than envisioning, that we may call self-speech?

In that case, speaking will not be describing what is beyond knowledge in informing and what is beyond it with the freewill in composing. Yet the Asharis insist on proving that a speaker describes what is beyond knowledge and will. For this reason, they say, “Since he is speaking on his own, it is not the

same as his being knowledgeable and having a self-freewill.” It is better, then, to review what the Asharis have brought forth in order to prove that self-speech is something beyond knowledge. Here is the explanation:

First: Self-speech is not knowledge because one may tell about what he does not know, or even knows its opposite, or something that he doubts. So, informing about a thing is not knowledge of it. Sayyid al-Shareef has said the following in his book *Sharh al-Mawaqif*: “What is meant by referring everything on one’s mind in the condition of knowing to knowledge is referring to knowledge which combines envisioning and believing. One who informs about something that he doubts, or one who knows the opposite, imagines the subject, the connotation and the judgmental ratio, then he informs of it.

What his mind contains of these three visions does not get out of the frame of knowledge, which is: envisioning. Yes, there is nothing in his mind of the other portion of knowledge, which is: believing. The source of confusion is explaining knowledge as being believing, so they claim that it is not present when notifying about what is on the mind of the doubtful informer or of that who knows its opposite. What is being overlooked is that the absence of knowledge in the sense of believing does not prove the absence of the other portion of knowledge, which is envisioning.”

Second: In the field of composition, they say that there is, during the period of composing, something else other than liking and disliking which is self-speech (intuition). This is so because one may order something which he does not want, such as one who tests his slave to see if he obeys him or not. The objective here is to test, not to undertake, the actions. [10](#)

One may produce the following resigns regarding the above:

1. Testing commands are of two types: One in which the freewill is relevant to the same introduction and has nothing to do with the action itself, as is the case when the Almighty, Praise belongs to Him, ordered His Friend, (Abraham) peace with him, to slaughter his son Ishamel. This is why, when the Friend performed the introductions (to undertaking the actions), he was addressed thus:

“O Abraham! You have fulfilled the vision” (Qur’an, 37: 105).

In the other part, freewill is relevant to the introduction and its conclusion. The whole matter is that one who commands something has an interest based on undertaking that action, not in the action itself, such as a ruler ordering one of his ministers to bring water in order to let the attendants understand that he is obedient, not rebellious, to him.

In this case, as in the previous one, the situation is not without a freewill. The whole matter is that in the first part, the freewill is relevant only to the introduction, whereas here both introduction and conclusion are relevant to the freewill. So, their saying that there is no will in the testing orders is not accurate.

2. What is obvious for one who produces a conclusion is imagining that the freewill of the one issuing the

command is relevant to others, such as those whom he orders, doing something. For this reason, it is judged that there is no freewill relevant to others doing something when they are put to test.

One may deduct that there is something else in them other than the freewill that may be called “request”, or it may be self–speech. But the truth is something else. Desiring an action is not relevant to others doing something because doing it is outside the frame of the choice of the one issuing the order. A thing such as this is not connected to freewill. For this reason, what is known is that the will in bidding and forbidding is relevant to the action of the one being ordered. It is visionary speech, it is not relevant to the optional action.

What others do is not optional. So, there is no avoiding saying that the order’s freewill is relevant to the action itself that is: bidding and forbidding. If you will, you can say that an action is either ordered or prohibited. Both fall within the frame of choosing a matter; both are regarded among freewill–relevant actions.

Yes, the goal behind bidding and forbidding is the ordered person carrying out orders, or he must stop doing what he was ordered not to do. The person under obligation knows that his disobedience implies worldly or deferred consequences.

Thereupon, the freewill in bidding is relevant to serious and testing orders according to a criterion that is: One’s will is relevant to bidding or forbidding someone who receives his order. It is not relevant to the ordered person himself or to his abstention from doing something, for it is the goal of the ordering individual that is irreversible. The person above confuses what is relevant to freewill with what is meant as bidding and forbidding.

It may come to mind that an objection may be raised against what we have stated, that the one issuing the order is a human whose will is not connected to what others do because this is outside his option. As for what is obligatory, the most Praised One is the One Who orders and subdues: His will is affected in everything:

“Not one of the beings in the heavens and the earth but must come to (Allah), the Most Gracious, as His servant” (Qur’an, 19:93).

Yet the response to this objection is obvious. What is meant by freewill here is the legislative, not formative, freewill, the one that subdues the servants, the one that gets them out of their ability to choose, rendering them without freewill, such is outside the scope of this research.

The Praised One has said,

“Had it been your Lord's will, all people on earth would have believed!” (Qur’an, 10:99).

This verse shows that the will of the most Praised One does not hinge on all people on earth believing (in Him). On the other hand, His freewill hinges on *iman* (conviction, certitude) of every aware adult

person. The Praised One has said,

“Allah tells (you) the truth, and He shows (you) the (right) way” (Qur’an, 10:99).

“The truth” in this verse is general. Likewise, His guidance to the right way is for all people.

The most Praised One has said,

“Allah wishes to make clear to you and to show you the ordinances of those before you” (Qur’an, 4:26),

in addition to other verses that indicate the generality of His legislative guidance. [11](#)

3. Unrepentant sinners and unbelievers are required what people of obedience to the Almighty and belief in Him are required to do, according to the text of the Holy Quran. Their holding them responsible is not initiated by a will from Allah, Praise belongs to Him. Otherwise His freewill will have to be separated from His objective. There has to be another source for obligation that we once call self-talk (intuition), and once request. The outcome is that there is something else in mutability other than freewill.

The Mutazilites have answered by saying that had His freewill, Praise belongs to Him, hinged on an action by itself, and it is not separated from the objective. But if it hinges on others’ actions, since it hinged through the actions of a servant’s freedom and choice, there is no avoiding actions being preceded by the servant’s choice. If this servant wills and chooses, the action materializes. If he does not, no action takes place.

In other words, the freewill of the most Praised One does not hinge on an action by one of His servants at best, whether he wanted it or did not. Rather, it hinges on his doing it provided premeditation had preceded his will. If it is preceded, the action takes place; otherwise, it does not.

It is better said that His freewill, Praise belongs to Him, never lags behind His objective without a difference between the formative and the legislative freewill. As for the first, if His formative freewill hinges on directly creating a thing, or through one of the causes, it imminently takes place. The most Praised One has said,

“Truly when He intends to create a thing, His order is: ‘Be,’ and it is!” (Qur’an, 36:82).

As for the second, it is related to the same mutability and the starting of an action, or the same desisting and alienating himself, which undoubtedly materializes in all His orders and prohibitions, whether His servant obeyed or disobeyed.

As regarding a servant’s actions or abstention from an action, they both are irrelevant to the legislative will in His orders and prohibitions. Their lagging behind is not regarded as violating the principle. This is so because others’ actions are not related to anyone’s freewill, others’ orders do not fall within a desiring

person's option. [12](#) For this reason, we said in its place that the legislative freewill is relevant to the self's actions, that is, initiating a start (of doing something) or prohibiting it, not to others' actions.

We arrive at this result: The legislative freewill is present in the case of unrepentant sinners and unbelievers. What is relevant materializes even if a servant does not comply.

4. What al-Fadl ibn Rozbahan has stated is that every rational person knows that the speaker is one who enjoys the attribute of speaking. If the meaning of the most Praised One speaking is His creating of speech, this description does not stand through Him. It is not said about one who creates speech to be a speaker. Likewise, it is not said about one who creates taste that he does taste. [13](#)

One may resign about the above that the principle standing through the doer is not one section, that is, the start section. Rather, it has sections. An action may be done by an individual, such as killing, striking the killer, beating someone, etc. And a section may be incidental, such as acquiring knowledge, the might in the one who knows, his potence, etc. Speaking, like beating, is not a start principle in the doer; rather, it is a mutability principle.

For this reason, the most Praised One created speech, so He is described as speaker. He is described with the attribute of conveying statements. Actually, it may be right through absolution even if the principle stands always through the doer, neither initiated nor started, but suffices to touch on the principle, such as one who sells dates and milk described as such. As for not applying the term "taster" for the One Who creates tasting, it is because the accuracy of derivation after one of the functions is not standard, so the most Praised One could be termed as "taster", "smeller", etc., because He creates (the faculty of) tasting, smelling, etc. Perhaps theologians are too cautious to describe Him with them in order to distance themselves from what can be misunderstood as giving Him a body and the requirements of doing so.

5. Just as the term "speech" is applied to articulated statements, it also is applied to what exists by itself. The most Praised One has said,

"Whether you hide your word or manifest it, He certainly has (full) knowledge of the secrets of (all) hearts" (Qur'an, 67: 13).

One may surrender, regarding the above, by applying "speech" in the absolute sense to what exists by itself when it is done by some way, or by caring about something, arguing about it. The "speech" is what is articulated by the tongue. So, it is not applied to what exists in one's mind, something for which there is no reality other than the known image except by way of interest.

Research's Conclusion

The Asharis claimed that what is inside the speaker's mind when he makes an informative or initiated sentence, is an image that testifies to the first. And there is behind the freewill in the second something

that they call “self’s speech” (intuition). They may have specifically applied the term “request” to self-speech in the mutability section. Thus, they corrected (the concept of) His being Speaker, the most Praised One that He is, just as He is Knowledgeable and Omni-Potent, and that all (these adjectives) are self-attributes.

But research and analysis, as you have already come to know, provided us with the opposite of their conclusion. This is due to what you have witnessed, that is, there is nothing behind knowledge in the informative sentences, nor is there behind the freewill and hatred, etc. in the mutability sentences, anything which we label as self-speech. You have already come to know that request is also the same as freewill.

Had they meant by self-speech as the meaning of the articulated speech or its informing image that applies to its term, its essence is rendered to knowledge and nothing more. And if they meant it to be a meaning beyond that, we do not know it within ourselves if we would refer to it.

As regarding the Ashari rendering his conclusions to this verse of poetry:

*Speech is in the heart but,
The tongue identifies what the heart has,*

Logical researches occupy a higher status than using poetry as a mechanism to lead to them. [14](#)

Thus, you come to know that what the critic al-Tusi says, i.e. that “self-speech is not rational”, is sound, there is nothing wrong with it.

Up to here, the three theories have been made clear, those of the Mutazilites, those of the wise men, and those of the Asharis. [15](#) With it, talk in the discussion of the first situation is completed, and it is time now to discuss in the second: whether the speech of the most Exalted One is incidental or timeless.

Second Situation: Is It Incidental or Timeless?

When philosophy came to exist, and when issues about the attributes of Allah Almighty were discussed by men of logic, the most important issue submitted for discussion was that of the speech of Allah Almighty and that of the creation of the Quran. The Mutazilites adopted the argument that the Quran was created. They defended it through various means.

Since the Abbaside government during the time of al-Mamoon and those after him up to the time of al-Wathiq Billah supported the Mutazilites’ movement and views, the latter benefited from this clout. They tested the scholars of Islamic lands in this issue. The result of this test was that all *faqih*s in that century responded with (in favor of) the creation theory. Only very few abstained from doing so, and imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal stood as the head of this group.

The issue of the speech of Allah Almighty being non-created can be rendered to the second century. It remained hidden till the time of al-Mamoon. Although the people of *hadith* stick to not saying anything about which statement was made by the Messenger of Allah (peace with him and his progeny) or by the period of the *sahaba*, they violated their principle in this issue, so much so that they were dragged into announcing it publicly from the tops of their mosque pulpits.

The main reason for that is due to Ahmed ibn Hanbal and his stance. He propagated the notion that the Quran was neither created nor timeless, defending it enthusiastically and bearing for its sake hardships recorded in history's annals. You have come to know how he refused to surrender to the theory of the creating of the Qur'an when the *faqih*s questioned him, so he was jailed, tortured and whipped. Despite all of this, he demonstrated firmness and steadfastness, and this was the most important factor that led to his fame throughout the Islamic lands thereafter. History has recorded a number of debates that went on between him and thinkers from among scholars of logic.

In order to explain the status in the situation, we would like to bring about what Ahmed ibn Hanbal and Abul-Hassan al-Ashari had brought forth in this regard.

Ahmed ibn Hanbal has said, "The Quran, the speech of Allah, is not created. One who claims that the Quran is created is a Jahmi apostate. One who claims that the Quran is the speech of Allah, the most Exalted and the most Great, then he stops without saying that it is created or not created is worse than the first. One who claims that our own pronouncing of the Quran and reciting it is created, while the Quran is Allah's speech, is Jahmi. And one who does not label these folks as apostates is just like them. Allah spoke to Moses manifestly. It was from Allah that Moses heard for sure. And He *handed him over the Torah with His hand*. Allah has always been a speaker, knowledgeable, praise be to Allah, the best of creators." [16](#)

Abul-Hassan al-Ashari has said, "We say that the Quran, the speech of Allah, is not created, and that one who says that the Quran is created is *kafir*, apostate." [17](#)

It has been cited about the imam of the Hanbalis that he said, "There are people who say that the Quran is neither created nor uncreated." He added saying, "These are more harmful to people than the Jahmis. Woe unto you! If you say that it is not created, say that it is!" Ahmed (ibn Hanbal) said, "These are evil people." It was said to him, "What do you yourself say?" He said, "What I think, and what I conclude, and it is something in which there is no doubt, is that the Qur'an is not created." Then he added saying, "Praise belongs to Allah! Who can doubt this?!" [18](#)

Such are the arguments of the people of *hadith*, the Hanbalis and the Asharis. As for the Mutazilites, Judge Abdul-Jabbar says, "As regarding our sect in this regard, the Quran is the speech of Allah Almighty and His inspiration. It is created, something new that Allah revealed to His Prophet so it may be a flag post, a guide, towards his being a prophet. He made it a guide for us to the rulings so we may refer to it to determine what is permissible and what is prohibitive, and for this we are obligated to praise

and to thank Him.

So, what we nowadays hear and recite, if what we read is not created anew by Allah Almighty, it is added to Him by way of reality just as you now add when you recite a poem by Imriul-Qais to its reality, even though Imriul-Qais has not this moment composed it.”¹⁹

Before we analyze the issue, we have to state the following introductions:

1. If the issue of the Quran being created or timeless brought about two groups each of which calls the other *kafir*, apostate, such as the imam of the Hanbalis says, “One who claims that the Quran is created is a *kafir* Jahmi,” while the Mutazilites say, “To say that the Quran is not created, is timeless, is to utter *shirk* (association) with Allah, Praise belongs to Him,” this issue must be analyzed in the light of reason, Quran and Sunnah by avoiding any excitement or fuss.

Undoubtedly, this issue was submitted during certain atmospheres where understanding was rare, when there were disputes. Otherwise, what is the sense in thus becoming divided about a matter one of the two groups claims that it is the factor of apostasy and that *Tawhid* is its opposite, while the other group claims the opposite?

Had the issue of the creation of the Quran occupied such a status, revelation should have clearly supported one of these two theories and thus removed the curtain from the face of reality. Yet we are of the opinion that there is no text in the Islamic Sharia about this issue. It rather surfaced in the beginning of the second (Hijri) century.

Yes, both groups have cited Quranic verses, but the indications (of these verses) are ambiguous and, if one supposes they serve as indications, they are not fully comprehended except by al-Awhadi. Anything regarded as an indication of *Tawhid* or *shirk* requires a Quranic verse that accepts no interpretation and is obvious to everyone now and always.

In his book titled *Al-Ibana*, al-Ashari has quoted reports about how Abu Haneefa was an apostate (*mushrik*, one committing *shirk*, associating others with Allah), that others dissociated themselves from him, and that the son of Abu Layla required him to regret and repent.

The reason was Abu Haneefa advocating the Quran having been created. Abu Haneefa, therefore, repented by way of *taqiyya* for fear he would be killed as he himself stated.²⁰ Yet al-Tahawi indicated in his work *Aqaid* the opposite of the above and advocated the Quran as having been uncreated, although he was a follower of Abu Haneefa in his taste and conduct.

2. Some members of the posterity used to feel too embarrassed to describe the Quran as being timeless. They only said that it was not created. Yet they gradually elaborated on their statement till they described the speech of Allah as being timeless. It is known that describing something as being uncreated or timeless is something a man of knowledge does not dare to delve into because both of

these descriptions are among His own characteristics.

Had His speech been something different from Himself, how can it be described as being uncreated or timeless? If we suppose that this doctrine, which only al-Awhadi tackles in the science of logic, how can this obscure issue be something in which every Muslim should believe despite the fact that the simple individual, even one who enjoys merits, cannot analyze and realize a thing other than Allah, Praise belongs to Him, while being at the same time uncreated?

The ease of the doctrine and its easy following is one of the characteristics of the Islamic Sharia. This distinguishes it from all other sects prevailing throughout the world. Yet believing in something being other than what Allah Almighty has stated, which differs from His own Self, whether created or timeless, is something so difficult for elite men, what would you say about commoners?

3. What appears to be the case with regard to the people of hadith is that the recited Quran is timeless, something which commonsense and reason, and even the Quran itself, denies. This belief has been rendered void, so much so that Sheikh Muhammad Abdoh assaulted it saying, “One who says that the recited Quran is timeless is much worse and more misleading in his belief than every creed the Quran itself testified to its being misled, calling for following its opposite.”[21](#)

When Ibn Taymiyyah, who installed himself as proponent of the doctrine of the men of hadith, noticed that it was a trivial belief, he openly advocated that the recited Quran is incidental and that verses such as these:

“O you wrapped up in garments!” (Qur’an, 73: 1),

“O you draped (in a mantle)!” (Qur’an, 74: 1)

and

“Allah has indeed heard (and accepted) the statement of the woman who pleads with you concerning her husband...” (Qur’an, 58: 1)

and others prove that a call, hearing it, etc., took place at a certain time, not since eternity.[22](#)

What is amazing is that he seeks evidence from the Mutazilites about the recited Quran being incidental, saying that the order of the words’ letters and of the sentences requires them to be incidental because the way the statement “Bismillah”, for e.g., depends on the “Bi” taking place then its vanishing through the “s”, etc., succeeding it. So, something taking place and vanishing that happens to the letters individually never separates from them, otherwise, there can be no word created. So, how can something like this be timeless, eternal, when applied to Allah Almighty?

4. Since the notion that the Quran is not created, or to say that it is timeless, has been the slogan of the folks of *hadith* and their distinguishing sign while, on the other hand, it is said that the recited and

pronounced Quran is timeless, something which sound reason cannot accept, the Asharis came up with a new theory with which they corrected the statement that the Quran is not created, that it is timeless. They sought a safe haven with saying that what is sought from the speech of Allah Almighty is not the recited Quran but the self-speech, and you have already come to know the extent of soundness of advocating (the theory of) the self-speech.[23](#)

At any rate, advocating the timeliness of the self-speech is not isolated from saying that the recited Quran is timeless.

5. How can the statement about the creation of the Quran and its being an event be a factor for *kufr*, apostasy, while the most Praised One describes it as being brought forth, that is, something new?

The most Praised One has said,

“Mankind's reckoning comes closer and closer: Yet they do not heed and they turn away. (Nothing) ever comes to them of a renewed message from their Lord except that they listen to it in jest” (Qur’an, 21: 1-2).

What is meant by the “message from their Lord” is the Holy Quran by virtue of this verse:

“We have, without doubt, sent down the message, and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)” (Qur’an, 15:9),

and also this verse:

“The (Qur’an) is indeed the message, for you and for your people, and you shall (all) soon be brought to account” (Qur’an, 43:44).

What is meant by “created” is something new which describes the Quran. The meaning of its being new is that it was revealed after the Bible. The Bible, too, was new because it was revealed after the Torah. The same applies to some chapters and verses of the Quran. They came to them some after others. It is not meant that it was new from the standpoint of its revelation. Rather, it is meant to be new by itself by the token it was described as the “remembrance/mention”. The remembrance by itself is something new. This does not apply to its revelation, for there is no sense in describing what takes place on its own as being revealed.[24](#)

How can it be said that the Quran is timeless while the most Praised One says the following about it:

“If it were Our will, We could take away what We have sent you by inspiration: Then you would find none to plead your affair in that matter against Us” (Qur’an, 17:86).

So, is it correct to apply taking away what is timeless and rendering it nonexistent?

6. What is amazing is that the topic of dispute was never clearly defined so one may be able to issue a

judgment in its regard. There are here possibilities into which the folks of hadith as well as the Asharis may look when describing His speech, the most Praised One, as being timely. We would like to submit them on the carpet of research, and we ask a judgment be issued in their regard derived from reason and the Quran:

- a. The pronouncements and wise statements, the like of which humans in all centuries have been unable to produce, were brought by the custodian of revelation (Gabriel) to the Honored Prophet [Muhammad (S)]. The Messenger of Allah (S) recited them, the ears grabbed them and the pens wrote them down on sacred tablets. So, they are not at all created, neither to Him, Praise belongs to Him, nor to others.
- b. The lofty meanings and sublime concepts in the fields of genesis, legislation, events, manners, etiquettes, etc.
- c. The Praised One's own Self, the Attributes of knowledge, ability, life-giving which the Quran discusses and to which it points out with its pronouncements and statements.
- d. The knowledge of the most Praised One as recorded in the Holy Quran.
- e. The Quran is not created for humans even though it was created by Allah.

These probabilities do not only apply to the Holy Quran but are repeated in all divinely revealed books that descended to His prophets and messengers.

Here is an explanation of judging them from the standpoint of taking place or from that of timelessness.

As for the first, I do not think that anyone who has a measure of rationality and intellect would believe that they are not created, or that they are timeless. How so while they are things, existents among many others, things that can come to exist but not necessarily have to exist? If they were *not* created, then they have to be a must by themselves, which is nothing but committing *shirk* in Allah, the most Praised One. Even if it is supposed that the most Praised One speaks these pronouncements and statements, His speaking is not outside the scope of His actions. So, can it be said that His action is not created or is timeless?

As for the second, it is close to the first with regard to commonsense. The Quran, as well as all sacred books, contains events which took place during the Prophet's lifetime, the debates with the People of the Book and with the polytheists, what happened during his invasions and wars, the painful incidents or the happy ones. So, can we describe as being "timeless" the incident that these verses narrate:

“Allah has indeed heard (and accepted) the statement of the woman who pleads with you concerning her husband and carries her complaint (in prayer) to Allah, and Allah (always) hears the arguments between both sides among you, for Allah hears and sees (all things)” (Qur’an, 58: 1).

The most Blessed and Exalted One informed, in the Quran and divinely revealed books, the incidents that happened to His prophets and to all nations and the norms of torment with which they were tormented. He also informed about the genesis, how He created and managed. So, these facts that are stated in the Holy Quran undoubtedly imply time periods, they are not timeless.

As for the third, there is no doubt that His own Self, His attributes of knowledge, ability, life-giving, etc., as well as what relates to them, such as His being the One and Only God, Timeless without any doubt, not created by virtue of commonsense. But the Quran is not the only book that talks about these things, everything humans say point out to these facts. The meaning referred to by pronouncements and sounds are timeless and, at the same time, so are the speeches and sentences, all relate to time.

As regarding the fourth, that is, His knowledge, Praise belongs to Him, of what these books contain and of what they do not, undoubtedly it is as timeless as He Himself is. None from among the theological logicians, with the exception of the Karamis, has said that His knowledge is incidental.

As for the fifth, I mean His being, Praise belongs to Him, speaking eternal, timeless self speech, not with letters or sounds, it contradicts knowledge and freewill. You have already come to know that what the Asharis term a self-speech does not come out of the frame of knowledge and freewill, and there is no doubt that His knowledge and simple freewill are timeless.

As for the sixth, that is, the objective behind negating its being non-created, since the Quran is not created for humans while at the same time it is created by Allah, Praise is due to Him, this matter is denied by any Muslim. The Quran is created by Allah, the Praised One, and people in their entirety cannot bring about something like it. The Praised One has said,

“Say: ‘If all mankind and jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur’an, they would not be able to produce the like of it, even if they back each other up with help and support’” (Qur’an, 17:88).

This analysis connotes the issue was submitted in disturbed atmospheres, and people were in disarray. The topic of discussion was not presented clearly so a distinction could be made between what is positive and what is negative, so right might be distinguished from wrong. Despite this confusion in presenting the subject of the dispute, we see that the folks of *hadith* and the Asharis seek evidences from Quranic verses to prove the timelessness of His speech and its being non-created. Here are the evidences for you one by one.

Al-Ashari has sought evidences in different ways:

First Evidence: It is this verse:

“For to anything which We have willed, We merely say to it, ‘Be,’ and it is” (Qur’an, 16:40).

Al-Ashari says, “What proves from Allah’s Book that His speech is not created is His own saying,

'For to anything which We have willed, We merely say to it, 'Be,' and it is' (Qur'an, 16:40).

Had the Quran been created, it should have been said to it: "Be!" and it becomes. Had Allah, the most Exalted and the most Great, said to the speech "Be!", such speech would have had a speech of its own! This requires one of two matters: The matter must either be rendered to saying that Allah's speech is not created, or every speech becomes a reality by saying "No!" to a purpose, which is impossible. When this becomes impossible, it becomes accurate and confirmed that Allah, the most Exalted One and the most Great, has speech that is not created.[25](#)

One may submit the following about the above:

One: The deduction is based on the order in the said verse and its likes being a pronounced order. It is composed of letters and sounds. The most Praised One is like a commanding ruler. Just as he communicates when he orders his ministers and aides through pronouncements, thus does the most Praised One seek assistance during His creation of the heavens and earth with pronouncement and speech, addressing the absolute nonexistent with the order "Be!"

There is no doubt that this probability is quite false, for there is no sense in addressing something that does not exist! In order to correct it, it is said that what is "non-existent" is known by Allah Almighty Who knows the thing before it comes into being, and that it will become a being at some time.

This is of no use because knowledge of a thing is not right through an address. If you have doubt about that, notice the carpenter who wants to make a chair with the use of tools and equipment. Is it right that he addresses them with this pronouncement, although there is a difference or differences between this example and that?

But what is meant about the order in the said verse, as most Muslims have understood it, is the forming order which expresses the definitive freewill being attached to finding the thing. What is meant by the verse is that the freewill of the most Praised One is followed by something that comes into being, into existence, and that nothing stands in its way. The thing that He ordered and wanted is formed, and it enters into the world of existence without objection or a stop like the obedient subject who is ordered and who obeys. He does not stop or refuse or oppose.

Thus, you become familiar with the difference between the legislative obligatory order, which exists in the Quran and Sunnah, and the formative order. The first is directed to the mature adult rather than to others, let alone those that do not exist. And this differs from the formative order, it is the symbol for the definitive freewill hinging on bringing about what is yet to exist.

Here is the Commander of the Faithful Ali ibn Abu Talib (as) explaining the formative order: "He says to what He wants 'Be!' and it is, without a thundering voice or a heard call. Rather, His speech, Glory to Him, is His action; He creates it and forms it, and it was never before existing. Had it been timeless, it would have been a second deity."[26](#)

Two: We choose the second portion and sequence as being non-binding. We commit to a speech that precedes the Quran that is not created. Through it the most Praised One brought about the whole of the Quran, creating it, including the word “Be” which exists in that verse and its likes. The result is that the Quran and all divinely revealed books as well as all His speeches and statements form one single speech that precedes them all. Thus, the sequence is severed when adhering to the principle of a single pronouncement, it is never created.

Three: How can the word “Be” which exists in the said verse and its likes be timeless whereas it connotes the future? So, it has to be time-relevant. This is by token of the most Praised One informing about the future thus: “Our speech when We want something is to say to it ‘Be!’ and it is.” For this reason, late Asharis resorted to the pronouncement “Be!” as an incident, whereas what is timeless implies an eternal, self-relevant meaning.[27](#)

Second Evidence: It is His saying:

“Your Guardian-Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six days and is firmly established on the throne (of authority): He draws the night over the day like a veil, each seeking the other in rapid succession. He created the sun, the moon and the stars, (all) governed by laws under His command. Is it not His [sole privilege] to create and to govern? Blessed be Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds!” (Qur’an, 7:54).

Al-Ashari has said, “The creating includes everything which He has created. When He says ‘command’, He made a reference to something else other than all creations. He, thus, pointed out to what we have described as being a command of Allah that is yet to be made. As regarding Allah’s command, it is His speech. Briefly: The most Praised One made a distinction between His order and His creation. Allah’s order is His speech, and this requires Allah’s speech to be uncreated.[28](#)

One may conclude with the following about the above. The deduction is based on the “command” in that verse meaning Allah’s speech, and this is not proven. Rather, the evidence indicates that it means something else. How so since the most Praised One has already said this in the same verse:

“... And the stars are subject to His command: Truly (there) are Signs in this for men who are wise” (Qur’an, 16: 12)

and

“Is it not His to create and to govern?” (Qur’an, 7:54).

What is meant by both words (creating and governing) is the same, the first leads to the other. This verse’s goal is to convey the meaning that creating, in the sense of bringing into existence, and His management (of what He creates) are both from Allah, the Praised One. It is not His affair to just create the world and the things then leave them alone and let someone else manage their affairs, so that

creating will come from Him while management comes from someone else independently. Rather, all come from Him.

What is meant by creating is finding exact things. And what is meant by governing is the order that prevails on them. It is as though creating is relevant to them and governing is to the conditions that take place in them and the order that rules among them. The evidence to this fact comes from some verses that refer to “governing” or administering after creating.

The most Praised One says,

“Truly your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six days and is firmly established on the throne (of authority), regulating and governing all things. No intercessor (can plead with Him) except with His leave” (Qur’an, 10:3).

The Almighty has also said,

“Allah is He Who raised the heavens with no pillars that you can see; He is firmly established on the throne (of authority); He has subjected the sun and the moon (to His law)! Each runs (its course) for an appointed term. He regulates affairs, explaining the Signs in detail, so that you may believe with certainty in the meeting with your Lord” (Qur’an, 13:2).

So, what “regulating the affairs” means is the opposite of prohibiting them. Rather, what is meant by the affairs is relevant to creating. Thus, the meaning becomes: creating first then dealing with and administering all coming from the most Praised One, for He is the Creator, the Owner, there is no partner with Him in creating, bringing into being or in managing and administering all affairs.

Third Evidence: It is this verse: “This is nothing but the word of mortals!”

Al-Ashari says, “Whoever claims that the Quran is created makes it the word of mortals, and this is what Allah has objected against the polytheists.”[29](#)

One can make this conclusion about it: One who says that the Quran is created means only that it is created for Allah, the most Praised One. Allah created it, inspired it to the Prophet and sent it to him in installments during a period of twenty-three years, making it beyond the might of humans to produce its like even if each of them supports the other for the task.

Yes, the Quran being a creation for Allah, Praise belongs to Him, does not negate that what people recite is created for them. It is commonsense that the letters and sounds which people articulate are created for them. For example, the poem by Imriul-Qais and others: Originally, they were created for their poets, but when recited, their recitation becomes a creation for the readers (or hearers).

What is amazing is that al-Ashari and those who were before and after him did not edit the topic of the dispute. They claimed that if it is said that the “Quran is created,” it is meant that the Quran is made for

humans. But necessity rules the opposite of this deduction: How can a Muslim who embraces the Quran and recites this verse by the Creator, Praise belongs to Him,

“This is a Book which We have revealed as a blessing” (Qur’an, 6: 155)

say that the Quran is created for humans? Rather, all Muslims say about the Quran the same: It is what is said by the most Praised One about it. Yet what is recited on their tongues is created for them, so something similar to what Allah revealed becomes created for people. The similar thing created for them is not evidence that the original was created for them. All people combined are unable to create the like of the Quran, but they are able to create (duplicate) its similitude. So, notice and think about it.

Thus, we become aware of the majority of evidences brought about by al-Ashari in his book *Al-Ibana* are incomplete from the standpoint of proof. We do not wish to elaborate and to critique it, and what we have stated suffices.

Something interesting needs to be pointed out here. It is well known about the imam of the Hanbalis that he did not wish to delve into matters in which the “righteous posterity” did not delve because he did not see any knowledge was there other than that of this posterity. So, what they discussed he, too, would discuss, and what they did not discuss of religious matters, he would see it as an innovation that must be shunned.

Since this issue was not discussed by the posterity, he felt he had no right to discuss it. Innovators are the ones who talk about it. He would not have followed in the latter’s footsteps, and it was his duty, according to his principles, to stop and not say a word. Yes, he has been quoted as saying what agrees with stopping, although what we have quoted about him is the opposite, that is, he said, “Whoever claims that the Quran is created is Jahmi, and whoever claims that it is not created is an innovator.”

Critics see that this imam of the Hanbali used in his early life to see that researching whether the Quran was created or not as an innovation, *bida* بدعة . But once the ordeal was over, the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil, who supported him, asked him to state his own view, so he chose to say that the Quran was not created! Despite this, he is never quoted as saying that the Quran is timeless.[30](#)

Position of Ahl al-Bayt (as)

The history of the research and of the ordeals through which both parties passed testifies that being extremist in its regard was not for the sake of supporting what is right, for dispelling doubts. Rather, each sect took advantage of that issue to harm its opponents. For this reason, we see the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (as) prohibiting their followers from delving into this issue.

Al-Rayyan ibn al-Salt asked Imam al-Ridha (as): “What do you say about the Quran?” The Imam (as) said, “It is the speech of Allah. Do not bypass it, and do not seek guidance anywhere lest you should stray.”[31](#)

Ali ibn Salim narrated about his father saying, "I asked as-Sadiq, Jafar ibn Muhammad (as), 'O son of the Messenger of Allah! What would you say about the Quran?' He said, 'It is the speech of Allah, what He has said, the Book of Allah, what He inspired and revealed. It is the Holy Book which falsehood does not approach from before its hands or from behind, the revelation of a Wise, Praiseworthy God'."[32](#)

Sulayman ibn Jafar al-Jafari has said, "I asked Abul-Hassan, Mousa ibn Jafar (as), 'O son of the Messenger of Allah (S)! What do you say about the Quran? Those before us have differed about it. Some folks say it is created, whereas others say it is not.'" He (as) said, "As for me, I do not say in this regard what they say; I only say: It is the speech of Allah."[33](#)

We see how the Imam (as) distanced himself from delving into this matter due to having seen that delving into it was not in the interest of Islam, and that contending with saying that it is the speech of Allah was better to resolve the subject of the dispute. But when they [Ahl al-Bayt (as)] realized the safest situation in this regard was to state their opinion about it, they said that the Creator is Allah, and all others are created (by Him), that the Quran is not the same as the most Praised One, otherwise, a fusion should be forged between the Revealer and what He reveals. The Quran is not He, so the Quran is unavoidably created.

Muhammad ibn Isa ibn Ubayd al-Yaqtini has narrated saying that Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Mousa al-Ridha (as) wrote some of his followers (Shias) in Baghdad saying, "In the Name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful. May Allah protect us and your own selves from sedition. If He does, what a great blessing it will be! But if He does not, it is sure perdition. We see that arguing about the Quran is an innovation *بدعة* in which both inquirer and respondent have participated. So, the questioner undertakes what does not belong to him, whereas the one answering him exerts himself while he does not have to. The Creator is none other than Allah, the most Exalted One, the most Great. Everything else is created (by Him). The Quran is the speech of Allah. Do not create a name for it from your own self lest you should be among those who stray. May Allah count us and your own selves among those who fear their Lord in the unknown, and they are apprehensive about the Hour."[34](#)

In reported narratives, there is a reference to the ordeal that the historians recorded. Ahmed ibn Abu Duad wrote saying that during the time of al-Mamoon, the latter wrote about the issue of creating the Quran to the provincial governors of Islamic metropolises. He did so in order to test the *faqih*s and narrators of *hadith* in the issue of the creation of the Quran, to impose on them to penalize anyone who espoused an opinion differently from that of the Mutazilites in this regard.

Al-Mutasim and al-Wathiq succeeded him and implemented his way and policy towards the opponents of the Mutazilites. The ordeal reached its peak against the narrators of *hadith*. Ahmed remained for twenty-eight months under torture but never abandoned his view[35](#).

When Abbasid ruler al-Mutawakkil came to power, he supported the sect of the Hanbalis, keeping his distance from their opponents. It is then that the narrators of *hadith* felt elated, and the ordeal now

surrounded those who were in the near past imposing their views through the authority of the sultan.

So, can we regard this debate as being Islamic, as being in agreement with the Quran in commanding to know the truth and to examine it, or was there something else behind all of this? Surely Allah is the One Who knows all facts and what the hearts conceal.

1. Judge Abdul-Jabbar (d. 415 A.H.), Sharh al-Usool al-Khamsa, p. 528; Sayyid al-Shareef, Sharh al-Mawaqif, p. 495.
2. Sharh al-Mawaqif, Vol. 1, p. 77. You will come across what the Asharis confirm.
3. The most Praised One has said, "...and Allah spoke directly to Moses" (Qur'an, 4:164). The most Praised One has also said, "It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration" (Qur'an, 42:51).
4. Nahjul-Balagha, sermon 179, Vol. 2, p. 122 (Abdoh edition).
5. Tabatabai, Tafsir al-Mizan, Vol. 2, p. 325 (Beirut edition).
6. Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 179, Vol. 2, p. 122 (Abdoh edition).
7. Sabzawari, Sharh Sabzawari's poem, p. 190.
8. Al-Qawshaji, Sharh al-Tajreed, p. 420.
9. Nahj al-Haqq which is incorporated into Dalail al-Sidq, p. 146 (Najaf edition).
10. Ibid.
11. We will provide you in detail a discussion of the generality of His guidance, Praise to Him, at the conclusion of this book's sixth chapter.
12. This is so even if the One desiring it is Allah Almighty, although this is possible; otherwise, it is by way of coercing and obligating, which is negated in His regard, Praise to Him, as you will see in the sixth chapter.
13. Dalail al-Sidq, Vol. 1, p. 147 (Najaf's edition).
14. Tabatabai, Tafsir Al-Mizan, Vol. 14, p. 250.
15. As regarding the Hanbalis' theory, we will discuss it in the second situation in order to avoid being repetitive.
16. Ahmed ibn Hanbal, Kitab al-Sunnah, p. 49.
17. Al-Ash'ari, Al-Ibana, p. 21. Also refer to Maqalat al-Islamiyyeen (Islamists' articles), p. 321.
18. Al-Ibana, p. 69. On p. 76, he mentioned the names of the people of traditions who advocate that the Quran is not created.
19. Sharh al-Usool al-Khamsa, p. 528.
20. Al-Ibana, pp. 71-72.
21. Risalat al-Tawhid (first edition. About one page of this risala was omitted in later editions. Notice p. 49 of the edition published by the Arab Culture Library).
22. Majmuat al-Rasaail al-Kubra, Vol. 3, p. 97.
23. This is not the first place in which the Asharis attempt to correct the belief of the folks of hadith. Rather, they did so on several occasions in order to produce it in a way accepted by reason.
24. This is due to what takes place by itself having precedence over what is brought about.
25. Al-Ibana, pp. 52-53.
26. Nahjul-Balagha, sermon 186.
27. Dalail al-Sidq quoting al-Fadl ibn Rozbahan al-Ashari's p. 153, Vol. 1.
28. Al-Ibana, pp. 51-52.
29. Al-Ibana, p. 56.
30. Tarikh al-Mathahib al-Islamiyya (history of Islamic sects), p. 300.
31. Al-Saduq, At-Tawhid, the Book of the Quran: What it is, hadith 2, p. 223.
32. Ibid., Chapter of the Quran, hadith 3, p. 224.
33. Ibid., hadith 5, p. 224.
34. Ibid., hadith 4.
35. Refer to p. 252, Vol. 11 of Siyar Alam al-Nubala. A chapter in this book details what imam Ahmed [ibn Hanbal] went through.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/al-ilahiyyat-volume-1-sheikh-hassan-muhammad-makki-al-amili/speech#comment-0>