

RAMON HARVEY*

THE REVELATION OF MERCY
IN THE LIGHT OF ISLAMIC THEOLOGY

SUMMARY: The article shows how voices from Sunni *kalām* have analysed Qur’anic and *ḥadīth* affirmations of God’s mercy. For an Ash’arite like al-Juwaynī, God is merciful because he saves whom he wishes. Thus the divine promise to act mercifully seems to become arbitrary, indeed empty. In Maturidism, God’s mercy can be seen in one line with his wisdom in ordering the world. Human mercy is, here, our capacity to understand and apply the values inherent in creation. The relation between mercy and justice can be clarified in the light of two Arabic words for justice: while *‘adl* means balance and can be transcended by mercy, *qisṭ* signifies an ideal condition of societal justice, which is already built on mercy.

For those who accept a revealed scripture, it is a given that God is merciful and that His mercy is absolute. The question that I will tackle in this paper is how does God reveal this mercy? To this end, I intend to principally engage the resources of the Islamic tradition of theology. Although I have my preferences – and these will become clear – my primary intention is to dig into a rich vein of previous theological work and expose the treasure that it may provide for the present enquiry. As the contemporary Muslim theologian Sherman Jackson writes, ‘tradition is not the result of the simple act of transmission or handing down, but of a process of evaluation, amplification, suppression, refinement, and assessing the polarity between would-be tradition and contemporary, indigenous innovations or nonindigenous ideas and practices’¹.

The obvious place to start is the Qur’an, understood by Muslims as God’s revealed speech. Each sura of the Qur’an, bar the ninth, begins ‘In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate (*bi-smi-llāhi al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*)’. We may add the Arabic *raḥma* to other Semitic cognates as a word linked to *raḥm*, the womb. 6:54

* Ramon (Ibrahim) Harvey PhD is a lecturer at Ebrahim College, London. He received most of his academic training at SOAS but also attended courses at places like al-Azhar. Dr Harvey’s interests include the hermeneutics and political theory of the Qur’ān.

¹ S. Jackson, *Islam and the Problem of Black Suffering*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009, p. 42.

tells us more, ‘Your Lord has prescribed for Himself mercy (*kataba rabbukum ‘alā nafsihi al-rahma*)’².

Theologically, this verse may be related to God’s attributes. A dominant perspective of the Ash‘arī school of Muslim theology, as explained by the seminal figure al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) is that the attribute of mercy is understood as the will of the Creator when it benefits the servant³. This line of thinking, in which God’s promise of mercy amounts to His decision to extend salvation to whom He wishes, may skirt dangerously close to making the attribute entirely arbitrary and thereby denuding it of meaningful content. As al-Juwaynī mentions, some of the school even understand *rahma* to be God’s action and as Ash‘arīs attribute neither eternal acts nor temporal ones to the Divine, this is analysed as nothing other than the benefit that the human being receives⁴.

Another attempt to comprehend the mercy of God from within Muslim theological tradition can be grasped from the Māturīdīs who make up the other major Sunnī school (a third tendency, the so-called Ḥanbalī, or Atharī school, will be put to one side due to its typical reticence towards *kalām*)⁵. For Māturīdīs, such as Abū al-Yusr al-Bazdawī (d. 493/1099), mercy is an attribute of action and as such is affirmed as an eternal quality of the Divine⁶. This means that God is essentially merciful, just as He is essentially powerful and knowledgeable. On this reading, God’s promise of mercy is not arbitrary, but rather His providential ordering of the creation is a reflection of His eternal wisdom, as much as it is of His will⁷.

If the Qur’an reveals that the nature of God is mercy, it only does so through the means of its prophetic recipient. The Prophet Muhammad, as the human locus of the divine speech, not only conveys this message of mercy, but is himself an embodiment

² Q. 6:12 contains a similar expression, ‘He has prescribed for Himself mercy (*kataba ‘alā nafsihi al-rahma*)’.

³ Abū al-Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī, *Al-‘Aqīdat al-niẓāmiyya fī al-arkān al-islāmiyya*, Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (ed.), Al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li-l-Turāth, Cairo 1992, p. 145.

⁴ Al-Juwaynī, *Al-‘Aqīdat al-niẓāmiyya*, p. 145.

⁵ However, figures such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) provide an important exception. See J. Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism*, Brill, Leiden 2007.

⁶ Abū al-Yusr al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, H.P. Linss (ed.), Al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li-l-Turāth, Cairo 2003, p. 76.

⁷ Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, B. Topaloğlu and M. Aruçi (ed.), Maktabat al-Irshād, Istanbul 2006, pp. 113, 164. Erkan M. Kurt criticises the Māturīdīs for unintelligibly equating God’s creative act with His attribute of creation (*takwīn*). E.M. Kurt, *Creation: The Principle of Nature in Islamic Metaphysics*, Blue Dome Press, New York 2012, pp. 70-71. In response, one could argue that their approach intentionally reduces the distinction between the two classes, in order to affirm both the reality and transcendence of God’s actions. As Ulrich Rudolph writes, ‘al-Māturīdī established a formula that was not just applicable to *takwīn*, but could also be applied to other cases without difficulty. God was always perfect, and always the same, regardless of the essential attribute, or act in discussion’. U. Rudolph, *Al-Māturīdī and the Development of Sunnī Theology in Samarqand*, trans. R. Adem, Brill, Leiden 2015, p. 287.

of it. In the tender address of Q. 21:107, we read, ‘We did not send you except as a mercy for all the worlds (*wa-mā arsalnāka illā raḥmatan li-l-‘ālamīn*)’. Here we may segue into the discourse of the Sufis who use this verse as a proof-text that the Prophet’s soul is nothing less than the pole of existence and first creation⁸. On this reading, the Merciful begins by creating His beloved and from him forms the entire universe as a manifestation of mercy.

This idea is quintessentially expressed in the *Sirr al-asrār*, a popular text often attributed to the Sufi master ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166), but convincingly argued to be a later work, perhaps that of Yūsuf al-Kūrānī (d. 768/1367)⁹. The author attributes to the Prophet, ‘The first thing that God created was my soul (*rūḥ*), the first thing that God created was my light (*nūr*), the first thing that God created was the pen (*qalam*), the first thing that God created was the intellect (*‘aql*)’¹⁰. The pen, understood as writing Fate (*qadar*), is mentioned in this context in the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī¹¹. The initial creation of the Prophet’s light is found in the commentary ascribed to the early Sufi exegete Sahl b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) for Q. 53:13, ‘Indeed, he saw Him another time’, referring to the Prophet’s primordial existence, to which he adds that he was ‘a light within a column of light a million years before the beginning of creation’¹². A similar hadith ascribed to the companion Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh is often mentioned in Sufi circles and sometimes attributed to the traditionist ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī (d. 211/827), among others, though it is absent from extant copies of his *Muṣannaḥ*¹³. The ‘intellect’ may have some connection to the cosmology of Avicenna and his forerunners from the *falāsifa*, in which a First Intellect is emanated from the First Principle, or One¹⁴. The author of the *Sirr al-asrār* comments that these different entities are actually all the same thing,

⁸ Shihāb al-Dīn al-Alūsī, *Rūḥ al-ma‘ānī ft tafsīr al-qur‘ān al-‘aẓīm wa-l-sab‘ al-ma‘ānī*, Muḥammad Munīr ‘Abdah Aghā al-Dimashqī (ed.), 30 vols., Idārat al-Ṭibā‘at al-Muniriyya, Beirut n. d., vol. 17, p. 105. See also, C.W. Ernst, “Muḥammad as the Pole of Existence”, in J.E. Brockopp (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Muḥammad*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2010, pp. 123-124.

⁹ Ahmed El Shamsy, “Returning to God through His Names: Cosmology and Dhikr in a Fourteenth-Century Sufi Treatise”, in W. Granara, R.P. Mottahedeh, W.M. Thackston and A. Korangy (ed.), *Essays in Islamic Philology, History, and Philosophy*, De Gruyter, 2016, pp. 204-228, p. 206.

¹⁰ ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Sirr al-asrār wa-maẓhar al-anwār*, Khālid Muḥammad ‘Adnān al-Zar‘ī and Muḥammad Ghassān Naṣūḥ ‘Azqūl (ed.), Dār al-Sanābil, Damascus 1994, pp. 44-5.

¹¹ Sulaymān b. al-Ash‘ath Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 2 vols., Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, Vaduz 2000, vol. 2, p. 790; Muḥammad b. ‘Īsa al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, 2 vols., Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, Vaduz 2000, vol. 2, pp. 555, 853.

¹² Sahl b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-qur‘ān al-‘aẓīm*, Ṭāhā ‘Abd al-Ru‘ūf Sa‘d and Ḥasan Muḥammad ‘Alī (ed.), Dār al-Ḥaram, Cairo 2004, p. 262.

¹³ M. Holmes Katz, *The Birth of the Prophet Muḥammad: Devotional Piety in Sunni Islam*, Routledge, New York 2007, pp. 24-26.

¹⁴ O. Lizzini, “Ibn Sina’s Metaphysics”, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2016 Edition), E.N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/ibn-sina-metaphysics/>.

the Muḥammadan Reality (*al-ḥaqīqat al-muḥammadiyya*), of which all human souls have been formed¹⁵.

The *Sirr al-asrār* also makes reference to the primordial covenant (*mīttāq*) described in the Qur'an in Q. 7:172, a great gathering of the souls at the beginning of time, '[Prophet], when your Lord took out the offspring from the loins of the Children of Adam and made them bear witness about themselves (*'alā anfusihim*), He said, 'Am I not your Lord?' and they replied, 'Yes, we bear witness'. He comments that when the souls go astray and forget their original covenant with their Lord, it is the mercy of the Merciful that leads to the descent of heavenly scripture to prophets, so that humanity may be reminded of its original home¹⁶.

Revelation is thus a manifestation of divine mercy and the mirroring of this quality at the level of human morality is central to the teachings of the prophets, and none more so than for the primordial soul who concludes their procession through history. It is a well-established practice in Muslim scholarly circles that the first hadith of the Prophet Muḥammad taught to aspiring students is the Hadith of Mercy, 'The merciful are given mercy by the All-Merciful. Have mercy to those on earth, so the one in the heavens will have mercy on you (*al-rāḥimūn yarḥamuhum al-raḥmānu irḥamū man fī al-arḍi yarḥamkum man fī al-samā'*)'¹⁷.

The metaphysical relation between the mercy of God and of humanity is discussed in a second hadith, 'God made mercy of one hundred parts, keeping ninety-nine with Himself and revealing in the earth a single part. From that, created beings treat each other mercifully, such that an animal raises its hoof from its child, fearing that it would strike it'¹⁸. Here we can see that the idea of the revelation of mercy to the world extends beyond the prophetic experience of *waḥy* and may include its disclosure within the natural creation of the world itself. An important Qur'anic term is *fiṭra*, the notion of a natural tendency for the human soul to turn towards, or to comprehend, that which is faithful and morally praiseworthy. Q. 30:30, states, '[Prophet] stand yourself up devoutly for the religion – the natural disposition God instilled in humanity (*fa-aqim waḡhaka li-l-dīni ḥanīfan fiṭrata allāhi allatī faṭara al-nāsa 'alayhā'*)'.

Fiṭra is also associated with the intellect. In the scheme of al-Māturīdī, it is an inbuilt capacity to come to *a posteriori* knowledge of God and ethics through sound reflection on one's experience within the world¹⁹. This empirical epistemology is supported by his objectivist moral realism. That is, in the terms of the present discussion, human mercy is not just an instinct, as perhaps it may be for the animal that raises its

¹⁵ Al-Jīlānī, *Sirr al-asrār*, p. 45.

¹⁶ Al-Jīlānī, *Sirr al-asrār*, p. 46.

¹⁷ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, vol. 2, p. 828; Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, vol. 2, p. 504.

¹⁸ Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 3 vols., Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, Vaduz 2000, vol. 3, pp. 1228-9.

¹⁹ Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī, *Ta'wīlāt al-qur'ān*, E. Boynukalin and B. Topaloğlu (ed.), 18 vols., Dār al-Mizān, Istanbul 2006, vol. 11, pp. 185-186.

hoof, but represents the human capacity to appreciate the scale of moral value, or *mīzān*, that God has placed within the creation²⁰. As we find in Q. 55:1-9,

The Merciful. He taught the Qur'an. He created the human being. He taught him explanation. The sun and the moon, each by a course. The stars and the trees prostrate. He raised the heavens and placed the Scale. That you do not overstep the Scale. Set up the weighing scale with justice and do not fall short in the Scale (*wa-aqīmū al-wazna bi-l-qist wa-lā tuḥsirū al-mīzān*).

From here, I think I can begin to draw a connection to Professor Markl's discussion of the question of God's modes of revelation within the Ancient Near East and the reinterpretation afforded by the Second Vatican Council. Markl asks, 'if God might have started His self-revelation to humanity even long before his self-revelation in the Scriptures ...'²¹.

The Qur'anic view, according to al-Māturīdī, is precisely that a certain basic type of faith and morality is essential to the true human condition and the self, if liable to be misled, is capable of knowing good and evil, and acting accordingly, before revelation. Thus, there is a shared socio-moral vision, which can exist before revelation and which is accessible to people of other traditions within the worldly sphere. In fact, aspects of shared morality are treated by the Qur'an as signs that point to the existence and wisdom of the Creator, the intimate recognition of which is the purpose of the creation of humanity²². As found in Q. 49:13, 'O humankind, We have created you from male and female and have made you peoples and tribes so that you may come to know one another. Certainly, the most noble of you in the sight of God is the most pious of you'.

If human beings possess the natural disposition to reflect upon the existence and mercy of their Creator, even before the revelation of scripture, then within the Islamic theological paradigm, it leads to the question of how divine mercy relates to those people. For Māturīdīs to be consistent, they must affirm that such people are responsible to fulfill or renege upon their covenant with their Lord. This is the clear view of the founder and early authorities in the school, though many later figures shifted much closer to the Ash'arī position²³, which reflects in general the forming of a shared identity in the Mamlūk era²⁴. Also, for this particular issue, it is ironically the

²⁰ Al-Māturīdī, *Ta'wīlāt al-qur'ān*, vol. 4, p. 257.

²¹ D. Markl, "Divine Mercy in the Ancient Near East and in the Hebrew Bible" (lecture, *Rahma: Muslim and Christian Studies in Mercy*, Pontifical Urbaniana University, Rome, October 14, 2016). Prof. Markl's own contribution to the Roman Symposium on Mercy in Islam and Christianity will be published in the forthcoming congress volume.

²² Al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, p. 167.

²³ Aḥmad b. Ḥasan al-Bayāḏī, *Iṣārāt al-marām min 'ibārāt al-imām Abī Ḥanīfa al-Nu'mān fī uṣūl al-dīn*, Aḥmad Farīd al-Mīziyādī (ed.), Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, Beirut 2007, pp. 62-64; A. Kevin Reinhart, *Before Revelation: The Boundaries of Muslim Moral Thought*, The State University of New York Press, Albany 1995, pp. 53-54.

²⁴ Rudolph, *Al-Māturīdī and the Development of Sunnī Theology in Samarqand*, pp. 7-9.

Ash'arīs who, by associating ethical value only with God's revealed speech and not His revealed creation, may appear to conceive of God as more merciful than their Māturīdī counterparts. This is because they can argue that people without access to revelation are relieved of the responsibility to believe.

Taking a step back, however, we can see that this position has been arrived at only through insistence on the primacy of God's will alone. If everything that occurs is by the will of God, then some people would be 'fortunate' to be born in a time and place in which they will not be held to account, as compared to those who are born in a time of revelation, yet fail to embrace faith, as also willed by Him. Thus, this apparent mercy is only won at the expense of making God seem an arbitrary, even deterministic, figure. The Māturīdīs, by affirming ethical responsibility, and tempering their affirmation of God's absolute will with His absolute wisdom, can argue that the human being always has the capacity and free choice to accept or reject the Creator. Moreover, each human being is presented with the opportunity to come to intimately know his, or her, Creator and Sustainer – this is the purpose of existence and the truest fulfillment of the covenant. Mercy is not, then, at the expense of a meaningful moral test for human beings, but rather in the assistance, natural and supernatural, that He provides for His creation in preparing them for it.

Nevertheless, like Thomas Aquinas, al-Māturīdī argues for the indispensability of a revealed Law alongside the light of natural reason²⁵. The role of revelation is complementary, providing detailed laws, including those that are beyond the grasp of the unaided human mind, as well as information about eschatological realities that motivate worship and virtue²⁶. In other words, one could say that the wisdom of the Law is such that human interests will be protected, but that is equally the wisdom of the good in creation itself, the revelation coming to perfect what is already manifest, in part, to the wise.

If we are able to balance the book of scripture with the book of world and to trace between the signs of God's presence in each²⁷, perhaps it is possible to discuss the notion of justice and how it relates to mercy. As my forthcoming book will elaborate, justice within the Qur'an is principally expressed with two words, '*adl* and *qisṭ*'. While in some contexts they may be taken as synonyms, the general pattern is that '*adl*, with the connotation of balance, refers to the internal ethical constitution, one's equity, while *qisṭ*, meaning a fair share, is a condition of justice sought within society²⁸. Within Qur'anic legislative contexts, one may transcend the practice of justice, in the sense of

²⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *The "Summa Theologica" of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 21 vols., R. & T. Washbourne, Londo: 1911-25, vol. 1, p. 2.

²⁶ Al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, p. 252.

²⁷ Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Al-Fuṣūl fī al-uṣūl*, 'Ujayl Jāsim al-Nashamī (ed.), 4 vols., Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyya, Kuwait 1994, vol. 3, p. 249.

²⁸ Muḥammad Muḥammad Dāwūd, *Mu'ḡam al-furūq al-dalāliyya fī al-qur'ān al-karīm*, Dār Gharīb, Cairo 2008, p. 341; Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islām and Secularism*, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, Kuala Lumpur 1993, p. 76.

‘*adl*, with mercy, or with excellence (*ihsān*). However, *qist*, or societal justice, the Kingdom of Heaven on earth – if you like – is not transcended by mercy, it is built upon mercy. This is illustrated by the example of the Prophet when returning to conquer Mecca, which his tribe, the Quraysh, had persecuted him within and forced him to emigrate from. On the way, one of his companions said, ‘Today is the day of war (*yawmu al-malḥama*), the day that the forbidden is made permitted [spilling blood within the sanctuary], the day God humiliates the Quraysh.’ Upon hearing about this, the Prophet responded, ‘Today is the day of mercy (*yawmu al-marḥama*), the day God honours the Quraysh’²⁹.

Returning back to the level of the divine attributes, it is a curious fact that the traditionally recognised divine names for the Just, *al-‘Adl* (literally Justice) and *al-Muqṣiṭ*, are not mentioned in the Qur’an. Instead, the scripture emphasises God’s lack of injustice³⁰. Nevertheless, God’s role as judge of human beings is affirmed, and he is mentioned as the Wise, or wise (*ḥakīm*), in a number of contexts that imply a specific reference to His justice³¹. This, however, points us to something crucial: like al-Māturīdī, one may read the Qur’an as affirming that both mercy and justice ultimately lead to the door of God’s ineffable wisdom³². This is a door that is locked to the rational mind, though perhaps the enlightened heart has the key.

At the very centre of the written Qur’an, one finds a story of the Prophet Moses and an unnamed figure often associated with the saint known as *al-Khaḍīr*. In the tradition, Moses declares he is the most knowledgeable person in the world. In terms of the Law, which he had received on Mount Sinai, this was true. But God sends him to meet *al-Khaḍīr*, who has special interior knowledge³³. Three times, Moses is asked to be patient when he sees his travelling companion do something that he cannot understand (Q. 18:67-68; 18:72; 18:75). Three times he cannot stop himself complaining about the apparent injustice of the actions (Q. 18:71; 18:74; 18:77). At this juncture, *al-Khaḍīr* explains the hidden wisdom to which he alone is privy (Q. 18:78-82).

There is always a point at which outward discussion of justice, mercy and wisdom ends and the inward cultivation of it must begin – which perhaps signals an appropriate place to stop.

²⁹ Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Sayyid al-Nās, ‘*Uyūn al-aṭar fī funūn al-maḡāzī wa-l-ṣamā’il wa-l-siyar*’, Muḥammad al-‘Īd Khaṭrāwī and Muḥyī al-Dīn Mastū (ed.), 2 vols., Maktaba Dār al-Turāth, Medina and Dār Ibn Kathīr, Damascus n. d., vol. 2, p. 232.

³⁰ M. Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1994, pp. 14-16.

³¹ W.B. Hallaq, ‘Qur’anic Constitutionalism and Moral Governmentality: Further Notes on the Founding Principles of Islamic Society and Polity’, *Comparative Islamic Studies* 8, no. 1-2 (2012): 1-51, p. 15.

³² Rudolph, *Al-Māturīdī and the Development of Sunnī Theology in Samarqand*, p. 299.

³³ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 1, pp. 22-23; vol. 2, pp. 961-962; Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2 vols., Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, Vaduz 2000, vol. 2, pp. 1017-1019.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abū Dāwūd, Sulaymān b. al-Ash'ath. *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*. 2 vols. Vaduz: Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2000.
- Al-Alūsī, Shihāb al-Dīn. *Rūḥ al-ma'ānī fī tafsīr al-qur'ān al-'aẓīm wa-l-sab' al-maṭānī*. Edited by Muḥammad Munīr 'Abdah Aghā al-Dimashqī, 30 vols. Beirut: Idārat al-Ṭibā'at al-Munīriyya, n. d.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *The "Summa Theologica" of St. Thomas Aquinas*. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. 21 vols. London: R. & T. Washbourne, 1911-25.
- Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib. *Islām and Secularism*. Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1993.
- Al-Bayāḍī, Aḥmad b. Ḥasan. *Iṣārāt al-marām min 'ibārāt al-imām Abī Ḥanīfa al-Nu'mān fī uṣūl al-dīn*. Edited by Aḥmad Farīd al-Miziyādī. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2007.
- Al-Bazdawī, Abū al-Yusr. *Uṣūl al-dīn*. Edited by Hans Peter Linss. Cairo: Al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li-l-Turāth, 2003.
- Al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. 3 vols. Vaduz: Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2000.
- Dāwūd, Muḥammad Muḥammad. *Mu'ḡam al-furūq al-dalāliyya fī al-qur'ān al-karīm*. Cairo: Dār Gharīb, 2008.
- El Shamsy, Ahmed. "Returning to God through His Names: Cosmology and Dhikr in a Fourteenth-Century Sufi Treatise". In *Essays in Islamic Philology, History, and Philosophy*, edited by William Granara, Roy P. Mottahedeh, Wheeler M. Thackston and Alireza Korangy. De Gruyter, 2016.
- Ernst, Carl W. "Muḥammad as the Pole of Existence". In *The Cambridge Companion to Muḥammad*, edited by Jonathan E. Brockopp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Fakhry, Majid. *Ethical Theories in Islam*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994.
- Hallaq, Wael B. "Qur'anic Constitutionalism and Moral Governmentality: Further Notes on the Founding Principles of Islamic Society and Polity." *Comparative Islamic Studies* 8, no. 1-2 (2012): 1-51.
- Hoover, Jon. *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad. *'Uyūn al-aṭār fī funūn al-maḡāzī wa-l-ṣamā'il wa-l-siyar*. Edited by Muḥammad al-'Id Khaṭrāwī and Muḥyī al-Dīn Mastū. 2 vols. Medina: Maktaba Dār al-Turāth and Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, n. d.
- Jackson, Sherman. *Islam and the Problem of Black Suffering*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Aḥmad b. 'Alī. *Al-Fuṣūl fī al-uṣūl*. Edited by 'Ujayl Jāsim al-Nashamī. 4 vols. Kuwait: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyya, 1994.
- Al-Jīlānī, 'Abd al-Qādir. *Sirr al-asrār wa-maẓhar al-anwār*. Edited by Khālīd Muḥammad 'Adnān al-Zar'ī and Muḥammad Ghassān Naṣūḥ 'Azqūl. Damascus: Dār al-Sanābil, 1994.
- Al-Juwaynī, Abū al-Ma'ālī. *Al-'Aqdat al-niẓāmiyya fī al-arkān al-islāmiyya*. Edited by Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī. Cairo: Al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li-l-Turāth, 1992.
- Katz, Marion Holmes. *The Birth of the Prophet Muhammad: Devotional Piety in Sunni Islam*. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Kurt, Erkan M. *Creation: The Principle of Nature in Islamic Metaphysics*. New York: Blue Dome Press, 2012.
- Al-Māturīdī, Abū Manṣūr. *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*. Edited by Bekir Topaloğlu and Muḥammad Aruçi. Istanbul: Maktabat al-Irshād, 2006.
- Al-Māturīdī, Abū Manṣūr. *Ta'wīlāt al-qur'ān*. Edited by Ertuğrul Boynukalin and Bekir Topaloğlu. 18 vols. Istanbul: Dār al-Mizān, 2006.
- Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. 2 vols. Vaduz: Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2000.
- Reinhart, A. Kevin. *Before Revelation: The Boundaries of Muslim Moral Thought*. Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1995.

- Rudolph, Ulrich. *Al-Māturīdī and the Development of Sunnī Theology in Samarqand*. Translated by Rodrigo Adem. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- Al-Tirmidhī, Muḥammad b. ‘Isa. *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*. 2 vols. Vaduz: Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2000.
- Al-Tustarī, Sahl b. ‘Abd Allāh. *Tafsīr al-qur’ān al-‘aẓīm*. Edited by Ṭāhā ‘Abd al-Ru’ūf Sa’d and Ḥasan Muḥammad ‘Alī. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥaram, 2004.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article montre combien de théologiens sunnites ont analysé les affirmations coraniques et traditionnelles au sujet de la miséricorde divine. Pour un aṣ‘arite, comme al-Ḡuwaynī, Dieu est miséricordieux, parce qu’il sauve qui il veut. Ainsi, la divine promesse d’agir miséricordieusement semble devenir arbitraire et même vide. Pour les māturīdites, la miséricorde divine peut être considérée dans le droit fil de la sagesse qui ordonne l’univers. La miséricorde humaine réside alors dans notre capacité de comprendre et d’appliquer les valeurs inhérentes à la création. La relation entre miséricorde et justice peut être éclairée à la lumière de deux paroles arabes employées pour la justice : tandis que *‘adl* signifie équité qui peut être dépassée par la miséricorde, *qist* signifie une condition idéale de la justice sociale qui est déjà bâtie sur la miséricorde.

