

Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān



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Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān

Edited by
Andrew Rippin



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PREFACE TO THE REPRINT

The essays gathered in this book have stood the test of time, and a reprint of the work certainly seems appropriate. When the original conference that stands behind the efforts of the contributors was convened in Calgary in 1985, the study of *tafsīr* could best be described as in its infancy. A few years earlier I had presented a paper at the International Conference on the Study of the Qur'ān in New Delhi on "the current status of *tafsīr* studies" (subsequently published in *The Muslim World* for 1982 and, in a slightly different form, *Hamdard Islamicus* for 1983) that encapsulated the discipline in the space of 15 pages and with some 150 items of bibliography. Since then, the field has grown exponentially and a proper bibliography would now undoubtedly be a book-length project. However, even given that swell in interest in the area, there are few, if any, books that can truly rival the scope of *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān* in terms of setting out the dimensions of the field and creating the agenda for future studies.

The academic focus on the study of *tafsīr* of which this book is a significant element has recently been subject to a critique from those who feel that this attention has drawn scholars away from tackling the Qur'ān directly. Whether that argument holds any particular weight does not need to be assessed here because the evidence of this book is precisely the best response: there is much that we do not know about the history of the interpretation of the Qur'ān and the material is intrinsically fascinating. The study of *tafsīr* is now a subject in its own right that attracts students and scholars from around the globe.

The contributors to this volume went on to have careers which took them on multiple paths, but all have, in one way or another, seen their work on the Qur'ān and its interpretation as an important element in their scholarly achievements. I am saddened that three of

the contributors have passed away just recently: Meir Kister died in 2010, Charles Adams in 2010, and Marston Speight in 2011.

Each of the essays in this volume stands at a particular place and time in the study of the material that it tackles; some have been updated in other publications, some have been supplemented with additional work by their authors and by others. Because of the obvious limitations involved in reprinting the book in its original typeset form, it has not been possible (or seemed desirable) to provide annotations that would update the original essays. However, a few items are certainly worthy of being mentioned.

Issa Boullata, now Emeritus professor at McGill, translated Sections I to IV of his chapter in this book into Arabic and made it the introduction to the book he edited entitled *I'jāz al-Qurʿān al-Karīm ʿabr al-Taʾrīkh* (Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya lil-Dirāsāt waʾl-Nashr, 2006), a work that contains the major Arabic theological and literary-rhetorical texts on *iʿjāz*, from al-Jāḥiẓ to Sayyid Quṭb and Bint al-Shāṭiʾ, passing through al-Khaṭṭābī, al-Rummānī, al-Bāqillānī, ʿAbd al-Jabbār, al-Jurjānī, al-Suyūṭī, and al-Rāfiʿī.

Meir Kister's essay on Adam was abbreviated by me for its publication in this volume in order to have the chapters remain reasonably balanced in length. Subsequently, Professor Kister published the longer essay as he originally wrote it in *Israel Oriental Studies* 13 (1993): 113–74. That version of the essay is available online at <http://www.kister.huji.ac.il/>, a site which testifies to Professor Kister's remarkable contribution to Islamic studies as a whole.

B. Todd Lawson, now Associate Professor at the University of Toronto, has recently published his extended study of the Bāb and his work under the title *Gnostic Apocalypse and Islam: Qurʿān, Exegesis, Messianism and the Literary Origins of the Babi Religion* (Routledge, 2011).

Andrew Rippin

University of Victoria, BC, Canada, January 2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

IN the study of Islam, it can be said with some accuracy that the Qur'ān has come to the forefront in recent years, both in its role as scripture and as literature; this is true both outside and within the Muslim world. However, the traditional interpretation of the book, commonly termed *tafsīr* or more widely '*ulūm al-Qur'ān*', still remains a vast, virtually untapped field of investigation. Although the state of research has improved over the past twenty years, many modernist and revivalist Muslims tend to ignore the material, seeing it as a storehouse of traditional restraints, while Orientalists continue to gloss over its importance as a historical record of the Muslim community, as revealed in comments that declare the material to be 'dull and pettifogging' and the like.

The essays gathered here represent an attempt to expose and explore various aspects of the field of *tafsīr* and their potential for scholarly research. The papers have their origin, for the most part, in presentations given at a conference held at the University of Calgary in April 1985 called 'The History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān'. The papers were invited from scholars, with contributions from within their own fields of specialization requested, with ultimate publication envisioned from the start. All the papers were revised, and often enlarged, by their authors, in light of the opportunities for discussion which the conference provided, in order to ready them for this volume and their subsequent presentation to a wider audience.

It is my pleasure as the convener of the conference to express thanks to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and to the various branches of the University of Calgary—the Special Projects Fund, the International Activities Advisory Committee, the Research Grants Committee, the Faculty of Humanities, and the Department of Religious Studies, along with several other individual units of the University—for their financial support. A special note of appreciation is due to Dr Leslie Kawamura, Head of the Department of Religious Studies, for the extent of his contribution to all the facets of this conference; the

Department's support for such activities continues to play a major role in the effective teaching and research of its members.

In editing these papers, an attempt has been made to impose consistency upon the individual contributions, while, at the same time, making each paper stand on its own. In the citation of authors of texts, for example, the date of death is given on the first occasion of their citation in each chapter; the same holds true for bibliographical data. A uniform system of transliteration has been implemented; modern Indonesian orthography has been used where appropriate, however. The assistance of Mrs Vi Lake at the University of Calgary in preparing the essays for publication is most gratefully acknowledged. Floyd MacKay gave generously of his time in the preparation of the indexes.

A.R.

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ANDREW RIPPIN is Associate Professor in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Calgary. He has published a number of articles on various aspects of the development of Quranic *tafsīr*, as well as *Textual Sources for the Study of Islam*, with J. Knappert (1986). His current research continues to be in the field of commentaries on the Qur'ān, especially those dealing with abrogation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
EI ¹	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> (Leiden, 1913–38)
EI ²	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , new edn. (Leiden, 1960–)
GAL	C. Brockelmann, <i>Geschichte der arabischen Literatur</i> (Leiden, 1937–49)
GAS	F. Sezgin, <i>Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums</i> (Leiden, 1968–)
GdQ	T. Nöldeke and F. Schwally, <i>Geschichte des Qorāns</i> , i–ii (Leipzig, 1909, 1919); G. Bergsträsser, O. Pretzl, <i>Geschichte des Qorāns</i> , iii (Leipzig, 1938)
Goldziher, <i>Richtungen</i>	I. Goldziher, <i>Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung</i> (Leiden, 1920)
IC	<i>Islamic Culture</i>
IJMES	<i>International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies</i>
IQ	<i>Islamic Quarterly</i>
IS	<i>Islamic Studies</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JMBRAS	<i>Journal of the Malaysia Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
Lane, <i>Lexicon</i>	E. W. Lane, <i>An Arabic–English Lexicon</i> (London, 1863–93)
MW	<i>The Moslem World/The Muslim World</i>
QS	J. Wansbrough, <i>Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation</i> (Oxford, 1977)
SI	<i>Studia Islamica</i>
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

Introduction

ANDREW RIPPIN

INVITED to give the Olaus-Petri Lectures at the University of Uppsala in Sweden in 1913, Ignaz Goldziher prepared his text (never to be delivered, as it happened) as *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung*.¹ Published in 1920, these lectures provide a topical survey of the material of Muslim exegesis; in terms of their comprehensive overview of the subject, they have yet to be replaced in any European-language publication. While many authors have attempted to write short introductions to *tafsīr*, either as introductions to books² or as journal articles,³ and other authors have attempted to supplement Goldziher's work with extended surveys of the more modern period,⁴ little attempt has been made in scholarly circles towards updating, expanding, and ultimately replacing the now dated, although still stimulating, insights of Goldziher.⁵

Goldziher's work was not intended to be all-inclusive or truly comprehensive; his interest was only in sketching out the tendencies in the exegetical material. To this end, he composed his work in six major sections, covering the origins of the *tafsīr* material and then treating its development in its traditional, dogmatic, mystical, sectarian, and modern tendencies. As a basic approach, this division of the material still appears viable, so long as it is clear that

¹ Leiden, 1920.

² See, e.g., H. Gätje, *The Qur'ān and its Exegesis: Selected Texts with Classical and Modern Muslim Interpretations*, trans. A. T. Welch (Berkeley, 1976), 30–44; Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qur'ān and its Interpreters*, i (Albany, 1984), 16–40.

³ See, e.g., Ilse Lichtenstadler, 'Qur'ān and Qur'ān Exegesis', *Humaniora Islamica*, 2 (1974), 3–28; M. O. A. Abdul, 'The Historical Development of *tafsīr*', *IC* 50 (1976), 141–53; R. Ahmad, 'Qur'ānic Exegesis and Classical *tafsīr*', *IQ* 12 (1968), 71–119. For further bibliographical information on *tafsīr*, see A. Rippin, 'The Present Status of *tafsīr* Studies', *MW* 72 (1982), 224–38.

⁴ See, e.g., J. M. S. Baljon, *Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation (1880–1960)* (Leiden, 1961); J. Jomier, *Le Commentaire coranique du Manār. Tendances modernes de l'exégèse coranique en Egypte* (Paris, 1954); J. J. G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden, 1974).

⁵ See my call for such in 'Present Status', 238.

the division 'traditional' versus 'dogmatic' is one which reflects Muslim self-understanding of the enterprise, that is, the difference between *tafsīr bi'l-ma'thūr* ('interpretation following tradition') and *tafsīr bi'l-ra'y* ('interpretation by personal opinion'). How useful a separation this is for the critical scholar is certainly subject to debate.⁶

While no attempt has been made to replace Goldziher's work in recent years, the general field of study has by no means been inactive and has, in fact, been substantially stimulated in the last twenty years by three very significant publications. Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri*, ii. *Qur'ānic Commentary and Tradition* (1967),⁷ Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, i (1968),⁸ and John Wansbrough, *Qurānic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (1977)⁹ have all had a substantial impact upon various aspects of research in the field.¹⁰ Most importantly, perhaps, all three of these works have made evident the truly vast quantity of texts which must be studied in order to achieve any sense of providing an overview of the Muslim exegetical enterprise.

Yet it would seem that today the challenge to produce a new survey must be taken up for a variety of reasons. The traditional historical-philological methods of analysing the Qur'ān as pursued in scholarly circles have been oriented towards re-establishing the 'original meaning' of the text or the 'author's intention' or the 'meaning of the text to the first hearers', however one wishes to express it. This latter way of expressing things has proven especially popular in the study of the Qur'ān, not because of a particular hermeneutical presupposition about the nature of the experience of texts, but rather for reasons which are closely aligned to an apologetic approach in Islamic studies: by putting things in terms of what the first hearers thought, we can avoid, it is suggested, talking about the author's intention or the original meaning—both concepts which might seem to imply an active participation in the creation of the text by Muḥammad.¹¹

⁶ See A. Rippin, 'Tafsīr', in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York, 1987), xiv, 236–40.

⁷ Chicago, 1967.

⁸ Leiden, 1968.

⁹ Oxford, 1977.

¹⁰ See Rippin, 'Present Status', 226–8.

¹¹ See, e.g., A. T. Welch, 'Introduction: Qur'ānic Studies—Problems and Prospects', in *Studies in Qur'ān and tafsīr*, issued as *Journal of the American*

Overall, this historical method has claimed that by establishing the historical context and the like at the time of the text's appearance, the original meaning can be ascertained—or at least, in the opinion of more cautious and more methodologically aware historians, the original meaning can be approximated. In many cases, too, this original meaning will be equated, sometimes explicitly, with the 'real meaning'.

The problems involved in this historical quest for truth are well known, especially within literary criticism circles,¹² but are probably worth restating here, however briefly. For one, doubts are often expressed about the possibilities of true historical knowledge, given the limitations imposed by the historian's own presuppositions. Crudely put, the scholar will never become a seventh-century Arabian townsman but will remain forever a twentieth-century historian or philologist. Secondly, the problem of the lack of tangible evidence for a given reconstruction suggests that the scholarly historical answer will always remain speculative. Thirdly, one may raise the notion of so-called 'validity' in interpretation and question whether an 'original meaning' has any particular binding power upon the present-day researcher.¹³

It has been suggested that it is within the body of the exegetical texts that we find a way out of these kinds of hermeneutical dilemmas.¹⁴ In exegetical works, we have evidence of 'reader

Academy of Religion, Thematic Issue, 47 (1979) supplement, 619–34, esp. 626–7: 'The message of the Qur'an is addressed initially to Muhammad and his contemporaries, and it is here that we must begin in seeking its meaning.'

¹² Among the vast quantity of literature which has appeared recently, the following may be suggested: D. C. Hoy, *The Critical Circle: Literature and History in Contemporary Hermeneutics* (Berkeley, 1978); F. Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (Chicago, 1980); B. Herrnstein Smith, *On the Margins of Discourse. The Relation of Literature to Language* (Chicago, 1978). Arguing the other point of view but useful for its summary of the argument is E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (Chicago, 1967); on Hirsch see Robert Crossman, 'Do Readers Make Meaning?', in S. R. Suleiman and I. Crossman, eds., *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (Princeton, 1980), 149–64. The most immediate guide to the problems of interpretation is F. Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979).

¹³ Some of these issues have also been raised in A. Rippin, 'Literary Analysis of Qur'an, *tafsir* and *sira*: The Methodologies of John Wansbrough', in Richard C. Martin, ed., *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson, 1985), 151–63.

¹⁴ See A. Rippin, 'The Qur'an as Literature: Perils, Pitfalls and Prospects', *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin*, 10 (1983), 38–47; W. C. Smith, 'The True Meaning of Scripture: An Empirical Historian's Nonreductionist Interpretation of the Qur'an', *IJMES* 11 (1980), 487–505.

reaction' to the text, and in that very concept of reader reaction may lie an answer. Gathering a great deal of popularity among literary critics today is the notion that a text does not exist in any real sense without a reader to react to and with the text.¹⁵ And it is precisely through the exegetical works that we can establish a history of reader reaction to the Qur'ān and arrive at a meaningful construct and analysis of the Qur'ān, doubly meaningful, it would seem, because we have arrived at an intellectually satisfactory result and are at the same time actually studying what Muslims themselves have understood the Qur'ān to mean. One might wish to consider that a part of this overall literary-history reader reaction would be the twentieth-century historical-philological readings of the Qur'ān which modern scholarship has produced; these approaches may certainly be seen to have value in this sense, but little more than that. To re-create a history of the reaction to the Qur'ān in terms of what people have actually thought it means, through an analysis of exegetical texts, appears to be a most appropriate, intellectually convincing, and rewarding task for the modern scholar of the Qur'ān.¹⁶

Just how to go about the study of the historical reader reaction to the Qur'ān, is, of course, a problem which looms large. It is not just a simple matter of jumping in and doing the work. The field of *tafsīr* is a vast one with its own special language and concerns. The books available to the modern student and scholar as secondary sources to help in the comprehension of this material are, as has already been suggested, quite inadequate. To come to some sense of an overview of the subject would appear to be the first prerequisite for any serious study, and this is where the substance of Goldziher's *Richtungen* is appropriate but yet inadequate for today. A new history of *tafsīr* is needed. But the problem then becomes one of how to go about writing such a history. What form should such a work take? What approach should it take? Who would, in fact, be

¹⁵ See Suleiman and Crossman, *The Reader in the Text*; Jane P. Tompkins, ed., *Reader-response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-structuralism* (Baltimore, 1980); Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980).

¹⁶ Those who desire to construct a proper, theoretical basis for a historical reader-reception theory should consult the works of H. R. Jauss, e.g., his 'Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory', *New Literary History*, 2 (1970), 7-37. For the basic issue of how one interprets a commentary, James Holmes, 'Describing Literary Translations: Models and Methods', in his *Literature and Translation* (Leuven, 1978), provides a stimulating linguistic model.

qualified to undertake such a task? The essays that follow in this book are all attempts to answer these sorts of questions; one should harbour no illusions that these essays do, in themselves, comprise a 'rewritten Goldziher'. These essays are, rather, explorations in the field, each of which could undoubtedly be expanded into monograph form; indeed, it would seem that a likely conclusion to be drawn from these essays is that the eventual replacement for Goldziher must be a whole series of scholarly treatises rather than a single book. These essays are a modest start towards revealing the problems, the texts, the approaches, the principles, and the questions which underlie the field of study.

A fundamental notion which has been the topic of debate in scholarly circles since the time of Goldziher's work concerns the origins of *tafsīr* as a discipline. Recent studies by Birkeland, Sezgin, Abbott, and Wansbrough¹⁷ have all brought this issue to the forefront as reflected in this book by the essay of Fred Leemhuis. At stake is the historical question of the rise of the formal discipline of exegesis. Is there evidence for Muḥammad's involvement in the activity or are reports of such to be treated with great scepticism, in a like manner to scholarship's attitude towards most *ḥadīth* reports? After discussing various issues surrounding the problem, Leemhuis makes the attempt to find tangible evidence for a date upon which one may peg the existence of *tafsīr* material. This he finds in a manuscript copy of a *tafsīr* ascribed by Mujāhid ibn Jabr (d. 104/722).

The separation between the text of scripture itself and its interpretation is an issue which likewise has been greatly discussed since the days of Goldziher.¹⁸ Recently, Wansbrough has isolated the blurring which occurs in exegetical works between scripture and its interpretation by drawing attention to the various devices used for separation of the two and their presence or absence.¹⁹ An aspect of this problem is contained also in the notion of variant readings to the text of the Qur'ān and the suggestion of their exegetical origin and intent, and the question of how their existence is to be understood in the light of a supposedly fixed text of scripture. Adrian Brickett argues a point of view in his essay not often heard in such discussions, suggesting that variants have no

¹⁷ H. Birkeland, *Old Muslim Opposition to Interpretation of the Qur'ān* (Oslo, 1955); Sezgin, *GAS* i; Abbott, *Studies* ii; Wansbrough, *QS*.

¹⁸ Goldziher, *Richtungen*, 4-32.

¹⁹ *QS*, ch. 4.

significance for Muslims and have been misinterpreted by the scholarly community outside Islam. Brockett's argument rests on notions of lexicographical similarity and doctrinal insignificance as proof of individual variants having no particular value; such a position reveals that scholars may well need to go back to re-examine and reassess the variant issue.²⁰

For Jane McAuliffe, it is the interpretational task itself which becomes the focus of attention. When *tafsīr* finds itself codified into books, it is not a simple matter of an author collecting together reports and presenting the material as a work of exegesis. Even those bastions of what is termed *tafsīr bi'l-mā'thūr*, al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) and Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), are revealed in the essay to have brought to their task various exegetical principles, generally derived from the Qur'ān's own separation of its content into *muḥkam* and *mutashābih*.

Likewise, it is the case that books of *ḥadīth*, apparently simple compilations, reveal a topical concern with *tafsīr* (when they have an interest in the subject at all). R. Marston Speight's examination of the body of *ḥadīth* material reveals the prime concerns of the *ḥadīth* collectors and raises, in vivid form, the differences between the *muḥaddith* and the *mufasssir*. M. J. Kister attacks this same sort of problem in yet a different way. Compiling from a mass of sources—exegetical, historical, traditional, among others—all the traditions concerning Ādam as they are related (however tenuously) to certain Qur'ān texts, Kister reveals both the sources of the material and the pressures which such undergo in their eventual codification. Sectarian, theological, and moral debates are all revealed to have left their impact on the interpretational tradition.

Turning from the development of the *tafsīr* material itself to the emergence of various genres of exegetical material are the three essays of David S. Powers, Issa J. Boullata, and Andrew Rippin. Dealing with abrogation, inimitability, and lexicography respectively, each displays a different approach to the material. Powers takes a descriptive approach, analysing the genre of literature as a whole, its concerns and directions. He, like other writers on the topic such

²⁰ For attempts to see variants from a different perspective see A. Rippin, 'Qur'ān 21:95: "A Ban is Upon Any Town"', *JSS* 24 (1979), 43–53; id., 'Qur'ān 7.40: "Until the Camel Passes Through the Eye of the Needle"', *Arabica* 27 (1980), 107–13; id., 'Qur'ān 78/24: A Study in Arabic Lexicography', *JSS* 28 (1983), 311–20.

as Wansbrough and John Burton,²¹ sees greater significance in the material than would seem to be immediately apparent, especially as it relates to the compilation of the Qur'ān. Boullata's essay on *i'jāz* takes essentially a historical approach, tracing the development and vicissitudes of various doctrines under the impact of a variety of influences on Muslim thought. Rippin, on the other hand, takes a topical approach, classifying various approaches to the lexicographical data of the Qur'ān, exploring their methods, and suggesting some modes of analysis. By isolating a genre of works (generally as defined within traditional *'ulūm al-Qur'ān*), each of these essays has a fairly clearly delineated group of texts to work with,²² but the interrelationship between so many of the genres means that the boundaries are not quite as precise as one may in fact wish.

Focusing on doctrinal trends becomes the unifying element of the essays by Mahmoud Ayoub, Ismail K. Poonawala, and B. Todd Lawson. For both Ayoub and Poonawala, dealing with Ithnā 'asharī and Ismā'īlī *ta'wīl* respectively, the notion of authority becomes the matter of central concern. Both the role of the Imāms and the text of the Qur'ān itself are revealed to be the focus of speculation and dispute. But even more, the relationship between those two becomes crucial. If the Imām in one way or another represents an aspect of the Qur'ān here on earth, what is the nature of the connection between them and where does ultimate authority lie? What becomes the role of interpretation in such a circumstance?

Mystical *tafsīr* in general has a tendency, noted also in Ismā'īlī works, to raise the question of the connection between scripture and interpretation. The very use of key words as a stepping-off point for speculation means that 'interpretation' becomes a very broad term indeed, covering a vast array of possibilities. This tendency of mystical *tafsīr* reaches its pinnacle in the *tafsīrs* attributed to the Bāb (d. 1850) as explored in Lawson's essay. Here the Qur'ān serves as the basis of, as well as the model for, the interpretational text. Yet the link is always tenuous. Even more centrally the Bāb's *tafsīr* raises severe questions of authority in

²¹ J. Burton, *The Collection of the Qur'ān* (Cambridge, 1977).

²² See also A. Rippin, 'The Exegetical Genre *asbāb al-nuzūl*: A Bibliographical and Terminological Survey', *BSOAS* 48 (1985), 1-15; id., 'Al-Zarkashī and al-Suyūṭī on the "Occasion of Revelation" Material', *IC* 59 (1985), 243-58; id., 'The Function of *asbāb al-nuzūl* in Qur'anic Exegesis', *BSOAS* 51 (1988).

interpretation. Here the recourse is to the ultimate response: that the interpretation is revelation in itself. By no means is such a statement as audacious as it may at first seem when one considers the suggested midrashic origins of the New Testament gospels²³ or Qumranic *peshar* leading up to the 'revealed' Temple Scroll,²⁴ or, even more evidently, the status of the Mishnah as Oral Torah revealed to Moses.²⁵ In saying that, however, it should not be forgotten that there appears to be a unique relationship in the case of the Bāb's work *vis-à-vis* the Qur'ān; in virtually no other case did the tendency of Šūfī and Shī'ī *tafsīr* to locate a source of authority for their positions over against the majority Sunnī community (which vested its authority in the four *uṣūl*) reach the extent of a blatant claim to prophetic status.

Obviously the Bāb felt that the situation of his contemporaries required a radical re-evaluation of the sources of tradition and authority. This is a question faced by all Muslims at all times but it faces those in the outlying regions of the Muslim world, most especially in the modern world, most starkly. How the Qur'ān can be adapted and adopted outside its cultural, geographical, and historical origins is the question faced, once again in three different ways, in the essays by Anthony H. Johns, Frederick M. Denny, and Charles J. Adams. The Indonesian archipelago provides a stimulating test case of a country largely isolated from the Muslim heartlands and a relative newcomer to the Islamic fold, and its effect upon the Muslim sources. The enterprise of *tafsīr*, of course, provides a natural focal point for such an investigation and, at the same time, raises all sorts of crucial questions, for example, concerning the difference between translation and interpretation.

Johns's essay gives a historical summary of Indonesian involvement with the Qur'ān, specifically in the development of exegetical material. Pointing to the tradition of *diglossia*, his essay reveals the essentially conservative nature of the activity, at least until recent years. Studying the same geographical area and limited to the modern period, Denny's approach is genre-defined as related to the ritual process of Qur'ān recitation.

²³ See, e.g., M. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* (London, 1974).

²⁴ See, e.g., M. P. Horgan, *Pesharim: Qumran Interpretations of Biblical Books* (Washington, 1979), esp. 229–59; Y. Yadin, *The Temple Scroll: The Hidden Law of the Dead Sea Sect* (New York, 1985), esp. 78–80.

²⁵ See Mishnah, Avot, i. 1.

The essay by Adams reveals the Indian subcontinent, by virtue of its longer history under Islam and its closer proximity to the Middle East, and also due to its unique situation of a Hindu majority under British rule, to be a place where Muslim sentiment became strongly expressed through *tafsīr*. While Mawdūdī's *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* is far from a manifesto for revolution, it does manage to enunciate the principles which Mawdūdī felt Islam stood for and for which all Muslims should strive.

In combination, these essays reveal the scholarly field of the study of the history of interpretation of the Qur'ān to be a vibrant and bright one. Clearly there is much to be done in terms of examining and understanding the material itself. There are many approaches which need to be undertaken and developed. There are theoretical issues which must be confronted. The hope of the authors of all of these papers is, I believe, that this book will prove a stimulus to further developments in the field.

PART I
FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF
TAFSĪR

I

Origins and Early Development of the *tafsīr* Tradition

FRED LEEMHUIS

As tradition has it, even in the time of Muḥammad, the apostle and prophet of Islam, the revelation he had received needed exegesis.¹ Thus we find recorded in the tradition literature many instances of Muḥammad interpreting the meaning and implications of Quranic passages. Examples are well known; one widely recorded is the one 'Ā'isha told:

I heard the apostle of God say: 'Whoever is called to account (*man ḥūṣiba*), will be punished.' She said: 'I said: "O Apostle of God, does not God say: 'His account will be easily settled' (Q. 84/8)." Whereupon the prophet [referring to Q. 69/18 ff.] answered: "O 'Ā'isha, that is the presentation (before God on Judgment Day), but anybody whose account is thoroughly examined (*man nuqīsha al-ḥisāb*), will be punished."'²

Another well-known example is:

When the verse: 'those who believe, and have not confounded their belief with evildoing' (Q. 6/82) was sent down, it distressed the companions of God's apostle and they said: 'Which one of us does not confound his belief with evildoing?' Then the apostle of God said: 'It is not as you think, but it is what Luqmān said to his son: "Do not associate others with God; to associate others with God is serious evildoing (Q. 31/13)."'³

¹ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Cairo, 1975), iv. 196–7. See also Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Azīm al-Zarqānī, *Manāhil al-'irfān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Cairo, 1943), ii. 9–10, and Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *'Ilm al-tafsīr* (Cairo, 1977), 8, 10, 13–19.

² For the sources see A. J. Wensinck, J. P. Mensing, and J. Brugman, *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane* (Leiden, 1936–69), s.v. *n-q-sh*. The wording of this tradition often differs. I have followed the version that Adam ibn Abī Iyās added to his redaction of *Tafsīr Warqā'*, ad Q. 84/8, Ms Cairo Dār al-kutub, *tafsīr* 1075, fo. 89^v; in the edition of 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ṭahīr al-Sūrātī, *Tafsīr Mujāhid* (Islāmābād, n.d.), ii. 741, where however the words *yā rasūl Allāh* are omitted. See also al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, ad Q. 84/8.

³ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *kutāb al-tafsīr*, ad Q. 6/82 and 31/13. See also al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, ad Q. 6/82.

So *ẓulm*, at least in Q. 6/82, became equated with *shirk*.

The companions of Muḥammad transmitted his explanations and, because of their understanding of the language, their knowledge of the circumstances of revelation, and their insight into the religion, they supplemented them with their own explanations. All this was faithfully transmitted and complemented by the next generation, to be registered in writing by the following generation in the time of the dynastic change from the Umayyads to the 'Abbasids.

According to a critical modern orthodox *sunni* view, as expressed by Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, we have to keep in mind that the material 'which was transmitted from the apostle on *tafsīr* was but little, as was that which was transmitted from his companions. This was only natural, because the people at that time were pure Arabs and where the verses of the Qur'ān were concerned only a small amount was unclear to them.'⁴ In short, the more of the Qur'ān that became obscure in the course of time, the more of it became provided with an explanation.⁵

This is essentially a widely held Muslim view of the early history of *tafsīr*.⁶ In accordance with it, we should take for granted that from the earliest times on, concern and/or disagreement about the precise meaning of God's word must have prompted exegetical activity. However, independent source material from this first phase of exegetical activity, that may verify or falsify that view, is virtually non-existent. All we know about the early period is from later ascriptions. Later works, from the middle of the second century AH at the earliest, claim to contain the exegesis of earlier authorities. But whether or not these claims are valid cannot be checked, because no objective criteria can be applied. Or to put it differently, original material, such as papyri from this early period that could substantiate these claims, has as yet not been found.

So reconstructions of the early history of *tafsīr* are all based on a preliminary assumption, which is the answer to the following question. Are the claims of the authors of the late second and the

⁴ Al-Dhahabī, p. 30.

⁵ Al-Dhahabī, p. 30.

⁶ Cf. al-Zarqānī, ii. 1-32, and al-Dhahabī, pp. 12-46, both of whom rely on al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, but nevertheless clearly express their doubts on the reliability of much material that is transmitted from the *ṣaḥāba*. Cf. also the studies mentioned in A. Rippin, 'The Present State of *tafsīr* Studies', *MW* 72 (1982), 229 nn. 34, 35, 36.

third Islamic century, that they merely pass on the material of older authorities, historically correct?

The answer of Sezgin⁷ is 'yes', and so much so that we may even believe that Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687),⁸ 'the father of Quranic exegesis', is the author of a *Tafsīr*. The only problem is that 'it still has to be determined which of the commentaries on the Qur'ān, which his pupils transmitted from him, he wrote himself and which were recorded in writing by his pupils in accordance with his lectures.'⁹ Apart from stating his perception that the lost early works may be partially or wholly reconstructed from our later sources on the basis of the technique of transmission,¹⁰ Sezgin claims that we now have directly preserved commentaries on the Qur'ān of the pupils of Ibn 'Abbās.¹¹

On the other hand Wansbrough's answer¹² is 'no', and so much so that he thinks that 'it must . . . be recognized that extant recensions of exegetical writing here designated haggadic, despite biographical information on its putative authors are not earlier than the date proposed to mark the beginnings of Arabic literature, namely, 200/815.'¹³ And then haggadic or narrative exegesis is, according to Wansbrough, chronologically the earliest type of Quranic exegesis, to be followed successively by other exegetical types such as halakhic or legal and masoretic or textual exegesis.¹⁴ Wansbrough arrived at his classification on the basis of extensive functional and stylistic analysis of an impressive number of early *tafsīr* works. In fact, he thus worked out a system of relative dating based on a literary development. It has to be noted that Wansbrough is strongly attracted to the view that 'a long period of oral composition and transmission, or possibly of oral delivery from notes is commonly supposed to have preceded the

⁷ GAS i. 19 ff. Sezgin was able to make use of the results of analysis of *isnāds* in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* done by H. Horst, 'Zur Überlieferung im Korankommentar at-Ṭabarī', *ZDMG* 103 (1953), 290-307, who is, however, rather more cautious.

⁸ I have refrained from giving references to biographical information. They may be found in the GAS, EI, Horst's study, etc. Only years of death are mentioned.

⁹ GAS, i. 27 (cf. also 22). It is interesting to note Sezgin's solution for the problem that 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭalḥa did not hear *Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās*. Whereas al-Suyūṭī had the problem resolved by quoting a tradition that Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa had learnt it from Mujāhid and Sa'īd ibn Jubayr as intermediaries (*al-Itqān*, iv. 238), Sezgin concludes that he must have received it written by Ibn 'Abbās himself, *because* he did not hear it from him!

¹⁰ GAS i. 26.

¹² Wansbrough, *QS* 119-246.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 20-1, 25.

¹³ *Ibid.* 144.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 119-21.

redaction of more or less fixed texts.' To this he adds: 'it is the chronology of that process which eludes satisfactory description.'¹⁵

Of course, the view that, because of the general untrustworthiness of *isnāds*,¹⁶ the traditional Muslim view of the development of *tafsīr* in the first two centuries of Islam has to be considered—to put it mildly—more or less mythical had been eloquently voiced by Goldziher.¹⁷ In his view he was followed by Birkeland,¹⁸ who, however, differed from Goldziher's view that from the earliest times onward a strong opposition existed to certain kinds of *tafsīr*, namely mythological, subjective exegesis which was indicated as *tafsīr bi'l-ra'y*. Birkeland pointed out that during the greater part of the first century there was no such opposition; *ḥadīth* or *sunna*, ancient poems as well as sound reasoning (*ra'y*) were regarded as self-evident means of interpretation.¹⁹ Only towards the end of the first century did opposition from ultra-pious circles to all interpretation of the Qur'ān arise, to fade away only around the year 200/815 when *tafsīr* was subjected to strict methods of transmission.²⁰ Against this view Abbott argued that when looking carefully at the story of Ṣabīgh ibn 'Isl,²¹ Goldziher's point of departure for his views on early opposition,²² the historicity of which was denied by Birkeland,²³ one could only conclude that already in early times a certain kind of *tafsīr* was frowned upon. It was, however, not *tafsīr bi'l-ra'y*, but *tafsīr al-mutashābihāt*. As was pointed out by Wansbrough, it remained unclear what precisely had to be understood in this early period by *mutashābihāt* as a technical term.²⁴ Apart from that, scrutiny of the respective reports on this Ṣabīgh ibn 'Isl²⁵ shows clearly enough that the

¹⁵ Ibid. 146.

¹⁶ See for a recent balanced view G. H. A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983). Cf. also M. Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma: A Source-critical Study* (Cambridge, 1981), esp. ch. 11. In both works older European views, especially Schacht's, are presented and discussed.

¹⁷ Goldziher, *Richtungen*, 55–85, esp. 62–5, 81–3.

¹⁸ H. Birkeland, *Old Muslim Opposition Against Interpretation of the Koran* (Oslo, 1955).

¹⁹ A similar view is adopted by Al-Dhahabī, pp. 19–24.

²⁰ Birkeland, p. 42.

²¹ N. Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri*, ii, *Qur'ānic Commentary and Tradition* (Chicago, 1967), 106–13.

²² Goldziher, *Richtungen*, 55–8.

²³ Birkeland, pp. 13–14.

²⁴ In his review of Abbott's book in *BSOAS* 31 (1968), 613–16 and *QS* 157–8. Cf. also A. Rippin, 'The Present Status', 226–7.

²⁵ For the sources see Abbott, pp. 106–13; some additional sources will be mentioned below.

reasons for his punishment by 'Umar, if the story is historical, had nothing to do with *tafsīr* as such. The versions of what constituted Ṣabīgh's crime differ. He was:

- (i) asking about matters from the Qur'ān among the armies of the Muslims;²⁶
- (iii) asking about *mutashābih al-Qur'ān*;²⁸
- (ii) harassing people with difficult questions from the Qur'ān;²⁷
- (iv) asking about *al-dhāriyāt*.²⁹

Version (i) apparently shows a *taḥrīf*—*ashyā'* instead of *asbbāh*—and thus is synonymous with version (ii). How such a version later may develop into a version with the (by then) technical terms *mutashābih* with a totally different connotation is easily understood.³⁰ The overall impression that remains is clearly that Ṣabīgh was something of a rebellious agitator who was posing dubious questions. His brother Rabī'a showed the same rebellious nature. Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933) mentions that he took part in the battle of the camel on 'A'isha's side.³¹ The nature of his questions may be guessed from the remark of Ibn 'Abbās quoted by al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) *ad* Q. 8/1 in the context of the question of what had to be considered *anfāl*,³² and not, as may be pointed out, among the reports of those who forbade *tafsīr* or refrained from it. Ṣabīgh had probably been casting doubts on the nature and/or distribution of

²⁶ Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Kitāb futūḥ Miṣr wa-akḥbārīhā*, ed. C. C. Torrey (New Haven, 1922), 168: *anna Ṣabīgh^{an} al-'Irāqī ja'ala yas'alu ashyā' min al-Qur'ān fi ajnād al-muslimīn*.

²⁷ Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Azhārī, *Tahdhīb al-lughā* (Cairo, c. 1967), viii. 27: *Ṣabīgh ism rajul kāna yata'annatu al-nās bi-su'ulāt mushkila min al-Qur'ān*.

²⁸ Al-Dārimī, *Sunan*, i. 54, quoted by Abbott, . 108, n. 114. It is, among other versions, also quoted in Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba fī tamyīz al-ṣaḥāba* (Cairo, 1328), ii. 198, no. 4123: *qadama 'l-madīna rajul yuqālu lahu Ṣabīgh . . . fa-ja'ala yas'alu 'an mutashābih al-Qur'ān*.

²⁹ Ibn Durayd, *al-Ishtiqāq* (Cairo, 1378/1958), 228: *wa-kāna Ṣabīgh hādḥā atā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb . . . fa-qāla ['Umar] lahu khabbīrīnī 'an al-dhāriyāt dharu^{an}*.

³⁰ See, e.g., how al-Azhārī's version is quoted in the *Lisān al-'Arab* by Ibn Manzūr, s.v. *ṣ-b-gh*: *wa-Ṣabīgh ism rajul kāna yata'annatu al-nās bi-su'ulāt fi mushkil al-Qur'ān*. It may be noted that Abbott (p. 108) tends to harmonize the different versions of Ṣabīgh's crime when she writes: 'Ṣabīgh, according to the earliest 'Irāqī and Egyptian sources . . . raised questions about the ambiguous (*mutashābih*) and difficult (*mushkilāt*) passages of the Qur'ān.'

³¹ Ibn Durayd, p. 228.

³² The version in 'Abd al-Razzāq's redaction of *Tafsīr Ma'mar*, MS Cairo Dār al-kutub, *tafsīr* 242 fos. 47'-48" is slightly different: the man who provoked Ibn 'Abbās's rebuke, 'You are like Ṣabīgh whom 'Umar flogged', is identified as an 'Irāqī, just like Ṣabīgh himself, cf. n. 26, above.

the spoils and, as such, was attacking political authority. It is clear that if the expression *mutashābih al-Qur'ān* from version (iii) is at all original it must be understood as a hint at Q. 3/7 in that Ṣabīgh was to be considered as belonging to *alladhīna fī qulūbihim zaygh^{an} fayattabi'ūna mā tashābaha minhu ibtighā'a'l-fitnati*, 'those in whose hearts is swerving, they follow the ambiguous part desiring dissension'. It is in this way that the suggestions that 'Umar suspected him to be a Kharijite probably have to be understood.³³ Being a Tamimite he may even have been suspected of still adhering to views of the false prophets of the *ridda*. Is it in this respect mere coincidence that we find among Musaylima's supposed imitations of the revelation: *wa'l-dhāriyāti qamḥ^{an}?*³⁴

Whatever may have been the precise nature of his inciting questions, Ṣabīgh was not explaining the Qur'ān, but casting doubt on its meaning and so undermining authority.³⁵ In short, he was a self-important³⁶ bumptious fool,³⁷ who, like his brother, later on, did not know his place and had to be taught a lesson by Mu'āwiya.³⁸ He was given a good lashing, was put under house arrest in Baṣra, and was not allowed to have contact with other people as long as he could not be expected to have mended his ways. Ṣabīgh's story probably reflects a historical event, but it has no connection with *tafsīr*, and the connection with *mutashābih al-Qur'ān* only arose secondarily. Thus, Birkeland's view about opposition to *tafsīr* only developing towards the end of the first century still stands. Although Abbott is somewhat more cautious than Sezgin as regards Ibn 'Abbās, she agrees with him in

³³ Ibn Durayd, p. 228, and Ibn Ḥajar, p. 199. The possible anachronism in this context is of course irrelevant.

³⁴ Among others, al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk* (Leiden, 1879–1901), Series i, p. 1934. Even much later, according to al-Ṭabarī (Series ii, p. 1287), Qutayba ibn Muslim in the year 96 abused the Tamimites (among others who refused to follow him in his rebellion) by addressing them as: 'You companions of Musaylima'.

³⁵ The title he claims for himself on 'Umar's question who he is: 'I am 'Abd Allāh Ṣabīgh', and 'Umar's answer: 'And I am 'Abd Allāh 'Umar' are indeed telling. See Abbott, p. 107.

³⁶ Ibn Ḥajar, p. 199, quotes a tradition that he was a *sayyid* among his people, which makes Ibn Ḥajar conclude that he was an important man in 'Umar's time.

³⁷ That is at least the opinion of Ibn Durayd, p. 228. Cf. al-Jāhiz, *al-Bayān wa'l-tabyīn* (Cairo, 1968), ii. 259 f. and *Das biographische Lexikon des Ṣalāḥaddīn Ḥalī Ibn Aibak aṣ-Ṣafādī*, ed. Wadād al-Qādī (Wiesbaden, 1982), xvi. 283.

³⁸ See esp. *The ansāb al-ashrāf of al-Balādhurī*, M. Schloessinger, ed. (Jerusalem, 1971), vii. 35. From M. J. Kister's annotations we learn that Rābi'a was a *wālī* in Herat in the time of Mu'āwiya.

considering early ascriptions as being generally valid and also in asserting that, from early times on, the transmission of *tafsīr* was usually and widely connected with written documents.³⁹

This presentation of approaches to the reconstruction of the early history of *tafsīr*⁴⁰ may have shown sufficiently that—to use the words of Michael Cook—the ‘respective methods tend more to illustrate the indefinite tolerance of the source-material for radically different historical interpretations than to identify evidence which can confirm or refute the approaches in question.’⁴¹ Recently, however, I came across a curious fact, which in my opinion constitutes a piece of such evidence which may enable us to draw somewhat more definitive conclusions about the early development of the *tafsīr* tradition. The clue is provided by a comparison of some of the transmissions of what is called *Tafsīr Mujāhid*. It was claimed by Sezgin that the Cairo Dār al-kutub manuscript *tafsīr* 1075 is one of the sources of al-Ṭabarī and thus proves his view that, by the method of *isnād* investigation, early written *tafsīrs* from the first century of Islam may be, as it were, excavated from later works.⁴² Whereas for Sezgin this manuscript is a key external proof for the rightness of his views, Wansbrough did not make use of it, although he acknowledged its probable importance.⁴³

As was pointed out by Staath in his extended and careful analysis,⁴⁴ and by myself,⁴⁵ the manuscript contains in all probability just what it says it does: *Kitāb al-tafsīr ‘an Warqā’ ibn ‘Umar* (d. 160/776) ‘*an Ibn Abī Najīh*’ (d. 131/749 or 132/750) ‘*an Mujāhid*’ (d. 104/722), which was transmitted by Ādam ibn Abī Iyās (d. 220/835).⁴⁶ It is, however, certainly not identical with one of al-Ṭabarī’s sources, although it is clearly related to some of them, namely, the versions ‘*an Ibn Abī Najīh*’ ‘*an Mujāhid*’ of ‘Isā ibn Maymūn (d. c.170/785), Shibl ibn ‘Ubād (d. 149/766), and

³⁹ Abbott, pp. 96–106.

⁴⁰ Cf. also Rippin, ‘The Present Status’, 226–30.

⁴¹ Cook, p. 156.

⁴² GAS i. 19–21.

⁴³ Although mainly for other reasons, see QS 139.

⁴⁴ G. Staath, *Die Überlieferung des Korankommentars Muğāhid b. Ğabrs. Zur Frage der Rekonstruktion der in den Sammelwerken des 3. Jh. d. H. benutzten frühislamischen Quellenwerke* (Giessen, 1969).

⁴⁵ F. Leemhuis, ‘Ms. 1075 tafsīr of the Cairene Dār al-Kutub and Muğāhid’s *Tafsīr*’, in R. Peters, ed., *Proceedings of the Ninth Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants* (Leiden, 1981), 169–80.

⁴⁶ In his youth *mustamlī* of Shu‘ba. Cf. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Sam‘ānī, *Adab al-implā’ wa’l-istimlā’*, ed. M. Weisweiler (Leiden, 1952), 15, 89.

Warqā'.⁴⁷ A comparison of the independently transmitted text⁴⁸ with the versions from al-Ṭabarī shows that what may be called—not only for convenience's sake, as will become clear—*Tafsīr Warqā'*, *Tafsīr 'Īsā*, and *Tafsīr Shibl* must have been works of about the same length. They show, however, a difference in distribution of individual *tafsīrāt* and where they, as in the majority of cases, have *tafsīrāt* to the same passages, there is often a difference in wording, although mostly not in content.⁴⁹

In the Cairo manuscript of *Tafsīr Warqā'*, or more accurately Ādam ibn Abī Iyās's redaction of it, a strange lacuna is found. From the beginning of *sūra* 68 until the beginning of *sūra* 77,⁵⁰ Ādam, with only one exception, adduces no *tafsīr* traditions from Warqā' 'an Ibn Abī Najīh 'an Mujāhid, whereas al-Ṭabarī quotes about a hundred, nearly all in the double-*isnād* from 'Īsā and Warqā' and so forth. Before *sūra* 68 and after the beginning of *sūra* 77, Ādam's traditions from Warqā' and his other sources and those quoted by al-Ṭabarī run largely parallel.

At first this did not strike me as peculiar, because Ādam filled up the gap with thirty-seven traditions that go back to a number of other authorities, such as 'Alī, Ibn 'Abbās, or Muḥammad himself, plus four with Mujāhid as the final authority through another chain of transmission. This lacuna is in all probability due to a very simple fact: Ādam, as a faithful transmitter,⁵¹ simply did not transmit this material from Mujāhid via Warqā' except at one place, *sūra* 72/15, because he knew that the tradition he had from Shaybān 'an 'Ikrima was the same as that from the Warqā' chain, namely *al-qāsiṭun* = *al-zālimūn*. Of course, many reasons could be suggested to explain the fact that Ādam could not transmit the missing part, but the obvious one is that it was already missing from the manuscript he transmitted. This is all the more likely because the amount of text that is missing must have been about the same as is provided by the respective *mutūn* that are found in *Tafsīr*

⁴⁷ Mainly in the redaction of al-Ḥasan al-Asyab, which is nearly always quoted in a double *isnād* with 'Īsā ibn Maymūn, to whose version it seems to have been assimilated; cf. Stauth, pp. 185–6.

⁴⁸ At least one copy, however, existed in Baghdad in al-Ṭabarī's time, cf. Leemhuis, 'Ms. 1075', 176.

⁴⁹ Stauth, pp. 148–91; Leemhuis, 'Ms. 1075', 170, 173.

⁵⁰ Fos. 83^r–85^r; in the printed edition, ii. 687–715.

⁵¹ Cf. Stauth, pp. 73–6. It is interesting to note that Ādam in his redaction of *Tafsīr Warqā'* transmitted two traditions from 'Īsā ibn Maymūn, fo. 94^v (ii. 790), but not 'an Ibn Abī Najīh 'an Mujāhid.

of al-Ṭabarī: about 950 words, which is the amount of text that the complete leaf of the papyrus fragment of *al-Wujūh wa'l-naẓā'ir* of Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. 150/767), which was published by Abbott, would have contained!⁵² The missing part must have had the same form, two joined folios which folded together formed four pages with a continuous text; in short, it would have been the middle leaf of a quire. This in itself is nothing extraordinary; it is precisely because of the fact that leaves get separated from books⁵³ that we are able to study such loose leaves as those from *al-Wujūh wa'l-naẓā'ir* or of Mālik's (d. 179/795) *al-Muwatṭa'* that were published by Abbott. That we are able to detect such a missing leaf from Ādam's direct source, however, confirms the reports on his trustworthiness and implies that there is no reason to doubt the *isnād*; it suggests that Ādam transmitted from Warqā' according to the rules which by then had become standardized. All this leads to the conclusion that Ādam's source must have been written before 160/776, the year of the death of Warqā'.⁵⁴

This fact which may be considered as external independent evidence confirms the finding of Stauth and myself that the written fixation of the works that transmit *tafsīr* 'an Ibn Abī Najīḥ 'an Mujāhid must have taken place some time around the middle of the second century AH. These findings were based on *isnād*—as well as *matn*—analysis of the different Mujāhid transmissions.⁵⁵ The *mu'an'an* part of the *isnāds*, which practically always characterizes the transmission of the oldest authorities in *tafsīr isnāds*, may be regarded as reflecting the awareness of people from Ādam's generation that their masters had not had the material of their masters transmitted to them in the rigorously standardized way that had become the norm in their own time.⁵⁶ The fixation in writing of already existing variant versions of a *tafsīr* tradition that took place around 150/767 makes it impossible to reconstruct

⁵² Abbott, pp. 92–5 and plates 1, 2.

⁵³ So, e.g., of the Arabic MS 589 of Mount Sinai, which contains the Arabic translation of the Syriac *Apocalypse of Baruch*, the outer leaf of the first quire is missing.

⁵⁴ Even if the leaf was missing not from a manuscript of Warqā', but from a rough copy Ādam had made upon dictation by Warqā', of which he later made a fair copy.

⁵⁵ Stauth, pp. 225–9; Leemhuis, 'Ms. 1075', 175.

⁵⁶ Stauth, p. 225; Leemhuis, 'Ms. 1075', 174–5. The dispute about the inadmissibility of *mu'an'an isnāds* is in this light, of course, quite understandable. See Juynboll, pp. 168 and 174.