

An Analysis of Christian Apologist James White’s Polemics Regarding the Qur’ān, “Created or Not?”

**HOW CHRISTIANS EMPLOY THE MISGUIDED
VIEWS OF ASTRAY SECTS
PART 1: THE STATEMENT OF AL-ṬABARĪ**

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Bismillāh wal-Ḥamdulillāh.

James White is a Christian apologist from the United States who engages in public debates with Muslims on various issues pertaining to scripture, doctrine and history.

In a video published on Youtube on 10 October 2019, titled “*Has the Qur`ān Eternally Existed*”, White debates a Muslim apologist on the subject matter of the Qur`ān as the speech of Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) and the issue of its eternality. These debates are not new and did not appear in the modern era. Rather, they took place in the era of the Righteous Salaf when Christians saw opportunities to argue for their doctrines using the innovations and heresies of astray sects such as the **Jahmites**, **Mu`tazilites**, **Kullābites**, **Ash`arites** and **Māturīdites**. These heresies arose on account of foreign influence from Hellenized Sabians, Jews and Christians upon individuals who debated without being grounded in knowledge and without sound understanding of the Qur`ān.

Thereafter, entire schools of thought developed on the basis of these doctrines and have remained till present. These schools remain useful entry points for Christian apologists in constructing their polemics against Muslims.

In this article we will analyse White’s treatment of this subject matter which is intended no doubt to justify Christian doctrine

regarding Jesus the Messiah (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) through the ambiguity and confusion regarding the Qur'ān as the uncreated Speech of Allāh.

For some useful background on the issue, one should first read and grasp the previous article titled, “**The Qur'ān, the Speech of Allāh, Jesus the Messiah, Christian Apologists and ‘The Word’**.”¹ This is essential reading and will allow this article and the rest of the series to be better understood.

In this first part, we shall take a look at a citation from Imām al-Ṭabarī that has been misunderstood by James White and provide its correct understanding.

¹ Refer to <http://www.islamjesus.ws/?zgxlax>.

PART 1: THE STATEMENT OF IBN JARĪR AL-ṬABARĪ

After an introduction to his presentation, James White starts by quoting a statement from **Imām al-Ṭabarī** (d. 310H) regarding the Qur'ān. He also cites from **Imām al-Ṭahāwī** (d. 321H). After this he mentions the Miḥnah, the Trial, referring to what took place in the early 3rd century hijrah during the era of Imām Aḥmad when the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs had been won over by the Mu'tazilah. His intent is to show the complete opposition between what he cited from al-Ṭabarī and al-Ṭahāwī on the one hand—whose statements he has misunderstood—and the views imposed by the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs a century earlier.

The Tawḥīd of the Mu'tazilah was founded upon negation of attributes for Allāh. They took this from the Hellenized Sabians, who—under influence of Greek philosophy—spoke of the Creator only in negations in order to avoid affirmation of any positive attributes. They did this because to prove the existence of a creator, they argued along the lines that attributes are evidence of origination and anything that has attributes is originated. Upon this line of reasoning, the Mu'tazilah claimed that attributes would make Him composite, and thus, render Him a body (jism) like all created bodies and enter multiplicity in His essence. Hence, they considered it shirk (associationism) to affirm attributes for Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ). This had implications upon Allāh's attribute of speech, from which is the Qur'ān.

Thus, controversy arose with respect to the Qur'ān, and the Mu'tazilah had to resolve the issue of what the Qur'ān is and where it came from. Since Allāh could not be given attributes—as that

would entail multiple eternal divine entities upon their erroneous and fallacious understanding—then the Qur'ān must be something created and must have been created by Allāh as either writing or speech in another entity. Hence, it could not have commenced with Allāh as His actual speech. In light of this, they said that whoever claims the Qur'ān is the uncreated speech of Allāh is an idolator, because they considered Allāh's attribute of speech to be the speech He creates in others and not an actual attribute of His essence.

However, this is a fallacious concept. Whatever Allāh creates in other beings of attributes such as life, hearing, seeing, speech and so on, are not said to be the attributes of Allāh, rather they are attributes of the entity in which the attribute is created. What the Mu'tazilah intend is that just like we say, “the Prophet of Allāh”, “the mosques of Allāh” and so on, where a created entity is ascribed to Allāh from the aspect of ownership and dominion, then similarly, speech, power, life are ascribed to Him in the same sense, even though they are things He creates in others.

This opposes reason and reality, but this was the solution of the Mu'tazilah to address the issue of the Qur'ān and Allāh's speech. For this reason, they considered it idolatry to say that the Qur'ān is the uncreated speech of Allāh.

White mentions the argument of the Mu'tazilah, saying:

“... but the point is that there was a deep concern on the part of the Caliph that some people were saying that the Qur'ān was uncreated and the idea was that this was considered to be an attack upon Tawhīd. Tawhīd is the

oneness of Allāh, and so if you have an uncreated entity such as the Qur'ān which is the speech of Allāh, the 'Kalām Allāh', if it's uncreated but it is not identical to Allāh you now have two uncreated entities and this was understood to be a violation of Tawḥīd or absolute monotheism. And so you notice what he [al-Ma'mūn] says, 'he has no belief in Tawḥīd who says the quran is uncreated.' This began an inquisition that resulted in beatings and executions, imprisonments for a number of years until a halt was called to it.”

We shall now comment on this introductory part of White's presentation in this debate.

COMMENTARY

THE VIEW OF THE PREDECESSORS (SALAF)

Let us outline the doctrine of the Righteous Predecessors in this matter. Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (رحمة الله) said:

“The doctrine of the Predecessors of this nation and its leading scholars among the Companions and those following them upon goodness, and of all of the leading scholars of the Muslims such as the Four Imāms and others is what is indicated by the Book and the Sunnah, and it is what is in agreement with sound rational evidences: That the Qur'ān is the Speech of Allāh, revealed (from Him), uncreated. It commenced with Him (as His speech) and to Him shall it return. He is the one who spoke the Qur'ān, the Tawrāh and the Injīl and other than that from His speech. It is not created and separate from Him. And He the Sublime, speaks with

His will and power. Hence, His speech is established with His self, it is not something created, separate from Him. And He speaks through His will and His power, not one of the Predecessors of this nation said that the speech of Allāh is created, separate from Him. And nor did any one of them say that the Qur'ān, Tawrāh or Injīl are bound to His essence in past and future eternity and that He is incapable of speaking through His will and power. Nor did they say that His calling out to Moses or that any specific speech [of His] is eternal. Rather, they said: Allāh does not cease being one who speaks when He wills. Hence, His speech [as an attribute] is eternal, with the meaning that He has never ceased to be one who speaks whenever He wills.”²

From the above:

1. Allāh spoke the Qur'ān—as He did the Tawrāh and Injīl before that—and He spoke it through His will and power. Since the attribute of speech is tied to His will and power, He speaks as and when He wills.

2. As such no specific instance of speech is eternal, rather everything He speaks is through His will and power.

3. Hence, **it is not said** that the Qur'ān is eternal (qadīm), this is not said by any of the Predecessors of this nation. Since Allāh spoke the Qur'ān through His will, when He willed to do so. As such, the Qur'ān, the Tawrāh and the Injīl are not speech eternally present with Allāh's essence. However, Allāh's attribute of speech is eternal, and it is tied to His will and power. Hence, Allāh spoke

² Majmū' al-Fatāwā (12/37-38). It is not said that the Qur'ān is eternal, this is an innovated statement of the Kullābiyyah.

the Qur`ān, when He desired to speak the Qur`ān, when He desired to reveal it upon Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

4. Further, Allāh did not create the Qur`ān as speech in someone else such as Gabriel (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) or Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). Rather it commenced as His own speech which was heard by Gabriel, and subsequent to that, it was conveyed.

FOREIGN DOCTRINES

After the emergence of the various schools of thought under the influence of the Hellenized Sabeans, Jews and Christians, there were six broad views on this matter.

First: that of the Righteous Predecessors as mentioned above.

Second: The view of the **Mutafalsifah**—pseudo-philosophers—who claimed that “the speech of Allāh” is but emanation—a flow, a force—that comes upon the Prophets, stimulating and inspiring their intellects, as a result of which speech arises within them, internally, in the soul, and this is revelation. That the “speech of Allāh” does not exist outside of His servants, it is something internal, in their minds and souls. This notion is furthest from the truth and is great misguidance and was spoken of by the likes of Ibn Sīnā, Ibn `Arabī al-Ṭāṭī and other misguided heretics outside the fold of Islām.

Third: The saying of the **Mu`tazilah** who negate all attributes for Allāh, and then claim that His attributes are whatever He creates in others. Thus His “speech” is what He creates in others, and His “mercy” is the mercy He creates in others, and His “love” is the love He creates in others and so on.

Fourth: The saying of the **Kullābiyyah**, and following them, the **Ashā'irah**, who deny that Allāh has actions tied to His will, and hence, He does not speak and act as and when He wills, having no wilfully chosen actions. To resolve this idea with the attribute of speech, they claimed that “speech” is only meaning, and that Allāh’s “speech” has been with Him in eternity as a meaning in His self. And hence, the Qur'ān is eternal in this sense. This led to the notion of **two Qur'āns**: An eternal uncreated Qur'ān which is the meaning in Allāh’s self, and a created, originated Qur'ān, which is what is heard and recited. In the statements of the Salaf, such as al-Ṭabarī, references are made to this doctrine, and we shall highlight this on our comments on his words a little later. Individuals such as James White would not be aware of these technicalities, and would thus wander blindly in their attempts to grasp this issue and this is with the knowledge that the Muslim nation itself became greatly misguided with respect to it.

Fifth: Another group were the **Sālimiyyah**, and they said that the letter and voice of the Qur'ān is eternal with Allāh’s essence, and this is a vile innovation. They simply combined the doctrine of the Kullābiyyah in negating Allāh’s chosen actions, and the statement of the Mu'tazilah that the Qur'ān is letter and voice. Now this latter statement is true and correct, that speech comprises voice, expression and is not just meaning alone. This view regarding speech is in agreement with the position of the Predecessors. However, the Mu'tazilah, claimed that the Qur'ān is created whereas the Predecessors held that Allāh spoke the Qur'ān, in its letters and words, with His voice, and His act of doing

so and His speech and voice, are all uncreated, because His essence is uncreated.

Sixth: The statement of the **Karrāmiyyah** and **Hishāmi Shītes** who hold that Allāh had the ability or potential for speech according to His will, but never had this attribute from eternity and acquired it at some point. Thus, He became one who speaks as and when He wills after not being so and remains as such for eternity thereafter. They held this view in order to avoid affirming an endless chain of events in the past (tasulsul al-ḥawādith), which is an essential part of the proof for the origination of the universe that was utilised by the previous four groups against the pseudo-philosophers who held the universe was eternal with Allāh.³

These controversial opinions only arose in the Muslim nation because of foreign influences as has preceded and were unknown to the Righteous Predecessors.

Once this is clear, we can now make the following points:

Firstly: it should already be clear from our previous article on this subject that we distinguish between Allāh's act of speaking the Qur'ān and all subsequent modes of conveyance of the Qur'ān. Those words that He spoke are from His attribute of speech which is uncreated, just like all of His other attributes. These words were heard by Gabriel (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) and conveyed to the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). no matter how they are conveyed, they always remain the speech of Allāh in the sense that He is the one who first spoke them. This

³ Refer to Majmū' al-Fatāwā (12/44-53, and 162 onwards).

is what is being referred to when it is said, “The Qur’ān is the uncreated speech of Allāh.”

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah said:

“It is known to the generality of intelligent people that the one who conveys the speech of another, such as the one who conveys the speech of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), ‘Indeed, actions are but by intention, and every man shall have but that which he intended’, when people hear this from the transmitter, they say, ‘This is the ḥadīth of the Messenger of Allāh (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)’, and ‘This is the speech of the Messenger of Allāh (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).’ And if the transmitter said, ‘This is my speech, my statement’, people would declare him untruthful due to their knowledge that speech belongs to the one who first commenced and started the speech, not to the one who conveyed it as a transmitter [through his own voice]. When the likes of this is known with respect to conveying the speech of created beings, then the speech of the Creator is more worthy of not being ascribed to other than His self.”⁴

Hence, when we hear the Qur’ān being recited we say it is the speech of Allāh, referring to the words which were first spoken by Allāh and not to the voice of the reciter.

Secondly: Attributes do not leave the entities they inhere in and become separate entities in themselves. This exists only in the mind as a mental construction and does not occur in outward reality. Built upon such an erroneous notion, Christians erred in their doctrines and it caused them to err in their understanding of this particular issue of the Qur’ān. For they wrongly assume that

⁴ Al-Fatāwā al-Kubrā (5/6).

the physical copies of the Qur`ān, the maṣāḥif, and the voices of the reciters, that they are all synonymous with Allāh's attribute of speech and manifestations of it, similar to how they believe Jesus is an incarnation of Allāh, meaning Allāh in flesh and body, and lofty is Allāh from such statements of disbelief, paganism and idolatry.

This notion of the attribute of an entity separating from it and becoming its own entity is false and exists only in the mind.

When Allāh spoke the Qur`ān, His attribute of speech did not leave Him. His words did not morph into something created, such as the Preserved Tablet or the voice of Gabriel and so on. His words were heard and subsequently conveyed as they were heard.

Words are other than the mode of transmission of those words.

The words will always remain the uncreated spoken word of Allāh, no matter how they are preserved or conveyed thereafter. And this is the meaning of the various statements of the Salaf in this regard such as that of al-Ṭabarī, which James White does not understand.

With the above, we can now explain the meaning of al-Ṭabarī's words and likewise, the words of all of the Salaf on this matter, for they all come from the same angle:

THE STATEMENT OF AL-ṬABARĪ

Imām al-Lālikāṭī cites this from al-Ṭabarī:⁵

The Creed of Abū Ja`far Muḥammad bin Jarīr a-Ṭabarī

‘Ubaydullāh bin Muḥammad bin Aḥmad informed us—reading to him—he said: Al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr Aḥmad bin Kāmil

⁵ Sharḥ Usūl I'tiqād (1/206-207).

informed us, saying: Abū Ja'far Muḥammad bin Jarīr said:

So the correct speech regarding that, in our view, is that [the Qur`ān] is the Speech of Allāh, the Mighty and Majestic...

Comment: The Qur`ān was spoken by Allāh, He spoke all of its verses. It is His speech which cannot be ascribed to anyone else, since He first spoke its words and verses.

Al-Ṭabarī continues:

... it is not created in whichever manner it may be written or when it is recited, in whatever place it may be recited, whether it is found in the heaven or upon the earth, however it may be preserved—whether written in the Preserved Tablet or in the copies of the children of the Qur`ānic schools, or inscribed on a stone and written on paper or leaf, whether memorized in the heart, or spoken by the tongue.

Comment: The distinction between words, (the Qur`ān) and the modes of preservation and conveyance of words are very clear in al-Ṭabarī's statement above. Words are other than the writing used to record or convey them and other than the voice which expresses them, and other than any medium on which they are inscribed, and the evidence for this is the statement of Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ):

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا لِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّي لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَنْفَدَ كَلِمَاتُ رَبِّي وَلَوْ

حِشْنَا بِمِثْلِهِ مَدَدًا ﴿١٠٩﴾

“Say: ‘If the sea were ink for [writing] the words of my Lord, the sea would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were

exhausted, even if We brought the like of it as a supplement.”
(18:109).

And also:

وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ كَلِمَ اللَّهِ

“And if [during the course of war] any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the words of Allāh.” (9:6).

The polytheist will hear the words of Allāh through the voice of a reciter, and thus, the voice of the reciter is other than the words which he recites. The words he is reciting are words that were first spoken by Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ), and hence we say that the Qur`ān, being the spoken word of Allāh, from His attribute of speech, is uncreated. In saying this, there is no notion of Allāh indwelling in His creation, and no notion of His attribute of speech leaving Him and entering His creation. These are the imaginations of the mind which have no external reality, because attributes do not become their own independent entities and leave the essences they inhere in.

So what al-Ṭabarī is saying is well understood to all of Ahl al-Sunnah, the Righteous Predecessors, the people of intellect and understanding. Those who know the difference between **qirā`ah** (act of recitation) and **maqrū`** (what is recited) and between **kitābah** (act of writing) and **maktūb** (what is written). An outsider such as a person of innovation and misguidance from the sects of the Jahmiyyah, Ash`ariyyah and their likes would not fathom this, or pretend not to out of bigotry for their innovated doctrine. And when that is so, then a Christian would be even further away from fathoming this.

Al-Ṭabarī says that no matter what the mode of preservation and conveyance, the words will always remain the uncreated speech of Allāh because He is the one who first spoke those words. Yes, we hear the voice, and we read what has been inscribed on paper with ink, but none of these mediums are the actual words. They simply convey words, and those words commenced with Allāh, through His voice, the reality of which is unknown, but which was heard by Gabriel, then conveyed by Gabriel through his own voice to Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

Al-Ṭabarī continues:

Whoever says other than this, or claims there is a Qur'ān in the earth or in the heaven other than the Qur'ān which we recite with our tongues, and which we write in the copies of the Qur'ān (maṣāḥif), or who believes this in his heart or who conceals such a belief in his heart, or who professes it with his tongue, then he is an unbeliever whose blood and wealth is lawful and who is free from Allāh and Allāh is free from him...

Comment: First, note al-Ṭabarī's clear separation between the Qur'ān and its modes of conveyance. He said: "...other than the Qur'ān *which we recite* with our tongues, and *which we write* in the maṣāḥif (written copies)...". Second, there is only one Qur'ān. Qur'ān means "a recital" and it is the Qur'ān that Allāh (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) spoke, which was then conveyed to Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and recited and written by Muslims thereafter. When a Muslim recites from:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿١﴾ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾

“All praise is due to Allāh, Lord of the Worlds.” (1:2).

To:

مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ ﴿٦﴾

“Among the Jinn and Men.” (114:6).

Then all of that recital is what Allāh Himself spoke when He revealed it to Gabriel who revealed it to Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

وَإِنَّهُ لَتَنْزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٩٢﴾ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ ﴿١٩٣﴾ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ ﴿١٩٥﴾

“And indeed, it is a revelation from the Lord of the Worlds. The Trustworthy Spirit (Gabriel) brought it down. Upon your heart that you may be of the warners. In a clear, Arabic tongue.” (26:192-195).

Thus, the Qur`ān is a revelation from Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) in the Arabic language, which He spoke to Gabriel (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ), who then revealed it upon the heart of Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), who memorised and then recited it and conveyed it to the Muslim nation. There is only this Qur`ān. Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) spoke it with meaning, words and voice which are uncreated because Allāh's attributes of knowledge and speech and His voice are all uncreated, and we do not know their realities, because the reality of His essence is unknown.

It is misguidance to claim that there is an eternal, uncreated Qur`ān with Allāh which is only the “meaning” (ma`nā), existing within His self and then a created Qur`ān which is comprised of words (alfāz). Or to claim that this created Qur`ān commenced with Gabriel (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) or Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), or was etched into

the Preserved Tablet, from which Gabriel took it, without it being Allāh's spoken word. For this would mean the negation of Allāh's attribute of speech, that He cannot and does not speak, and this is ascribing great deficiency to Allāh (عَرَّجَلٌ).

Al-Ṭabarī then provides evidence:

... due to the saying of Allāh, lofty be His praise:

بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَّجِيدٌ ﴿١١﴾ فِي لَوْحٍ مَّحْفُوظٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

“Nay! This is a Glorious Qur`ān. (Inscribed) in a Preserved Tablet!” (85:21-22).

And He said, and His saying is the truth:

وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ كَلِمَ اللَّهِ

“And if [during the course of war] any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the words of Allāh.” (9:6).

So He informed us, lofty be His praise that it is in the Preserved Tablet, **written** (maktūb), and that it is **heard** (masmū) from the tongue of the Prophet Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and it is a single Qur`ān, heard from Muḥammad and written in the Preserved Tablet, and likewise, **memorized** (maḥfūz) in the hearts, and **recited** (matluww) upon the tongues of the old and the young.

Comment: The Qur`ān—Allāh's *spoken* word—is other than the inscription (kitābah). For that reason, Allāh said, **“(Inscribed) in a Preserved Tablet”**, so it is not synonymous with the physical Tablet itself, but other than it. However, the words so inscribed—

independent of the medium—are the Qur`ān. The same is said about the written copies of the Qur`ān (*maṣāhif*). The physical paper and ink are not the Qur`ān, but the words written are the Qur`ān. And likewise, the words of Allāh are other than the voice of the reciter when the polytheist hears them being recited. The words are other than the medium, and those words, since they were first spoken by Allāh, are uncreated. Al-Ṭabarī used the passive participle four times (*maktūb*, *masmū`*, *maḥfūz*, *matluww*) to indicate that the Qur`ān is other than modes of preservation and transmission. What is written, heard, memorised and recited is other than the actions of writing, hearing, memorising and reciting.

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ) said:

“For it is known that the Qur`ān is one. It is recited by a great portion of people. But the Qur`ān itself does not multiply itself through the abundance of recitations of the reciters. Rather, what multiplies is whatever they recite the Qur`ān with (i.e. their voices). So whatever multiplies and takes place in the servants then it is created. And the Qur`ān itself—in its wording and meaning which Allāh spoke, which Gabriel heard from Allāh, which Muḥammad heard from Gabriel, which Muḥammad conveyed to the people, and warned nations therewith, due to His saying, “**That I may warn you therewith and whomever it reaches**” (6:19)—is one Qur`ān. It is the speech of Allāh, uncreated.”⁶

He also said:

⁶ Majmū` al-Fatāwā (12/75).

“Whoever believes that the ink which is in the written copy of the Qur`ān and the voices of the servants are eternal, then he is an errant misguided person, an opposer to the Book and Sunnah and the consensus of those foremost (in faith) and all of the scholars of the Muslims. Not one of the scholars of the Muslims said that that is eternal.”⁷

He also said:

“Whoever said that the ink is eternal has erred. And whoever said that speech of Allāh is not in the written copy of the Qur`ān, it only contains ink which is an expression (‘ibārah)⁸ of the speech of Allāh has also erred. Rather the Qur`ān is in the muṣḥaf—the written copy of the Qur`ān—just as all speech is found written on paper and just as all of the ummah is agreed upon [the Qur`ān being in the muṣḥaf], and just as it is so in the innate dispositions of the Muslims. For every degree [of reality and being] has a ruling that is particular to it. Thus, the existence of speech in a book is unlike the existence of an attribute in the entity described with it—

⁷ Ibid. (12/237).

⁸ This is a reference to the doctrine of the Ash‘arites who say that the Arabic Qur`ān is not the actual speech of Allāh as His attribute, since they hold only the His attribute of speech is only the meaning in His self and they deny that He spoke the Qur`ān with its words. Hence, they say about the Arabic words of the Qur`ān that they are only an “expression”. This is upon their erroneous view regarding the definition of speech (kalām) that it is only meaning, not wording. However, speech, in the language of the Arabs, is both meaning (ma‘nā) and wording (lafz), otherwise it is not speech at all. So upon this, they hold that the Qur`ān we have with us in the Arabic language is an expression of the meaning that is with Allāh’s self. This tantamounts to saying that the Qur`ān we have is not the actual spoken word of Allāh, but a created expression of it. However, the truth is that the words written by the ink are the words that Allāh spoke, without that entailing that Allāh’s spoken word became the ink.

like the existence of knowledge and life in the entity to which they are attributed—such that it is said, ‘The attribute of Allāh merged with other than Him’ or, ‘[The attribute of Allāh] separated from Him.’”⁹

Here Ibn Taymiyyah has explained the difference between the existence of speech in written form in a book and the existence of an attribute in someone. Thus, life and knowledge are inseparable attributes of a being and they exist in a particular way. But the way speech exists in a book is not the same as it exists as an attribute of a person. Nevertheless, it can be said that what is in the book is the speech of a person, without this meaning that the speech of the person is the ink and paper of the book. So whoever does not treat each affair according to its reality and particular degree or status of being will fall into error.

He continues a little later:

“When we say: ‘This is the speech of Allāh’ when we hear it from a reciter and see it in the muṣḥaf, then the indication is to speech as speech, without looking at what it is associated with of the voice of the one conveying it [through recitation] or the ink of the writer. Thus, whoever said: ‘The voice of the reciter and the ink of the writer are the speech of Allāh which is uncreated’ has erred. And this is the difference that Imām Aḥmad explained to the one who asked him and who had just recited: ‘**Say: He is Allāh (who is) uniquely One.**’ (112:1), Imām Aḥmad said: “This is the speech of Allāh, uncreated.” The questioner went on to cite him as having said: ‘My utterance (lafẓ) of the Qur`ān is uncreated.’ So he

⁹ Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā (12/240).

summoned him, scolded him severely, and requested punishment and disciplinary measures for him. He said to him: ‘Did I say to you that my utterance of the Qur`ān is uncreated?’ He said: ‘No. But you said to me when I recited: **‘Say: He is Allāh (who is) uniquely One.’** (112:1), ‘This is the speech of Allāh, uncreated.’ He said: ‘Then why did you not cite from me what I actually said?!’ So Imām Aḥmad explained that the one who says, when he hears from those who convey [the Qur`ān through a mode of conveyance], ‘This is the speech of Allāh’, then the indication is to the the actual reality [of the speech] which Allāh spoke with, even if we heard it through the conveyance of the one conveying and [through] his motion and voice...”¹⁰

From the above it is made clear that when we say about what is in the written copy of the Qur`ān or the recitation of a reciter, “This is the speech of Allāh, uncreated”, then we are referring to Allāh’s speaking of those words. That they are the very words Allāh spoke, and His speaking of them is uncreated as He is uncreated, and His essence is uncreated, eternal, along with all of His attributes. And none of this entails that the voice of the reciter or the ink of the writer is eternal.

¹⁰ Ibid. (12/240).

CLOSING NOTES

What has preceded should suffice in allowing the following to be established and understood:

1. The way and doctrine of the Salaf is nothing but the truth and all Muslims are under obligation to follow it in order to have a sound understanding in all matters of creed.

2. The deviated sects of innovation, in their errant sayings and opinions, are entrance points for the Jews, Christians, Atheists and others to attack Islām and claim it has contradictions.

3. The correct explanation of the Qur`ān being the uncreated speech of Allāh and the correct view regarding the written copies of the Qur`ān and the recitation of the reciters.

4. There being no basis in this issue of the Qur`ān for the Christians to claim that their saying regarding Jesus is the same as the saying of the Muslims regarding the Qur`ān. This was said by Faythūn, a Christian in the early 3rd century of Islām. when the likes of Ibn Kullāb appeared with innovated, heretical statements regarding Allāh's attribute of speech and the Qur`ān.¹¹

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¹¹ Refer to the article: "**The Qur`ān, the Speech of Allāh, Jesus the Messiah, Christian Apologists and 'The Word'**." at <http://www.islamjesus.ws/?zgxlax>