

“BUKHĀRĪ’S *KITĀB TAFSĪR AL-QUR’ĀN*”\*

by Christopher Melchert

The celebrated *Ṣaḥīḥ* (full title: *al-Jāmi` al-musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ al-mukhtaṣar*, meaning roughly “the comprehensive, fully supported, sound epitome”) of Abū `Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā`īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) is divided into 97 chapters, of which the second largest is *kitāb tafsīr al-Qur’ān* (“the book of qur’anic commentary”). It constitutes about 7 percent of the whole work. Marston Speight has a useful discussion of it in a 1988 article, recently revisited by Aisha Geissinger, but I should like to go further by way of measuring the extent of al-Bukhārī’s reliance on Companions and other later authorities by comparison with the Prophet, otherwise comparing this book with the rest of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, and comparing this book with other notable collections of hadith.<sup>1</sup> It confirms al-Bukhārī’s unusual attention to *adab* (belles-lettres), more pronounced than ever in this book. It seems a valuable witness to the state of qur’anic commentary in the mid-ninth century, from when we have few others.

Verses and comments.

As for sizes, Ibn Ḥajar’s estimates in the introduction to his commentary on al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* may be cited to indicate orders of magnitude: it comprises 7,275 hadith reports with full *isnād*, 2,602 excluding repeats (i.e. multiple appearances of the same reports with variant *isnāds* and small changes of wording under different headings), with a further 1,341

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\* The writing of this study was completed while the author was the John G. Medlin, Jr., fellow at the National Humanities Center, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina.

<sup>1</sup> R. Marston Speight, “The Function of *ḥadīth* as Commentary on the Qur’ān, as Seen in the Six Authoritative Collections,” in *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur’ān*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 63-81, at 73-5; Aisha Geissinger, *Gender and Muslim Constructions of Exegetical Authority*, Islamic History and Civilization, Studies and Texts 117 (Leiden: Brill, 2015.), chap. 4. Al-Bukhārī’s *k. al-tafsīr* is also remarked by Walid Saleh, “Preliminary Remarks on the Historiography of *tafsīr* in Arabic,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 12 (2010): 6-40, at 26-7.

mentioned with incomplete *isnāds* for the purpose of corroboration (*ta`ālīq*).<sup>2</sup> By the standard numbering, *kitāb tafsīr al-Qur`ān* within it comprises 503 hadith reports, which means that it constitutes about 7 percent of the whole collection and is longer than all but one other book (*kitāb al-maghāzī*) of the whole *Ṣaḥīḥ*. By contrast, Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* (for example) includes 11-12,000 hadith reports (about half of them repeats) but its *kitāb al-tafsīr* at the end is a much more modest collection of about forty hadith reports.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, there is a substantially higher proportion of repeated hadith reports in al-Bukhārī's *kitāb al-tafsīr* than in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* as a whole. Marston Speight has counted sequential repetitions: "it contains 457 *ḥadīth*, not counting repetitions within the same chapter, having to do with different versions of the same report."<sup>4</sup> But the overwhelming majority of reports in *kitāb al-tafsīr* are repeated in other books. By my count, *kitāb al-tafsīr* includes just 68 unique hadith reports, excluding all repeats. This means that it constitutes somewhat less than 3 percent of unique hadith reports in the whole collection. It seems to be a special concern of al-Bukhārī's to show that Qur'an and hadith are complementary, the latter normally explaining the former. He quotes the Qur'an in about a quarter of all his topic headings, far more than any other major hadith collector.<sup>5</sup> Repeating hadith reports that

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<sup>2</sup> Ibn Hajar, *Hady al-sārī*, ed. `Abd al-`Azīz ibn `Abd Allāh Bīn Bāz (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1428-9/2008), 562. The *Hady* is Ibn Hajar's introduction to his commentary on the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Fath al-bārī*, normally published as its first volume. To my knowledge, this particular edition is as textually adequate as others and easily available commercially. However, I do not propose it as a standard edition to be preferred, except that it numbers sections and hadith reports after Muḥammad Fu`ād `Abd al-Bāqī's for the edn of Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, 14 vols. (Cairo: al-Maṭba`ah al-Salafiyyah, 1380/1960), which numbering I do endorse as the standard. One example of repetition: al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *al-tafsīr* 2, ad Q. 2:198, no. 4519, appears earlier with an overlapping *isnād* and similar but not identical wording at *al-ḥajj* 150, *bāb al-tijārah ayyām al-mawṣim*, no. 1770. The restriction of *ḥadīth* to what is traced back to the Prophet, *athar* to reports of later Muslims, was established well after al-Bukhārī's time and has not influenced my usage here.

<sup>3</sup> Walīd Saleh's observation, "In the compilations of *ḥadīth*, the sections on prophetic quranic interpretation are rather short," applies to some compilations but not others: Walid A. Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical tafsīr Tradition*, Texts and Studies on the Qur'an 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 192.

<sup>4</sup> Speight, "Function," 73. For example, al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *al-tafsīr* 2, ad Q. 2:223, nos. 4526-7, are reports < Ibn `Umar with overlapping *isnāds*, on which more below.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Melchert, "Bukhārī and His *Ṣaḥīḥ*," *Le Muséon* 123 (2010): 425-54, at 448. Cf. Scott C. Lucas, "The Legal Principles of Muḥammad b. Ismā`īl al-Bukhārī and Their Relationship to Classical Salafi Islam,"

mention the Qur'an in a long book of *tafsīr* is then another way to stress that complementarity.

Al-Bukhārī's style is to go systematically through the Qur'an in the canonical order from start to finish. Unlike other ninth-century hadith collectors and much more often than in other books of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Bukhārī usually begins sections of *kitāb al-tafsīr* with comments. These are most often glosses of obscure words and phrases, from various commentators, normally without any *isnād*, occasionally with an incomplete one. For example, he begins the section on Q (Maryam) 19 with four comments from the Companion (ʿAbd Allāh) ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68/687-8), starting with an expansion of verse 37 (*“abṣir bihim wa-asmiʿi ʾLlāh* whereas today they do not hear or see”), one from (Sufyān) ibn ʿUyaynah (d. Mecca, 198/814), glossing an obscure expression in verse 83 (*taʾuzzuhum azzan*), one from Mujāhid (ibn Jabr; d. Mecca, 104/722-3?), glossing an obscure word in verse 89 (*iddan*), then eight more apparently attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās again (although Ibn Ḥajar's commentary identifies one of them rather as coming from the Basran grammarian Abū ʿUbaydah [d. 208/823-4?]), then one last gloss from Mujāhid.<sup>6</sup> For 29 chapters, he offers only comments without *isnād* (23, 29, 35, 51, 57, 58, 64, 67, 73, 76, 81, 82, 85-90, 94, 97, 100-7, 109). For most, he goes on to relate hadith from the Prophet or Companions with *isnād* relevant to the chapter in question, usually some particular verse. Sometimes, comments follow hadith. (Occasionally, the order depends on which recension of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* is being followed; e.g. for Q [Hūd] 11, where only the

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*Islamic Law and Society* 13 (2006): 289-324, esp. 299.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath* 9:272. As an example of the textual weakness of this edition, I observe that the final gloss from Mujāhid is mentioned only in the commentary, not in the text of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* given on the previous page. In the Sulṭāni edition of 1311-13, the closest we have to a standard text of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Mujāhid's gloss appears in a marginal note (repr. Liechtenstein: Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2001), 6:93. Al-Bukhārī's involvement with philologists of the generation before him is treated at length in M. Fuad Sezgin, *Buhārī'nin kaynakları*, Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi yayınlarından 13 (Istanbul: Ibrahim Horoz Basimevi, 1956), 124-63. Anonymous comments (i.e. al-Bukhārī's own) are collected in appendices at 321-68 (in *k. al-tafsīr*) and 369-79 (in other books of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*). Chapter names will be given as in printed Qur'ans today, but al-Bukhārī's usage is often very different; e.g. Q 19 is *sūrat khy*ʿ, of uncertain pronunciation.

recension of Abū Dharr has comments all at the beginning.<sup>7)</sup> Although he usually offers Companion comments without *isnād*, he also includes notably many Companion comments with *isnād* in *kitāb al-tafsīr*—about 72 percent of all the unique reports in this book (and over a third of all reports in it with *isnād*), as opposed to about 9 percent of all the reports in the whole *Ṣaḥīḥ*. On Q (al-Tawbah) 9:40, “When the two of them were in the cave and he said to his companion, ‘Do not grieve. God is with us’” (Jones translation), he hangs explanations from Ibn `Abbās of why he did not actively support his relative Ibn al-Zubayr in the Second Civil War, namely that Ibn al-Zubayr never actively sought his support.<sup>8</sup> He occasionally quotes illustrative poetry; for example, to explain *ḥāmīm* as an apparent battle cry at the beginning of Q (al-Mu`min) 40. Sufyān al-Thawrī the Kufan jurist (d. 161/777?) is quoted as saying that he found no verse of the Qur`an harder on him than Q (al-Mā`ida) 5:68, “you have no base until you observe the *Torah* and the *Gospel* and what has been sent down to you.”<sup>9</sup>

I have counted 299 comments expressly attributed (but excluding hadith with full *isnād*). These are dominated by Mujāhid and Ibn `Abbās, each responsible for 103 (34 percent). The Basrans al-Ḥasan (d. 110/728) and Qatādah ibn Di`āmah (d. 117/735-6?) and the Kufans Sufyān ibn `Uyaynah and Sa`īd ibn Jubayr (d. 95/714?) are the next most prominent, with ten, eight, nine, and six quotations, respectively. On the other hand, of Abū Zabyān (d. 90/708-9), al-Ḍaḥḥāk (d. 106/724-5?), and Muḥammad ibn Abī Muḥammad, to name “the earliest authorities of qur`ānic exegesis which seem to be historically tangible”

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<sup>7</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath* 9:195, *ad* Q 11. For recensions of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, v. Johann Fück, “Beiträge zur Überlieferungsgeschichte von Buḥārī’s Traditionssammlung,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 92 (n.F. 17, 1938): 60-87, now also available as “On the Transmission of Bukhārī’s Collection of Traditions,” trans. Gwendolyn Goldbloom, *Education and Learning in the Early Islamic World*, ed. Claude Gilliot, The Formation of the Classical Islamic World 43 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 245-70.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *EF*<sup>3</sup>, s.n. ‘`Abdallāh b. `Abbās’, by Claude Gilliot, on reports of the quarrels of Ibn `Abbās and Ibn al-Zubayr.]

<sup>9</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *al-tafsīr*, *ad* Q. 5, introductory glosses; also at *al-riqāq* 19, *bāb al-rajā’ ma`a al-khawf*, before no. 6469.

besides Mujāhid as recently enumerated by Harald Motzki, only al-Ḍaḥḥāk appears.<sup>10</sup> Two recensions identify a comment on Q (al-Ṣaff) 61 as coming from “Yaḥyā.” Ibn Ḥajar’s commentary indicates that the source is Yaḥyā ibn Ziyād al-Farrā’, the famous Kufan grammarian (l. Baghdad, d. 207/823-4), in particular his book *Ma`ānī al-Qur’ān*.<sup>11</sup> Ibn Ḥajar indicates that a substantial number of purely anonymous comments are also from him, even more from Abū `Ubaydah.<sup>12</sup> I am not sure why al-Bukhārī was reluctant to name them. Certainly, they were fairly recent—older contemporaries of his own.

It was usual to rely more heavily on later authorities when it came to the Qur’an (as opposed to the law), less heavily on the Prophet and his Companions. Al-Bukhārī himself relies more heavily on Companions and Followers in his chapter on the Qur’an than in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* as a whole. At the same time, it cannot be said that al-Bukhārī consistently avoids citing recent authorities. His section on Q (al-Ḥajj) 22 begins with a gloss from Ibn `Uyaynah: *mukhbitīn* means *muṭma`innīn*. According to Ibn Ḥajar’s commentary, a *tafsīr* attributed directly to Ibn `Uyaynah and the *Tafsīr* of (Muḥammad) ibn al-Mundhir (d. 318/930?) relate this gloss < Ibn `Uyaynah < Ibn Abī Najīḥ < Mujāhid. At least we can generalize that al-Bukhārī’s standard of accuracy in his *ta`līqāt*, comments and quotations without full *isnād*, is lower than for fully supported quotations, just as the tradition has recognized.

A prominent feature of the qur’anic commentary tradition is multiple alternative

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<sup>10</sup> Harald Motzki, *Analysing Muslim Traditions*, Islamic History and Civilization, Studies and Texts 78 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 271. “Muḥammad ibn Abī Muḥammad” is an obscure reference. Al-Bukhārī mentions two such men in *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, but it seems doubtful whether either is the one Motzki has in mind: al-Bukhārī, *K. al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, 4 vols. in 8 (Hyderabad: Maṭba`at Jam`iyyat Dā`irat al-Ma`ārif al-`Uthmāniyyah, 1358-62; 2nd edn., 1377/1958; repr. 8 vols. + index, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyyah, 1986), 1:225-6.

<sup>11</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath* 9:485, confirmed by al-Farrā’, *Ma`ānī al-Qur’ān*, ed. Muḥammad `Alī al-Najjār, et al., Turāthunā, 3 vols (Cairo: Maṭba`at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, etc., 1955-72), 3:153. On al-Farrā’, v. Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 9 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967-84), 8:123-5, 9:131-4, also al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, ed. `Umar `Abd al-Salām Tadmuri, 52 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-`Arabī, 1407-21/1987-2000), 14 (201-210 H.): 293-5, with further references.

<sup>12</sup> On Abū `Ubaydah, v. Sezgin, *Geschichte* 8:67-71, 9:65-6, also al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh* 14 (201-210 H.): 397-400, with further references.

interpretations of obscure words. An example is *ill* in Q (Barā'ah) 9:8 ("They will not observe any *ill* or *dhimmah* with you"). `Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058) is typical<sup>13</sup>:

Concerning *ill* there are seven interpretations.

One is that it means a pact (*`ahd*), this being the position of Ibn Zayd.

The second is that it is a name of God (be He exalted), as Mujāhid said . . . .

The third is that it is an alliance (*ḥilf*), this being the position of Qatādah.

The fourth is that *ill* is an oath while *dhimmah* is a guarantee. Abū `Ubaydah said this . . . .

The fifth is that it means permission (*jawāz*), as al-Ḥasan said.

The sixth is that it is relatedness (*qarābah*), as said by Ibn `Abbās and al-Suddī . . . .

The seventh is that it means a pact, a contract, a covenant, and an oath, whereas *dhimmah* is where one is considered blameworthy who has no pact, as a certain Basran said.

By contrast, al-Bukhārī says only, "*Ill* means relatedness."<sup>14</sup>

Al-Bukhārī seems unafraid of foreign words in the Qur'an. Concerning Q (Hūd) 11:75 ("Abraham was prudent, tender-hearted and penitent"), he quotes the Kufan Follower Abū Maysarah (d. 63/682-3?), "*Awwāh* means merciful in Ethiopic." Concerning Q (Yūsuf) 12:31 ("She invited them and prepared for them a couch"), he quotes Mujāhid, "*Muttaka'* means a citrus fruit (*utrujī*) in Ethiopic," taking it that Potiphar's wife prepared for them fruit (which they were peeling when they cut themselves) rather than places to lean. Concerning the mysterious letters at the beginning of Q (Ṭāhā) 20, he quotes Sa`īd ibn Jubayr, "In Nabataean, *ṭāhā* is 'O man.'" Concerning Q (al-Nūr) 24:35 ("His light is like a niche in which there is a lamp"), he quotes another Kufan Follower, Sa`d ibn `Iyād al-Thumālī,

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<sup>13</sup> Al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa-al-`uyūn*, ad Q. 9:8; ed. al-Sayyid ibn `Abd al-Maḥsūd ibn `Abd al-Raḥīm, 6 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyyah & Mu'assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyyah, n.d.), 2:343.

<sup>14</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *al-tafsīr*, ad Q. 9, introductory glosses.

“*Mishkāh* is an aperture (*kuwwah*) in Ethiopic.” He quotes Mujāhid apropos of Q (al-Ṭūr) 52, “Ṭūr means mountain in Syriac.” But there is obviously no special preference for identifying foreign origins. For example, *sijill* (from Latin by way of Byzantine Greek *sigillon*) is simply glossed as *ṣahīfah* (“scroll”) at Q (al-Anbiyā’) 21:104 (“The day We roll up the heavens as a recorder rolls up records”).<sup>15</sup> Presumably, al-Bukhārī accepted that Arabic included loan words.

#### Variant readings.

Al-Bukhārī occasionally reports variant readings (*qirā’āt*), sometimes fairly obscure ones without significant followings in later times. With full *isnād*, he reports that Ibn ‘Abbās read *yūṭawwaqawnah* at Q (al-Baqarah) 2:184, whereas the Ten Readers all read *yūṭiqūnah* (“for those who are able to do it”).<sup>16</sup> He mentions that one of what became the Seven Readers, ‘Āṣim, read *adbār* in Q (Qāf) 50:40 (“and glorify Him at the *ends* of prostrations”) but *idbār* in Q (al-Najm) 52:49 (“and glorify Him at the *setting* of the stars”). The first was controversial: three of the Seven Readers (Nāfi’, Ibn Kathīr, and Ḥamzah) and five of the Ten (additionally Abū Ja’far and Khalaf) favored *idbār* there too. But only one of the Ten (Ya’qūb) favored *adbār* in Q. 52:49.<sup>17</sup> The Prophet himself is said to have recited *fa-hal min muddakir* at Q (al-Qamar) 54:15, a fairly uncontroversial reading—only Qatādah is reported to have interpreted it otherwise.<sup>18</sup> Al-A’mash and ‘Āṣim read *fa-`adalaka* at Q (al-Infīṭār) 82:7, al-Bukhārī says, whereas the people of the Hijaz read *fa-`addalaka*. This is to name two Kufans of the earlier second/eighth century, one of the Fourteen and one of the Seven,

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<sup>15</sup> V. Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Quran*, Gaekwad’s Oriental Ser. 79 (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938, repr. Lahore: Al-Biruni, 1977), 163-4.

<sup>16</sup> Aḥmad Mukhtār ‘Umar and ‘Abd al-‘Āl Sālim Mukram, *Mu’jam al-qirā’āt al-qur’āniyyah*, 8 vols. (Kuwayt: Dhāt al-Salāsīl, 1402-5/1982-5, repr. n.p.: Intishārāt-i Uswah, 1412-13/1991-2), 1:143; al-Qalānisī, *al-Kifāyah al-kubrā*, ed. ‘Uthmān Maḥmūd Ghazāl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2007/1428), 142.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Umar and Mukram, *Mu’jam* 6:237-8, 263; al-Qalānisī, *Kifāyah*, 382, 384.

<sup>18</sup> *Mudhdhakir* or *mudhakkir* (reports vary), according to ‘Umar and Mukram, *Mu’jam* 7:34.

respectively. It is to overlook others of the Seven and Ten who read *fa-`adalaka* (the other Kufans Ḥamzah, al-Kisā'ī, and Khalaf) and *fa-`addalaka* (the Basran Abū `Amr and the Damascene Ibn `Āmir, unless al-Bukhārī counted Abū `Amr among the people of the Hijaz).<sup>19</sup> Al-Bukhārī says that Jarīr, `Īsā ibn Yūnus, and Abū Mu`āwiyah read *tarā 'l-nāsa sakrā wa-mā hum sakrā* instead of *sukārā* (Q [al-Ḥajj] 22:2). This refers to Jarīr ibn `Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Rāzī (d. 187/802-3), `Īsā ibn Yūnus al-Sabī'ī (d. 187/802-3?), and Abū Mu`āwiyah Muḥammad ibn Khāzim (d. 195/810-11?), all transmitters from the Kufan traditionist and Qur'an reader al-A`mash (Sulaymān ibn Mihrān, d. 148/765?), one of the Fourteen. Al-Bukhārī apparently ignores the preference of others for *sakrā*—Ḥamzah and al-Kisā'ī among the Seven, Khalaf as well among the Ten.<sup>20</sup> Al-Bukhārī observes that the Meccan preacher (*qāṣṣ*) `Ubayd ibn `Umayr (d. 68/687-8?) read *tatalazzā* at Q (al-Layl) 92:14 (“I have warned you of a fire that blazes”) instead of the shortened form *talazzā* (what one finds in printed Qur'ans today) or (a variant form of Ibn Kathīr's reading) *ttalazzā*.<sup>21</sup>

Plainly, then, al-Bukhārī had no idea of restricting the acceptable readings to so small a range as seven or ten. He offers (evidently) his own opinion concerning Q (al-Ḍuḥā) 93:3, *mā wadda`aka rabbuka wa-mā qalā* (“Your Lord has not said farewell to you nor does He hate you”), “This may be read with either a double or single (*d*), with the same meaning,” when all of the Fourteen agreed on *wadda`aka* and only a few others are remembered as reading *wada`aka*.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, it seems to be his own saying of Q (Saba') 34:19 (“They said, “Our Lord, make the stages of our journey longer””), “*Bā`id* and *ba`id* are the same.” The

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<sup>19</sup> `Umar and Mukram, *Mu`jam* 8:89; Ibn Mihrān, *al-Mabsūṭ fī al-qirā'āt al-`ashr*, ed. Subay` Ḥamzah Ḥakīmī (Damascus: Majma` al-Lughah al-`Arabiyyah, n.d.), 465.

<sup>20</sup> `Umar and Mukram, *Mu`jam* 4:161-3.

<sup>21</sup> Ibn Mujāhid, *K. al-Sab`ah fī al-qirā'āt*, ed. Shawqī Ḍayf (Cairo: Dār al-Ma`ārif, 1972, repr. 1988), 690.

<sup>22</sup> `Umar and Mukram, *Mu`jam* 9:179-80, mentioning the Companion Ibn `Abbās, the Medinese Followers `Urwah ibn Zubayr and Hishām ibn `Urwah, the Syrian Follower Abū Baḥriyyah, and the later Syrians Ibn Abī `Ablah and Abū Ḥaywah.



Ten Readers are divided on this two and a half for *ba`id*, one for *bā`ada*, six and a half for *bā`id*.<sup>23</sup> Again, al-Bukhārī seems to advocate indifference, although in this case there was more disagreement among the most famous experts. (It has been remarked that he avoids reports of divergent Syrian and Iraqi readings of the Qur'an before `Uthmān's authoritative collection, perhaps because, conversely, this is a point over which disagreement was disturbingly consequential.<sup>24</sup>) It apparently fits the style of Basran scholarship that al-Bukhārī should quote grammarians more often than qur'anic readers.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, al-Bukhārī apparently disapproves of trying to come up with one's own interpretation of the consonantal outline on the basis of sense, quoting `Abd Allāh ibn Mas`ūd (d. 32/653?) as saying, "We recite it only as we have been taught it."<sup>26</sup> The Qur'an reciter Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Miqṣam (d. 354/965) was famously put on trial in 322/934 and forced to renounce his defense of inventing new readings consistent with the consonantal outline. We do not know that it was ever considered a crime before him, but al-Bukhārī's quotation indicates that opinion was hardening against it in the mid-ninth century.<sup>27</sup>

Al-Bukhārī quotes Ibn Mas`ūd to explain his reading of Q (Yūsuf) 12:23, the command *hayta lak* in particular. Ibn Mujāhid's Seven Readings include this, *hīta lak*, and

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<sup>23</sup> In favor of *ba`id* are remembered Ibn Kathīr, Abū `Amr, and Ibn `Āmir according to Hishām, in favor of *bā`ada* Ya`qūb, in favor of *ba`id* all the rest: al-Qalānīsī, *Kifāyah*, 352.

<sup>24</sup> Viviane Comerro, *Les traditions sur la constitution du mushaf de `Uthmān*, Beirut Texts and Studies 134 (Würzburg : Ergon Verlag, 2012), 63.

<sup>25</sup> C. H. M. Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar and Qur'ānic Exegesis in Early Islam*, Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 19 (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1993), 182.

<sup>26</sup> Another, longer version *apud* `Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Taḥf*, ed. Muṣṭafā Muslim Muḥammad, 3 vols. in 4 (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1410/1989), 1/2:320 = ed. `Abd al-Mu`ī Amīn Qal`ajī, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ma`rifah, 1411/1991), 1:279, *ad* Q. 12:23. Its *isnād* intersects with al-Bukhārī's only at the transmitter from Ibn Mas`ūd, Abū Wā'il Shāqīq ibn Salamah (Kufan, d. ca. 100/718-19).

<sup>27</sup> V. Christopher Melchert, "Ibn Mujāhid and the Establishment of Seven Qur'anic Readings," *Studia Islamica*, no. 91 (2000), 5-22, at 20.

*haytu lak*.<sup>28</sup> Ibn `Abbās, the authority al-Bukhārī most often quotes, goes unmentioned at this point. The reason may be uncertainty over what his reading was. Al-Ṭabarī's commentary quotes Ibn `Abbās as considering the word Ḥawrānī, an opinion for which al-Bukhārī quotes `Ikrimah. Al-Suddī, on the other hand, thought it was Coptic (which agrees with the presumed Egyptian setting), al-Ḥasan that it was Syriac, Mujāhid that it was Arabic. Then it quotes Ibn `Abbās for the readings *hi'tu* and *hītu*.<sup>29</sup> From other sources, `Umar and Mukram's comprehensive encyclopedia of variant readings also quotes Ibn `Abbās as favouring *huya'tu*, *huyaytu*, *haya'tu*, and *hayti*.<sup>30</sup> Al-Bukhārī was not indifferent to the pronunciation of this odd word, else he would not have quoted Ibn Mas`ūd. Al-Bukhārī's refusal to quote Ibn `Abbās may have come of uncertainty as to which reading he most likely preferred but probably also of reluctance to call attention to disagreement over the meaning of the Qur'an.

It is instructive to compare a short book of the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān ibn al-Ash`ath al-Sijistānī (d. 275/889), *kitāb al-ḥurūf wa-al-qirā'āt*. This includes two versions of the hadith report by which Ibn Mas`ūd preferred *hayta lak* and defended it by saying "I prefer to recite it as I have learnt it."<sup>31</sup> However, Abū Dāwūd is also more willing than al-Bukhārī to report disagreement over the readings. One prominent disagreement concerns Q (al-Fātiḥah) 1:4, whether *maliki yawmi 'l-dīn* (a majority of the Seven) or *mālik* (two Kufans: `Āṣim and al-Kisā'ī). Abū Dāwūd quotes one hadith report (Medinese *isnād*) by which al-Zuhrī says that the Prophet, Abū Bakr, `Umar, and `Uthmān all recited *malik*. "The first to read it as *māliki yawmi 'l-dīn* was Marwān."<sup>32</sup> He follows this by a report (Meccan *isnād*)

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<sup>28</sup> Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab`ah*, 347.

<sup>29</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, ad Q. 12:23.

<sup>30</sup> `Umar and Mukram, *Mu`jam* 3:158-61.

<sup>31</sup> Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *al-ḥurūf wa-al-qirā'āt*, nos. 4004-5. These both intersect with `Abd al-Razzāq's version at the Kufan al-A'mash.

<sup>32</sup> Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *al-ḥurūf wa-al-qirā'āt*, no. 4000. This is quoted < Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal < `Abd al-Razzāq but I have not found it in `Abd al-Razzāq's *Tafsīr*.

attributing this reading to the Prophet (no. 4001). Finally, he quotes Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal as saying, “The ancient reading is *māliki yawmi ’l-dīn*.” Al-Bukhārī offers no advice as to the wording of Q 1, apparently another example of reluctance to call attention to disagreement.

Of Q (al-ʿAlaq) 96:15, *la-nasfaʿan bi-al-nāṣiyah*, al-Bukhārī comments that this means “we will surely take it,” the verb to be written with a *nūn*, not doubled (representing, other commentators tell us, a lightened form of the energetic mood). In printed Qurʾans, this normally appears with *tanwīn fathah* rather than the letter *nūn*, although in Ibn Ḥajar’s commentary it is written exactly as al-Bukhārī describes it, with *nūn*.<sup>33</sup> Al-Bukhārī does not comment on the other place in the Qurʾan where a lightened energetic verb is written with *tanwīn fathah*, Q (Yūsuf) 12:32. Neither was the spelling of major concern to other medieval exegetes. For example, as al-Bukhārī remarks the example at Q. 96:15 but not 12:32, the later commentator Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273?) remarks the example at Q. 12:32 but not 96:15.<sup>34</sup> Al-Bukhārī’s comment is a reminder that the exact written presentation of the Qurʾan was subordinate to the sound of the letters as it was recited. (When I began to teach selected passages of the Qurʾan at Oxford, I used a library copy printed in Damascus in the late nineteenth century. It often diverged from student copies in spelling but not pronunciation; e.g. as to writing the feminine ending as *tāʾ marbūṭah* or *tāʾ*.)

#### Comparisons.

Al-Bukhārī’s *kitāb al-tafsīr* may be compared with the *tafsīr* of the Abū Bakr ʿAbd al-Razzāq ibn Hammām al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 211/827), likewise from a major hadith collector although not part of his major hadith collection, *al-Muṣannaḥ*. What has come down to us is evidently the recension of ʿAbd al-Razzāq’s *Tafsīr* by Salamah ibn Shabīb (d. 247/861?), while al-Ṭabarī is

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<sup>33</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-bārī* 9:560.

<sup>34</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Ḥifnāwī & Maḥmūd Ḥāmid ʿUthmān, 22 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1414/1994), 9:190, 20:125 = ed. ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Mahdī, 20 vols. in 10 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1418/1997), 9:157-8, 20:115-16.

said to have drawn on another recension by Abū `Alī ibn Abī al-Rabī` al-Jurjānī (d. 263/877).<sup>35</sup> It comprises 3,759 numbered items. Not every verse of the Qur`an is covered, but only one chapter (63) goes without any comment. Over three-quarters of the items in our version come from Ma`mar ibn Rāshid (d. 153/770?), a Basran client who transferred to Yemen. Its ultimate authorities are the Prophet at about 14 percent of all items, Companions at 10 percent, and later figures, nearly all Followers, at 76 percent. Leaving aside items from the Prophet and Companions, it is about two-thirds Basran, one-seventh Kufan, one-tenth Meccan. About two-fifths of all items come from the Basran Qatādah alone (figures based on a random sample of 200). It comprises only items with *isnād*.

`Abd al-Razzāq's commentary is unlike al-Bukhārī's, then, in that al-Bukhārī offers almost no Follower hadith reports with full *isnād*, whereas Follower reports dominate `Abd al-Razzāq's collection. It is unlike al-Bukhārī's collection in offering comments only from the Prophet, Companions, and later traditionists—no grammarians or philologists. Like al-Bukhārī, `Abd al-Razzāq occasionally but unsystematically mentions variant readings; e.g. `Umar read *lā yuḍārar kātib* at Q (al-Baqarah) 2:282 ("let not a scribe . . . be harmed"), whereas nine of the Ten read *yuḍārra*, one *yuḍāra*; al-A`mash read *tassāqaṭ* at Q (Maryam) 19:25 ("you will cause . . . to fall down"), in agreement (as it happens) with eight of the Ten Readers.<sup>36</sup> `Abd al-Razzāq tends not to mention non-Arabic languages, though. Of *awwāh*, for example (Q [Hūd] 11:75), he reports not that it has an Ethiopic meaning but that `Ubayd ibn `Umayr used to allude to it by saying *awh awh* at the mention of the Fire.<sup>37</sup> Of *muttaka`*

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<sup>35</sup> `Abd al-Mu`ṭī Amīn Qal`ajī, introduction to `Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Tafsīr*, ed. Qal`ajī, 1:31-3; Sezgin, *GAS* 1:99.

<sup>36</sup> `Umar and Mukram, *Mu`jam* 1:225-7, 4:39-41; al-Qalānisi, *Kifāyah*, 209, 307; Ibn Mihrān, *al-Mabsūṭ fī al-qirā`āt al-`ashr*, ed. Subay` Hamza Hākimī (Damascus: Majma` al-Lughah al-`Arabiyyah, n.d.), 288-9; `Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, ed. Muḥammad, 1:111, 2:7.

<sup>37</sup> `Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, ed. Muḥammad, 1/2:309 = ed. Qal`ajī, 1:269.

(Q [Yūsuf] 12:31), he quotes Qatādah as saying it means food (*ta`ām*).<sup>38</sup> Of the mysterious letters at the beginning of Q (Ṭāhā) 20, *ṭāhā*, he quotes Qatādah and al-Ḥasan as saying that they mean “O man” but not that this is Nabataean.<sup>39</sup> `Abd al-Razzāq is more likely than al-Bukhārī to report disagreement. For example, he addresses a now-famous controversy, whether Abraham took up Isaac to sacrifice or Ishmael. He mentions three Companions, three Followers, and Ma`mar himself as identifying the son in question as Ishāq, one Companion and two Followers as identifying him as Ismā`īl, one of them (Sa`īd ibn al-Musayyab) expressly in the face of someone’s assertion that it was Ishāq.<sup>40</sup> Al-Bukhārī says nothing in his short chapter on Q (al-Ṣaffāt) 37.

Among the Six Books, just one other has a large book of *tafsīr*, *al-Jāmi` al-ṣaḥīḥ* of Abū `Isā Muḥammad ibn `Isā al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892), which comprises some 420 hadith reports, over 98 percent of them from the Prophet. (Ibn Mājah, like `Abd al-Razzāq, assembled a separate Qur’an commentary, not extant.<sup>41</sup>) It covers all but 21 chapters of the Qur’an (46, 65, 67, 71, 73, 76-9, 82, 86-7, 90, 100-1, 103-7, 111), of which 14 coincide with chapters for which al-Bukhārī offers no hadith with *isnād*. Unlike al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī offers no comments from Followers, let alone ninth-century philologists. He glosses words only as he has glosses from the Prophet, as when the Prophet explains that *al-ṣūr* in Q (al-Zumar) 39:68 is a horn that will be blown.<sup>42</sup> The comparison confirms al-Bukhārī’s

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<sup>38</sup> `Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, ed. Muḥammad, 1/2:322 = ed. Qal`ajī, 1:281.

<sup>39</sup> `Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, ed. Muḥammad, 2:15.

<sup>40</sup> `Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, ed. Muḥammad, 2:152 = ed. Qal`ajī, 2:124-5.

<sup>41</sup> Al-Rāfi`ī, *al-Tadwīn fī tārikh Qazwīn*, ed. `Azīz Allāh al-`Uṭāridī, 4 vols. (Hyderabad: al-Maṭba`ah al-`Azīziyyah, 1404/1984), 2:49; Kātib Ḥalebi, *K. Kashf al-ẓunūn*, ed. Şerefettin Yaltkaya and Rifat Bilge, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1941, 1943), 1:439. Outside the Six Books, there are likewise occasional reports of a *tafsīr* by Mālik (d. 179/795), also apparently not extant: Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. Gustav Flügel, with Johannes Roediger and August Mueller (Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1872), 33 (*fann* 3, *maqālah* 1); al-Qāḍī `Iyāḍ, *Tartīb al-madārik*, ed. Muḥammad ibn Tāwīt al-Ṭanjī, et al., *al-Silsilah al-Tārikhiyyah*, 8 vols. (Rabat, etc.: n.p., etc., 1966-83), 1:81.

<sup>42</sup> Al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi`, tafsīr al-Q., ad Q* (al-Zumar) 39, no. 3244.

closeness to the classical style of Qur'an commentary, copiously quoting Followers, and especially to the realm of *adab*. Al-Tirmidhī does twice quote anonymous glosses from “the people of knowledge.” A long hadith report in which the Prophet describes a series of heavens and earths above and below ours concludes with his saying, apparently, that if one could let down a rope to the lowest earth, it would land on God, then quoting Q (al-Ḥadīd) 57:2 (“His is the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He brings life and He brings death. He has power over everything”), the reason for placing it in the book of *tafsīr*. After commenting on the *isnād*, al-Tirmidhī says, “Some of the people of knowledge have commented on this hadith report, saying [pl.] that it would land on God’s knowledge, power, and authority, God’s knowledge, power, and authority being in every place whereas he is on the throne as described in his Book.”<sup>43</sup> Thus he defends traditionalist theology. Perhaps al-Bukhārī would simply omit a theologically embarrassing report. (Al-Tirmidhī calls this one *gharīb*, meaning uncorroborated, as he does with a quarter of all reports in his book of *tafsīr*.)

Al-Bukhārī’s *kitāb al-tafsīr* may also be compared with that of Abū `Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad ibn Shu`ayb al-Nasā’ī (d. 303/915?) at the end of *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, usually counted outside the Six Books (in Speight’s time thought lost). It comprises 735 hadith reports, or about 6 percent of the whole book—a slightly smaller proportion than the 504 in al-Bukhārī’s *kitāb al-tafsīr*. Whereas 95 percent of *al-Sunan al-kubrā* as a whole goes back to the Prophet, in *kitāb al-tafsīr* within it, about 70 percent of all hadith reports go back to the Prophet, 30 percent to the Companions, very similarly to hadith in al-Bukhārī’s *kitāb al-tafsīr*. Like `Abd al-Razzāq and al-Bukhārī, al-Nasā’ī goes through the Qur’an in canonical order, offering glosses on various verses, although far from all verses. Whereas al-Bukhārī offers only comments without *isnād* for 30 chapters, al-Nasā’ī offers no comments without *isnād* and

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<sup>43</sup> Al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi`*, *tafsīr al-Q.*, ad Q. 57, no. 3298. The other such gloss is shortly before at *tafsīr al-Q.*, ad Q (al-Wāqī`ah) 56, no. 3294.

skips only nine chapters altogether (71, 90, 94, 100-1, 103, 105, 113-14). Like al-Bukhārī, al-Nasā'ī provides accounts of the occasions of revelation, the legal application of verses, glosses of words, and occasionally clarifications from transmitters. For example, al-Nasā'ī quotes Ibn `Abbās as explaining that Q (Ibrāhīm) 14:28 (“Have you not looked at those who changed the blessing of God for ingratitude?”) refers to the people of Mecca, then Sufyān ibn `Uyaynah (who is in the *isnād* going back to Ibn `Abbās) as saying “that is, the unbelievers among them.”<sup>44</sup> Concerning a prophetic gloss on Q (al-Furqān) 25:68, a further clarification is interpolated from Ḥamzah the transmitter of *al-Sunan al-kubrā* from al-Nasā'ī.<sup>45</sup> But there seem to be no comments drawn from famous commentators such as Qatādah and Sa`īd ibn Jubayr, nor philologists such as al-Farrā' and Abū `Ubaydah. Likewise, I have found not one alternative reading.

A controversial juridical question in the ninth century was *ityān al-nisā' fī adbārihin*, “going into women in their rears.” In the *Muṣannaf*, `Abd al-Razzāq mentions Companions Ibn `Abbās, the caliph `Umar, `Abd Allāh ibn `Amr, Abū'l-Dardā', and Abū Hurayrah in opposition, as well as two Followers, although he apparently quotes the Prophet on both sides.<sup>46</sup> Non-prohibition is associated especially with the early Māliki school.<sup>47</sup> Both sides

<sup>44</sup> Al-Nasā'ī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā, al-tafsīr*, Q. 14, no. 11268. But al-Bukhārī quotes Ibn `Abbās by two other *isnāds*, both through Sufyān ibn `Uyaynah, in both of which it is Ibn `Abbās himself who specifies that the verse refers to the unbelievers in particular, not all the Meccans or all the Quraysh: al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *al-maghāzī* 8, *bāb qatl Abī Jahl*, no. 3977, and *ibid.*, *al-tafsīr* 14/3, *bāb a-lam tara*, no. 4700.

<sup>45</sup> Al-Nasā'ī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā, al-tafsīr*, Q. 25, no. 11373. Ḥamzah's was the only extant recension of al-Nasā'ī's *k. al-tafsīr* according to Ibn Ḥajar, *K. Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, 12 vols. (Hyderabad: Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Nizāmiyyah, 1325-7, repr. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), 1:6.

<sup>46</sup> `Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-A`zamī, *Min manshūrāt al-Majlis al-`Ilmī* 39, 11 vols. (Johannesburg: Majlis Ilmi, 1390-2/1970-2), 11:442-3. There are just two relevant items (both implicitly opposed) in `Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, ed. Muḥammad, 1:89-90 = ed. Qal`ajī, 1:103, *ad Q. 2:223*.

<sup>47</sup> E.g. al-Nasā'ī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, ed. `Abd al-Ghaffār Sulaymān al-Bundārī & Sayyid Kisrawī Ḥasan, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyyah, 1411/1991), 5:315-16. It is held against the Mālikiyyah in polemics from other schools; e.g. Ibn Abī Ya' lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābilah*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqrī, 2 vols. (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sunnah al-Muḥammadiyyah, 1371/1952), 1:316, and al-Qārī' al-Harawī, *Manāqib al-imām al-a`zam, apud Ibn Abī al-Wafā'*, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyyah*, 2 vols. (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Nizāmiyyah, 1332), 2:465-6. Denied by some early Mālikiyyah; e.g. Ṣaḥnūn, according to Abū Bakr al-Mālikī, *Riyāḍ al-nuḥūs*, ed. Bashīr al-Bakkūsh, sup'd Muḥammad al-`Arūsī al-Mutta'wwī, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1401-3/1981-3)

cite Q (al-Baqarah) 2:223, “Your women are a tillage. Go to your tillage as you wish.”<sup>48</sup>

Al-Bukhārī’s *kitāb al-tafsīr* includes four Companion hadith reports in explanation of it, three of them incomplete:

No. 4526. < Ishāq < al-Naḍr ibn Shumayl < Ibn `Awn < Nāfi’: “Ibn `Umar . . . , when he recited the Qur’an, would not speak until he had finished. I was with him one day. He recited *sūrat al-Baqarah* until he reached a place. He said, “Do you know about what this was sent down?” I said, “No.” He said, “It was sent down concerning such-and-such.” Then he went on.”

No. 4527. (< Ishāq < al-Naḍr ibn Shumayl) < `Abd al-Ṣamad < his father<sup>49</sup> < Ayyūb < Nāfi’ < Ibn `Umar (concerning) “Go to your tillage as you wish.” He said, “He goes into her in . . . .” This was related by Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Sa`īd < his father < `Ubayd Allāh < Nāfi’ < Ibn `Umar.

No. 4528. < Abū Nu`aym < Sufyān < Ibn al-Munkadir < Jābir: “The Jews used to say, ‘If he has sex with her (*jāma`ahā*) from behind, the child will turn out cross-eyed.’ Then there came down ‘Your women are a tillage. Go to your tillage as you wish.’”

Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* includes a close parallel to the last, < Qutaybah ibn Sa`īd, Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shaybah, and `Amr al-Nāqid < Sufyān on up.<sup>50</sup> Apparently, no known recension of al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* includes what Ibn `Umar said, so it must have been al-Bukhārī himself who could not bring himself to repeat it. However, Ishāq ibn Rāhawayh’s *Musnad* and *Tafsīr* included the first version, which quotes Ibn `Umar as saying, “It came down concerning going into women’s rears.”<sup>51</sup> Al-Ṭabarī quotes three overlapping versions < Ibn `Awn on up in his commentary at Q 2:223 to exactly the same effect. Al-Ṭabarī also has an overlapping

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1:355.

<sup>48</sup> So al-Shāfi`ī, *K. al-Umm*, 7 vols. in 4 (Bulaq: al-Maṭba`ah al-Kubrā al-Amīriyyah, 1321-5, repr. Cairo: Kitāb al-Ṣa`b, 1388/1968), 5:84, 156.

<sup>49</sup> “From his father” is omitted in the edition of Bin Bāz but supplied here from al-Qaṣṭallānī, *Irshād al-sārī*, 10 vols. (Bulaq: al-Maṭba`ah al-Kubrā al-Amīriyyah, 1304-5), 7:34.

<sup>50</sup> Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *al-nikāḥ* 19, *bāb jawāz jimā`ihī imra`atahu fī qubulihā*, no. 1435.

<sup>51</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Faṭḥ* 9:36, *ad* nos. 4526-8. This section of the *Musnad* appears to be no longer extant. Cf. Ishāq ibn Rāhawayh, *al-Musnad*, ed. `Abd al-Ghafūr `Abd al-Ḥaqq Ḥusayn al-Balūshī, 5 vols. in 4 (Medina: Maktabat al-Īmān, 1410-15/1990-5); idem, *al-Musnad*, ed. Muḥammad Mukhtār Ḍirār al-Muftī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-`Arabī, 1423/2002).



version of al-Bukhārī's second, no. 4527, < Abū Qilābah < `Abd al-Ṣamad < his father < Ayyūb on up in which Ibn `Umar's gloss is simply "in the rear." The unnumbered hadith report through Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Sa`īd on up was found in al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/971), *al-Mu`jam al-awsaṭ*, in which Ibn `Umar says, "There came down on the Messenger of God "Your women are a tillage for you" just to give permission (*rukḥṣatan*) to go into the rear."<sup>52</sup>

Al-Bukhārī treats a related Prophet hadith report in his great biographical dictionary *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*: Khuzaymah ibn Thābit < the Prophet, "God is not embarrassed by the truth. Do not go into women's backsides (*a`jāzihinn*).” He recounts nine different *isnāds* for it and rejects them all.<sup>53</sup> Since he has nothing else on the problem in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, it seems likely that his opinion was similar to that reported of al-Nasā`ī: that there was no sound hadith report on either side (at least from the Prophet), so that the safest course was not to prohibit something that early jurists had thought licit (Ibn `Umar evidently foremost among them, although al-Ṭabarī also quotes the Hijazi Ibn Abī Mulaykah).<sup>54</sup> Al-Nasā`ī himself relates a long series of relevant hadith reports in *al-Sunan al-kubrā*.<sup>55</sup> It includes one report that Ibn `Umar, on being asked about going into the rear ends of concubines, responded, "Does a Muslim do this?" But it also includes two reports by which Ibn `Umar said there was no harm in it, one of them related by Mālik ibn Anas, who is independently quoted as himself seeing no harm in it.<sup>56</sup> (All three reports from Ibn `Umar are also related by al-Ṭabarī. A different sort of counter-report comes from Abū Dāwūd, by which Ibn Mas`ūd [!] laments, "Ibn

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<sup>52</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath* 9:36, *ad* nos. 4526-8.

<sup>53</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr* 8:256-7. Another report against going into a woman's rear is rejected at *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr* 3:16-17, yet another is not expressly rejected but the possibility of its being from a Companion only, not the Prophet, is raised at 8:303.

<sup>54</sup> Al-Nasā`ī quoted in Ibn al-Manzūr, *Mukhtaṣar Tārīkh Dimashq*, ed. Rūḥiyyah al-Naḥḥās, &al., 29 vols. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1404-9/1984-9). 3:101; al-Maqrīzī, *K. al-Muqaffā al-kabīr*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ya`lawī, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1991), 1:401.

<sup>55</sup> Al-Nasā`ī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā* 5:314-25, *k. `ishrat al-nisā'*, §§ 24-32.

<sup>56</sup> Al-Nasā`ī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā* 5:315.

‘Umar—God forgive him—was imagining things.”<sup>57</sup> Al-Ṭabarī includes a counter-report that accuses Nāfi’ of misquoting Ibn ‘Umar.) On this point, then, al-Bukhārī implicitly sides with Mālik rather than al-Shāfi‘ī.<sup>58</sup> Al-Nasā‘ī expressly comes down on the same side in the end but, characteristically, after presenting reports both for and against. By contrast, and equally characteristically, al-Bukhārī implicitly expresses his opinion by presenting reports on one side only. Perhaps this is a reason why *al-mukhtaṣar* is part of the full title of al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*: it is not only a small selection of all known hadith, even the sound, it is restricted to the rules of just one school (al-Bukhārī’s own, in this case), not all the rules entertained by respectable Sunnis.<sup>59</sup>

Another useful comparison is the Qur’an commentary of Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Ḥātim Muḥammad al-Rāzī (d. 327/938), from a major hadith critic but independent of any larger collection.<sup>60</sup> Even more than al-Bukhārī’s or al-Ṭabarī’s commentaries, this apparently deserves to exemplify *al-tafsīr bi-al-ma’thūr*, for it normally includes an *isnād* with every comment and almost no comments on the Qur’an from the compiler himself.<sup>61</sup> Mehmet Akif Koç reports that, over the course of a dozen volumes, Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s own comments would cover no more than two pages.<sup>62</sup> Koç also reports that the

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<sup>57</sup> Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, k. *al-nikāḥ* 44, *bāb fī jāmi‘ al-nikāḥ*, no. 2164.

<sup>58</sup> Al-Shāfi‘ī, *Umm* 5 (Bulaq) 5:84,156 = ed. Rif‘at Fawzī ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, 11 vols. (al-Manṣūrah: Dār al-Wafā’, 1422/2001; 2nd printing 1425/2004), 6:244-6, 443-4.

<sup>59</sup> On the juristic *mukhtaṣar* as not just an “abridgement,” see Jonathan E. Brockopp, “Early Islamic Jurisprudence in Egypt: Two Scholars and Their *Mukhtaṣars*,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30 (1998): 167-82, esp. 174.

<sup>60</sup> For MSS, see GAS 1:179, no. 3. Two editions are *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘aẓīm*, ed. As‘ad Muḥammad al-Ṭayyib, 14 vols. (Mecca and Riyadh: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1419/1999), and *Tafsīr Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī*, ed. Aḥmad Fathī ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ḥijāzī, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2006/1427).

<sup>61</sup> The distinction between *al-tafsīr bi-al-ma’thūr* (“explication by transmitted material”) and *al-tafsīr bi-al-ra’y* (“explication by opinion”) has seemed polemically useful to Salafiyyah but quickly fails on testing against actual Qur’an commentaries across the centuries. See Saleh, “Preliminary Remarks,” 21-37, and *idem*, *Formation*, 16.

<sup>62</sup> Mehmet Akif Koç, “*Isnāds* and *rijāl* Expertise in the Exegesis of Ibn Abī Ḥātim (327/939 [sic]),” *Der Islam* 82 (2005): 146-68, at 163.

extant portions comprise 16,283 reports in all, of which nearly 4 percent are from the Prophet, 22 percent from Companions (of which 80 percent from Ibn `Abbās), and 74 percent from Followers and later figures (my own rougher estimates indicate altogether half from Followers, a quarter from later figures).<sup>63</sup> This means a similar percentage of Prophet hadith to that in the book of *tafsīr* in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* but hugely more post-Companion hadith—almost exactly the same percentage as in `Abd al-Razzāq. Therefore, it is evidently not possible to identify preference for Prophet or Companion hadith with traditionalist preference for hadith (i.e. transmitted knowledge) over recent opinion.

Koç finds that 22 transmitters of opinions in Ibn Abī Ḥātim's *Tafsīr* are aspersed in his massive encyclopaedia of *rijāl* criticism, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-al-ta`dīl*, 23 are identified there but not characterized at all, and three are often cited in the *Tafsīr* but not mentioned at all in *al-Jarḥ*. He explains the evident discrepancy by a conscious lowering of standards when theology and law are not at stake. A weaker standard of proof does less harm when the subject is encouraging piety, not identifying forbidden acts or acceptable dogmatic views. Elsewhere than the *Tafsīr*, Ibn Abī Ḥātim expressly quotes the prominent traditionist `Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797) as allowing transmission of hadith from a weak transmitter concerning etiquette, exhortation, and renunciation (*adab*, *maw`īzah*, *zuhd*).<sup>64</sup> But Koç's distinction is weakened by our lack of a body of legal hadith from Ibn Abī Ḥātim. That is, we cannot be sure that, had he collected 16,000 legal hadith reports, they would have included fewer or no transmitters aspersed in *al-Jarḥ wa-al-ta`dīl*. Al-Bukhārī's *kitāb*

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<sup>63</sup> Koç, "Isnāds," 167n.

<sup>64</sup> Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *K. al-Jarḥ wa-al-ta`dīl*, 9 vols. (Hyderabad: Jam`iyyat Dā'irat al-Ma`ārif al-`Uthmāniyyah, 1360-71, repr. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-`Arabī, n.d.), 2:30-1. Koç interprets Ibn Abī Ḥātim as strongly endorsing the double standard, citing pages 27-32. However, this quotation from Ibn al-Mubārak is the only one that addresses it expressly. For an argument that the double standard has been overstressed on the basis of theoretical literature from the tenth century and later, citing the equal proportion of strong and weak among legal and non-legal hadith included in Aḥmad's *Musnad*, see Christopher Melchert, "The *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal," *Der Islam* 82 (2005): 32-51, at 45-7. To the contrary, Jonathan A. C. Brown has observed that al-Tirmidhī identifies as *gharīb* considerably more hadith reports in his chapter on proper behavior (*al-birr wa-al-ṣilah*) than in his chapter on inheritance law (*al-farā'id*): *Hadith* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 235.

*al-tafsīr* includes more comments from Companions than the rest of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, but he does not give nearly so much space as Ibn Abī Ḥātim to Followers. He also includes hugely more philological clarifications and comments far more often himself.

One outstanding feature of the classical *tafsīr* tradition is alternative interpretations. A certain reluctance on al-Bukhārī's part to call attention to disagreement has been remarked already. Here it is conspicuous that al-Bukhārī seldom offers one interpretation after another of the same locution. One place where he does is Q (Yūnus) 10:2, *anna lahum qadama ṣidq* ("that they will have a sure footing"), he quotes the Medinese Zayd ibn Aslam (d. 136/754) as explaining that this refers to Muḥammad, then Mujāhid that it refers to goodness (*khayr*). By comparison, however, al-Ṭabarī names Mujāhid among five who said it refers to a reward of some sort, Zayd ibn Aslam among three who said it refers to Muḥammad. Al-Māwardī offers four interpretations, but instead of quoting Zayd ibn Aslam as saying it refers to Muḥammad, he quotes this interpretation of Muqātil ibn Ḥayyān, a Khurasani client (d. bef. 150/767-8) cited just once by al-Bukhārī. To Mujāhid he attributes the opinion that it refers to a previous truth-telling such as had earlier brought them to faith.<sup>65</sup> The most careful of the three, on this point, appears to be al-Ṭabarī with his complete *isnād* for every quotation.

Shortly afterwards, al-Bukhārī apparently quotes Mujāhid again as glossing Q (Yūnus) 10:26, *wa-ziyādah* ("Those who do good will have the fairest [reward] and more"), as "forgiveness and satisfaction (*maghfirah wa-riḍwān*)," whereas someone else said it means to look at his face. Al-Ṭabarī cites ten persons (including the Prophet and three Companions) said to have explained *wa-ziyādah* as looking at God's face, just one, Mujāhid, as saying it means forgiveness and satisfaction. The hadith report by which the Prophet himself connected Q. 10:26 with looking at God's face is included by Muslim and other leading

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<sup>65</sup> Al-Māwardī, *Nukat* 2:421, *ad* Q. 10:2.

collectors with a Basran *isnād*, although not al-Bukhārī himself.<sup>66</sup> Al-Bukhārī does testify elsewhere (in *kitāb al-tafsīr* apropos of Q [Qāf] 50:39, “and glorify your Lord by praising Him before the rising and the setting of the sun”) that the Prophet promised the saved that they would see God in the Afterlife, as clearly as they see the full moon on a cloudless night.<sup>67</sup> Al-Māwardī cites the same three Companions as al-Ṭabarī as saying that *wa-ziyādah* means to look at his face, Mujāhid alone as saying it means forgiveness and satisfaction.<sup>68</sup> On this point, as at some others, al-Bukhārī’s selection may reflect wariness of anthropomorphism.<sup>69</sup>

#### Al-Bukhārī’s *tafsīr* and the rest of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

Al-Bukhārī’s immediate sources for hadith in the *tafsīr* are geographically fairly similar to his immediate sources for hadith in the rest of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Where identifiable, his immediate authorities are as follows: Basran 26 (27%); Kufan 16 (17%); Baghdadi 8 (8%); all Iraq 50 (53%); Egyptian 8 (8%); Syrian 10 (11%); Meccan 5 (5%); Medinese 3 (3%); Jibali 4 (4%); Khurasani and Transoxanian 15 (16%). Here for comparison is a chart showing percentages from the same regions in the whole *Ṣaḥīḥ*<sup>70</sup>:

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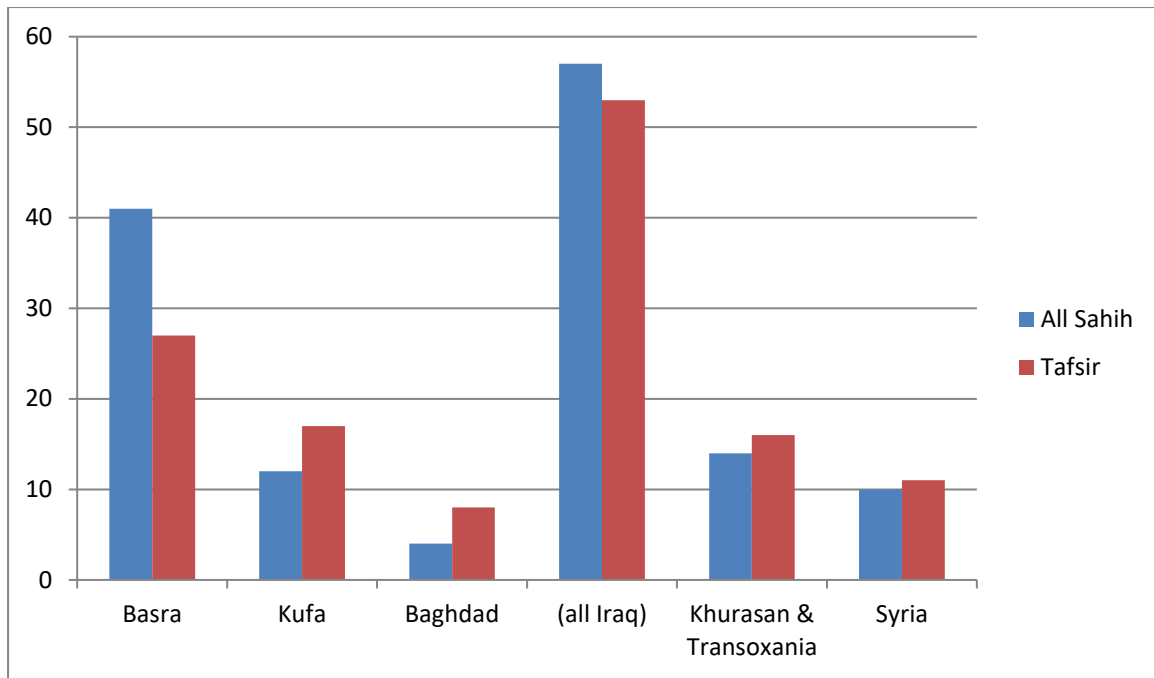
<sup>66</sup> Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-īmān* 80, *ithbāt ru’yat al-mu’minīn*, no. 181; Tirmidhī, *Jāmi’*, *ṣifat al-jannah* 16, *ru’yat al-rabb*, no. 2552, and *tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, ad Q. 10, no. 3105; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, *al-muqaddimah* 13, *fīmā ankarat al-jahmiyyah*, no. 187.

<sup>67</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *mawāqīt al-ṣalāh* 16, *bāb faḍl ṣalāt al-‘aṣr*, no. 554; *mawāqīt al-ṣalāh* 26, *bāb faḍl ṣalāt al-fajr*, no. 573; *al-adhān* 129, *bāb faḍl al-sujūd*, no. 806; *al-tafsīr* 50, ad Q. 50:39, no. 4851; *al-riqāq* 52, *bāb al-ṣirāt jistr Jahannam*, no. 6573; *al-tawḥīd* 24, *bāb Q. 752-3*, nos. 7434-7.

<sup>68</sup> Al-Māwardī, *Nukat* 2:433, ad Q. 10:26.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Melchert, “Bukhārī,” 453-4, on the creation of Adam in God’s image.

<sup>70</sup> Based on a sample of 230 hadith reports in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, from Melchert, “Bukhārī,” 427.



Al-Bukhārī's ultimate authorities are rather more different. In the *tafsīr*, about 68 percent of all hadith reports with *isnāds* (including repeats) go back to the Prophet, 31 percent to Companions, and less than one percent to a Follower. In the *Ṣaḥīḥ* as a whole, by contrast, over 90 percent of all hadith reports go back to the Prophet. Al-Bukhārī was much more concerned to report sayings from the Prophet than (for example) Muslim, in whose small *kitāb al-tafsīr* only about 5 percent go back to the Prophet, but the state of qur'anic commentary still evidently constrained him to bring up the Companions more often than usual.

Al-Bukhārī's *kitāb al-tafsīr* passes systematically through the whole Qur'an only in the sense that it has something to say about each chapter. It is far from being a systematic treatment; for example, its choice of which variant readings to consider seems downright capricious. The *Ṣaḥīḥ* as a whole makes the Qur'an unusually prominent, as by quoting it in over a quarter of all topic headings. The *kitāb al-tafsīr* shows that this is partly a matter of overlapping with the realm of *adab*. S. R. Burge has proposed that al-Bukhārī's arrangement of hadith shows that he meant for readers to go through his *Ṣaḥīḥ* in order, not to use it as an

encyclopedia in which one looks things up here and there.<sup>71</sup> The Qur'an was of great interest to Muslim *littérateurs*, if nothing else as the paragon of Arabic prose style. In al-Bukhārī's time, the specialized study of variant qur'anic readings developed above all in Baghdadi belletrist circles.<sup>72</sup> *Adab* was also the field where out-of-the-way information, presented according to no obvious plan, was most prized. Al-Bukhārī's literary talent has occasionally provoked comment. The *kitāb al-tafsīr* confirms that he was part of that tradition.

Al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, by contrast, worked much more exclusively in the hadith tradition.

Compared with the rest of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Bukhārī's *kitāb al-tafsīr* includes unusually much material without full *isnāds*. The tradition clearly distinguishes between the respect due to what al-Bukhārī presents with full *isnāds* and what he presents without, as *ta'ālīq*. The carelessness evident in *kitāb al-tafsīr*, as when he attributes something to Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah that Sufyān's *tafsīr* attributes rather to Mujāhid, or when he implicitly attributes something to Ibn 'Abbās that is actually from al-Farrā', confirms that al-Bukhārī maintained different standards for the different sections of his collection. In particular, it reflects the strong attraction between *tafsīr* and *adab*, the latter realm relatively indifferent to complete *isnāds* by comparison with works of hadith. Al-Bukhārī's attraction to *adab* is evident elsewhere in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, as in frequent glosses on words. It seems to be strongest, however, in *kitāb al-tafsīr*. There is also a notable contrast between al-Bukhārī's *kitāb al-tafsīr* and the rest of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* in the frequency with which al-Bukhārī comments himself: by Sezgin's count, 248 times in *kitāb al-tafsīr*, 45 times in all the rest of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*.<sup>73</sup> In *kitāb al-tafsīr*, al-Bukhārī seems to be working in a slightly different, less self-effacing tradition. It is

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<sup>71</sup> S. R. Burge, "Reading Between the Lines: The Compilation of *ḥadīth* and the Authorial Voice," *Arabica* 58 (2011): 168-97, at 194-5.

<sup>72</sup> Melchert, "Ibn Mujāhid," 7-11.

<sup>73</sup> V. *supra*, n. 6.

conceivable, of course, that he came up on his own with the idea of treating qur'anic commentary differently from the law and other concerns of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*. However, inasmuch as al-Bukhārī's *kitāb al-tafsīr* is anomalous both by comparison with *kitāb al-tafsīr* in other leading hadith collections of its century and by comparison with other books of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* itself, it seems more likely that he took a different approach in *kitāb al-tafsīr* under the influence of earlier, *adab*-oriented approaches (as by the philologists whose glosses he quotes), possibly also because a developing genre of *tafsīr* in the mid-ninth century made that seem the normal approach.

Al-Bukhārī's *tafsīr* and the genre of *tafsīr*.

In the end, one also wishes to know what al-Bukhārī's *kitāb al-tafsīr* tells us about the historical development of qur'anic commentary. A weak reason for excluding al-Bukhārī from the history of qur'anic commentary is that his *kitāb al-tafsīr* is just a part of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, not an independent work. In fact, it sometimes was referred to as a separate work.<sup>74</sup> As late as Ibn al-Nadīm in the tenth century, works we now consider unitary are often referred to by what we now think of as their constituent parts. A stronger reason is that al-Bukhārī only weakly influenced the later commentary tradition, partly because persecution at the end of his life limited the circulation of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* until the tenth century. He is cited very often by the later Qur'an commentator al-Qurṭubī, one possible measure of his influence, but Muslim is cited almost as often, so it cannot be argued that the attention paid al-Bukhārī is related to the importance of his *kitāb al-tafsīr*.

Influence is hard to measure, though. Walid Saleh asserts that it was al-Tha'labī, not al-Ṭabarī, who ushered in the classical style of qur'anic exegesis.<sup>75</sup> A count of express

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<sup>74</sup> E.g. Kātib Çelebī, *Kashf* 1:443, mentioning both the one he included as a book of his *Ṣaḥīḥ* and another, larger commentary referred to by its transmitter from him, al-Firabrī. My guess is that there was only one commentary, the one included in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*: Melchert, "Bukhārī and his *Ṣaḥīḥ*," 433.

<sup>75</sup> Saleh, *Formation*, 5.



citations suggests that the most important earlier commentaries for al-Qurṭubī were those of al-Ṭabarī, then al-Māwardī, then al-Qushayrī (Abū Naṣr, son of the famous Sufī), only then (and some distance behind) al-Thaʿlabī.<sup>76</sup> Does this show that al-Ṭabarī and al-Māwardī ought to be the most studied? Saleh is also puzzled by some of what al-Thaʿlabī identifies as the constituents of proper qurʿanic commentary: *ʿilal*, *iḥtijājāt*, and *al-akhbār al-mutaʿalliqāt*.<sup>77</sup> The first two are commonplaces of hadith-based law, respectively subtle defects in *isnāds* and arguments based on hadith reports that suffice to establish points of law. Al-Bukhārī's separate book of *ʿilal* mentioned by Ibn Ḥajar is not extant, but over three-quarters of all items in al-Tirmidhī's book *al-ʿIlal al-kabīr* are comments from al-Bukhārī.<sup>78</sup> The term *mutaʿalliq* reminds one strongly of al-Bukhārī, since, as mentioned above, his *Ṣaḥīḥ* is distinguished by over a thousand reports with incomplete *isnāds* attached (hence the name) as commentary (especially to document parallel lines of transmission). Use of these terms by al-Thaʿlabī cannot demonstrate that al-Bukhārī was a direct influence, but they do tend to show that the culture of qurʿanic commentary overlapped with that of hadith collection and criticism, even for an *adab*-oriented commentator as little obsessed with *isnāds* as al-Thaʿlabī. (Aisha Geissinger proposes that al-Bukhārī meant to influence the development of qurʿanic commentary by discrediting what was not assembled by expert hadith critics such as himself.<sup>79</sup> By this criterion, his *kitāb tafsīr al-Qurʿān* must be judged a failure, since not only did later commentators not confine themselves to well-attested hadith, those after al-Ṭabarī even tended to dispense with *isnāds*. However, the contrast between al-Bukhārī's plentiful

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<sup>76</sup> According to al-Qurṭubī, *Jāmiʿ*, ed. al-Ḥifnāwī & ʿUthmān, indexes by Sayyid Ibrāhīm Ṣādiq & Muḥammad ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Qādir, al-Ṭabarī is cited 179 times, al-Māwardī 154, al-Qushayrī 148, al-Thaʿlabī 80.

<sup>77</sup> Saleh, *Formation*, 86-7.

<sup>78</sup> Al-Tirmidhī, *ʿIlal al-Tirmidhī al-kabīr, tartīb Abū [sic] Ṭālib al-Qāḍī*, ed. Ḥamzah Dīb Muṣṭafā, 2 vols. (Amman: Maktabat al-Aqṣā, 1406/1986).

<sup>79</sup> Geissinger, *Gender*, 168-9.

quotation of philologists and Companions, al-Tirmidhī's stingier quotation, suggests to me that al-Bukhārī's claims for hadith specialists were more modest than Geissinger perceives.)

Norman Calder defined the genre of *tafsīr* by its reviewing the whole of the text in canonical order, citing named authorities, with polyvalent interpretations but mistrustful of mystical and allegorical readings.<sup>80</sup> Al-Bukhārī has something to say about every chapter of the Qur'an, so the whole text in canonical order is there. He does not yet have something on every verse—al-Ṭabarī seems to have been the first to pull this off. There is a heavy stress on named authorities. Al-Bukhārī offers *isnāds* for all sayings of the Prophet and most of Companions but not all Companion sayings and no sayings of Followers and later authorities. Here is some polyvalency but muted. It is hard to find mystical and allegorical readings. Al-Bukhārī seems to be at least well on the way to producing a classical *tafsīr* text without fully meeting the proposed criteria.

Ahmed El Shamsy has contrasted the commentaries of two who studied with the disciples of Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820), al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, with commentaries of al-Shāfi'ī's time and before<sup>81</sup>:

The significant novelty in the Quran commentaries by al-Shāfi'ī's second-generation students is thus twofold. First, they exhibit a scientific distance between the author and the subject, which manifests itself in the open presentation of multivocal evidence. Earlier commentaries, such as those by `Abd al-Razzāq or Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767), present authoritative opinions and coherent narratives, respectively, but do not display such a scientific distance; rather, they project the timeless and unchanging aura of a tradition. Second, this absence of a univocal tradition necessitates a new basis for authority, which is supplied by a hierarchy of sources . . . .

Al-Bukhārī's *tafsīr* falls chronologically between. `Abd al-Razzāq's commentary already presents multiple contrary positions, as on the question of which son Abraham set out to

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<sup>80</sup> Norman Calder, "Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr: Problems in the Description of a Genre," *Approaches to the Qur'ān*, ed. G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef, Routledge/SOAS Series on Contemporary Politics and Culture in the Middle East (London: Routledge, 1993), 101-40.

<sup>81</sup> Ahmed El Shamsy, *The Canonization of Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 2013), 216.

sacrifice. Clearly (*contra* El Shamsy), the commentary tradition was moving in this direction independently of al-Shāfiʿī. Al-Bukhārī's apparent reluctance to expose disagreement looks relatively conservative. But al-Bukhārī stands out by integrating the hadith and *adab* approaches, ʿAbd al-Razzāq offering only the former. And al-Bukhārī clearly respects a hierarchy of sources, possibly under Shāfiʿī influence but more likely, again, because of a general movement in this direction across the ninth century.

Walid Saleh, as noted, has proposed that not al-Ṭabarī but al-Thaʿlabī stands at the beginning of the classical commentary tradition. That he overstates his case has been sufficiently observed before now.<sup>82</sup> Some of what he expounds as innovations of al-Thaʿlabī's commentary have clear antecedents in al-Bukhārī's *kitāb al-tafsīr*. He disparages al-Ṭabarī for his fulsome provision of *isnāds* to support everything, praises al-Thaʿlabī for dispensing with them.<sup>83</sup> Al-Bukhārī's *tafsīr* falls between al-Ṭabarī and al-Thaʿlabī, usually providing full *isnāds* for statements from the Prophet and his Companions but dispensing with them for more recent commentators, and often when quoting the Companion Ibn ʿAbbās. (Kātib Ḥelebī also thought commentaries bereft of *isnāds* constituted an important new stage, but he does not attribute it to al-Thaʿlabī. Rather, the commentators he names as introducing this style are the Baghdadi grammarians Abū Ishāq al-Zajjāj [d. 310/922?] and his student Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī [d. 377/987].<sup>84</sup>)

Saleh thinks it significant that al-Thaʿlabī often quotes the Prophet not directly commenting on a verse but exposing the meaning of something that comes up in a verse, such as the meaning of "patience."<sup>85</sup> Al-Bukhārī, like al-Ṭabarī, most often quotes hadith in which

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<sup>82</sup> See review by Hans-Thomas Tillschneider, *Die Welt des Islams* 48 (2008): 112-17.

<sup>83</sup> Saleh, *Formation*, 224.

<sup>84</sup> Kātib Ḥelebī, *Kashf* 1:431. On these two, see respectively *EL*<sup>2</sup>, s.nn. "al-Zadjdjād," by C. H. M. Versteegh, and "al-Fārisī," by C. Rabin.

<sup>85</sup> Saleh, *Formation*, 193-8.

the Prophet quotes the Qur'an or in which a revelation comes to cap something the Prophet has just said. But the connection between prophetic dictum and qur'anic revelation may be fairly remote, inessential to the meaning of the prophetic dictum. For example, al-Bukhārī places reports of an incident at the Last Judgement, when death will be slaughtered in the form of a black and white ram, either in *kitāb al-tafsīr* or *kitāb al-riqāq* ("sayings to soften the heart") depending on whether the Prophet at the end quotes Q (Maryam) 19:39 ("Warn them of the day of anguish when the matter will have been decided while they are still in a state of heedlessness").<sup>86</sup> Such reports can hardly be called *exegetical*. They might be called *geonic* inasmuch as their function is to connect two genetically independent textual corpora. If al-Bukhārī anticipates al-Tha'labī at points where he supposedly improved on al-Ṭabarī, it weakens Saleh's case for al-Tha'labī's originality and importance. However, it also shows how useful Saleh's description of al-Tha'labī can be for the history of qur'anic commentary and, of more lasting consequence, demonstrates that qur'anic commentary developed gradually (and unevenly), not by occasional great leaps.

To sum up, al-Bukhārī's example shows that there were multiple approaches to *tafsīr* in the mid-ninth century, just as there were later. His integration of the hadith and *adab* approaches to the Qur'an makes an important precedent for al-Ṭabarī's integration of them (although al-Ṭabarī need not have got the idea from al-Bukhārī, whose *Ṣaḥīḥ* he probably never saw). His combination of items with and without *isnād* makes a precedent for al-Tha'labī's doing without *isnāds* (although, again, there is no need to suppose direct influence, since he had other examples before him). Al-Bukhārī's minimization of disagreement seems aberrant even for his own time, at least when it comes to hadith and qur'anic commentary; however, it agrees with the style of ninth-century legal *mukhtaṣars*. Differences between his *kitāb al-tafsīr* and the rest of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* suggest that his special

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<sup>86</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *tafsīr* 19, no. 4730; *al-riqāq* 5, *bāb yadkhulu al-jannah sab`ūna alfan*, no. 6544; *al-riqāq* 6, *bāb ṣifat al-jannah wa-al-nār*, no. 6548.

approach in the former reflects contemporary developments going in the genre of *tafsīr*, although in the absence of extant examples from the mid-ninth century, it is impossible to say for sure.