

You can't tell a book by its author: A study of Mu'tazilite theology in al-Zamakhsharī's (d. 538/1144) *Kashshāf*[†]

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Abstract

This article examines the *Kashshāf*, the Quran commentary of the Mu'tazilite al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144). This involves: (1) the continuous reading of the commentary on two *sūras*; (2) the study of al-Zamakhsharī's commentary in the *Kashshāf* on Quranic passages used by him or his teacher Ibn al-Malāḥimī (d. 536/1141) in their theological treatises; and (3) an analysis of a report claiming that al-Zamakhsharī had begun his commentary with the blatantly Mu'tazilite statement: "Praise be to God who created the Quran". The conclusion is that the results of the study of the commentary on the two *sūras* reflect the overall theological content of the *Kashshāf* and that to consider the *Kashshāf* to be a Mu'tazilite Quran commentary amounts more to looking at the theological school of its author and to accepting medieval hearsay than it does to drawing conclusions based on a detailed examination of the relevant sources.

Keywords: Qur'an exegesis, Mu'tazilite theology, Al-Zamakhsharī, Creation of the Quran, *Kashshāf*, theological treatises

Introduction

Abū l-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī (467/1075–538/1144) was a Mu'tazilite man of letters and grammarian from Khwārazm. The author of about fifty works, two-thirds of which have survived (many in print), his main fields of interest were *adab*, grammar and lexicography, but he also composed works in theology and law, as well as works on the Quran and the Tradition.¹ He is best known, however, for his Quran commentary, *al-Kashshāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl wa-ʿuyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-taʾwīl* (*The Discoverer of the Truths of the Hidden Things of Revelation and the Choicest Statements concerning the Aspects of Interpretation*) which he completed in Mecca in 528/1134.² Throughout its history,

[†]This article is based on sections of my PhD thesis, "Al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) and his Qur'an commentary *al-Kashshāf*: a late Mu'tazilite scholar at work" (University of Toronto, 2003), some of which did not make it into my *A Traditional Mu'tazilite Qur'an Commentary. The Kashshāf of Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144)* (Texts and Studies on the Qur'an, 2, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006).

1 For a complete, annotated list of al-Zamakhsharī's works, see my *A Traditional Mu'tazilite Qur'an Commentary*, Appendix 3, pp. 267 ff.

2 The edition of the *Kashshāf* used here is that of the Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī (4 vols, Beirut, 1997).

the *Kashshāf* has been described as a “Mu‘tazilite interpretation of the Quran”. By the seventh/thirteenth century, Nāṣir al-Dīn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar al-Bayḍāwī (d. c. 685/1286) had already composed his *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta’wīl*, a Quran commentary which Robson describes as “largely a condensed and amended edition of al-Zamakhsharī’s *Kashshāf*”, which sometimes refuted the latter’s Mu‘tazilite views and sometimes simply omitted them.³ Al-Bayḍāwī was not the only one pre-occupied with the Mu‘tazilism of the *Kashshāf*: his contemporary, Alexandrian *qāḍī* Nāṣir al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Munayyir (d. 683/1284), also wrote a counterblast to the commentary at this time.⁴ Half a century later, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) warned readers to be wary of the *Kashshāf* and, even a century after that, Aḥmad b. ‘Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 846/1442) repeated the warning, saying that the *Kashshāf* was off limits to all who wished to study it unless they were aware of its dangers.⁵

In modern times a number of scholars have made a connection between the *Kashshāf* and its supposed Mu‘tazilism. Nöldeke spoke of “[al-Zamakhsharī’s] most clever and over-subtle investigations of philosophical and theological matters” in the *Kashshāf*; Nassau Lees referred to the Mu‘tazilite doctrines that “pervade the whole Preface”; Goldziher said that in the *Kashshāf* al-Zamakhsharī “produced a concise fundamental work for Mu‘tazilite Qur’ān interpretation”; and Brockelmann spoke of “Mu‘tazila bias”.⁶ More recently, Smith noted that “[al-Zamakhsharī’s] interpretation of and commentary on the Qur’ān were strongly influenced by his theological viewpoints”; McAuliffe referred to the *Kashshāf* as a “mouthpiece for the dogmas of the [Mu‘tazilites]”; and Madelung stated that al-Zamakhsharī’s “rationalist Mu‘tazilī interpretations . . . provoked criticism among traditionalist Sunnīs”, mentioning al-Bayḍāwī and Ibn al-Munayyir as representatives of this criticism.⁷

Other authors, however, hold a position opposed to the one above. Jansen states: “[I]n spite of traces of Mutazilite dogmatical attitudes, [the *Kashshāf*]

3 J. Robson, “al-Bayḍāwī,” *EP*² 1: 1129.

4 This scholar is Nāṣir al-Dīn Abū l-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Munayyir al-Judhāmī al-Iskandarī (d. 683/1284). His work on the *Kashshāf* is the *Kitāb al-Intiṣāf min al-Kashshāf*, described as a counterblast “against the heresies and some opinions on grammar” (*GAL*¹, *GAL*) – *GAL*¹ 1: 291, 416, 431; *GAL* 1: 346; 529–30; *GAL.Sp* 1: 509, 738.

5 Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), *Mizān al-i-tidāl fī naqd al-rijāl*, ed. ‘Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī (Cairo: Maṭba‘at ‘Īsā l-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, [1963]), 4: 78 [no. 8367]; Aḥmad b. ‘Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449), *Lisān al-mizān*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mar‘ashalī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1995–96), 6: 651–3 [no. 8313].

6 Th. Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qorāns* 1st ed. (Göttingen: Verlag der Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, 1860), xxviii; *Kashshāf* (Calcutta: Maṭba‘at al-Laysī, 1856–59), 1: 7; I. Goldziher, “Aus der Theologie des Fachr al-dīn al-Rāzī”, *Der Islam* 3, 1912, 220; C. Brockelmann, “al-Zamakhsharī”, *EP*¹ 4: 1205.

7 J. I. Smith, *An Historical and Semantic Study of the Term “Islām” as Seen in a Sequence of Qur’ān Commentaries* (Harvard Dissertations in Religion. Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975), 92–3; J. D. McAuliffe, *Qur’ānic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 53; W. Madelung, “al-Zamakhsharī”, *EP*² Suppl., fasc. 11–12: 840–1. Versteegh (*EP*² 11: 434) passes over the *Kashshāf* in silence, referring his readers to the *EP*² Supplement for al-Zamakhsharī’s contributions in theology, exegesis and *adab*.

is not a dogmatical commentary"; Gimaret writes: "The Qur'ānic commentaries of Abū Dja'far al-Ṭūsī (d. 459/1067) and of al-Ṭabarsī (d. c. 548/1155) are overtly Mu'tazilī commentaries, even more so than the *Kashshāf* of al-Zamakhsharī"; Rippin argues: "The famous work of al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), renowned for its Mu'tazilī perspective, is distinctive primarily for its special outlook and not for the presence of an overall theological argument *per se*, nor for the quantity of such argumentation" (though what this "special outlook" is, if it refers to Mu'tazilism, is unclear); and Saleh notes: "His Mu'tazilī opinions are few and far between to be significant (*sic*) and too buried in a normative Sunnī approach to allow them a distinctive voice" (though the term "normative Sunnī approach" requires some clarification). Later, though, in his remarks on al-Zamakhsharī's commentary on Q93:7, Saleh seems to lean towards the first position.⁸

A closer look at the preceding statements raises more questions than it answers. One might ask how the content of the *Kashshāf* exercised such medieval scholars as al-Bayḍāwī, Ibn al-Munayyir, al-Dhahabī and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī so much that they were still condemning the commentary three-hundred years after it first appeared. Why had it not simply been destroyed, banned or replaced by al-Bayḍāwī's version? Here again, though, there is a problem, for al-Bayḍāwī would not have removed everything that was objectionable in al-Zamakhsharī's *Kashshāf*, so it was left to two later scholars, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Dā'ūdī al-Mālikī (d. 945/1538) and Aḥmad al-Nūbī (d. c. 1037/1627), to complete his task for him. In their respective works, *al-Ithāf bi-tamyīz mā tabī'a fihī l-Bayḍāwī ṣāhib al-Kashshāf* and *Kashf al-aqwāl al-mubtadhala fī sabq qalam al-Bayḍāwī li-madhhab al-Mu'tazila*, these scholars drew attention to the places in the *Kashshāf* where al-Bayḍāwī would have "failed to remove al-Zamakhsharī's heresies".⁹ These later efforts to "de-Mu'tazilize" the *Kashshāf*, several centuries after al-Bayḍāwī, make one wonder, not only if there was ever agreement as to what was specifically Mu'tazilite and, therefore, heretical in the commentary, but also if there was not more afoot than saving al-Zamakhsharī's readers from exposure to his heresy.

More recent statements on the *Kashshāf* are not particularly helpful either. While not wishing to criticize the scholars cited here, it is worth noting that

8 J. J. G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 63; D. Gimaret, "Mu'tazila", *EP*² 7: 786; A. Rippin, "Tafsīr", *EP*² 10: 85; W. Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsīr Tradition. The Qur'ān Commentary of al-Thālabī (d. 427/1035)* (Texts and Studies on the Qur'ān, 1. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 23, n. 40. On al-Zamakhsharī's comments on Q93:7, Saleh writes: "The praise from modern scholars showered on al-Zamakhsharī, however, has more to do with their intellectual affinity with his Mu'tazilite theology than with a balanced analysis of his approach to the Quran. Al-Zamakhsharī is as doctrinally motivated as any other medieval scholar" (*Formation*, 148).

9 J. Robson, "al-Bayḍāwī", *EP*² 1: 1129; *GAL*¹ 1: 418; *GAL.Sp* 1: 741; *GAL* 1: 532–3. Al-Dā'ūdī was one of al-Suyūfī's (d. 911/1505) students and wrote, besides the aforementioned *Ithāf* on al-Bayḍāwī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn* in 941/1534 (see *GAL*¹ 2: 289; *GAL* 2: 373; *GAL.Sp* 2: 401). Aḥmad al-Nūbī lived in al-Ṭā'if and composed five works, including one on al-Bayḍāwī, another in praise of his hometown of al-Ṭā'if (1027/1617), and a third against smoking tobacco written in the year of his death (see *GAL*¹ 2: 385; *GAL* 2: 504–5; *GAL.Sp* 2: 520).

their statements on the *Kashshāf* are broad and more or less assume that readers are well informed. The result of this is that readers may assume they have learned more than they have. Goldziher, for example, referred to the *Kashshāf* as “a concise fundamental work for Mu‘tazilite Qur’ān interpretation” and Gimaret argued that al-Ṭūsī and al-Ṭabarsī wrote “overtly Mu‘tazilī commentaries, even more so than the *Kashshāf*”, but neither told readers what makes a commentary a Mu‘tazilī interpretation of the Quran or, in the case of Gimaret, why the *Kashshāf* was less of a commentary of this kind than those of the others.¹⁰ Would this have something to do with the “special outlook” to which Rippin refers? Even if it does, we are no further along the path to clarity as to what makes the *Kashshāf*, or any commentary, “Mu‘tazilite”. Would a commentary be Mu‘tazilite, then, not because of its outlook but simply because it contains specifically Mu‘tazilite theology? As noted, Rippin has stated that there is little in the way of Mu‘tazilite theological argumentation in the *Kashshāf*; yet Smith argued that al-Zamakhsharī’s commentary was “strongly influenced by his theological viewpoints”; and McAuliffe referred to the *Kashshāf* as a “mouthpiece” for the dogmas of the Mu‘tazilites. How far is the *Kashshāf* specifically Mu‘tazilite dogma? No-one seems to know. For a variety of undoubtedly good reasons, no one has studied al-Zamakhsharī’s *Kashshāf* to any great extent (and the same could probably be said for other Quran commentaries). The views presented above therefore tend to repeat, to some degree, broad statements that have their roots in primary sources that have been around for centuries.

In the light of these various opinions, this article sets out to study al-Zamakhsharī’s *Kashshāf* with an eye to discovering what can be said about its Mu‘tazilite contents. It may be possible, afterwards, to agree with Goldziher’s statement that the *Kashshāf* is “a concise fundamental work for Mu‘tazilite Qur’ān interpretation”, or with any of the statements above, and for these statements to have a more precise meaning than they do now. On the other hand, these statements may be unwarranted, not because they contradict the evidence but because there is insufficient evidence to support them. Once the matter of the *Kashshāf*’s Mu‘tazilism has been studied, it will be possible to see if its condemnation was in any way justified; and if not, to see what motives might have led to its censure.

While a detailed, line-by-line reading of the commentary might be the best way to answer questions concerning the content of the *Kashshāf*, I adopt here a shorter but no less sound approach, looking at the text from a number of angles. The first involves a detailed study of a limited part of the *Kashshāf*, the commentary on Q44 (Sūrat al-Dukhān/Smoke) and Q54 (Sūrat al-Qamar/The Moon), to establish the extent to which Mu‘tazilite theological ideas can be found therein. The continuous reading of these two *sūras* avoids the trap of focusing on verses that might seem to fit a Mu‘tazilite agenda more easily

10 For al-Ṭūsī and al-Ṭabarsī (al-Ṭabrisī), see Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, “al-Ṭūsī”, *EF*² 10: 744–6 and E. Kohlberg, “al-Ṭabrisī”, *EF*² 10: 40–1. Neither author comments on the Mu‘tazilite nature of the *Kashshāf*, although Kohlberg notes that al-Ṭabarsī wrote three commentaries on the Quran, one of which, *al-Kāfi l-shāfi min kitāb al-Kashshāf*, was a one-volume abridgement of al-Zamakhsharī’s.

and thus retains the possibility that Mu'tazilite views might emerge in unexpected places.¹¹ The second approach has two parts, each involving comparing the *Kashshāf* with a theological treatise that may have influenced it. The first is al-Zamakhsharī's theological tractate, *al-Minhāj fī uṣūl al-dīn*; the second *al-Mu'tamad fī uṣūl al-dīn*, the major theological treatise of al-Zamakhsharī's teacher Rukn al-Dīn (Ibn) al-Malāḥimī (d. 536/1141). The third approach focuses on manuscripts of the *Kashshāf* in order to test the veracity of the well-known anecdote according to which al-Zamakhsharī would have begun his commentary with the words *al-ḥamdu li-llāh alladhī khalaqa l-Qur'ān* (Praise be to God who created the Quran), a clear declaration of his Mu'tazilite position. By approaching the *Kashshāf* from these various angles, it will be possible to gain a clearer idea of its Mu'tazilite contents and the extent to which it may be considered a Mu'tazilite commentary on the Quran.

1. The first approach: a study of Q44 (Sūrat al-Dukhān) and Q54 (Sūrat al-Qamar)

As noted above, al-Zamakhsharī has been said to have given a Mu'tazilite interpretation of the Quran. A study of his commentary on Q44 (Sūrat al-Dukhān/Smoke) and Q54 (Sūrat al-Qamar/The Moon) shows, however, that the *Kashshāf* hardly speaks constantly of Mu'tazilism; nor does it seek occasion to do so. Within the framework of the traditional *tafsīr musalsal*, al-Zamakhsharī offers some Mu'tazilism when the opportunity arises, but does not present a detailed development.¹² It might have been possible for him to have used many passages as a starting point for a presentation of his Mu'tazilite opinions but he does not. What distinguishes this commentary from others, then, is not an excess of Mu'tazilism.¹³ This restrained use of the *tafsīr* for expressing Mu'tazilite views is shown by the fact that, in his commentary on Q44 and Q54, al-Zamakhsharī makes only one reference to a Mu'tazilite tenet. In his commentary on Q54:17 we read:¹⁴

- 11 For a more detailed study of al-Zamakhsharī's commentary on Q44 and Q54, see my *A Traditional Mu'tazilite Qur'ān Commentary*, Chapter 3, especially pp. 118 ff. These two *sūras* were originally chosen because they were of average length and therefore susceptible to a detailed study within a reasonable time frame.
- 12 To call a Quran commentary a *tafsīr musalsal* ("chained commentary") means that it "begins with the first *sūrah* of the Quran and comments verse by verse on that *sūrah* and all subsequent ones. Exegetical chronology has, therefore, its own autonomy, following the sequence of text rather than that of revelation . . . Within the *sūrah* each verse is quoted separately and then broken into exegetical units, what medieval Biblical scholars would call *lemmata*. Each passage, or *lemma*, is then analyzed separately and relevant comments are made about the verse as a whole, such as its *sabab al-nuzūl*. What is frequently absent is any extended consideration of the larger context. Occasionally, a connection will be made with the previous verse or, even more rarely, with more distant parts of the *sūrah*" (McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians*, 34).
- 13 A brief perusal of the *Kashshāf* will show that there are no long excursions on any topic; the most that can be hoped for is a series of explanations, interpretations or variations of the passage under scrutiny.
- 14 I use Arberry's translation of the Quran (*The Koran Interpreted*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, 1964¹); any changes are indicated by square brackets. Since

Now We have made the Quran easy for Remembrance. Is there any that will remember?

wa-la-qad yassarnā l-Qur'āna li-l-dhikri fa-hal min muddakirin.

Al-Zamakhsharī explains the passage as follows:¹⁵

that is, we have made it easy to remember *and to take a warning from*, in that we have filled it with healing exhortations and by means of it have turned [people] away from *the promise and the threat* [but] “is there anyone” to heed the warning?

ay sahhalnāhu li-l-iddikār wa-l-ittī'āz bi-an shaḥannāhu bi-l-mawā'iz al-shāfiya wa-ṣarrafnā fīhi min al-wa'd wa-l-wa'id «fa-hal min» muttā'iz.

He begins his commentary by using synonyms to explain the Quranic passage:

1. *sahhala* (to facilitate, to make easy, to ease) means the same as *yassara* in the Quranic verse;
2. *iddikār* (*maṣdar* of *iddakara* [*idhtakara*]: to remember, to think about, to bear in mind) has the same meaning as *dhikr* in the verse.

At the same time, however, al-Zamakhsharī's explanation goes beyond simple synonyms; he adds: and to take a warning from (*ittī'āz*).

He then continues:

in that we have filled it with healing exhortations and through it have turned [people] away from *the promise and the threat* (*al-wa'd wa-l-wa'id*) [but] “is there anyone” to heed the warning?

This last expression, translated as “the promise and the threat”, is one of the five principles of the Mu'tazilite school of theology.¹⁶

Arberry follows Flügel's enumeration of the verses, both his and that of Cairo will be given where necessary, first Cairo and then Flügel's.

15 *Kashshāf* 4: 436.

16 The Mu'tazilites had five principles (*al-uṣūl al-khamsa*) which Gimaret summarizes thus: 1. The uniqueness of God (*al-tawḥīd*); 2. The justice of God (*al-'adl*); 3. “The promise and the threat” (*al-wa'd wa-l-wa'id*); 4. The theory of “the intermediate state” (*al-manzila bayna l-manzilatayn*) for the sinful Muslim here on earth (neither “believing” (*mu'min*) nor “disbelieving” (*kāfir*), they are a “malefactor” (*fāsiq*)); 5. The obligation laid upon every believer to “command the good and forbid the evil” (*al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar*), i.e. to intervene in public affairs to uphold the Law (*EF* 7: 786–7). The last three principles were derivative of the first two, divine unity and justice, and the Mu'tazilites were known as the People of (Divine) Unity and Justice (*ahl al-tawḥīd wa-l-'adl*). The principle known as “the promise and the threat” (*al-wa'd wa-l-wa'id*) said that God must necessarily reward the good and punish the wicked in the next life. However, the accent was on the second part, the eternal damnation of the sinner who did not repent. That is why al-Zamakhsharī speaks only about *turning* [people] away from the promise and the threat, for he is talking about eternal punishment. Van Ess gives the “eternal punishment of the ‘transgressor’” as the third principle of the founding father Abū l-Hudhayl (“Mu'tazilah”, *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan and London: Collier-Macmillan, 1986) 7: 225); and Gimaret

Having interpreted the text in line with his own theological views, al-Zamakhsharī then gives two other interpretations. First:

It was said: We have made it easy to memorize (*sahhalnāhu li-l-ḥifẓ*) and those who wish to memorize it are helped to do so but is there anyone seeking to memorize [the Quran] in order to be helped?

Here the emphasis is on the understanding of the word *dhikr* – it means *ḥifẓ*. Second, al-Zamakhsharī says:

It is possible that the meaning is: We have made it easy to remember (*hayya'nāhu li-l-dhikr*) as one prepares (*yassara*) his camel for a trip when he saddles it; and one prepares (*yassara*) his horse for a raid when he puts a saddle and bridle on it.

Here the accent returns to the meaning of *yassara*; the idea of making remembering the Quran easy by specifically preparing it for this. It is interesting to note, however, that al-Zamakhsharī explains *yassara* as *hayya'a* but then proceeds to give an example in which the original verb, *yassara*, is used to clarify the meaning of the verb *hayya'a*. This may be because he is thinking of the lines of poetry he wishes to use next, which include:

wa-qumtu ilayhi bi-l-lijām muyassiran

I stood up and went to [my horse], with the bridle making him ready to ride.¹⁷

The verb *yassara*, then, means: making performance easy through prior preparation. This nuance is clearly explained with the help of the example and the verse; passing via the verb *hayya'a*, then, appears superfluous.¹⁸

Before ending his comments, al-Zamakhsharī stresses the validity of the second of his three interpretations (that the Quran has been made easy to memorize (*ḥifẓ*)). He says:

It is related that the followers of [other] religions recite their books, like the Torah and the Gospel, only by looking at them, and that they do not memorize them as [the Muslims do with] the Quran.

writes that by *al-wa'd wa-l-wa'id* "is understood that on account of the 'threat' uttered against him in the Qur'an, every Muslim guilty of a serious offence, who dies without repentance, will suffer for eternity the torments of Hell" ("Mu'tazila", *ET* 7: 786).

- 17 This line is by al-A'raj al-Khārijī, according to the editors' notes from both the 1997 *Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī* (Beirut) and 1998 *Maktabat al-'Ubaykān* (Riyadh) editions of the *Kashshāf* (4: 436, n. 1; 5: 658–9, n. 2). He could be, then, Abū Mālik al-Naḍr ibn Abī l-Naḍr, called al-A'raj, a poet at the court of Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170/786–195/809).
- 18 E. W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (repr.) (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1980), 8: 2976, at the root *y-s-r*, which defines *yassara l-faras* as: "he prepared the horse for riding, by saddling and bridling".

Having presented what could be said about this passage, both Mu‘tazilite in meaning and other, al-Zamakhsharī moves on to the next verse. The only indication that he might prefer the Mu‘tazilite interpretation is that it was given first.

In line with the previous analysis is al-Zamakhsharī’s rather imaginative use of one of his sources in his commentary on Q35:8/9: “And what of him, the evil of whose deeds has been decked out fair to him, so that he thinks it is good?” Here we see him ostensibly quoting this source, al-Zajjāj’s *Ma‘ānī l-Qur’ān*, but closer analysis of the original text indicates that al-Zamakhsharī is giving a Mu‘tazilite bent to al-Zajjāj’s text.¹⁹ Q35:8/9 is obviously an important verse concerning free will and divine predestination, since it speaks of God’s leading astray and guiding whom he will. In order to understand the explanations of the text, the full verse is presented here schematically:

And what of him, the evil of whose deeds has
been decked out fair to him, so that he thinks
it is good?

God leads astray whomsoever He will, and
whomsoever He will He guides;
so let not thy soul be wasted in regrets for
them;

God has knowledge of the things they work.

*a fa-man zuyyina lahu sū’u
‘amalihi fa-ra’āhu ḥasanan*

*fa-inna llāha yuḍillu man
yashā’u wa-yahdī man yashā’u
fa-lā tadhhab nafsuka ‘alayhim
ḥasarātin
inna llāha ‘ālimun bi-mā
yaṣna‘ūna*

19 Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Sahl ibn al-Sārī al-Zajjāj (d. c. 311/923) was a lexicographer, grammarian, and an intimate student of al-Mubarrad Abū l-‘Abbās Muḥammad ibn Jazīd al-Azdī (d. 285/898 or 286/900), the most important representative of the so-called Baṣran school of grammar of his time. After his studies, al-Zajjāj was tutor in the household of ‘Ubayd Allāh Ibn Sulaymān, vizier of the ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Mu‘taḍiḍ (r. 892–902 CE). Later he was employed in the service of Ibn Sulaymān’s son, al-Qāsim, when he became vizier; he remained al-Qāsim’s secretary until his death in Baghdad at the age of over eighty. For al-Zajjāj, see *GAL*¹ 1: 110; *GAL* 1: 111–2; *GAL.Sp* 1: 170; C. Versteegh, “al-Zadjjāj”, *EF*² 11: 377–8; Jalāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), *Bughyat al-wu‘āt fī ṭabaqāt al-lughawiyyīn wa-l-nuḥāt*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm ([Cairo]: Maṭba‘at ‘Īsā l-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1964–65), 1: 411–3 [no. 825]; and Yāqūt ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī al-Rūmī (d. 626/1229), *Irshād al-arīb ilā ma‘rifat al-adīb [Mu‘jam al-udabā’ wa-ṭabaqāt al-urabā’]*, ed. D. S. Margoliouth (London: Luzac & Co. and Cairo: Maṭba‘a Hindiyya, 1925), 1: 51–63 [no. 9]. This section of the article was part of a larger one in the thesis, in which al-Zamakhsharī’s use of al-Zajjāj’s *Ma‘ānī l-Qur’ān* was examined. It was a methodological study, an effort to see how accurately what was read in the *Kashshāf* reflected the earlier sources that were referred to; the results were presented at the 2002 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Toronto. In the *Kashshāf*, al-Zamakhsharī refers specifically to al-Zajjāj by name on thirty-two occasions at least. In his references, al-Zamakhsharī gives only al-Zajjāj’s name; there are no references to particular works. He indicates that he is borrowing from al-Zajjāj usually by the expression *qāla l-Zajjāj* (“al-Zajjāj said”) (75 per cent of the time). Of the thirty-two references to al-Zajjāj in the *Kashshāf* under study, all but one could be traced to a corresponding text in the *Ma‘ānī l-Qur’ān*. The other was not traced; it must have been a reference to a work of al-Zajjāj that is not yet available or was lost, or else it is an error. Q35:8/9 is the only occasion on which we see some Mu‘tazilite tampering with al-Zajjāj’s original text.

This verse begins with a question to which no answer is given.²⁰ Al-Zamakhsharī, and al-Zajjāj before him, realized that an answer was apparently missing. Al-Zamakhsharī creates an elaborate dialogue between God and “his prophet (*nabiyyihī*)”, into which he injects and then explains parts of this passage. The point is that those who think their evil deeds are good are the same as those whom God leads astray (*wa-ma'nā tazyīn al-'amal wa-l-iḍlāl wāḥid*); and the Prophet is not to waste away regretting any of them.²¹ Al-Zamakhsharī then gives the two explanations he says al-Zajjāj mentioned (*dhakara*). The latter proposes his explanations by supplying an answer (A, below) to the question (Q, below); this answer is, each time, based on what follows in the Quranic verse, what could be called the “Quranic answer” (Aq, below). Since the contents of the answer are, therefore, indicated by the later passages (*dalāla 'alayhi*), that is, the “Quranic answer” (Aq), al-Zajjāj says that the answer (A) to the question (Q) itself has been dropped (*ḥudhifa*). The two question-and-answer explanations that al-Zamakhsharī says al-Zajjāj gives are as follows:²²

Q: “And what him, the evil of whose deeds has been decked out fair to him?”

A: Thy soul was wasted in regrets for them (*dhahabat nafsuka 'alayhim ḥasratan*).

Aq: “so let not thy soul be wasted in regrets for him (*sic*)” (*'alayhi* in the *Kashshāf*).

Here the answer (A) has been dropped because, as shown above, it is given later in the verse (Aq). This is in accord with what al-Zamakhsharī has already stated: the Prophet is not to waste time regretting such people. As for al-Zajjāj's second explanation, as quoted by al-Zamakhsharī, the answer does not fit the question quite so snugly; nor does al-Zamakhsharī give any additional explanations:

20 Some translations, however, supply an answer. Pickthall's translation, for example, reads: “Is he, the evil of whose deeds is made fairseeming unto him so that he deemeth it good, (other than Satan's dupe)?” (M. M. Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Miṣrī and Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, n.d.)). The *hamza* at the beginning of the verse can also be an interjection; Blachère translates it as “Eh quoi (What)!” (*Le Coran*, Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve & Larose, 1980). Arberry stays closer to the Arabic.

21 This statement may look very un- or even anti-Mu'tazilite, for it seems to be stating that God causes those whom he leads astray to be blinded to the evil of their deeds. A closer reading of the passage indicates that the *tazyīn al-'amal = al-iḍlāl* equation is the outcome of a process where individual liberty comes first. After stating that the two expressions have the same meaning, al-Zamakhsharī continues: “That is, the one who disobeys is one for whom benefits are of no avail, so that he merits thereby to be forsaken by God Most High, to be abandoned – he and his lot etc. (*wa-huwa an yakūna l-'āṣī 'alā ṣifa lā tajdī 'alayhi l-maṣāliḥ ḥattā yastawjiba bi-dhālik khidhlān Allāh ta'ālā wa-takhliyatahu wa-sha'nihi ilkh*)”. Later al-Zamakhsharī writes that the Prophet is not to regret what happens when God forsakes “those who are determined to be unbelievers (*al-muṣammūna 'alā l-kufr*)”. It is clear, then, that God leads astray those who are determined to be so treated, who, by their freely chosen disobedience, merit what they get (*Kashshāf* 3: 609).

22 *Kashshāf* 3: 609.

Q: “And what of him, the evil of whose deeds has been decked out fair to him?”

A: [He is] like the one whom God has guided (*ka-man hadāhu llāh*).

Aq: “God leads astray whomsoever He will, and whomsoever He will He guides”.

*

When the *Ma‘ānī l-Qur‘ān* itself is examined, it becomes clear that al-Zamakhsharī is practically quoting al-Zajjāj, with some slight, but not insignificant, changes. In the first explanation, al-Zajjāj’s original question and answer reads:²³

Q: “And what of him, the evil of whose deeds has been decked out fair to him” and whom God has led astray (*fa-aḍallahu llāh*)?

A: Thy soul was wasted in regrets for him (*dhababat nafsuka ‘alayhi ḥasratan*).

Aq: “so let not they soul be wasted in regrets for them”.

Al-Zamakhsharī’s version does not mention the phrase about God leading the evildoers astray. While this could be an oversight on the part of the author or copyist, the context is far too tantalizing to allow easy acceptance of such an explanation. It looks, rather, like the elimination of a statement contrary to the Mu‘tazilite explanation that al-Zamakhsharī has just given concerning the true meaning of God’s leading someone astray.

As for the second explanation, we see al-Zamakhsharī’s Mu‘tazilite hand at work even more clearly. In the *Ma‘ānī l-Qur‘ān*, al-Zajjāj’s original sequence reads:

Q: “And what of him, the evil of whose deeds has been decked out fair to him?”

A: [He is] like the one from whom God has turned away (*ka-man ta‘āddāhu llāh*)

Aq: God leads astray whomsoever He will, and whomsoever He will He guides.

In this sequence we see that al-Zamakhsharī has done the opposite of al-Zajjāj. Since the Quranic answer (Aq) has two parts, one answer (A) is as acceptable as the other. However, as we have seen, al-Zamakhsharī’s answer does not fit as easily as one would expect; it appears, again, to be an attempt to avoid saying that God leads people astray. More seriously, perhaps, he appears to attribute this interpretation to al-Zajjāj. The whole passage is a clear example of al-Zamakhsharī altering a passage in the *Ma‘ānī l-Qur‘ān* to make it fit his own theological views more closely.

23 Ibāhīm ibn al-Sarī ibn Sahl al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923), *Kitāb Ma‘ānī l-Qur‘ān (wa-ī-rābuhu)*, ed. ‘Abd al-Jalīl ‘Abduh Shalabī (Cairo: al-Hay’a al-‘Āmma li-Shu‘ūn al-Maṭābī al-Amīriyya and Beirut: Maktabat al-‘Aṣriyya, 1974), 4: 264.

The aforementioned study of al-Zamakhsharī's commentary on Q44 and Q54 showed that the *Kashshāf* had all the elements of a traditional Quran commentary (*tafsīr musalsal*) and in no way distinguished itself within the genre. Its author employed all the traditional techniques (*tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi-l-Qur'ān*, grammar, questions-and-answers (*masā'il wa-ajwiba*)) and information (variant readings (*qirā'āt*), occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), traditions (*ahādīth*), poetry and other transmitted knowledge) at his disposal to explain the meaning of the text on a word-by-word or phrase-by-phrase basis. This indicates that the *Kashshāf* retained all the elements of a traditional work of exegesis, no matter how it was viewed or defined with respect to the Mu'tazilism of its author. Furthermore, with respect to this theology and despite the fact that al-Zamakhsharī was accused by some of using the *Kashshāf* as a means for propagating it, an attentive reading of his commentary on the forty-fourth and fifty-fourth *sūras* reveals nothing by way of polemics, proseletyzing or even theological discussion; one sees only a passing reference to a Mu'tazilite principle. Likewise, a comparative study of the *Kashshāf* with one of its sources, al-Zajjāj's *Ma'ānī l-Qur'ān*, revealed only one instance reflecting al-Zamakhsharī's theological position, in his "quotation" from the *Ma'ānī*. The *Kashshāf* received strong criticism in some circles, and this suggests that it was caused more by al-Zamakhsharī's being a Mu'tazilite than by the content of the *Kashshāf*.

2. The second approach: possible theological influences on the *Kashshāf*

From the previous section it would seem that, despite the general accusations of heresy, al-Zamakhsharī's commentary was on the whole well within the accepted exegetical tradition. In this section, I will compare the *Kashshāf* with two theological treatises to see if any of the theological ideas from the latter can be detected. The treatises are al-Zamakhsharī's own *al-Minhāj fī uṣūl al-dīn*, and *al-Mu'tamad fī uṣūl al-dīn*, the major theological treatise of his teacher Rukn al-Dīn (Ibn) al-Malāhimī (d. 536/1141).

2.1 Al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Minhāj fī uṣūl al-dīn*

Al-Minhāj fī uṣūl al-dīn is al-Zamakhsharī's short, and only, truly theological treatise. However, its theological content is not the main interest here; rather, it is used to see to what extent the "Mu'tazilite content" of Quranic verses used in the *Minhāj* can be found repeated or reflected in the *Kashshāf*. There is no assumption that the *Minhāj* was written before the *Kashshāf* or that it was a source. We do not know when the *Minhāj* was completed, although the *Kashshāf* was completed in 528/1134. The goal, then, is to see to what extent, if at all, the theological ideas al-Zamakhsharī associated with certain Quranic passages or verses in the *Minhāj* were also associated with them in the *Kashshāf*. It is this association of theological ideas and Quranic texts that is our focus here.

The *Minhāj fī uṣūl al-dīn* is described by Madelung as "a brief summary of his theological creed", and by Schmidtke as "a short creedal tract on theology". It is divided into nine chapters, each laid out in the usual question-and-answer (*masā'il wa-ajwiba*) format. A tenth chapter on the imamate is lacking from

surviving Yemeni manuscripts, since it did not agree with the doctrine of the Kufan Zaydīs who brought the *Minhāj* to Yemen.²⁴ The chapter titles given by Schmidtke indicate that al-Zamakhsharī deals with themes that were dear to the hearts of the Muʿtazilites.²⁵ In particular, the titles of Chapter 7 (Chapter on the Promise and the Threat) and Chapter 8 (Chapter on the Command of what is Proper and the Interdiction of what is Reprehensible) state two of the five principles of the Muʿtazilite School. Their position at the end of the treatise probably indicates their relative importance. The long second chapter (Chapter on the Knowledge of God and His Attributes) deals with the unity of God (*tawhīd*), a fundamental Muʿtazilite fundamental principle, while the next three chapters (Chapter on the Imposition of Moral Obligations, Chapter on the Facilitating Favours and Chapter on Pains) deal with themes associated with the other fundamental principle, divine justice (*ʿadl*). The sixth (Chapter on Sustenance, Prices and Terms of Death) brushes with the question of divine predestination (*qadar*). These nine chapters are of similar length, two to three pages in Schmidtke’s edition, although the seventh, on ‘the promise and the threat’ is four full pages. The only exception is the second chapter which, at ten pages, amounts to nearly a third of the entire treatise (even if a few of these pages bear some ample footnotes).

In the *Minhāj*, Madelung argues, al-Zamakhsharī avoided entering into the controversies that separated the two branches of the Muʿtazila that existed in Khwārazm during his time: those who followed ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025), known as the Bahshamiyya, and those who followed the latter’s student Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044). While al-Zamakhsharī’s method was *masāʿil wa-ajwiba*, his approach was “catholic”: if he mentioned two conflicting views, he did not take sides or even directly indicate his preference; nor did he ever refute a Muʿtazilite view. He was influenced by the views of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and Rukn al-Dīn (Ibn) al-Malāḥimī (d. 536/1141), a disciple of the former and one of al-Zamakhsharī’s contemporaries, as a closer reading of the *Minhāj* reveals – nowhere does he uphold views of the Bahshamiyya that the latter had rejected.²⁶ While being influenced by the theology of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and Ibn al-Malāḥimī, Madelung notes that al-Zamakhsharī did not

- 24 W. Madelung, “The theology of al-Zamakhsharī”, in *Actas del XII Congreso de la U.E.A. I. (Malaga, 1984)* (Madrid: Union Européenne d’Arabisants et d’Islamisants, 1986), 488, where the manuscripts are described as consisting “of about six tightly written folios”; S. Schmidtke (ed. and trans.), *A Muʿtazilite Creed of al-Zamaḥṣarī (d. 538/1144) [al-Minhāj fī uṣūl al-dīn]* (Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, 51/4, Stuttgart: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft – F. Steiner, 1997), 9.
- 25 Schmidtke translates the titles of the chapters (sing. *bāb*) as follows: 1. Chapter on the Proof for the Temporality of the Bodies and that they have a Producer (*bāb al-dalīl ʿalā ḥudūth al-ajsām wa-ʿalā anna lahā muḥaddith*); 2. Chapter on the Knowledge of God and His Attributes (*bāb maʿrifat al-qadīm wa-ṣifātihi*); 3. Chapter on the Imposition of Moral Obligations (*bāb al-taklīf*); 4. Chapter on the Facilitating Favours (*bāb al-altāf*); 5. Chapter on Pains (*bāb al-ālām*); 6. Chapter on Sustenance, Prices and Terms of Death (*bāb al-arzāq wa-l-asʿār wa-ājāl*); 7. Chapter on the Promise and the Threat (*bāb al-waʿd wa-l-waʿd*); 8. Chapter on the Command of what is Proper and the Interdiction of what is Reprehensible (*bāb al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahy ʿan al-munkar*); 9. Chapter on Prophecy (*bāb al-nubuwwāt*).
- 26 Madelung, “Theology”, 489 ff. *passim*, 495. Madelung’s views are echoed by Schmidtke (*Minhāj*, 9). Madelung illustrates his analysis of al-Zamakhsharī’s position, as it appears

identify completely with it, and so “lent support to a broadly based, catholic Mu‘tazilism”.²⁷ The question now is: are these influences stated or at least reflected in the *Kashshāf*?

2.1.1 Overall view on the use of the *Qurān* in the *Minhāj*

In the *Minhāj*, al-Zamakhsharī makes specific reference to twenty-eight Quranic passages, either short verses or parts of longer ones. These are not divided equally among the nine chapters (which, with the exception of the second, are of a similar length). It is not surprising that a significant number of the Quranic references are found in chapter 2 (12 of the 28). Chapter 7, however, also has a good number of references (9); the rest are divided between Chapter 8 (two) and Chapter 9 (five). The remaining chapters do not contain Quranic references. Furthermore, it should be noted that Quranic references are not spread evenly through these chapters. Al-Zamakhsharī frequently supports a position with three or four passages from the Quran, so that, even in the relatively short Chapter 7, the nine references are found in just three places: a single verse on one occasion and two groups of four on the other.

One might ask about the role of these Quranic passages in the *Minhāj*. A study of the text reveals that this is twofold: an illustrative role, for example at the end of Chapter 9 on prophecy, where al-Zamakhsharī deals with Muḥammad’s miracle and the miraculous character of the Quran. First he states what a miracle is and gives the conditions for its occurrence; he then asks: “What is the miracle (*mu‘jiza*) of Muḥammad?” He begins his answer by mentioning the Quran, but then adds others, such as the splitting of the moon (*inshiqāq al-qamar*), the glorification of God by the pebbles (*tasbīḥ al-ḥaṣā*), the moaning of the tree trunk (*ḥanīn al-jidh*), the feeding of the crowds with little food and the quenching of their thirst with little water (*ifām al-jamā‘āt min ṭā‘ām yasīr wa-saqyuhum min mā’ qalīl*) and, finally, Muḥammad’s communication of hidden matters (*ikhbārūhu bi-l-ghuyūb*). Al-Zamakhsharī then returns to the Quran to describe in more detail its miraculous character and gives two aspects of this: the Quranic passages are used to illustrate the second characteristic of the Quran’s miraculous character, its “reports on hidden matters”.²⁸

The miraculous character of the Quran is two-fold: (first,) the inability of the people of eloquence [*ahl al-fasāḥa*] to match it and (secondly,) the reports on hidden matters in it like the saying of God the Exalted “and you will not do”,²⁹ “Certainly the host shall be routed”,³⁰ “that He may uplift it above every religion”,³¹ “God will protect thee from men”.³²

in the *Minhāj*, with references to the first two chapters of the treatise, which deal with the proof of the existence of God and with the divine attributes.

27 Madelung, “Theology”, 492–3.

28 Schmidtke, *Minhāj*, 43 (E = English), 80 (A = Arabic). Arberry’s translation is followed for Quranic passages. My translation of the *Minhāj* does not always follow Schmidtke’s.

29 Q2: 24/22.

30 Q54: 45.

31 Q9: 33.

32 Q5: 67/71.

Al-Zamakhsharī's answer and his demonstration of the Quran's two-fold miraculous character ends rather abruptly here. No explanations are given as to the context of these Quranic passages; as with the list of miracles, he accepts that his reader is familiar with them.³³ The context of these verses is as follows:

1. Q2:24/22 has to do with the challenge to the polytheists to produce a *sūra* like one in the Quran; but the Quran says that they will not do this (*lan taf 'alū*);
2. Q54:45 is taken as a reference to the victory at Badr;
3. Q9:33 says the religion brought by Muḥammad will be raised above other religions;
4. Q5: 67/71 is an order to the Prophet to deliver his message and is accompanied by a promise of divine protection.

Three of these verses were later understood to refer to events that came to pass afterwards. What is important for al-Zamakhsharī, though, is that they are reports of hidden matters known only to God and revealed in the Quran.

Besides this more illustrative role in the *Minhāj*, Quranic passages can sometimes be raised to the level of a "proof" (*dalīl*). An example is found in Chapter 7 on 'The promise and the threat', where the question is asked as to the proof (*dalīl*) that the persistent offender will stay eternally in hell; here al-Zamakhsharī gives three Quranic passages followed by a saying of the Prophet: "Whosoever throws himself off a mountain will fall into hell-fire for eternity; and whosoever kills himself with a knife will be in hell-fire eternally, sticking his knife into his belly with his [own] hand". Here al-Zamakhsharī also mentions that his opponents, whom he calls the Murji'ites, are wrong to cling to traditions which are countered by others which agree with the Quran, although he does not elaborate. On such occasions, though, there does not appear to be a distinction between a rational proof (*dalīl*) and a more traditional argument from authority where the revealed text is simply brought forward to support a position; in each case either a series of passages from the Quran or sometimes even a single passage is presented.³⁴ It may be that al-Zamakhsharī takes the word *dalīl* to mean "indication" or "sign" rather than "decisive proof" or "clear demonstration".³⁵ Either way, in the preceding section of the *Minhāj*, the question is asked as to the scriptural indications (sing. *mānī al-sam'*) prohibiting prophetic intercession for the grave sinner, and here again we find Quranic passages. Al-Zamakhsharī's "proof" (*dalīl*), then, that the persistent sinner remains in hell does not involve carefully crafted rational arguments with respect to the correct understanding of the traditional material he has presented. In fact, the only developed discussion of this kind is found in the latter section where, after giving the scriptural indications prohibiting prophetic intercession, al-Zamakhsharī has to explain the tradition where the

33 One is reminded of al-Zamakhsharī's presentation of the *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihāt* verses in his commentary on Q3:7. He gives two pairs of verses: in each case one verse, the *mutashābih*, is referred to the other, the *muḥkam*, in order to be understood. However, he does not say why these verses are so considered. See *Kashshāf* 2: 365–6.

34 See L. Gardet, "Ilm al-Kalām", *ET* 3: 1141–50, especially section III: Method and problematic (pp. 1146–7).

35 See S. van den Bergh, "Dalīl", *ET* 2: 101–2; L. Gardet, "Burhān", *ET* 1: 1326–7.

Prophet says: “[My] intercession is for the grave offenders among my nation”. Al-Zamakhsharī concludes this section with another appeal to authority: “We have held to what is agreed upon (*fa-akhadhnā bi-mā ttufiqā ‘alayhi*)”.³⁶

When al-Zamakhsharī’s demonstrations go beyond a simple list of Quranic passages, one might question their relevance; perhaps there is a history with which his readers are familiar. In his use of one cluster of four Quranic passages in Chapter 2, for example, the Quranic passages are incorporated into a proof that God can be neither perceived by the senses nor seen.³⁷ The section begins with the question: “What is the proof (*dalīl*) that He cannot be perceived by any sense (*lā yudraku bi-hāssa*) and that He is not seen (*laysa bi-mar’ī*)?” The answer has three related parts: (i) God is neither a body (*jism*) nor an accident (*araḍ*) and so cannot be perceived by any of the senses; (ii) God remains unseen even if one has good eyesight and all impediments (*al-mawānī min al-ru’ya*) have been removed;³⁸ and (iii) God cannot be faced (*muqābala*) since he is not a body and does not subsist (*hāl*) in one. Al-Zamakhsharī then abruptly quotes four Quranic passages without introduction: “The eyes attain Him not” (Q6:103), “Thou shalt not see Me” (Q7:143/138), “(those) . . . shall never create a fly” (Q22:73/72) and “for they said, ‘Show us God openly’. And the thunderbolt took them for their evil doing” (Q4:153/152).³⁹ When we look closely at these passages, it becomes clear that the main thrust is the impossibility of seeing God, of looking at him. They do not deal with God’s not being a body (*jism*) or subsisting in one (*hāl fī jism*), nor do they refer to either of the two preceding points. They “prove” that God can be neither perceived nor seen, in much the same way as the verses in the preceding example proved that the persistent

36 Schmidtke, *Minhāj*, 38–9 (E, which has “fall into the hell-fire for eternity”), 75–6 (A). I have not followed Schmidtke’s English translation exactly for either tradition; in the latter case, the Arabic has: *shafā’atuhu li-ahl al-kabā’ir min ummatī*. In these few pages from the *Minhāj* we see a number of points that reflect Gardet’s comments on traditional arguments in Kalām, i.e. arguments from authority: quotations from the Quran, traditions, and positions that were agreed upon.

37 Schmidtke, *Minhāj*, 16–7 (E), 54–5 (A).

38 Al-Zamakhsharī includes in his explanation a list of impediments to seeing, one of which is the inability to face or be in front of an object (*khilāf al-muqābala*). Although the word has the meaning being “in front of” or “facing”, there should not be, in theory, any “front” and the only “face” would be that of the one seeing. The main idea is “to take a position with respect to something”, or for something “to have a position” (*fī jiha*). This leads to the next point.

39 The passage from the *Minhāj* reads as follows [I have used square brackets to indicate changes to Schmidtke’s translation]: “Yet it is impossible to face God because He is neither a body nor subsisting in a body. God said “The eyes attain Him not” [(Q6:103)] and He said “Thou shalt not see Me” [(Q7:143/138)] as He said “(those) . . . shall never create a fly” [(Q22:73/72)] because [seeing Him is as impossible as their creating a body]; and God said “for they said, ‘Show us God openly’. And the thunderbolt took them for their evil doing” [(Q4:153/152)]. If they had asked for something that [was] possible (*jā’iz*) they would not have done evil and would not have been taken by the thunderbolt . . . [Mose’s statement] – peace be upon him – ‘Show me, that I may behold Thee!’ [(Q7:143/138)] is not binding because he said this [only] in order to silence those who demanded to see (God) by proving its impossibility and in order to stop their arguing when they heard His saying “Thou shalt not see Me” [(Q7:143/138)]” (Schmidtke, *Minhāj*, 17 (E), 55 (A)).

sinner will remain in hell for ever: by making a broad statement that is not at odds with the theological position. It should be added here that, as in the previous example and on other occasions where al-Zamakhsharī offers more than Quranic proof for the position he is defending, references to the Quran are not always given first. Sometimes Quranic verses are used merely to support secondary points that arise in the course of the argument. Perhaps this is Gardet's thinking when he writes: "The fact that these 'traditional' arguments are in some manuals listed after the "rational" arguments indicates that the former are to be regarded as a *confirmatur* to the results of dialectical reasoning".⁴⁰

The overall impression left by the *Minhāj* is that it is "a brief summary of [al-Zamakhsharī's] theological creed", a short work in which the main tenets of Mu'tazilism were exposed and "defended" by set answers and Quranic references. Within this framework, Quranic verses and passages have a role as an authority next to rational arguments, although in what we have seen there were few of these arguments. Unlike *tafsīr*, where he would comment on individual words or phrases, in the *Minhāj* he uses them to support or illustrate the theological position he is upholding. In these cases al-Zamakhsharī either presumes that the meaning of the passage is clear – and in line with the position he is taking – or he explains it in terms of this position. This was not new to al-Zamakhsharī: he is merely reflecting the approach of his predecessors in the field of Kalām, even if he makes relatively little use of direct scriptural quotes for his theological purposes. What is interesting, though, is how he blurs the lines between rational and traditional arguments in his presentation, since he often quotes scripture or traditions as part of what he calls a *dalīl*.

2.1.2 Reflections of the Minhāj in the Kashshāf

Whatever the final evaluation of the *Minhāj* as a theological work is, it is important in that it incorporates Quranic references. In the *Minhāj* we are presented with 28 Quranic passages which had a Mu'tazilite connection, if not content, for al-Zamakhsharī. While the use of these passages in Mu'tazilite treatises probably did not start with al-Zamakhsharī, what is of interest is how far their Mu'tazilite connection or content is to be found in the *Kashshāf*. Studying the *Minhāj* and the *Kashshāf* allows us to see al-Zamakhsharī's interpretative process at work from both ends. In the *Minhāj* we saw him illustrating or defending his theological positions with reference to the Quran; in the *Kashshāf* we can see the same process starting from the Quran. What, then, do we see when we study al-Zamakhsharī's commentary on these 28 passages in the *Kashshāf*? The statistics are shown in Table 1.

A careful examination of the exegesis of these verses or passages reveals that in only ten cases (35.7%) does al-Zamakhsharī raise the theological points for which he used them in the *Minhāj*. This does not mean that in his commentary on some of the remaining eighteen passages (64.3%) he does not express ideas that could be attributed to a Mu'tazilite position. Seven of these eighteen verses (38.9%) have some Mu'tazilite content while the other 11 (61.1%) do not.

40 L Gardet, "Ilm al-Kalām" *EP* 3: 1146. Gardet's reference to "manuals" would indicate that he is speaking about a later period.

Table 1. Mu‘tazilite “content” of the 28 quranic verses according to the *Kashshāf*

Ideas from the <i>Minhāj</i>	Other Mu‘tazilite ideas	No Mu‘tazilite ideas
10 (35.7%)	7 (25%)	11 (39.3%)
10 (35.7%)	17 (60.7%)	11 (39.3%)

However, in these seven cases, al-Zamakhsharī does not mention the ideas he defended in the *Minhāj*. This means that in approximately 60% of the 28 verses Mu‘tazilite content can be found, and that more than half of these (58.8%) are in the *Minhāj*. In 40% of the cases nothing Mu‘tazilite was raised.

An example of the intermediary situation can be found in al-Zamakhsharī’s commentary, which he brings forth in the seventh chapter of the *Minhāj* on the Promise and the Threat as scriptural indications (sing. *mānī‘ al-sam‘*) prohibiting prophetic intercession for the grave sinner (see pp. 38–9 (E); p. 75 (A)). He here presents passages from four verses (in italics below) without further comment: Q24:23; 40:18; 2:48/45; 39:19/20.⁴¹ The first passage might also indicate what, for al-Zamakhsharī, amounted to a grave sin, although the main theme of these passages is definitely elsewhere.

Q24:23: *Surely those who cast it up on women in wedlock that are heedless but believing shall be accursed in the present world and the world to come; and there awaits them a mighty chastisement.*⁴²

Q40:18: And warn them against the Day of the Imminent when, choking with anguish, the hearts are in the throats and *the evil doers have not one loyal friend, no intercessor to be heeded.*

Q2: 48/45: And beware of a day when no soul for another shall give satisfaction, and *no intercession shall be accepted from it*, nor any counterpoise be taken, neither shall they be helped.

Q39: 19/20: *He against whom the word of chastisement is realized – shalt thou deliver him out of the Fire?*⁴³

When the commentary on these verses in the *Kashshāf* is examined, we note that at Q24:23 al-Zamakhsharī does not raise the matter of Quranic impediments to prophetic intercession for the grave sinner. In his commentary on Q40:18, he devotes a few lines to the topic of intercession (*shafā‘a*), saying that it is an additional favour (*ziyādat al-tafaḍḍul*) and only those who repent receive it, a position similar to that expressed in the *Minhāj* in his explanation of the tradition on prophetic intercession: “[My] intercession is for the grave offenders among my nation”.⁴⁴ His commentary in the *Kashshāf* would, of course, cover

41 Schmidtke, *Minhāj*, 38 (E), 75 (A).

42 In the *Minhāj*, the text runs: “*inna lladhīna yarmūna l-muḥṣanātī ilā qawlihi “wa-lahum ‘adhābun ‘azīmun”*”.

43 The verse is addressed to Muḥammad.

44 *Kashshāf* 4: 163. Al-Zamakhsharī supports his interpretation in the *Kashshāf* with references to Q4:174 and a tradition reporting that al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, “By God! They will have absolutely no intercessor (*wa-llāhi mā yakūnu lahum shafī‘ al-batta*)”.

prophetic intercession, but al-Zamakhsharī does not raise this topic, nor is there reason to assume he was thinking solely of prophetic intercession, since the verse speaks of “loyal friend” (*ḥamīm*) and “intercessor” (*shafīʿ*). At Q2:48/45, the topic of intercession for the “disobedient” (*al-ʿuṣāt*) is dealt with in the same way, but there is no specific reference to the intercession of a prophet.⁴⁵ Finally, although in his commentary on Q39:19/20, al-Zamakhsharī makes it clear that God alone can release a soul from the Fire and, as a consequence, the role of the prophet is non-existent, he does not raise the topic of intercession (*shafāʿa*). The focus is the prophet’s actions in this world and his inability to bring about faith, not his intercessory powers in the next world.⁴⁶

In the *Kashshāf*, then, the interdiction of prophetic intercession is not mentioned explicitly in the commentary on any of these verses; nor are they presented as being “revealed prohibitions”. In the first verse nothing is said on the topic. In the second, intercession is mentioned as an additional favour for those who have repented; in the third, there is a question about intercession for the disobedient not being accepted; and in the fourth, the stress is on God’s omnipotence, that is, that Muḥammad can neither create faith in this world nor save those who merit chastisement in the next.

While, in the previous example, al-Zamakhsharī’s commentary reflects Muʿtazilite ideas not specifically mentioned in the *Minhāj*, elsewhere in the *Kashshāf* we find him discussing, with respect to certain Quranic passages, the ideas he raised in the *Minhāj* when these passages were quoted. For example, the first cluster of Quranic references in the *Minhāj*, alluded to above, contains four verses: Q6:103; 7:143/139; 22:73/72; 4:153/152. They are incorporated into a discussion in Chapter 2 on the impossibility of seeing God. In the commentary on some of these verses in the *Kashshāf* we see some of the same ideas.

In his commentary on Q6:103: *lā tudrikuhu l-abṣāru* (“The eyes attain him not”) in the *Kashshāf*, al-Zamakhsharī is evidently in the same zone as when composing the *Minhāj*. There he uses only a part of Q6:103; the full verse is as follows:

The eyes attain Him not, but he attains the eyes; He is the All-subtle, the All-aware.

lā tudrikuhu l-abṣāru wa-huwa yudriku l-abṣāra wa-huwa l-laṭīfu l-khabīru.

In the *Kashshāf* he first defines “vision (*al-baṣar*)” as: “the subtle substance that God has set in the sense of sight, by which what can be seen is attained”.⁴⁷ He then explains the passage:

45 *Kashshāf* 1: 165. Al-Zamakhsharī says: “If you were to say, ‘Is there any proof therein that intercession for the disobedient is not accepted?’ then I would say, ‘Yes, because He did not allow one soul to pay another’s due, by which it would be free from [what was its due for] either an action or an omission; nor did He allow that intercession be accepted from it. So it is known that the intercession of an advocate is not accepted for those who disobey’”.

46 *Kashshāf* 4: 123.

47 *Kashshāf* 2:51: *al-baṣr huwa l-jawhar al-laṭīf alladhī rakkabahu llāh fī ḥāssat al-naẓr, bihi tudraku l-mubṣarāt* – the last part could read: *bihi tudriku l-mubṣarāt* (“by which you perceive what can be seen”).

The meaning is that the eyes do not connect with Him and do not attain Him, because in His essence He is above being seen. The eyes connect only with what is in some position, either primarily or secondarily, like bodies (*ajsām*) and forms (*hay'āt*).⁴⁸

In the *Kashshāf* he tends to repeat himself and even gives one part of the verse as an explanation of another. Nevertheless, it is clear that he is expressing the same ideas as those in Chapter 2 of the *Minhāj*, where he used the verse as a proof-text, though here the development is greater. The philosophical vocabulary is present, and he states clearly that only bodies and forms can be perceived by the faculty of sight, but that God is in his essence beyond such visible things, too subtle to be seen, although he sees all and nothing is too subtle for his perception. It could be noted, however, that al-Zamakhsharī seems to be grappling with either the ideas or the vocabulary, for in his commentary on the last three short phrases he uses words derived from the fourth form of the root *d-r-k* a total of eight times.⁴⁹

The next relevant verse is Q7:143/139: *lan tarānī* ("Thou shalt not see Me"). This is a long verse, containing a dialogue between God and Moses, and al-Zamakhsharī devotes a lot of ink to it.⁵⁰ Of greatest interest here is the connection between *lan tarānī* or other parts of the verse, and the Kalām topic for which it was used in Chapter 2 of the *Minhāj*. When al-Zamakhsharī comes to the statement *lan tarānī*, it is evident that he has this Kalām topic clearly in mind. When he asks his theoretical question as to why Moses should have asked to see God, since as a prophet he should have known better, his question is six lines long and covers a number of theological ideas that are only touched upon in the *Minhāj*.⁵¹ He shows that God cannot be seen because of what he is and

48 *Kashshāf* 2: 52. For the technical terms used here, see R. Amaldez, "Hay'a", *EP* 3: 301–2; S. van den Bergh, "Djawhar", *EP* 2: 493–4; Tj. de Boer, "Djism", *EP* 2: 553–5.

49 *Kashshāf* 2: 52. His commentary can be summarized as follows:

Quran	Commentary
<i>wa-huwa yudriku l-absāra</i> but he attains the eyes	Because of the subtlety of his perception (<i>idrāk</i>), he attains those subtle substances (<i>jawāhir laṭīfa</i>) that no one else can.
<i>wa-huwa l-laṭīfu</i> He is the All-subtle	He is too subtle to be attained by the eyes (<i>yulṭafu 'an an tudrikahu l-absār</i>).
<i>l-khabīru</i> the All-aware	[He is All-aware] of all subtle things (<i>kull laṭīf</i>), for he attains the eyes; they are not too subtle to be attained by him.

50 The core dialogue here runs:

he said, 'Oh my Lord, show me, that I may behold *qāla rabbi arinī anẓur ilayka*
Thee!'

Said He, 'Thou shalt not see Me; *qāla lan tarānī*

51 The question is: "If you were to say, 'How could Moses – Peace be upon him – have asked that, he being one of the most knowledgeable of people as to God and what is and is not permitted concerning him; and as to his being above being seen, which is to be attained by one of the senses? This is true only for something that is in a position, but it is impossible for what is neither a body nor an accident to be in a position. The Mujbirites' refusing to say it is rationally absurd is not binding, since it is not the first

then establishes that Moses' request was made only to silence those who had asked – a point already made in the *Minhāj*.⁵² He returns to this second point, stressing that such a request would imply a crass anthropomorphism unworthy of a prophet.⁵³ Throughout the commentary on this verse, the theological ideas of the Muʿtazilites are clear. If any greater indication of where al-Zamakhsharī stands were needed, there is the list of the early members of the school he gives, from the founding fathers to its most famous theologians of the fourth/tenth century: Wāṣil ibn ʿAṭāʾ (d. 748), ʿAmr ibn ʿUbayd (d. 761), al-Nazzām (d. 836), Abū l-Hudhayl (d. 841?), Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. 915) and his son Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī (d. 933). Both the ideas and the vocabulary used to express them are identical to those found in the *Minhāj*. In the *Kashshāf*, however, the topic is developed far more than in the theological treatise. The extra time and space allow al-Zamakhsharī to take a swipe at his opponents (whom he calls the “Mujbira”); he argues that what they say does not hold up since they are sinners!

The third verse used in the *Minhāj* to illustrate the point is Q22:73/72: *lan yakhluqū dhubāban* (“(those) . . . shall never create a fly”). In the *Minhāj*, the phrase was used merely to indicate impossibility, the impossibility of seeing

time they act arrogantly or commit a sin. How could he (i.e. Moses) have demanded it, when he had said – when ‘the earthquake seized’ those who had said openly, ‘Show us God,’ – ‘Wilt Thou destroy us for what the foolish ones of us have done? [It is only Thy trial, whereby] Thou ledest astray whom Thou wilt’ (Q7: 155/154). So he washed his hands of their action and called them foolish and lost”. The answer is: “I would say, ‘He asked to see only in order to censure those whom he called foolish and lost, and whose actions he washed his hands of; and in order to silence them. That is because, when they asked to see, he denied it to them and let them know about sin and told them about the truth; but they were obstinate and persisted in their obstinacy, and said, ‘No escaping it! We will not believe you (*lan nuʿmina laka*) until we see God openly.’ So he wanted them to hear the clear revelation (*naṣṣ*) from God about the impossibility of [what they were asking]. That is his word, ‘*lan tarānī* (Thou shalt not see me),’ so that they would be sure and the doubt that had entered them would depart from them. It was for this that he said, ‘*rabbī arinī anzur ilayka* (Oh my Lord, show me, that I may behold Thee!)’” (*Kashshāf* 2: 144–5). By Mujbira, al-Zamakhsharī means his orthodox opponents in general; see W. M. Watt, “Djabariyya”, *EP* 2: 365.

- 52 Schmidtke, *Minhāj*, 17 (E), 55 (A) (“[Mose’s statement] – peace be upon him–” show me, that I may behold Thee!’ is not binding because he said this [only] in order to silence those who had demanded to see (God) by proving its impossibility and in order to stop their arguing when they heard His saying ‘Thou shalt not see Me.’”).
- 53 Al-Zamakhsharī writes: “And his saying ‘that I may behold Thee!’ with the meaning that it has of ‘to be in front of, to face’, which is pure anthropomorphism and crude materialism, is a proof that it is an interpretation of their demands and an account of what they said. The one riding the camel (*ṣāhib al-jamal*) was too great to make God something that could be looked towards or that could be in front of the sense of sight, for how [could that be] with one who is more deeply rooted in the knowledge of God Most High than Wāṣil ibn ʿAṭāʾ, ʿAmr ibn ʿUbayd, al-Nazzām, Abū l-Hudhayl, the two *shaykhs* and all of the Kalām theologians?” (*Kashshāf* 2:145). The two *shaykhs* referred to here are Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. 303/915) and his son Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī (321/933). From what I have been able to discover, *ṣāhib al-jamal* is a title given to Muḥammad. Here, however, al-Zamakhsharī seems to be using it with reference to Moses. Otherwise, he either suddenly started to speak about Muḥammad (not to attribute the Quranic passage to him) or else his text was corrupted in transmission and an intermediary passage is missing.

God; no context was given for it. In fact, the verse deals with the gods of the polytheists, which cannot create even so much as a fly. In the *Kashshāf*, al-Zamakhsharī does not make any reference to seeing God or to any point from the theological debate that surrounds the phrase in the *Minhāj*.⁵⁴ In the *Kashshāf* it illustrates the impotence of the polytheists’ idols; in the *Minhāj* it illustrates the impossibility of seeing God.

The fourth and final verse used in the first cluster of *Minhāj* is Q4:153/152: *fa-qālū arinā llāha jahratan fa-akhadhathumu l-ṣā‘iqatu bi-ẓulmihim* (“for they said, ‘Show us God openly’. And the thunderbolt took them for their evil doing”). In the *Minhāj*, al-Zamakhsharī states clearly that the punishment was due to their demanding something impossible, that is, seeing God, and gives an example of Abraham’s demanding something that was possible:

If they had asked for something that [was] possible, they would not have done evil and would not have been taken by the thunderbolt, as when [Abraham] demanded the revivification of [the] dead, [for] he did no evil and was not taken by the thunderbolt.⁵⁵

In the *Kashshāf*, at this passage, there is no reference to the theological questions that were the context for its use in the *Minhāj*. Al-Zamakhsharī merely states that the Quranic “for their evil doing” (*bi-ẓulmihim*) means “because of their asking to see” (*bi-sabab su’ālihim al-ru’ya*). He then gives the same example about Abraham in practically the same words, ending with a shot at his opponents (whom he calls the “Mushabbihā”): “May evil and thunderbolts befall the Mushabbihā”.⁵⁶

With Q4:153/152, the first cluster of verses from the *Minhāj* has been examined. While the commentary on the first two verses in this cluster reflects Mu‘tazilite theological thinking, the other two do not; Q22:73/72 does not even deal with the theme of seeing God.

One might question the meaning of these statistics. What do they say about the Mu‘tazilite content of the *Kashshāf* in general, assuming that one can extrapolate from them? If it is recalled that in five of the *Minhāj*’s nine chapters, al-Zamakhsharī made no direct reference to the Quran, the first idea that springs to mind is that in al-Zamakhsharī’s *Kalām*, Quranic passages played a secondary role. Furthermore, considering that al-Zamakhsharī was not primarily a theologian, there is no need to assume that his knowledge of the minutiae of *Kalām* debate and the Mu‘tazilite positions was excessive. Not only was the *Minhāj* a brief summary of al-Zamakhsharī’s theological position, as Madelung says, but it could also have been all that he was capable of writing on the topic. As for the *Kashshāf*, al-Zamakhsharī appears to manifest an overall lack of concern there for the specific “Mu‘tazilite content” of the verses that he used in the *Minhāj*. As shown above, there was a lack of reciprocity between the *Kashshāf*

54 *Kashshāf* 3: 172–3.

55 Schmidtke, *Minhāj*, 17 (E), 55 (A).

56 *Kashshāf* 1:618. The Mushabbihā would be those guilty of *tashbih*, that is, the anthropomorphists.

and the *Minhāj* at the 28 verses used in the latter; for in about 65% of cases, what was to be found in the *Minhāj* did not reappear in the *Kashshāf*. Al-Zamakhsharī was clearly not constantly thinking about Kalām as he composed his Quran commentary. This is in line with the results of the study of Q44 and Q54. Consequently, a comparison with the *Minhāj fī uṣūl al-dīn* supports the view that the *Kashshāf* was not written primarily as a vehicle for Muʿtazilite theology.

2.2 Rukn al-Dīn (Ibn) al-Malāḥimī's (d. 536/1141) *al-Muʿtamad fī uṣūl al-dīn*

In Rukn al-Dīn ibn al-Malāḥimī, “the main representative of the school of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī in the first half of the 6th/12th century”, we find a scholar whose lifespan corresponds with that of al-Zamakhsharī.⁵⁷ Ibn al-Malāḥimī taught al-Zamakhsharī theology, while the latter taught the former exegesis.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the extant parts of Ibn al-Malāḥimī's Kalām work, *al-Muʿtamad fī uṣūl al-dīn*, have been published and are available for scrutiny.⁵⁹ This work could offer us a direct and contemporary source for the Muʿtazilism of the *Kashshāf*.⁶⁰ However, the fact that material is found in both the *Muʿtamad* and the *Kashshāf* is hardly a guarantee that the former was a source for the latter. It may be that al-Zamakhsharī had completed the *Kashshāf* before Ibn al-Malāḥimī even began the *Muʿtamad*, and that they both drew on earlier, common sources; no dates indicate when the latter was finished so it is necessary to keep this point in mind.

57 Schmidtke, *Minhāj*, 8. Rukn al-Dīn's exact name is uncertain. Following McDermott and Madelung I will refer to him consistently as Ibn al-Malāḥimī.

58 Aḥmad b. Muṣṭafā b. Khalīl Ṭāshkubrī Zāda (d. 968/1560–61), *Miftāḥ al-saʿāda wa-miṣbāḥ al-siyāda fī mawḍūʿāt al-ʿulūm*, ed. Kāmil Kāmil Bakrī and ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Abū l-Nūr (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, [1968]), 2, 100.

59 Ed. McDermott and Madelung (London: al-Hoda, 1991). According to Madelung, Ibn al-Malāḥimī states in the introduction to the *Muʿtamad* that his intention is “to condense, complete and update” ʿAbū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's largest Kalām work, the *Kitāb Taṣaffūḥ al-adilla*, in which he critically scrutinized (*taṣaffāḥa*) the arguments of the Muʿtazilī scholars as much as those of their opponents”. However, he adds that Ibn al-Malāḥimī does not go much beyond the end of this book, his main but not only source (*Muʿtamad*, xi). The present edition of the *Muʿtamad* is over 600 pages long and includes dozens of references to the Quran, although there is no index at the end of their edition. The edition is divided into two parts (sing. *juzʿ*), the first and the third, following the divisions of the manuscripts that were used. According to the introduction, this edition contains most of the first two parts and the complete third part of the *Muʿtamad*, even if only the first and third parts are indicated in the table of contents. This is because the section heading for Part 2 in the manuscript was omitted, and not because the second part was missing. The fourth part, however, is missing, although the editors have incorporated one chapter (*bāb*) that was found in a manuscript of another of Ibn al-Malāḥimī's works, the *Kitāb al-Fāʿiq*, described as “a greatly abridged version of the *Muʿtamad*” (*Muʿtamad*, xiv). Each part is divided into three large sections of unequal length; each of these has a number of chapters (sing. *bāb*), some of which are divided into smaller sections (sing. *faṣl*); there are a few independent sections called *faṣl* also.

60 There is no need to limit Muʿtazilite sources to this one author. Al-Zamakhsharī had come into contact with the teachings and Quran commentary of the Muʿtazilite Zaydī *imām* al-Ḥākim al-Jushamī (d. 494/1101) through the latter's student Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ishāq al-Khwārazmī, although he did not draw directly on this commentary when composing the *Kashshāf*. See Madelung, “Theology”, 487; “al-Zamakhsharī”, *ET² Suppl.*, fasc. 11–12: 341.

2.2.1 Overall view on the use of the *Qur'an* in the *Mu'tamad*

A study of the *Mu'tamad* shows, first of all, that the Quranic verses are not spread evenly throughout the entire work. In fact, they are quite limited. Besides a few in the opening pages of the first part and at the very end of the single chapter from the fourth part (for the divisions of the *Mu'tamad*, see note 59), Quranic references in the main body of the book are limited to nine chapters, four chapters in the first part and five in the third part. If it is taken into account that the first part has twenty-two chapters and two independent sections, and that the third part has fourteen chapters, two of which have three subsections (sing. *faṣl*), to say nothing of the final fifty-page section on sects opposed to the Islamic doctrine of *tawhīd* (that has no divisions into chapters and subsections); then it becomes clear that Ibn al-Malāḥimī uses the Quran as sparingly here as al-Zamakhsharī did in the *Minhāj*. As in the *Minhāj*, verses tend to be presented in clusters in chapters that range from one page to nearly one hundred.

In the main body of the *Mu'tamad*, Ibn al-Malāḥimī makes about 160 references to nearly 140 Quranic passages, either individual verses, several verses together, or simply parts of verses. Occasionally he refers to a verse more than once but rarely more than twice; the majority of the verses mentioned in the *Mu'tamad* are used only once. Ibn al-Malāḥimī indicates on several occasions that what he has given by way of Quranic references is not everything that could have been supplied, writing such things as *wa-ghayr dhālika*, *ilā ghayr dhālika* or *ilā ghayr dhālika min al-āyāt* after a number of Quranic citations.

Methodologically I will try to establish here whether any of the theological ideas Ibn al-Malāḥimī buttressed with Quranic passages in the *Mu'tamad* are repeated or reflected in al-Zamakhsharī's commentary on the same verses in the *Kashshāf*. Because of the large number of such references, it is not possible here to give an exhaustive comparison of their use in both works. As was the case with the more limited *Minhāj fī uṣūl al-dīn*, a few examples will be chosen to illustrate Ibn al-Malāḥimī's use of a verse or cluster of verses in the *Mu'tamad*; al-Zamakhsharī's comments on these same verses in the *Kashshāf* will then be presented. These verses will be drawn from an earlier study of approximately twenty verses (approximately 13% of the 140 or so) that were examined with respect to their use in the *Kashshāf* and the *Mu'tamad*.⁶¹ A few remarks will then be offered as to the extent to which al-Zamakhsharī employed Ibn al-Malāḥimī's *Mu'tamad* when writing the *Kashshāf*.

2.2.2 Ibn al-Malāḥimī's *Mu'tamad*: a source for the *Kashshāf*?

Part 3, ch. 11 of the *Mu'tamad* deals with the meaning of describing God as being one and the meaning of divine unity. Ibn al-Malāḥimī here uses Q2:163/158: *wa-ilāhukum ilāhun wāḥidun lā ilāha illā huwa l-rahmānu l-rahīmu* ("Your God is One God; there is no god but He, the All-merciful, the All-compassionate"); it occurs alone in a discussion about what it means

61 The original study was carried out for the author's PhD thesis and involved a detailed comparison of what al-Zamakhsharī and Ibn al-Malāḥimī had to say on approximately twenty verses in their respective works.

when the Mu‘tazilite teachers (*shuyūkhunā*) describe God as being one (*wāḥid*). Ibn al-Malāḥimī says that one of three things is meant:⁶²

1. A single essence that cannot be divided or broken into parts (*dhāt wāḥida lā yajūzu ‘alayhi l-tajazzu’ wa-l-tab‘īd*). This is not applied to God in the way of praise (*‘alā jihat al-madh*), since others too are described in this way.
2. No one shares with God the qualities that are attributed to him in the way that they are attributed to him; in this sense, it is said that he has no second.
3. God is the one god (*ilāh wāḥid*), who alone deserves worship (*ibāda*) and has no partners in it. Ibn al-Malāḥimī then quotes part of Q2:163/158: “Your God is One God; there is no god but He, the All-merciful, the All-compassionate”. Ibn al-Malāḥimī concludes the third point by referring to the last words of the Quranic passage he quotes: “By these two qualities He (May He be exalted) is praised”.

In this list we can see three aspects of divine unity underlined, or the three angles from which the idea is viewed. These can be described as: (i) internal unity, that is, indivisibility; (ii) uniqueness, that is, God is completely different from everything else (*tanzīh*); and (iii) external unity, that is, there is no god with God.

In the *Kashshāf* at Q2:163/158, al-Zamakhsharī mentions the third meaning, which Ibn al-Malāḥimī illustrated by a reference to the same verse, i.e. al-Zamakhsharī speaks of God’s unity in terms of his being the only god, of being unique (sole, single or one of its kind, and not exceptional, inimitable or matchless, which is the second understanding given by Ibn al-Malāḥimī). He also refers to the two epithets (*rahmān* and *rahīm*), as did Ibn al-Malāḥimī; however, his comments are more in line with Ibn al-Malāḥimī’s second point, that of God’s incomparability with creatures in his attributes. He writes:

“One God”: unique with respect to divinity, with absolutely no one sharing it with him; it is not correct to call anyone other than him a god. “There is no god but He”: affirmation of unity, denying [other gods] and affirming him. “The All-merciful, the All-compassionate”: Lord of all benefits, both in their sources and in their developments; no one other than he is with this quality. Everything other than he is either a grace or object of a grace.⁶³

In al-Zamakhsharī’s comments here, we see some similarity with the *Mu‘tamad*. However, he gives a wider interpretation of the verse than Ibn al-Malāḥimī in that he incorporates ideas of *tanzīh*. Furthermore, while this would also have been an occasion for al-Zamakhsharī to give the summary of the *shaykhs’* views that Ibn al-Malāḥimī did, he chooses not to do so.

62 Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu‘tamad*, 502–3. Ibn al-Malāḥimī compares the first use of the word to its application to the atom (*jawhar*); see S. van den Bergh, “Djawhar”, *ET* 2: 493–4.

63 *Al-Kashshāf* 1: 236. The passage here seems a little like a flow of consciousness. Al-Zamakhsharī ends his comments on this verse with a *sabab al-nuzūl*: “It was said: The polytheists had three hundred and sixty idols around the Ka’ba, and when they heard of this verse, they were amazed and said, ‘If you speak the truth, then bring a sign so that by it we may know your truthfulness’; and the verse was revealed (*fa-nazalat*)”. As it stands now, this occasion for revelation implies that the verse had been heard of before it was revealed.

Part 3, ch. 3 of the *Mu'tamad*, dealing with the impossibility of God's being a location for accidents, contains three references to the Quran, all of which are grouped together. Concerning the meaning of verse Q89:22/23: "and Thy Lord comes (*wa-jā'a rabbuka*)" (and that of parts of two other verses (Q2:210/206; 6:158/159) that speak of the Lord's coming (using the verbs *jā'a* and *atā*)), Ibn al-Malāḥimī says that, although this verse speaks of God's essence (*dhāt*), what is meant are his acts (*af'āl*) and his punishments (*'uqūbāt*).⁶⁴ His answer involves listing other verses (Q59:2; 16:26/28) to explain how these three are to be understood, and to show that the true meaning of the verses is not the apparent one. Ibn al-Malāḥimī ends this section with a commentary on Q2:210/206: "What do they look for, but that God shall come to them in the cloud-shadows?" (one of the verses he has just referred to) that was transmitted on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, who is quoted as saying: "He will come to them with the promise and the threat (*al-wa'd wa-l-wa'id*), and he will reveal to them what of the command (*al-amr*) was hidden from them". It is interesting to note how this very Mu'tazilite tradition has made its way into Ibn al-Malāḥimī's treatise.⁶⁵

In the *Kashshāf*, al-Zamakhsharī makes some comments on Q89:22/23: "and Thy Lord comes (*wa-jā'a rabbuka*)". However, while he raises essentially the same question as Ibn al-Malāḥimī concerning predicating motion of God, his answer is different. In the *Mu'tamad*, this verse was used in Ibn al-Malāḥimī's discussion of the essence of God, his movement, acts and punishments, and God's "coming" meant His acts and His punishments; in the *Kashshāf* al-Zamakhsharī sees it as an expression of incomparable divine majesty and glory. One might argue that al-Zamakhsharī's view is similar to Ibn al-Malāḥimī's here, in that he says that predicating the verb "to come" of God is "a comparison to the manifestation of the signs of [God's] might and the demonstration of the effects of his power and authority" and, therefore, in a sense he is saying that the verse speaks of the manifestation of something other than the essence (*dhāt*) of God. However, the rest of the passage indicates that al-Zamakhsharī is more concerned with the greatness of God's glory and majesty than with questions of the divine essence, for he writes: "In this, [God's] state is comparable to the state of a king who, if he is present himself, there appear with his presence effects of awe and command that are not evident with the presence of all of his armies and of all his ministers and leading personalities together without exception."⁶⁶

64 These passages read: Q2: 210/206: "What do they look for, but that God shall come to them (*ya'tiyahum Allāh*) in the cloud-shadows?" and Q6:158/159: "What, do they look for the angels to come to them (*ta'tiyahum al-malā'ika*), nothing less, or that thy Lord should come (*ya'tiya rabbukum*)?"

65 Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 327–8. This is a very Mu'tazilite understanding of the verse that has been placed on the lips of Ibn 'Abbās, since we see in it references to two of the five Mu'tazilite principles.

66 *Kashshāf* 4: 754–5: "If you were to say, 'What is the meaning of predicating [the verb] "to come" of God, since movement and change of place are permitted only concerning those who can be in a position?' I would say, 'It is a comparison to the manifestation of the signs of his might and the demonstration of the effects of his power and authority. In this, his state is comparable to the state of a king who, if he is present himself, there appear with his presence effects of awe and command that are not evident with the presence of all of his armies and of all his ministers and leading personalities together without exception.'"

Reading Ibn al-Malāḥimī's *Mu'tamad*, it is striking how very little direct use he makes of the Quran in this six-hundred page book. When he does use the revealed text, the impression is the same as that left by al-Zamakhsharī's use of it in the *Minhāj*: the role is secondary. When the comparison is made with the *Kashshāf* at the twenty verses originally studied, practically nowhere in al-Zamakhsharī's commentary on these verses can specific ideas expressed in the *Mu'tamad* be found. It is only in his commentary on Q2:163 and Q5:116 (not mentioned in this article) that al-Zamakhsharī raises explanations that resemble material found in the *Mu'tamad*. Even in the former case, the similarities are counterbalanced by differences. Something similar is seen in the commentary on Q89:22 (above), where al-Zamakhsharī asks essentially the same question as Ibn al-Malāḥimī, only to give a different answer. For the remaining verses, there are no similarities between the *Mu'tamad* and the *Kashshāf*. Thus, if these twenty verses are indicative, the *Mu'tamad* played no role in the formulation of the ideas and explanations in the *Kashshāf*; where similarities are apparent they can probably be attributed to chance. Since Ibn al-Malāḥimī was al-Zamakhsharī's teacher, this probably means that al-Zamakhsharī had no access to the *Mu'tamad*.

The lack of common ground between the two works reflects the scarcity of shared ideas between al-Zamakhsharī's own work in *Kalām*, the *Minhāj fī uṣūl al-dīn*, and the *Kashshāf*, and recalls earlier remarks concerning al-Zamakhsharī's preparation as a theologian and his lack of interest in incorporating into his commentary even his own theological ideas. Furthermore, considering this comparison with the *Minhāj*, it would seem that even if al-Zamakhsharī had had access to the *Mu'tamad* before he began the *Kashshāf*, its ideas might not have been reproduced there. In any case, based on our survey of the use of the Quran in a number of chapters of the *Mu'tamad*, it is clear that this work cannot be considered a source for the *Kashshāf*.

3. The third approach: the matter of *Khalaqa l-Qur'ān*⁶⁷

3.1 Background⁶⁸

The matter of the creation of the Quran is intimately linked to both Mu'tazilite theology and the Trial or Inquisition (*miḥna*) the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Ma'mūn set in motion four months before his death in 218/833, and which continued under his successors al-Mu'tasim (d. 227/842), al-Wāthiq (d. 232/847) and al-Mutawakkil (d. 247/861) until the latter finally put an end to it in 237/851–2.⁶⁹ Two phases in the development of the doctrine of the created Quran can be observed, the

67 The results of this research were presented at the 2005 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Philadelphia.

68 The following is based primarily on Wilfred Madelung, "The origins of the controversy concerning the creation of the Koran", in P. Morewedge (ed.), *Islamic Philosophical Theology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), 504–25.

69 See M. Hinds, "Miḥna", *EL* 7: 2–6 and John A. Nawas, "A reexamination of three current explanations for al-Ma'mūn's introduction of the *Miḥna*", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, 1994, 615–29.

earlier of which did not directly involve the Mu'tazilites. Towards the middle of the eighth century, those who held that the Quran was created focused on the anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*) of the more traditionalist groups whose concept of God was based on such verses as Q4:164, which spoke of God's having spoken directly to Moses (*kallama llāhu Mūsā taklīman*) and Q4:125, which spoke of God's having taken Abraham for a friend (*wa-ttakhadha llāhu Ibrāhīma khalīlan*).⁷⁰ For those who held that the Quran was created, God could not be said to have spoken any more than he could be said to have taken a creature for a friend; God was above such human attributes as speech and friendship. God, therefore, created the sound of speech that was heard, but it was not God's speech in a literal sense. Those opposed to this position did not respond directly but stated that the Quran was God's speech; they sought to show the intimate connection between the Quran and God. This, in fact, was nothing new. What was new was for this group to add either a condemnation of those who said that the Quran was created, or a denial that the Quran was created, initially with the negative "It is not created (*laysa bi-makhlūq*)" rather than the more positive "It is uncreated (*ghayr makhlūq*)". However, during this early period in the debate, the denial of the creation of the Quran was not meant to imply in any way that it was eternal (*qadīm*).

The traditionalists' shift towards the doctrine of the eternal Quran was attributable to developments in the arguments of their opponents, the Mu'tazilites and other asserters of the creation of the Quran, in the decades leading up to the *miḥna*. The latter did not deny that God truly spoke, though they did argue that God produced speech without speech organs; furthermore, they held that the Quran was truly God's speech. What was new was the refusal to admit that anything could be co-eternal with God. To assert that the Quran was not created, i.e. that it was not temporal, was to say that it was eternal, which would destroy the unity of God by setting up something co-eternal with him. The traditionalist response rejected the Mu'tazilite view, noting, in particular, that it implied that God was originally ignorant (for the Quran contained the names and knowledge of God) and that there was a time when God did not speak.

The result of the *miḥna*, al-Ma'mūn's motives for which are still debated (cf. note 69), hinged on the acceptance by the '*ulamā*' (even under duress) of the statement that the Quran was created. The result of this Trial, however, was not the imposition of the doctrine of the created Quran, but its opposite: the acceptance of the doctrine of the uncreated, eternal Quran. As the doctrine of the created Quran was a Mu'tazilite tenet, they were discredited, and what was to become Sunnism developed unhindered. This did not mean, as Hinds says, that "the inspiration for the *miḥna* necessarily came from Mu'tazilīs or that its initial purpose was the imposition of Mu'tazilī doctrine"; rather, it was simply the case that, "in the context of the *miḥna*, Mu'tazilī interests overlapped considerably with those of al-Ma'mūn, for all that they were not

70 Names associated with the created Quran at this time are Ja'd ibn Dirham (d. 125/743) and Jahm ibn Ṣafwān (d. 128/745), both executed towards the end of the Umayyad period. See G. Vajda, "Ibn Dirham", *EF* 3: 747–8 and W. M. Watt, "Djahm b. Ṣafwān", *EF* 2: 388.

identical".⁷¹ Neither did the result of the Trial mean that the Mu'tazilites and their doctrines disappeared: they continued to exist and even to thrive, influencing theological traditions both within and outside of Islam. Of Khwārazm, where al-Zamakhsharī was born more than two centuries after the end of the *miḥna*, Gimaret writes that Mu'tazilism continued to be the dominant ideology "to such an extent that outside this area *khwārazmī* was understood as a synonym of *mu'tazilī*".⁷² In such a milieu, then, beginning a Quran commentary with the words "Praise be to God who created the Quran (*al-ḥamdu li-llāh alladhī khalaqa l-Qur'ān*)" would not only immediately indicate the theological position of the author but would also call to mind the entire history of the *miḥna* and the suffering traditionalist scholars underwent at the hands of political authorities who had espoused this Mu'tazilite position.

The aforementioned anecdote, found in a number of biographical dictionaries, says that al-Zamakhsharī would have first written "Praise be to God who created the Quran (*al-ḥamdu li-llāh alladhī khalaqa l-Qur'ān*)" at the very beginning of the *Kashshāf* but then changed it to *al-ḥamdu li-llāh alladhī jā'ala l-Qur'ān* when told that his commentary would be shunned by the people if he did not do so.⁷³ Although none of the sources mentions copies of the *Kashshāf* that had either *khalaqa* or *jā'ala*, the latter of which, Ibn Khallikān says, was used

71 M. Hinds, "Miḥna", *EF*² 7: 5–6 This view contrasts with that held by Patton, who wrote: "When al-Rashīd died, the matter remained in the same position during the time of his son al-Amīn; but when al-Ma'mūn succeeded some of the Mu'tazilites led him astray and made the doctrine of the creation of the Qurān to appear plausible to him". Patton's source here is the Egyptian historian al-Maqrīzī (d. 1442); the "matter" he refers to is that the Quran was the uncreated Word of God (Walter M. Patton, *Aḥmed ibn Ḥanbal and the Miḥna* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1897), 48–9).

72 D. Gimaret, "Mu'tazila", *EF*² 7:785.

73 Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282), *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, [1968]), 5: 170 [no. 711]. See also Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Fāsī (d. 832/1429), *al-Iqd al-thamīn fī tārikh al-balad al-amīn*, ed. Fu'ād Sayyid (Cairo, 1959–69), 7: 141; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), *Ta'rikh al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa-l-a'lām*, ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmūrī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1991–2000), vol. 521–530H/531–540H, 489 [no. 398]; 'Abd al-Ḥayy ibn Aḥmad Ibn al-Imād (d. 1089/1679), *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahaba* (Maktabat al-Qudsī, 1931–33) 4: 120. After noting Ibn Khallikān's comments in the preface to his edition of the *Kashshāf*, Nassau-Lees writes: "It is not at all improbable that al-Zamakhsharī originally did write *Khalaqa* – first because, instead of being ashamed of his doctrines, he was proud them; and secondly, because it would appear that the word *Anzala* is not his, for a different form of the same verb occurs in the next sentence, which, though not a breach of the rules of good composition, would here be an inelegancy. As to his having substituted the word *J'ala* (*sic*), the idea is absurd. To introduce the identical word in the same line twice in the same sense, would be a gross breach of the rules of good composition, and a blunder, that no man of sound sense would be guilty of accusing the most profound philologer and elegant scholar of his age (*sic*). The word *J'ala* (*sic*) is understood before the words قرانا عربيا which occur lower down, and will there, no doubt, be taken in the sense of *Khalaqa*. I am satisfied that Ibn Khallikān's statement, which I am surprised to see that al-Soyootī has endorsed, is without foundation" (Calcutta: Maṭba'at al-Laysī, 1856–59, 1: 7–8, n.7). This does not mean that Nassau-Lees necessarily accepted that al-Zamakhsharī wrote *khalaqa l-Quran* but rather that the latter would never have changed it to *jā'ala l-Qur'ān*, as Ibn Khallikān maintains.

by the Mu'tazilites with the meaning of the former anyway (*wa-ja'ala 'indahum bi-mā'nā khalaqa*), those who give the report state that it was not al-Zamakhsharī who changed the expression to "Praise be to God who revealed the Quran (*al-ḥamdu li-llāh alladhī anzala l-Qur'ān*)" (which can be read today), even though they do not agree on who actually made the change.⁷⁴

Ibn Khallikān's remark that *ja'ala* and *khalaqa* have the same meaning merits comment. Wolfson has pointed out that the verb *ja'ala* differed from the verb *khalaqa* in that the former was used in the Quran in connection with itself while the latter was not. He illustrates this with a reference to Q43:2: "We have made it (*ja'alnāhu*) an Arabic Quran". Referring to Patton, Wolfson also says that, "in his defense of the uncreatedness of the Koran, [Ibn Ḥanbal] argued that the word *ja'al* does not mean the same as *ḥalak*". In his first letter concerning the creation of the Quran and the Trial, al-Ma'mūn refers to Q43:2 as proof that God did create the Quran, for everything that God makes he also creates. In fact, during the Trial, an Ibn al-Bakkā l-Akbar from Baghdad admitted that the Quran was something "made" (*maj'ūl*) and "newly produced" (*muḥdath*), but he would not say that it was "created" (*makhluq*). When questioned by al-Mu'taṣim's governor about the meaning of *ja'ala* in Q43:2, Ibn Ḥanbal replied by quoting Q105:5: "and He made them like green blades devoured (*fa-ja'alahum ka-ʿasfīn ma'kūlin*)", which also has the verb *ja'ala*, and asking the governor if anything could be concluded from this text about their having been created.⁷⁵ Consequently, changing *khalaqa* to *ja'ala* (if any change ever took place) may not have been as unacceptable as Ibn Khallikān believed. In fact, in the second line of the *muqaddima* al-Zamakhsharī says that God made (*ja'ala*) the Quran begin with his high praise (*wa-ja'alahū bi-l-tahmīd muftataḥan*), and yet nowhere in these sources do we find any objections to the use of this word. So the question remains: Did al-Zamakhsharī begin the *Kashshāf* with this statement? In the next section, manuscript evidence will be examined to test the authenticity of this account.

3.2 Manuscripts of the *Kashshāf*: the main text and the marginal glosses⁷⁶

A study of 110 manuscripts of the *Kashshāf* containing the *muqaddima* revealed that only five had a comment on the *khalaqa l-Qur'ān*, and these were not all of equal weight. Even some of these glossators rejected the idea that

74 Ibn Khallikān says that it was the modification of the people (*iṣlāḥ al-nās*) (*Wafayāt* 5: 170 [no. 711]), Abū l-Fidā' that it was the work of al-Zamakhsharī's companions (*aṣḥāb*) (Abū l-Fidā' Ismā'īl ibn 'Alī (d. 732/1331), *Kitāb al-Mukhtaṣar fī akhbār al-bashar* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1956–61) 2: 25 [juz' 5]), and Ibn al-Wardī merely states that the text was changed after his death (*ba'dahu*) (Zayn al-Dīn 'Umar ibn al-Muẓaffar Ibn al-Wardī (d. 749/1349), *Ta'rīkh Ibn al-Wardī* (al-Najaf: al-Maṭba'a al-Haydariyya, 1969) 2: 63). For the meanings of *khalaqa*, see R. Arnaldez, "Khalq", *EF* 4: 980–8.

75 H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1976), 297; Patton, *Aḥmed ibn Ḥanbal*, 58, 73–4, 90–1. For the traditionist and eponym of one of the four Sunnī *madhāhib*, see H. Laoust, "Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal", *EF* 1: 272–7.

76 The results in this section are based on a study of approximately 250 manuscripts of the *Kashshāf*, most of which were studied during a nine-week trip to Istanbul in the spring and summer of 2004.

al-Zamakhsharī had first written *khalāqa l-Qurʿān* and then changed it. In the margin of MS. Fatih 340, for example, there is a note next to the opening lines of the *muqaddima* that reads:

I have heard some people say that the author wrote *khalāqa* in the autograph copy (*nuskhat al-aṣl*), which is the *umm al-Kashshāf*, and then changed it to *anzala* out of fear (*khawfan*) but this is not so, for he was clear about his theological position (*madhhab*) throughout the entire introduction (*khuṭba*) and used not to conceal his position. I have studied the *Kashshāf* [written] in his handwriting (*khatt*) and I have seen neither erasure (*kashf*) nor change (*taghyīr*) in it.⁷⁷

A similar statement is found in the margin of MS. Fatih 344.⁷⁸

MSS. Beyezi 575 and Köprülü 129, however, support the claim that al-Zamakhsharī first wrote *khalāqa l-Qurʿān* and later changed it.⁷⁹ In the first of these manuscripts, the gloss refers not to a personal study of the *Kashshāf* but to someone else's observations:

Ibn al-ʿAmīd Amīr Kātib al-Itqānī (May God have mercy on him) said, "I saw in the author's (May God have mercy on him) copy the word *anzala* written in someone else's handwriting. It was as if in its place there had been *khalāqa*, in accordance with what was his (i.e. al-Zamakhsharī's) theological position (*madhhabuhu*)".⁸⁰

77 The *umm al-Kashshāf* is the name al-Zamakhsharī gives to the final draft he finished in Mecca in 528/1134; he refers to it in the postscript he added to this copy. My study indicates that it was not the only copy used by medieval copyists. The other was stored at the Abū Ḥanīfa tomb-shrine (*mashhad*) in Baghdad, and is referred to in the colophon of other manuscripts. The Baghdad copy could well have been the rough draft (*sawād*) to which al-Zamakhsharī refers in the postscript to the *umm al-Kashshāf* and from which he copied the *umm al-Kashshāf* in Mecca. See my *A Traditional Muʿtazilite Qurʿān Commentary*, especially pp. 70–75.

78 MS. Fatih 344 is a complete copy of the *Kashshāf* finished on 20 Shawwāl 798H. MS. Fatih 340 is a copy of the commentary on Q1–Q33; it was finished in Dhū l-Qaʿda 732H. Although the glossator on MS. Fatih 340 writes "I have heard some people say" and "I have studied the *Kashshāf*", it is highly unlikely that he did. This marginal gloss repeats almost verbatim what al-Yamanī (d. 750/1348–9) says on the matter of *khalāqa l-Qurʿān* in his *sharḥ* on the *Kashshāf*, completed in 733/1332. This gloss and al-Yamanī's comment are confirmed by a more recent source; Nassau-Lees writes: "Firawzabādī (*apud* the *Kashf al-Zoonoon*) on the other hand says, that he asked his master regarding it, and that he told him he had seen at Baghdad, in the *Imām* Aboo Hanīfah's tomb, the Author's autograph, and that it bore no signs of erasure or emendation (*Kashshāf* (ed. Calcutta, 1856–9) 1: 7, n.7). Firawzabādī is undoubtedly Fīrūzābādī (d. 817/1415); the "master" may be Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355) with whom he studied in Damascus in 750/1349 and then accompanied to Jerusalem the same year. See H. Fleisch, "Fīrūzābādī", *EF*² 2: 926–7; J. Schacht and C. E. Bosworth, "al-Subkī", *EF*² 9: 743–5. The copy of the *Kashshāf* referred to here, though, is that of Abū Ḥanīfa's *mashhad*, and most likely not the *umm al-Kashshāf*.

79 MSS. Beyezi 575–6 are a complete copy of the *Kashshāf* (Q1–Q18 and Q19–Q114); they are undated. MS. Köprülü 129 is a first volume (Q1–Q18) from the eighth century H.

80 Qiwām al-Dīn Luṭf Allāh Amīr Kātib b. (ʿAmīd) Amīr ʿUmar b. Amīr Ghāzī Abū Ḥanīfa al-Itqānī was born in Itqān, Turkmenistan (or Farāb according to *GAL.Sp*) in 685/1286.

The marginal note in the second manuscript, which has innumerable glosses throughout, reads: “*Khalaqa* was in the autograph (*al-aṣl*) but it was removed (*kushiṭa*) and so *anzala* was written”.

The fifth manuscript (MS. Shehid ‘Alī Pasha 153) had only the word *ja‘ala* written above *anzala*.⁸¹ An isolated word is hard to interpret but this one is not necessarily as neutral as it might appear if it is viewed in the light of the discussion of Ibn Khallikān’s comment given above. It would have been far more significant if the main text had had *ja‘ala* and the gloss had been *anzala*. As it is now, it appears to be either a protest that *ja‘ala* had the same meaning as *anzala*, or else a half-hearted attempt to put forward what might be considered the Mu‘tazilite position. In the latter case the glossator was careful not to write the more incendiary *khalaqa*.

An examination of the manuscript tradition shows that none of the manuscripts studied contained *khalaqa l-Qur‘ān* or *ja‘ala l-Qur‘ān*, neither was there any indication that a later hand had changed a copyist’s *khalaqa* or *ja‘ala* to *anzala*. In 95.5% of the manuscripts the *khalaqa l-Qur‘ān* received no attention at all. This question then was of interest to practically no one. In the 4.5% that did garner a few words from a glossator, only two said that al-Zamakhsharī had originally written *khalaqa l-Qur‘ān* – less than 2% of the total: MS. Köprülü 129 which has a statement that cannot be substantiated; MS. Bayezit 575 which, on the other hand, is more interesting as the glossator cites from a known source, the aforementioned Ibn al-‘Amīd Amīr Kātib al-Itqānī (d. 758/1357) who made his own copy of the *Kashshāf* in 718H.⁸²

The important question is: did al-Itqānī say what was attributed to him? He did see that the autograph of the *Kashshāf* at the Abū Ḥanīfa tomb-shrine for his own copy (MS. Lâleli 216, 718H) was made from it, and this was used by later copyists. However, only part of his copy was available (Q15–Q23) and so we do not know if he indicated that the introduction to the *Kashshāf*

In 730/1330 (or 720/1320, *GAL.Sp*) he travelled to Damascus and Cairo, and then was professor and *qāḍī* in Baghdad. In Damascus again, he was al-Dhahabī’s successor in the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Zāhiriyya, but following a quarrel with Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355) and others, he resigned and went to Egypt where he was professor in a new *madrasa* built in 757/1356 by Ṣarīghimish. He died in Egypt in 758/1357. In *GAL.Sp* the itinerary differs slightly in that al-Itqānī had only one stay in Damascus, the quarrel having taken place before he left for Baghdad, from where he then proceeded to Egypt. Brockelmann lists seven works attributed to al-Itqānī, several of which are commentaries on other works. These include *The Crusher of the Mu‘tazilites* (*Shaddākhāt al-Mu‘tazila*), a *risāla* “against al-Zamakhsharī’s interpretation (gegen Zamaḥṣārīs Auslegung)”, that is, his interpretation of the Quran (*GAL*¹ 2: 79; *GAL* 2: 95; *GAL.Sp* 2: 87; for al-Subkī, see J. Schacht and C. E. Bosworth, “al-Subkī”, *EP*² 9: 743–5).

81 MS. Shehid ‘Alī Pasha 153 was finished in Muḥarram 704H.

82 Part of al-Itqānī’s copy of the *Kashshāf* exists. It is MS. Lâleli 216, copied in 718H in Baghdad (the copyist’s name is given as Ibn ‘Amīd Kātib al-Itqānī); at the top of folio 2A a gloss says: *al-rābī min al-Kashshāf li-Jār Allāh al-allāma bi-khaṭṭ Qawām al-Dīn al-Itqānī*. At the end, al-Itqānī writes: “[It] was copied from the autograph copy written in [the author’s] handwriting, bequeathed to the tomb-shrine (*mashhad*) of the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfa (May God be pleased with him and his followers)”. MS. Lâleli 216 contains only the commentary on Q15–Q23 and does not have the *Shaddākhāt al-Mu‘tazila* in the margins.

had been changed. While al-Itqānī's copy is of no interest for the matter at hand, a possible source for his views may be found in two complete copies of the *Kashshāf* made using al-Itqānī's copy. MSS. Ali Emiri Efendi 80–81 (840H) were copied from that belonging to al-Itqānī, and MS. Nurosmāniye 290/399 (1050H) was collated with the one belonging to him.⁸³ Each copy has the usual expression, *anzala l-Qur'ān*, in the introduction, and neither has marginalia to indicate that there had been anything different in either al-Itqānī's copy or al-Zamakhsharī's original. This indicates that al-Itqānī's copy had the standard text and makes one wonder why, if, as the glossator of MS. Bayezit 575 has claimed, al-Itqānī had said that *anzala* had been written by another hand, he did not write or otherwise indicate what had been in the original.

Al-Itqānī might have raised the issue of the opening words of the *Kashshāf* in his own *muqaddima* to his copy of the *Kashshāf*; this introduction appears to be given at the beginning of MS. Nurosmāniye 290/399.⁸⁴ In this short text, al-Itqānī says that al-Zamakhsharī received the title Jār Allāh because he had spent five years in Mecca; he supports this statement with lines from one of al-Zamakhsharī's *qaṣīdas*. He then says that al-Zamakhsharī wrote 20 works (*mu'allafāt*), and lists them.⁸⁵ However, he makes no reference to the opening words of the *Kashshāf*, either to say what al-Zamakhsharī had originally written or to indicate who had changed it. The conclusion, then, is not only that the remark given in MS. Bayezit 575 cannot be taken at face value, but that it is most likely simply false.

3.3 *Sharḥs and ḥāshiyas on the Kashshāf*

The margins of *Kashshāf* copies are not the only places where comments on al-Zamakhsharī's supposed declaration of his Mu'tazilism occur. The phrase *al-ḥamdu li-llāh alladhī khalaqa l-Qur'ān* received attention in at least three commentaries on the *Kashshāf*, where authors had more space to deal with the matter. In chronological order, those examined here are the *sharḥs* (or *ḥāshiyas*) by al-Ṭībī (d. 743/1342), al-Yamanī (d. 750/1348–9) and al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413).⁸⁶ The first two are contemporaries and their comments on

83 In the Itqānī manuscript (MS. Lâleli 216) and its two copies (MSS. Ali Emiri Efendi 80–81 and Nurosmāniye 290/399), it is clearly stated that the copy of the *Kashshāf* used was the author's, which had been bequeathed (*mawqūfa*) to the Abū Ḥanīfa tomb-shrine (*mashhad*) in Baghdad. MSS. Lâleli 216 and Nurosmāniye 290/399 both add that this copy was written in his own handwriting.

84 Completed on 09 Muḥarram 1050H by 'Alā l-Dīn al-Shuhūdī. It was later compared with al-Itqānī's copy and collated with it and another copy, completed on 27 Ramaḍān 1051H. The short *muqaddima* on folio 1A was probably added at this time; it concludes: *wa-nuqilat min khaṭṭ al-shaykh Qidām al-Dīn al-Itqānī raḥimahu llāh ta'ālā*.

85 For more on al-Zamakhsharī's life and work, see my *A Traditional Mu'tazilite Qur'ān Commentary*, Chapter 1 and Appendix 3.

86 Abū 'Alī (or Muḥammad) al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ṭībī's (d. 743/1342) commentary on the *Kashshāf*, entitled *Futūḥ al-ghayb (fī l-kashf 'an qinā' al-rayb)*, is one of several works he composed. Al-Suyūfī describes him as an eminent scholar (*'allāma*) in the sciences, Arabic, and rhetoric; and quotes Ibn Ḥajar's exceedingly positive opinion of him. Al-Suyūfī says that, in his commentary on the *Kashshāf*, al-Ṭībī mentions that shortly before beginning to write it he saw the Prophet in his sleep, who offered him a bowl of milk from which he drank (al-Suyūfī, *Bughya* 1: 522–3

al-Zamakhsharī's *khalāqa l-Qur'ān* are similar, although not necessarily connected; they both reject the idea that al-Zamakhsharī ever wrote *al-ḥamdu li-llāh alladhī khalāqa l-Qur'ān*.

In the *Futūḥ al-ghayb*, al-Ṭībī's commentary, the author says that al-Zamakhsharī's opening words in his commentary are "the clarification of the order of the revelation (*bayān tartīb al-nuzūl*)".⁸⁷ Al-Ṭībī's explanation of this order is traditional: first God "sent down" (*anzala*) the Quran from the Guarded Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*) to the nearest heaven (*al-samā' al-dunyā*); then he "sent it down" (*nazzala*) according to the requirements and events on earth, where it was established in a composed and organized way, as shown by the words *mu'allaf* and *munazzam* in al-Zamakhsharī's commentary. As regards al-Zamakhsharī's having written and then changed *khalāqa l-Qur'ān*, al-Ṭībī says that *anzala* expressed what was originally intended and so no change had occurred; nor was there any need to use *khalāqa l-Qur'ān*, since later in the passage al-Zamakhsharī clearly indicates where he stood with respect to the nature of the Qur'ān. Al-Ṭībī writes:

[no. 1080]; *GAL*¹ 1: 290; 2: 64; *GAL* 1: 345; 2: 76; *GAL.Sp* 1: 508; 2: 76; *al-Fihris al-shāmil li-l-turāth al-'arabī al-islāmī al-makhtūṭ* (Amman: al-Majma' al-Malakī li-Buḥūth al-Ḥadāra al-Islāmī, Mu'assasat Āl al-Bayt, 1987) 2: 515). 'Imād ('Izz) al-Dīn Yaḥyā b. al-Qāsim al-'Alawī al-Fāḍil al-Yamanī (d. 750/1348–9), a Shāfi'ī *adīb*, grammarian and commentator, travelled to Baghdad, Damascus and Khurasān. Al-Suyūṭī says he was familiar with the *Kashshāf* and wrote a gloss (*ta'līqa*) on it. Al-Ziriklī gives the title of his gloss, finished in 733/1332, as *Tuḥfat al-ashraf fī kashf ghawāmiḍ al-Kashshāf*, that listed in *GAL.Sp*. However, it is listed as *Durar al-aṣḍāf fī ḥall 'uqad al-Kashshāf* in *GAL* and the *Fihris al-shāmil*. Interestingly enough, in *GAL.Sp Durar al-aṣḍāf* is the title of al-Yamanī's gloss on al-Ṭībī's *Futūḥ al-ghayb*. Kaḥḥāla lists both without further comment (al-Suyūṭī, *Bughya* 2: 339 [no. 2130]; 'Umar Riḍā Kaḥḥāla, *Mu'jam al-mu'allifīn. Tarājim muṣannifī l-kutub al-'arabiyya* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1993) 4: 110 [no. 18100]; Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-'Alām. Qāmūs tarājim li-ashḥar al-rijāl wa-l-nisā' min al-'arab wa-l-musta'ribīn wa-l-mustashriqīn* (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li-l-Malāyīn, 1979) 8: 163; *GAL*¹ 1: 290; *GAL* 1: 345–6; *GAL.Sp* 1: 508; *al-Fihris al-shāmil* 2: 515) 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Jurjānī al-Ḥusaynī al-Ḥanafī al-Sayyid al-Sharīf (d. 816/1413) travelled to Harāt to study with Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī al-Taḥṭānī (d. 766/1364) who, because of his advanced age, turned him down and sent him to one of his students in Egypt. Tritton writes that he "belonged to an age which wrote commentaries on earlier works" and that in his *Tārīfāt*, "he was not afraid to be simple" (pp. 602–3). He wrote on many subjects: grammar, logic, law and language; and as a theologian devoted considerable space to philosophy. Kaḥḥāla says he wrote over 50 works, and almost all of those that he lists are *ḥāshiyas*, *sharḥs*, or *ḥāshiyas* on other *sharḥs* or *mukhtaṣars* (al-Suyūṭī, *Bughya* 2: 196–7 [no. 1777]; A. S. Tritton, "Al-Djurdjānī, 'Alī b. Muḥammad", *EL*² 2: 602–3; Kaḥḥāla, *Mu'jam al-mu'allifīn* 2: 515 [no. 10037]; *GAL*¹ 2: 216–7; *GAL* 1: 346; 2: 280–1; *GAL.Sp* 2: 305–6 *GAL.Sp* 1: 508). Al-Jurjānī never finished his gloss on the *Kashshāf* and this is evident in editions of the *Kashshāf* that contain it, for it ends in the first volume.

87 Here I am following Topkapi MS. 1780 A230 (copied about the 11th/17th century). The opening words of the *Kashshāf* are: *al-ḥamdu li-llāh alladhī anzala l-Qur'ān kalāman mu'allafan munazzaman wa-nazzalahu bi-ḥasab al-maṣāliḥ munajjaman wa-jā'alahu bi-l-tahmīd muftataḥan wa-bi-l-istī'ādha mukhtataman* (*Kashshāf* 1: 41).

This (i.e. the explanation he has just given) is what was intended and not what has been said, that he said first of all *khalaqa l-Qur'ān* and then changed it out of pious fear (*taqiyyatan*), because he was clear about that (i.e. his Mu'tazilite position) when he said, "They are only the attributes of a first creation, etc".⁸⁸

A similar dismissal of the idea that *anzala l-Qur'ān* was a later emendation to al-Zamakhsharī's original *khalaqa l-Qur'ān* is given by al-Yamanī. He writes:

Know that God the Sublime "sent down" (*anzala*) the Quran all at once from the Preserved Tablet to the nearest heaven. Then, after that, he "sent it down" (*nazzala*) piecemeal, corresponding to requirements and matching events. That is why he (i.e. al-Zamakhsharī) said *anzala* and *nazzala*, taking into account the technique of *tajnīs al-ishtiqāqī*.⁸⁹ I have heard some people say that in the original copy (*nuskhat al-umm*) he wrote *khalaqa* and then changed it to *anzala* out of fear (*khawfan*) but this is not so, for he was clear about his theological position (*madhhab*) throughout the entire introduction (*khutba*). He used not to conceal his position but to make it known and to boast of it. I have studied (*tālā'a*) the *Kashshāf* [written] in his handwriting (*khatt*) and I have seen neither erasure (*kasht*) nor change (*taghyīr*) in it.⁹⁰

The third witness to the debate on what al-Zamakhsharī originally wrote is al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413).⁹¹ At the beginning of his

88 The Arabic text reads: *hādihā huwa l-murād lā mā qīla innahu qāla awwalan khalaqa l-Qur'ān thumma ghayyarahū taqiyyatan li-annahu šaraḥa bi-dhālika bi-qawlihi 'wa-mā hiya illā šifāt muḥtada' ilā ākhirihī. The words wa-mā hiya illā šifāt muḥtada' (muḥtada') ilā ākhirihī to which al-Ṭībī refers are the continuation of the passage in the Kashshāf. In it al-Zamakhsharī describes the Quran and refers to it in terms of a created being (e.g. muḥtada' muḥtada', munsha' mukhtara').*

89 *Tajnīs al-ishtiqāqī* could be translated as same-root paronomasia. Heinrichs writes: "A general definition of *tajnīs* would be: a pair of utterances (mostly, but not necessarily single words), within a line or colon, which are semantically different but phonetically, either completely or partially, identical. The alternative "completeness or lack of such" is the basis for distinguishing the various subtypes that the rhetoricians have discovered. Since words that are only partially identical are very likely to be semantically different anyway, it becomes clear that two notions have merged in the *tajnīs* concept: a narrow one which covers only the case of complete phonetic identity (this is the *tajnīs tāmm*, which some say, or imply, is the original and "correct" meaning of the term), and a broader one in which the two terms of the *tajnīs* show any kind of lesser degrees of assonance, down to root-repetition (*ishtikāk*, *figura etymologica*). Some authors deny that *ishtikāk* is a subtype of *tajnīs*" (W. P. Heinrichs, "Tajnīs", *EL* 10: 67).

90 Here I follow MS. Nurosmāniye 417/563, completed on 03 Šafār 997 in Yemen by 'Abd al-Hādī b. Sa'īd al-Yamanī. The card catalogue gives no title but lists it as a *ḥašhiya*. It is interesting to note that al-Yamanī refers to the "original copy" of the *Kashshāf*, that people said had *khalaqa l-Qur'ān*, as *nuskhat al-umm*. This gives the impression that he is referring to the *umm al-Kashshāf* that al-Zamakhsharī finished in Mecca in 528/1134, and not the copy at the Abū Ḥanīfa *mašhad* in Baghdad.

91 Unlike the two previous commentaries, al-Jurjānī's has been printed in a number of editions; here the Mušṭafā l-Bābī al-Ḥalabī (Cairo: 1385–87/1966–68) edition has been used.

commentary he too specifically notes al-Zamakhsharī’s theological position (*madhhab*) with respect to the Quran and adds that he went to trouble to show his Mu‘tazilism and was proud of it. In his comments on *anzala*, however, al-Jurjānī does not explicitly deny that al-Zamakhsharī ever wrote *al-ḥamdu li-lāh alladhī khalaqa l-Qur’ān*; he does not address the question at all, but merely uses an anonymous *khalaqa/anzala* report as a way of introducing his own explanation of how brilliant al-Zamakhsharī’s text is. He writes: “It is reported that in the original copy *khalaqa* occurred in the place of *anzala*, but that then the author changed it. If this is correct, then the change was beneficial”;⁹² he then proceeds to give seven reasons why the change (if it did occur, as reported) had benefits (*fawā’id*). Al-Jurjānī, then, is not interested in confirming or denying the report; nor is he concerned with its authenticity. What is important is that the word *anzala* was much better suited to what al-Zamakhsharī was saying than *khalaqa* could ever have been, and this he amply demonstrates with the seven *fawā’id* that he supplies.

3.4 The evidence and the story

Manuscript evidence supports the view that al-Zamakhsharī never wrote *khalaqa l-Quran*, for in none of the 110 manuscripts containing the *muqaddima* was the reference to the creation of the Quran to be found; nor was there any indication that manuscripts had been tampered with, to erase or change what an earlier copyist had written.⁹³ This limited number of manuscripts may seem too small to be the basis for such a statement. However, further evidence is available: there are the biographical dictionaries (*ṭabaqāt*). While the story of the *Kashshāf*’s opening words is to be found in a number of these works, none of the authors ever claimed to have seen a copy of the commentary containing the offending expression, or even one that had been changed. Moreover, there is no agreement in these *ṭabaqāt* works as to who would have changed *khalaqa l-Qur’ān* to *anzala l-Qur’ān*, if such a change did occur. Secondly, glossators corroborate the view that al-Zamakhsharī never wrote *khalaqa l-Qur’ān* by the general silence with which they pass over the account; furthermore, those who do say that *khalaqa l-Qur’ān* was written originally are very few and their evidence is extremely weak. Thirdly, the main commentators on the *Kashshāf* reject the idea that al-Zamakhsharī ever wrote *khalaqa l-Qur’ān* and take pains to point it out. Finally, there has been no debate on this matter in the sources. There was simply a story in circulation, which many biographers and most glossators ignored but which a few commentators took the time to refute. Nevertheless, the story seems to have taken on a life of its own, to the point that Brockelmann could remark parenthetically that “at the very beginning [of the *Kashshāf* al-Zamakhsharī] declares the Qur’ān created” and Jansen could

92 *Kashshāf* (ed. Cairo, 1966–68) 1: 3. The Arabic text reads: *yurwā annahu waqa‘a fī umm al-nusakh khalaqa makāna anzala thumma ghayyarahu l-muṣannif fa-in ṣahha dhālika fa-l-taghyir li-fawā’id*.

93 Nassau-Lees refers to similar results in the first printed edition of the *Kashshāf*: “I have myself seven or eight good copies, and some of them . . . are very old; yet in none of them occur (*sic*) either of the words, *khalaqa* or *J’ala* (*sic*)” (*Kashshāf* (ed. Calcutta, 1856–59) 1: 7, n. 7).

state: “‘Glory to God who created the Koran’ are the opening words of Az-Zamakhsharī’s Koran commentary”.⁹⁴ In the light of this study these statements are very hard to endorse. Not only have no manuscripts with *khalaqa l-Qur’ān* (or even *ja’ala l-Qur’ān*) been found; there is no reason to believe either that there ever were any, or that al-Zamakhsharī wrote *khalaqa l-Qur’ān* in the first place.

The question arises as to when and where the report about al-Zamakhsharī’s having written *khalaqa l-Qur’ān* first appeared and who was behind it. Despite his *risāla* against al-Zamakhsharī’s interpretation of the Quran, the aforementioned al-Itqānī cannot have been at the origin of this account. Not only does the evidence not support this position, but the story was in circulation before his time; Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282) had already reported the matter before al-Itqānī (b. 685/1286) was born. What is noteworthy about Ibn Khallikān’s account is that it is one of two anecdotes he gives to illustrate how open al-Zamakhsharī was about his Mu’tazilism, a point already made by a number of other authors. Immediately before presenting the report about the opening words of the *Kashshāf*, Ibn Khallikān gives an anonymous report which says that, when visiting someone, al-Zamakhsharī would have himself announced with: “Abū l-Qāsim the Mu’tazilite is at the door (*Abū l-Qāsim al-Mu’tazilī bi-l-bāb*)”.⁹⁵ The Mu’tazilite Abū Yūsuf al-Qazwīnī (d. 488/1095) was attributed with a similar way of announcing himself, indicating that the story was either an invention applied to Mu’tazilites who were open about their theology, or perhaps a way of behaving that was not all that uncommon.⁹⁶ The report concerning the opening words of the *Kashshāf*, on the other hand, which Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282) places immediately after the report on al-Zamakhsharī’s way of having himself announced and for which he himself says he found no evidence in the “many copies” (*kathīr min al-nusakh*) of the commentary he had seen (just as he found no evidence for saying that the emendation to the text was the work of the people and not that of the author), can only be a fabrication that appeared sometime in the late sixth/twelfth or early seventh/thirteenth century as an indirect means of saying not only that al-Zamakhsharī was a Mu’tazilite (which was well known) but also that his commentary was not free from his beliefs.

Such a “creation story” would have been in line with the thinking of Ibn Khallikān’s (d. 681/1282) contemporary Ibn Abī Jamra (d. 699/1300?) who discussed who could study the *Kashshāf* and said that those who did so and who preferred it to the books of the “masters” were in error. This theme was continued by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) a century and a half later in perhaps stronger terms, for he forbade people to touch the *Kashshāf* and transmitted

94 “al-Zamakhsharī”, *El*¹ 4: 1205; Jansen, *Interpretation*, 62.

95 See for example: Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt* 5: 170 [no. 711], reproduced in al-Fāsī, *al-ʿIqd al-thamīn* 7: 141 and Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* 4: 120.

96 G. Makdisi, “The Sunnī Revival” in *Islamic Civilization 950–1150* (Papers on Islamic Civilization, 3, Oxford: Bruno Cassier, 1973), 157; and W. Madelung, “Abū Yūsuf Qazwīnī”, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul and New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 1983–2001), 1: 398–9.

similar forebodings from al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1345). A less strident variation on the theme of the “Mu‘tazilite *Kashshāf*” can, however, be seen in the biographies of such eighth/fourteenth century writers as Abū l-Fidā’ (d. 732/1331) and Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373). Most writers, though, had nothing but praise for the *Kashshāf* and its author, and passed over the “creation story” in silence. Nevertheless, this does not mean that they were unaware of it. Authors borrowed heavily from each other and no one had more borrowed from him than Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282). This story, then, was well known and continued to circulate (to the point of becoming an accepted fact in modern times), perhaps reflective of an effort either to fight a perceived resurgent Mu‘tazilism or simply to destroy the popularity of the *Kashshāf* and to stop its spread. In the end, though, if the latter were the intention, the endeavour proved fruitless.⁹⁷

Conclusion

This article set out to examine in a systematic way al-Zamakhsharī’s *Kashshāf*. From medieval times, this commentary was considered by some, at least, to be a Mu‘tazilite commentary on the Quran and this perception has found its way into modern scholarship, even though, as the various references have shown, scholars do not define precisely what they might understand a Mu‘tazilite commentary to be. Some modern-day scholars have shied away from considering the *Kashshāf* to be such a commentary, but even these do not seem to have studied the text itself to any great extent, and so what al-Zamakhsharī in fact said remains something of a mystery. While it is clearly not possible for every scholar to write a book on every medieval scholar or work before writing about them, it is necessary on occasion for individuals to examine a little more closely what many others may know from afar. This article comes out of such an endeavour with respect to al-Zamakhsharī and his *Kashshāf*.

The endeavour in question approached the *Kashshāf* from three angles: first, a close reading of a section of the text (Q44 and Q54), to see what it would yield by way of a Mu‘tazilite interpretation. Only one passage clearly referred to a principle of this school; the commentary on Q54:17. What is interesting here, though, is that the Mu‘tazilite interpretation was only one of three that al-Zamakhsharī offered; it was indeed the first but, it was only one of three. Just as infrequent was al-Zamakhsharī’s slightly Mu‘tazilite manipulation of a passage from an earlier source he was ostensibly quoting, al-Zajjāj’s *Ma‘ānī l-Qur’ān*.⁹⁸ The relative scarcity of both Mu‘tazilite interpretations of the Quranic text and Mu‘tazilite alterations to the earlier source indicates that the *Kashshāf* was not primarily focused on the theology of its author. In fact, this

97 For ‘Abd Allāh b. Sa‘d (Sa‘īd?) Ibn Abī Jamra al-Andalusī (d. 699/1300?), see *GAL*¹ 1: 372; *GAL* 1: 458–9; *GAL.Sp* 1: 635. His comments on the *Kashshāf* can be found in his *Bahjat al-nufūs wa-taḥallihā bi-mā’rafat mā lahā wa-mā ‘alayhā* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1972) 1: 46 [juz’ 1]. The *Bahjat al-nufūs* is a commentary on one of Ibn Abī Jamra’s earlier works, the *Kitāb Jam’ al-nihāya fī bad’ al-khayr wa-l-ghāya*, a summary of al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

98 Such examples should be kept in mind when reconstructing earlier texts from references to them in later works.

detailed reading of these two *sūras* revealed the *Kashshāf* to be a traditional *tafsīr musalsal*, grounded in the earlier exegetical tradition and relying on the interpretations and tools of the trade that al-Zamakhsharī's predecessors had used.

The second approach involved studying two theological works whose ideas might be reflected in the *Kashshāf*, al-Zamakhsharī's own *al-Minhāj fī uṣūl al-dīn* and *al-Mu'tamad fī uṣūl al-dīn* by his teacher Ibn al-Malāḥimī (d. 536/1141). Unlike the first approach, which involved the continuous reading of the commentary on the two *sūras* in the hope that it might lead to Mu'tazilite ideas in the text, this was focused on verses whose commentary might reveal such ideas more readily. If a number of Quranic verses had been used by either al-Zamakhsharī or Ibn al-Malāḥimī to support, defend or even "prove" Mu'tazilite ideas in their theological treatises, it seemed reasonable to assume that some of these ideas might emerge in the commentary on the same verses in the *Kashshāf*. It was noted, however, that in these Kalām works, scripture was used relatively rarely to begin with, and that even then it appeared to have an ancillary role. With respect to the 28 Quranic passages quoted in the *Minhāj*, the commentary on approximately 40% of them had no Mu'tazilite content in the *Kashshāf*; the commentary on approximately 35% of them did reflect ideas presented in the theological treatise; and the commentary on the rest (25%) reflected Mu'tazilite positions that were not to be found in the *Minhāj*. These statistics may look good but do so only until it is realized that very little of the Quran made its way into the *Minhāj*. As for the *Mu'tamad*, this larger theological work used far more scripture than did the shorter *Minhāj* but, relatively speaking, it too did so exceedingly sparingly. The study showed that this book was simply not used by al-Zamakhsharī. In general then, even on the relatively rare occasions when scripture was used in these theological works, the connection between specific scriptural passages and the theological arguments they supported was weak, especially when it came to proofs, and this weakness was reflected in the lack of a connection between them and Mu'tazilite ideas in the *Kashshāf*. Understood in this light and on the basis of what has been studied here, it is not necessary to assume that al-Zamakhsharī would have had Mu'tazilite ideas to develop in his commentary on verses that had no connection to theology in the Kalām tradition since this would be pulling him out of the tradition, even if the connection between theology and scripture in the treatises often appeared weak.

The third approach was much more focused, looking at one line from the commentary, the first. For almost as long as the *Kashshāf* has been in existence, there has also been a story that it began with the blatantly Mu'tazilite words "Praise be to God who created the Quran (*al-ḥamdu li-llāh alladhī khalaqa l-Qur'ān*)". By the beginning of the twentieth century, this story was considered to be fact. In conjunction with the few medieval sources that transmitted it, it may have been at the origins of the modern-day view that the *Kashshāf* was a "Mu'tazilite commentary" on the Quran. In any case, such a statement would have set the tone for the remainder of the commentary in the eyes of orthodox readers, and would probably have driven them away before they even turned the first page. This may, in fact, have been the intention, for the story is undoubtedly a fabrication set in place early by opponents of the Mu'tazila as a way of keeping

people away from the *Kashshāf* which, they believed, had to be tainted by heresy since its author was a Mu'tazilite. The story did not, however, have the desired results, as the many manuscript copies and printed editions (20 as of today) of the *Kashshāf* show. In fact, a study of over 100 of these manuscripts gave no indication that this "creation story" was anything more than an invention, for there was no evidence to support it, and glossators and commentators openly rejected the story for the most part, if they spoke about it at all. Their silence reflects that of the medieval scholarly community in general, where the story was undoubtedly well known but probably not accepted, for it received limited exposure in the biographical dictionaries (*ṭabaqāt*) and does not seem to have had much effect on the reputation of either al-Zamakhsharī or his commentary. With the exception of al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) and Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449) after him, none of the authors of the biographical works under study had anything critical to say about the *Kashshāf*.⁹⁹ On the contrary, the impression they give is that the work was held in high esteem, for it was invariably the first of al-Zamakhsharī's works to be listed. The so-called "Mu'tazilite" *Kashshāf*, then, received a much warmer reception from scholars than one might have expected if it had truly been steeped in heresy.

Al-Zamakhsharī's *Kashshāf* is a traditional Quran commentary written by a member of the Mu'tazilite school of theology, that sometimes incorporates Mu'tazilite comments into a traditional framework. Of the three approaches to the text followed here, the findings from the reading of Q44 and Q54 are probably more representative of the *Kashshāf*'s Mu'tazilite contents than are those from the comparison of it to the *Minhāj* and the *Mu'tamad* where, despite the percentages with respect to the former, direct use of the Quran was sparse and the connection between Quranic passages and theology, on the level of "proof" at least, often appeared vague and unconvincing. It might be that their main role was simply to be a traditional *confirmatur* to the results of rational arguments (as Gardet said), no matter how they were presented in the *Minhāj*.¹⁰⁰ As for the "creation story", it is a fabrication which attempted to draw a direct connection

99 The biographical sources consulted for the original study numbered nearly three dozen and spanned a period of seven centuries, from Ibn al-Anbārī's (d. 577/1181) *Nuzhat al-alibbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-udabā'* to al-Khuwānasārī's (d. 1313/1895) *Rawḍāt al-jannāt fī aḥwāl al-'ulamā' wa-l-sādāt*.

100 Even at this level the selection of Quranic passages (verses or parts thereof) that could have been used at various places in the *Minhāj* and the *Mu'tamad* was probably wider than what was used; Ibn al-Malāḥimī says as much himself (see §2.2.1 above). Why certain passages were chosen for specific theological arguments may be hard to explain, beyond the fact that they supported the latter in a general way without getting into the details of the Kalām arguments. If this is the case, the connection was probably too weak for such passages to stand out as the Quranic pillars on which specific theological arguments stood, and this would be reflected in the *Kashshāf*. In any case, they remained connected to only a small part of the theological treatises, and represented a tiny percentage of the Quran. By al-Zamakhsharī's time, it is possible that the passages he refers to (and maybe others he did not mention) were solidly set in the theological tradition as part of the arguments; something similar could probably be said for the *muhkamāt* and *mutashābihāt* verses of the Quran (n. 33). Nevertheless, it might be possible to trace back the theological tradition to the point where certain passages first appeared.

between the theology of al-Zamakhsharī and the contents of his commentary. To reject it for the forgery it is, is merely to concur with most medieval scholars, either directly or indirectly, even if the study of a limited number of these sources could and did lead a number of modern-day scholars astray. To say more about the *Kashshāf*, to describe it as a Muʿtazilite commentary on the Quran – and, as already noted, scholars today have not really defined what such a commentary might be, a difficulty that may have begun with al-Bayḍāwī – or to expect more from it than what this study has brought to light, would be to focus more on the author and the “creation story” that has dogged him throughout history than it would be to focus on the *Kashshāf* and what its author actually wrote in it.

Abbreviations

*EI*¹ = *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 1st ed., ed. M. Th. Houtsma et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1913–38).

*EI*² = *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 2nd ed., ed. H. A. R. Gibb et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960–2005).

*GAL*¹ = C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* 1st ed. (Weimar: Verlag von Emil Felber, 1898–1902).

GAL = C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1943–9).

GAL.Sp = C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur Supplementbände* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1937–42).