that while the basic prosody of Qur’anic saj’ is accentual, based on the number of stresses in adjacent verses, quantitative rhythmical parallelism becomes more important at the ends of verses and often includes penultimate feet.

The Core of the Qur’an: Sūrat Yā Sīn (Q. 36)
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The Prophet dubbed Sūrat Yā Sīn the ‘core of the Qur’an’. This article attempts to explain the reasons for this. It highlights the central theme of the sura, the resurrection of the dead: Yā Sīn provides the longest presentation of this subject in one single sura, dealing with all the arguments the disbelievers bring up against it. Contrary to the opinions of some scholars, the structure of this sura, seen in the succession of its well-connected parts, with additional consolidation from a web of recurring expressions, is shown to be completely coherent. The article elucidates some of the stylistic features of the sura and ends with an account of the special significance of Sūrat Yā Sīn for Muslim believers, individually and collectively, throughout the world.

Al-Ṭabarī and the Dynamics of tafsīr: Theological Dimensions of a Legacy
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The Jāmi’ al-bayān ‘an ta’wil āy al-Qur’ān is fittingly recognised as representing an important milestone in the history of the discipline of tafsīr: within the work, al-Ṭabarī accomplished a uniquely comprehensive exegetical synthesis of literary, grammatical, legal and theological elements, bringing a broader sense of definition and purpose to the discipline of tafsīr. Among the characteristic features of the scholarship of al-Ṭabarī are the objectivity and consistency he brought to his work and such qualities resonate in his gauging of theological issues and topics. While it has been customary to view al-Ṭabarī’s theology as being strictly informed by a rigidly traditionalist methodology, a circumspect review of theological discussions in the tafsīr reveals not only the author’s accomplished marshalling of the attendant arguments and theses, but also the spirit of autonomy and resourcefulness with which he assesses points of doctrine and dogma. In this article an attempt is made to analyse aspects of the intertwined theological discourses of the tafsīr and related treatises, bridging them with materials articulated in the biographical sources. The aim is to explore the relationship between his approach to scholarship along with the standpoints to which he adhered and their impact upon attitudes towards his remarkable work and legacy.
Al-Ṭabarī and the Dynamics of \textit{tafsīr}: Theological Dimensions of a Legacy

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While the earliest forms of Qur’anic exegesis were systematically constellated around treatments of the Qur’an in which selected topics and features of the text had been discretely expounded upon, it was in the \textit{Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʿwīl āy al-Qurʾān} composed by Muhammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (224–310/839–923) that an imposingly more integrated and wide-ranging approach to the interpretation of the Qur’an was cultivated, which broached literary, legal, grammatical, and even theological issues and themes.\footnote{Journal of Qur’anic Studies 15.2 (2013): 83–139 Edinburgh University Press DOI: 10.3366/jqs.2013.0097 © Centre of Islamic Studies, SOAS www.euppublishing.com/jqs} Despite relying distinctly upon the exegetical materials furnished by antecedents in the form of texts, treatises and orally transmitted materials, the synthesis offered in his \textit{Jāmiʿ al-bayān} surpassed all previous efforts in the field, bringing comprehensiveness and a broader context to the discipline of exegesis.\footnote{Journal of Qur’anic Studies 15.2 (2013): 83–139 Edinburgh University Press DOI: 10.3366/jqs.2013.0097 © Centre of Islamic Studies, SOAS www.euppublishing.com/jqs} And while over successive centuries the accomplishments of al-Ṭabarī were complemented and extensively refined by successive generations of exegetes, the precision and levels of expertise brought by him to all aspects of scholarship pored over in his monumental \textit{tafsīr} set an important historical milestone.\footnote{Journal of Qur’anic Studies 15.2 (2013): 83–139 Edinburgh University Press DOI: 10.3366/jqs.2013.0097 © Centre of Islamic Studies, SOAS www.euppublishing.com/jqs} It is often assumed that this author’s approach to the resolution and espousal of theological doctrines and points of dogma was essentially informed by a rigidly derived traditionalist strategy, to the extent that his \textit{tafsīr} monotonously served as a vehicle for the articulation and defence of the credal statements and doctrinal catechisms associated with Sunnī religious orthodoxy; however, a close examination of al-Ṭabarī’s treatment of theological issues reveals an underlying sophistication and exuberance which defines the meticulousness and thoroughness he brought to the traditions of learning with which he engaged.\footnote{Journal of Qur’anic Studies 15.2 (2013): 83–139 Edinburgh University Press DOI: 10.3366/jqs.2013.0097 © Centre of Islamic Studies, SOAS www.euppublishing.com/jqs} Certainly, his own ‘theological orthodoxy’ is instinctively shaped by traditionalist considerations, although within the \textit{tafsīr} he adopted not only a rationally-devised exposition of dogma, but was also intrepidly prepared to employ grammatical arguments and philological constructs to advocate and expound upon theological
premises and doctrines, furnishing aspects of the commentary with a distinctly polemical tone. Significantly, embedded within the matrices of his own theology is a determined and objective attitude to specific points of doctrine which led to his being criticised by a number of influential individuals among the *ahl al-hadīth* (‘traditionists’), the consequences of which are reflected in various dramatic episodes in his lifetime.\(^5\) Additionally, one detects within the theological narratives of the *tafsīr* an attempt to rein in the excesses of speculatively-formulated strategies and constructs as pursued by rational theologians within the Sunnī camps which al-Ṭabarī felt were not conducive to the defence of orthodox doctrine, further underlining the spirit of independence which defined his scholarship. Ingeniously, through his commentary, al-Ṭabarī demonstrated that *tafsīr* was not simply a perfunctory endeavour devoted to the presentation of the exegetical statements and musings distilled from a hierarchy of early luminaries, despite the acceptance that due reverence had to be accorded to materials which were authentically sourced from them.\(^6\) Nor was its ultimate goal the forensic analysis of the linguistic constituents of scripture, but rather he had shown that while preceding discussions provided analogues and a substratum upon which the discipline could develop ways of engaging with and drawing inspiration from the text of the Qur’ān, the craft of Qur’ānic interpretation turned essentially on the locating of new relative contexts and discourses to which the interrelated narratives of exegesis could be made pertinent.\(^7\) Al-Ṭabarī’s treatment of contentious theological issues exemplifies the manner by which this could be achieved, shedding light on key issues of concern to theologians and the solutions which were proposed to resolve them within an exegetical framework.\(^8\) In both the life and works of al-Ṭabarī, a gauging of the trajectories of all the interlocking intellectual discourses reveals the intricacy and profundity of his contribution to the traditions of learning associated with classical Islamic thought.\(^9\)

**The Grammarian Nexus**

In a monograph devoted to the linguistic thought of the Kufan grammarian Abū Zakariyyāʾ al-Farrāʾ (d. 207/822), the Egyptian scholar Ahmad Makkī al-Anṣārī discerningly drew attention to the fact that veiled criticisms of this scholar frequently surfaced in the course of al-Ṭabarī’s commentary.\(^10\) Al-Anṣārī observed that although al-Ṭabarī rarely names al-Farrāʾ when discussing specific linguistic views or issues with which he was in disagreement, a circumspect review of the passages in which criticisms occur intimates that it is al-Farrāʾ and his *Maʿānī al-Qur’ān* which provide an indispensable backdrop to the ensuing discussions. Among the instances in which this is evident is the pericope referring to God’s *istiwāʾ* in Q. 2:29 (*thumma*’*stawā ilā l-samāʾ*), and its extolling of the Almighty’s ascent to the heavens.\(^11\) Definitions of the semantic import of *istiwāʾ* within classical Qur’ānic commentaries and dogmatic treatises were principally shaped by preconceived theological outlooks and
considerations: many traditionist scholars tended to promote an interpretation in which istiwāʾ was equated with the act of rising or ascending, adhering to the evident language used in the verse. Within this context it was asserted that there existed an incontrovertible distinction between the divine and human attributes of such an act and that the principle of bi-lā kayf (‘amodality’) had to be applied when broaching such Qur’anic statements; conversely, rationalist theologians, and indeed a number of traditionalist scholars, preferred to apply a metaphorical gloss to the term, or identify meanings which obviated any anthropomorphic imagery inferred from the use of the language in this and similar Qur’anic passages. Al-Ṭabarī opens his exegesis of the verse by disclosing that there existed differences regarding the term’s interpretation and that some had said that istawā ilā’l-samāʾ meant aqbara ʿalayhā; he also cites a turn of expression which conveys this specified meaning. Al-Ṭabarī then refers to a verse of poetry, in which the phrase aqbara ʿalayhā occurs in a context connoting the turning of one’s attention to a given matter, noting that it was adduced as evidence for the equating of istawā with the connotation of iqbal (‘advent’), an explanation he describes as being erroneous. Having dismissed the previous gloss, al-Ṭabarī focuses upon introducing a number of further periphrastic qualifications of the term istiwāʾ, included among which are the usage of the term denoting the actions of someone being diverted from one place to another (taḥawwul); the turning of one’s attention or focus towards a matter or concern (ʿamada lahā or ilayhā); and the equating of istiwāʾ with al-ʿuluww and irtifaʾ (‘a rise’ or ‘an ascent’), which is supported by a dictum attributed to al-Rabī b. Anas (d. 139/756). Having systematically proceeded through the gamut of explanations proffered by various scholars in respect of the semantic import of istiwāʾ, al-Ṭabarī concludes with a conspectus of accepted lexical explanations of the term, including those cited above and others which fall semantically within the confines of the Arabs’ use of istiwāʾ, such as al-iḥtiyāz waʿl-istīlāʾ (‘occupation of space’ and ‘gaining hegemony or ascendancy’). He then pronounced that the most fitting meaning of the Qur’anic verse is the one which equates istiwāʾ with al-ʿuluww and irtifaʾ, adding that ‘He ascended and rose over them [the heavens], giving order to them by virtue of his power and created them as seven heavens’. In the context of the allusion to al-Farrāʾ, it is the next passage of the commentary which is fascinating, as it reveals al-Ṭabarī’s censure of those individuals who reject the equating of istiwāʾ with al-ʿuluww and irtifaʾ. He remonstrates that such a position was supposedly taken in order to steer clear of the implication that the semantic thrust of signifying an ascent and rising towards the heavens is predicated by a previous state of being beneath them; the inference is that to get from one state to the next necessitates physical displacement and motion. Al-Ṭabarī dismisses the rationale of such a stance, describing it as being a case of replacing the conventionally understood meaning with one which is unknown; he also mentions that the espousal of such an explanation offers no reprieve from what its advocate is seeking to escape. The corollary to this point is that favouring the term iqbal over ʿuluww does
not circumvent the physical connotation implied by the use of the verb. It is evident that the views of al-Farrāʾ are the subject of his diatribe for the whole of the beginning of al-Ṭabarī’s discussion of al-istiwāʾ, as well as the later passages in which he reprimands the advocate of this view, are precisely informed by the exegetical treatment of this verse in the Maʿānī al-Qurʾān, as indicated by al-Anṣārī.

Still, al-Ṭabarī’s reproach does not end there: posing a hypothetical question to his anonymous opponent, he states that ‘it would be said to him, “You allege that the taʿwil of His statement istawāʾ is aqbala and therefore was He [in a state of] retreat from the heavens before He advanced towards them?” And should he claim that such an act does not constitute the iqbal of action but rather an abstract iqbal, it would be said to him, “Therefore you should say ‘alā ‘alayhā can likewise denote a rising of dominion and authority (‘uluww mulk wa-sultān) and not a rising concomitant with movement and rest (‘uluww intiqāl wa-zawāl)” ’, insinuating that such an explanation need not be understood in the sense of a physical act. Al-Ṭabarī then indicates that whatever is said in response to the aforementioned hypothetical statement would be matched with similarly binding objections, before concluding his discussion of the point by stating that if it were not for the fact that he disliked expatiating the book with matters not pertinent to it, he would have identified the flaws of every statement made in response to the above where it was found to be in conflict with the recorded dicta of the people of truth. Elsewhere in the tafsīr where Qur’anic references to istiwāʾ are resolved, al-Ṭabarī refers to his having mentioned differences among scholars concerning its import and that it had been adequately addressed beforehand in his tafsīr, although while discussing its occurrence in Q. 13:2, he simply curtly states that it connotes ‘alā ‘alayhā and offers the same explanation at other instances where it features. The dialectically structured critique of al-Farrāʾ’s view together with the whole polemical thrust of the passage betrays the somewhat assertive yet informed manner by which al-Ṭabarī engages with his opponent; and indeed, it is quite arresting that throughout the tafsīr prominent gramman luminaries and the linguistic explanations which they endorse are often the targets of criticism which he pursues relentlessly and unwaveringly. A summary review of the discussions on istiwāʾ as they feature in the Maʿānī reveals an unassumingly succinct gauging of the verse: al-Farrāʾ merely mentions two lexical explanations for istiwāʾ, one of which specifies that istiwāʾ is used to indicate the expiry of one’s youth (strength), while in the second instance, it is stated that it can connote something becoming straightened from a state of crookededness. He then introduces a third view, ‘aqbala ilayyā wa-ʿalayyā’, which he contends is relevant to the meaning of the actual verse before modestly admitting that ‘God knows best!’ And he ends his exposition not only with a report ascribed to Ibn ʿAbbās in which the verb saʿida (‘to climb’) is used to paraphrase istiwāʾ, but also with the declaration that all the aforementioned examples discussed by him are
attested in the language of the Arabs, thereby confirming the existence of empirical evidence for his explanation.\textsuperscript{18}

Al-Anṣārī was of the opinion that al-Ṭabarī’s censure of al-Farrāʾ, although he does not directly mention his name, was motivated, in this instance and others, by his aversion to the latter’s Muʿtazilī leanings.\textsuperscript{19} Classical biographical sources do allege that al-Farrāʾ had Muʿtazilī sympathies, yet the theological views he sporadically expresses in the \textit{Maʿānī} are by no means redolent of a rampant espousal of Muʿtazilism.\textsuperscript{20} This was the conclusion that Edmund Beck reached having meticulously mined the \textit{tafsīr} for its theological content;\textsuperscript{21} indeed, he had spoken of parallels between the theological theses favoured by al-Farrāʾ and those which were to become the cornerstone of the brand of speculative theology eventually championed by Abūʾl-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/935); significantly, these had been earlier nurtured by Ibn Kullāb (d. 241/854–5) and al-Qalānīsī (fl. third/ninth century) all of whom made substantial contributions to Sunnī theological discourses.\textsuperscript{22}

However, Beck’s conclusions have been questioned by Joseph van Ess, who felt that he had not paid sufficient attention to al-Farrāʾ’s stance on the subject of determinism and human free will.\textsuperscript{23} Still, as can be shown, there do exist statements in the \textit{Maʿānī} in which al-Farrāʾ clearly attempts to place distance between himself and the so-called Qadarīs and, theoretically speaking, he has more in common with the movement traditionally identified with expressions of Sunnī orthodoxy than a supposed affinity with Muʿtazilism.\textsuperscript{24} And, moreover, his preferred explanation of \textit{istiwāʾ} was hardly conducive to the charge that he harboured Muʿtazilī tendencies; on the contrary, such positions were favoured by Sunnī theologians of rational persuasions as demonstrated by al-Ashʿarī’s own exposition of the term in his \textit{al-Ibāna ʿan usūl al-diyāna,}\textsuperscript{25} which insists that while the act of \textit{istiwāʾ} is a reality, it must be understood in terms which befit God’s majesty and it is not accompanied by \textit{ṭūl istiqrār}; namely, the strictures of time, space and location do not impinge upon it; moreover, al-Ashʿarī insists that the amodality of the act of \textit{istiwāʾ} remains paramount. The extent to which later Ashʿarīs moved away from the traditionist position by adopting the theological instrument of \textit{taʿwil} (‘figurative paraphrasing’), or indeed metaphor, within interpretive strategies to circumvent anthropomorphisms in scripture becomes a key point of controversy within medieval Sunnī theological thought and the tensions between certain traditionists and Ashʿarīs over approaches to points of dogma are palpably played out in the later literature.\textsuperscript{26} Of course, it could be argued that al-Ṭabarī was averse to such tendencies even within expressions of Sunnism and this would place his theology somewhere between the \textit{ahl al-hadīth}, who censured the use of speculative theology together with its reliance on dialectical schema, and the rational traditionalists within the Sunnī camps, who felt obliged to develop such strategies to counter Muʿtazilī defences of theological constructs.\textsuperscript{27} Within such contexts, dogmatic positions were forged in an intensely reactionary
milieu which witnessed the crystallisation of doctrines to counter opposing and contested views.

Most Muʿtazilī theologians tended to employ the term istawlā (‘gaining hegemony’) as a paraphrase for istiwā’ or simply locate its lexical equivalent in the noetic notion of qāṣd (‘abstract intention’), thereby attenuating any perceived physicality to the act.28 The Muʿtazilī luminary ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025) dismissed the idea that istiwā’ could be construed as locative or temporal and quotes the leading Muʿtazilī scholar Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbārī (d. 303/915), who insists that it reflects the act of qāṣd: namely, God’s turning His attention to the creation of the heaven. One significant treatise in which al-Farrāʾ’s explanation of this verse surfaces is the Majālis Thaʿlab (or “Sessions” of Thaʿlab’), a work which collates philological and grammatical reminiscences of the Kufan philologist and littérateur Thaʿlab (d. 291/904). In two separate passages in the text he mentions the various meanings of istiwā’, stating in one instance that ‘al-Farrāʾ and our companions say aqbalaʿalayhā; others say istawlā’; on a second occasion in a reference to Q. 20:5 (al-Rahmanu ʿalā-l-ʿarshi-stawā), he states that ‘the Muʿtazila equate istiwā’ with istawlā’, implying that al-Farrāʾ took a different view.29 Thaʿlab was renowned for his anti-kalām posturing; in his reference to aqbalaʿalayhā he uses the term aṣḥābunāʾ – he is hardly likely to have associated with a view which was Muʿtazili in countenance. Still, referring to the Majālis, al-Anṣārī made the claim that even Thaʿlab associated al-Farrāʾ with the Muʿtazili view and he implied that the adoption of the term iqbal was commensurate with their lexical paraphrase of the term, which is misleading because, as shown above, Thaʿlab speaks of two different views, yet al-Anṣārī curiously omitted any reference to the further quotation in the text where Thaʿlab mentions the Muʿtazilīs and istawlā as a view endorsed by them.30 Al-Ṭabarī was a student of Thaʿlab, who describes him as one of his early protégés and he was mentored by his leading charge, Abū ʿUmar al-Zāhid (d. 345/956); furthermore, Abū Hātim al-Sijistānī (d. 255/869) and Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933), both of whom were renowned for their expertise in philology, are linked to him.31 It was by virtue of his close acquaintance with the scholarship of leading Basran and Kufan luminaries that al-Ṭabarī gained insights into the various linguistic arguments prevalent among the two schools, which he was able to adduce at length throughout the course of the Jāmiʿ. Thaʿlab is noted for having memorised the literary legacy of al-Farrāʾ, to the extent that he was able to identify the loci of individual passages from his actual works; he would have been cognisant of any connection between al-Farrāʾ and the Muʿtazilīs on such issues.32

Significantly, there does exist an anecdote in which the renowned scholar Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) was said to have pronounced that he used to hold the Kufan grammarian al-Farrāʾ in great esteem until he read his Maʿānī al-Qurʾān text.33 Given the traditionist credentials of Ibn Ḥanbal, such a statement might lead to the
impression that issues of orthodoxy and doctrine were probably upmost in his mind. However, al-Farrāʾ’s Maʿānī ostensibly focuses on the grammatical treatment of Qur’anic readings with the aim of demonstrating the linguistic authority of lectiones and this is something al-Ṭabarī also engaged in to the extent that he was censured by later reader specialists for questioning the linguistic bases of a number of lectiones attributed to the Damascene scholar Ibn ʿĀmir (d. 118/736), a figure whose reading was designated as one of the canonical seven. Significantly, theological musings do occasionally permeate al-Farrāʾ’s analyses, although these are notably incidental to the work’s conceptual thrust and intended focus. A clearer hint of what appears to lay behind Ibn Ḥanbal’s statement is probably preserved in the biographical work of the Mālikī scholar al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ (d. 543/1149), Tartib al-madārik, which includes an anecdote mentioning that Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim Ibn Sallām (d. 224/838) compiled an exegetical-grammatical treatise which merged the linguistic analyses of al-Farrāʾ and Abū ʿUbayda. It is reported that Ibn Sallām was apparently half way through the text when he received a dispatch from Ibn Ḥanbal, in which he spoke of being dismayed to learn that ‘you are compiling a work on qirāʾāt in which you have established al-Farrāʾ and Abū ʿUbayda as authorities in the area of maʿānī al-Qurʾān: desist from this’. By all accounts Ibn Sallām supposedly stopped working on the text, having reached Sūrat al-Anbiyāʾ. One of the standard features of the maʿānī genre is its use of models of grammar which were methodically supported by references to profane poetry and the diction of the Arabs for the purposes of elucidation, exemplification and argumentation. This certainly would have perturbed those of a strictly traditionist persuasion who were repelled by the notion that profane materials should be used to justify the linguistic integrity of the Qurʾān, notwithstanding the fact that it was often the linguistic idiosyncrasies associated with scripture’s textual transmission which were being acutely scrutinised by grammarians. The resort to use of poetry to elucidate the language of the Qurʾān in exegesis was considered to be a moot point within early exegetical strategies, as indicated by the discussions of the Kufan grammarian Ibn al-Anbārī (d. 328/939), who made a passionate defence of its interpretive utility. And, criticism of the use of poetry as the basis for explicating scripture does appear in traditionist narratives, although it featured among the repertoire of exegetical tools employed in al-Ṭabarī’s Jāmiʿ. Indeed, historical tensions between certain traditionist scholars and al-Ṭabarī could have emanated from these and other related issues.

Placing aside debates about the implications of al-Farrāʾ’s supposed propensity to Muʿtazilism, the refutation outlined by al-Ṭabarī essentially countenances the idea that one could quite conceivably speak of ʿuluww and irtifāʾ in senses which do not signify physical movement, although admittedly this features within the central thrust of the lines of argumentation through which he runs in order to counter the basis of al-Farrāʾ’s view. However, even when mentioning the preferred view of the verse’s
meaning, it is evident that al-Ṭabarî is mindfully positioning his own arguments in ways which would vitiate any objections that an opponent might raise. Still, this did not stop some commentators from suggesting that al-Ṭabarî espoused the latter view: the exegete al-Wāhidî (d. 468/1076) in his voluminous commentary, Kitâb al-basît, isolated it as al-Ṭabarî’s preferred opinion: namely, that istiwâ’ was equated with the rising of sovereignty and dominion (mulk wa-sulṭân), as favoured by those seeking to maintain a non-literal spin.\(^3\) The very nature of the discussions presented by al-Ṭabarî acutely underpins both the subtlety of his approach and the intricacies of his own theological position. When compared with the reserve and caution exercised by the ahl al-hadîth, who were distrustful of the dialectical technique, which was configured around the tenacious pursuit of the perceived logical inconsistencies of opponents’ arguments, the enthusiasm and mastery with which he employs it are striking. So, not only is his defence of doctrine more intricate than hitherto accepted but his approach to issues of dogma has a markedly independent quality to it. Subtle patterns of argumentation are employed not only in his presentation of the exegesis of exempla and law, but they also feature in his discussion of grammatical and philological issues. With regards to figures such as al-Farrâ’ and Abû ‘Ubayda, their analyses often provide the background to a not insignificant number of linguistic issues which he discusses in the course of the tafsîr, with ‘anonymous’ grammarians often being the subject of sustained criticism.\(^4\) Interestingly, it was the frequency of the allusions to al-Farrâ’ in the Jâmi’ which led al-Ansârî to conclude, albeit exaggeratedly, that the Ma’ânî served as a model for al-Ṭabarî’s own work.\(^5\)

**Discourse on the **ism** and the musammâ**

On the more conventional points of theological doctrine, al-Ṭabarî’s position is generally situated within the brand of theology associated with traditionalist expressions of Sunnî orthodoxy. This is clear in his critique of Mu’tazîli doctrinal arguments on the created status of the Qur’ân; the divine attributes; predestination; intercession; the beatific vision; and it extends to his critical appraisal of points of dogma promulgated by movements deemed outside the fold of Sunnî expressions of orthodoxy.\(^6\) Yet most salient is the manner in which al-Ṭabarî is able to defend the perceived orthodox position, employing an armoury of logical and linguistic arguments whenever he clashes with adversaries, although as is shown by his critique of al-Farrâ’, he was willing to criticise individuals whose own doctrinal stances sit contiguously within the confines of a traditionalist-defined theology. Such qualities are characteristic of the intellectual autonomy which he brought to his scholarship whether in tafsîr, fiqh or indeed hadîth; the notion that his work is informed by an approach to issues of theology strictly trammeled by convention is not borne out by the Jâmi’.\(^7\) This is apparent in his treatment of istiwâ’ and, likewise, in al-Ṭabarî’s allusions to the question of the nature of the relationship between the ism and the
musammā (nomen and nominatum), a topic traditional sources suggest has its provenance in the second-eighth/third-ninth centuries and which had conceptual implications for dogmatic discussions on the divine attributes. From a theological perspective, the related debates turned on whether there existed a unity of identity between names (asmaʾ) and their referents (musammā). Initially, the position taken by certain orthodox scholars appeared to be shaped in response to the Muʿtazili argument, which had posited an ontological disjunction between the ism and the musammā and proposed that the former was connected to the conventional process of naming (tasmīyya) in the sense that the ism issued from waṣf al-wāṣif (the attribute supplied by someone), an explanation which was viewed as constituting a furtive attack on the traditional doctrine of the divine attributes and their substantive nature; and there is certainly a nexus with the undermining of the traditional doctrine of the uncreated Qurʾan. According to the general Muʿtazili thesis, God knows and has power by virtue of His unique essence in the sense that ‘attributes’ such as knowledge and power did not subsist hypostatically within it. By dismissing the unity of identity between the ism and the musammā, it was possible to argue that God’s attributes, as conceptually conceived by traditionalist scholars, were not essential properties of the essence. To an extent, the so-called traditionalist position was defined by its being instinctively based on the adoption of an opposing view which upheld the notion of the unity of identity between the ism and the musammā.

In order to appreciate the significance of al-Ṭabarī’s gauging of the subject it is worth outlining some of the positions espoused among the ahl al-ḥadīth, groups within the Sunnī camps and notable Muʿtazili figures on the ism and musammā paradigm. ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-Dārimī (d. 280/893), a representative of the ašḥāb al-ḥadīth, points out in his refutation of the doctrines of the Muʿtazili Bishr al-Marīṣī (d. 218/833) that his cohorts professed that asmaʾ Allāh are something other than God: the names He has were those creation devised to refer to Him; al-Dārimī countered this thesis by asserting that the asmaʾ Allāh embodied the essence of His attributes, ‘tathqīf ṣifātihi’, and that the idea that creation provided Him with ‘names’ implies a deficiency. The reasoning is that if something is other than God, then it necessarily must belong to the realm of created entities, although what may have commenced as a straightforward critique of the notion that asmaʾ Allāh were something other than God soon exponentially distended into a sweeping defence of the ism and the musammā being essentially one, although al-Dārimī’s discussion is concerned specifically with the unity of identity between God and His attributes, as opposed to offering a broader discussion of the intricacies of the arguments about the ism and the musammā; it was Ibn Kullāb and his companions who earlier reasoned that it should not be said that the ṣifār are Him nor should it be said that they are something other than Him. Certainly, many scholars were sceptical of the utility of arguments about the ism and the musammā and favoured abstaining from deliberations on the subject. In his
biographical dictionary, al-Khāṭīb al-Baghdādī includes a report relating that the traditionist scholar Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbi (d. 285/898), a student of Ibn Ḥanbal, declared that ‘People have spoken on the subject of al-ism and al-musammā; it has reached my attention that Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā disliked talking about the ism and the musammā and I abhor for you what Ahmad b. Yahyā abhors’, implying that his Kufan mentor, Thaʿlab, harboured disdain for such dialectical discourses.⁵¹ And this appears to be a position favoured by many among the ahl al-ḥadīth and is recorded as a stance preferred by Ibn Ḥanbal, who is reported to have plainly disavowed those who profess that God’s names are created (makhlūqa).⁵² Yet among later Ḥanbalī scholars, there does appear a tendency to speak more assertively about the equivalence of the ism and the musammā in broader terms not confined to the debate about the asmāʾ Allāh being something other than God: for example, it is reported that during the time of al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923), the Basran grammarian who was the author of the commentary Maʿānī al-Qurʾān wa-iʿrābuhu and a contemporary of al-Ṭabarī, the Ḥanbalīs professed the view that ‘al-ism huwa al-musammā’. Al-Zajjāj, who aligned himself with the theological conservatism of the Ḥanbalīs, is said to have engaged in a debate on the subject with the Zāhirī scholar Ibrāhīm b. ʿArafa, better known through his sobriquet Nifṭawayhī (d. 323/935), dismissing the latter’s contention that he was in agreement with the Ḥanbalīs on that matter.⁵³ Such reports, if authenticated, show the avidity with which certain Ḥanbalīs defended the equivalence between the ism and the musammā, which appears to have been given a much more extensive compass beyond simply referring to the attributes of God, and such a doctrinal stance would have been one which was adhered to by individuals in al-Ṭabarī’s lifetime. Among much later generations of Ḥanbalī luminaries one is able to find scholars such as al-Qādī Abū Yaʿlā (d. 458/1066), whose own ruminations on the topic provided shaded qualifications of the traditional stance, showing that there were important stricures which had to be applied when arguing for the unity of identity between the ism and the musammā. Al-Qādī Abū Yaʿlā explains that by claiming that the asmāʾ Allāh are other than Him and are created, it was postulated that from eternity God had neither name nor attribute until creation devised for Him names and attributes, which is the very point al-Dārimī earlier identified.⁵⁴

Turning to early Ashʿarī luminaries, the doctrine of the ontological unity of the ism and the musammā was vigorously defended, although in the credal summary which al-Ashʿarī presents in the Ibāna, he does not engage in a detailed discussion of the subject but plainly declares that whoever claims that the asmāʾ Allāh are something other than God is in manifest error; an identical statement also features in his Maqālāt al-Islamīyyīn.⁵⁵ Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015), who was instrumental in preserving many of the doctrinal teachings of al-Ashʿarī, actually points out that he did not subscribe fully to the doctrine that the ism was the musammā, implying that his teaching on the subject was much more intricate and nuanced.⁵⁶ Ibn Fūrak refers to a quotation in
which al-Ashʿarī explained that he intended to repudiate al-Jubbāʾī’s criticisms of the 
*ašḥāb al-ṣifāt* (‘the traditionalists’) because of their doctrine that the *ism* is the 
*musammā*; in the quotation it is clarified that his critique of al-Jubbāʾī was not 
expounded upon because al-Ashʿarī took the view of the traditionalists, but for 
the reason that al-Jubbāʾī set out to diminish the view using parameters which 
contravened his own epistemological framework and were inconsistent with his 
tenets.\textsuperscript{57} The Ashʿarī cynosure ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) does discuss 
the doctrine of the *ism* and the *musammā* in the introduction to his *Tafsīr asmāʾ Allāh*, 
explaining that the majority of scholars among the *ahl al-sunna wa l-jamāʿa* was 
of the view that, ontologically, the *ism* is the same as the *musammā* in form and in 
and that this was the professed belief of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāṣibī (d. 243/857), 
who apparently devoted a treatise to the subject.\textsuperscript{58} Al-Baghdādī also adds that this was 
a view stipulated by al-Ashʿarī in his commentary on the Qurʾān, but that his position 
on the subject, which he previously outlined, was one which identifies a division of 
the categories of *al-asmaʾ*.\textsuperscript{59} Later generations of Ashʿarī scholars such as al-Bāqillānī 
(d. 403/1013) and al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) presented trenchant defences of the unity 
of identity between the *ism* and the *musammā*.\textsuperscript{60} In his *Tamḥīd*, al-Bāqillānī points 
out that individuals have differed over the *ism*: ‘is it the *musammā* itself or an attribute 
found in it or a phrase other than the *musammā*?’, and he then declares that ‘the *ahl al-ḥaqq* believe that the *ism* is the same as the *musammā* itself or indeed an attribute 
intrinsically connected to it; it is not (a product of) the *tasmiyya*’.\textsuperscript{61} Likewise, in 
al-Bāqillānī’s précis of the arguments, he distinguishes between the *asmaʾ al-dhāt* 
(‘attributes of the essence’) and the *asmaʾ al-afʿāl* (‘attributes of the acts’), noting that 
in the case of the latter they are something other than Him.\textsuperscript{62} 

Bearing in mind the background to the discussions and their historical significance, 
it is notable that al-Ṭabarī’s foray into the subject of the *ism* and *musammā* appears deceptively incidental, although it demonstrates the polemical turn which he 
frequently allows his commentary to take. He is concerned not with directly defending 
the idea of there being an ontological unity between the *ism* and the *musammā*, nor 
indeed with explicitly dismissing the connection between the two, but rather with 
showing the futility of discussions on the topic, although his musings draw attention 
to conceptual flaws in the arguments of those who champion the notion of ontological 
unity. Moreover, the manner in which he wrestles with the technicalities of the related 
debates in the *tafsīr* displays the tenacity and assertiveness with which he was to treat 
topics he deemed theologically significant; it also confirms his perciipient grasp of the 
dialectical disposition of the arguments, and his ingenious use of the forum provided 
by his commentary to articulate an ‘orthodox’ response. The thrust of his prescient 
treatment of the subject was to influence later traditionalist approaches, all of which 
underlines the complexities which colour his own Sunnī allegiances and the extent to 
which he was prepared to defend them.
The mention of the subject of the *ism* and *musammā* features in the opening section of the *tafṣīr* devoted to the explication of the *basmala* in which he underlines the verbal agency concomitant within the syntactic function of the prepositional *bāʾ* in the *basmala*, and the fact that in such constructions the *bāʾ* requires an implicit verb which determines its context and function, although there is no explicit verb present.\(^{63}\)

Al-Ṭabarī points out that if one were to mention the *basmala* when reciting the Qur’an, it would be obvious to a hearer that the individual reciting the text had meant ‘*‘I recite in the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful’*’; likewise, had the *basmala* been mentioned prior to one’s standing, or other similar acts, it would be obvious that the speaker meant ‘*‘I stand in the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful’*’. Al-Ṭabarī even discounts the objection that the reference to the aforementioned function of the *basmala* created ambiguities; it would be clearer to simply state *bi‘llāh*, as it might otherwise be inferred that acts were carried out through something other than God. His dismissal of this latter point turns on his highlighting the relationship between *al-ism* and *al-tasmiyya* (*‘the process of naming’*): he indicates that in the language of the Arabs an indeterminate relationship can sometimes pertain between the patterns of *maṣādir* (*‘verbal nouns’*) and the verbal forms with which they are conventionally linked; he then moves on to adduce selected verses of poetry to exemplify the phenomenon, showing that the invocation of the *basmala* simply means ‘*I begin by naming God prior to a statement or an act’*.\(^{64}\) It is critical to draw attention to al-Ṭabarī’s brilliantly effective use of Prophetic traditions and related dicta at successive stages of the arguments he is positing, as he allows them to buttress the points which he has elaborated upon. Thus, for example, a dictum he adduces includes a reference to the Prophet’s being instructed by the angel Gabriel ‘to recite by mentioning God your Lord’; and to likewise ‘rise and recline in the name of your Lord’; al-Ṭabarī argues that the wording confirms the correctness of the point he made: namely, the verbal function of the *tasmiyya* within the context of the *basmala* and the fact that it connotes: ‘*I recite by summoning and invoking God’*.\(^{65}\)

When discussing the function of the *basmala*, he even uses a legal analogy to drive home the argument: namely, it was commonly accepted among the majority of classical jurists that it would be ritually incorrect to utter ‘*bi‘llāh*’ when slaughtering an animal as opposed to ‘*bi‘smi‘llāh*’; on the basis that this would conflict with Prophetic convention and precedent.\(^{66}\) The denouement of the deliberations is that there exists an unequivocal semantic distinction between *bi‘smi‘llāh* and *bi‘llāh*.\(^{57}\) At this juncture in the *tafṣīr* al-Ṭabarī then goes on to pronounce ‘*this is not the place for extensively elucidating as to whether the *ism* is the *musammā* or indeed something other than it; or whether it serves as its attribute for [such a discussion] would render the book lengthy’.\(^{68}\)

During the ensuing analysis, al-Ṭabarī draws his reader’s attention to one particular line of poetry which was frequently adduced by proponents of the thesis that the
ism and musammā were one and he actually disputes its interpretation. Adhering to a dialectical format, he pronounces ‘How would you respond if someone were to assert: “What do you say about the hemistichs of Labīd b. Rabī‘a in which he states ilā-ḥawli thumma ismu‘l-salāmī ‘alaykum  // wa-man yabki ḥawlan kāmilan fa-qadi‘tadhar”?’ He then reveals to his reader that someone purportedly well versed in the language of the Arabs has proffered such an explanation: namely, that bi‘smi‘llāh means bi‘llāh and he sets about formulating an explanation of the line of poetry, but not before firstly reasoning that if such an explanation were accepted, it would be possible to say ‘I saw ism Zayd and ‘I ate ism the food’ or even ‘I drank ism the drink’: that the Arabs would collectively refute such usages in their language signified, in al-Ṭabarī’s view, the defectiveness of such an explanation of the opening segment of Labīd’s line of poetry; he then adds that such a view would only be possible if it is accepted that in essence the ism is the musammā. The figure to whom al-Ṭabarī is alluding is Abū ‘Ubayda b. Ma‘mar b. al-Muthannā (d. 210/825), a giant in the field of philology and the author of the Majāz al-Qur’ān. Indeed, if one were to trace this explanation to his actual text and its exegesis of the verse, Abū ‘Ubayda says ‘bi‘smi‘llāh means bi‘llāh for the ism of an entity represents the very essence of that entity’; he then adduces the actual verse of poetry attributed to Labīd b. Rabī‘a. It is this exact explanation which is the subject of a detailed critique by al-Ṭabarī delivered within the dialectical framework of a rejoinder, although it is the linguistic aspects of the arguments only with which he is concerned. Whether the theological significance of the ism and musammā controversy was an issue in vogue at the time of Abū ‘Ubayda is open to question, although it is probable that he would have been principally concerned with fleshing out the applied linguistic implications of the discussions; this is despite his reportedly saying, ‘If you hear someone assert that the ism is something other than the musammā, then bear witness to his heresy (zandaqa).’ The verse of poetry and the accompanying explanations he adumbrated were subsequently utilised by enthusiastic advocates to support the thesis that the ism and the musammā are ontologically one; simultaneously, various Qur’anic verses such as Q. 55:78, Sanctified is the name of your Lord; Q. 12:40, These are indeed names which you and your forebears devised; Q. 87:1, Exalt the name of your Lord; and Q. 19:7, Oh Zachariah: We give to thee glad tidings of a son whose name is John, were axiomatically cited to defend the thesis. Tellingly, like al-Farra‘, Abū ‘Ubayda is accused of blatantly harbouring Mu‘tazilī tendencies in various biographical anecdotes. Still, in this instance he is propounding a view which was to be appropriated by advocates of the thesis that the ism was identical to musammā and among them were a number of traditionalists and even later Hanbali scholars. Conversely, al-Ṭabarī is dismissing the linguistic bases of such an argument together with the wider point which flows from it. He had mentioned in his synopsis that the aim of the current discussion is to determine
whether the *ism* which forms part of the genitive construct in the *basmala* is a noun or whether it is a *maṣdar* which possesses verbal agency via a process of *tasmiyya*. Notably in his exegesis of Q. 55:78, *tabāraka’smu rabbi*ka dhī’l-jalāli wa’l-ikrām (*Sanctified is the name of your Lord …*), which is one of a number of analogous verses used to defend the thesis that the *ism* and *musammā* were equivalent, al-Ṭabarī employed lexical paraphrase to explain its structure, stating ‘*tabārak dhikru rabbi*ka’.*

It is intriguing that there exist certain parallels between al-Ṭabarī’s critique of the argument in support of the *ism* and *musammā* paradigm and its treatment in the work of the Basran grammarian and Mu’tazili scholar Ibn Jinnī (d. 392/1002), who devotes a section to the *idāfat al-ism ilā’l-musammā wa’l-musammā ilā’l-ism* in his seminal philological treatise *al-Khaṣāʾīs*. He mentions that his mentor Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī (d. 377/987) frequently visited this topic and was seemingly mesmerised by it and, evocatively, Ibn Jinnī insists that therein existed unassailable grammatical proof of the flawed nature of the belief which some hold that the *ism* is the *musammā*. Like al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Jinnī dismisses Abū ʿUbayda’s reference to Labīd’s poetry and his view regarding *bi’smi’llāh* being the same as *bi’llāh*. He discusses his former explanation in some detail, referring to Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī’s views on the subject and the fact that he explains it through the syntactic phenomenon of *ḥadhf al-muḍāf* (the ellipsis of the former part of the genitive construct). And he adds that he (and Abū ʿAlī) would be in agreement with regards to the *ma’nā* suggested by Abū ʿUbayda but that the latter speaks of there being an otiose element in the verse; while, they speak of *nuqṣān*: namely there is a missing component supplied through reference to ellipsis (*thumma ism (ma’nā) al-salām ‘alaykumā)*. Interestingly, Ibn Jinnī described the topic of *al-ism* and the *musammā* in the language of Arabic as being abstruse (*gharīb*), and dramatically concluded that few are able to become familiar with and penetrate it.

The key point here is whether at the time when al-Ṭabarī had outlined and disseminated his arguments through the *tafsīr* whether those in the traditionalist camps were favouring the doctrine that the *ism huwa al-musammā*, as many later Ḥanbalīs did. Be that as it may, the fact that there existed friction between al-Ṭabarī and individuals affiliated to traditionalist groups, including the later Ḥanbalīs, may well have resulted from the finer qualifications he was offering on this topic and other related issues.

While al-Ṭabarī’s commentary is replete with doctrinal discussions in which key points of dogma are painstakingly expounded upon and then appropriately endorsed in light of his own standpoint, he was also the author of two theological treatises which unambiguously introduced orthodox dogma using a credal format. According to biographical evidence, parts of the *tafsīr* were initially available as early as 270/883, while the whole of the work was in circulation between the years 283/896 and 290/903.
second, *al-Tabṣīr fī maʿālim al-dīn*, appeared subsequent to the *Jāmi‘*.*83* The *Ṣarīḥ* is divided into pithy sections which discuss select points of dogma, adducing dicta sourced from the Pious Ancestors to highlight that the theological views presented in the work encapsulate the essence of a traditionally defined orthodoxy. Doctrines he addresses in this include the uncreated nature of the Qurʾān; the reality of the beatific vision; the divine creation of the human act; hierarchies among the Companions and their virtues; the status of the articulated word of God; the divisible nature of faith; the relationship between the *ism* and the *musammā*; and the gravity of falsely attributing statements to someone – the fact that al-Ṭabarī is drawing attention to this last point appears to hint at certain doctrinal allegations which were made against him and are recorded in biographical anecdotes. He uses the *Ṣarīḥ* to affirm that his positions on the key doctrinal issues are the ones outlined in the text and that anyone insinuating otherwise is an utter miscreant who deserves God’s wrath.*84* Doctrinal points are covered in greater depth and detail in the second related treatise, *al-Tabṣīr fī maʿālim al-dīn*, a work which was written for the people of Āmul, Tabaristān, following a request that al-Ṭabarī compose a text providing a summary of the doctrines over which the community had differed.*85* Expressing the need to avoid discord on matters of faith and also highlighting the fact that the natives of Āmul were being led by a malevolent elite who had openly sown the seeds of dissension among them, particularly the easily beguiled common folk, it is the subject of the *ism* and the *musammā* with which he commences his disquisition. Significantly, he is not concerned with explaining the intricacies of the arguments in this regard but the topic provides him with an opening gambit as he bemoans the fact that those who delve into the subject have no appreciation as to what informs the debates, often misconstruing the fact that esteemed figures such as the traditionists Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 277/890) and Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī (d. 264/878) are said to have professed the doctrine of the *ism* being equivalent to the *musammā*, erroneously deducing from that a presumed orthodox position to which they ignorantly and crudely subscribed; al-Ṭabarī warns that they were unaware of the gravity of what they were saying.

In the *Ṣarīḥ al-sunna*, al-Ṭabarī simply states that the doctrine of whether the *ism* is the *musammā* or an entity other than it represents a senseless innovation concerning which there are no (early) dicta which might be sought for guidance on the matter, nor indeed statements attributed to respected authorities to which one might pay heed; he then advises that it suffices to follow the lead of the Qurʾānic verse which states *and to God belongs the exalted names so plead to Him through them* (Q. 7:180). It was the phrasing provided by this very verse which certain traditionalist scholars adopted when formulating their compromise solution to the quandary of the relationship between the *nomen* and *nomenatum*: namely, that *al-ism līʾl-musammā*. Later scholarship was to explain that there were occasions when the *ism* was identical with the *musammā*, just as there were instances when the two should be considered as
constituting separate identities. It was also posited that the assertion of the formula al-ism li’l-musammā circumvented the doctrinal obstacles predicated by the Muʿtazilī position. The formula also meant that theoretical tensions about the nature of al-tasmiyya, a veritable tertium quid in relation to the ism wa’l-musammā, were expeditiously dissipated. Al-Ṭabarī had demonstrated with clinical insight and precision in the Jāmiʿ that insurmountable logical absurdities resulted from upholding the concept of the ontological unity between the ism and the musammā. The gist of his arguments was presented with greater simplicity, but equally decisive terms in both the Ṣarīḥ al-sunna and the Tabṣīr, with the aim of showing that such discussions were invariable futile and best avoided as the Pious Ancestors had never intended that the paradigm should serve as a shibboleth of orthodoxy. It is worthy of note that aspects of the arguments presented by al-Ṭabarī on the subject resonated in the works of luminaries such as the Zāhirī scholar Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), and likewise Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), who presented a detailed treatment of the topic with the aim of showing that while the ‘orthodox’ reaction to the Muʿtazilī doctrine was understandable, the resultant doctrine did have its flaws and undesirable consequences. Indeed, in his treatment of the topic, Ibn Taymiyya quotes extensively from al-Ṭabarī, insisting that it was his position as articulated in the Ṣarīḥ al-sunna which was worthy of emulation. In the Jāmiʿ al-Ṭabarī’s mastery of the arguments is evident and he took advantage of the latitude provided by the forum of taḥṣīr to broach the topic in an allusive but effective manner, underlining the intricate disposition of his own theological standpoints and the skill with which they are synthesised; moreover, the references to the topic in his credal compositions reveal the consistency of his position.

Characterising the Theological Thought of al-Ṭabarī

In a study of al-Ṭabarī’s treatment of the Qur’anic pericopes in which the beatific vision is extolled, Gösta Vitestam made the case that his theological approach was intellectual but somewhat veiled. He even suggests it was distinguished from the philosophy of the Ḥanbalīs, adherents of ‘naïve popular piety’, and he reasoned that in certain ways al-Ṭabarī ‘was bounded by the traditional taḥṣīr and did not dare to transgress its limits’. Vitestam did refer to the ‘openmindedness’ with which al-Ṭabarī explored certain theological topics as being rather astonishing, but seems to attribute his whole drive as being regulated by his wanting to win the confidence of the orthodox, which hints at a somewhat disingenuous aspect to the aims of his endeavour. Vitestam argues that al-Ṭabarī wanted to show he was keenly acquainted with the concept of God for which the speculative theologians stood. But on the evidence of the Jāmiʿ, in contrast, al-Ṭabarī’s foray into the realm of speculative theology is barely diffident or guarded, nor is it couched in moderate terms, but is rather vigorously and assertively pursued. He is not unctuously seeking to appease
certain theological quarters and camps, but independently aligning himself with the views he felt were representative of an accepted orthodoxy. In this respect Claude Gilliot has argued in his monograph on al-Ṭabarî that his commentary helps pave the way for the articulation of a traditionally-based orthodoxy and even hints that he did not have an explicit opponent in mind when pondering theological questions, although the aforementioned discussions and al-Ṭabarî’s subtle criticism of the grammarians reveal that specific adversaries, movements and even ideas were clearly within the vista of the dialectical sweep of his own arguments. And a number of traditionists proved to be implacable opponents of certain doctrinal positions al-Ṭabarî advocated. One theme evident from Gilliot’s study is that the Jāmiʻ was not principally concerned with the issues of dogma and dialectics but rather it aimed at the consolidation of an accepted orthodoxy based on theological views and discourses already in circulation. Franz Rosenthal concluded his influential study of the life and works of al-Ṭabarî by stating that ‘there is every reason to assume that his dogmatic beliefs were basically those of the mainstream of ‘orthodox’ Islam as it was conceived, for instance, in the environment of Ibn Ḥanbal’. He went on to say that ‘nothing to the contrary can be observed in his preserved dogmatic writings such as the Ṣarîh and the Ṭabšīr’. Yet, as can be seen from the marked independence of thought and robust objectivity with which al-Ṭabarî forensically analysed theological topics in the Jāmiʻ, his brand of theology possessed an adventurously intricate edge to it and he was prepared to differ not only with the Ḥanbalîs, but other key scholars as his gauging of the discourses on the ism and musammâ, together with his examination of the istiwâl verse, indicates.

Based on Joseph van Ess’ study of the historical emergence of the Mu’tazila and his conclusions regarding their role during the mihna together with the connection between them and later Mu’tazila, Christopher Melchert had presented a new identification of all the major opposing theological parties of the third/ninth century. He spoke of there being three main parties during the third/ninth century: traditionalists (including luminaries such as Ahmad Ibn Ḥanbal), rationalists (Ḥanafî jurists and the leading Mu’tazî scholars) and semi-rationalists (self-proclaimed traditionalists who employed apologetic theology). He posited that traditionalists tended to be opponents of dialectics, whose approach to law and issues of theology was strictly informed by scriptural sources such as the Qur’an and hadîth. In contrast the semi-rationalists made ample use of speculative methods and constructs in approaches to theology and law, resorting to rationally based analogues. Melchert identified al-Ṭabarî as one of a number of third/ninth-century figures who harboured semi-rationalist tendencies. However, one senses that the term ‘semi-rationalist’, which by Melchert’s own admission retains an indistinctness, probably overlooks the fine distinctions with regards to the subtle fusion between traditionalism and rationalism within the make up of al-Ṭabarî’s theological position together with the
individuality which is a mark of his work, whether it is in the realm of his approach to theology, jurisprudence, or even history. Such generalised terms overlook the dynamics of the currency of a developing orthodoxy, as al-Tabarî’s *tafsîr* shows, although the classification provides some definition with regards to prevailing attitudes within the Sunnî camps. Fascinatingly, with the modern context in mind, Walid Saleh discerningly points out that ‘al-Ṭabarî was never Salafî enough for the Salafîs’ and that for the purposes of their agenda his work was usurped by Ibn Kathîr’s Qur’ân commentary.94 Clifford Bosworth refers to the fact that al-Ṭabarî generally treated the verses of the Qur’an ‘from a grammatical and lexicographical standpoint’; he also notes that the author makes both ‘dogmatic theological and legal deductions from the text’ and that his ‘own dogmatic beliefs appear to have been basically within the framework of “orthodox” Islam as conceived, for example, in the environment of Ibn Ḥanbal just before al-Ṭabarî’s time and that of al-Ash’ârî after him’.95 However there are unique characteristics to the constitution of al-Ṭabarî’s dogmatic theology which sometimes place him at odds with specific points of doctrine which Ibn Ḥanbal and his students would have endorsed, and this would also apply with regards to his use of *kalâm* techniques in the defence of dogma; yet by the same token he does not fully subscribe to the unfettered brand of speculative and theology with which al-Ash’ârî and his later adherents are associated, making unique his own synthesis of theology and approaches to its defence. Even the position he was to take in defending or repudiating specific Prophetic traditions underlines the thoroughly objective ethic he adopted in his works.

**Al-Ṭabarî in the Biographical Sources**

Despite the fact that classical biographical sources generously acknowledge the distinction of al-Ṭabarî’s intellectual achievements and his contribution to the classical traditions of learning, also comprised alongside the profusion of adulatory dicta are selected reports that speak of contentious issues and dramatic episodes in which his resolve on key theological, *hadîth*-based and legal standpoints was tested. The incidents in question provide further context to the theological discussions and perspectives which feature in the *Jâmi‘*, and the bases of his own position on crucial points of doctrine. It is worth drawing attention to the provenance of the biographical sources on al-Ṭabarî, many of which emanate from materials collated by students linked with him. Two such students, al-Qâḍî Abû Bakr Ahmad b. Kâmil b. Khalaf (d. 350/961) and Abû Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzîz b. Muḥammad al-Ṭabarî (fl. third-fourth/ninth-tenth centuries), are said to have compiled biographies devoted to their mentor and although their works have not survived, their names appear with regularity as informants and narrators for the panoply of reports which cover his life and times in biographical literature.96 Another student, Abû Muḥammad ʿAbd Allâh b. Aḥmad b. Jaʿfar al-Farghânî (d. 362/972–3), was the author of an important supplement (*ṣila*)
to al-Ṭabarī’s seminal history, which included an obituary devoted to his mentor. Ibn Kāmil is credited with a number of notable exegetical and legal works and he was responsible for promulgating the school of jurisprudence which was linked with al-Ṭabarī, who by his own admission had previously adhered to the Shāfi‘ī tradition of fiqh for a period of some ten years, confirming the significance he attached to the notion of independent ijtihād. Rosenthal notes that al-Ṭabarī’s own works are a very ‘limited source of hard biographical data’ about the author, adding that the principal materials on his life were preserved in three works: the Taʾrikh Baghdād of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071); the Tāʾrikh madinat Dimashq of Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571/1176); and the Irshād al-arīb ilā maʿrifat al-adīb of Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (d. 629/1229), which furnished the most exhaustive account of his life – it was Yāqūt who intimated at the end of his entry on al-Ṭabarī that most of the reports on his life were sourced from the biographical works devoted to him by Ibn Kāmil and ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. Rosenthal suggested that later writers principally relied upon the profusion of reports preserved in these compilations, although it should be noted that unique references to incidents in his lifetime are found in other historical materials.

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī commences al-Ṭabarī’s entry in the Taʾrikh Baghdād by recounting that despite the fact that news of his death was not announced, those who gathered for the ritual burial prayer were numerous and that vigils were held at his grave for many months; he also reports that he was the subject of elegies composed by religious scholars and littérateurs. Yāqūt mentions that, due to fear of the common folk, al-Ṭabarī had to be buried at night, as accusations were made against him about his Shī‘ī sympathies. This is previously recorded in the work of the ethicist and historian Miskawayhi (d. 421/1030), who mentions his being interred at night due to the rabble preventing his funeral taking place during the day, adding that he was accused of ‘rafḍ’ and ‘ilḥād’ (‘Shī‘ī tendencies’ and ‘heresy’). In his al-Muntaẓam fi tāʾrikh al-umam waʾl-mulūk, Ibn al-Jawzī repeats most of the detail found in al-Khaṭīb’s work, but while discussing his funeral and the fact his death was not publicised he offers some thoughts as to why al-Ṭabarī was accused of harbouring Shī‘ī sympathies, referring to al-Ṭabarī’s opinion that the wiping over the feet associated with ritual ablution was permissible in lieu of washing them, a position favoured by the Imāmīs. As argued by Rosenthal, even a brief examination of the discussions of the relevant Qur’anic passage, Q. 5:7, as presented in the tafsīr shows that al-Ṭabarī’s position is undoubtedly aligned with the perspective advanced by Sunnī scholars, with his own discussion of ‘wiping’ being qualified through citations of authenticated qirāʾāt which support the different interpretations; still, the espousal of such a view was hardly evidence of any Shī‘ī leanings. Ibn al-Jawzī quotes from the work of the historian Thābit b. Sinān (d. 365/975) when mentioning the accusations of rafḍ, an important source upon which later historians relied.
Biographical works also attributed allegations of Shi‘ism to the fact that al-Ṭabarī had devoted a study to the famous Ghadīr Khumm tradition which he discussed in a work he composed devoted to the virtues of al-Imām ʿAlī, Kitāb fadāʾil ʿAlī; in the text he authenticated the actual tradition and appended to it faḍāʾil materials on Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. Indeed, the subject is touched upon by Yāqūt, who hints that it was probably cited as evidence of his Shi‘ism. Nonetheless, there were of course earlier hadīth scholars, including Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892), who had already included it in their collections. Its citation together with discussions germane to the technicalities of its isnād documentation was hardly an indicator of dogmatic bias; the fact that the tradition was glossed in ways to reflect the legitimacy and primacy of the claims of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalib to the office of caliphate within Shi‘ism remains an entirely separate issue; besides, al-Ṭabarī’s tafsīr and the two credal treatises he composed confirm his staunch loyalty to the standard doctrines on the caliphate articulated by traditionalist Sunnī scholars. There were slight variations on the Ghadīr Khumm tradition, such as the hadīth al-thaqalayn, which featured in Sunnī collections, including Muslim’s Ṣaḥīḥ; and indeed the dictum referred to as the hadīth al-tayr. Although, again, the inclusion of these traditions in these extensive collections was part and parcel of hadīth scholarship.

The concerted attempts to tarnish and discredit al-Ṭabarī’s Sunnī reputation appear to have their origin in some of the disputes in which he himself was embroiled. In the ensuing passages of Ibn al-Jawzī’s Muntazam, the person responsible for bringing a number of allegations against al-Ṭabarī to the attention of a figure by the name of Naṣr the chamberlain is Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Abī Dāwūd (d. 316/929). His father was the famous traditionist, Sulaymān b. al-Ashʿath (d. 275/888), who was a distinguished student of Ibn Ḥanbal and transmitted the corpora of the amālī (also referred to as the masāʾil), constituting many of his legal responsa and whose sunan collection of traditions was renowned. Among the accusations discussed in Ibn al-Jawzī’s account is that al-Ṭabarī professed the beliefs of the Jahmīs (those with presumed Muʿtazilī inclinations) on account of his explanation of Q. 5:64, where it is mentioned that God’s two hands are stretched out, which he purportedly paraphrased as ‘God’s grace’ (niʿma), a figurative spin on the verses which many rationalists favoured; in the Muntazam, Ibn al-Jawzī reports that he denied this. Al-Ṭabarī’s commentary has an extended discussion of the various explanations proffered for this verse, in which he initially points out that in the usage and poetry of the Arabs such turns of expressions were used to symbolise benevolence and munificence as opposed to ungenerousness, but he then includes a gamut of other explanations which are individually analysed. Among these are views advocated by speculative theologians (ahl al-jadal) some of whom posit that ‘His two hands’ means ‘His grace’, while others equate the term with ‘quwwa’ (‘power’), seeking parallels with a second Qur’anic verse (Q. 38:45). Other explanations are listed, including yad
being paraphrased as representing His sovereignty and treasures (mulk wa-khazāʾinuhu) and one which identifies yad as being one of His attributes, noting that it is not an organ (jāriha) in the form of a human hand. The final part of the discussion of the verse simply comprises separate but cogent refutations of the view that equates yad with niʿma, which are successively listed but introduced through the formula ‘they say’, and it is with the refutations that he concludes the section, although the last opinion cited makes it plain that it is inconceivable in the language of the Arabs that the dual can be used to connote an entire class, as in yadayn for niʿma.

The way the tafsīr is structured enabled al-Ṭabarī to include all sorts of perspectives and explanations with which he did not necessarily agree, and while he regularly shares his thoughts on his preferred view, there are also many instances in which he remains silent; still, concerning this particular verse, Abū Bakr’s claim appears unfounded.

The second allegation which Abū Bakr made was that al-Ṭabarī had narrated a dubious tradition which mentions that upon the Prophet’s death his very soul flowed into the hands of ʿAlī who proceeded to ingest it; al-Ṭabarī disputes having offered such a wording, disclosing that he simply said he wiped his face with it. Ibn al-Jawzī considers the whole episode of the accusations to be highly implausible (muḥāl) before going on to imply that the incidents were credible because al-Ṭabarī actually responded to the charges by way of an epistle sent to Naṣr, the chamberlain, in which he elaborated ‘there is no assemblage lower in Islam than this despicable group’. The fact that al-Ṭabarī referred to ‘this group’ using this sort of language indicates his anger at the seriousness of the allegations. Ibn al-Jawzī describes the statement as unpleasant, observing that ‘he should have confronted his actual accuser and not condemn an entire group, given that he was aware of the affiliation of the individual making the accusation’.114 Notwithstanding the fact that al-Ṭabarī had taken stances on theological points which brought him into conflict with certain traditionist scholars, it is the disputes with Ibn Abī Dāwūd which appear to have been particularly divisive, affecting judgements about his Sunnī allegiances in the later biographical sources.115 Bearing in mind the more general reasons given for al-Ṭabarī’s treatment of the Ghadir Khumm report, it seems that his discussion of its authentication and transmission may have its origins in the disputes with Ibn Abī Dāwūd as some reports indicate that originally al-Ṭabarī set about authenticating the Ghadir Khumm dictum upon hearing that Ibn Abī Dāwūd had questioned its genuineness, and this led to his working on the composition of the faḍāʾil works, as indicated above.116 According to the hadīth critic Ibn ʿAdī (d. 365/976), Ibn Abī Dāwūd was renowned for his fiercely anti-Shīʿī stances, questioning not only the traditions such as the Ghadir Khumm and the hadīth al-tayr dictum, which were viewed as being symbolically important within Shīʿism, but also promulgating reports which impugned ʿAlī’s reputation; Ibn Abī Dāwūd is said to have been so sceptical of the hadīth al-tayr tradition that he declared
that if it were true, it would invalidate the concept of the Prophethood of Muḥammad.\textsuperscript{117} It is noted that having been banished from Baghdad for some years, he later returned and adopted a much more conciliatory attitude and joined the Ḥanbalī \textit{madhhab (tahānbala)}; it was even stated that he set about composing a work which promulgated the virtues of “Ali, upon hearing of which al-Ṭabarī sardonically declared, “The [slumbering] sentinel has bellowed \textit{Allāhu akbar},” a turn of phrase used to mock someone pretending to be alert.\textsuperscript{118} Referring to the reports in \textit{Yaḵūt’s \textit{Irshād}}, Rosenthal did argue that the various questions raised by individuals about the historicity of the episode at Ghadīr Khumm impelled al-Ṭabarī to take a stand, which led to his authorship of the \textit{Fadā’il “Ali}. Intriguingly, Rosenthal argued that Sunnī scholarship expressed “discomfort” with al-Ṭabarī’s efforts in respect of this putative work and he goes on to argue that while al-Ṭabarī’s “personal identification with “orthodox” attitudes cannot be doubted, he appears to have tried to be evenhanded in an objective scholarly manner, much to the embarrassment of later Sunnī scholars.\textsuperscript{119} However, the issue here is not that Sunnī scholars were embarrassed by the subject of his work, as other notable hadīth specialists had already pored over and validated issues surrounding the transmission of these reports, but rather their disquiet stemmed from the fact that al-Ṭabarī was being inaccurately accused of harbouring Shī‘ī inclinations, a charge which was in their view unfounded. Thus, for example, in the \textit{Mīzān al-i‘tidāl} of Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahābī (d. 748/1348), al-Ṭabarī is described as having “a slight inclination towards \textit{tashāyu}” and \textit{muwālāt} which is innocuous.\textsuperscript{120} Picking up on these points in the commentary on the text, the \textit{Līsān al-mīzān}, Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1448) tactfully probes the validity of these claims, referring to an accusation by Aḥmad b. “Ali al-Sulaymānī (d. 404/1013) which contends that al-Ṭabarī used “to manufacture” traditions for Shī‘īs, which Ibn Ḥajar describes as an indiscriminately spurious charge. He then remarks that al-Ṭabarī was a distinguished and esteemed scholar who may have had faults, but that to inveigh against him with falsehoods and baseless insinuations was deplorable. He goes on to offer the interesting observation that perhaps al-Ṭabarī was being confused with his namesake, Abū Ja‘far b. Rustam al-Ṭabarī, who was a renowned Shī‘ī scholar.\textsuperscript{121} This same conclusion was earlier reached by Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), who described seeing a two-volume work which brought together transmissions of the Ghadīr Khumm report and a similar work devoted to the \textit{ḥadīth al-tayr}. Ibn Kathīr also repeats the claim, which appears to originate with Ibn Abī Dāwūd, that al-Ṭabarī was said to have professed the Shī‘ī view regarding the wiping of the feet when performing ablution as opposed to the view which stipulated that washing them was obligatory. He briefly refers to the ensuing confusion between the identification of Ibn Rustam and al-Ṭabarī, arguing that the latter’s \textit{Jāmī} clearly shows that he stipulates that washing the feet in water, together with rubbing them at the same time, was compulsory, noting that he used the expression “\textit{masḥ},” which was misconstrued by many who failed to appreciate the distinctions he intended; the implication is that al-Ṭabarī is absolved of holding such a view.\textsuperscript{122}
There were pre-existing hostilities between al-Ṭabarī and Dāwūd b. ʿAlī al-İsfahānī (d. 270/884) the founder of the Zāhirī school. It is not insignificant that during one particular debate al-Ṭabarī had disputed with Dāwūd over a topic in which he overwhelmed him to the extent that he was unable to respond; as a result one of Dāwūd’s students began to berate him, prompting al-Ṭabarī to leave. Although the student in question was reprimanded by Dāwūd, al-Ṭabarī went on to compose a text entitled al-Radd ᵉlā dhī’l-asfār, a refutation evidently linked to the topics discussed in this incident. ¹²³ Despite this, al-Ṭabarī was said to have held Dāwūd’s scholarship in great esteem and reportedly had in his possession 80 fascicules of his works which he had actually transcribed. ¹²⁴ Friction between al-Ṭabarī and the Zāhirīs persisted through Dāwūd’s son, Abū Bakr, who is said to have been piqued by al-Ṭabarī’s aforementioned encounter with his father. Rosenthal points out that biographical reports do recount that when by chance Abū Bakr and al-Ṭabarī were brought together, Abū Bakr implied that he had wanted to vent his annoyance at him, but that he was won over by al-Ṭabarī’s excessive praise for his father and the respect he had accorded him as his son. Rosenthal concluded that this would tend to suggest that tensions between al-Ṭabarī and Abū Bakr were amicably resolved; ¹²⁵ however, it seems highly likely that the antagonism between al-Ṭabarī and the Zāhirīs remained.

Indeed, some centuries later it was Ibn Kathīr who reported that ‘he was buried in his home because common folk among the Ḥanbalīs and the rabble attached to them prevented his burial during the day, attributing him to rafḍ; and there were ignoramuses who accused him of heresy’. ¹²⁶ Refuting the insinuations, Ibn Kathīr contends that they were simply ‘emulating Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Dāwūd al-Faqīh al-Zāhirī, who used to criticise him [al-Ṭabarī], accusing him of grave offences and rafḍ’. ¹²⁷ Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 380/990 or 395/1003) lists under Abū Bakr’s works a text entitled al- İntīṣār min Abī Ja’far al-Ṭabarī, which would confirm the rivalry of sorts between the two figures. ¹²⁸ One does find criticisms of al-Ṭabarī circulating in later Zāhirī literature, hinting at lingering tensions. One of the most prominent Zāhirī luminaries, the Andalusian scholar Ibn Ḥazm, produced a detailed critique of al-Ṭabarī’s supposed stance on the obligation of knowing God’s attributes by way of istidlāl (‘deductive reasoning’). ¹²⁹ He was of the view that al-Ṭabarī was ‘a great figure among our predecessors whom we respect for his virtues’, but added that his beliefs on the topic, which were derived by an elevation of the status of analogical reasoning, had to be contested. ¹³⁰

**Historical Trajectories of the Discord**

Much more arresting in the biographical literature are the narratives which refer to al-Ṭabarī’s disagreement with the emerging Ḥanbalīs, which is all very ironic given that as a young man when he left Āmul, his home town in Ṭabaristān, his intention was to study traditions with Ibn Ḥanbal in Baghdād. ¹³¹ Indications that there were
issues with specific individuals who were associated with the Ḥanbalīs is evident from al-Khaṭīb’s inclusion of an anecdote which records that the traditionist scholar Muhammad b. Ishāq b. Khuzayma (d. 311/923) had borrowed a copy of the Jāmi‘ from a student to whom the text had been dictated by al-Ṭabarī between the years of 283/896 to 290/902–3, and that having borrowed the tafsīr for some years, he declared that no one was more knowledgeable than al-Ṭabarī and that the Ḥanbalīs had indeed ‘wronged him’. Ibn Khuzayma also features in a connected report in which a student tells the tale that, having returned to Nishāpūr from Baghdad, where he studied traditions, he was asked by Ibn Khuzayma about his teachers there. Having alluded to the individuals with whom he studied, he was questioned as to whether he had benefited from al-Ṭabarī’s knowledge. He replied, ‘No’, explaining that while al-Ṭabarī was in Baghdad no one was able to meet with him as the Ḥanbalīs prevented students from seeing him. Expressing his dismay, Ibn Khuzayma replied that studying with al-Ṭabarī would have surpassed learning with all those other individuals. It was Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 772/1370), the Ashʿarī apologist, who poured ridicule on the idea that the Ḥanbalīs could have wielded such influence, to the extent that they prevented individuals from seeing him, although it has been pointed out that his view of the Ḥanbalīs was somewhat prejudiced. This wrangling with certain traditionalist individuals who were affiliated with the Ḥanbalīs is a recurring theme in the biographical sources, but although they are said to have been the instigators behind much of the ensuing hostility, it is evident from the rather refractory nature of al-Ṭabarī’s relationship with the Zāhirīs, and indeed the traditionist Ibn Abī Dāwūd, that there existed a range of misgivings emanating from various groups and individuals, particularly with regards to points of theology and rational approaches to the defence of doctrine, and even points on jurisprudence and hadith, which accounted for the broader antagonism between al-Ṭabarī and his opponents. Such tensions became a catalyst for a sustained outpouring of enmity and over the centuries original accusations were given further currency. Al-Ṭabarī’s literary legacy, in addition to his biography, certainly indicates that he should be seen as an independently-minded individual who enjoyed mastery over key traditions of learning, all of which inevitably brought him into intellectual as well as personal disagreements with his peers, whether they were jurists, grammarians, traditionists, or indeed theologians. He was prepared to clash not only with his ideological opponents among the speculative theologians of the Muʿtazilis but also with those who belonged to the broad alliance of the Sunnī camps, including traditionists, among whom were Ḥanbalīs, and those who were advocates of a rational defence, treatment and qualification of points of dogma and theology. Indeed, it was with an independent frame of mind and even-handedness that he broached scholarly topics, a point very much discerned in Rosenthal’s view of the character of his scholarship. In his biography of al-Ṭabarī, al-Farghānī speaks eloquently of his fearing no one despite the ignominy of his being treated
obnoxiously, adding that his adversaries were ignoramuses, those driven by envy, and even heretics.136

According to the initially allusive account in Yaqqūt’s *Irshād*, around the year 297/907, al-Ṭabarī was sought out in the mosque by the Ḥanbalīs one Friday and questioned concerning Ahmad Ibn Ḥanbal and about the ḥadīth al-julūs ‘alā l-ʿarsh. The context for this seems to have been related to al-Ṭabarī’s composition of the *Iḥktilāf al-fuqahāʾ*, a work which collated the opinions of key jurists and was supposedly composed to assist him in recollecting the views of those with whom he was debating. This was one among an impressive array of works he devoted to legal topics, including the *Latef al-qawl fī aḥkām sharāʾiʿ al-Islām*, which apparently encompassed the sum and substance of his legal views. Still, there appear to have been objections as to why Ibn Ḥanbal was not included among the authorities listed in the *Iḥktilāf* work.137 Al-Ṭabarī’s response was to have said Ahmad’s views on khilāf are ‘not deliberated over’, to which came the response that other scholars have cited his views on ikhtilāf; al-Ṭabarī countered by stating that he had ‘not seen [instances] of anyone citing him in this regard and nor was he aware of any of his companions being depended upon therein’.138 The discussions à propos the ḥadīth al-julūs ‘alā l-ʿarsh centred on an interpretation of the last part of Q. 17:79, perchance, your Lord might bring you back to a highly extolled station.139 One gloss of the latter part of the verse attributed to the exegete Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. 104/722) referred to the Prophet being sat on the glorious throne. In Yaqqūt’s account al-Ṭabarī is said to have mentioned the ḥadīth al-julūs ‘alā l-ʿarsh and asserted it was muḥāl (‘impossible’), apparently citing a verse of poetry to drive home his point, much to the vexation of the Ḥanbalīs and aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth who leapt up and began throwing their ink pots at him. In the aftermath of this al-Ṭabarī quickly sought refuge in his home, where stones were thrown at its entrance, thereby blocking access to the property. Apparently, ‘thousands’ of police intervened to protect him from the common folk.140 Rosenthal has suggested there are manifest elements of hyperbole in the accounts of this incident, particularly the references to ‘thousands of police’ being called upon to intervene, and he has even played down the suggestion that as a consequence of these events al-Ṭabarī composed an apology to the Ḥanbalīs, spending the remainder of his life praising the virtues of Ibn Ḥanbal and the sound nature of his beliefs to the extent that he inveighed against anyone who insinuated that he implied otherwise.141 Yaqqūt remarks that it is even claimed that his work on ikhtilāf was found buried in his home following his death and that copies were made of the text.142 Notwithstanding the formulaic elements in the accounts of these events, the fact remains that there was undoubtedly hostility between al-Ṭabarī and certain individuals who were associated with the ahl al-ḥadīth and the Ḥanbalīs; and it was principally theological issues which appear to be the source of his travails, although topics germane to ritual law and even traditions emerge in disputes recounted in the biographical literature.143 Ibn
al-Jawzī reports that in the year 309/923 Abū Jaʿfar was asked to attend the home of the vizier ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā in order to debate with the Ḥanbalīs; however, even though al-Ṭabarī showed up, the Ḥanbalīs did not appear – it is stated that they had a number of specified grievances against him. The event may well have been related to the accusations about al-Ṭabarī’s theological views; in his al-Kāmil fiʾl-taʿrīkh, Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233), bemoans the fact that the common folk egregiously prevented al-Ṭabarī’s public funeral on account of the allegations of his inclination to rajd and ilḥād, but in relation to the charges he indicates that it was the same vizier ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā who actually exclaimed ‘By God had these people been asked to elaborate as to what is meant by rajd and ilḥād, they would neither know nor comprehend [the meaning]’. Ibn al-Athīr goes on to claim that some Ḥanbalī individuals were actually behind this and the common folk simply followed their lead. It is not insignificant that numerous theological points made within the taṣfīr would have caused consternation to those of a stern religiosity, and, as has been mentioned, even the use of dialectical frameworks was spurned by arch-traditionists. Figures such as the Ḥanbalī al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Barbahārī (d. 329/941) spoke of the baleful nature of the kalām-based procedure, even pronouncing that such a method led to the ‘igniting of doubts in the heart even though its proponent may arrive at truth and the sunna’. Regarding al-Barbahārī, Rosenthal did conclude that although his ‘name is not mentioned in connection with al-Ṭabarī’s Ḥanbalite trouble, he must be seen as the person behind most of it’. Yet it seems inevitable that the seeds of the disputes between al-Ṭabarī and his detractors were sown much earlier, when the Jāmiʿ was first composed and gradually disseminated through al-Ṭabarī’s lectures, well before al-Barbahārī became active; and, intellectually, he was less influential than Ibn Abī Dāwūd, who remained a somewhat implacable foe. Ibn Abī Dāwūd was respected in his lifetime as a traditionist, becoming a figure around whom opposition to al-Ṭabarī could consolidate. Indeed, despite its late provenance there is a report in the Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ of al-Dhahabī which provides some sense of the support which Ibn Abī Dāwūd could muster: it states that ‘the Ḥanābilīs were the ḥizb (‘cohorts’) of Abū Bakr b. Abī Dāwūd and that they were numerous and agitated against Ibn Jarīr, causing him harm to the extent that he confined himself to his home’. With regards to the explanation of the verse Q. 17:79 provided in the taṣfīr, al-Ṭabarī takes the view that the maqām referred to the Prophet’s being able to intercede on that day; and this too was a second view with which the exegete Mujāhid is associated, although he is actually cited as the source for the report that the Prophet would be seated on the throne. However, al-Ṭabarī does include the gloss which refers to the Prophet being seated on the throne but it is one among a sequence of explanations he introduces for the verse. Significantly, having registered that view, he follows it up by categorically adducing Prophetic traditions which identifies the ’maqāman
mahmūdan’ with the act of intercession, and these are introduced by al-Ṭabarī with the statement that they provide ‘the most preferred two statements on the (subject) in terms of correctness’, although he does go on to ponder at length the sundry theological implications of the discussions and viewpoints germane to the julūs narrative, sensitively attempting to find subtle ways of evaluating them. In his voluminous Kitāb al-sunna, which preserves a miscellany of legal, theological, exegetical and even paraenetic statements attributed to Ahmad b. Hanbal and the circle of scholars who were closely linked with him and the orthodoxy he espoused, Abū Bakr al-Khallāl (d. 311/923) includes a detailed section devoted to the maqām al-mahmūd, quoting the Mujāhid explanation together with a selection of related materials, including dicta on the subject of al-julūs ‘alâ‘l-‘arsh as discussed by traditionists. In one of the reports Ibn Ḥanbal’s son, ʿAbd Allāh, reflects on a conversation he had with his father concerning the tradition’s isnād in which the former is said to have sighed due to the fact that it had not reached him with a chain of transmission that was ‘ālī (possessing a coveted shorter isnād). Al-Khallāl also recalls that his mentor, Abū Bakr al-Marrūdhī (d. 275/888–9), who was a student of Ibn Ḥanbal, actually had a work entitled Kitāb al-maqām al-mahmūd from which he read, al-Khallāl’s discussion of the topic is exceptionally detailed, including a welter of statements arguing for the veracity of the reports that the Prophet would be seated on the throne, with various luminaries separately pronouncing that whoever rejects the Mujāhid tradition and the inference that the Prophet would be seated on the throne ‘is jahmī’; ‘is disavowed’; or deserves to be ‘impeached’; figures such as Ishāq b. Rāhawayhi (d. 238/852) and Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī are ceremoniously cited for their endorsements; and there are reports affirming the reliability of Layth, who transmitted the view on the authority of Mujāhid; even the interpretation of dreams is invoked to support the explanation. It is unquestionable that this was a topic which led to passionate debates with respected traditionists offering strident defences of the interpretation; the reliability of the reports claiming that the Prophet would be seated on the throne is consistently defended throughout the section. While, for the rationalists among Muʿtazilī theologians and certain Sunnī individuals, the physicalities regarding the Prophet’s linkage with the glorious throne had implications for their notions of God’s divine transcendence. As noted above, in the Jāmiʿ al-Ṭabarī does include Mujāhid’s gloss, but with a measure of equanimity he simply qualified its importance by suggesting that there existed a preferred view: namely, that the verse in question was acclaming the Prophet’s role as an intercessor on that day. It was probably his support of such explanations which brought him into conflict with defenders of that particular interpretation of the verse; many of its supporters were figures later associated with the emerging Ḥanbalī school. The Baṣra grammarian al-Zajjāj, in his fleeting reference to the maqāman mahmūdan narrative briefly states that the best explanation is the one which equates it with the Prophet’s intercession, which would suggest that in his lifetime there were figures
linked with the Ḥanbalīs who were prepared to side with such views. The subtleties inherent in al-Ṭabarī’s convoluted explanation of the maqām verse were seemingly lost on later scholars who seized upon one of the opinions he endorsed in the tafsīr: al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272) actually remarks that al-Ṭabarī underpinned it (the notion of the Prophet’s being seated on the throne) using an ‘needlessly inflated avowal’. Al-Qurṭubī was to insist that such meanings can only be accommodated through the matrix of ta’wil: namely, that it was inappropriate to imply that God was restricted to space, location and direction. He also listed next to the mention of al-Ṭabarī a view ascribed to Abū Dāwūd al-Sijsīnī, Abū Bakr’s father, in which it is proclaimed that whoever denies this tradition (the Prophet’s sitting on the throne) is besmirched, thereby confirming the historical tension between the position taken by certain traditionists and the one countenanced by al-Ṭabarī, suggesting the dispute, in terms of its representing a struggle of ideas, was protracted and would have intensified once al-Ṭabarī’s Jāmiʿ, together with his teachings, was in circulation.

The chasms one can sometimes encounter between the positions taken by al-Ṭabarī on dogmatic issues covered in the Jāmiʿ and those included in the credal treatises of the traditionists, many of whom were later associated with the emerging Ḥanbalī tradition, do, it becomes evident, account for some of the criticisms directed towards him by his detractors. A further example of this can be seen in al-Ṭabarī’s treatment of the verse in which the heavenly kursī is mentioned (Q. 2:255), where he reports that the ahl al-tawīl differed over the semantic import of the term. He begins by mentioning that some have taken the view that the kursī represents God’s knowledge and he adduced a dictum linked with Ibn ʿAbbās which was narrated by al-Ṭabarī’s mentor, Abū Kurayb (d. 248/861–2), along with an auxiliary report sourced from Ibn ʿAbbās which contextualises the interpretation further. The next explanation offered is one which states that the kursī represents the ‘position of the qadamayn’ adding that ‘it issues a groaning sound like the sigh of a riding beast (aṭṭīṣ ka-aṭṭīṣ al-raḥl)’. A sequence of dicta is adduced to clarify the explanation, one of which speaks of the kursī being beneath the throne (ʿarsh) in the analogical vein of a footstool upon which sovereigns place their feet when seated on a throne. The sheer magnitude of the kursī and the throne is animated through various Prophetic traditions, one of which further speaks of the material relationship between the two as being akin to a ring being cast into the middle of a vast desolate plain. The final report presented by al-Ṭabarī is one which cites al-Hasan al-Baṣrī (d. 112/728), who declares that ‘the kursī is the ʿarsh’. Having listed the various positions, it is hinted that each of the views professed ‘has its foundation and mode of support’ before it is affirmed by al-Ṭabarī that the most apposite explanation is the one supported by the tradition in which the Prophet refers to the throne filling the heavens and the earth and says that He will sit upon it leaving not ‘four digits [of space]’, and that it issues a groan like the sigh of a riding beast when first mounted due to the weight [of its load] (inna lahu aṭṭīṣ ka-aṭṭīṣ al-raḥl.
al-jadīd idhā rukība min thiqālihi); three separate asānid bearing similar reports are listed.161 His tendency to include a raft of different opinions, some of which he possibly disagrees with, provides him with a means of making dexterous use of the gamut of perspectives and explanations presented for the explication of certain verses.162 Still, it is rather surprising, and even out of character, that having listed this final explanation and introduced it by announcing that it represented the preferred view, al-Ṭabarī then returns to the first gloss of the verse linked with Ibn ʿAbbās, noting ‘that the explanation explicitly verified by the Qurʾan is the statement of Ibn ʿAbbās’; namely, the one which equates the kursī with knowledge. The next segment of the verse, protecting them burdens Him not, is used to articulate the argument that ‘His knowledge of them [the heavens and earth] is no encumbrance to him’.163 The concatenation of Prophetic, lexical and poetic dicta subsequently attested by al-Ṭabarī to deliver an irrefutable connection between the kursī and ʿilm intimates that it was this very view that he seems to incline towards, especially as the discussion of the kursī narrative culminates with these points; besides, he had returned to Ibn ʿAbbās’ explanation afresh having already discussed its import. Why al-Ṭabarī would want to manoeuvre between these two seemingly contradictory standpoints is confounding, but such jockeying for position would have placed him at odds with certain traditionist contemporaries who were upholding the authenticity of the dicta which refer to the ‘groaning’ of the kursī and the ʿarsh.164 In actual fact, even the equating of the kursī with knowledge was viewed as an insidious means of circumventing the perceived anthropomorphic imagery presented by the tradition; indeed early traditionist scholars such as Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān b. Abī Shayba (d. 297/907) were composing epistles devoted to the ʿarsh and the panoply of traditions which were related about it.165 Discussing what he considered to be outrageous examples of Muʿtazī exegesis which were aimed at reconciling the meanings of the Qurʾan with dubious dogmatic inclinations, Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) actually included the equating of the kursī with God’s knowledge as one such example; so even the accommodation of such views within the body of the tafsīr was deemed ominous by those of a traditionist persuasion.166 Furthermore, formidable traditionist scholars such as Ibn Khuzayma and, in later years, Ibn Manda (d. 395/1004) along with Ibn Baṭṭa al-ʿUkbarī (d. 387/997) all defended the report in question.167 It was the dissenting Ḥanbalī Ibn al-Jawzī who dismissed it in his Shubhat al-tashbīh, condemning his Ḥanbalī cohorts for promulgating such dogmatic views, which he felt were vapid.168 Likewise Ibn ʿAsākir actually authored a work entitled Bayān al-wahm waʾl-takhlīṭ al-wāqī ʿfi hadīth al-aṭīt, pouring scorn on such interpretations and assailing the figure responsible for its narration: Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767), the author of the Sīra.169

The opposition an interpretation such as the one outlined by al-Ṭabarī would have faced is evident from the strident and protracted defence of the physical elements of the ʿarsh and kursī narratives which is mounted in the denunciatory work
of the traditionist al-Dārimī in a section entitled Bāb mā jā‘ bi‘l-kursī, aimed at countering the arguments of his ‘historical’ opponent the Mu‘tazilī Bishr al-Marīṣī. Arrestingly, he starts his philippic by talking of al-Marīṣī’s drawn out denial of God’s throne and seat, remonstrating with his preference for the dictum in which Ibn ʿAbbās equates the kursī with God’s knowledge. Al-Dārimī sets about questioning the isnād documentation for the tradition, arguing that it conflicts with what was narrated by trustworthy transmitters, noting there was a much more plausible dictum also narrated on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās which sanctioned a contrary opinion. Al-Dārimī refers to a plethora of traditions which contravene the figurative treatment of references to the throne and seat, taking the opportunity to assail his beleaguered opponent at every possible stage of his deliberations, often incorporating al-Marīṣī’s arguments verbatim. Also included is the very tradition which mentions ‘inna lahu aṭīṭ ka-aṭīṭ al-raḥl al-jadīd idhā rukiba min thiqalihi, which was initially endorsed as the preferred explanation for the kursī by al-Ṭabarī, but then passed over in favour of the Ibn ʿAbbās report.170 Al-Dārimī emphasises that although he and his fellow traditionalists accept necessarily such dicta, they also ‘believe in everything with which He describes himself and how He describes himself without qualification (bi-lā kayf)’. The scathing tone of al-Dārimī’s tirade gives some indication of the indignation aroused by the equating of the kursī with ‘ilm among certain traditionists; yet this is the explanation with which al-Ṭabarī concluded his exegesis; notwithstanding the fact that he uses the phrase ‘explicitly verified by the Qur’an’ to introduce it.171 It was the aṭīṭ tradition which was adduced in ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal’s Kitāb al-sunna wa‘l-radd ʿalā l-Jahmiyya, in a section dealing with dicta narrated on the subject of the throne and God the Almighty’s sitting on it; and moreover, in the treatise terms such as mumāssa (‘touching’) are used and any inference that the physicalities implied by such narratives infringed upon the notion of God’s transcendence is trenchantly dismissed as evidence of heresy.172 It is against the background of such discourses that opponents among the traditionist scholars would have assessed the theological musings of al-Ṭabarī’s Jāmi‘.

Although it would be absurd to assert that there existed a blanket opposition of sorts setting apart al-Ṭabarī and the Ḥanbalīs along with the traditionists, one does encounter points of dogma defended in the Kitāb al-sunna of ʿAbd Allāh which appear at odds with the views endorsed or preferred in the Jāmi‘, including the maqāman mahmūdan and even to an extent the discussion on the kursī. It was his approach to discussing and supporting theological issues such as these together with the independence of mind with which al-Ṭabarī approached legal and hadīth discussions which led to the controversies in which he became involved, engendering spurious accusations about al-Ṭabarī’s inclination to iḥlād, raḥīd and iʿtīzāl. Yet, as his discussion of istiwā‘ and his musings on the inappropriateness of the ism and musammā paradigm demonstrate, he was prepared not only to criticise indirectly
figures such as al-Farrāʾ and Abū ʿUbayda, who were not quite in the \textit{ahl al-jadal} camp, but also to take a stance against certain aspects of arch-traditionist discourses and selected doctrines he believed were not pertinent to expressions of religious orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{173} The vigour and passion with which contentious theological issues are tackled in the \textit{tafsīr} bespeak volumes about the dynamic which informs his own theology, giving the distinct impression that his struggle with his opponents is one epitomised by ideas. Despite the controversies and the fact that accusations lingered in the later sources about his so-called inclination to Shīʿīsm and unconventional theological views, in real terms the legacy of al-Ṭabarī remained undiminished and he continued to command the respect and admiration worthy of his contribution to the key traditions of learning which distinguished the Islamic sciences. Ibn al-Nadīm describes al-Ṭabarī as being one of the eminent scholars of his era, adding that he was a paragon of many of the traditional disciplines of learning, including the Qur’ānic sciences, grammar, poetry, philology and jurisprudence.\textsuperscript{174} And, when commenting on his \textit{tafsīr}, Ibn al-Nadīm remarks that no work of the like had ever been produced, pointing out that it had since been abridged by a number of scholars. When mentioning the works ascribed to Ibn Abī Dāwūd, Ibn al-Nadīm remarked that he also compiled a \textit{tafsīr} which emulated the \textit{tafsīr} of al-Ṭabarī, which was a subtle hint at the rivalry between the two.\textsuperscript{175} Testimonies referring to the superiority of the Jāmīʿ were to appear in successive biographical notices, from al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī’s biographical dictionary to the work of Yāqūt. In his \textit{Inbāḥ al-ruwāt ʿalā anbāḥ al-nuḥāt}, a work which offered one of the most extensive ‘biographical’ treatments of grammarians, philologists, littérateurs, poets, readers and historians, straddling the early years of the Islamic tradition and extending right through to the seventh/thirteenth century, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qīfī (d. 646/1248) included a somewhat brief account of al-Ṭabarī in which he mentions the pre-eminence of his \textit{tafsīr}: he also refers to his works on history and jurisprudence, noting that he had kept the entry on him concise due to his having separately devoted a text to the life and legacy of this figure entitled \textit{al-Taḥrīr fī akhbār Muḥammad b. Jarīr}, a work he openly describes as being splendid.\textsuperscript{176} In recognition of al-Ṭabarī’s achievements in the context of the period, it is therefore no surprise that the Shāfīʿī traditionalist and Ashʿarī theologian Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 406/1016) had reportedly stated that it would have not have been considered too much had one travelled to China in order to come into possession of his \textit{tafsīr}.\textsuperscript{177}

**Conclusions**

The significance of al-Ṭabarī’s contribution to the tradition of exegesis together with the magnitude of his achievement in the field rests not only with his subtle synthesis and collating of the disparate elements of \textit{tafsīr}, but it extends to the fact that in the course of the \textit{tafsīr} he was able to demonstrate that the discipline of exegesis provided
an important forum which could be brought to bear on the predominant discourses and intellectual debates of his era; moreover, in his Jāmiʿ he successfully marshalled the sources and arguments with stunning skill when grappling with theological issues, and certainly influenced subsequent approaches to the defence of doctrine, ensuring his legacy was not only unrivalled but also that it would endure. Classical literary sources frequently and appropriately commend the theological conservatism and traditionalism of al-Ṭabarī with regards to his stance on dogmatic issues, with the view often expressed that his oeuvre affirms that he staunchly defended doctrines which were considered to be touchstones of an emerging Sunnī orthodoxy. However, what is striking about al-Ṭabarī’s treatment and resolution of dogmatic issues is the objective and sedate manner in which he positions his own theological standpoints and objectively defends their rationale. And although his brand of theology sits firmly within the confines of traditionalist Sunnī orthodoxy, he does not predictably adhere to all of the theological positions which were determinedly upheld within such discourses, and it was this very fact that brought him into conflict with a number of influential figures among his peers. The consequences of this were enormous, leading to aspersions initially being cast about his loyalty to traditional Sunnī orthodoxy, discussions which reverberated in the classical literature: his unswerving allegiance to it was never in question, but the independence of thought and impartiality al-Ṭabarī brought to his treatment of theological issues were emblematic of his overall approach to scholarship. Al-Ṭabarī was willing to countenance a much more active approach to defending orthodoxy, but one which shows his thorough acquaintance with the currency of dogmatic theology. Moreover, while he registered his criticisms of aspects of traditionist theological discourses with which he disagreed with candour, he was equally at pains to draw attention to shortcomings in the theological discourses of those in the Sunnī rationalist camps, especially in instances where such material was the product of speculative and reactionary theological discourses, offering key revisions and complements to dogmatic constructs devised for the defence of doctrine. The fact that al-Ṭabarī had adopted such a comprehensive approach to topics and themes pored over in the tafsīr meant that for some later writers the subtlety of his doctrinal musings was sometimes obliquely obscured. Of course, over successive periods the countenance of theological discourses was to change fundamentally with the advent of the philosophical theology championed by al-Ashʿarī and developed further by later Ashʿarī acolytes. In respect of his commentary, such findings should readily consign to history the perception which prevails regarding al-Ṭabarī’s Jāmiʿ as symbolising a straightforward traditional approach informed by the opaque parameters of tafsīr biʾl-maʿthūr. As has been shown elsewhere, such characterisations and categorisations of forms of tafsīr are clearly misleading. Al-Ṭabarī had ingeniously shown that the discipline of tafsīr provided a unique forum from which contributions could be made to prevailing intellectual discourses and his own deliberations on theological doctrines presented in the commentary reveal him to possess mastery
over the predominant discourses to the extent that he is not merely reiterating conventionally accepted points of belief and dogma, but locating an apposite substrate for their defence, resolution and synthesis. Moreover, the true measure of his accomplishment in the realm of *tafsir* can only be fully appreciated when it is considered in light of the intellectual and ideological debates with which the author had to contend throughout his lifetime.

**NOTES**


biographies compiled by two of his students, the content of the *tafsīr* and its sources are discussed at pp. 256–7, and it is mentioned that these were derived from ‘*kutub al-tafsīr al-muṣannafah*’, including materials attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās via Sa‘īd b. Jubayr (d. 95/714), Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. 104/722), Qatā‘a (d. 118/736), al-Ḥasan al-Ḡaṣṭrī (d. 110/728), Islam b. Ṭūlūn (d. 105/723–4), al-Dawḥāḥī b. Muzāḥim (d. 102/720), ‘Abd Allāh b. Mas‘īd (d. 32/652), ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Zayd b. Aslam (d. 182/798), the *tafsīr* of Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767), and the *tafsīr* of Muqāṭīl b. Ḥayyān (d. 150/767). It is claimed that that disreputable commentators were shunned and never relied upon by al-Ṭabarī, namely al-Kalbī (d. 146/763), Muqāṭīl b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767) and al-Wāqīdī (d. 207/822), despite al-Kalbī often being cited in the work. Undoubtedly, the exegetical endeavour attributed to exeges such as al-Suddī (d. 127/745), Sufyān b. al-Thawrī (d. 161/787), ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī (d. 211/826), ‘Abd Allāh b. Wabh (d. 197/812), Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna (d. 198/814) and Yahyā b. Sallām (d. 200/815), provided key blueprints and points of reference which al-Ṭabarī could utilise when developing his own work.


4 Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī, General Introduction*, vol. 1, p. 61; see for example the arguments in Gösta Vītem, ‘AT-Ṭabarī and the Seeing of God’ in Alexander Fodor (ed.), *Proceedings of the 14th Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants. The Arabist, Budapest Studies in Arabic 13–14:1* (1995), pp. 147–55; and see the summary in Boswell, art. ‘al-Ṭabarī’ (p. 12); also Norman Calder et al, *Classical Islam*, pp. 114–18; also William Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1998 (reprint of the 1973 edition)), p. 297. Ignaz Goldziher mentions al-Ṭabarī’s showing ‘little appreciation of independent, arbitrary, and subjective ideas, which he does not consider worth recognising’ and the notion that knowledge based from materials derived from the Pious Ancestors was indispensable for *tafsīr* (see Ignaz Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden: Brill, 1920), p. 87 and the translation quoted above by Wolfgang H. Behn (tr. and ed.), *Schools of Koranic Commentators with an Introduction on Goldziher and Hadith from Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums by Fuat Sezgin* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), p. 57). Al-Ṭabarī’s reliance on *loci probantes* from poetry is also highlighted, and the fact that the work is an important source for the views of the Kufan and Basran grammarians, yet Goldziher claims that despite this he never abandons ‘his interpretation based on tradition’ (p. 92) and that in a number of passages his ideas as a theologian surface, although the suggestion is that he ‘takes the ground occupied by traditional expressions of orthodoxy’ (p. 93, and see also p. 61 in Behn, *Schools*). Goldziher did suggest that al-Ṭabarī took a position which was close to Mu‘tazilism on free will and guidance (*ḥudā* and *ḍalāl*), although he speaks of his probably not being aware of the sensitivities of the stance and that he always endeavours to present himself as an opponent of sectarian dogmatic tendencies; there are also references to his maintaining ultra-orthodox teachings and opposing
metaphorical interpretation as indulged in by rational theologians (pp. 94–5, and p. 62 in Behn, *Schools*). See also his point on p. 96, in which he speaks of his opposition to the elimination of anthropomorphic imagery in scripture and says that on occasion he does not suppress or openly censure views deemed rational on such issues (pp. 97–8, and p. 63 in Behn, *Schools*). For more on mentors and influences, see Gilliot, *Exégese, langue, et théologie en Islam*, pp. 19–37; for al-Ṭabarían’s works, see also pp. 39–68. Traditional views of the ‘orthodox’ quality of the *tafsīr* are summarised in Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ*, vol. 13, p. 385, although he would have been specifically judging it on its treatment of exempla and popular material.

5 Notwithstanding exceptions and nuances, the traditionists or *āshāb al-hadīth* tend to be individuals who are associated with a stern religiosity on matters of theological doctrine, while the traditionalists can include scholars who approve not only of the use of rational frameworks for the defence of dogma, but they are prepared to apply metaphor or figurative language to explain away literal meanings in the text. Details of the episodes are provided in the translation in Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarî: General Introduction*, vol. 1, pp. 58–63 and pp. 68–78. Discussions with reference to the Arabic sources are to be examined below.


7 In his brief biographical entry, Clifford Bosworth speaks of commentaries which antedate al-Ṭabarî’s, adding that he took over al-Ṣanʿānī’s commentary ‘in its entirety for his own work’ (Bosworth, art. ‘al-Ṭabarî’). He also mentions Horst’s argument that al-Ṭabarî utilised earlier commentaries which are no longer existent (see Heribert Horst, ‘Zur Überlieferung im Korankommentar at-Ṭabarîs’, *Zeitschriften der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 103 (1953), pp. 290–307). He did utilise previous elements but perhaps al-Ṭabarî’s achievement is best understood in terms of his refining the hermeneutical framework within which materials collated from different works could be placed and contextualised. One has to bear in mind that the *Ṭafsīr* was a commentary which was forged in the context of a number of predominant intellectual discourses: the first of which was informed by the quest for a consensus for the articulation of a traditionally defined orthodoxy; the second related to establishing the legitimacy of *tafsīr* among the traditional sciences; the third was about circumscribing epistemological and methodological frameworks through which the explication of the text should proceed; while the fourth turned on demonstrating how the popular treatment of exempla could play an important role in contextualising and giving relevance to the sacred word. See also ʿAlī b. Faddāl al-Majāshiʿī, *al-Nukat fil-Qurʾān*, ed. Ibrāhīm ʿAlī (Riyadh: Dār al-Rushd, n.d.), in the introduction to this work he reports, on the authority of al-Ṭabarî, that the aims of the Qurʾān are encompassed in three areas: *tawḥīd, akhbār* and *diwānāt* (p. 9). It was Theodor Nöldeke who remarked of al-Ṭabarî’s *tafsīr* that if it were available all other commentaries would be rendered secondary (see Goldzighter, *Die Richtungen*, p. 86; and Behn, *Schools*, p. 57). See also the seminal work by Theodor Nöldeke and Friedrich Schwally, *Geschichte des Qorans*, 2nd edn (Leipzig: Dieterich ‘sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1909–38).
8 See Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, vol. 5, p. 254 and p. 267, where his student and biographer ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Muhammad al-Ṭabarī praises his 'orthodoxy' at length. Firstly, his proficiency in the methods of disputation is extolled (p. 267) and then testimony is included stating that with regards to the sum and substance of his theological standpoints Abū Jaʿfar adhered to positions espoused by the 'majority' and the Pious Ancestors. We are also informed of his always differing with the Muʿtazilis whenever they contravened the consensus of the *jamāʿa* on issues such as predestination; the non-created status of the Qurʾan and the denial of the beatific vision; the status of the sinner; the Prophet’s role as an intercessor; and their opinion regarding ‘the capacity to act exists prior to the commission of an act’ and that all acts are created by God. See the translation of this passage in Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: General Introduction*, vol. 1, p. 61. Also, see Claude Gilliot, *Exégèse, langue et théologie en Islam*, pp. 207–78 (‘Chapitre VIII Le Combat De Tabari Pour L’Orthodoxie’).


10 Ahmad Makki al-Anṣārī, Abū Zakariyyāʾ al-Farrāʾ wa-madhhabubu ḥiʾl-nahw waʾl-lugha (Cairo: al-Majlis al-ʿĀlā li-Riʾiāyat al-Funūn waʾl-ʿĀdāb waʾl-ʿUllām al-ʾIjmāʾiyya, 1964). Despite almost 50 years having passed since the work’s publication, it remains an invaluable study of the legacy of al-Farrāʾ, which is some achievement given the fact that it was produced when many of his works were only available in manuscript form.

11 Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, vol. 1, pp. 428–34. These positions are summarised by al-Qūṭubi, Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muhammad al-Anṣārī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-ahkām al-Qurʾān waʾl-mubayyin li-nāṭaḏammahu min al-sunn wa-ʾāy al-Furqān* (21 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 176–7. Beginning his discussions by stating that the verse represents one of the mushkilāt (‘intricately challenging’) verses, he lists all the different views held by exegetes and concludes with the principle which holds for this and similar verses: averting (meanings) which convey the sense of physical movement or displacement. He actually speaks of three camps with regards to the interpretation of such verses: those who advocate accepting the truth of the verses and refrained from their qualification or interpretation; others who upheld the literal meaning of such verses, interpreting them in ways consistent with the tenor of their literal meanings and usage (al-Qūṭubi labels those who accept such views as being mushabbiba, ‘corporealists’); and a third camp who recite and promote explaining away and averting the literal explanation of such verses. The sensitivities are carried over in translations of the Qur’an: J.M. Rodwell used the terms ‘proceeded to the heaven’ and ‘sitteth on his throne’ (p. 94 and p. 340) for Q. 2:29 and Q. 20:5 respectively (J.M. Rodwell, *The Koran*)
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(London: Dent, Everyman Library, 1963, first published in 1909)); Marmaduke Pickthall favoured ‘Then turned He to the heaven’ and ‘The Beneficent One, Who is established on the Throne’ (p. 36 and p. 228) for the same set of verses (Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (New York; Toronto: New American Library, 1975)); Arthur J. Arberry had ‘then He lifted Himself to heaven’ and ‘sat Himself upon the Throne’ (p. 5 and p. 311 of *The Koran Interpreted* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1998)); while M.A.S. Abdel Haleem favoured ‘He turned to the sky’ and ‘The Lord of mercy established on the throne’ (p. 6 and p. 196, *The Qur’an: A New Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)). For the various groups, see also Binyamin Abrahamov, ‘The *Bi-lā Kayfa* Doctrine and its Foundations in Islamic Theology’, *Arabica* 42:3 (1995), pp. 365–79. However, it is worth bearing in mind that specific sects such as the Karrāmiyya and the so-called Sālimiyya were renowned for adhering to an anthropomorphic reading of this and other connected verses; see van Ess, *Der Eine und das Andere*, vol. 1, p. 598 and vol. 2, p. 1,009f.


13 Al-Ṭabarī does explain that even those who equated *istiwā‘* with *irtafa‘a‘* differed over the subject of the verb: is it the Creator of the heavens or indeed the ‘vapours’ which sat over the recently created heavens (al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘* al-bayān, vol. 1, p. 434). Cf. the discussion in Gilliot, *Exégese, langue, et théologie en Islam*, pp. 238–41 (‘La session de Dieu sur le Trône’), especially p. 239.

14 Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘* al-bayān, vol. 1, p. 434. Al-Ṭabarī seems to be implying that al-Farrā‘ said that there was a ‘compelling’ reason why he actually favoured this explanation, although this is not evident in the passages of the *Ma‘ānī*; it may well be the case that the original musings of al-Farrā‘ have not survived in the extant copies of the work.


16 Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘* al-bayān, vol. 1, p. 333. See also vol. 12, p. 483; cf. vol. 15, p. 18, in which the term *dabbarah* is used to denote God’s attending to ‘or governing’ his affairs, having established himself on the throne. See also al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘* al-bayān, ed. al-Turkī, vol. 16, p. 11, in which he explains Q. 20:5, ‘al-Rahmān ʿalā‘ arshīhi irtafa‘a‘a‘ wa‘-alā‘, and vol. 18, p. 591 and vol. 22, p. 387, ‘irtafa‘a‘ ‘alayhā wa‘-alā‘. With regards to al-Farrā‘’s gloss, it could also be argued that *iqābāl* was the corollary of will and intention.

17 Examples of the criticisms of *ahl al-Arabiyya*, which includes both al-Farrā‘ and indeed Abū ‘Ubayda, are found throughout the *tafsīr* and he usually uses the formula ‘some among the
ahl al-ʿArabiyya claim’ or simply ‘the grammarians’ in general: see al-Ṭabarî, Jāmīʿ al-bayān, vol. 1, p. 223, in which he criticises in detail the views of some grammarians who speak of the otiose function of the ʿurūfī muqattaʿa; and vol. 1, p. 132, where he describes one grammarian as being someone whose acquaintance with the interpretation of ahl al-taʿwil is feeble and whose ‘narration of the statements of the Pious Ancestors from among the scholars of tafsīr is scant’. The figure to whom he is referring is Abū ʿUbayda and he is questioning his locating the meaning of al-Rahmān within the semantic compass of ḏūḥ raḥmah: ‘al-Rahmān maḥāzuḥu ḏūl-raḥmah’. There are also instances where he explicitly discusses key differences over grammatical topics by Kufan and Basran grammarians (vol. 1, p. 184); although, as pointed out by al-Anṣārī, al-Farrāʾ is often the subject of a rebuke (vol. 4, p. 301); the maʿānī based works of al-Qutrub (d. 206/881), al-Kisāʾī (d. 189/804), al-Farrāʾ, Abū ʿUbayda (d. 210/825), al-Akhfash al-Awsa (d. 215/830) and Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) provided discussions and arguments which were referred to in the course of the commentary. See also Gilliot, Exégese, langue, et théologie en Islam, pp. 168–203, which focuses on the treatment of grammatical issues in the Jāmīʿ.


19 Al-Anṣārī also took the view that al-Ṭabarî based large sections of the linguistic discussions in the tafsīr on the work of al-Farrāʾ without appropriately acknowledging his source, even accusing him of plagiarising him; there are many instances in which he highlights where al-Ṭabarî alludes to him and includes discussions which can be sourced to the Maʿānī, but such views appear exaggerated, especially when one takes into account the sheer scope of al-Ṭabarî’s work and the nature of citation within the framework of such works: see pp. 321–4 of al-Anṣārī, Abū Zakariyyāʾ al-Farrāʾ. Notably, a PhD thesis on the subject of the traditionalist outlook of al-Ṭabarî did refute these allegations in detail; see Ahmad al-ʿAwāyishā, al-ʿImām Ibn Jarir al-Ṭabarī wa-dīfāʿīhu ʿan ʿaḏdat al-salaf (unpublished PhD dissertation: Jāmīʿ at Umm al-Qurā, 1983), pp. 122–34. And this is discussed by Ahmad Saqr in the introduction to his edition of Ibn Qutayba’s Kitāb tafsīr gharīb al-Qurʾān (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1978). See page ‘dāl’ of the introduction, where he also states that al-Ṭabarî quotes the statements of these figures without due acknowledgement. See also Gilliot, Exégese, langue, et théologie en Islam, pp. 187–9.

20 Yağūt al-Ḥamawi, Muʿjam al-udabāʾ, vol. 5, p. 620, in which al-Farrāʾ is described as ‘a jurist conversant with juridical differences; the pre-Islamic battles of the Arabs; their histories together with poetry; medicine and astrology (astronomy); and who was a muṭakallīm inclined towards Muʿtazilism, who also philosophised in his works, applying the terminologies of the philosophers’. The Muʿtazila did claim him as one of their own.


24 See Mustafa Shah, ‘Expressions of Traditional Orthodoxy: the Kufan Grammarian al-Farrāʾ and the Allegations of iʿtīḍāl’, forthcoming. Reinhart questions the view that Sunnī orthodoxy should be seen as the default term for Islam as he argues that it has its own history as one of many movements within the traditions of Islam (see Kevin Reinhart’s ‘Sunnī Sectarianism’ in Yasir Suleiman (ed.), *Living Islamic History: Studies in Honour of Professor Carole Hillenbrand* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 209–25); however, Reinhart’s view does not pay sufficient regard to the overbearing prominence of Sunnī discourses across the traditional religious sciences, and the sample of works he uses to make his points is too confined. See also Brett Wilson, ‘The Failure of Nomenclature: The Concept of Orthodoxy in the Study of Islam’, *Comparative Islamic Studies* 3:2 (2007), pp. 169–94. The mistaken idea that most early grammarians were of a Muʿtazilī persuasion is a common perception although the sources do not fully substantiate that view.

25 Al-Asḥarī, Abū’l-Hasan ʿAli b. Ismāʿīl, *Ibūna ‘an usūl al-diyyāna*, ed. Muhammad ʿAbd al-Hamīd (Beirut: Maktabat Dār al-Bayān, 1999), pp. 97–103. For the arch-traditionist approach, see works such as Ibn Khuzayma, Abū Bakr, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd wa-tībāt šīfāt al-rabb ʿazzā wa-jalla* (Riyadh: Dār al-Rushd, 1988), pp. 231–40, and the discussion of istiwāʾ; Ibn al-Jawzī, Abū’l-Faraj Jamāl al-Dīn, *Dafʿ shubhat al-tashbīḥ bi-akaf al-tanzīḥ* (Beirut: Dār al-Hijra, 1990); Nader El-Bizri, ‘God: Essence and Attributes’ in Tim Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 121–40; also al-Juwainī, ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAbd Allāh, al-ʿAqīda al-Nīṣāmīyya, ed. Muhammad al-Zubaydī (Beirut: Dār Sābil al-Rashād & Dār al-Nafis, 2003), p. 166–8, in which he speaks of such verses being muṣḥkhālāt and that it was best to avoid the elaboration of meanings such as istiwāʾ. The idea that the divine essence can be a substrate for temporal acts is dismissed within classical Ashʿarīsm, as a figure such as al-Rāzī would argue that such acts would have to exist concomitantly with His essence, which is impossible (al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn, *Kitāb al-muḥāṣṣal fī usūl al-dīn aw muḥāṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa l-mutaʾakkhīrin min alʿulāmāʾ wa l-ḥukamāʾ wa l-mutakallimīn*, ed. Husayn Aṭāwa, 1st edn (Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-Turāth, 1991), p. 158). See also p. 187, where al-Rāzī refers to al-Asḥarī’s affirming that istiwāʾ was a sīfa, but stating that there is no proof of either denying or affirming that this and others such as the yad are sīfāt and that a non-committal stance was appropriate in such instances. These were referred to as the sīfāt al-khabāriyya: namely, those which are substantiated by the scriptural sources; the terms samʿīyya or indeed naqlīyya are also used.

26 This is evident in the work of the later Ashʿarīs who devised rational constructs and postulates when faced with interpreting such dicta. Ibn Taymiyya argues that many of the Ashʿarīs took this position on istiwāʾ for the simple reason that they rejected the notion that accidents can subsist within the divine essence; this would apply to the elective attributes such as those associated with God’s being pleased or angry (see Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ*, vol. 6, pp. 217–68).
It is suggested that the Ash`arīs predicate a concomitance between the fi`il wa`l-maf`ūl, in the sense that the istiwā becomes a created act in respect of the throne (see Ibn Taymiyya, Majmū`, p. 121 and pp. 141–9; also the Usūl of al-Baghdādī cited below, p. 112, n. 58).

27 Al-Ghazālī, Abū Hāmid, Ḥiyāʾ `ulām al-dīn (4 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Mārifah, 1987), vol. 1, p. 146. Al-Ghazālī mentions that the aḥl al-haqqa were compelled to resort to ta`wīl (‘explaining away a literal meaning’) when faced with such dicta. This is also associated with the notion of tafsīr (‘delegating’).


29 Abū l-ʾAbbās Tha`lab, Ahmad b. Yayyā, Majālis Tha`lab, ed. Abū al-Salām Hārūn, 5th edn (Cairo: Dār al-Mārifah, n.d.), see p. 174 and p. 269. This and other quotations are discussed at greater length in the forthcoming Shah, ‘Expressions of Traditional Orthodoxy’. See Ansārī, Abū Zakariyyā al-Farrā`, p. 82, where he simply states that al-Ṭabarī’s dislike of Muʿtaziliism led him to rail against al-Farrā`; one of the conclusions reached by al-Anṣārī in his study was that al-Farrā` had Muʿtazili leanings.

30 Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qīfī, Inbāḥ al-rūwāt `alā anbāh al-nuḥūt, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-ʾUddāf Ibrāhīm (4 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Misrīyya, 1956), vol. 1, p. 177. It is also significant that the Shi’ī commentator al-Ṭabarī mentions that Tha`lab was asked about the meaning of istiwā`, and he replied that ‘our companions say: al-iqḥāṣ’. So it is clear many non-Muʿtazili scholars would not have considered it a controversial view (al-Ṭabarī, Majma` al-Bayān fi tafsīr al-Qur`ān, vol. 1, p. 157).


39 Al-Wāḥidī, Abū ʿl-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ahmad, Taṣfīr al-baṣīṭ, ed. Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Fawāz (25 vols. Riyadh: Ḥāmid b Muḥammad b. ʾAbī ʿAlī al-Islāmiyya, 2009), vol. 2, p. 299f. The editor of the text actually contested that this was the view that al-Tabarī had preferred, arguing that it was mentioned in the framework of his rejoinder; he then goes on to refer to the early discussions, arguing that al-Ṭabarī did side with the view that it meant ʾirtīfāʾ in the plainer sense.

40 Al-Ṭabarī, Ḥāmīʾ al-bayān, vol. 1, p. 394 (examples of criticisms of al-Farrāʾ); vol. 22, p. 244 (ʿzaʾama baʾd ahl al-ʿArabiyya). See the examples discussed above in note 17.

41 This is a point observed in Muḥammad al-Mālikī, Dirāsat al-Ṭabarī lik-ʾil-maʾnā min khīlīl Taṣfīrih Ḥāmīʾ al-bayān ʿan taʾwil ʿilā al-Qurʾān (Ribāṭ: Wizārat al-Aqwāf waʾl-Shuʿūn al-Islāmiyya, 1996), pp. 88–90. For a review of the nature of his theological views, see pp. 189–205. Concerning the Taṣfīr, Franz Rosenthal argued that ‘during his lifetime, it probably was considered his outstanding scholarly achievement, even more so than in his great works on law and ḥadīth’ (Rosenthal, The History, p. 105).

42 See al-Ṭabarī, Ḥāmīʾ al-bayān, vol. 1, pp. 162–3, in which he dismisses the views of ahl al-qadar when discussing the notion of ṭāfīfīd, in the context of free will and the capacity to act, as al-Ṭabarī explains that without seeking God’s support man is unable to find his way to divine guidance (see also p. 168). See also al-Ṭabarī, Ḥāmīʾ al-bayān, vol. 5, pp. 403–7, which includes dicta on God’s speaking to Moses; al-Ṭabarī, Ḥāmīʾ al-bayān, vol. 7, pp. 260–3 and the reference to the span of one’s life (ajal); and al-Ṭabarī, Ḥāmīʾ al-bayān (ed. Turkī), vol. 19, p. 575, and the reference to God’s creation of man’s acts; al-Ṭabarī, Ḥāmīʾ al-bayān (ed. Turkī), vol. 22, pp. 160–3, and the authority of qadar; al-Ṭabarī, Ḥāmīʾ al-bayān (ed. Turkī), vol. 24, pp. 384–9, where al-Ṭabarī countenances the physicality of God’s advent on the Day of Judgement; and al-Ṭabarī, Ḥāmīʾ al-bayān (ed. Turkī), vol. 20, p. 145f, where he refers to God’s creating Adam with His hands; al-Ṭabarī, Ḥāmīʾ al-bayān (ed. Turkī), vol. 21, p. 605, where it is stated that the Prophet is in our sight. But one does come across exceptions such as Q. 20:39 (before my sight), where he ponders the two contrasting explanations, one of which refers to the idea of ‘flourishing before us’, endorsing it on the basis of its being consistent with the preferred lectio: al-Ṭabarī, Ḥāmīʾ al-bayān (ed. Turkī), vol. 16, pp. 57–60. Still, his overall position on points of dogma is confirmed in the two creedal works he composed which are discussed below: al-Ṭabarī, Ṣarīḥ al-summa, ed. Badr b. Yūsūf al-Maʿtūq, 2nd edn (Kuwait: Dār al-Khulafāʾ li-l-Kitāb al-Islāmi, 2005); and al-Ṭabarī, Taṣfīr fi maʾālim al-dīn, ed. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAlī al-Shībīl (Beirut: Dār al-ʿĀsimah, 1996). It is also known under the alternative title Tabṣīr ʿlīʾl-nuḥā wa-maʾālim al-hudū. Folios are missing from the end of the al-Taṣfīr manuscript,
rendering it incomplete. For the polarity between the views of al-Ṭabarī and Shi‘ism, see Watt, *The Formative Period*, p. 368, n. 88.

43 See the discussion in Mårtensson, *Tabari*, pp. 22–3, where she speaks of theology requiring more discursive reasoning than history.


48 It is worth considering al-Ṭabarī’s account of the *miḥna* in the *Ta’rīkh* in which he preserves the discussions between Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and his accusers, particularly where his Mu’tazili opponent mentions the link between the ear and ‘all hearing’ and sight and ‘all seeing’, before citing a Qur’anic verse which Ibn Ḥanbal is asked to explain and he responds by saying ‘*huwa*
whether the names of God are created.

Appended to the work is a summary of the creed attributed to Ibn Haddad (Beirut: Dar El-Machreq, 1986), pp. 70.

Distinctions between his position and the Ashārī position on this see Shaykh al-Islāmiyyān. For more on the various attitudes and positions see van Ess, Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. 3., vol. 4, pp. 200–1, in which he discusses Ibn Taymiyya’s references to differences on the
subject between al-Muhāsibī and Ibn Kullāb. The implication is that the latter’s notion about the attributes being neither the same as the ism, nor different from it, was at the centre of arguments as al-Muhāsibī questioned this and spoke of an ontological equivalence.


63 Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi‘ al-bayān, vol. 1, pp. 114–34 for the whole section (and pp. 114–15), which begins by extolling the importance of the basmala, adding that its mere mention allows one to reconstruct the intended, yet inner, meaning of its speaker, which is elided. See the discussion in Gilliot, Exégese, langue, et théologie en Islam, pp. 242–4.

64 Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi‘ al-bayān, vol. 1, p. 116. For more on this phenomenon see Ibn Jinnī, al-Khaṣṣā‘īṣ, vol. 3, pp. 34–51; al-Ṭabarī points out that Arabic is replete with examples of this syntactic trait and produces poetic verses to demonstrate this.


68 Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi‘ al-bayān, vol. 1, p. 118. It is worth noting that the text’s editor, Ahmad Shākir, considered al-Ṭabarī’s explanation of the arguments about the basmala and the links with tasmiyya as being inspired, and indicative of his perceptive grasp of the issues: see the discussion in the footnote at pp. 118–19.

69 These lines were from a poem composed for his two daughters by the mukhaddram poet Labīd on his deathbed in the kāmil meter. He died during the caliphate of ʿUmar. See Ibn Qutayba, Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh b. Muslim, al-Shīr wa’l-shuʿarā‘, ed. M. Qamīha and N. Zarzūr, 2nd edn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1985) pp. 154 ff. A detailed commentary of the verse is provided in ʿAbd al-Qādir b. ʿUmar al-Baghḍādi, Khīzānat al-adab wa-lubb lubb lisān al-ʿArab: wa-huwa sharh ‘alā shawāhid sharh al-kāfya li’l-rādī, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Ḥārīn (13 vols. Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Salafīyya, 1347–51/1928–32), vol. 4, pp. 337–42 (shāhid no. 305). The point is that the ism in the poetry is the equivalent of al-salām. In the line of poetry he was instructing his daughters that it would suffice if they mourned his passing for a year. For al-Ṭabarī’s discussion of the line, see al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi‘ al-bayān, vol. 1, p. 119. He says that there are two possible meanings of the line, neither of which coincides with Abū ʿUbayda’s view, which sees the ism being the musammā. The first meaning, his preferred view, is having mourned for a year the two daughters should adhere to (the mention of) God’s name and His remembrance and desist from thinking of their father and
crying over him, suggesting it was a form of ighrāʾ (‘exhortation’); for the second explanation al-Ṭabarî refers to its reflecting a process of tasmiyya: namely, that may God’s name be over you (‘tasmiyyat Allāh ‘alaykumā, as in ism Allāh ‘alayka’), whereby someone seeks the refuge and protection of the Almighty.


71 Abū ‘Ubayda, Maʿmar b. al-Muthannâ, Maṣāḥ al-Qurʾān, ed. Fuʿāṭ Sezgin, 2nd edn (2 vols. Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Risāla, 1981), vol. 1, p. 16. See also the discussion in al-Zajjājī, Abūʿl-Ḡāsim ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Ishaq, Itṣḥaqaq asmāʾ Illāh, ed. ʿAbd al-Husayn al-Mubārak, 2nd edn (Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Risāla, 1986), p. 217, where he seems to suggest that by taking such a view of the ism being the salām, Abū ʿUbayda was being held hostage to the notion that the ism is the musammā, although al-Zajjājī simply dismisses the argument that the existence of linguistic phenomena such as synonyms and antonyms impacted upon the idea of the unity of identity between the ism and the musammā is discussed in Ibn al-Anbārī, Muhammad b. al-Ḡāsim, Kitāb al-addād, ed. Muḥammad Abūʿl-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Beirut: al-Maktabat al-ʿAsriyya, 1987) p. 13.

72 Al-Lālakāʾī, Sharḥ uṣūl, vol. 1, p. 155. Khalaf b. Hishām al-Bazzār, the renowned Kufan reader, is also quoted, showing that many traditionalists were simply stating the ism was the musammā. There are similar statements attributed to al-Shāfīʿī.

73 Al-Bāqillānī, Kitāb tanḥīd al-awāʾil wa-talkhiṣ al-dalāʾil, p. 258. The reasoning is that the Qurʾānic dicta show that the ism must be the same as the musammā for God would not command mankind to exalt or glorify something other than him. While the arbitrary naming of deities is condemned in Q. 12:40; this has a nexus with the origins of language and the tawqīf-ʾistilāḥ debate. It was the Muʿtazzī ʿAbbād b. Sulaymān (d. 252/864) who asserted that the change in the name of something would lead to a change in the essence of its identity: Naysābūrī, Abū Rashīd Saʿīd b. Muḥammad b. Saʿīd, al-Masāʾ il ʾil-khīlāf bayn al-Baṣriyyīn waʾl-Baghdādīyyīn, ed. M. Ziyāda and R. al-Sayyid (Beirut: Maʿḥad al-Inmāʿ al-ʿArabī, 1979), p. 161. Cf. the discussions in ʿAbd al-Jabbār, al-Mughnī fi abwāb al-tawhīd waʾl-ʿadl, vol. 5, pp. 160–6.


76 Al-Ṭabarî, Jāmiʿ al-bayān (ed. Türkî), vol. 22, p. 278.


78 Ibn Jinnī moves on to elaborate by referring to the difference between the lexeme for sword (ṣa/y/f) and its orthographical denotation in which it is the ism and retains a wholly abstract quality; and, conversely ʿdarabtu ha ḫaʾl-hadīḍa which constitutes the actual weapon (al-musammā) wrought from iron.

79 Ibn Jinnī, al-Khaṣṣaʾiṣ, p. 32. Intricately entwined in the discussions is the notion of the derivation of the term ṣalām, which became one of the key subjects of Khilāf between Basran and Kufan grammarians. The grammarians’ interest in the topic was principally concerned with issues such as the relationship between words and the concepts they embody, including discourses about the origins of language and the process of naming, although the arcing of the conceptual boundaries of the associated discourses meant that aspects of the discussions of key
grammarians regularly surfaced in the constructs and premises ruminated over by theologians. It is the grammarians al-Zajjāj (d. 337/949), who earlier provided a detailed discussion of the linguistic ramifications of the arguments in his Ḫidāḥ fi ʿilal al-nahw, using points raised by Sibawayhi as the background for positing his thoughts on the topic (al-Zajjāj, Abūʾl-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Iṣḥāq, al-Ḫidāḥ fi ʿilal al-nahw, ed. Māzīn al-Mubāрак (Cairo: Maḥāʾat al-Madāni, 1959)). See also the translation by Kees Versteegh, The Explanation of Linguistic Causes, al-Zajjāj’s Theory of Grammar (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 1995). Versteegh reasoned that al-Zajjāj had Muʿtazili inclinations on the basis that he appeared to discount the unity of identity between the ism and the musammā, but it is quite plain that this could not be used as an indicator of such leanings; moreover, there is nothing in his works to suggest that his theology is not of the branch defended by scholars associated with traditional Sunnīsm.

80 See note 75.

81 Yāqūt does query the correctness of one aspect of al-Ṭabarī’s theological positions as presented by his biographer ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī, arguing there is a hint of strict determinism detected in his belief with regards to the ‘sealing of the non-believers’ hearts’ yet the references to his theological beliefs in the entry present an individual whose ‘orthodoxy’ was consistent with traditional Sunnī beliefs (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Muʿjam al-udabāʾ, vol. 5, pp. 267–8).

82 Yāqūt, Muʿjam, vol. 5, p. 255, where Ibn Kāmil states al-Ṭabarī dictated 150 verses of the tafsīr before continuing to complete the Qurʾān, adding that this was done in 270/883–4 and that it gained a reputation. Rosenthal (The History of al-Ṭabarī: General Introduction, pp. 106–7), cites 190 verses, while the Ḥiṣān ʿAbbās edition of the Muʿjam lists 150 verses.


85 Al-Ṭabarī, al-Ṭabsīr fi maʿālim al-dīn, p. 103f.


90 Gilliot, Exégese, langue, et théologie en Islam, pp. 207–78 (‘Chapitre VIII: Le Combat De Tabari Pour L’Orthodoxie’), especially p. 207, where he states that ‘Un commentaire coranique n’est pas un traité d’hérésiographie, pourtant la polémique contre les groupes sectaires n’en est pas absente. Ceux-ci sont parfois désignés, mais le plus souvent, tout au moins dans le Commentaire de Tabari, ils sont laissés dans l’anonymat, et ce n’est que la connaissance des débats qui ont animé la communauté musulmane jusqu’à son époque qui permet parfois de les identifier.’ Also, with regards to the Qāḍārīs, see p. 276 and his point that ‘Il est impossible d’identifier précisément les groupes ou led personages qu’il vise dans sa polémique anti-qadarite’.


93 See Christopher Melchert’s ‘The Adversaries of Ahmad b. Ḥanbal’, *Arabica* 46 (1997), pp. 234–53. With regards to al-Ṭabarî, Melchert mentions that ‘medieval sources give various accounts of the accusation against him, but most have to do with semi-rationalist positions in either theology or jurisprudence’ (p. 247). Melchert identified the following as semi-rationalists: al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820), al-Husayn al-Karabîsî (d. 248/862), Abû Thawr (d. 240/854), al-Hârîth al-Muhâsîbî (d. 243/857), Dâwûd b. Khalaf al-Zâhir (d. 270/884), al-Muzanî (d. 264/878) and al-Ṭabarî, although one senses that he was more concerned about the characterisation of approaches to law. Cf. Mustafa Shah, ‘The Early Arabic Grammarians’ Contributions to the Collection and Authentication of Qur’anic Readings: The Prelude to Ibn Mujâhid’s *Kitâb al-sab’a*, *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 6:1 (2004), pp. 72–102, at p. 76f. The underlying theme of Melchert’s argument is that Ibn Ḥanbal was perturbed more by the semi-rationalists than the Muʿtazila (p. 235), and that semi-rationalism became the matrix of the classical schools of law (see p. 250). Melchert also questions whether Rosenthal was right to identify *tut court* the Muʿtazila’s rationalism.


95 Boswell, art. ‘al-Ṭabarî’.


99 Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarî: General Introduction*, p. 10. Although he states ‘that unless there is irreputable proof to the contrary, we must assume that the reports reflect reality, and that idealising descriptions depict, if not reality, then something equally or more important, namely, the perception of contemporaries’. Such materials, he says, are legitimate sources for the biographer although caution must be exercised when using them.


103 In Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 52, pp. 201–2, where Ibn ʿAsākir gives an example of the anger he displayed when told that someone has impugned Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. See also Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, vol. 5, p. 269.


105 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, p. 247. Yāqūt includes an anecdote in which Abū Bakr b. Kāmil relates that an individual not only claimed that ʿĀlī was in Yemen at the time of the so-called incident, but he also composed a poem which listed the various regions of the Arabian Peninsula and mentioned Ghadhīr Khumm, recounting in it that numerous false reports about it had been concocted. This perturbed al-Tabari, who authored the *Faḍāʾil ʿĀlī* and listed the paths of transmission for the Ghadhīr Khumm dictum, which attracted the attention of Shiʿīs who began inveigling against the Companions. This consequently caused al-Ṭabarī to collate materials on the virtues of the Companions; he was then asked to collate those of Banī Ṭabābās.


107 Rosenthal, The *History of al-Ṭabarī: General Introduction*: he concludes that it was probably a desideratum that the collected lectures on the virtues of all these Companion figures be collated in a single work but this never materialised (pp. 91–3), although the point is made that his ‘personal identification with ‘orthodox’ attitudes cannot be doubted’ (p. 93).

108 Muḥammad, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, in al-Kutub al-Sitta: Bāb maʾnāqīb al-Imām ʿĀlī, p. 1,102 (*hadīth* no. 6225), in which Zayd b. Arqām related that the Prophet had delivered a sermon at the pools of
Khumm between Mecca and Medina, and having declared that he was a mortal whose passing was imminent he went on to state that he had bequeathed to the community ‘al-thaqalayn’ (‘the two substantial matters’); the first of which was the Qur’an, to which it should steadfastly hold on; and the second was ‘ahl-bayt’, to whom reference was repeatedly made in the form of an advisory. Cf. al-Hākim al-Naysābūrī, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh, al-Mustadrak ‘alā l-Ṣaḥīḥayn, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir Ṭātā (5 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2002), vol. 3, pp. 117–8 (Bāb maʿrifat al-saḥāba). The Mustadrak can include additions as well as variations of traditions not featured in the Ṣaḥīḥayn, although its methodology was questioned by some later traditionists.

109 The jayr tradition relates that roasted hen was prepared for the Prophet, but before eating it he supplicated, desiring that the person most loved in God’s eyes would share the meal with him. His servant, Anas b. Mālik heard the prayer, before whispering, ‘Let it be someone from my people (al-anṣār), only for ʿAlī to arrive. ‘Alī was refused entry by Anas, who informed him that the Prophet was otherwise engaged, but upon finally having been allowed access after three attempts, he asked what had kept him by Muhammad, whereupon he explained that he was rebuffed by Anas, who, when in turn asked by the Prophet what caused him to act in such a way, replied that it was his wish that the person who shared the Prophet’s meal would be a man from his own people, to which Muhammad responded, ‘He loves his people’ (al-Hākim al-Naysābūrī, al-Mustadrak ‘alā l-Ṣaḥīḥayn, vol. 3, pp. 141ff. (see ḥadīth nos. 4650, 4651 and 4652).

110 He was born in Āmul, Ṭabaristān, which is situated on the Caspian Sea. He speaks of memorising the Qur’an when he was seven; leading prayers when he was eight; and recording traditions when he was nine (Yāqūt, Muʿjam, p. 247).


114 Rosenthal, The History of al-Ṭabarānī: General Introduction, p. 60, Rosenthal did feel that the ambiguous nature of the last passage in Ibn al-Jawzī’s text meant that it was difficult to ascertain who were the actual subjects in the various verbs. He also speaks of Ibn al-Jawzī referring to the rejection of the tradition as ‘absurd’ and that the rest of the passage might be the narrative from Thābit b. Sinān’s history: see n. 233. He also reasons that the episode had nothing to do with the Ḥanbalīs (pp. 60–1.) He explains ‘that the criticism of al-Ṭabarānī’s unfairness in blaming the entire group for the error of one of its members is difficult to ascribe to Ibn al-Jawzī’. Rosenthal does associate the discussions with the tradition but it appears to be more about the whole episode of the allegations.

115 Al-Dhahabī, Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, vol. 13, pp. 221–38; see p. 230, in which the enmity between him and al-Ṭabarānī is mentioned along with Ibn Ṣāʿīd (d. 318/930), a respected ḥadīth specialist.

116 Ibn ʿAsākir, Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq, vol. 52, pp. 197–8. Cf. Al-Dhahabī, Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, vol. 14, p. 274. A work also seen as emanating from the Fadāʾil is a text entitled al-Radd ʿalā l-hurqāṣiya. Rosenthal speculates that this might have been a refutation of Ibn Abī Dāwūd (Rosenthal, The History of al-Ṭabarānī: General Introduction, pp. 123–4) had argued that Brockelmann’s earlier suggestion that it was a refutation of the Ḥanbalīs was incorrect (Sezgin’s Geschichste, vol. 1, pp. 328–9). The work is mentioned in ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Ṭabarānī’s Aḥl al-bayt fiʾl maktabat al-ʿArabiyya (Qom: Muʿassasat Aḥl al-Bayt liʾl-Tūrāth, 1417 AH), (work no. 327), pp. 191–2; it is claimed therein that the Shiʿī scholar Ibn Tawūs (d. 673/1274–5) used to cite from it.

Ibn Ṣā‘id, his foe, is said to have remarked that it suffices what his father said about him: namely, that he was a liar; and that Abū Dāwūd also exclaimed that it was a calamity that he was seeking a judgeship. Ibn ‘Adi even states ‘I know not what had been revealed to his father regarding him’. Ibn Abī Dāwūd was accused of being from the nawāṣib (‘enemies of ‘Ali’). Al-Dhahabī, who discusses the report, simply explains that Ibn Abī Dāwūd’s comments were lamentable especially as the tradition, whether it is authenticated or not, has a largely neutral significance (p. 232 of Siyār). Al-Jurfānī completed his entry on Ibn Abī Dāwūd by stating that if it were not for the fact that he had stipulated including in his work all those ‘censured’, he would have omitted mention of him (Ibn ‘Adī, al-Kāmil, p. 1578): Incidentally, it was Ibn ‘Īṣā who allowed Ibn Abī Dāwūd to return out of exile from Wāṣīt, where he had been banished by Ibn al-Furāt. The hadith scholar al-Dārāquṭnī is said to have remarked of Ibn Abī Dāwūd, ‘He is thiqa, except he is prone to errors with regards to traditions’ (al-Khāṭīb, Taʾrikh Baghdād, vol. 9, p. 468). Intriguingly, Nāzūk, the head of police mentioned in the story of the stoning of al-Ṭabarī’s home, had to facilitate Ibn Abī Dāwūd’s funeral due to the great numbers who attended.


119 Rosenthal, The History of al-Ṭabarī: General Introduction, pp. 92–3; and for more on Rustam, see p. 13, 57 and p. 118.


121 Ibn Ḥajar, Lisān al-mīzān, vol. 7, p. 26. He even reasons that if one were to swear on oath that al-Sulaymānī had intended Ibn Rustam it would have been validated. Rosenthal dismisses the attempts to attribute the work to Ibn Rustam. Ibn Ḥajar does mention the fact that the Andalusian exegete Abū Hayyān (d. 745/1344) was so beguiled by what al-Sulaymānī had to say about al-Ṭabarī that when presenting one of his exegetical views in his al-Beḥr al-muḥīṭ, he described him as ‘a leading authority from among the Ḳamīṣ!’ Although, one of the recent printed versions has the reference to Abū Jaʿfar al-Tūsī. Al-Dhahabī also expresses his surprise at the persuasiveness of al-Ṭabarī’s study of the Ghadir Khumm reports.

122 Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya, vol. 6 (part 11), p. 157f. Ibn Rustam, also from Āmul, was noted for his strident Shiʿism and was a prominent grammarian praised for his learning (see Ibn al-Anbārī, Nuḥḥat al-ulībba’, p. 180; and al-Qifṭī, Inbāḥ, vol. 1, p. 163). In his Taʾrikh, al-Ṭabarī did make extensive use of the materials narrated by Abū Mikhnaf, who was criticised by Sunnīs for his ‘Shīʿī bias’, but he made it evident in the introduction to his work that he was merely narrating the materials and that many would find materials which were objectionable. See also Khalīl Athamīna, ‘The Historical Work of al-Baladhurī and al-Ṭabarī: The Author’s Attitude Towards the Sources’ in Hugh Kennedy (ed.), Al-Ṭabarī: A Medieval Muslim Historian and his Work, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam, 15 (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2008), pp. 141–55; and in the same work, Sebastian Günther, ‘Al-Nawfali’s Lost History: A Shiʿī Sourced Used by al-Ṭabarī and Abūʾl-Faraj’, pp. 157–73. For materials on narrators cited in his works, see Muhammad Šubḥī b. Ḥasan Hallaq, Rījāl taʿṣīr al-Ṭabarī: jarḥan wa-taʿḍīlān min taḥqīq Jāmiʿ al-bayyān ‘an taʿwīl āy al-Qurʿān li-ʿAlmād Shākir wa-Maḥmūd Shākir (Beirut: Dār Ibn Hazm, 1997); and Akram al-Fālūjī al-Atharī (ed.), al-Muʾjam al-ṣaghīr liʿrwāt al-Inmām Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (2 vols. Ammān: Dār al-Atharīyya and Dār Ibn ‘Affān, 1425 AH).


126 Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidaya wa’l-nihaya*, vol. 6, p. 157. And Bosworth states that al-Tabari had debates and discussions with Abû Bakr but that these took place ‘on the level of courtesy and mutual respect’ (Bosworth, art. ‘al-Ṭabarî’).

127 One suspects that Ibn Kathir may have confused Dawûd al-Zâhirî’s son with Ibn Abî Dâwûd al-Sijistâni as many of the allegations which are bandied about, including references to terms such as *ihlâd* and *rafîd*, emanated from the latter figure. Still, certain Zâhirî scholars, such as Ibn Ḥazm, remained critics. In the Turkî manuscript of *al-Bidaya wa’l-nihaya* the words ‘zungri’ and ‘faqîh’ are omitted, but the name is Abû Bakr Muhammад b. Dâwûd (vol. 14, p. 849) and this is due to variants between manuscripts.


129 In the opening section of his seminal history, al-Tabari uses the argument from *ḥudâh* (‘temporality of the world’), to prove the existence of God, which was a kalâm-based proposition censured by traditionists. Ibn Ḥazm deals with al-Tabari’s views on the necessity of *istidlâl* (‘inductive reasoning’) in determining the existence of God, pointing out he was close to the Ash’arîs on this point (Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fisal fi’l-mîlal*, vol. 4, pp. 67–78).


132 Al-Khaṭîb al-Baghdâdi, *Ta’rîkh Baghdad*, vol. 2, p. 164. Cf. Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarî: General Introduction*, p. 30, in which the relationship with this figure is assessed. Also, p. 19, where he claims that the notion that he went to study with Ibn Ḥanbal may have been fabricated to alleviate tensions with the Ḥanbalîs.

133 Al-Khaṭîb al-Baghdâdi, *Ta’rîkh Baghdad*, vol. 2, p. 164. He is the author of the *Kitâb al-tawhîd* and the Ǧâḥîth. See also Ibn ʿAsâkîr, *Ta’rîkh madînat Dimashq*, vol. 52, p. 195, as the account differs slightly. It should be noted that Ibn Khuzayma apparently accompanied al-Ṭabarî on his journey to Miṣr and they shared accommodation there. See Yâqût, *Mu’jam*, vol. 5, p. 246.


135 This can be seen in the reports about his debates with traditionists; his refusal of official positions; his rejection of gifts from the vizier (Yâqût, *Mu’jam*, vol. 5, p. 270 ff).

136 Al-Subkî, *Tabaqât al-Shâfi’îyya al-kubrâ*, vol. 3, p. 125. Cf. Watt, *The Formative Period*, p. 297. Watt speaks of al-Ṭabarî making concessions to the views of the Mu’tazilis in the *tafsîr* and that he was bitterly opposed in the last years of his life by the Ḥanbalîs. Firstly, the idea that al-Ṭabarî made concessions is strictly out of character; and, secondly, the opposition mounted by the Ḥanbalîs and indeed some of the aṣḥâb al-ḥadîth, such as Ibn Abî Dâwûd, persisted throughout extended periods of his life.


140 The variations in the accounts are noticeable: the verse of poetry is said to have been transcribed by al-Tabarî over the entrance to his home, whereupon the head of the police erased it and the so-called aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth came along and replaced it with several lines of poetry confirming the Prophet’s station at the side of the Allāmī, which ended with a hemistich stating that ‘thus it was narrated by al-Layth on the authority of Muḥājīd’. See also Rosenthal, The History of al-Tabarî: General Introduction, pp. 69–78.


142 Yāqūt, Mu’jam, vol. 5, pp. 253–4. See also al-Tabarî, Tahdhib al-āthār wa-tafṣīl al-thābit ʿan rasīl Allāh, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir (5 vols. Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Madāni, 1982). Classical writers such as Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Khaṭīb and Yāqūt all mention that the author died before he could complete the Tahdhib, although all are agreed that it reflected a highly acclaimed piece of scholarship and Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī referred to it as a wonder amongst his works (see Shākir’s introduction to the Tahdhib). His arrangement of the traditions and analysis of them underlines his proficiency and mastery of the relevant scholarship. The Tahdhib discusses areas such as the ʿīlal of the traditions and their paths of transmission; legal significance; the differences among scholars in regard; and coverage is extended to lexical analysis. See also al-Tabarî, Ikhtilāf al-fuqahāʾ (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʾIlmiyya, n.d.); see also the version edited by Joseph Schacht, Das Konstantinople Fragment des Kitāb ikhtilāf al-Fuqahāʾ (Leiden: Brill, 1933). Related articles include Claude Gilliot, ‘Le traitement du ḥadīth dans le Tahdhib al-āthār de Tabari’, Arabica 41:3 (1994), pp. 309–51; and Devin J. Stewart, ‘Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Tabarī’s al-Bayān ʿan usūl al-afkām and the Genre of usūl al-fiqh in Ninth-Century Baghdad’ in James Montgomery (ed.), Occasional Papers of the School of Abbasid Studies, Cambridge 6–10 July 2002 (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), pp. 325–49. Stewart suggests that developments within the field of usūl al-fiqh were well advanced within the tradition when al-Tabarî’s work was written and that much of the scholarship in the work feeds off earlier endeavours in the field attributed to leading Ḥanafī as well as Muʿzāzilī authorities. Also important is F. Kern’s study, ‘Tabarî’s Ikhtilāf al-Fuqahāʾ’, Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft 55 (1901), pp. 61–95.

143 The issue of the Ghadir Khumm and taʿrīkh traditions has already been discussed at length, particularly in the context of the disputes with Ibn Abī Dāwūd. Yāqūt, Mu’jam, vol. 5, p. 252, recounts a discussion about the asānīd and the spread of transmission of traditions in which al-Tabarî exchanged views with Ibn Ḥamdān, highlighting the latter’s errors.

Ibn al-Athīr, ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAli b. Abī al-Karam, al-Kāmil fīʿl-taʿrīkh, ed. Muḥammad Yūsuf al-Daqqāq (11 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿImiyya, 1987), vol. 7, pp. 8–10. For more on the clash with the Ḥanbalis, see Bakr b. ʿAbd Allāh Abū Zayd, al-Madkhal al-muṣaffal ilā fīqh al-Imām ʿĀbd Allāh b. Ḥanbal wa-takhrijāt al-īs̱āḥāb (2 vols. Jeddah: Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1417 AH), pp. 361–65. He discusses the relationship between al-Taʿbarī and the Ḥanbalis and refers to the fact that al-Khallāl was the first individual to collate the teachings of Ibn Ḥanbal, which has implications for the claim that the anecdote in which al-Dāqqāq brought them into opposition with al-Ṭabarī. For the role of al-Khallāl, see al-Dhahabī, Ṣiyār aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, vol. 14, pp. 785–6. The point Abū Zayd makes is that the ‘madhhab’ of Ibn Ḥanbal would not have been around at that time and so to refer to a clash with Ḥanbalis is absurd. However, this does not obscure the fact that figures who identified with Ibn Ḥanbal and his theology took positions which brought them into opposition with al-Taʿbarī. See also Abdul Hakim al-Matroudi, The Ḥanbali School of Law and Ibn Taymiyya: Conflict or Conciliation (London & New York: Routledge, 2006) – a discussion of Ibn Ḥanbal’s legal legacy features in the first chapter, especially pp. 10–15; and al-Dhahabī, Ṣiyār aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, vol. 14, pp. 267–82, especially p. 274.


Rosenthal, The History of al-Taʿbarī: General Introduction, p. 72, and see the discussion in n. 278. See his biography in al-Qāḍī b. Abī Yaʿlā, Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābīla, vol. 1, pp. 300–9. For more on him, see Cook, Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong, p. 114ff. And there were obviously points of disagreements which were sourced to other works and views.


Al-Taʿbarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, ed. al-Turkī, vol. 15, pp. 47–54. It is striking that Muqṭil b. Sulaymān, who is accused of abject anthropomorphism, does accentuate the theme of intercession in his tafsīr of the verse. Ibn Taymiyya did claim that his views were misrepresented in doxographies (Ibn Taymiyya, Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawiyya, vol. 2, pp. 618–20), (p. 78). See also Rosenthal, The History of al-Taʿbarī: General Introduction, Appendix A, on pp. 149–151, which translates parts of al-Taʿbarī’s discussion of the jūlūs narrative in the Jāmiʿ. Having stated his preference with regards to the šaftāʾa explanation, he never specifically discounts the Mujāhid report, but states that it represents a belief whose veracity cannot be disregarded in terms of the content of the actual report or indeed its rational basis. He uses the argumentum e silentio, noting there are no reports from the pious ancestors rejecting the notion before embarking upon a detailed exposition of the different arguments.

Abū Bakr al-Khallāl, Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. Hārūn, Kitāb al-sunna, ed. ʿAtiyya al-Zahrānī (7 vols. Riyadh: Dār al-Rāya, 1989), vol. 1, pp. 209–56. The Kitāb al-sunna is also referred to as the al-Musnad due to the fact the term is mentioned in its opening lines. Some seventy-odd reports are devoted to the subject, many of which directly endorse the Prophet’s being sat on the throne. See also Henri Laoust, La Profession de foi d’Ibn Baṭṭa (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1958); Rosenthal, The History of al-Taʿbarī: General Introduction, pp. 76–7, where he discusses the perceived physical sensitivities predicated by the Mujāhid tradition. It is frequently pointed out that the codification of the legal views and musings of Ibn Ḥanbal was the accomplishment of Abū Bakr al-Khallāl, whose efforts contributed significantly
to the emergence of the school of jurisprudence which was posthumously linked with him. Although it is unlikely he studied with Ahmad, he was closely linked with one of his pupils Abū Bakr al-Marrūdī and his works remained critical sources for the emerging school.

153 Al-Khallāl, Kitāb al-sunna, p. 212 (report no. 239). The editor of the text questions the very authenticity of this report, quoting al-Dhahabī, who asserted Ahmad Ibn Hanbal said that there were no reliable reports which exist on this subject.

154 Al-Khallāl, Kitāb al-sunna, p. 217.

155 For more on the Jahmiyya, see Josef van Ess, Anfänge muslimischer Theologie: zwie antiqadaritische Traktate aus dem ersten Jahrhundert der Hgira, Beiruter Texte und Studien, Bd. 14 (Beirut: in Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1977); and van Ess, Der Eine und das Andere, vol. 1, pp. 311–14 and p. 528f. In Bosworth, art. ‘al-Ṭabarānī’, Bosworth describes the Ḥanbalīs as being ‘belligerent and uncompromising’ referring to al-Ṭabarānī’s tribulations with the Ḥanbalīs as being ‘acerbic’ and saying that they ‘may well have had a disturbing and unsettling effect on al-Ṭabarānī’s life’. He makes the point that during al-Ṭabarānī’s lifetime Ḥanbalism had ‘struggled to carve a niche for itself alongside the existing three madhhabs’. He suggests its ‘advocates were both pugnacious and often unscrupulous, being ready to whip up the mindless Baghdād mob’. Bosworth sees the dispute as stemming from al-Ṭabarānī’s omission of Ibn Ḥanbal’s legal opinions in his work which enraged the ‘baying Ḥanbalite mob’. Still, it should be evident from the material covered thus far in the article that the roots of this discord and dissent are much more intricate than hitherto suggested by Bosworth; differences about key theological issues and discussions about traditions are also fuelling the tensions and it is Ibn Abī Dāwūd who is particularly prominent as a major rival. See also Cook who plays down the Ḥanbali role in al-Ṭabarānī’s difficulties (Cook, Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong, pp. 114–44).


157 There are parallels with al-Khaitāb al-Baghdādī: see al-Dhahabī, Siyār a‘lām al-nubalā’, vol. 18, p. 284; and al-Dhahabī, Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz, vol. 3, p. 1,183. Rosenthal would suggest that the ‘role of Ḥanbalite hostility, though real, seems to have been exaggerated in connection with his death as it was in his life’ (Rosenthal, The History of al-Ṭabarānī: General Introduction, p. 78).


160 Al-Ṭabarānī, Jāmī al-bayān, vol. 5, pp. 398–402. Cf. Ibn Ḥanbal, ʿAbd Allāh Ahmad, Kitāb al-sunna wa-l-radd ʿalā l-Jahmiyya, ed. Ahmad al-Qufaylī (Cairo: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 2008), pp. 231–5. The editor of the text has supplied full critical notes, often pointing out that the traditions cited are weak or even questionable; yet it is evident that such materials were deemed significant within arch-traditionist discourses, particularly in al-Ṭabarānī’s era. The term ʿafīf, derived from the verb ṣaffa, is paraphrased by Ibn Durayd as ‘the groaning or moaning of a riding beast or camel’, which is also associated with its carrying an onerous load; a tradition is also included mentioning the screeching of the gates of Paradise as a result of the thronging (crowds). See Ibn Durayd, Abū Bakr Muhammad b. al-Ḥasan, Jamhurat al-lughā, ed. Ramzi Bahlbaki (3 vols. Beirut: Dār al-ʿIlm li’l-Malayīn, 1987), vol. 1, p. 58. Also note
Abū’l-Ḥasan al-Ash’arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyā*, vol. 1, pp. 285–6, where the term is discussed in respect of differences among theologians about the throne and the issue of the *aṭfī* (‘groaning’).


163 Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmī‘ al-bayān*, vol. 5, p. 401. A brief review of the footnotes reveals that the editor of the *tafsīr*, Ahmad al-Shākir, was startled by the contradiction presented by al-Ṭabarī’s exegesis of the verse.

164 The debate about its authenticity has spilled over into modern discussions with the late traditionist Nāṣīr al-Dīn al-Albānī including it in his collection of weak traditions, *Siṣīlat al-ahādīth al-da‘īfa wa-athār rāhī al-sayyī‘i fi’l-umma* (14 vols. Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma‘ṣūf li’l-Nashr, 1993), vol. 6, pp. 146–7 (no. 2639). Al-Albānī points out that the figure who is pivotal in the *isnād* of the tradition is Ibn Iṣḥāq, the author of the famous sīra, who is technically classed as a *mudallīs*, which, among other traits, can denote an individual who is known to conceal deliberately the sources from whom he quotes due to the fact that they are often unreliable, although he notes that in the *isnād* he uses the ‘*an‘ana* form. Cf. the discussion in Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘*, vol. 6, pp. 545–84, cited below, especially pp. 556–7 and vol. 16, pp. 435–6. See the defence of such dicta, including the *maqāmān* mahmūdān in Ibn Qayyim’s *al-Kāfīya al-Shāfi‘iya fi’l-īntīṣār li’l-fiqḥ al-na‘īya* (al-qaṣīda al-nu‘īya), ed. M. ʿAbd al-Rahmān et al. (3 vols. Jeddah: Dār ʿĀlam al-Fawā‘id, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 318ff and p. 473ff.


167 Ibn Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-tawhīd*, p. 104, although on p. 106 he rejects one report including the same language due to reservations he has about the *isnād*.


170 It was Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī who earlier included the tradition in his *sunan* collection. The wording does differ slightly regarding the terms used (*madd* for *qāla*). The tradition relates a request for intercession which perturbs the Prophet, who reacts by referring to the majesty and
greatness of God and in this context the throne is mentioned. At one stage the Prophet expressed a point by illustrating with his greatness of God and in this context the throne is mentioned. At one stage the Prophet expressed

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172 Ibn Ḥanbal, Kitāb al-sunnā waʾl-radd ‘alāʾl-Jahmiyya, pp. 231–5, at p. 234, where he states the Almighty will sit on the throne. The same text has a section in which Abū Ḥanīfa is rebuked by numerous luminaries for various issues (pp. 155–63). It is reported by Ibn Kāmil that when al-Ṭabarānī was dictating the Dhayl al-mudhāyyal, he highly praised Abū Ḥanīfa, who upset one of his companions, al-Šawwāf, who began to inveigh against al-Ṭabarānī; it was said that al-Ṭabarānī refused to pardon his conduct (Yaqūt, Mu’jam, vol. 5, p. 268f).


174 Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Fīrīṣtā, p. 288. Walid A. Saleh, The Formation of the Classical Tafsīr Tradition: The Qur’ān Commentary of al-Tha’lābī (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 10–12, does question the influence of al-Ṭabarānī’s work and its overall impact; he is concerned with the assertion that al-Ṭabarānī perfected the tradition and everything that came after him was an inert variation on his work. Certainly, one needs to appreciate that al-Ṭabarānī continues the achievements of earlier scholarship and enhances its discourses, to which later scholars substantially contributed, augmented and improved upon. As he states, tafsīr is by no means ‘a static enterprise’, and in al-Ṭabarānī’s work an attempt is made to qualify and refine the intellectual discourses of his day, which he did. See also pp. 207–9, although one needs to assess al-Ṭabarānī’s work on the basis of its contents and the debates with which it engaged.


176 Al-Ḥanafī, Inbāḥ al-ruwāt, vol. 3, pp. 89–91. It was al-Ḥanafī who also included an entry for al-Ṭabarānī in his work entitled al-Muḥammadn min al-shu’arāʾ, where he also refers to the Tāḥrīr, although on this occasion he describes it as being a gratifying work (‘muqīnī’ as opposed to ‘splendid’); see al-Ḥanafī, al-Muḥammadn min al-shu’arāʾ, ed. Hasan Ma’mārī (Paris: Jāmī’at Paris, Kulliyat al-ʾĀdāb waʾl-ʿUlmūm al-Insāniyya, 1970), pp. 187–9. Unfortunately, the Tāḥrīr has not survived. Ibn Khayr al-ʿIshbīlī (d. 575/1179) mentions the transmission paths for a number of al-Ṭabarānī’s works which had reached him and were circulating in al-Andalus (Abū Bakr Muhammad b. Khayr al-ʿIshbīlī, Fahrasa (Dār al-Kutub al-ʾIlimyya, 1998); al-Jāmī’, p. 52; the Tahdīḥ al-ʾāthār, p. 169; al-Taʾrīkh (dhayl al-mudhāyyal), p. 195; Kitāb al-farāʾīḍ, p. 230; and the Kitāb ʾādāb al-nuṭūṣ, p. 256). For more on his works, see Śalaḥ al-Dīn Khalīl b. Ayyb, al-Shaṭfā, al-Wāṣf biʾl-waṣayyāt, ed. Ahmad Arnaʾūṭ and Tuṣkī Muṣṭafā (29 vols. Beirut: Dār Ilḥāyāʾ al-Ṭurāth al-ʿArabī, 2001), vol. 2, pp. 212–4. Bosworth does speak of there being a hiatus between the fourth/tenth century and the time of al-Ḥanafī as far as biographical interest in the life of al-Ṭabarānī is concerned, but this is incorrect and would have had little bearing on the fact that his literary legacy remained influential and attracted the sustained interest and attention of scholarship; and his achievements continued to be recorded in the biographical literature. The fact that the Sāmānīd Amīr commissioned the translation which sought to ‘hijack’ al-Ṭabarānī’s name and reputation, confirms the esteem in which his work was held (Daniel, ‘The Sāmānīd “Translations”’, p. 297).

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lil’l-Turāth, 1999); see p. 191 and the reference to the fact that (scholarship in) tafsīr lay in the hands of al-Ṭabarānī. Other relevant sources include Ibn Khallikān, Ahmad b. Muḥammad, Wafayāt al-a’yān wa-anbāʾ al-ẓamān, ed. ʿĪsān ʿAbbas (8 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1968), vol. 4, pp. 191–2; al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā, vol. 3, pp. 120–8; and al-Samāʿānī, ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad, al-ʿAnsāb, ed. ʿAbd Allāh ʿUmar al-Bārūḍī (5 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Jinn, 1988), vol. 4, pp. 46–8. Al-Samāʿānī appears to rely on al-Khaṭīb for the bulk of his information on al-Ṭabarānī, repeating the details mentioned by the author. This is also true of Abūʾl-Zakariyyā’s al-Nawawī’s Tahdhib al-asmāʾ waʾl-ṣifāt (4 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 77–9, which includes a reference to al-Ṭabarānī’s having links with al-Rabī’ b. Sulaymān; he also notes an evaluation of one of his legal views by the Shāfiʿī scholar al-Ramlī (d. 1004/1596), author of the famous Nihāyat al-muḥtāj ilā sharḥ al-minhāj. See al-Dhahabi, Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, vol. 14, pp. 267–82; al-Dhahabi, Tadhkiraṭ al-huffāẓ, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Muʿallāmī (4 vols. Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1374 AH), vol. 3, pp. 710–15; al-Ṭabarānī is identified as having a separate legal school of thought (ʿlahu madḥhab fiʾl-fiqḥ ahktārahu li-nafsihi”) and indeed one of his students composed a work in defence of it (vol. 3, p. 121). For more on his school, see Ibn ʿAsākir, Taʾrīkh madinat Dimashq, vol. 52, p. 200; Ibn al-Nadīm also associates him with a number of leading scholars of hadīth and praised him for having sought so-called shorter asānīd, travelling to Egypt, Syria, Kufa, Basra and Rayy. These were asānīd which possessed fewer intermediaries separating the first narrator of a tradition from the actual originator of the tradition and were the raison d’être of the riḥla; Rosenthal simply mentions these constituting brief visits to local authorities, but they are very significant within the context of the acquisition of knowledge in hadīth scholarship. Luminaries such as Sufyān al-Thawrī and Ibn Hanbal are noted for having extolled those who set out on such quests, and indeed it is described as a sunna: see Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, Tadrīb al-rāʾīf fi sharḥ taqrīb al-Nawawī, ed. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ʿAbd al-Latīf (2 parts in 1. Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1972), vol. 2, p. 160f); also Leonard Librande, ‘The Categories High and Low as Reflections on the Riḥlah and Kitāba in Islam’, Der Islam 55:2 (1978), pp. 267–80.

178 Saleh, ‘Preliminary Remarks on the Historiography of tafsīr’, p. 20. His point is that the reference to al-Ṭabarānī’s tafsīr being maʿthūr was ideologically and not factually driven.

The principal texts discussed in this article are provided as supplementary material online (see www.euppublishing.com/toc/jqs/15/2)
Appendices

al-Ṭabarî, Jâmi‘ al-Bayân, Istiwâ‘

A

القول في تأويل قوله تعالى: { ثم استوى إلى السماوات }.
قال أبو جعفر: اختلفوا في تأويل قوله: "ثم استوى إلى السماوات".
قال بعضهم: معنى استوى إلى السماوات، أقبل عليها، كما تقول: كان فلان يقترب على فلان، ثم
استوى علي يشامتني - واستوى إلى يشامتني. بمعنى: أقبل علي وإلي يشامتني، واستشهد على أن
: الاستواء بمعنى الإقبال بقول الشاعر:
"أقول وقد قَطَعْنِي بَنِي شَرْوَرَى... سَوَامَ، واسْتَوَى مِنَ الضَّجَوَعَ فَزْرَمْ أَنَّى عِنْهُ أَهْيَنَ خَرْجَنَ مِنَ الضَّجَوَعَ، وكان ذلك عندهم بمعنى: أقبلن. وهذا من التأويل في هذا
البيت خطاً، وإنما معنى قوله: " واستوى من الضجوع "، استوى على الطريق خارجات من
الضجوع، بمعنى استقمن عليه.

وقال بعضهم: لم يكن ذلك من الله جل ذكره بتحول، ولكنه بمعنى فعله، كما تقول: كان الخليفة في
أهل العراق يقولهم، ثم تحول إلى الشام. إما يريد: تحول فعله. [وقال بعضهم: قوله: "ثم استوى
إلى السماوات " يعني ب: استواء]. كما قال الشاعر:
"أقول لهِما أَسْتَوَيْنِي في نَبَاهِه... عِنْ أَيْ دِينِ قَتَلَ النَّاسَ مُسْعَى
وقال بعضهم: "ثم استوى إلى السماوات "، عدله. وقال: بل كل تأكير عملا كان فيه إلى آخر، فهو
مستوى لما عمداه، ومستوى إليه،

وقال بعضهم: الاستواء هو الغل، والغل هو الارتقاء. ومن قال ذلك الربيع بن أسى
فجعَت ذلك عن عمر بن الخطاب، قال: حدثنا عبد الله بن أبي جعفر، عن أبيه، عن الربيع بن أسى:
"ثم استوى إلى السماوات " يقول: أرتقى إلى السماوات.

ثم اختلف متأويل الاستواء بمعنى الغل والارتقاء، في الذي استوى إلى السماوات، فقال بعضهم: الذي
استوى إلى السماوات علا عليها، هو خلقها ومنشنتها. وقال بعضهم: بل العالي عليها: الدخان الذي
جعله للأرض سماوات

قال أبو جعفر: الاستواء في كلام العرب مصرف على وجوه: منها انتهاء شباب الرجل وقتله، فقال:
إذا صار كذلك: فقد استوى الرجل. ومنها استقامة ما كان فيه أوه من الأمور والأسباب، يقول منه:
"السماوات، إذا استقام بعد أوه، ومنه قول الطَّرَمَاح بن حكيم
طَلَّ عَلَى رَسْمِ مَهِيدَ أَيْدِه... وَعَةٌ وَاسْتَوَىَ بِيَمِّه

B

والعجب ممن أنكر المعنى المفهوم من كلام العرب في تأويل قوله تعالى: "ثم استوى إلى السماوات ".
الذي هو معنى الغل والارتقاء، هرباً عند نفسه من أن يلزمه بسمه - إذا تأوله بمعنى المفهوم كذلك -
أن يكون ممن علا وارتفع، ثم استوى إلى السماوات من تأويله المستنكرين. ثم لم يتجزم
ماهرب منه، فإنما تأول قوله "استوى " أقبل، أفكان مصيرًا من السماوات، فقبل إليه؟
فإن زعم أن ذلك ليس بإقبال فعل، ولكن إقبال تدبر، قيل له: فكذكك قُلْتُ: علا عليها علو ملك وسلطان
لا عُلُوٍّ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ، ثُمَّ لَنْ يَقْوَلِ فِي شَيْءٍ مِنْ ذَلِكَ قَوْلًا إِلَّا أَلْزَمُ فِيهِ الْآخَرُ مِثْلُهُ، وَلَكِنَّ أَنَا كَرِهْتُ إِطَالَةَ الْكِتَابِ مَثْلًا مِنْ جُنُسِهِ، لِأُلْبَنَّ أَنَّ قَالَ كُلُّ قَالِ قَالَ فِي ذَلِكَ قَوْلًا لِقُوَّلِ أَهْلِ الْحَقِّ فِيهِ مَخَالِفةً.

وَفِيما بِتَنِيْ مِنْهَا مَا يُشْرِفْ بِذِي الْقُوَّمِ عَلَى مَا فِيهِ الْكَفَّانَةُ إِنْ شَاءُ اللَّهُ

al-Farrā? Ma‘ānī al-Qur‘ān, Istiwā? :

A

وقوله: "ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاءَ فَسَوْاهُ..." الاستواء في كلام العرب على جهتين: إحداهما أن يُستَوَى الرجل [[بَسْمَةٍ] يُبَتَّهْنِي شِبَابُهُ، أو يُسْتَوِي عَنْ اعْجَاب، فِهْدَانُ وَجْهَانُ. وَوَجَهَ ثَلَاثَ اِسْتِوْىٍ أَنْ تَقُولَ: كَانَ مَقَبَّلًا عَنْ فَلَانُ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى يَشِانِمْنِي وإِلَى سَوَاءٍ، عَلَى مَعْنِي أَقْبَلَ إِلَى وَعِلَى هَذَا مَعْنِيَ قُوْلُ: ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلِمُ. وَقَالَ أَبُو عَبْدُ اللَّهِ: ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاءِ، فَصُدِّع، وَهَذَا كَفَّاً لِلرَجُلِ: كَانَ قَانُٰمًا فَاسْتَوَى قَاعِداً، وَكَانَ قَاعِداَ فَاسْتَوَى قَانِيًا. وَكَلِّكَ فِي كَلَّامِ الْعَرَبِ جَارٍ.

Al-Tabarî and the basmala: the ism wa’l-musammā

A

وَذَلِكَ أَنَّ لِيِّاءَ مِنْ "بَسْمَةِ اللَّهِ" مَقْتَضِيَةً فَعَلاً يَكْونُ لِيَ جَالِيًّا، وَلا فَعَلَ مَعَهَا ظَاهِرًا، فَأَفْغَنت سَامِعَ الْقَائِلِ "بَسْمَةِ اللَّهِ" مَعْرِفَتْ بِمَرَادٍ قَائِلِهِ، عَنْ إِظْهَارِ قَائِلٍ مَّرَادُهُ قُوَّلًا إِذْ كَانَ كَلِّ نَاطِقٍ بِهِ عِندَ افْتَاحَهُ أَمَّا قَدْ أَحْضَرَ مَنْطَقَتَهُ بِهِ إِمَّا مَعَهَا، إِمَّا قَبْلَهُ بِلَا فَضْلٍ - مَا قَدْ أَغْنَى سَامِعَهُ عَنِ دَلَّةٍ شَاهِدَةٍ عِلْمَيْنِ. مِنْ أَجْلِ افْتَحَالِ قَائِلِهِ بِهِ، فَصَارَ اِسْتَفْغَانَةً سَامِعُ دَلَّاهُ عَنْ إِظْهَارِهَا حَدَّ، نَظَرَ اِسْتَفْغَانُهَا إِذَا سَمَعَ قَائِلًا قَبْلَهُ: مَا أُذِكَّرَ الْبُيُوتُ؟ فَقَالَ: "طَعَامًاٍ - عَنْ أَنْ يُكَرَّ المُسْتَوِّي مَعْ قُوْلِهِ "طَعَامًاٍ". اِلْكِلُّ لَمْ يَقْرِرْ لَهُ مِنْ الدَّلَّاهَةِ إِلَى أَنْ ذَلِكَ مَعَنَّا، يَتَقْدِمُ مَسَاسُ السَّائِلِ إِبَاهُ عَمَّا أَكَلُّ. فَمُعَقَّوَلُ إِذَا أَنَّ قُوْلَ الْقَائِلِ إِذَا قَالَ بِبَسْمَةِ اللَّهِ الْرَّحْمُنُ الرَّحْيمُ "ثُمَّ افْتَحَالُ تَالِيًّا سَوْاهُ..." أَنِّ اِسْتَيَابُهُ "بِبَسْمَةِ اللَّهِ الْرَّحْمُنُ الرَّحْيمُ "عَلَٰهُ".

بِبَسْمَةِ اللَّهِ الْرَّحْمُنُ الرَّحْيمُ "ثُمَّ افْتَحَالُ تَالِيًّا سَوْاهُ..." أَنِّ اِسْتَيَابُهُ "بِبَسْمَةِ اللَّهِ الْرَّحْمُنُ الرَّحْيمُ "عَلَٰهُ". السَّوَاء، يُبْنِي عَنْ مَعْنِي قُوْلِهِ: "بِبَسْمَةِ اللَّهِ الْرَّحْمُنُ الرَّحْيمُ" وَمَفْهُومُ هُوَ أَنَّهُ مَرَدُهُ ذَلِكَ: أُقْرِرَ بِبَسْمَةِ اللَّهِ الْرَّحْمُنُ الرَّحْيمُ. وَكَذَلِكَ قُوَّلَهُ "بِبَسْمَةِ اللَّهِ" عَنْ نُهُوضَهُ لِلْقَياَمَ أوْ أَنْ قُوَّعَهُ وَسَأَرُتُ اِفْعَالُهُ، يُنَبِّئُ عَنْ مَعْنَى مَرَادَهُ بِقُوْلِهِ "بِبَسْمَةِ اللَّهِ" وَأَنَّهُ أُرَادَ بِقِيْلِهِ "بِبَسْمَةِ اللَّهِ" أَقْوَمُ بَاَسْمَ اللَّهِ، وَأَقْوَمُ بَاَسْمَ اللَّهِ وَكَذَلِكُ قَسَارُ الْإِفْعَالِ

B

قَيْلُ: إِنَّ الْعَرَبِ قَدْ تَجْرَحَ المَصَادِرُ مَبْهِمَةً عَلَى أَسْمَاءِ مَخْلُوفَةٍ، كَتِبْهُمْ: "أَكْرَمْتُ فَلَانًا كَرَامًا، وَإِنَّا بَنَاءُ مَصْدِرٍ "أَفْغَلْتِ" - إِذَا أَخْرَجَ عَلَى فَعْلِهِ "الْإِفْعَالِ". وَكَتِبْهُمْ: "أَهْتَ فَلَانًا هُوَانًا، وَكَمْتُهُ كَلاَمًا. مَحْرُورٌ "أَفْغَلْتِ" - إِذَا أَخْرَجَ عَلَى فَعْلِهِ "الْإِفْعَالِ". وَكَتِبْهُمْ: "أَهْتَ فَلَانًا هُوَانًا، وَكَمْتُهُ كَلاَمًا.

وَمَعَابِدُ: "أَفْغَلْتِ" - إِذَا أَخْرَجَ عَلَى فَعْلِهِ "الْإِفْعَالِ". وَكَتِبْهُمْ: "أَهْتَ فَلَانًا هُوَانًا، وَكَمْتُهُ كَلاَمًا.

وَكَذَلِكُ قَسَارُ الْإِفْعَالِ
هل لا خلاف بين الجميع من علماء الأمة، أن قالوا لقال عنه القول بعض بهاام الأئمة: "بالمثل"، ولم يقل "اسم الله"، وأنه مخالف بعضًا ببعض في القول. وقد علم بذلك أنه لم يبرِّه بقوله "باسم الله"، كما قال الزعيم أن اسم الله في قول الله: "بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم" هو الله. لأن الله إن كان كما زعم، لوجب أن يكون القائل عند تذكيره ذيكره "بالمثل"، قائلًا ما سُئل له من القول على الاحذية. وإجمال الجميع على أن قائل ذلك تارك ما سئل له من القول على دلالة - إذ لم يقل "بسم الله " - دليل واضح على فساد ما ادعى من التأويل في قول القائل: "بسم الله "، أن اسم الله هو الله.
وليس هذا الموضوع من مواضيع الأكثار في الإسامة عن الآب: هو المسمى، أم غيره، أم هو صفة له؟
فنظير الكتاب به: ومن هذا موضوع من مواضيع الإسامة عن الآب المضاف إلى الله: هو اسم، أم مصدر به مسمى التسمية؟

D

فإن قال قائل: فما أنت قائل في بيت ليبيد بن ربيعة؟

"إلى الحوَّور، ثم اسم السلام عليكم... "


فإن قلوا: نعم! خرجوا من لسان العرب وأجاروا في لغتها ما تطغته جميع العرب في لغتها. وإن قلوا: لا ستلوا الفرق بينهما: فلن يقولوا في أحدهما قول إلا أثرموا في الآخر مثله.

فإن قلت لذا: قالوا: فما يمكن قول لبيد هذا عندك؟

قيل له: يحبس ذلك وتحجه، كماً عار نحنة القائل من حكينا قوله، أهديها: أن : "اسم السّلام" اسم من أسماء الله، فائتين أن يكون لبيد عنيل يقوله: "ثم اسم السلام عليكم"، ثم الرضا اسم الله وذكره بعد ذلك، ونداً ذكرى وذكر عليه: على وجه الإسلام. ففرق الأسم، إذ أخبر الحرف الذي يأتي بمعنى الإغارة. وقد تقول العرب ذلك، إذا أخبرت الإغارة، وقدمت المغرى به:

: وإن كنا قد تسنBAT: وهو مؤخر. ومن ذلك قول الشاعر

(بأ أيها المانهِ دؤوبًا دوّنًا... إن رآيت الناس يحمَّدونكًا)
باب في إضافة الاسم إلى المسمى والمسمى إلى الاسم

هذا موضع كان يعتاده أبو على رحمة الله كثيراً ويتلقته ويرتاح لاستعماله.
وفي دليل نحوه غير مدفع يدل على فساد قول من ذهب إلى أن الاسم هو المسمى.
ولو كان إياه لم تجز إضافة واحد منهما إلى صاحبه لأن الشيء لا يضاف إلى نفسه.

وإنما ذلك بعد عن إدراج هذا الموضوع.

وكذلك قال أبو عبيد في قول ليبيد: إنما عندهم قول غيابنا: لا يتعش الطرف إلا ما تخونه داع بياتيه باسم الماء مدعونا بالماء.
ما أسود والماء: صوت الشيء أي يدعونا - يعني الغنم - بالماء أي يقلن لي: أصبت ماء أسود.
فأبو عبيد يدعى زيادة ذي واسم ونحن نحمل الكلام على أن هناك محدوداً.
قال أبو علي: وإنما هو على حد حذف المضاف أي: ثم اسم معنى السلام عليكما واسم معنى السلام.
هو السلام فكان ذا قائل: ثم السلام عليكما.
فالمعني - لعمري - ما قاله أبو عبيد ولكنه من غير الطريق التي أتاه هو منهج تراه هو اعتقد زيادة.
شيء واعتقدها نحن نقصان شيء.
وإنما من هذا اعتقادهم زيادة مثل في نحو قولنا: مثلي لا يأتي المبين وملك لا يخفى عليه الجميل أي أنا
كذا وأنت كذلك.
وعليه قوله: مثلي لا يحسن قولًا ففعّل أي أنا لا أحسن ذلك.
وقدرفع القبيح وإنما جعله من جماعة هذه حالها ليكون أثب للعلم اذ كان له في أشياء وأضرار، ولما انفرد هو بنع صامد السؤال: ما الذي يثبت عليه وترجايعه.

فأذا كان له فيه نظر، كان حري أن يثبت عليه وترجايعه فيه.

وعلى قول الآخر: ميظولا لثبو عليه مضافية فقوله: إذاً، باسم العامل واسم السلام إنما هو من باب.

إضافة الاسم إلى المسمى بعكس الفصل الأول.

وإنما يخلص هذا من هذا موقعه والفبر المراد به.

Ibn al-Jawzī: al-Muntaẓam

A

وفي الذى القعدة أحضر أبو جعفر محمد بن جرير الطبري دار على بن عيسى لمناظر الحنابلة فحضر ولم يحضروا فعاد الى منزله، وكانوا قد نقموا عليه. قال المؤلف سندكر قصتهم معه عند ذكر وفاته ان شاء الله تعالى.

B

ووافي أبو جعفر الطبري وقت المغرب من عشية الأحد ليومين بقيا من شوال سنة عشر وثلاثة ودفن وقد أضحى النهار يوم الاثنين برحمة يعقوب في ناحية باب خراسان في حجرة بارزة داره، وقيل بل دفن يليا ولم يزلن به أحدimes جمع من لا يحصيهم إلا الله وصلى على قبره عدة شهور يليا ونها، وذكر تأبت بن سنان في تأريخه أنه انها اخفق حالف أن العامة اجتمعوا ومنعوا من دفنه بالنهار وادعوا عليه الرفض ثم ادعوا عليه الآراء، قال المصنف كان ابن جرير يرى جاز المسح على القدمين، وللاي جعل فضلهذا السبب إلى الرفض وكان قد رفع في حقه أبو يكر ابن أبي داود قصة إلى نصر الحاجب يذكر عنه نسبه، فأنكرها ومنها انها نسبه إلى ناثر بن جم، فقال أنه قالهن مثل يدا وهو مسجتان إلى نعمة، فأدرك هذا وقال ما أقوله، وأنا انها روى عن روح رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لما خرجت سائلا: في كف على فحساه، فقال أنما الحديث مسح بها على وجه، وليس فيه حساس، قال المصنف رحمه الله، وهذا إضافة حاله solución انها كتب ابن جرير في جواب هذا الى نصر الحاجب للاعصبية في الإسلام كهذه العصبية الخسية وهذا قبيح منه لأنه كان ينبغي أن يخاصمن من خاصمه وأنا انا قد ماتته جميعا وهو يدرى إلى من يندب.

Yāqūt: Irshād al-Arib

A
قال غير الخطيب ودفن ليلاً خوفاً من العامة لأنه كان يتهيم بالتشيع وأما الخطيب فإنه قال ولم يذن به:

«أحد فاجتمع على جنازته من لا يحصى عدهم إلا الله وصلي على قبره عدة شهور ليلاً ونهاراً ورثاه خلق كثير من أهل الدين والأندرب»

قال وسمع محمد بن عبيد الملك بن أبي الشوارب وأحمد بن منيع البحوي وأحمد بن حميد اللازي وأبا همام الوليد بن شجاع وأبا كريم محمد بن العلاء وعدد خلقاً كثيراً من أهل العراق والشام ومصر.

وحدث عنه أحمد بن كامل القاضي وغيره واستوطن بغداد وأقام بها إلى حين وفاته.

B

فلما قدم إلى بغداد من طبرستان بعد رجوعه إليها تعصب عليه أبو عبد الله الحصاص وجعفر بن عرفة والبياض ويقده الحنابلة فسألوه عن أحمد بن حنبل في المساجد ومن حديث الجلوس على العرش فقال جعفر: أما أحمد بن حنبل فلا بعد خلافة فحالوا له فقد ذكر العلماء في الاحتفال فقال:

ما رأيت به رأيتي ولا رأيت له أصحاباً يعول عليهم وأما حديث الجلوس على العرش فمحال ثم أنشد:

(سبحان من ليس له أنيس ولا له في عرشه جليس)

الرجز

فلما سمع ذلك الحنابلة منه وأصحاب الحديث وثوا ورومو بهم حباه وقيل كانت ألوفاً فقام ابو جعفر بنفسه ودخل داره فروموا داره بالحجارة حتى صار على بابه كاتب العظام وركب نازوك صاحب الشرطة في عشرات ألوى من الجند يمنع عنه العامة ووقف على بابه يوماً إلى الليل وأمر برفع الحجارة عنه وكان قد كتب على بابه:

(سبحان من ليس له أنيس ولا له في عرشه جليس)

فأمر نازوك بمحو ذلك وكتب مكانه بعض أصحاب الحديث:

إذا وافى إلى الرحمن وافد
(لأحمد منزل لا شك عال)
فدينيه وقعدته كرما
(على رغم لهم في أنف حاسد)
على عرش بلغة بطينة
(على الأكباب من باغ وعائد)
لك هذا المقام الفرد حقا
(كذاك رواه ليث عن ماجاه)
والوافر

فخلا في داره وعمل كتابه المشهور في الاعتدار إليهم وذكر مذهبه واعتقاده وجرح من ذهن فيه غير ذلك وقرأ الكتاب عليهم وفضل أحمد بن حنبل وذكر مذهبه وتصويب اعتقاده ولم يزل في ذكره إلى أن مات ولم يخرج كتابه في الاحتفال حتى مات فوجدوه مدفوناً في النزاب فأخرجوه ونسخوه اعنى احتفال الفقهاء هكذا سمعت من جماعة منهم أبي - رحمه الله
القول في تأويل قوله تعالى: { وسع كرسي السماوات والأرض } قال أبو جعفر: اختلف أهل التأويل في معنى الخرسي الذي أخبر الله تعالى ذكره في هذه الآية أنه
 وسع السماوات والأرض.
 فقال بعضهم: هو علم الله تعالى ذكره.
 ذكر من قال ذلك:
 حدثنا أبو داود وسلم بن جناد ، قال: حدثنا ابن إضير، فعلى مطروح، عن جعفر بن أبي المغيرة، عن
 سعيد بن جبير، عن ابن عباس: " وسع كرسيه قال: كرسيه عليه
 حدثني يعقوب بن إبراهيم، قال: حدثنا هشيم، قال: أخبرنا مطرف,
 عن جعفر بن أبي المغيرة، عن سعيد بن جبير، عن ابن عباس، مثله ورد فيه: ألا ترى إلى قوله: "
 ولا يؤدِّه حفظهما "؟
 وقال آخرون: " الكرسي: موقع القدمين.
* ذكر من قال ذلك:
 حدثني علي بن مسلم الطوسي، قال: حدثنا عبد الصمد بن عبد الواحد، قال: حدثني أبي، قال:
 حدثني محمد بن جحادة، عن سلمة بن كهيل، عن عمارة بن عمر، عن أبي موسى، قال: الكرسي: موقع القدمين، ولو أطلق كتابع الرحيل.
 حدثني موسى بن هاوان، قال: حدثنا عمرو، قال: حدثنا أسباط، عن السدي: " وسع كرسيه السماوات والأرض "، فإن السماوات والأرض في جوف الكرسي، والكرسي بين يدي العرش، وهو
 موقع قدميه.
 حدثني المشتى، قال: حدثنا إسحاق، قال: حدثنا أبو زهير، عن جوهر، عن الضحاك قوله: " وسع
 كرسيه السماوات والأرض "، قال: كرسيه الذي يوضع تحت العرش، الذي يجعل الملوك عليه أقدامهم
.
 حدثنا أحمد بن إسحاق، قال: حدثنا أبو أحمد الزبيري، عن سفيان، عن عمار الذهني، عن مسلم -
 البطن، قال: الكرسي: موقع القدمين.

 حدثي عن عمارة، قال: حدثنا ابن أبي جعفر، عن أبيه، عن الزبيدي: " وسع كرسيه السماوات
 والأرض "، قال: لما نزلت: " وسع كرسيه السماوات والأرض " قال أصحاب النبي صلى الله عليه
 وسلم: يا رسول الله هذا الكرسي وسع السماوات والأرض، فكيف العرش؟ فائرز الله تعالى: ( وما
 قدروا الله حق قدره ) إلى قوله: ( سبحانه وتعالى عمار يشتركون).
 حدثي يونس، قال: أخبرنا ابن وهب، قال: قال ابن زيد في قوله: " وسع كرسيه السماوات والأرض
 قال ابن زيد: حدثني أبي قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: " ما السماوات السبع في
 الكربى إلا كفرت لهم سبعة آقتات في نفس البكروت، فقال أبو نضر: سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم
 يقول: ما الكرسي في العرش إلا كحلقة من حديد آلت بين ظهري فلأذا من الأرض
 وقال آخرون: الكرسي هو العرش نفسه.
 ذكر من قال ذلك.
 حدثني المشتى، قال: حدثنا إسحاق، قال: حدثنا أبو زهير، عن جوهر، عن الضحاك، قال: كان-
 الحسن يقول: الكرسي هو العرش.
قال أبو جعفر: ولكل قول من هذه الأقوال وجه ومذهب، غير أن الذي هو أولى بتأويل الآية ما جاء به الآثر عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، وهو ما حدثني به عبد الله بن أبي زيد القطوي، قال: حدثنا عبد الله بن موسى، قال: أخبرنا إسرائيل، عن أبي إسحاق، عن عبد الله بن خليفة، قال: أمرت النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، فقالت: ادع الله أن يدخل الجنة فغنم الزمر تعالى ذكره، ثم قال: إن كرسية وسع السموم والأرض، وأنه لبقع عليه، فما بفضل منه مقدار أربع أصابع - ثم قال بأصابعه فجمعها - وإن له أطياف كأن يكون الرجل الجديد، إذا ركز من ثقله.

حدثني عبد الله بن أبي زيد، قال: حدثني يحيى بن أبي بكر، عن إسرائيل، عن أبي إسحاق، عن عبد الله بن خليفة، قال: جاءت امرأة، فذكر نحوه:

وأما الذي يدل على صحته ظاهر القرآن فقول ابن عباس الذي رواه جعفر بن أبي المغيرة، عن سعيد بن جبير، عن أنه قال: "هو علمه"، وذلك لقال له تعالى ذكره: "ولا يؤدده حفظهما" على أن ذلك كذلك، فأخبر أن لا يعوده حفظ ما علم وأنا به مما في السموم والأرض، وكما أن حفظه، مكنتك أنهم قالوا في دعائهم: (ربنا وسع كل شيء رحمته وعلما)، قال أبو جعفر: وأصل الكلمة "الكرسي" العلم، ومنه قول للصحيفة يكون فيها علم مكتوب "كراسة"، ومنه:

قول الزاجر في صفه قاصد:

الإبل إذا ما احتزها تكرسا.

al-Ṭabari’s exegesis of Q. 17:79

al-Maqām al-mahmūd

وقوله (عسى أن يبعثك ربك مقاما محصودا) وعسى من الله واجبة، وإنما وجه قول أهل العلم: عسى من الله واجبة، لعلم المؤمنين أن الله لا يدع أن يفعل ما يفعله ما أطمع به فهم الجزاء على أعمالهم والوضع على طاعتهم إياه ليس من صفته الغروم، ولا شك أنه قد أطمع من قال ذلك له في نفعه، إذا هو تعاهده ولزمه، فإن لزم المقول له ذلك وتعاهده ثم لم ينفعه، ولا سبيل يحول بينه وبين نفعه إلاه مع الأطعام الذي تقدمنه لصاحبه على تعاهده إياه ولزمه فإنه لصاحبه غار بما كان من إخلاءه إياه فيما كان أطمعنا فيه، يقول الذي قال له: وإذا كان ذلك كذلك، وكان غير جائز أن يكون جل ثناؤه من صفاته الغروم لعبادته صح وجواب أن كل ما أطمعنا فيه من طعم على طاعته، أو على فعل من الأفعال، أو أمر أو نهي أمر به، أو نهاهم عنه، فإنه موف لهم به، وإنهم منه كالعدة التي لا يخلف الوفاء بها قالوا: عسى وفعل من الله واجبة.
وتؤمل الكلام: أقيم الصلاة المفروضة يا محمد في هذه الأوقات التي أمرتك بإقامتها فيها، ومن الليل فتهجد فرضاً فرضته عليك، لعل ربك أن يبعثك يوم القيامة مقاما تقوم فيه محموداً تجاه فقهك.

ثم اختلف أهل التأويل في معنى ذلك المقام المحمود، فقال أكثر أهل العلم: ذلك هو المقام الذي هو يقوم صلى الله عليه وسلم يوم القيامة للشفاعة ليرحم ربيهم من عظيم ما هم فيه من شدة ذلك اليوم.

ذكر من قال ذلك:

حدثنا محمد بن بشار، قال: ثنا عبد الرحمن، قال: ثنا سفيان، عن أبي إسحاق، عن صلة بن زفر، عن حديثه، قال: يجمع الناس في صعيد واحد، فيسمعهم الداعي، فيلغمهم البصر، حفظة عراعة كما خلقوا، قياماً لا تكلم نفس إلا بإذنه، ينادي: يا محمد، فيقول: لبي وسعيدي وخير في يديك، والشر ليس ليك، والمهد من هذين، عبد بن يدك، ويا يا يا يا يا يا يا يا يا يا يا يا يا يا يا يا يا يا يا يا يا يا يا يدك لا تلاقوا ولا تنجا منك إلا إلى يدك تبادرك وتعالى. سبحانك رب هذا البيت! فهذا المقام المحمود الذي ذكره الله تعالى.

حدثنا سليمان بن عمرو بن خالد الرقي، قال: ثنا عيسى بن يونس، عن رشدين بن كربم، عن أبيه، عن ابن عباس، قوله (عسى أن يبعثك ربك مقاماً محموداً) قال: المقام المحمود: مقام الشفاعة.

حدثنا ابن بشار، قال: ثنا عبد الرحمن، قال: ثنا سفيان، عن سلامة بن كهيل، قال: ثنا أبو الزعاء، عن عبد الله في قصة ذكرها، قال: ثم يأخر بالضربات فضرب على حجر جهنم، فيرم الناس بقدر أعمالهم: يمر أولهم كالبرق، وكم الرجح، وكم الطير، وكأسرع نواحيه، ثم كل ذلك حتى يمر الرجل سعيماً، ثم مشيناً، حتى يجيء آخرهم يتلبيب على بطنه، فيقول: ربي لما أпатك بي، فيقول: إنني لم أبكيك، إنما أني بك عملك، قال: ثم يأتين الله في الشفاعة، فيكون أن شافع يوم القيامة جبرائيل عليه السلام، روح القدس، ثم إبراهيم خليل الرحمن، ثم موسى، أو عيسى قال أبو الزعاء: لا أدرى أيهما قال، قال: ثم يقيم نبيكم صلى الله عليه وسلم رابعاً، فلا يشفع أحد بعده فيما يشفع فيه. وهو المقام المحمود الذي ذكر الله (عسى أن يبعثك ربك مقاماً محموداً).

حدثنا محمد بن بشار، قال: ثنا ابن أبي عدي، عن عوف، عن الحسن في قول الله تعالى (ومن الليل فتهجد به نافلة كعساى أن يبعثك ربك مقاماً محموداً) قال: المقام المحمود: مقام الشفاعة يوم القيامة.
حدثنا محمد بن عمرو، قال: ثنا أبو عاصم، قال: ثنا عيسى: وحدثني الحارث، قال: ثنا الحسن، قال: ثنا ورقا، جميعاً عن ابن أبي نجيح، عن مجاهد، في قول الله تعالى (مقاما محمودا) قال:

شفاعة محمود يوم القيامة.

حدثنا القاسم، قال: ثنا الحسن، قال: ثنا أبو جراح، عن ابن جريع، عن مجاهد، مثله.

حدثنا القاسم، قال: ثنا الحسن، قال: ثنا أبو معاوية، عن عاصم الأحول، عن أبي عثمان، عن سلمان، قال: هو الشفاعة، يشفعه الله في أمته، فهو المقام المحمود.

حدثنا بشر، قال: ثنا سعيد، عن قتادة، قوله (عسى أن يبعثك ربك مقاما محمودا).

وقد ذكر لنا أن نبي الله صلى الله عليه وسلم خبر بิน أن يكون إماماً، أو ملكاً، فانصرف إليه جبرائيل عليه السلام: أن تواضع، فاختار النبي أن يكون إماماً، فاعظى به نبي الله ثبتين: أنه أول من نشأ عليه الأرض، وأول شافع. وكان فعل العلم يرون أنه المقام المحمود الذي قال الله تبارك وتعالى (عسى أن يبعثك ربك مقاماً متعاليا) شفاعة يوم القيامة.

حدثنا محمد بن عبد الأعلى، قال: ثنا محمد بن ثور، عن معمر، عن قتادة (مقاما محمودا) قال:

هي الشفاعة، يشفعه الله في أمته.

حدثنا الحسن بن يحيى، قال: أخبرنا عبد الرزاق، قال: أخبرنا معمر والثوري، عن أبي إسحاق، عن صلة بن زرير، قال: سمعت حذيفة يقول في قوله (عسى أن يبعثك ربك مقاما محمودا) قال: يجمع الله الناس في صعيد واحد حيث يسمعهم الداعي، فينذغم البيصر حفاة عراة، كما خلقتها سكوتاً لا تكلم نفس إلا بإذنه، قال: فنادى محمد، يقول: لبك وسعديك، والخير في يديك، والشر ليس إليك، والمهد من هديته وعهدك بين يديك، وله وإليك، لا يلتفت ولا منجي منك إلا إليك، تبارك وتعالى.

سجاحاً رضي الله، قال: فذلك المقام المحمود الذي ذكر الله (عسى أن يبعثك ربك مقاما محمودا).

حدثنا محمد بن عبد الأعلى، قال: ثنا محمد بن ثور، عن معمر، عن أبي إسحاق، عن صلة بن زرير، قال حذيفة: يجمع الله الناس في صعيد واحد، حيث ينذغم البيصر، ويسمعهم الداعي، حفاة عراة، كما خلقتها أول مرة، ثم يقوم النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فيقول: "لبك وسعديك" ثم ذكر نحوه إلا أنه قال: هو المقام المحمود.

وقال آخررون: بل ذلك المقام المحمود الذي ورد الله نبيه أن يبعثه إياه، هو أن يقاعده معه على عرشه.

ذكر من قال ذلك:
حدثني عبد بن يعقوب الأنصاري، قال: ثنا ابن فضيل، عن ليث، عن مjahد، في قوله ( عسی‌ان‌ی‌تبعک ریٰ مقاما محمودا ) قال: بلغه معاٰ على عرشه.

وأول说出 القولين في ذلك بالصورما ما صن به الخبر عن رسول الله.

وذلك ما حدثنى به أبو كريب، قال: ثنا وكيع، عن داود بن يزيد، عن أبيه، عن أبي هريرة، قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ( عسی‌ان‌ی‌تبعک ریٰ مقاما محمودا ) سئل عنها، قال: "هي الشفاء.

حدثني علي بن حرب، قال: ثنا مكي بن إبراهيم، قال: ثنا داود بن يزيد الأودي، عن أبيه، عن أبي هريرة، عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم في قوله ( عسی‌ان‌ی‌تبعک ریٰ مقاما محمودا ) قال: "هو المقام الذي أشفع فيه لأمتي ".

حدثني أبو عتبة الحمصي أحمد بن الفرج، قال: ثنا بقية بن الوليد، عن الزبيدي، عن الزهري، عن عبد الرحمن بن كعب بن مالك، عن كعب بن مالك، أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: "مشر الناس يوم القيامة، فاكنون أنا وأمتي على تل فیکسونی ربی حلة خضراء، ثم يؤذن لي، فأقول ما شاء الله أن أقول، فذاك المقام المحدود ".


حدثني أبو زيد عمر بن شهبا، قال: ثنا موسی بن إسماعیل، قال: ثنا سعيد بن زید، عن علي بن الحكم، قال: ثني عثمان، عن إبراهیم، عن الأسود، وعندما، عن ابن مسعود، قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: "إنني لأقوم المقام المحدود " فقال رجل: يا رسول الله، وما ذل المقام المحدود؟ قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: "ذاك إذا جاء جيء بكم حفاظة عراؤ غزالة فيكون أول من يكسى إبراهيم عليه السلام، فيتزوي بريتتیين بیضاوین، قبلهما، ثم يعقد مستقبل العرش، ثم أتونی بکسومی قاپسها، فاقوم عن بینه مقاما لا تقوم غيري يغطائي فيه الأولون والآخرون، ثم يفتح نهر من الكثّر إلى الحوض. "

حدثنا الحسن بن يحيى، قال: أخبرنا عبد الرزاق، قال: أخبرنا محمد بن حرب عن الزهري، عن علي بن الحسين، قال: قال النبي: "إذا كان يوم القيامة، فذكر نحوه، ورد فيه: "ثم أشفع فافقول: يا رب عبادك عبدوك في أطراف الأرض، وهو المقام المحمود".

حدثنا ابن بشار، قال: ثنا أبو عامر، قال: ثنا إبراهيم بن طهبان، عن أسد، عن علي، قال: سميت ابن عمر يقول: إن الناس يحتشرون يوم القيامة، ففيهم، في كل نبي أمه، ثم يجيء رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، في آخر الأمور، في طرفه هو وأمه على كم فوق الناس، فيقول: يا فلان أشفع، فيقول: يا فلان أشفع، فيقول: يا فلان اشفع، يا فلان أشفع، فما زال يردها بعضهم على بعض يرجع ذلك إليه، وهو المقام المحمود الذي وعد الله إيها.

حدثنا محمد بن عوف، قال: ثنا حيوة وربيع، قال: ثنا محمد بن حرب، عن الزهري، عن الزهري، عن عبد الرحمن بن كعب بن مالك، عن كعب بن مالك، أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: "يحضر الناس يوم القيامة فاكون أنا وأمي على تل، فيكسوني ربي عز وجل حلة خضراء، ثم أؤذن لي فأقول: ما شاء الله لن أقول، فذاك المقام المحمود.

وهذا وإن كان هو الصحيح من القول في تأويل قوله (عست أن يبعث ربك مقاما محسوداً) لما ذكرنا من الرواية عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وأصحابه وتابعين، فإن ما قاله محسود من أن الله يبعث محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم على عرشه، قول: "فيا مدد صحته، لا من جهة خير ولا نار، وذلك لأنه لا خير عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، ولا من أحد من أصحابه، ولا من التابعين بإباحة ذلك.

فأما من جهة النظر، فإن جميع من ينتحل الإسلام، سواء اختلافاً في معنى ذلك على أوجه ثلاثة، فكلهم.

فرقة منهم: الله عز وجل بان بن من خلقه كان قبل خلقه الآخرين، ثم خلق الآخرين، فلم يباشها، وهو كما لم يزل، غير أن الآخرين التي خلقها، إن لم يكن هو لها مساساً، وجب أن يكون لها مبانياً، إن فعال الآخرين إلا وهو ممس لل أجل بما أو مباين لها. قالوا: فإذا كان ذلك كذلك، وكان الله عز وجل فاعل الآخرين، ولم يجز في قولهم إن بيوس في بيوس، إن بيوس، وعندما يراهنهم أنه لها مبانيا، فعلى مذهب هؤلاء سواء انعقد محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم على عرشه، كان من قولهم، إن بيئوتهم من عرشه، وبينبيوتهم من أرضه بمعنى واحد في أنه بان منهما كليهما، لم يباش مس لواحد منهم.

وقالت فرقة أخرى: كان الله تعالى ذكره قبل خلقه الآخرين، لا شيء بمثابة، ولا شيء، بينبيوتهم، ثم خلق الآخرين، فاقامة بقدرته، وهو كما لم يزل قبل خلقه الآخرين، لا شيء بمثابة ولا شيء، بينبيوتهم، فعلى قول
هؤلاء أيضا سواء أقعد محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم عرشه، أو على أرضه، إذ كان سواء على قولهم عرشه وأرضه في أنه مماس ولا مباين لذا، كما أنه لمماس ولا مباين لهذه.

وقال فرقة أخرى: كان الله عز ذكره قبل خلق الأشياء لا شيء ولا شيء، ولا شيء، ولا شيء، ثم أحدث الأشياء وخلقها، فخلق نفسه عرشاً استوى عليه جالساً، وصار لمماساً، كما أنه قد كان قبل خلق الأشياء لا شيء، لا شيء، ولا شيء، ثم خلق الأشياء فرقه هذا وحرم هذا، وأعطى هذا، ومنع هذا، قالوا: فكذلك كان قبل خلق الأشياء مماس ولا مباينه، خلق الأشياء، فماس العرش بجليسه عليه دون سائر خلقه، فهو مماس ما شاء من خلقه، ومباين ما شاء منه، فعله مذهب هؤلاء أيضا سواء أقعد محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم موجباً له على عرشه، ليس بجليس جميع العرش، ولا في إقعاد محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم موجباً له صفة الرؤوبية، ولا مخرجه من صفة العبودية لربه، كما أن مباينة محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم ما كان مباينة له من الأشياء غير موجبة له صفة الرؤوبية، ولا مخرجته من صفة العبودية لربه من أجل أنه موصوف بائه له مباين، كما أن الله عز وجل موصوف على قول قائل هذه المقالة بأنه مباين لها، هو مباين له، قالوا: فإذا كان معنى مباين ومباين لا يوجب لمحمد صلى الله عليه وسلم الخروج من صفة العبودية والدخول في صفة الرؤوبية، فذلك لا يوجب له ذلك قعوده على عرش الرحمن، فقد تبين إذا بما قلنا أنه غير محال في قول أحد ممن ينتحلا الإسلام ما قاله مجاهم من أن الله تبارك وتعالى يقعد محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم.

فإن قال قائل: إنا لا ننكر إقعاد الله محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم، وإننانترك إقعاده.

حدثي عباس بن عبد العظيم، قال: ثنا يحيى بن كثير، عن الجبري، عن سيف السدويسي، عن عبيد الله بن سلام، قال: إن محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم يوم القيامة على كرسي الرج بين يدي الرج تبارك وتعالى، وإنما ينكر إقعاده إياه معه، قال: أنجبائه عندما أن يقعده عليه لا معه. فإن أعجز ذلك صار إلى الإقرار بأنه إياه معه. أو إلى أنه يقعده. والله للبشر صوابه، وأما أن لا مماس ولا مباين، وإذا ذلك قال كان منه خروجاً في بعض ما كان ينكره وإن قال ذلك، [ص: 533] غير جائز: كان منه خروجاً من قول جميع الفرق التي حقننا قولهم، وذلك فراق قول جميع من ينتحل الإسلام، إذ كان لا قول في ذلك إلا الأقوال الثلاثة التي حكناها، وغير محال في قول منها ما قال مجاهم في ذلك.
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