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# ‘AYN AL-QUDĀT’S QUR’ANIC VISION

## From black words to white parchment\*

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### Introduction

‘Ayn al-Qudāt Hamadānī (d. 1131) was a mystic, philosopher, theologian, and judge who was born in the western Iranian city of Hamadan. He was the student of Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 1126),<sup>1</sup> the brother of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), and is best known as a maverick-like figure who was put to death by the Seljuq government at the tender age of 34, ostensibly on charges of “heresy”.<sup>2</sup> Looking beyond the causes surrounding his state-sponsored execution and to his writings, ‘Ayn al-Qudāt emerges as a first-rate thinker who was thoroughly conversant in the Islamic intellectual sciences, along with Arabic and Persian poetry. One of ‘Ayn al-Qudāt’s greatest achievements was the original manner in which he tied the seemingly disparate traditions of Islamic mysticism, philosophy, and theology together into a unified perspective—a perspective that would, in one way or another, come to inform the work of some of the greatest figures of post-classical Islamic civilization.<sup>3</sup> For all of ‘Ayn al-Qudāt’s importance, there is relatively little scholarship on him that is entirely reliable, and there are indeed major features of his thought which have not been examined at all, or at least not in great detail. His engagement with the Qur’ān is one glaring example.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, what is to follow is an attempt to outline the main features of ‘Ayn al-Qudāt’s profound Qur’ānic vision.

### Vastness and worthiness

It should be noted that ‘Ayn al-Qudāt is not concerned with such questions as the Qur’ān’s various linguistic senses and its occasions of revelation, even though he was deeply learned in all of the Qur’ānic sciences. For ‘Ayn al-Qudāt, the Qur’ān as the Word of God penetrates the planes of time and space, and hence accounts for all of reality. The Qur’ān in its true nature therefore transcends the physical Arabic text in which it is written. What, then, is the Qur’ān, and how can it be known? The judge of Hamadān has a great deal to say in answer to these and related questions.

From one perspective, ‘Ayn al-Qudāt equates the Qur’ān itself with Paradise, however far off this may seem to most people: “Paradise is the Qur’ān, but you are unaware!”<sup>5</sup> From another perspective, he likens the Qur’ān to a rope, in keeping with a well-known *ḥadīth*

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which states that the Qur'ān is a rope which extends from heaven to earth.<sup>6</sup> This rope allows the one who grasps it to be pulled into the very presence of God: "Alas! The Qur'ān is a rope that pulls the seeker until he is made to reach the Sought".<sup>7</sup>

As that which leads people back to God, the Qur'ān in theory supplies all of the provisions that people need for their homeward journey. With this in mind, 'Ayn al-Qudāt introduces a creative play on the Persian word *bas*, meaning "enough". If we combine the first letter of the Qur'ān, i.e. the *bā'* of the *basmala* (Q. 1:1) with the final letter of the Qur'ān, i.e. the *sīn* in *nās* (Q. 114:6), we get the word *bas*. Thus, what is between the *bā'* and the *sīn*, namely, the entire Qur'ān, is "enough" (*bas*) for the one seeking God.<sup>8</sup> Incidentally, this same idea is expressed by the famous Persian poet Sanā'ī (d. 1131),<sup>9</sup> 'Ayn al-Qudāt's contemporary and someone upon whose poetry he heavily relied.<sup>10</sup>

Since the Qur'ān is enough for the believer, it explains all things, and indeed contains all things: "By my life! All is explained in the Majestic Qur'ān—*nor is there anything moist or dry, but that it is in a clear Book* (Q. 6:59). But, where have you seen the Qur'ān?";<sup>11</sup> "Whatever is, was, and will be, all of it is in the Qur'ān".<sup>12</sup> It will be noted that in the first of the two texts just cited 'Ayn al-Qudāt asks "where" one "sees" the Qur'ān. This is an important concept which we will have the opportunity to address momentarily. At this stage it is sufficient to keep in mind that wherever the Qur'ān is to be seen in order to gain access to its secrets, 'Ayn al-Qudāt was convinced that he had access to that unique vantage point. This explains why he says in no uncertain terms: "The Qur'ān is so vast that whatever I want, I find it in the Qur'ān. O chevalier! The Qur'ān is majestic: *We have indeed given thee the seven oft-repeated, and the mighty Qur'ān* (Q. 15:87)".<sup>13</sup>

The vantage point in question is nothing other than what can be called "awakening". Such an awakening might be signalled by one's sincerity (*ikhlas*) for the "things" of God, which amount to nothing less than Paradise and its content. At the same time, there is a kind of sincerity, commonly invoked in Sufi discourse, which is of the kind that sees even the desire for Paradise as an impediment upon the path towards self-realization. One must be sincere, then, not for that which comes as a consequence of a godly life but with God in one's life, both here and in the hereafter. This highest form of sincerity is reserved for the one who recognizes God (*arīf*), and entails direct access to the vast treasures of the Qur'ān:

All is in the Qur'ān, but you are still asleep! When one's intention is pure of the contaminations of this world, that is called the "sincerity of the ascetics", the reward for which is Paradise: *Those who believe and act righteously, for them is the Garden as a reward* (Q. 18:107). But when one's intention is pure of the contaminations of the next world, that is called the "sincerity of the recognizers", the reward for which is the encounter with God: *Whosoever hopes for the meeting with his Lord, let him perform righteous deeds and make no one a partner unto his Lord in worship*" (Q. 18:110).<sup>14</sup>

In order to cultivate these two types of sincerity, 'Ayn al-Qudāt introduces a rather straightforward programme of action. First, one must faithfully seek God;<sup>15</sup> second, one must let go of what 'Ayn al-Qudāt calls "habit-worship" (*ādat-parastī*), a theme which informs many aspects of his teachings.<sup>16</sup> Habit-worship is tantamount to idol-worship (*but-parastī*),<sup>17</sup> and is thus completely antithetical to the Qur'ānic notion of God's oneness. Attachment to one's deeply ingrained habits, be they psychological or physical and pertaining to some desired gain in this world or the next world, causes one's inner ugliness to dominate, thereby forcing the Qur'ān's beauty to recede to the background.

Thus, ‘Ayn al-Qudāt advises, “If you want to see the beauty of the Qur’ān, let go of habit-worship!”<sup>18</sup> But to “let go” of habit-worship does not in itself guarantee that one will be able to perpetually see the Qur’ān’s beauty. Only the beauty of the Qur’ān itself can cause a person to leave habit-worship all together, what ‘Ayn al-Qudāt refers to as a person’s “coming out” of habit-worship. When habit-worship is fully overcome, one is then characterized as being among “those worthy of the Qur’ān” (*ahl-i Qur’ān*):

O dear friend! When you see the beauty of the Qur’ān, you will come out of habit-worship such that you will become worthy of the Qur’ān: ‘Those worthy of the Qur’ān are worthy of God, and are His chosen ones’.<sup>19</sup> These people are worthy because they have reached the reality of God’s Word itself. *Do they not contemplate the Qur’ān?* (Q. 47:24) is acquired from them because the Qur’ān has accepted them. This is the meaning of *they are more worthy of it and deserving of it* (Q. 48:26).<sup>20</sup>

Following a long-standing tradition in Islam, ‘Ayn al-Qudāt conceives of the Qur’ān as a bride. The bride’s beautiful face is not seen by most people, and is in effect veiled up to a million times over: “The Qur’ān is in so many as a million veils (*parda*), but you are not privy (*maḥram*)! Right now, you do not have a way to get inside its veils!”<sup>21</sup> The bride’s beauty is not to be seen by just anybody. As ‘Ayn al-Qudāt exclaims, “For the Qur’ān to lift the veil of greatness from its face and show itself to one who is privy is no trifling matter!”<sup>22</sup> The reason the disclosure of the Qur’ān’s veils is such a significant “revelation” is because the beauty of the Qur’ān has the ability in itself to take one from their fallen state to presence with God, from ugliness to beauty, from distance to proximity, and from illness to healing:

O dear friend! What have you understood from the verse where God says, *Had We made this Qur’ān descend upon a mountain, thou wouldst have seen it humbled, rent asunder by the fear of God* (Q. 59:21)? And Muṣṭafā said, “The Qur’ān is richness, with no poverty after it and no richness other than it”.<sup>23</sup> O dear friend! When the Qur’ān lifts the cover (*niqāb*) of greatness from its face and removes the veil (*burqa*) of majesty, all of those ill because of their distance from the encounter with God are cured, and deliverance is found from every ailment. From Muṣṭafā, listen to what he said: “The Qur’ān is the medicine”.<sup>24,25</sup>

But who are those that are “privy” for such an honour? It is not those who are worthy of the Qur’ān since, as we have seen, becoming worthy of the Qur’ān is itself predicated upon the Qur’ān displaying its beauty to a person, causing him thereby to completely relinquish habit-worship and then become worthy of the Qur’ān. Those who are privy are those who are virtually “worthy” of the Qur’ān. They have this status because their *hearts* are worthy of beholding the Qur’ān’s beauty:

Beware! Do not think that the Qur’ān will ever accept just any stranger (*nā maḥramī*) and speak to him. The Qur’ān gives a wink of its beauty to a heart that is worthy. *Truly in that is a reminder for whosoever has a heart* (Q. 50:37) testifies to this.<sup>26</sup>

The next question would be how this worthiness of heart comes about. ‘Ayn al-Qudāt’s answers are inextricably related to his teachings concerning the right and wrong way to read and interact with the Qur’ān, to which we shall now turn.

## Understanding and hearing

One topic that ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt constantly addresses in his writings is that of the correct understanding of the Qur’ān. He is rather unapologetic about the criteria that he takes for granted. His convictions can be summed up in three of his pithy remarks: “Knowing is one thing, and memorizing the words of others is quite another thing!”<sup>27</sup>; “A person reads the Qur’ān so many times, but knows nothing of the Qur’ān!”<sup>28</sup>; “Do you imagine that you know the Qur’ān? By God, you don’t know!”<sup>29</sup> The aforementioned criteria for a sound understanding of the Qur’ān has little to do with mastery of Arabic and the science of Qur’ānic interpretation (*tafsīr*).

With respect to *tafsīr*, ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt argues that one cannot accept the meanings of verses based on the reports and explanations of traditional authorities, even if the authority be the famous early scriptural exegete Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 688). This is because there is a world of difference in assenting to the realized understanding of someone else and knowing why it is that they have such a conviction.<sup>30</sup>

For ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, what is worse than following the opinions of someone else in matters of Qur’ānic interpretation is one’s own superficial understanding of the text of the Qur’ān. He juxtaposes the outward (*ẓāhir*) understanding of the Qur’ān with a more esoteric kind of understanding. The latter is commonly referred to in Sufi texts as the inward (*bāṭin*) sense of scripture. In the following passage a synonym for this term is employed, namely, “kernel” (*maghẓ*). In other words, the Qur’ān has a shell (*pust*) and it has a kernel. The shell is the surface of the Qur’ān, the “outward” aspect of it, whereas the kernel is what the shell is for, and is in fact its reality:

Alas! People have been content with the outward of the Qur’ān—all they see of it is a shell! Wait, until the Qur’ān’s kernel is eaten: “The Qur’ān is God’s cultivating spot upon His earth”.<sup>31,32</sup>

In the context of a letter to one of his disciples, ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt gives us a window into his perspective on outward or exoteric forms of Qur’ānic exegesis. Here, he is concerned with driving home to his disciple the point that dedication to an outward understanding of the Qur’ān is a sign of ignorance, and ultimately indicates a failure to understand the intent of religion and revealed scripture:

Whoever is committed to the outward is a complete moron; and if he is content with the outward, he is lifeless, suspended at the lowest point of humanness, and totally unaware of the reality of the revealed laws of the prophets.<sup>33</sup>

‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s disdain for the standard approaches to Qur’ānic interpretation does not stop here. It is well known that the analysis of the Arabic language, with respect to its lexicography, grammar, style, and rhetorical forms, is the hallmark and foundation of the science of Qur’ānic interpretation. As a master himself of the Arabic language, however, ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt sees mastery of Arabic as rather unessential to understanding the Qur’ān.<sup>34</sup> A standard example which he employs in order to demonstrate this point concerns the early enemies of Islam Abū Jahl and Abū Lahab. They were among the most eloquent users of the Arabic language, and they “heard” the Qur’ān, but they did not accept the Qur’ān as the Word of God and thus did not follow the Prophet.<sup>35</sup> In the case of Abū Jahl in particular, who in ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s writings is the prototypical unbeliever tone-deaf to the divine Word, what he

lacked despite his extensive knowledge of Arabic was self-knowledge (*ma’rifat-i nafs*).<sup>36</sup> With the famous Sufi dictum in mind, “He who knows himself knows his Lord”, ‘Ayn al-Qudāt says that Abū Jahl’s lack of self-knowledge means he could not have knowledge of God, and thus could not *hear* the Qur’ān:

*Dead, not living (Q. 16:21); Surely you will not make the dead to hear (Q. 27:80); Only those who hear will respond. As for the dead, God will resurrect them (Q. 6:36). A dead man who does not hear cannot answer. Respond to God and the Messenger when he calls you (Q. 8:24). The purpose of this is because you say, “I know the Qur’ān”. If this is Qur’ān-knowing, then Abū Jahl also knew the Qur’ān! God says, they are debarred from hearing (Q. 26:212).*<sup>37</sup>

As someone who could not hear the divine audition, Abū Jahl was “estranged” (*bīgānī*).<sup>38</sup> Abū Jahl is also an archetype of a certain kind of person who claims to “know” the Qur’ān based on his knowledge of Arabic alone, even if, unlike Abū Jahl, such a person does accept the Qur’ān as the Word of God. What Abū Jahl and this kind of believer share in common is their surface-level perception of what the Qur’ān is:

What you hear and read—that’s not the Qur’ān! If it were, why did Abū Jahl not hear? And why is it said, *Surely, you will not make the dead to hear (Q. 27:80)*? I mean, he heard the outward.<sup>39</sup>

Look at Muṣṭafā, when he will complain about you and the likes of you: *O my Lord! Truly my people have taken this Qur’ān for foolishness (Q. 25:30)*. Do you imagine that you are not one of these people? In truth, you are, but you don’t know!<sup>40</sup>

‘Ayn al-Qudāt returns to the outward/inward aspect of the Qur’ān many times in his writings. In some contexts, he also frames his enquiry using the form (*ṣūra*)/meaning (*ma’nā*) dichotomy, which becomes standard fare in Sufi texts from the sixth/twelfth century onward. In order to move beyond the Qur’ān’s form and access its meaning, one must “ingest” the kernel of the Qur’ān and not simply behold its outer form. The key here is reflection (*fikr*):

If you want to find Him, then read the Qur’ān with reflection, for “God has disclosed Himself to His servants in the Qur’ān.”<sup>41</sup> Read it so that you know what work you are to do—*till it becomes clear to them that He is the real (Q. 41:53)*. If you do not know, go and try to explain it!<sup>42</sup>

The kind of “reflection” ‘Ayn al-Qudāt is calling for is not discursive reasoning. Just like Ghazālī, whom he follows very closely on many points of Sufi doctrine, ‘Ayn al-Qudāt is of the view that discursive reasoning will not take one to the meaning of scripture. Rather, what is needed is a perspective that transcends our usual cognitive frames of referencing, what ‘Ayn al-Qudāt calls “that which is beyond the scope of the intellect” (*mā warā’ ṭawr al-‘aql*).<sup>43</sup> This can only be obtained when one is pure.

In another letter to a disciple, ‘Ayn al-Qudāt poses a rhetorical question to his student, emphasizing the importance of purity as a precondition for “hearing” the Qur’ān:

Do you imagine that you have ever read or heard a letter of the Qur’ān? Not at all! *None touch it, save those made pure (Q. 56:79); The idolaters are surely unclean; (Q. 9:28); “God is good, and He only accepts the good”<sup>44</sup>; good women are for good men (Q. 24:26); Peace be upon you; you have done well; so enter it, abiding (Q. 39:73).*<sup>45</sup>

Yet *what* is it that is supposed to be pure? This takes us back to a point discussed earlier, that of a “worthy heart”. For ‘Ayn al-Qudāt, a worthy heart is a synonym for a pure heart. A heart that is not worthy will not be filled with light and knowledge, which are synonymous with the Qur’ān:

So long as your heart is not cleansed of attachments—*Did We not expand for thee thy breast?* (Q. 94:1)—your heart will not be full of knowledge, light, and recognition: *Is the one whose breast God expands for submission so that He is upon a light from his Lord . . . .?* (Q. 39:22)<sup>46</sup>

Keep your hearing and sight pure from what is inappropriate until you hear the Beginningless Word and see the Beginningless beauty. Keep your tongue pure from sins until you can read the Qur’ān. Keep your heart pure from inward sins until you understand the eternal Word.<sup>47</sup>

When the heart is cleansed of its worldly attachments, it will then be ready to understand and “reflect” upon the Qur’ān. In the following passage, which is a fine example of ‘Ayn al-Qudāt’s Qur’ānic Persian prose, he states his point in very lucid terms:

Alas! The lock of humanness is upon hearts, and the bond of heedlessness around thoughts. This is the meaning of *Do they not contemplate the Qur’ān? Or do hearts have their locks upon them?* (Q. 47:24). When the openings of victory and God’s help come forth—*When God’s help and victory comes!* (Q. 110:1)—He will remove this lock from the heart. *We shall show them Our signs upon the horizons and within their selves* (Q. 41:53) will be manifest, and the plants of *And God made you grow forth from the earth like plants* (Q. 71:17) will harvest. He will come out of his self. He will see the dominion (*malakūt*) and the kingdom, and the King of the kingdom will reign: *Thus did We show Abraham the dominion of the heavens and the earth* (Q. 6:75). He will come out of his self.<sup>48</sup>

We shall return to the notion of “coming out” of oneself in due course. At this juncture, it is important to keep in mind that what ‘Ayn al-Qudāt means by the lock upon the heart being opened fundamentally entails what the Sufis call “unveiling” (*kashf*). Thus, when ‘Ayn al-Qudāt speaks of *reading* the Qur’ān, he is not concerned with the *act* of reading, just as he is not concerned with the act of thinking when he speaks of reflecting upon the Qur’ān. The active role of the individual entails combat with the self and overcoming one’s base qualities. The passive aspect is when God causes the individual to be overcome by the divine audition. This is made possible by virtue of hearing and listening to the divine Word.

Sufis have always placed critical importance upon “listening”, which is undoubtedly signalled by such Qur’ānic verses as Q. 7:204. This practice of deep listening engenders deeper modes of contemplation among listeners, thus resulting in ever new and more profound understandings upon every aural encounter with the Qur’ān.<sup>49</sup> ‘Ayn al-Qudāt’s emphasis on “hearing” the Qur’ān is no different in this regard. For him, as was the case with many of the Sufis who preceded him, the ability to hear the Qur’ān correctly in this world is itself a reflection of a higher, primordial prefigurement when all human souls stood before God in a timeless “time” and testified to His oneness and lordhood. This is known in Sufi texts as the “Day of the Covenant”, and is signalled by Q. 7:172:<sup>50</sup>

O dear friend! Recall that day when the beauty of “*Am I not your Lord?*” (Q. 7:172) was being displayed to you and you were hearing the audition of *And if any of the idolaters seek asylum with thee, grant him asylum until he hears the Word of God* (Q. 9:6). There was

no soul that did not see Him, and there was no ear except that it heard the audition of the Qur’ān from Him. But veils were appointed such that, by means of these veils, some souls forget and some are not given access beyond the first station ....<sup>51</sup>

As for the people whom ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt cites as being worthy of the Qur’ān, one of them was his early master Shaykh Baraka Hamadānī (d. 1126).<sup>52</sup> Shaykh Baraka only knew the Fātiḥa (Q. 1) and a few other short Qur’ānic chapters—in other words, he had the bare minimum knowledge of the Qur’ān that one would need in order to perform the five daily prayers. His student, in contrast, had a very extensive knowledge of the Qur’ān, and in all likelihood had the entire Qur’ān committed to memory. Despite this fact, ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt insists that Shaykh Baraka knew the Qur’ān much better than he did, and this because of his inner purity and high level of spiritual attainment.<sup>53</sup> His heart was thus unlocked, and he could understand the meaning of the Qur’ān, beyond the outward, formal elements of the Arabic text in which the Qur’ān is written.

The hearing in question is what ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt calls “inner hearing” (*sam‘-i bāṭinī*). People who have this quality stand in stark contrast to those who are estranged from the divine Word and simply hear it as the clashing of words and sounds.<sup>54</sup> In keeping with two well-known Prophetic sayings,<sup>55</sup> Shaykh Baraka had died to himself, and thus his resurrection had already taken place. Having already reached the next world, he could hear the Qur’ānic address in its primordial audition.<sup>56</sup>

### **Letters, dots, obliteration**

A natural corollary to our author’s general approach to the Qur’ān is to be found in his theory of its mysterious “detached letters” (*al-ḥurūf al-muqatta‘a*), which appear at the beginning of 29 Qur’ānic chapters.<sup>57</sup> Whereas people understand the Qur’ān only from “the path of habit” and not from God,<sup>58</sup> ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt makes it clear that his understanding of the detached letters, as with his other “ideas”, is based on tasting (*dhawq*).<sup>59</sup> One of the things that he has tasted with respect to the detached letters is that they contain all of the secrets in the cosmic order.<sup>60</sup> These secrets are not to be read of in books or even extracted from the pages of the Qur’ān through an analytical engagement with the text of the Qur’ān. Rather, the reality of the detached letters is made known to ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt through the same means with which he has been able to unlock the mysteries of the Qur’ān in general. This “means” is nothing other than the purification of the heart in order to hear the meanings contained in the Qur’ān from God Himself.

This is why ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt indirectly links knowledge of the detached letters with what the Sufis refer to as the “science of the heart”: “Were I not to find these detached letters in the Qur’ān, I would not have any faith in the Qur’ān! *Truly in that is a reminder for whosoever has a heart* (Q. 50:37).<sup>61</sup> Likewise, “The detached letters are what gladden the hearts of the lovers of His Word”.<sup>62</sup> The heart that has become worthy of receiving the meanings of the divine Word is the same heart that can also access the meanings of the detached letters. But, ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt avers, this can only be done when one relinquishes his self of individual agency, or the “habit” of insisting on his selfish and individualistic quest for knowing. As with the other topics which he tackles in his writings, there can be no talk of “‘Ayn al-Quḍāt” and “his” understanding of the detached letters:

How could I ever be so bold as to comment on the detached letters, such as *Ṭā’*. *Hā’* (Q. 20:1), *Hā’*. *Mīm* (Q. 40:1, etc.), and *Alif*, *Mīm*, *Ṣād* (Q. 7:1)? All that I have written,

that is, whenever I write something, it comes before me and overpowers me to the point that I write. Likewise, if I want to write, I cannot.<sup>63</sup>

When an exposition of the detached letters does “overpower” the judge of Hamadān, there is much to say. In the first instance, he tells us that these letters appear in a garb (*kiswa*) that is “undifferentiated” (*mujmal*)<sup>64</sup> so that those who are strangers to the Qur’ān are debarred from understanding the mysteries to which they refer.<sup>65</sup> This “garb of letters” does not only pertain to the detached letters. The entire Qur’ān is itself enshrouded in this garb, whose function remains the same—to communicate something to the believers in and lovers of the divine Word which cannot be conveyed to those who reject the message:

The Qur’ān was sent to this world in the garb of letters. A million spirit-stealing winks were placed in every letter. Then this call was given: *And remind, for truly the reminder benefits the believers* (Q. 51:55). He said, ‘Lay down the snare of messengerhood and the call. Our snare will know those who are our prey, and will have no desire for those estranged from us’. *Truly it is the same for the unbelievers whether thou warnest them or warnest them not; they do not believe* (Q. 2:6).<sup>66</sup>

Despite the fact that all of the Qur’ān’s letters are inaccessible to those estranged from the Qur’ān, the detached letters better serve the function as primary gateways into that vast expanse which is the Beginningless Word:

O chevalier! Do you know what these detached letters are? The infinite, Beginningless Word, from beauty without neglect. These letters are meaningless for the generality of people. *If the sea were ink for the Words of my Lord, the sea would be exhausted before the Words of my Lord were exhausted, even if We brought the like thereof to replenish it* (Q. 18:109). Do you say that a little ink can write all of the Qur’ān? Then what is this? *And if all the trees on earth were pens, and if the ocean and seven more added to it [were ink], the Words of God would not be exhausted* (Q. 31:27). All that is known is from this, but you have not known anything! O friend! That which cannot be written with the oceans is all wrapped up in the exaltedness of these letters.<sup>67</sup>

For ‘Ayn al-Qudāt, the detached letters do not only amount to the 29 Qur’ānic chapters in which they are found. Those who only see the Qur’ān’s detached letters in this conventional way are, as he says, still neophytes.<sup>68</sup> This is because they are on the plane of forms and written expressions. In reality, the entire Qur’ān consists of detached letters since the Qur’ān descended from the “world of the mystery” (*‘ālam-i sirr*),<sup>69</sup> which is the plane of meaning above and beyond forms, writing, and speech. In that world, insofar as we can speak of an “articulated” Qur’ān, the entire Qur’ān subsists as so many individual, detached letters. In our world, these letters form together, giving us clusters of words and sentences, and effectively the entire written Qur’ānic text. During the downward descent of the detached letters, some of them did not descend fully—they therefore stand apart from the letter combinations which make up most of the Qur’ān. These suspended letters are what we normally refer to as the “detached letters”. Their presence, as we have already noted, is an indication of a more originary form of the Qur’ān, and they are the keys to unlocking the Qur’ān’s true meanings.

Before people learn the “alphabet of love” (*abjad-i ‘ishq*), they will, like most people, necessarily see the Qur’ān’s letters as connected and only behold the conventional detached

letters of the Qur’ān. But when they learn this alphabet, things change entirely. They can then behold the Qur’ān’s beauty in its full plenitude:

O dear friend! You have still not reached that place where the alphabet of love is written for you. The trace of this alphabet’s writing is when the connected (*muttaṣal*) letters become unconnected (*munfaṣal*). This is, *We have connected the Word for them* (Q. 28:51).<sup>70</sup> Then, the trace of all of this is, *We disconnected the signs* (Q. 6:97, etc.). On the Path, all of this is referred to as “writing the alphabet of love upon the Tablet of the wayfarer’s heart”.<sup>71</sup> Wait, until the beauty of these verses is displayed to you—*God has inscribed faith upon their hearts* (Q. 58:22)—to the point that all of the Qur’ān, with its meanings, becomes easy for you: *Indeed We have made the Qur’ān easy to remember; so is there any who remembers?* (Q. 54:32).<sup>72</sup>

In order to provide a concrete example of his theory of the detached letters, ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt draws on the sentence *He loves them* (يحبهم) to be found in Q. 5:54, which is a favourite among Sufis in their discussions on love.<sup>73</sup> The more one spiritually matures through wayfaring (*sulūk*) and the higher the ascent of his soul, the more will he begin to see يحبهم as actually comprised of detached letters (ي ح ب ه م). That is, the beauty hidden behind the veil of the word cluster will be seen in its primary form, that of detached letters:

When one becomes more ripe, the connected letters will become unconnected. This is what people read, *He loves them* (Q. 5:54), and they think that it is connected. When from behind the veil he comes out of his self, beauty itself will be presented to his sight in the disconnected letters, and he will say it all like this: *Yā’, Ḥā’, Bā’, Hā’, Mīm*. But who has the capacity to listen?!<sup>74</sup>

‘Ayn al-Quḍāt does not stop there. In a letter to a student he says that one may arrive at a “world” wherein “the chapters of the Qur’ān are one letter, but without the imprint (*naqsh*) of letters”.<sup>75</sup> Even though he does not develop this point elsewhere in his writings, he provides us with a number of other statements that shed greater light on what he has in mind. If the detached letters all devolve on a letter but which does not have the formal contours and confines of the shape of a letter, namely, its “imprint”, there is a certain kind of formlessness to the detached letters themselves, even in their primordial state. This is why ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt says that if one ascends the rungs of human perfection, he will eventually come to see even the detached letters which make up the entire Qur’ān in an even more primitive state, that of a dot (*nuqṭa*). In the passage below, which is in part identical to the one we have just cited, he lays down his position:

In the world of mystery these letters are called “undifferentiated”. And they are called “letters of the alphabet.” O dear friend! What I am saying is that in the world of mystery the connected letters—what people call the “alphabet”—are all disconnected. They imagine *He loves them and they love Him* (Q. 5:54) to be connected. When from behind the veil he comes out of his self and beauty itself is presented to his sight in the disconnected letters, the verse is like this, if he is a beginner: *Yā’, Ḥā’, Bā’, Hā’, Mīm*.<sup>76</sup> When he reaches a portion [beyond that], the letters all become a dot.<sup>77</sup>

To seemingly complicate the point at hand, in another context ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt explicitly states that the detached letters do not devolve on just one dot, but on dots (*nuqṭat*).<sup>78</sup> Without

venturing too far afield into the unique role which “dots” play in ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s cosmogony and anthropology, it can here be noted that he is not presenting us with two contradictory pictures of what it “looks like” when we emerge “out of ourselves” and beyond the detached letters. Rather, he is providing us with a key insight into the two modes in which the wayfarer will encounter the originary form of the detached letters, oscillating as he inevitably will between the states of contraction (= a dot) and expansion (= dots).

Beyond these dots ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt maintains that there is something even more originary and primordial. If the soul continues to ascend he will emerge from the “world of mystery” to the “world of certainty” (*‘ālam-i yaqīn*). He tells us that “when one is given the way from inside another veil”, when he has torn the veils of separation and transcended the multiple levels of illusory existence, “the dots are also obliterated”.<sup>79</sup> The world of certainty is synonymous with a more intense level of what (as we have seen) ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt refers to as the person “coming out” of his self, or what the Sufis call annihilation (*fanā*) and obliteration (*mahw*). Hence, neither dots nor the “individual” remain, for all things are reduced to nothingness: “Alas! In the world of certainty the wayfarer sees his self as obliterated, and sees the Obliterator as God—*God effaces what He wills, and establishes* (Q. 13:39)”.<sup>80</sup>

This is precisely when the wayfarer comes to understand the Qur’ān, since its luminous rays have completely consumed the dark shadows which necessarily obtain from the once dichotomous world of reciter/recited and reader/written. At this stage, we can only speak of that which is recited, and that which is written. This stage of obliteration in which there remains nothing beyond the dots takes us to the all-ness of the Qur’ān, where there is only primordial hearing and primordial writing:

When the reader arrives at the Book—and with Him is the Mother of the Book (Q. 13:39)—he has arrived at the Qur’ān’s meanings. The beauty of the Qur’ān’s radiance effaces his self so much that neither Qur’ān, nor reciter, nor Book remain. Rather, all is the recited, and all is the written.<sup>81</sup>

‘Ayn al-Quḍāt further states that the soul’s being obliterated only accounts for the first phase of the realized wayfarer’s engagement with the Qur’ān. Those like ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt who have died to their egos and have been resurrected in the divine audition can even see past the “black” ink of the Qur’ān:

The people of the world read the Qur’ān from the black part of the parchment (*muṣḥaf*), but I read it from the white part of the parchment. *We have apportioned for them their livelihood in the life of this world* (Q. 43:32); *And God has favored some of you above others in provision* (Q. 16:71).<sup>82</sup>

Elsewhere, ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt tells us that the “whiteness” he has in mind is nothing other than light (*nūr*).<sup>83</sup> This light can only be witnessed when one leaves the darkness of his own illusory existence. We are therefore led to that key dimension of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s Qur’ānic vision which we can call his doctrine of affirmation (*ithbāt*) or subsistence (*baqā*) in the Qur’ān:

Alas! We only see from the Qur’ān black letters and white paper! When you are in existence, you cannot see anything but blackness and whiteness. When you come out of existence, the Word of God will obliterate your own existence. Then, from obliteration, you will be taken to affirmation. When you reach affirmation, you will not see another

blackness—you will see all as whiteness and will recite, *And with Him is the Mother of the Book* (Q. 13:39).<sup>84</sup>

Qua embodied individual, the realized soul returns after having been obliterated by the divine Word to read the Qur’ān not as a wholly other reader, but as someone who himself is mysteriously absent from and yet inscribed in the very pages which he recites. Here, there are no dark shadows and no forms as such; there is only light and formlessness. Put differently, all blackness is vanquished, and only whiteness is witnessed.

### Concluding remarks

In this chapter we have outlined the main aspects of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s unique Qur’ānic vision by focussing on the importance he places upon (1) the Qur’ān’s encompassing nature, (2) the notion of Qur’ānic “worthiness”, (3) understanding the Qur’ān, and (4) “hearing” the Qur’ān. This then set the stage for an exposition of (5) our author’s vision of the detached letters, and his (6) attendant discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of this vision.

Although ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt does not appear to have influenced the *hurūfī* tradition in any unequivocal way, the one place where we see his theory of the detached letters clearly appropriated is in the Qur’ānic writings of the famous philosopher and mystic Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1640).<sup>85</sup>

It is perhaps safe to say that ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s theory of the detached letters has no clear textual precedent. At the same time, it does bear some interesting similarities to the treatment of the detached letters by the great Andalusian Sufi and Qur’ān commentator Ibn Barrajān (d. 1141). Ibn Barrajān also sees the detached letters as representing a more primordial, celestial aspect of the Qur’ān, and thus as taking in the entirety of the written Qur’ānic text. But, one clear point of difference between them is that ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt sees the detached letters as ultimately originating in nondifferentiated dots, while Ibn Barrajān assigns no function to the dots in his treatment of the detached letters.<sup>86</sup>

It is possible that both Ibn Barrajān and ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s treatment of the detached letters was informed by earlier discussions in Islamic theology and Qur’ānic exegesis having to do with the nature of the Qur’ān’s descent.<sup>87</sup> But at least in the case of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, a more likely direct source is Arabic calligraphy wherein letters are formed out of initial dots, which some Sufis see as representing the emergence of immanence from transcendence, or multiplicity from unity.<sup>88</sup>

### Notes

- 1 For an excellent introduction to his life and thought, see Joseph Lumbard, *Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, Remembrance, and the Metaphysics of Love* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016).
- 2 The subtle causes behind ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s death have most recently been investigated in Mohammed Rustom, “‘Ayn al-Quḍāt between Divine Jealousy and Political Intrigue”, *Journal of Sufi Studies* 7, no. 1–2 (2018), pp. 47–73; Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam: Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), Chapter 4.
- 3 For the range of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s historical influence, see Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart: The Mystical Theology of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt* (Albany: State University of New York Press, in press), Introduction.
- 4 Surprisingly, neither Najīb Māyil Hirawī, *Khāṣṣiyat-i āyinaḡī: naqd-i ḥāl, guzāra-yi ārā, wa-guzīda-yi āthār-i fārsī-yi ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī* (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay, 1995), pp. 64–119 nor ‘Afīf ‘Usayrān, “Muqaddima-yi muṣahḡih”, pp. 1–192 in ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, ed. ‘Afīf ‘Usayrān (Tehran:

- Intishārāt-i Manūchihri, 1994) discuss ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s understanding of the Qur’ān in their respective surveys of his thought. Some helpful but underdeveloped enquiries are Fāṭima Mudarrisī and Maryam ‘Arab, “Jāyghāh-i Qur’ān wa-ta’wīl-i ān dar *Tamhīdāt*-i ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī,” *Ma’rifat* 20, no. 161 (2011), pp. 97–112; Alireza Zekavati Gharagozlou, *Encyclopaedia Islamica*, volume 3, s.v. “‘Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī,” trans. Matthew Melvin-Koushki, eds. Wilferd Madelung and Farhad Daftary (Leiden: Brill in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2011), doi: 10.1163/1875-9831\_isla\_COM\_0321; Zahrā Pārsāpūr, “Didgāh-i ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt dar bāb-i ḥurūf, ḥurūf-i muqatta’a, wa-nuqat,” *Lisān-i mubīn* 3, no. 6 (2012), pp. 31–47. More recently, Nicholas Boylston has helpfully situated ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s approach to the Qur’ān against the backdrop of the notion of “unities of plenitude” and the multiple perspective shifts and vantage points which he assumes in his writings. See Boylston, “Writing the Kaleidoscope of Reality, the Significance of Diversity in 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Century Persian Metaphysical Literature: Sanā’ī, ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt and ‘Atṭār” (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2017), pp. 216–222.
- 5 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, ed. ‘Alī Naqī Munzawī (vols. 1–3) and ‘Afīf ‘Usayrān (vols. 1–2) (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Asāṭir, 1998), 1:21, § 24.
  - 6 Aḥmad, *Musnad*, no. 11273 (vol. 12 of *Jam’ jawāmi’ al-aḥādīth wa-l-asānīd wa-maknaz al-siḥāḥ wa-l-sunan wa-l-masānīd* [Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Jam’iyyat al-Maknaz al-Islāmī, 2000]).
  - 7 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 168, § 224.
  - 8 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:486, § 761.
  - 9 See Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), p. 420.
  - 10 See Raḥīm Farmanish, *Aḥwāl wa-āthār-i ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt* (Tehran: Chāp-i Āftāb, 1959), pp. 290–340. ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt mentions Sanā’ī by name at *Nāmahā*, 2:50, § 49.
  - 11 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:349, § 582. See also ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:333, § 558. Unless otherwise stated, Qur’ānic passages cited in this chapter are from Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Caner Dagli, Maria Dakake, Joseph Lumbard, and Mohammed Rustom (eds.), *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: HarperOne, 2015).
  - 12 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 169, § 225.
  - 13 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:43, § 49.
  - 14 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:25–26, § 27.
  - 15 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 19, § 29.
  - 16 For which, see Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, Chapter 6.
  - 17 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 12, § 18.
  - 18 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:102, § 145.
  - 19 Aḥmad, *Musnad*, no. 13746.
  - 20 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 176–177, § 234.
  - 21 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:349, § 582.
  - 22 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:351, § 584.
  - 23 Sulaymān b. Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu’jam al-kabīr* (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyya, 1994), 1:255. For an alternative version of this *ḥadīth*, see Dakake’s commentary upon Q. 16:69 in Nasr et al., *The Study Quran*, p. 676.
  - 24 Ismā’īl b. Muḥammad al-‘Ajlūnī, *Kashf al-khafā’* (N. p.: Maktabat al-‘Ilm al-Ḥadīth, n. d.), 2:112.
  - 25 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 168, § 224.
  - 26 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 177, § 234.
  - 27 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:47–48, § 63.
  - 28 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:242, § 400.
  - 29 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:91, § 124.
  - 30 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:291, § 439.
  - 31 Abū Bakr al-Bazzār, *al-Baḥr al-zakḥkhār al-ma’rūf bi-Musnad al-Bazzār* (Madina: Maktabat al-‘Ulūm wa-l-Ḥikam, 2006), 5:423.
  - 32 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 177–178, § 235.
  - 33 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:351, § 584.
  - 34 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 3:325, § 77.
  - 35 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 170–171, § 226.
  - 36 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 178, § 236. We could also translate this phrase as “self-recognition.”
  - 37 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:42, § 47.
  - 38 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 178, § 236.

- 39 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:76, § 105.
- 40 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:76, § 105.
- 41 This is a version of a very well-known saying which goes back to Imam Ja'far al-Sādiq (d. 148/765). In its most common form, it reads as follows: "God has disclosed Himself to His servants in His Word, but they do not see." See 'Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī, *al-Qāmūs al-ṣūfī*, ed. 'Aṣim Ibrāhīm al-Kayyālī (Beirut: Kitāb Nāshirūn, 2011), p. 305.
- 42 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:84, § 112.
- 43 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's source for this is Ghazālī. See Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, ed. Kāmil 'Ayyād and Jamīl Ṣalībā (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1967), p. 111 and *The Niche of Lights*, trans. David Buchman (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), p. 37.
- 44 For this tradition, see, inter alia, Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*: Zakāt, 8, no. 1430 (vol. 2 of *Jam' jawāmi' al-aḥādīth wa-l-asānīd wa-maknāz al-siḥāḥ wa-l-sunan wa-l-masānīd*).
- 45 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:21–22, § 24.
- 46 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 65, § 88.
- 47 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:149, § 217.
- 48 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 11–12, § 16.
- 49 For more on this phenomenon and some of its implications, see the helpful enquiries in Navid Kermani, *God Is Beautiful: The Aesthetic Experience of the Quran*, trans. Tony Crawford (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), Chapter 6; Sara Sviri, "The Countless Faces of Understanding: On *Istinbāt*, Mystical Listening and Sufi Exegesis," in *The Spirit and the Letter: Approaches to the Esoteric Interpretation of the Qur'an*, eds. Annabel Keeler and Sajjad Rizvi, pp. 51–85 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
- 50 For this verse, see the discussion in Lumbard, "Covenant and Covenants in the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 17, no. 2 (2015), pp. 1–23 (at pp. 6–9).
- 51 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 106, § 150.
- 52 For whom, see Nasrollah Pourjavady, *'Ayn al-Quḍāt wa-ustādān-i ū* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Asāfir, 1995), pp. 95–133; *Encyclopaedia Islamica*, s.v. "Baraka (Barakat) Hamadānī".
- 53 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:50–51, § 66.
- 54 See 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 169, § 225.
- 55 That is, "Die before you die" and "He who dies, his resurrection has taken place," neither of which are found in the canonical *ḥadīth* sources.
- 56 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 177, § 234.
- 57 For the detached letters in Islamic thought, see, inter alia, Pierre Lory, *La science des lettres en Islam* (Paris: Dervy, 2004) and Martin Nguyen, "Exegesis of the *ḥurūf al-muqatta'a*: Polyvalency in Sunnī Traditions of Qur'anic Interpretation," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 14, no. 2 (2012), pp. 1–28.
- 58 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:143, § 208.
- 59 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:308, § 465.
- 60 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:143, § 208.
- 61 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:126, § 181.
- 62 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:98, § 136.
- 63 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:308, § 465.
- 64 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:246, § 371.
- 65 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 175, § 232.
- 66 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 168–169, § 224.
- 67 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:126, § 182.
- 68 See 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:42, § 47.
- 69 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 175, § 233.
- 70 The translation of this verse and the one to follow completely depart from *The Study Quran*.
- 71 For the Preserved Table (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*) mentioned in Q. 85:22 and its identification with the heart, see Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, Chapters 6 and 9.
- 72 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 176, § 233.
- 73 A thorough study of early Persian Sufi discussions on love, which largely deal with Q. 5:54, can be found in William Chittick, *Divine Love: Islamic Literature and the Path to God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).
- 74 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:98, § 137.
- 75 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 3:311, § 57.

- 76 Although ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt cites the clause in Q. 5:54 after *He loves them*, namely, *and they love him*, his example still only pertains to the Arabic word cluster which spells *He loves them*.
- 77 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 175–176, § 233.
- 78 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:99, § 138.
- 79 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:99, § 139.
- 80 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 53, § 72.
- 81 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 3–4, § 4.
- 82 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:99, § 139.
- 83 See ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 2, § 2. The notion of whiteness and its identification with light is directly related to ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s detailed exposition of the Muhammadan Light (*nūr Muḥammadī*). See Rustom, “Everything Muhammad: The Image of the Prophet in the Writings of ‘Ayn al-Qudat,” *Sacred Web* 39 (2017), pp. 33–40; Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, Chapter 10.
- 84 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 173, § 229.
- 85 This is documented in Rustom, *The Triumph of Mercy: Philosophy and Scripture in Mullā Ṣadrā* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), pp. 30–31.
- 86 See the observation in Yousef Casewit, *The Mystics of al-Andalus: Ibn Barraḡān and Islamic Thought in the Twelfth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 231, n. 85.
- 87 A thorough enquiry into which can be found in Walid Saleh, “A Piecemeal Qur’ān: *furqān* and Its Meaning in Classical Islam and Modern Qur’ānic Studies,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 42 (2015), pp. 31–71.
- 88 For connections between Sufism and Islamic calligraphy, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 17–36; Schimmel, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), pp. 77–114.