

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 b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) is divided into ninety-seven chapters, of which the second largest is *kitāb tafsīr al-Qur’ān* (“the book of qur’ānic commentary”). It constitutes about ~~seven~~<sup>7</sup> 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 Bukhārī’s reliance on Companions and other later authorities in comparison with his reliance on the Prophet; otherwise comparing this book with the rest of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*; and comparing this book with other notable collections of *ḥadīth*.<sup>1</sup> It confirms 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’ānic commentary in the mid-ninth century, a time from which we have few others.

## Verses and ~~Ce~~omments

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As for sizes, Ibn Ḥajar (Shihāb al-Dīn Abū’l-Faḍl Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-‘Asqalānī, d. 852/1449) estimates in the introduction to his commentary on Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* may be cited to indicate orders of magnitude: it comprises 7,275 *ḥadīth* 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 mentioned with

<sup>1</sup> R. Marston Speight, “The Function of *ḥadīth* as Commentary on the Qur’ān, as Seen in the Six Authoritative Collections,” in Andrew Rippin (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur’ān*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 63–81, 73–75; Aisha Geissinger, *Gender and Muslim Constructions of Exegetical Authority*, (*Islamic History and Civilization, Studies and Texts*) IHC 117; (Leiden: Brill, 2015), Chapter 4. Bukhārī’s *kitāb 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, 26–27.

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

On the other hand, there is a substantially higher proportion of repeated *ḥadīth* reports in 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 sixty-eight unique *ḥadīth* reports, excluding all repeats. This means that it constitutes somewhat less than ~~three~~ 3 percent of unique *ḥadīth* reports in the whole collection. It seems to be a special concern of Bukhārī's to show that Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* are complementary, the latter normally explaining the former. He quotes the Qur'ān in about a quarter of all his topic headings, far more than any other major *ḥadīth* collector.<sup>5</sup> Repeating

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Hady al-sārī*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd Allāh Bin Bāz (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1428–1429 [2008]), 562. The *Hady* is Ibn Ḥajar'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 *ḥadīth* reports after that of Muḥammad Fuʿād ʿAbd al-Bāqī for Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb's edition of Ibn Ḥajar's commentary, the numbering of which I do endorse as the standard: *Fath al-bārī: Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb; (14 vols.; Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Salafiyyah, 1380 [1960]). One example of repetition: 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-mawsim*, no. 1770. The restriction of *ḥadīth* to what is traced back to the Prophet, *athar* to reports of later Muslims, was established well after Bukhārī's time and has not influenced my usage here.

<sup>3</sup> Saleh's observation, "In the compilations of *ḥadīth*, the sections on prophetic qur'ānic interpretation are rather short," applies to some compilations but not others. Walid A. Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsīr Tradition: The Qur'ān Commentary of al-Tha'labī* (d. 427/1035). (Texts and Studies on the Qur'ān TSQ 1; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 192.

<sup>4</sup> Speight, "Function," 73. For example, Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *al-tafsīr* 2, ad Q 2:223, nos. 4526–4527 are reports < Ibn ʿUmar with overlapping *isnāds*, on which see more below.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Melchert, "Bukhārī and His *Ṣaḥīḥ*," *Le-Muséon* 123 (2010): 425–54, 448. Cf. Scott C.

*ḥadīth* reports that mention the Qurʾān in a long book of *tafsīr* is then another way to stress that complementarity.

Bukhārī's style is to go systematically through the Qurʾān in the canonical order from start to finish. Unlike other ninth-century *ḥadīth* collectors, and much more often than in other books of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Bukhārī usually begins sections of *kitāb al-tafsīr* with comments. These are most often glosses of obscure words and phrases, taken from various commentators, normally without any *isnād*, and 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. 68/687–688), starting with an expansion of verse 387 (*“abṣir bi-him wa-asmi ʿi-l-lāh; God says, whereas today they do not hear or see”*); one from (Sufyān) Ibn ʿUyaynah (d. Mecca, 198/814) glossing an obscure expression in verse 83 (*taʿuzzuhum azzan*); one from Mujāhid (ibn Jabr; d. Mecca, 104/722–723?) 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. 208/823–824?]); then one last gloss from Mujāhid.<sup>6</sup> For twenty-nine chapters, he offers only comments without *isnād* (23, 29, 35, 51, 57, 58, 64, 67, 73, 76, 81, 82, 85–90, 94, 97, 100–107, and 109).

For most chapters, Bukhārī goes on to relate *ḥadīth* with *isnād* from the Prophet or

Lucas, “The Legal Principles of Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī and Their Relationship to Classical Salafī Islam,” *Islamic Law and Society/ILS* 13 (2006): 289–324, esp. 299.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath*, 9.272. Q (Maryam) 19:38 actually begins *asmi ʿi-l-lāh wa-absir*. Ibn ʿAbbās' reversal, presumably the result of quoting by memory, was evidently remarked by al-Bukhārī, who mentions the correct order before going on to the next gloss. As an example of the textual weakness of *of this the Bin Bāz* edition, I observe that the final gloss from Mujāhid is mentioned only in the commentary, not in the text of Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* given on the previous page. In the Sultānī edition of 1311–1313/1893–1895, 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. Bukhārī's involvement with philologists of the generation before him is treated at length in M. Fuat Sezgin, *Buhārī'nin kaynakları*, (Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi yayınlarından 13; İstanbul: Ibrahim Horoz Basimevi, 1956), 124–163. Anonymous comments (i.e., Bukhārī's own) are collected in appendices at 321–368 (in *kitāb al-tafsīr*) and 369–379 (in other books of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*). Chapter names will be given as in printed Qurʾāns today, but Bukhārī's usage is often very different; e.g., Q 19 is *ʿSūrat khay ʿs* (of uncertain pronunciation).

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Companions relevant to the chapter in question, usually to some particular verse. Sometimes, comments follow *ḥadīth*. (Occasionally, the order depends on which recension of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* is being followed, e.g., for Sūrat Hūd, where only the 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 ~~seventy-two~~ 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 ~~nine~~ 9 percent of all the reports in the whole *Ṣaḥīḥ*. On Q 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,’” 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 Sūrat Ghāfir. The Kufan jurist Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/777–778?) is quoted as saying that he found no verse of the Qur’ān harder on him than Q 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 *ḥadīth* with full *isnād*). These are dominated by Mujāhid and Ibn ‘Abbās, each responsible for 103 (~~thirty-four~~ 34 percent). The Basrans al-Ḥasan (d. 110/728) and Qatādah b. Di‘āmah (d. 117/735–736?) and the Kufans Sufyān b. ‘Uyaynah and Sa‘īd b. Jubayr (d. 95/713–714?) are the next most prominent, with ten, eight, nine, and six quotations, respectively. On the other hand, of

<sup>7</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath*, 9.195, *ad* Q 11. For recensions of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, see Johann Fück, “Beiträge zur Überlieferungsgeschichte von Buḥārī’s Traditionssammlung,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* ZDMG 92 (1938): 60–87, now also available as “On the Transmission of Bukhārī’s Collection of Traditions,” trans. Gwendolyn Goldbloom, in Claude Gilliot (ed.), *Education and Learning in the Early Islamic World*, (*The Formation of the Classical Islamic World* FCIW 43; (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 245–270.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Claude Gilliot, *EF*, s.v. “‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Abbās,” on reports of the quarrels of Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn al-Zubayr. All translations of the Qur’ān here ~~come are~~ from Alan Jones (trans.), *The Qur’ān* (Exeter: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007).

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

Abū Ḥabīb (d. 90/708–709), al-Ḍaḥḥāk (d. 106/724–725?), and Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad (recently enumerated by Harald Motzki as “the earliest authorities of qur’ānic exegesis which seem to be historically tangible” besides Mujāhid), only al-Ḍaḥḥāk appears.<sup>10</sup> Two recensions identify a comment on Sūrat al-Ṣaff as coming from “Yaḥyā.” Ibn Ḥajar’s commentary indicates that the source is Yaḥyā b. Ziyād al-Farrā’, the famous Kufan grammarian (Baghdad, d. 207/823–824), in particular his book *Ma’anī 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 Bukhārī was reluctant to name them. Certainly, they were fairly recent authorities—older contemporaries of Bukhārī himself.

It was usual to rely more heavily on later authorities when it came to the Qur’ān (as opposed to the law), less heavily on the Prophet and his Companions. Bukhārī himself relies more heavily on Companions and Followers in his chapter on the Qur’ān than in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* as a whole. At the same time, it cannot be said that Bukhārī consistently avoids citing more recent authorities. His section on Sūrat al-Ḥajj 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 Bukhārī’s standard of accuracy in his *ta’līqāt* (comments and quotations without full *isnād*) is

<sup>10</sup> Harald Motzki, *Analysing Muslim Traditions*, (Islamic History and Civilization, Studies and Texts IHC 78; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 271. “Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad” is an obscure reference. Bukhārī mentions two such men in his *Al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, but it seems doubtful whether either is the one Motzki has in mind. See Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; 4 vols. in 8; Hyderabad: Maṭba‘at Jam‘iyyat Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmāniyyah, 1358–1362 [1958]; repr. 8 vols. with index; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1986), 1.225–256.

<sup>11</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath*, 9.485, confirmed by al-Farrā’, *Ma’anī al-Qur’ān*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Najjār et al.; (3 vols.; Cairo: Maṭba‘at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1955–1972), 3.153. On Farrā’, see Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* [GAS]; (9 vols.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967–1984), 8.123–125, 9.131–134; also Muḥammad b. Aḥmad ‘Abd Allāh Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, ed. ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Salām Tadmuri; (52 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1987–2000), 14 (201–210 A.H.); 293–295, with further references.

<sup>12</sup> On Abū ‘Ubaydah, see Sezgin, *Geschichte*, 8.67–71, 9.65–66, also Dhahabī, *Tārīkh* 14 (201–210 A.H.); 397–400, with further references.

lower than for fully supported quotations, just as the tradition has recognized.

A prominent feature of the qur'ānic commentary tradition is multiple alternative interpretations of obscure words. An example is *ill* in Q Tawbah 9:8 (“They will not observe any *ill* or *dhimmah* with you”). ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058) is typical:

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.<sup>13</sup>

By contrast, Bukhārī says only, “*Ill* means relatedness.”<sup>14</sup>

Bukhārī seems unafraid of foreign words in the Qur’ān. Concerning Q Hūd 11:75 (“Abraham was prudent, tender-hearted and penitent”), he quotes the Kufan Follower Abū Maysarah (d. 63/682–683?), “*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 (*utrujj*) 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 Sūrat Ṭāhā 20, he quotes Sa‘īd b. Jubayr, “In Nabataean, *tāhā* is ‘O man.’” Concerning Q Nūr 24:35 (“His light is like a niche in which there is a lamp”), he quotes another Kufan Follower, Sa‘d b. ‘Iyāḍ al-Thumālī, “*Mishkāh* is an aperture (*kuwwah*) in Ethiopic.” He quotes Mujāhid apropos of Q Najm 52, “*Ṭūr* means mountain in Syriac.” But there is obviously no special preference for identifying foreign

<sup>13</sup> Abū’l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb al-Māwardī, *Al-Nukat wa’l-‘uyūn: Tafṣīr al-Māwardī, ad Q 9:8*; ed. Sayyid b. ‘Abd al-Maqṣūd b. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm; (6 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah and Mu’assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyyah, 1992), 2.343.

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

origins. For example, *siḡill* (from Latin by way of Byzantine Greek *sigillon*) is simply glossed as *ṣaḡīfah* (“scroll”) at Q Anbiyā’ 21:104 (“The day We roll up the heavens as a recorder rolls up records”).<sup>15</sup> Presumably, Bukhārī accepted that Arabic included loan words.

## Variant Readings

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Bukhārī occasionally reports variant readings (*qirā’āt*), sometimes fairly obscure ones without significant followings in later times. Giving full *isnāds*, he reports that Ibn ‘Abbās read *yūṭawwaqawnah* at Q 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 whom became the Seven Readers, ‘Āṣim, read *adbār* in Q Qāf 50:40 (“and glorify Him at the *ends* of prostrations”) but *idbār* in Q 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. 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 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 Infiṭār 82:7, 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, 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,

<sup>15</sup> See Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Quran*, (Gaekwad’s Oriental Series 79; Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938; repr. Lahore: Al-Biruni, 1977), 163–164.

<sup>16</sup> Aḥmad Mukhtār ‘Umar and ‘Abd al-‘Āl Sālim Mukram, *Mu‘jam al-qirā’āt al-Qur’āniyah: ma‘a muqaddimah fi’l-qirā’āt wa-ashar al-qurrā’*, (8 vols.; Kuwait: Dhāt al-Salāsīl, 1982–1985; repr. n.p.: Intishārāt-i Uswah, 1991–1992), 1.143; Muḥammad ibn al-Husayn al-Qalānisī, *Al-Kifāyah al-kubrā fi’l-qirā’āt al-‘ashr*, ed. ‘Uthmān Maḥmūd Ghazāl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2007), 142.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Umar and Mukram, *Mu‘jam*, 6.237–238, 263; Qalānisī, *Kifāyah*, 382, 384.

<sup>18</sup> *Mudhdhakir* or *mudhakkir* (reports vary), according to ‘Umar and Mukram, *Mu‘jam*, 7.34.

unless Bukhārī counted Abū ‘Amr among the people of the Hijaz).<sup>19</sup> Bukhārī says that Jarīr, ‘Īsā b. Yūnus, and Abū Mu‘āwiyah read *tarā ‘l-nāsa sakrā wa-mā hum sakrā* instead of *sukārā* (Q 22:2). This refers to Jarīr b. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Rāzī (d. 187/802–803), ‘Īsā b. Yūnus al-Sabī‘ī (d. 187/802–803?), and Abū Mu‘āwiyah Muḥammad b. Khāzim (d. 195/810–811?), all transmitters from the Kufan traditionist and Qur’ān reader al-A‘mash (Sulaymān b. Mihrān, d. 148/765?), one of the Fourteen. Bukhārī apparently ignores the preference of others for *sakrā* — Hamzah and al-Kisā‘ī among the Seven, as well as Khalaf among the Ten.<sup>20</sup> Bukhārī observes that the Meccan preacher (*qāṣṣ*) ‘Ubayd b. ‘Umayr (d. 68/687–688?) read *tatalazzā* at Q Layl 92:14 (“I have warned you of a fire that blazes”) instead of the shortened form *talazzā* (what one finds in printed Qur’āns today) or (a variant form of Ibn Kathīr’s reading) *ttalazzā*.<sup>21</sup>

Plainly, then, 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 Duḥā 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 Sabā’ 34:19 (“They said, ‘Our Lord, make the stages of our journey longer’”), “*Bā ‘id* and *ba ‘id* are the same.” The 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, Bukhārī seems to advocate indifference, although in this case there was more

<sup>19</sup> ‘Umar and Mukram, *Mu‘jam*, 8.89; Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn b. Mihrān, *Al-Mabsūṭ fī ‘l-qirā’āt al-‘ashr*, ed. Subay‘ Ḥamzah Ḥākimī (Damascus: Majma‘ al-Lughah al-‘Arabiyyah, n.d.), 465.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Umar and Mukram, *Mu‘jam*, 4.161–163.

<sup>21</sup> Ibn Mujaḥid, *Kitāb al-Sab‘ah fī ‘l-qirā’āt*, ed. Shawqī Dayf (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1972; repr. 1988), 690.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Umar and Mukram, *Mu‘jam*, 9.179–180, mentioning the Companion Ibn ‘Abbās, the Medinese Followers ‘Urwah b. Zubayr and Hishām b. ‘Urwah, the Syrian Follower Abū Baḥriyyah, and the later Syrians Ibn Abī ‘Ablah and Abū Ḥaywah.

<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: (Qalānisī, *Kifāyah*, 352).



disagreement among the most famous experts. (It has been remarked that he avoids reports of divergent Syrian and Iraqi readings of the Qur'ān 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 Bukhārī should quote grammarians more often than qur'ānic readers.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, 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 b. Mas'ūd (d. 32/652–653?) as saying, “We recite it only as we have been taught it.”<sup>26</sup> The Qur'ān reciter Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. 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 Bukhārī's quotation indicates that opinion was hardening against it in the mid-ninth century.<sup>27</sup>

Bukhārī quotes Ibn Mas'ūd to explain his reading of Q 12:23, the command *hayta lak* in particular. Ibn Mujāhid's Seven Readings include this, *hīta lak*, and *haytu lak*.<sup>28</sup> Ibn 'Abbās, the authority Bukhārī most often quotes, goes unmentioned at this point. The reason may be uncertainty over what his reading was. The commentary of al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) quotes Ibn 'Abbās as considering the word Ḥawrānī, an opinion for which Bukhārī quotes 'Ikrimah. Al-Suddī, on the other hand, thought it was Coptic (which agrees with the

<sup>24</sup> Viviane Comerro, *Les traditions sur la constitution du muṣḥaf de 'Uthmān*, (Beiruter Texte und Studien 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 b. Hammām al-Ṣan'ānī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān, ad Q 12:23*; ed. Muṣṭafā Muslim Muḥammad, (3 vols. in 4; Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1410 [1989]), 1/2.320 or ed. 'Abd al-Mu'ī Amīn Qal'ajī, (2 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1991), 1.279. Its *isnād* intersects with Bukhārī's only at the transmitter from Ibn Mas'ūd, Abū Wā'il Shaqīq b. Salamah (Kufan, d. ca. 100/718–719).

<sup>27</sup> See Christopher Melchert, “Ibn Mujāhid and the Establishment of Seven Qur'ānic Readings,” *S<sup>t</sup>udia Islamica* 91 (2000): 5–22, 20.

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

presumed Egyptian setting), al-Ḥasan that it was Syriac, Mujāhid that it was Arabic. Then Ṭabarī 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> Bukhārī was not indifferent to the pronunciation of this odd word, else he would not have quoted Ibn Mas‘ūd. 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’ān.

It is instructive to compare a short book of the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān b. al-Ash‘ath al-Sijistānī (d. 275/889), *kitāb al-ḥurūf wa’l-qirā’āt*. This includes two versions of the *ḥadīth* 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 Bukhārī to report disagreement over the readings. One prominent disagreement concerns Q 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 *ḥadīth* report (with 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 (with Meccan *isnād*) attributing this reading to the Prophet (no. 4001). Finally, he quotes Ibn Ḥanbal as saying, “The ancient reading is *māliki yawmi ’l-dīn*.” Bukhārī offers no advice as to the wording of Sūrat al-Fātiḥah, apparently another example of reluctance to call attention to disagreement.

Of Q ‘Alaq 96:15, *la-nasfa’an bi’l-nāṣiyah*, Bukhārī comments that this means “we

<sup>29</sup> Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayān ‘an ta’wīl āy al-Qur’ān*, ad Q 12:23; *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī. Jāmi‘ al-bayān ‘an ta’wīl āy al-Qur’ān*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir and Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir, (16 vols. [incomplete]; Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1954–1969), 16.25–31.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Umar and Mukram, *Mu‘jam*, 3.158–161.

<sup>31</sup> Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān b. al-Ash‘ath al-Sijistānī, *Sunan*, *kitāb al-ḥurūf wa’l-qirā’āt*, nos. 4004–4005. These both intersect with ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s version at the Kufan al-A‘mash.

<sup>32</sup> Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, no. 4000. This is quoted < Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal < ‘Abd al-Razzāq, but I have not found it in ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s *Tafsīr*.

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 Qur’āns, this normally appears with *tanwīn fathah* rather than the letter *nūn*, although in Ibn Ḥajar’s commentary it is written exactly as Bukhārī describes it, with *nūn*.<sup>33</sup> Bukhārī does not comment on the other place in the Qur’ān where a lightened energetic verb is written with *tanwīn fathah*, Q 12:32. Neither was the spelling of major concern to other medieval exegetes. For example, as Bukhārī remarks the example at Q 96:15 but not 12:32, the later commentator Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273?) remarks the example at Q 12:32 but not 96:15.<sup>34</sup> Bukhārī’s comment is a reminder that the exact written presentation of the Qur’ān was subordinate to the sound of the letters as it was recited. (When I began to teach selected passages of the Qur’ān 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 *tā’ marbūṭah* or *tā’*.)

## Comparisons

Bukhārī’s *kitāb al-tafsīr* may be compared with the *tafsīr* of Abū Bakr ‘Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ṣan‘ānī (d. 211/827), likewise from a major *ḥadīth* collector, although not part of his major *ḥadīth* collection, *Al-Muṣannaf*. What has come down to us is evidently the recension of ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s *Tafsīr* by Salamah b. Shabīb (d. 247/861–862?), while Ṭabarī is said to have drawn on another recension by Abū ‘Alī b. Abī al-Rabī‘ al-Jurjānī (d. 263/877).<sup>35</sup> It comprises 3,759 numbered items. Not every verse of the Qur’ān is covered, but only one chapter (63) goes without any comment. Over three-quarters of the

<sup>33</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath*, 9.560.

<sup>34</sup> Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi‘ li-aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Ḥifnāwī and Maḥmūd Ḥāmid ‘Uthmān, (22 vols.; Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1994), 9.190, 20.125 or ed. ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Mahdī, (20 vols. in 10; Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1997), 9.157–158, 20.115–116.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Abd al-Mu‘ī Amīn Qal‘ajī, introduction to ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, 1.31–33; Sezgin, *GAS*, 1.99.

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items in our version come from Ma‘mar b. Rāshid (d. 153/770?), a Basran client who transferred to Yemen. Its ultimate authorities are the Prophet at about ~~fourteen~~ 14 percent of all items, Companions at ~~ten~~ 10 percent, and later figures, nearly all Followers, at ~~seventy-six~~ 76 percent. Leaving aside items from the Prophet and Companions, it is about two-thirds Basran, one-seventh Kufan, and 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 reports with *isnāds*.

‘Abd al-Razzāq’s commentary is unlike Bukhārī’s, then, in that Bukhārī offers almost no Follower *ḥadīth* reports with full *isnād*, whereas Follower reports with full *isnāds* dominate ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s collection. It is also unlike Bukhārī’s collection in offering comments only from the Prophet, Companions, and later traditionists—no grammarians or philologists. Like Bukhārī, ‘Abd al-Razzāq occasionally but unsystematically mentions variant readings, e.g., ‘Umar read *lā yuḍārar kātib* at Q 2:282 (“let not a scribe... be harmed”), whereas nine of the Ten read *yuḍārra* and one *yuḍāra*; al-A‘mash read *tassāqaṭ* at Q 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 11:75), he reports not that it has an Ethiopic meaning but that ‘Ubayd b. ‘Umayr used to allude to it by saying *awh awh* at the mention of the Fire.<sup>37</sup> Of *muttaka*’ (Q 12:31), he quotes Qatādah as saying it means food (*ta‘ām*).<sup>38</sup> Of the mysterious letters at the beginning of Q 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 Bukhārī to report disagreement. For example, he addresses a now-famous controversy, namely whether

<sup>36</sup> ‘Umar and Mukram, *Mu‘jam*, 1.225–~~2~~27, 4.39–41; Qalānisī, *Kifāyah*, 209, 307; Ibn Mihrān, *Mabsūṭ*, 288–289; ‘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.

<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.

Abraham took up Isaac or Ishmael to sacrifice. 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 b. al-Musayyab) expressly in the face of someone’s assertion that it was Ishāq.<sup>40</sup> Bukhārī says nothing in his short chapter on Sūrat al-Ṣaffāt.

Among the Six Books, just one other has a large book of *tafsīr*, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ* of Abū ‘Isā Muḥammad b. ‘Isā al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892), which comprises some 420 *ḥadīth* reports, over ~~ninety-eight~~<sup>98</sup> percent of them from the Prophet. (Ibn Mājah, like ‘Abd al-Razzāq, assembled a separate Qur’ān commentary, but it is not extant.<sup>41</sup>) It covers all but twenty-one chapters of the Qur’ān (46, 65, 67, 71, 73, 76–79, 82, 86–87, 90, 100–101, 103–107, and 111), of which fourteen coincide with chapters for which Bukhārī offers no *ḥadīth* with *isnād*. The few comments that Tirmidhī quotes that are not from the Prophet come from Companions. He 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 Zumar 39:68 is a horn that will be blown.<sup>42</sup> The comparison confirms Bukhārī’s closeness to the classical style of Qur’ān commentary, copiously quoting Followers, and especially in the realm of *adab*. Tirmidhī does twice quote anonymous glosses from “the people of knowledge.” A long *ḥadīth* 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 Ḥadīd 57:2

<sup>40</sup> ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, ed. Muḥammad, 2.152 = ed. Qal‘ajī, 2.124–125.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad 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 Çelebī, *Kitāb al-Kashf al-zunūn*, 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 ‘Iyād b. Mūsā b. ‘Iyād al-Yaḥṣubī, *Tartīb al-madārik wa-taqrīb al-masālik li-ma‘rifat al-lām madhhab Mālik*, ed. Muḥammad b. Tāwīt al-Ṭanjī et al., (8 vols.; (Rabat: n.p., 1966–1983), 1.81.

<sup>42</sup> Abū ‘Isā Muḥammad b. ‘Isā al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ, tafsīr al-qur’ān*, ad Q 39, no. 3244.

(“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*, Tirmidhī says, “Some of the people of knowledge have commented on this *ḥadīth* 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. Bukhārī’s selection of *ḥadīth* in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* more consistently supports semi-rationalist Sunni theology against the more thoroughgoing traditionalists. (Tirmidhī calls this one *gharīb*, meaning uncorroborated, as he does with a quarter of all reports in his book of *tafsīr*.)

Bukhārī’s *kitāb al-tafsīr* may also be compared with that of Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad b. Shu‘ayb al-Nasā’ī (d. 303/915?) at the end of his *ḥadīth* collection *Al-Sunan al-kubrā*, usually counted outside the Six Books (in Speight’s time thought lost).<sup>44</sup> It comprises 735 *ḥadīth* reports, or about ~~six-6~~ percent of the whole book—a slightly smaller proportion than the 504 in Bukhārī’s *kitāb al-tafsīr*. Whereas ~~ninety-five~~95 percent of *Al-Sunan al-kubrā* as a whole goes back to the Prophet, in *kitāb al-tafsīr* within it, about ~~seventy-70~~ percent of all *ḥadīth* reports go back to the Prophet, ~~thirty-30~~ percent to the Companions, very similarly to *ḥadīth* in Bukhārī’s *kitāb al-tafsīr*. Like ‘Abd al-Razzāq and Bukhārī, Nasā’ī goes through the Qur’ān in canonical order, offering glosses on various verses, although far from all verses. Whereas Bukhārī offers only comments without *isnād* for thirty chapters, Nasā’ī offers no comments without *isnād* and skips only nine chapters altogether (71, 90, 94, 100–101, 103, 105, and 113–114). Like Bukhārī, Nasā’ī provides accounts of the occasions of revelation, the legal application of verses, glosses of words, and

<sup>43</sup> Tirmidhī, *Jāmi‘, kitāb tafsīr al-Qur’ān* ad Q. 57, no. 3298. The other such gloss appears shortly before at *tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, ad Q 56, no. 3294.

<sup>44</sup> In modern times, it is Nasā’ī’s smaller collection, *Al-Mujtabā*, that has usually been included among the Six Books. It has often been referred to simply as *Al-Sunan*. See Christopher Melchert, “The Life and Works of Al-Nasā’ī,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* *JSS* 59 (2014): 377–407.

occasionally clarifications from transmitters. For example, 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 b. 'Uyaynah (who is in the *isnād* going back to Ibn 'Abbās) as saying "that is, the unbelievers among them."<sup>45</sup>

Concerning a prophetic gloss on Q Furqān 25:68, a further clarification is interpolated from Ḥamzah, the transmitter of *Al-Sunan al-kubrā*, from Nasā'ī.<sup>46</sup> But there seem to be no comments drawn from famous commentators such as Qatādah and Sa'īd b. Jubayr, nor philologists such as 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 *Muṣannaḥ*, 'Abd al-Razzāq mentions Companions Ibn 'Abbās, the Caliph 'Umar, 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr, Abū'l-Dardā', and Abū Hurayrah in opposition, as well as two Followers, although he apparently quotes the Prophet on both sides.<sup>47</sup> Non-prohibition is associated especially with the early Maliki school.<sup>48</sup> Both sides cite Q 2:223, "Your women are a tillage. Go to your tillage as you wish."<sup>49</sup> Bukhārī's *kitāb*

<sup>45</sup> Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad b. Shu'ayb al-Nasā'ī, *Al-Sunan al-kubrā*, ed. 'Abd al-Ghaffār Sulaymān al-Bundārī and Sayyid Kisrawī Ḥasan (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1991), *kitāb al-tafsīr*, no. 11268 (*ad* Q 14). But Bukhārī quotes Ibn 'Abbās by two other *isnāds*, both through Sufyān b. '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: Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *al-maghāzī* 8, *bāb qat'l Abī Jahl*, no. 3977, and *ibid.*, *al-tafsīr* 14/3, *bāb a-lam tara*, no. 4700.

<sup>46</sup> Nasā'ī, *Al-Sunan al-kubrā*, *al-tafsīr*, no. 11373 (*ad* Q 25). Ḥamzah's was the only extant recension of Nasā'ī's *kitāb al-tafsīr* according to Ibn Ḥajar, *Kitāb Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, (12 vols.; Hyderabad: Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Nizāmiyyah, 1325–1327 [1907–1909]), repr. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), 1.6.

<sup>47</sup> 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Al-Muṣannaḥ*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-A'zamī, (11 vols.; Johannesburg: Majlis al-'Ilmī, 1970–1972), 11.442–443. There are just two relevant items (both implicitly opposed) in 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, *ad* Q.2:223; ed. Muḥammad, 1.89–90 = ed. Qal'ajī, 1.103.

<sup>48</sup> E.g., Nasā'ī, *Al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 5.315–316. It is held against the Malikis in polemics from other schools; e.g., Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqī, (2 vols.; Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sunnah al-Muḥammadiyyah, 1371 [1952]), 1.316, and al-Qāri' 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 [1913–1914]), 2.465–466. Denied by some early Malikis: e.g., Ṣaḥnūn, according to Abū Bakr al-Mālikī, *Riyāḍ al-nufūs*, ed. Bashīr al-Bakkūsh, supp. Muḥammad al-'Arūsī al-Muṭṭawwī, (3 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1401–1403 [1981–1983]), 1.355.

<sup>49</sup> So Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī, *Kitāb al-Umm*, (7 vols. in 4; Bulaq:

*al-tafsīr* includes four Companion *ḥadīth* reports in explanation of it, the three from Ibn ‘Umar incomplete:

No. 4526 < Ishāq < al-Naḍr b. 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 b. Shumayl) < ‘Abd al-Ṣamad < his father<sup>50</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 b. Yaḥyā b. 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.’”<sup>51</sup>

Apparently, no known recension of Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* includes what Ibn ‘Umar said, so it must have been Bukhārī himself who could not bring himself to repeat it. However, Ishāq b. 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>52</sup> Tabarī quotes three overlapping versions < Ibn ‘Awn on up in his commentary at Q 2:223 to exactly the same effect. Tabarī also has an overlapping version of 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 *ḥadīth* report through Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. 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

al-Maṭba‘ah al-Kubrā al-Amīriyyah, 1321–1325 [1903–1908]; repr. Cairo: Kitāb al-Sha‘b, 1968), 5.84, 156.

<sup>50</sup> “From his father” is omitted in the edition of Bin Bāz but supplied here from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Qaṣṭallānī, *Irshād al-sārī li-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (10 vols.; (Bulaq: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Kubrā al-Amīriyyah, 1304–1305 [1886–1888]), 7.34.

<sup>51</sup> Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* includes a close parallel to the last, < Qutaybah b. Sa‘īd, Abū Bakr b. Abī Shaybah, and ‘Amr al-Nāqid < Sufyān on up. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ, nikāḥ* 19, *bāb jawāz jimā’ihi imra’atahu fī qubulihā*, no. 1435.

<sup>52</sup> Ibn Hajar, *Fath*, 9.36, ad nos. 4526–5428. This section of the *Musnad* appears to be no longer extant. Cf. Ishāq b. Rāhawayh, *Al-Musnad*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ghafūr ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Ḥusayn al-Balūshī, (5 vols. in 4; (Medina: Maktabat al-Imān, 1990–1995); or ed. Muḥammad Mukhtār Ḍirār al-Muftī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 2002).



the Messenger of God ‘Your women are a tillage for you’ just to give permission (*rukḥṣatan*) to go into the rear.’<sup>53</sup>

Bukhārī treats a related Prophet *ḥadīth* report in his great biographical dictionary *Al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*: Khuzaymah b. 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>54</sup> Since he has nothing else on the problem in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, it seems likely that his opinion was similar to that reported of Nasā’ī: that there was no sound *ḥadīth* 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 Ṭabarī also quotes the Hijazi Ibn Abī Mulaykah).<sup>55</sup> Nasā’ī himself relates a long series of relevant *ḥadīth* reports in *Al-Sunan al-kubrā*.<sup>56</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 b. Anas, who is independently quoted as himself seeing no harm in it.<sup>57</sup> (All three reports from Ibn ‘Umar are also related by Ṭabarī. A different sort of counter-report comes from Abū Dāwūd, by which Ibn Mas‘ūd [!] laments, “Ibn ‘Umar—God forgive him—was imagining things.”<sup>58</sup> Ṭabarī includes a counter-report that accuses Nāfi‘ of misquoting Ibn ‘Umar.) On this point, then, Bukhārī implicitly sides with Mālik rather than al-Shāfi‘.<sup>59</sup> Nasā’ī expressly comes down on the same side in the end but, characteristically, after

<sup>53</sup> Ibn Hajar, *Fath*, 9:36, *ad* nos. 4526–4528.

<sup>54</sup> Bukhārī, *Al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, 8.256–257. 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 and not the Prophet is raised at 8.303.

<sup>55</sup> Nasā’ī quoted in Ibn al-Manẓūr, *Mukhtaṣar Tārīkh Dimashq*, ed. Rūhiyyah al-Naḥḥās et al., (29 vols.; (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1984–1989), 3.101; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Muqaffā al-kabīr*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ya‘lawī, (8 vols.; (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1991), 1.401.

<sup>56</sup> Nasā’ī, *Al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 5.314–325, *kitāb ‘ishrat al-nisā’*, §§ 24–32.

<sup>57</sup> Nasā’ī, *Al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 5.315.

<sup>58</sup> Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *kitāb al-nikāḥ* 44, *bāb fī jāmi‘ al-nikāḥ*, no. 2164.

<sup>59</sup> Shāfi‘ī, *Umm*, Bulaq ed., 5.84, 156 = ed. Rif‘at Fawzī ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, (11 vols.; (al-Manṣūrah: Dār al-Wafā’, 2001; 2<sup>nd</sup> printing, 2004), 6.244–246, 443–444.

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presenting reports both for and against. By contrast, and equally characteristically, 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 Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*: it is not only a small selection of all known *ḥadīth*, even the sound; it is restricted to the rules of just one school (Bukhārī's own, in this case) rather than all the rules entertained by respectable Sunnis.<sup>60</sup>

Another useful comparison is the Qur'ān commentary of Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Ḥātim Muḥammad al-Rāzī (d. 327/938), from a major *ḥadīth* critic but independent of any larger collection.<sup>61</sup> Even more than Bukhārī's or Ṭabarī's commentaries, this apparently deserves to exemplify *al-tafsīr bi'l-ma'thūr*, for it normally includes an *isnād* with every comment and almost no comments on the Qur'ān from the compiler himself.<sup>62</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>63</sup> Koç also reports that the extant portions comprise 16,283 reports in all, of which nearly ~~four~~ 4 percent are from the Prophet, ~~twenty-two~~ 22 percent from Companions (of which ~~eighty~~ 80 percent are from Ibn 'Abbās), ~~and~~ seventy-four 74 percent from Followers and later figures (my own rougher estimates indicate altogether half from Followers, a quarter from later figures).<sup>64</sup> This means a similar percentage of Prophet *ḥadīth* to that in the book of *tafsīr* in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* but hugely more post-Companion *ḥadīth*—almost exactly the same percentage as in 'Abd al-Razzāq.

<sup>60</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* *IJMES* 30 (1998): 167–182, esp. 174.

<sup>61</sup> For the manuscripts, 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).

<sup>62</sup> The distinction between *al-tafsīr bi'l-ma'thūr* (explication by transmitted material) and *al-tafsīr bi'l-ra'y* (explication by opinion) has seemed polemically useful to Salafis but quickly fails on testing against actual Qur'ān commentaries across the centuries. See Saleh, "Preliminary Remarks," 21–37, and Saleh, *Formation*, 16.

<sup>63</sup> Mehmet Akif Koç, "*Isnāds* and *rijāl* Expertise in the Exegesis of Ibn Abī Ḥātim (327/939 [sic])," *Der Islam* 82 (2005): 146–168, at 163.

<sup>64</sup> Koç, "*Isnāds*," 167n.

Therefore, it is evidently not possible to identify preference for Prophet or Companion *ḥadīth* with traditionalist preference for *ḥadīth* (i.e., transmitted knowledge) over recent opinion.

Koç finds that twenty-two transmitters of opinions in Ibn Abī Ḥātim's *Tafsīr* are aspersed in his massive encyclopaedia of *rijāl* criticism, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa'l-ta'dīl*; twenty-three 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 b. al-Mubārak (d. 181/797) as allowing transmission of *ḥadīth* from a weak transmitter concerning etiquette, exhortation, and renunciation (*adab*, *maw'izah*, *zuhd*).<sup>65</sup> But Koç's distinction is weakened by our lack of a body of legal *ḥadīth* from Ibn Abī Ḥātim. That is, we cannot be sure that, had he collected 16,000 legal *ḥadīth* reports, they would have included fewer or no transmitters aspersed in *Al-Jarḥ wa'l-ta'dīl*. Bukhārī's *kitāb 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 Bukhārī's part to call attention to disagreement has been remarked

<sup>65</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Ḥātim Muḥammad al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa'l-ta'dīl*, (9 vols.; Hyderabad: Jam'iyat Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyyah, 1360–1371 [1941–1952]; repr. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, n.d.), 2.30–31. 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 *ḥadīth* included in Aḥmad's *Musnad*, see Christopher Melchert, "The *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal: How it Was Composed and What Distinguishes It from the Six Books" *Der Islam* 82 (2005): 32–51, 45–47. To the contrary, Jonathan A. C. Brown has observed that Tirmidhī identifies as *gharīb* considerably more *ḥadīth* reports in his chapter on proper behavior (*al-birr wa'l-ṣīlah*) than in his chapter on inheritance law (*al-farā'id*): Jonathan A.C. Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 235.

already. Here it is conspicuous that Bukhārī seldom offers one interpretation after another of the same locution. One place where he does so is Q Yūnus 10:2, *anna lahum qadama ṣidq* (“that they will have a sure footing”); he quotes the Medinese Zayd b. Aslam (d. 136/754) as explaining that this refers to Muḥammad, then cites Mujāhid that it refers to goodness (*khayr*). By comparison, however, Ṭabarī names Mujāhid among five who said it refers to a reward of some sort, and Zayd b. Aslam among three who said it refers to Muḥammad. Māwardī offers four interpretations, but instead of quoting Zayd b. Aslam as saying it refers to Muḥammad, he quotes this interpretation of Muqātil b. Ḥayyān, a Khurasani client (d. bef. 150/767–768) cited just once by Bukhārī. To Mujāhid he attributes the opinion that it refers to a previous truth-telling such as had earlier brought them to faith.<sup>66</sup> The most careful of the three, on this point, appears to be Ṭabarī with his complete *isnād* for every quotation.

Shortly afterwards, Bukhārī apparently quotes Mujāhid again as glossing Q 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 looking at the face of God. Ṭabarī cites ten persons (including the Prophet and three Companions) said to have explained *wa-ziyādah* as looking at God’s face, and just one, Mujāhid, as saying it means forgiveness and satisfaction. The *ḥadīth* report by which the Prophet himself connected Q 10:26 with looking at God’s face is included by Muslim and other leading collectors with a Basran *isnād*, although not Bukhārī himself.<sup>67</sup> Bukhārī does testify elsewhere (in *kitāb al-tafsīr* apropos of Q 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>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Māwardī, *Nukat*, 2.421, ad Q 10:2.

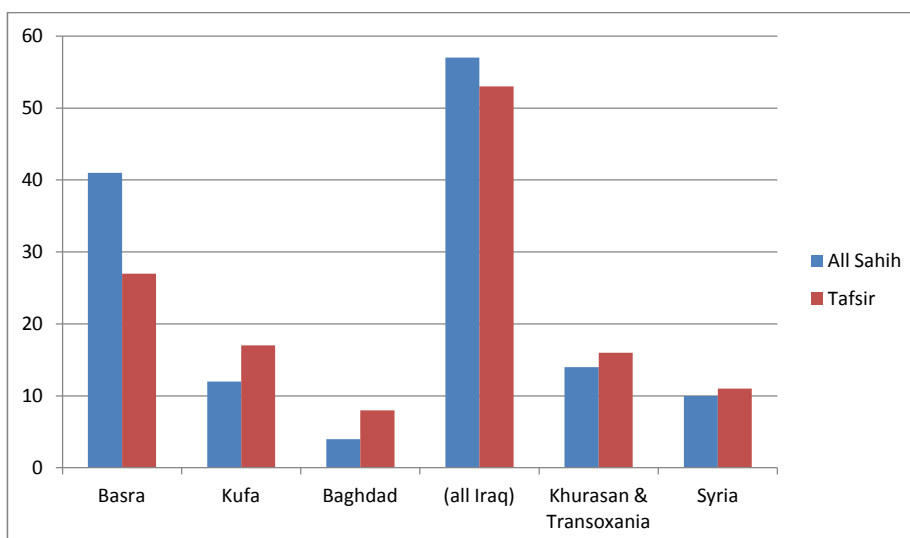
<sup>67</sup> Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *kitāb al-īmān* 80, *ithbāt ru’yat al-mu’minīn*, no. 181; Tirmidhī, *Jāmi’*, *ṣifat al-jannah* 16, *ru’yat al-rabb*, no. 2552, and *tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, ad Q 10, no. 3105; Ibn Mājah Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Yazīd, *Sunan*, *al-muqaddimah* 13, *fīmā ankarat al-jahmiyyah*, no. 187.

<sup>68</sup> Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *mawāqūt al-ṣalāh* 16, *bāb faḍl ṣalāt al-‘aṣr*, no. 554; *mawāqūt 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;

Māwardī cites the same three Companions as Ṭabarī as saying that *wa-ziyādah* means to look at His face, Mujāhid alone as saying it means forgiveness and satisfaction.<sup>69</sup> On this point, as at some others, Bukhārī's selection may reflect wariness of anthropomorphism.<sup>70</sup>

### Bukhārī's *Tafsīr* and the Rest of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*

Bukhārī's immediate sources for *ḥadīth* in the *tafsīr* are geographically fairly similar to his immediate sources for *ḥadīth* 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>71</sup>:



*al-riqāq* 52, *bāb al-ṣirāt jistr Jahannam*, no. 6573; *al-tawḥīd* 24, *bāb* Q 7:52–53, nos. 7434–7437.

<sup>69</sup> Māwardī, *Nukat*, 2.433, *ad* Q 10:26.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Melchert, “Bukhārī,” 453–454, on the creation of Adam in God's image.

<sup>71</sup> Based on a sample of 230 *ḥadīth* reports in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, from Melchert, “Bukhārī,” 427.

Bukhārī's ultimate authorities are rather more different. In his *kitāb al-tafsīr*, about ~~sixty-eight~~<sup>68</sup> percent of all *ḥadīth* reports with *isnāds* (including repeats) go back to the Prophet, ~~thirty-one~~<sup>31</sup> percent to Companions, and less than ~~one~~<sup>1</sup> percent to a Follower. In the *Ṣaḥīḥ* as a whole, by contrast, over ~~ninety~~<sup>90</sup> percent of all *ḥadīth* reports go back to the Prophet. Bukhārī was much more concerned to report sayings from the Prophet than (for example) Muslim, in whose small *kitāb al-tafsīr* only about ~~five~~<sup>5</sup> percent go back to the Prophet, but the state of qur'ānic commentary still evidently constrained him to bring up the Companions more often than usual.

Bukhārī's *kitāb al-tafsīr* passes systematically through the whole Qur'ān 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'ān 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 Bukhārī's arrangement of *ḥadīth* 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>72</sup> The Qur'ān was of great interest to Muslim *littérateurs*, if nothing else as the paragon of Arabic prose style. In Bukhārī's time, the specialized study of variant qur'ānic readings developed above all in Baghdadi belletrist circles.<sup>73</sup> *Adab* was also the field where out-of-the-way information, presented according to no obvious plan, was most prized. Bukhārī's literary talent has occasionally provoked comment.<sup>74</sup> The *kitāb al-tafsīr* confirms that he was part of that tradition. Tirmidhī, Nasā'ī, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, by contrast, worked much more exclusively in the *ḥadīth* tradition.

Compared with the rest of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Bukhārī's *kitāb al-tafsīr* includes unusually

<sup>72</sup> S. R. Burge, "Reading ~~b~~<sup>B</sup>etween the Lines: The Compilation of *ḥadīth* and the Authorial Voice," *Arabica* 58 (2011): 168–197, at 194–195.

<sup>73</sup> Melchert, "Ibn Mujāhid," 7–11.

<sup>74</sup> See Melchert, "Bukhārī and his *Ṣaḥīḥ*," 448.

much material without full *isnāds*. The tradition clearly distinguishes between the respect due to what 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 b. 'Uyaynah that Sufyān's *tafsīr* attributes rather to Mujāhid, or when he implicitly attributes something to Ibn 'Abbās that is actually from Farrā', confirms that 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 *ḥadīth*. 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 Bukhārī's *kitāb al-tafsīr* and the rest of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* in the frequency with which Bukhārī inserts his own comments: by Sezgin's count, 248 times in *kitāb al-tafsīr*, ~~fourty five~~<sup>45</sup> times in all the rest of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*.<sup>75</sup> In *kitāb al-tafsīr*, Bukhārī seems to be working in a slightly different, less self-effacing tradition. It is conceivable, of course, that he came up on his own with the idea of treating qur'ānic commentary differently from the law and other concerns of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*. However, inasmuch as Bukhārī's *kitāb al-tafsīr* is anomalous both by comparison with *kitāb al-tafsīr* in other leading *ḥadīth* 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.

#### Bukhārī's *Tafsīr* and the Genre of *Tafsīr*

In the end, one also wishes to know what Bukhārī's *kitāb al-tafsīr* tells us about the historical development of qur'ānic commentary. A weak reason for excluding Bukhārī from

<sup>75</sup> See *supra*, n. 6.

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the history of qur'ānic 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>76</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 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.<sup>77</sup> He is cited very often by the later Qur'ān commentator Qurṭubī, one possible measure of his influence, but Muslim is cited almost as often, so it cannot be argued that the attention paid 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 Ṭabarī, who ushered in the classical style of qur'ānic exegesis.<sup>78</sup> A count of express citations suggests that the most important earlier commentaries for Qurṭubī were those of Ṭabarī, then Māwardī, then al-Qushayrī (Abū Naṣr, son of the famous Sufī), only then (and some distance behind) Tha'labī.<sup>79</sup> Does this show that Ṭabarī and Māwardī ought to be the most studied? Saleh is also puzzled by some of what Tha'labī identifies as the constituents of proper qur'ānic commentary: *'ilal*, *iḥtijājāt*, and *al-akhbār al-muta'alliqāt*.<sup>80</sup> The first two are commonplaces of *ḥadīth*-based law, respectively, subtle defects in *isnāds* and arguments based on *ḥadīth* reports that suffice to establish points of law. Bukhārī's separate book of *'ilal* mentioned by Ibn Ḥajar is not extant, but over three-quarters of all items in Tirmidhī's book *Al-'Ilal al-kabīr* are comments from Bukhārī.<sup>81</sup> The term *muta'alliq* reminds one strongly of Bukhārī, since, as mentioned above, his *Ṣaḥīḥ* is distinguished by over a thousand reports

<sup>76</sup> E.g., Kātib Ḥalabī, *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>77</sup> See Melchert, "Bukhārī and his *Ṣaḥīḥ*," 451–453.

<sup>78</sup> Saleh, *Formation*, 5.

<sup>79</sup> According to Qurṭubī, Ṭabarī is cited 179 times, Māwardī 154, Qushayrī 148, and Tha'labī 80.

<sup>80</sup> Saleh, *Formation*, 86–87.

<sup>81</sup> Al-Tirmidhī, *'Ilal al-Tirmidhī al-kabīr, tarṭīb Abū [sic] Ṭālib al-Qāḍī*, ed. Ḥamzah Dīb Muṣṭafā, 2 vols. (Amman: Maktabat al-Aqṣā, 1986).



with incomplete *isnāds* attached (hence the name) as commentary (especially to document parallel lines of transmission). Use of these terms by Tha‘labī cannot demonstrate that Bukhārī was a direct influence, but they do tend to show that the culture of qur’ānic commentary overlapped with that of *ḥadīth* collection and criticism, even for an *adab*-oriented commentator as little obsessed with *isnāds* as Tha‘labī. (Aisha Geissinger proposes that Bukhārī meant to influence the development of qur’ānic commentary by discrediting what was not assembled by expert *ḥadīth* critics such as himself.<sup>82</sup> By this criterion, his *kitāb tafsīr al-Qur’ān* must be judged a failure, since not only did later commentators not confine themselves to well-attested *ḥadīth*, [but](#) those after Ṭabarī even tended to dispense with *isnāds*. However, the contrast between Bukhārī’s plentiful quotation of philologists and Companions and Tirmidhī’s stingier quotation of such sources suggests to me that Bukhārī’s claims for *ḥadīth* 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>83</sup> Bukhārī has something to say about every chapter of the Qur’ān, so the whole text in canonical order is there. He does not yet have something on every verse—Ṭabarī seems to have been the first to pull this off. There is a heavy stress on named authorities. Bukhārī offers *isnāds* for all sayings of the Prophet, most 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. Bukhārī seems to be at least well on the way to producing a classical *tafsīr* text according to Calder’s definition without fully meeting the proposed criteria.

Ahmed El Shamsy has contrasted the commentaries of two who studied with the

<sup>82</sup> Geissinger, *Gender*, 168–169.

<sup>83</sup> Norman Calder, “*Tafsīr* from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr: Problems in the Description of a Genre,” in G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (eds.), *Approaches to the Qur’ān* (London: Routledge, 1993), 101–140.

disciples of Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/820), Ṭabarī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, with commentaries of Shāfi‘ī’s time and before:

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...<sup>84</sup>

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

As noted, Walid Saleh has proposed that it is not Ṭabarī but Tha‘labī who stands at the beginning of the classical commentary tradition. That he overstates his case has been sufficiently observed before now.<sup>85</sup> Some of what he expounds as innovations of Tha‘labī’s commentary have clear antecedents in Bukhārī’s *kitāb al-tafsīr*. He disparages Ṭabarī for his fulsome provision of *isnāds* to support everything and praises Tha‘labī for dispensing with them.<sup>86</sup> Bukhārī’s *tafsīr* falls between Ṭabarī and Tha‘labī, 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 ‘Abbās. (Kātib Çelebī also

<sup>84</sup> Ahmed El Shamsy, *The Canonization of Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 216.

<sup>85</sup> See review by Hans-Thomas Tillschneider, *Die Welt des Islams* [WI](#) 48 (2008): 112–117.

<sup>86</sup> Saleh, *Formation*, 224.

thought commentaries bereft of *isnāds* constituted an important new stage, but he does not attribute it to Tha‘labī. Rather, the commentators he names as introducing this style are the Baghdadi grammarians Abū Ishāq al-Zajjāj [d. 310/922–923?] and his student Abū ‘Alī al-Fārisī [d. 377/987].<sup>87</sup>)

Saleh thinks it significant that Tha‘labī 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>88</sup> Bukhārī, like Ṭabarī, most often quotes *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet quotes the Qur’ān or in which a revelation comes to cap something the Prophet has just said. But the connection between prophetic dictum and qur’ānic revelation may be fairly remote, inessential to the meaning of the prophetic dictum. For example, 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 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>89</sup> Such reports can hardly be called *exegetical*. Perhaps there is an analogy in the rabbis’ finding allusions to the rules of the Mishnah in the Pentateuch. Like them, Bukhārī is connecting two genetically independent textual corpora, in his case the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*. If Bukhārī anticipates Tha‘labī at points where he supposedly improved on Ṭabarī, it weakens Saleh’s case for Tha‘labī’s originality and importance. However, it also shows how useful Saleh’s description of Tha‘labī can be for the history of qur’ānic commentary and, of more lasting consequence, demonstrates that qur’ānic commentary developed gradually (and unevenly), not by occasional great leaps.

<sup>87</sup> Kātib Çelebī, *Kashf*, 1.431. On these two, see respectively C. H. M. Versteegh, *ET*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. “al-Zadjdjādj,” and C. Rabin, *ET*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. “al-Fārisī.”

<sup>88</sup> Saleh, *Formation*, 193–198.

<sup>89</sup> Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *tafsīr* 19, no. 4730; *al-riqāq* 5, *bāb yadkhulu al-jannah sab‘ūna alfan*, no. 6544; *al-riqāq* 6, *bāb ṣifāt al-jannah wa’l-nār*, no. 6548.

To sum up, 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 *ḥadīth* and *adab* approaches to the Qur'ān makes an important precedent for Ṭabarī's integration of them (although Ṭabarī need not have got the idea from Bukhārī, whose *Ṣaḥīḥ* he probably never saw). His combination of items with and without *isnād* furnishes a precedent for Tha'labī's doing without *isnāds* (although, again, there is no need to suppose direct influence, since he had other examples before him). Bukhārī's minimization of disagreement seems aberrant even for his own time, at least when it comes to *ḥadīth* and qur'ānic 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 approach in the former reflects contemporary developments in the genre of *tafsīr*, although in the absence of extant examples from the mid-ninth century, it is impossible to say for sure.