

A COMPARISON OF THE REFERENCES TO MUQĀTIL B. SULAYMĀN (150/767) IN THE EXEGESIS OF AL-THA'LABĪ (427/1036) WITH MUQĀTIL'S OWN EXEGESIS*

MEHMET AKIF KOÇ

ANKARA UNIVERSITY, TURKEY

Abstract

Muqātil b. Sulaymān's work is the oldest surviving exegesis which comments on the entire Qur'an from the beginning to the end. Analytical comparisons between different manuscripts of this exegesis and the quotations made by the exegetes, who greatly benefited from Muqātil, give us important information about the history of Quranic exegesis. al-Tha'labī's references to Muqātil offer valuable data illuminating the role of 'the changing contents' of the manuscripts in understanding the history of the exegesis. Changing evaluations and criticism about Muqātil's personality and his opinions show that the history of Quranic exegesis needs to be further critically studied.

Introduction

Muqātil b. Sulaymān's exegesis has been studied by modern scholars to enable them to elaborate on the history of early exegetical activities. The investigation of the transmissions of Muqātil in al-Tha'labī's recently published exegesis, *al-Kashf wa al-bayān 'an tafsīr al-Qur'ān*¹ has also contributed to the elucidation of the early development of exegesis and to the understanding of its nature in the following peri-

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¹ Al-Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa al-bayān 'an tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, ed. Sayyid Kasrawī Ḥasan (Beirut 2004). Because no serious effort has been made to produce a critical edition, this article makes limited use of this edition. The manuscripts of al-Tha'labī's exegesis found in Beyazıt Library (Veliyyüddin Efendi no. 130-3), Süleymaniye Library (Şehid Ali Paşa no. 156) and others consulted are used instead.

ods. Thus, the exegeses of Muqātil's and al-Tha'labī's are not randomly selected as major themes of this study: Muqātil's work is the oldest surviving exegesis which comments on the entire Qur'ān from beginning to end. Now we have this exegesis in published form.² Due to controversial opinions attributed to Muqātil, he is considered one of the most interesting figures in the history of exegesis. However, the importance of al-Tha'labī's exegesis — for the present study — lies in the crucial role it played in the legitimization of Muqātil's exegesis.

After his death, Muqātil's exegesis was nearly ignored for one and half centuries by many exegetes, possibly, due to criticism of Muqātil,³ which made him unpopular during this period. Remarkably, the earliest references to his exegesis are found in the commentary of Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī (333/945), which contains more than thirty references to Muqātil's exegesis.⁴ Given the voluminous-

² This exegesis was first edited and published in four volumes by 'Abd Allāh Maḥmūd Shaḥāta in Cairo during 1979–88. This edition is used in this study. There is another edition (Beirut) of this exegesis which was published by Aḥmad Farīd in 2003. This edition is of doubtful use, because it lacks any scientific methodology. First of all, Aḥmad Farīd does not make any reference to Shaḥāta, who edited and published this exegesis before him. Aḥmad Farīd claims to be the first editor of this exegesis. However, it is clear that Aḥmad Farīd benefited from Shaḥāta's edition to the extent that he (Farīd) repeats the mistake, which Shaḥāta had made in his edition: in the explanation of the verse (3:111), Shaḥāta mentions the name of Ka'b b. Mālik (40/660?) mistakenly instead of noting the name of Ka'b b. al-Ashraf (3/625). See Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr* (Cairo 1979–88), I, 295. Aḥmad Farīd repeats the same mistake without alteration. See Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr Muqātil b. Sulaymān* (Beirut 2003), I, 186.

³ Muqātil's thought in favour of *tashbīh* or *tajmīn* (anthropomorphic) is considered unacceptable by the mainstream of Muslims. See, for example, al-Ash'arī, *Kitāb maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, ed. Hellmut Ritter (Wiesbaden 1980), 152–3, 209; Ibn Hibbān, *Kitāb al-majrūhīn min al-muḥaddithīn wa al-ḍu'afā' wa al-matrūkīn*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Zāyid (Aleppo 1396), III, 14; al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād aw madīnat al-salām* (Beirut n.d.), XIII, 164. Apart from anthropomorphic tendencies, Muqātil is also accused of being a Murji'i, Zaydī, liar, *ḥadīth* fabricator together with *tadlīs* (deceiving or concealing some part of the report deliberately). See, for example, al-Ash'arī, *Kitāb maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, 151; Ibn Abī Hātim, *Kitāb al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl* (Hyderabad 1952), VIII, 354; Ibn Hibbān, *Kitāb al-majrūhīn* III, 14–15; Ibn 'Adīyy, *al-Kāmil fī ḍu'afā' al-rijāl* (Beirut 1985), VI, 2428; Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist* (Beirut 1978), 253; Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Muḥallā* ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr (Beirut n.d.), II, 35; al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād* XIII, 164, 169; al-Shahrīstānī, *al-Milal wa al-niḥal*, ed. Aḥmad Fahmī Muḥammad (Beirut 1948), I, 228; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmā' al-rijāl*, ed. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf (Beirut 1992), XXVIII, 450; al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-i'tidāl fī naqd al-rijāl*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī (Beirut 1963), IV, 173; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* (Beirut n.d.), X, 284.

⁴ Twenty-one of these references are found in Muqātil's published exegesis. See

ness of al-Māturīdī's exegesis one might think that the references to Muqātil's exegesis in al-Māturīdī's commentary are too few. Nonetheless, despite the existence of several early exegeses which have come down to us, al-Māturīdī retains a unique place because of his extensive usage of Muqātil's commentary. After al-Māturīdī, we see that al-Naqqāsh (351/962) used Muqātil in his exegesis,⁵ and then Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī (373/983) and al-Tha'labī benefited from it.⁶

Two centuries after al-Tha'labī, several exegetes continued to use Muqātil's commentary, such as al-Māwardī (450/1058) 260 times in his exegesis, al-Ṭūsī (460/1068) 7 times, al-Wāhidī (468/1076) 764 times,⁷ al-Baghawī (516/1122) 425 times, al-Zamakhsharī (538/1143) 13 times, Ibn 'Aṭīyya (542/1147) 47 times, al-Ṭabrasī (548/1153) 215 times, Abū al-Faraj b. al-Jawzī (597/1201) approximately 1300 times, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (604/1207) 220 times and the famous traditionalist Ibn Kathīr (774/1372), whose fastidiousness is well known,⁸ makes 18 references to Muqātil b. Sulaymān in his exegesis.⁹ These

al-Māturīdī, *Tāwīlāt ahl al-sunna*, ed. Fāṭima Yūsuf al-Khiyamī (Beirut 2004), I, 262, 519, 524; II, 626; III, 18, 261, 306, 420–1, 429, 463, 464, 552, 588, 617; IV, 46, 73, 168, 259; V, 78, 523. The other thirteen references in Muqātil's published exegesis have not been found. For these references see *ibid.*, III, 114, 217, 277, 306, 399, 585; IV, 49, 211, 255, 437; V, 17, 80, 437. These references made by al-Māturīdī have been investigated by Kiyasettin Koçoğlu [see Kiyasettin Koçoğlu, 'Maturidi'nin Mutezileye Bakışı' unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü 2005)]. Koçoğlu used the manuscript of al-Māturīdī's exegesis, which is now in the Topkapı Palace Museum/ Madina Dept no. 180. Although the editor of al-Māturīdī's published exegesis, Fāṭima Yūsuf, did not use the Topkapı Palace Museum manuscript, there is full agreement between the references in both the published and manuscript forms of al-Māturīdī's exegesis.

⁵ In his exegesis, Ibn 'Aṭīyya (542/1147) has noted four places, where al-Naqqāsh narrates from Muqātil. See *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz fī tafsīr al-kitāb al-azīz* (Beirut 1993), I, 124, 374; II, 427, 441. Only one of these references was found in the manuscript of al-Naqqāsh's exegesis in Süleymaniye library (Hasan Hüsnü Paşa no. 40). See Al-Naqqāsh, *Shifā' al-sudūr fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-karīm*, 154. This exegesis of al-Naqqāsh contains the explanation of very few verses of the Qur'an. Page numbering of this manuscript is arranged in accordance with modern books. A superficial study of this exegesis shows that al-Naqqāsh uses Muqātil rarely. For two other references to Muqātil see *ibid.*, 151.

⁶ The transmission of al-Samarqandī and al-Tha'labī will be dealt with later in this article.

⁷ This figure only shows the number of references to Muqātil in al-Wāhidī's work entitled *al-Wasīṭ fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-majīd* (eds, 'Adil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd, Aḥmad Muḥammad Şīra, 'Alī Muḥammad Mu'awwid, Aḥmad 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Jamāl and 'Abd al-Raḥmān Uways [Beirut 1994]).

⁸ Abū al-Maḥāsīn al-Ḥusaynī, *Dhayl tadhkīrat al-ḥuffāz li al-Dhababī* (Beirut

scholars saw no problem in transmitting reports from Muqātil. In the commentary of Abū al-Su‘ūd (951/1544) he shows his profound respect for Muqātil by adding the expression *raḍīya Allāh ‘anhu* (May God be well pleased with him) after mentioning his name.¹⁰

There is only one critical reference to Muqātil in the exegesis of al-Māturīdī; it criticizes Muqātil for his anthropomorphic approach/*tashbīh* and *tajsīm* (a belief that God resembles his creatures in appearance, feelings, or behaviour).¹¹ Apart from this criticism al-Māturīdī thinks that Muqātil’s exegesis is a beneficial work and an important early exegetical source. In his other work (*Kitāb al-tawḥīd*) al-Māturīdī deals with Muqātil in only one place. According to the anecdote in this text of al-Māturīdī, a Mu‘tazilite scholar, al-Ka‘bī (319/931), narrates a report from Muqātil and says that Muqātil believed that if the *fāsiq* (sinner/impious) dies before he has repented he will go to paradise. Al-Ka‘bī finds that Muqātil’s approach here is characterized by an extreme laxity.¹²

Al-Māturīdī draws attention to an important point in his usage of Muqātil’s exegesis: al-Māturīdī mentions Muqātil’s full name (Muqātil b. Sulaymān) when he recounts two out of three criticisms made by Abū Mu‘ādh Bukayr b. Ma‘rūf (163/780) of Muqātil.¹³ This is possibly, because of his concern that in case their names (Abū Mu‘ādh and Muqātil) had been seen together in the text it would have been confusing, for one simple reason it might be thought that Abū Mu‘ādh is referring to his mentor Muqātil b. Ḥayyān (150/767) instead of Muqātil b. Sulaymān. Abū Mu‘ādh¹⁴ was Muqātil b. Ḥayyān’s famous pupil and narrator.¹⁵

1956), 58; Ḥajī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-zunūn ‘an asām al-kutub wa al-funūn* (Istanbul 1360), I, 439.

⁹ These numbers are mostly determined by searching the CD of *Maktabat al-tafsīr* and the web page www.altafsir.com

¹⁰ This expression is generally used for the most respected predecessors and companions. See Abū al-Su‘ūd, *Irshād al-‘aql al-salīm ilā mazāyā al-Qur‘ān al-karīm* (Beirut 1990), III, 270; VI, 278; Muḥammad al-‘Arūsī, ‘Muqātil b. Sulaymān mufasssiran li al-Qur‘ān’, unpublished M.A. thesis (The University of Mannūba 2001–2), 145.

¹¹ Al-Māturīdī, *Tāwīlāt* III, 552.

¹² Al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, ed. Bekir Topaloğlu-Muhammed Aruçi (Ankara 2003), 556. For al-Ka‘bī’s evaluation of Muqātil in his own work, see al-Ka‘bī, *Maqālāt*, in the private library of Rājīḥ al-Kurdī in the copy of the article on ‘Murjiah’, 36a.

¹³ Al-Māturīdī, *Tāwīlāt* III, 420–1, 552. There is one place where the the names of Abū Mu‘ādh and ‘Muqātil’ are mentioned together. See *ibid.*, III, 585.

¹⁴ Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb* IV, 253–4.

¹⁵ Al-Ṭabarī (311/923) and Ibn Abī Ḥātim (327/939) mention the name of

Al-Māturīdī's exegesis can be seen as a turning point in the legitimation of Muqātil b. Sulaymān's commentary. Al-Māturīdī avoids drawing attention to the criticisms directed against Muqātil by others and shows great courage in his determination to benefit from Muqātil's work. Interestingly, he uses Muqātil in his exegesis, in which he wishes to combat the beliefs of the innovators in Islamic theology.¹⁶

After al-Māturīdī, another important scholar who used Muqātil is Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī (373/983). Abū al-Layth is considered to be among the great scholars of Samarqand and because of his influence he is given the title *imām al-hudā* (leader of guidance).¹⁷ Muqātil b. Sulaymān is Abū al-Layth's primary exegetical source¹⁸ and there are more than 450 references to Muqātil in his exegesis.¹⁹ There are some inconsistencies between the published exegesis of Muqātil and Abū al-Layth's quotations from Muqātil in his exegesis, according to the research done by İshak Yazıcı. For example, 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (23/644) is mentioned as an occasion of revelation in relation to verse 24:62 in Muqātil's published exegesis, while in Abū al-Layth's exegesis it is narrated that Muqātil says that this verse was revealed in connection with 'Uthmān b. 'Affān (35/655).²⁰

Muqātil b. Ḥayyān with his father's name (Ḥayyān's son Muqātil) on every occasion. Probably, they are trying to prevent any confusion between Muqātil b. Sulaymān and Muqātil b. Ḥayyān in their exegesis.

¹⁶ Mustafīd al-Raḥmān, 'An Edition of the First Two Chapters of al-Māturīdī's *Ta'wilātu Ahl al-Sunna*', Ph.D. thesis (University of London 1970), 126.

¹⁷ 'Abd al-Qādir b. Muḥammad, *al-Jawābir al-muḍīyya fī ṭabaqāt al-ḥanafīyya* (Hyderabad n.d.), II, 130, 196.

¹⁸ İshak Yazıcı, 'Ebu'l-Leys es-Semerkindî, Hayatı, Eserleri ve Tefsirindeki Metodu', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Erzurum Atatürk Üniversitesi İslâmî İlimler Fakültesi 1982), 149.

¹⁹ Ibid., 151. İshak Yazıcı carried out research on this topic before his Ph.D. thesis: 'Ebu'l-Leys es-Semerkindî'nin Mukatıl ibn Süleyman'ın Tefsiri ile Olan Münasebeti', Ph.D. seminar work (Erzurum Atatürk Üniversitesi İslâmî İlimler Fakültesi 1979). In this work Yazıcı argues that Abū al-Layth's exegesis is also called *Baḥr al-'ulūm* (see *ibid.*, 13). Nevertheless, after further investigation he concludes that this name is wrong. On the basis of research on various manuscripts in Istanbul Yazıcı argues that *Baḥr al-'ulūm* belongs to 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī b. Yahyā al-Samarqandī (860/1456). See İshak Yazıcı, 'Baḥru'l-'ulūm', *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul 1991), IV, 517–18. The publication of Abū al-Layth's exegesis under the title *Tafsīr al-Samarqandī al-musammā Baḥr al-'ulūm* undoubtedly increased this confusion [ed. 'Alī Muḥammad Mu'awwid-'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd-Zakariyyā 'Abd al-Majīd al-Nūti (Beirut 1993)].

²⁰ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 210–11; Abū al-Layth, *Tafsīr*, II, 451. Other examples in relation to this issue do not always show clear contradictions. These inconsistencies are sometimes due to the practice of the early historians; namely, that of using the

In his interpretation of the word *kanz*, cited twice in 18:82, Abū al-Layth narrates the following explanation from Muqātil: *Kullu shay'in fī al-Qur'āni kanzun fa huwa mālun*.²¹ The word *kanz*, 'treasure', is explained as *māl* (possession) in Muqātil's published exegesis.²² Nevertheless, it is difficult to find an agreement, which shows that the word *kanz* always means *māl* in the Qur'ān. On the other hand this formula was first used by Ibn 'Abbās (68/687) and his pupils²³ and the same formula '*kullu shay'in fī al-Qur'ān... fa huwa ...*' is found in most of the reports transmitted by al-Malaṭī (377/987) from Muqātil under the title *mutashābih al-Qur'ān*.²⁴ Clearly, Abū al-Layth took Muqātil's explanation from his lost work²⁵ *Kitāb mutashābih al-Qur'ān*.²⁶

The Comparison Confirms What is Already Known

In al-Tha'labī's exegesis Muqātil's name is mentioned nearly 630 times, and even this number does not indicate the full extent of al-Tha'labī's transmission from Muqātil. The reason for this lies in al-

same event with a different stress. See Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I, 90–Abū al-Layth, *Tafsīr* I, 96; Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I, 496–Abū al-Layth, *Tafsīr* I, 453. Sometimes, as a possible scribal type of error, similar Arabic words are copied as one and the same. See Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I, 466–Abū al-Layth, *Tafsīr* I, 427; Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 164–Abū al-Layth, *Tafsīr* II, 40; Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 440–Abū al-Layth, *Tafsīr* III, 26. For other inconsistencies see Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I, 138–Abū al-Layth, *Tafsīr* I, 158; Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I, 423–Abū al-Layth, *Tafsīr* I, 405; Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 243–Abū al-Layth, *Tafsīr* II, 103; Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 203–4–Abū al-Layth, *Tafsīr* II, 444.

²¹ Abū al-Layth, *Tafsīr* II, 309.

²² Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 274; III, 227, 265, 355. Furthermore, Muqātil narrates a report from Mujāhid (103/721) and al-Ḍahḥāk (105/723) which says that the word *kanz* in 18:82 means 'pages' which contain knowledge. Muqātil then brings the explanation of *al-māl* after using the word *yuqālu* (it is being said that) in order to imply that this explanation is weak. Undoubtedly, there is a contradiction between this example and the transmission of Abū al-Layth from Muqātil that the word *kanz* in the Qur'ān always means *al-māl*. See Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 599.

²³ Mehmet Akif Koç, *İsnad Verileri Çerçevesinde Erken Dönem Tefsir Faaliyetleri-İbn Ebī Hātim (327/939) Tefsiri Örneğinde Bir Literatür İncelemesi* (Ankara 2003), 128–32.

²⁴ Al-Malaṭī, *al-Tanbīh wa al-radd 'alā ahl al-ahwā' wa al-bida'*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (Baghdad n.d.), 71–80.

²⁵ Al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn* (Beirut n.d.), II, 331.

²⁶ Josef van Ess rightly points out that part of Muqātil's work *Kitāb mutashābih al-Qur'ān* comes to us through al-Malaṭī: Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra* (Berlin-New York 1992), II, 527–28. Compare this with Ismail Cerrahoğlu, 'Tefsirde Mukātil ibn Süleyman ve Eserleri', *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyât Fakültesi Dergisi* 21 (1976), 1–36, 8.

Tha'labī's usage of anonymous transmission in his narration of the report. It can only be guessed to whom al-Tha'labī is referring when he uses the expression *qāla akthar al-mufasssīrīn* (the majority of the exegetes have said). For example, having used the expression *qāla al-mufasssīrūn bi alfāẓīn mukhtalifatin wa-ma'ānin muttafiqatin* (The exegetes have said in different words but with the same meaning) concerning the narrative of Ṭālūt and Jālūt,²⁷ al-Tha'labī gives more than two pages of information.²⁸ Most probably, this general expression (*akthar al-mufasssīrīn*) also includes Muqātil's exegesis. Concerning the usage of the reports from Muqātil, al-Tha'labī outdoes Abū al-Layth (375/985), who mentions Muqātil's name in his exegesis more than 450 times.²⁹ The following figures are presented in order to make al-Tha'labī's explicit transmission from Muqātil more understandable.

	Total amount
Personal views or evaluations	234
Occasions of Revelation	111
Synonyms	99
Explanations of the unseen (<i>ghayb</i>)	91
Historical details	69
Reports where Muqātil's name is mentioned in the <i>isnād</i>	13
Law	7
Comments on the presence of different languages in the Qur'an	6

Al-Tha'labī uses Muqātil most frequently in the interpretation of *Sūrat Maryam* (19). The reason is not surprising: the last phrase of every verse (*fāṣila*) in *Sūrat Maryam* ends with rhyming words which are not commonly used in the Arabic language. Muqātil has a good reputation for finding synonyms of these rhyming words. Similarly, al-Tha'labī's quotations including historical details from Muqātil increase remarkably in the interpretation of *Sūras Yūnus* (10), *Hūd* (11), *Yūsuf* (12), *al-Shu'arā'* (26) and *al-Naml* (27), which offer extensive relevant material. It can be seen from the above figures that

²⁷ See 2:249–51.

²⁸ Al-Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa al-bayān 'an tafsīr al-Qur'an*, Veliyyüddin Efendi no. 130–3, I, 186b–188b. Concerning the word *al-khamṭ* (sour) mentioned in 34:16 al-Tha'labī says that according to most exegetes (*fi qawli akthar al-mufasssīrīn*) the word *al-khamṭ* here means *al-arāk* (tooth brush tree). See al-Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa al-bayān 'an tafsīr al-Qur'an*, Şehit Ali Paşa no. 156, 5a. In Muqātil's published exegesis it is also said that this word (*al-khamṭ*) means tooth brush tree (*wa huwa al-arāku*). See Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 529; thus it seems certain that al-Tha'labī has benefited from Muqātil in this regard.

²⁹ İshak Yazıcı, 'Ebu'l-Leys es-Semerkindi, Hayatı', 151.

al-Tha'labī makes very little use of Muqātil's exegesis in his interpretation of the legal verses of the Qur'an.³⁰ This is interesting because when the *ahkām al-Qur'an* tradition (the interpretation of the legal verses of the Qur'an) is analysed, it can be seen that Muqātil's exegesis *Tafsīr khamsmi'a āya* is the oldest example of this genre which has come down to us.³¹ Moreover, there are many explanations of legal verses of the Qur'an in Muqātil's published exegesis, in which he interprets the Qur'an from beginning to end.

There is remarkable diminution in al-Tha'labī's usage of Muqātil's reports as regards the interpretation of the verses of *Sūrat al-Nisā'* (4), which deals with issues such as inheritance law and various regulations about marriage³² Similarly, al-Tha'labī does not use Muqātil's reports until the end of the legal verses at the beginning of *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* (5).

Why does al-Tha'labī not try to use Muqātil's explanations as regards the interpretation of the legal verses given Muqātil's fame in this field? The answer to this lies in the approach of the Muslim scholars of the early period to the science of exegesis. They are extremely cautious in their explanation of the theological and legal verses of the Qur'an, and consider that the reports in these two fields should be derived from only the most reliable and respectable scholars. These scholars, however, do not have such strong objections regarding other secondary fields, even though these contain many reports narrated by unreliable or weak transmitters.³³ Clearly, Muqātil, whose reputation is not good among these scholars, is not approved of by al-Tha'labī in the fields of theology and jurisprudence despite al-Tha'labī's reputation as a scholar who shows great flexibility and tolerance towards exegetical sources.³⁴ There are several accounts

³⁰ Muqātil's interpretation of the legal verses of the Qur'an is rarely found in the exegesis of Abū al-Layth (373/983). See Abū al-Layth, *Tafsīr* I, 182, 210. In addition, Abū al-Layth does not pay any attention to Muqātil's explanation of the notion of *naskh* (abrogation), which is mentioned frequently in relation to the interpretation of the legal verses of the Qur'an. See İshak Yazıcı, 'Ebū'l-Lays es-Semerkandī'nin', 130.

³¹ Ed. İshāq Goldfeld (Israel 1980). The oldest exegesis by the name of *ahkām al-Qur'an*, which has survived up until today, belongs to al-Ṭahāwī (321/933). See Emrullah İşler, 'Ṭahavī (321/933) ve Ahkamu'l-Kur'an'ı', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü 1993), I.

³² Veliyyüddin, I, 348b–366a.

³³ Mehmet Akif Koç, 'İsnāds and Rijāl Expertise in the Exegesis of Ibn Abī Ḥātim (327/939)', *Der Islam*, 82 (2005), 158–63.

³⁴ It should be noted that al-Tha'labī's tolerance does not extend to Mu'tazilite scholars. See İshāq Goldfeld, *Mufasssırū sharq al-ālam al-Islāmī fi arba'āt al-qurūn*

which show that al-Tha'labī sometimes criticises both Muqātil and the reports transmitted from Muqātil's exegesis³⁵

The number of reports transmitted from Muqātil's exegesis concerning the occasions of revelation in al-Tha'labī's commentary is substantial, as can be seen clearly in the figures given above.³⁶ Muqātil's excessive fondness for this kind of report is evident from his exegesis: Muqātil mentions 140 reports concerning the occasions of revelation in his interpretation of *Sūrat al-Baqara* (2) alone, which consists of 286 verses.³⁷

As is well known, one of the major criticisms against Muqātil is his eagerness for frequent interpretation of the unseen (*ghayb*). His explanations of every ambiguous (*mubham*) word, passage or narrative in the Qur'ān are dominant in his exegesis, regardless of whether this ambiguity is minor or major. Probably, as Blachère (1393/1973) has pointed out, the main reason for his unceasing effort to explain the ambiguous expressions in the Qur'ān lies in his anxiety not to leave anything unexplained in the Qur'ān.³⁸

Differences

What has been stated up until now confirms the findings of studies about Muqātil's exegesis carried out by contemporary scholars. What is new in this research is that it shows statistically how one (al-

al-hijriyya al-ūlā: Nashr makhṭūṭat muqaddimat al-Tha'labī li-kitāb al-kashf wa al-bayān 'an tafsīr al-Qur'ān ('Aqqā 1984), 16.

³⁵ Al-Tha'labī holds the view that Muqātil misunderstood the Quranic word *al-fahshā'* (obscene behaviour). According to al-Tha'labī, with the exception of verses 2:169 and 2:268 Muqātil explains every instance of *al-fahshā'* in the Qur'ān as *al-zinā* (fornication). (See Veliyyüddîn, I, 99b, 208b.). Nonetheless, investigation shows that neither Muqātil's published works nor the quotations of al-Malaṭī (377/987) from Muqātil in the context of *mutashābih al-Qur'ān* correct al-Tha'labī's anecdote from Muqātil's explanation of the word *al-fahshā'*. [See Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I, 155; *al-Ashbāh wa al-nazā'ir fī al-Qur'ān al-karīm*, ed. 'Abd Allāh Maḥmūd Shahāta (Cairo 1994), 128–9; al-Malaṭī, *al-Tanbīh*, 71–80]. So it is not known exactly on what al-Tha'labī has based his view in his criticism of Muqātil. In order to look at al-Tha'labī's criticism of Muqātil see Şehit, 25b, 188a.

³⁶ Abū al-Layth (373/983) also quotes extensively from Muqātil in relation to the occasions of revelation. See İshak Yazıcı, 'Ebū'l-Leys es-Semerkindī'nin', 130.

³⁷ Muḥammad al-'Arūsī, 'Muqātil b. Sulaymān', 87. Muqātil's interpretation on the issue of occasions of revelation has been rightly criticized for his failure to enumerate in full the members of the chain of *isnād*, which goes back to the Prophet or the companions. See *ibid.*, 97.

³⁸ Quoted by Josef van Ess from Paul Nwyia's book *Exégèse Coranique et Langage Mystique* (Beirut 1970). See Josef van Ess, *Theologie* II, 518–19.

Tha'labī) of the most important successors of Muqātil benefited from him (Muqātil) nearly two and half centuries after his death. In fact, the main theme of this study is the inconsistencies between the reports available in the Khorasan version of Muqātil's exegesis, part of which is preserved in the exegesis of al-Tha'labī, and in the Baghdad version of Muqātil's exegesis, which is edited by 'Abd Allāh Maḥmūd Shaḥāta.³⁹ This investigation will also provide evidence of the reliability of the transmission of the oldest complete Quranic exegesis from period to period and from region to region.⁴⁰ Most importantly, only after such a comparison can it be demonstrated whether Muqātil's exegesis was open to ideological editing and reduction as Josef van Ess has alleged. Van Ess guesses that many heretical views of Muqātil, which would not have disturbed the people in Khorasan, caused serious dissatisfaction and objection in Baghdad, where these views might have been removed from the text of Muqātil's exegesis. Van Ess suggests another possibility in this regard. He thinks that Muslim theologians and historians probably exaggerated Muqātil's few exceptional views which diverge from the mainstream of Muslim thought.⁴¹ Why van Ess promotes these hypotheses is not difficult to understand: Muqātil's surviving works do not explain sufficiently the severe criticism directed against him.⁴² Consequently neither hypothesis advanced by van Ess is helpful in the solution of these problems. The first necessitates extreme caution in dealing with Muqātil's exegesis, while the second suggests that there are no serious distortions in the text of Muqātil's exegesis.

There are 154 differences between the reports narrated by al-Tha'labī from Muqātil and Muqātil's published exegesis. Only a small number of these differences need careful study and scrutiny. It is safe to assume that most of these differences are inadvertent errors which could have occurred during the production and reproduction of the manuscripts. They will be investigated in what follows.

The Three Main Types of Problematic Difference

In this section three types of differences — possible distortion, inconsistency and lack of availability of al-Tha'labī's references to

³⁹ Josef van Ess has analysed carefully both versions of the exegesis. See *ibid.*, II, 519–23.

⁴⁰ Many manuscripts are used in this evaluation.

⁴¹ Josef van Ess, *Theologie* II, 528–9.

⁴² *Ibid.*, II, 528.

Muqātil in Muqātil's own exegesis — will each separately be explained.

The Possibility of Distortion (tahrīf)

According to al-Tha'labī, Muqātil thinks that 'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (32/653) (uncle of the Prophet Muḥammad) is among the twelve men criticized in verse 8:36 due to their provision of food supplies to the army of the unbelievers in Badr.⁴³ In the Baghdād version of Muqātil's exegesis, the name of 'Abbās is removed from this list of twelve men and the name of Abū Jahl 'Amr b. Hishām's (2/624) brother al-Ḥārith b. Hishām (18/639)⁴⁴ is substituted in order to complete the number.⁴⁵ This change might be a result of an effort to avoid damaging the good reputation of 'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib in the eyes of Muslims. It is also possible that by including 'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib in the list, Muqātil, who openly supported the policy of the Umayyad Caliphate during his residence in Khorasan,⁴⁶ tried to show his negative reaction to those who were in favour of the Abbasid revolution. After his departure from the region of Khorasan he changed his anti-Abbasid views and consequently replaced 'Abbās' name with the name of al-Ḥārith, which was less controversial than the name of 'Abbās.

There is no doubt that this change was made deliberately; however, it is very difficult to accept that it was part of and the result of a systematic distortion of the exegesis of Muqātil. The reason is simple: 'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib is reproached in another place in the Baghdād version.⁴⁷ The following example also shows that this difference does not stem from systematic distortion:

According to al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil, verse 41:34 was revealed concerning Abū Sufyān Ṣakhr b. Ḥarb (31/652).⁴⁸ What we know about Abū Sufyān makes this comment reasonable, because this verse talks about a man who used to be an enemy of the Prophet, but after the Prophet treated him well he became a close friend. Nevertheless, it is recorded in Muqātil's published exegesis

⁴³ Veliyyüddîn, II, 596b; al-Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa al-bayān 'an tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Yozgat Manuscripts no. 94, II, 258b.

⁴⁴ Al-Ḥārith b. Hishām became a Muslim during the conquest of Mecca. See Ibn Hajar, *al-Iṣāba fī tamyīz al-ṣahāba* (Egypt 1328), I, 293.

⁴⁵ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 115; Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr Muqātil*, Hasan Hüsnü Paşa no. 17, 106a.

⁴⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa al-mulūk* (Beirut n.d.), VII, 330–1.

⁴⁷ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 162.

⁴⁸ Şhit, 47b; Veliyyüddîn, IV, 1254a.

that this verse was revealed about Abū Jahl ‘Amr b. Hishām (2/624). Various explanations have been brought forward to authenticate this anachronism.⁴⁹ If this last opinion had occurred in al-Tha‘labī’s exegesis instead of Muqātil’s Baghdād version, it would have been thought that because of Muqātil’s policy in Khorasan — to support the Umayyad Caliphate — he tried not to damage Abū Sufyān’s reputation.

The prophet Abraham in his prayer mentioned in 26:83 asked God to bestow him a *ḥukm*. According to the manuscript of al-Tha‘labī’s exegesis in Veliyyüddīn Efendi no. 132, Muqātil explains the word *ḥukm* as *fahm* (understanding), *‘aql* (reason) and *‘ilm* (knowledge).⁵⁰ According to Muqātil’s published exegesis, with the exception of one place⁵¹, the explanation of *‘aql* is not used in the interpretation of the words *ḥukm* and *ḥikma* in the Qur’ān. Muqātil generally explains these two Quranic terms as *fahm*, *‘ilm*, *ḥalāl*, *ḥarām*, *mawā‘iz*, *amr*, *nahy*, *Qur’ān* and *sunna*.⁵² It is unlikely that the word *‘aql* was removed mistakenly from the Baghdād version of Muqātil’s exegesis. As is well known, in the early period there was an ideological discussion around the terms *ḥukm* and *ḥikma*, which are derived from the same root *ḥkm*.⁵³ While the *ahl al-ra’y*, who are in favour of interpretation based on ‘reason’ add the word *‘aql* to the explanation of the word *ḥukm*, other scholars, known as the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, objected to this explanation.⁵⁴ This instance of removal in

⁴⁹ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 743.

⁵⁰ Veliyyüddīn, III, 1023b. It is observed that the word *‘aql* does not occur in the published version of al-Tha‘labī’s exegesis. This shows that there are even differences among the different manuscripts of this exegesis. See al-Tha‘labī, *al-Kashf* IV, 453.

⁵¹ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 87.

⁵² Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 269; Hasan Hüsni, 212a. See the interpretation of the verses in Muqātil’s exegesis except verse 26:83: Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I, 286, 515, 574; II, 327, 494; III, 79, 260, 269, 338, 434, 489, 639, 800, 837. In Muqātil’s other work the word *al-ḥukm* is explained as *al-fahm* and *al-ilm*. See *al-Ashbāh wa al-naẓā’ir*, 112.

⁵³ See Naşr Hāmid Abū Zayd, *al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī* (Cairo n.d.), 39–46; Hayri Kırbaşoğlu, *Sünni Paradigmanın Oluşumunda Şāfi‘înin Rolü* (Ankara 2000), for instance see 106–8, 176, 223.

⁵⁴ Interestingly, many reports reaching back to the period of the Successors show that the word *ḥikma* is explained as the prophetic tradition, prophethood or *‘aql*. See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayān ‘an tāwīl āy al-Qur’ān*, (Beirut 1988), I, 557; Ibn Abi Hātim, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘aẓīm musnad an Rasūl Allāh wa al-ṣaḥāba wa al-ṭabī‘in*, ed. As‘ad Muḥammad al-Ṭayyib (Mecca 1997), I, 237. Nonetheless, the association of *ḥikma* with the prophetic tradition (*Sunna*) is made by Imam Shāfi‘ī (204/819). See al-Shāfi‘ī, *al-Risāla*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr (Beirut 1940) for example see 32, 78.

the Baghdād version is possibly the result of such a discussion. The following example will clarify this matter further:

This example is related to verse 12:108. In this verse it is said ‘(My Messenger) Say: This is my way...’ (*qul hādhibihī sabīlī*). According to al-Tha‘labī, Muqātil understands the word *sabīlī* (my way) as *dīnī* (my religion)⁵⁵ in contrast to Muqātil’s published exegesis where the same word is explained by Muqātil as *sunnatī* (my manner).⁵⁶ The association of *sabīl* and *Sunna* is established in his published exegesis and it is clear that this association would have pleased the *ahl al-ḥadīth*. Thus it is possible that, as in the previous examples, here also Muqātil’s view in his published exegesis is being distorted in favour of the traditionalists.

In verse 7:145 it is said ‘And We wrote for him (Moses) upon the tablets...’. The interpretation of this verse deals with what and how God wrote on the tablets. According to the published version of Muqātil’s exegesis, God wrote with His Hand on the tablets, *bi yadīhī*.⁵⁷ However, in the narration of al-Tha‘labī from Muqātil, the expression *bi-yadīhī* (with His Hand) is not used.⁵⁸ There is no doubt that this expression (*bi-yadīhī*) brings in the notion of anthropomorphism. On the basis of this expression, Shaḥāta thinks that Muqātil accepted the idea of anthropomorphism, *tashbīh*.⁵⁹

Interestingly, Muqātil’s anthropomorphic view occurs in the Baghdād version of his exegesis rather than in al-Tha‘labī’s reference to Muqātil. However, it is not the case that al-Tha‘labī did not record this expression because of his sensitivity to some dogmatic issues. In fact, al-Tha‘labī does not see any problem in narrating a report from Wahb b. Munabbih (113/731), who mentions not only the hand of God but also his fingers in the interpretation of this verse.⁶⁰

The state of (dead) believers in the grave is narrated differently in al-Tha‘labī’s transmission from Muqātil and in Muqātil’s published exegesis. According to the former narration, the angel called *Dūmān*⁶¹

⁵⁵ Veliyyüddîn, II, 735b; al-Tha‘labī, *al-Kashf wa al-bayān ‘an tafsīr al-Qur‘ān*, Beyazıt no. 460, 39a. (This manuscript is seriously damaged and the first 93 pages of the second volume do not belong to al-Tha‘labī’s exegesis. In addition, the name of the author is also written erroneously in the catalogue of the library). Then Muqātil mentions verse 16:125 in order to support this comment. Muqātil’s usage of this verse in his interpretation seems very suitable.

⁵⁶ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 353.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 62–3; Hasan Hüsnü, 68a.

⁵⁸ Veliyyüddîn, II, 563a; Yozgat, II, 220a.

⁵⁹ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 62, footnote no. 1.

⁶⁰ Veliyyüddîn, II, 563a.

⁶¹ The name of this angel is written as *Rūmān* in another manuscript of al-

will come to the dead believers before *Munkar* and *Nakīr* (the two angels who question people in their graves).⁶² In the latter narration, the first questioning is carried out by *Munkar* and *Nakīr*.⁶³ Probably, the detail before *Munkar* and *Nakīr*'s coming in the first narration was considered redundant, therefore it is not recorded in Muqātil's published exegesis.

Reports about the couches⁶⁴ upon which the believers will recline in paradise are narrated in al-Tha'labī's transmission from Muqātil in great detail,⁶⁵ whereas these details concerning the couches are omitted in Muqātil's published exegesis.⁶⁶

Verse 40:28 deals with a believer in Pharaoh's family. According to al-Tha'labī's transmission from Muqātil, this believer is identified with 'the son of Pharaoh's uncle',⁶⁷ whereas in Muqātil's published exegesis it is just said that this man is 'a Copt like Pharaoh' without mentioning any relationship between them.⁶⁸

These three examples show that someone might have consciously removed the details in Muqātil's exegesis.

Inconsistencies

Al-Tha'labī explains the word *ihdinā* (Guide us) in verse 1:6 with the expression *arshidnā* (Guide us)⁶⁹ in his narration from Muqātil. The same explanation is attributed to 'the reading' of 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd (32/652) instead of Muqātil's view in Muqātil's published exegesis.⁷⁰

The Prophet Muḥammad died after seven nights — in al-Tha'labī's report from Muqātil⁷¹ — and nine nights — in Muqātil's own exegesis⁷² — elapsed from the day 2:281 was revealed.

The Qur'ān says that a party of Jews decided to confuse the Muslims by declaring their belief at the beginning of the day and their disbelief at the end of the day in what was revealed to Prophet

Tha'labī's exegesis. See al-Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa al-bayān 'an tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Ayasofya no. 289, 1b.

⁶² Veliyyüddin, II, 758b; Ayasofya 1b.

⁶³ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 405; Hasan Hüsni, 144a.

⁶⁴ 76:13

⁶⁵ Şehit, 154b.

⁶⁶ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* IV, 527.

⁶⁷ Şehit, 42a; Veliyyüddin, IV, 1240a.

⁶⁸ Muqātil *Tafsīr* III, 711; Hasan Hüsni, 268b.

⁶⁹ Veliyyüddin, I, 20a.

⁷⁰ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I, 36.

⁷¹ Veliyyüddin, I, 218a; Yozgat I, 168b.

⁷² Muqātil *Tafsīr* I, 228.

Muḥammad, hoping that this attitude could lead to Muslims returning from their own belief.⁷³ There are differences among the versions of Muqātil's exegesis concerning the decision taken by the Jews: according to al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil, the Jews would worship for part of the day by turning their faces in the direction of Mecca (al-Ka'ba), so the Muslims would hypothetically turn their faces towards Jerusalem (Bayt al-Maqdis).⁷⁴ According to Muqātil's published exegesis, the Jews would declare their belief at the beginning of the day and their disbelief at the end of the day in Muḥammad's personal qualities narrated in the Torah.⁷⁵

Concerning the contents of the heavenly table sent by God in verse 5:115 there are different reports in Muqātil's published exegesis and in al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil. For instance, according to al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil, the number of pieces of bread on the table is six⁷⁶ whereas in Muqātil's published exegesis there are five.⁷⁷

The interpretation of verse 7:69 contains some information about the height of people at the time of the Prophet Noah. According to al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil, the people were about 12 *zīrā*⁷⁸ (measure of length) tall whereas in Muqātil's published exegesis it is said that this measure is 12.5 *zīrā*.⁷⁹

There are also differences among the versions of Muqātil's exegesis concerning the number of people who boarded Noah's Ark. Al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil says that there were 78 people on the Ark, half of whom were men.⁸⁰ In Muqātil's published exegesis there were 80 people on the Ark and similarly, half of them were men.⁸¹

Al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil and Muqātil's own exegesis differ in explaining the two Quranic terms of *zafīr* and *shahīq* in verse 11:106. *Zafīr* or *shahīq* is used in sense of 'sighing' in one source while the same term is used in sense of 'wailing' in the other.⁸²

⁷³ 3:72

⁷⁴ Veliyyüddîn, I, 263a; Yozgat I, 193b.

⁷⁵ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I, 284.

⁷⁶ Veliyyüddîn, I, 486a.

⁷⁷ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I, 518; Hasan Hüsnü, 80a.

⁷⁸ Veliyyüddîn, II, 542a.

⁷⁹ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 45; Hasan Hüsnü, 94a.

⁸⁰ Veliyyüddîn, II, 596a; Beyazıt, 6b.

⁸¹ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 282; Hasan Hüsnü, 127a.

⁸² Veliyyüddîn, II, 697a; Beyazıt, 13b; Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 298; Hasan Hüsnü, 130b.

There is different information about the age of Mary when she became pregnant with Jesus: according to al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil, she was 10,⁸³ whereas she was 13 years old according to Muqātil's published exegesis.⁸⁴ In addition, the number 16 is found in al-Tha'labī's variant manuscript.⁸⁵ Thus some differences are found between the manuscripts of al-Tha'labī's exegesis.

The number of Pharaoh's magicians who opposed Moses is 72 according to al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil.⁸⁶ The number in Muqātil's published exegesis is 73.⁸⁷

According to al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil, verse 24:40 was revealed concerning 'Utba b. Rabī'a (2/624)⁸⁸ whereas in Muqātil's published exegesis this verse was revealed concerning the brother of 'Utba, Shayba b. Rabī'a (2/624).⁸⁹

In both versions of Muqātil's exegesis differences exist in relation to the number of people governed by Balqīs' advisory council. According to both versions, the council consists of 313 men. However, in al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil each advisor controls ten thousand people,⁹⁰ whereas in Muqātil's published exegesis each of them controls one hundred thousand.⁹¹

In verse 46:35, the Prophet is asked to be patient, like all of the apostles who are endowed with firmness (*ulū al-aẓm*). The question to be answered by the exegetes concerns the identification of these prophets. According to al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil, they are Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Job.⁹² However in Muqātil's published exegesis the name of Joseph is replaced with the name of Jonah.⁹³

The expression *qarīn* in the verse 50:27 is explained by al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil as an angel⁹⁴ who records the bad deeds of man, whereas in Muqātil's published exegesis it is interpreted as Satan.⁹⁵

⁸³ Veliyyüddîn, III, 890a.

⁸⁴ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 624; Hasan Hüsni, 174b.

⁸⁵ Ayasofya, 143b.

⁸⁶ Veliyyüddîn, III, 911a; Ayasofya, 168a.

⁸⁷ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 32; Hasan Hüsni, 181a.

⁸⁸ Veliyyüddîn, III, 993b; Ayasofya, 260b.

⁸⁹ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 202; Hasan Hüsni, 403b.

⁹⁰ Veliyyüddîn, III, 1039b.

⁹¹ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 303; Hasan Hüsni, 217b.

⁹² Şehit, 66b.

⁹³ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* IV, 30.

⁹⁴ Şehit, 82b.

⁹⁵ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* IV, 113; Hasan Hüsni, 288b.

According to al-Tha‘labī’s narration from Muqātil, the guests of the prophet Abraham in verse 51:24, consist of twelve angels.⁹⁶ However, in Muqātil’s published exegesis there are only three angels: Gabriel, Michael and one who is unidentified.⁹⁷

According to al-Tha‘labī’s narration from Muqātil, ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amr b. al-‘Aṣ (65/685) is among the people about whom verse 65:1 was revealed.⁹⁸ However, in Muqātil’s published exegesis, the name of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (73/692) is found instead of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amr b. al-‘Aṣ.⁹⁹ Besides, it is clear that the copier of al-Tha‘labī’s exegesis has made a mistake; while the copier should have written the names of both al-Ṭufayl b. al-Ḥārith (31/652) and ‘Utba b. Ghazwān (17/638) separately in relation to the occasions of revelation of this verse, he has written ‘Ṭufayl b. Ḥārith b. Ghazwān’ mistakenly as if only one person were involved.¹⁰⁰

In verse 82:6 it is stated ‘O man! What has made you careless concerning your Lord, the Bountiful.’ Both versions of Muqātil’s exegesis try to find a different answer for this Quranic question: according to al-Tha‘labī’s narration from Muqātil, it is said ‘When God postpones punishing this man, the mercy of God makes him careless.’¹⁰¹ According to Muqātil’s published exegesis, however, Satan has deceived him.¹⁰²

In verse 83:23 it is stated that the believers in paradise are gazing at something while reclining on couches. In al-Tha‘labī’s narration from Muqātil it is explained that the believers are gazing at their enemy, *yanzurūna ilā ‘aduwwihim*.¹⁰³ According to Muqātil’s published exegesis, the believers are gazing at the blessing and benefaction of God, *yanzuruna ilā dhālika al-na‘im*.¹⁰⁴ It is also important to note that there is also a difference among the manuscripts of al-Tha‘labī’s exegesis in relation to this example. In the manuscript of Şehit Ali Paşa no. 156 the singular form of the word *‘aduww* occurs. However, the same word is written in the plural form in the manuscript of Veliyyüddîn Efendi, *a‘dā’ihim* (their enemies). Interestingly, the manuscript of Veliyyüddîn Efendi depends mainly on the manuscript of Şehit Ali Paşa and it (Veliyyüddîn Efendi) was produced

⁹⁶ Şehit, 85b; Veliyyüddîn, IV, 1351b.

⁹⁷ Muqātil, *Tafsîr* IV, 129; Hasan Hüsni, 300a.

⁹⁸ Şehit, 128b.

⁹⁹ Muqātil, *Tafsîr* IV, 263.

¹⁰⁰ Veliyyüddîn, IV, 1473b.

¹⁰¹ Şehit, 165a.

¹⁰² Muqātil, *Tafsîr* IV, 613.

¹⁰³ Şehit, 167a.

¹⁰⁴ Muqātil, *Tafsîr* IV, 624.

very late. The exact statement in Veliyyüddîn Efendi is *wa qāla Muqātil: yanzurūna ilā a'dā'ihim kayfa yu'adhdhbūn* (and Muqātil has said: They are gazing at how their enemies are being tormented in hell).¹⁰⁵ Clearly, the copiers of the exegesis of Muqātil have not only changed the singular form of the word (*aduww*) — which is not an appropriate form in this context — into the plural form (*a'dā'*), but have also added a reasonable explanation to make the expression more understandable. In short, this exegesis has been subjected to some kind of grammatical rectification.

God begins by taking an oath by *fajr* 'daybreak' at the beginning of *Sūra* 89:1. This oath raises the question as to which day *fajr* refers to here. In reply to this question, al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil records that this *fajr* is the dawn of every day in a year.¹⁰⁶ According to Muqātil's published exegesis, it is explained as the dawn of every Muslim festival of sacrifice day.¹⁰⁷

According to al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil, verse 90:4 was revealed about Usayd b. Kilda b. Asīd b. Khalaf (?).¹⁰⁸ In Muqātil's published exegesis, however, it is recorded that this verse was revealed about al-Hārith b. 'Āmir b. Nawfal b. 'Abd Manāf al-Qurashī (2/624).¹⁰⁹

It is recorded in al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil that 'the event of the elephant'¹¹⁰ happened twenty-three years before the Prophet Muḥammad's birth.¹¹¹ In Muqātil's published exegesis, it is said that forty years passed between 'the event of the elephant' and the birth of the Prophet.¹¹² Nonetheless, an examination of the different manuscripts of al-Tha'labī's exegesis reveals the reason for this inconsistency. According to these manuscripts, the view that twenty-three years had passed is attributed to al-Kalbī (146/763) while

¹⁰⁵ Veliyyüddîn, IV, 1578a.

¹⁰⁶ Şehit, 174b; Veliyyüddîn, IV, 1596b.

¹⁰⁷ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* IV, 688; Hasan Hüsnü, 354b.

¹⁰⁸ Şehit, 178b. In the Veliyyüddîn manuscript, the name of this man is recorded as 'Asad' instead of 'Usayd'. See Veliyyüddîn, IV, 1606a. However, the name of this man is written wrongly in both manuscripts. The correct version of his name is Kalada b. Asīd b. Khalaf (?). For more information about this man see Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharat ansāb al-'Arab*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo 1982), 161.

¹⁰⁹ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* IV, 702.

¹¹⁰ In pre-Islāmic times, Abraha, the governor of Yemen under Abyssinia rule attempts to demolish al-Ka'ba. As his army includes elephants, this event is known as 'the event of elephant'. See *Sūrat al-Fil* (105).

¹¹¹ Şehit, 128b.

¹¹² Muqātil, *Tafsīr* IV, 853.

Muqātil's own view is given as forty years.¹¹³ So it is safe to assume that the copier of the Şehit Ali Paşa no. 156 manuscript mistakenly attributed the opinion of al-Kalbī to Muqātil.

Verse 111:5 describes the suffering of Abū Lahab 'Abd al-'Uzzā b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's (2/624) wife in hell: she has a halter of palm-fibre upon her neck. According to the narration derived from Muqātil and al-Sha'bī (104/722) in the manuscript of Şehit Ali Paşa, this halter is made of fibre, *lif*.¹¹⁴ However, in Muqātil's published exegesis it is said that this halter is made of iron chains.¹¹⁵ Like previous examples, this inconsistency can only be understood after scrutinizing the different manuscripts of al-Tha'labī's exegesis: according to the manuscript of Veliyyüddîn Efendi, the explanation giving *lif* (fibre) is attributed to Qatāda (117/735) and al-Sha'bī.¹¹⁶ Clearly, Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd, who copied al-Tha'labī's exegesis from the manuscript of Şehit Ali Paşa no. 156 in 593/1197, wrongly attributed the opinion of Qatāda to Muqātil.

These examples show that the early copies of al-Tha'labī's exegesis do not always provide authentic information. Moreover, after comparing these two works, it has to be admitted that it is not known exactly why there are inconsistencies among the reports in question. It is possible that Muqātil changed his mind during or after the composition of his exegesis but we concede that this cannot be verified.

Lack of Availability of al-Tha'labī's References to Muqātil in Muqātil's Own Exegesis

There are fifty-seven reports in this group. When we compare both exegeses (al-Tha'labī's and Muqātil's published exegesis) these reports cause serious problems. One wonders whether the exegesis of Muqātil edited and published by 'Abd Allāh Maḥmūd Shaḥāta is incomplete. Or it is possible that al-Tha'labī used a more expanded version of Muqātil's exegesis than today's published version? This issue could have been examined in detail if the Khorasan version of Muqātil's exegesis were available.

In the previous subsections (the possibility of distortion and inconsistencies) each example has been dealt with in relation to these headings. Because these examples have provided opportunities for comment and take our investigation further, it is not necessary to

¹¹³ Veliyyüddîn, IV, 1649b; Fatih, 146a.

¹¹⁴ Şehit, 196b.

¹¹⁵ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* IV, 904; Hasan Hüsnü, 368a.

¹¹⁶ Veliyyüddîn, IV, 1670b.

discuss all of these fifty-seven examples in making an evaluation. Thus, the following four points are sufficient as typical examples covering opinions attributed to Muqātil by al-Tha'labī which could not be traced in Muqātil's own exegesis:

- i. According to al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil, the Prophet asked God to compel the Jews to accept Islam as their new religion. Consequently, verse 2:119 was revealed.¹¹⁷ This verse ends with this expression: '...And you (Muḥammad) will not be asked about the owners of hell-fire'.
- ii. According to al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil, Muqātil and al-Kalbī (146/763) share the opinion that verse 10:41 has been abrogated.¹¹⁸
- iii. According to al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil, the Prophet Noah took the body of the Prophet Adam onto the Ark.¹¹⁹
- iv. The expression 'the earth of God' in 39:10 is defined by al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil as the 'the earth of paradise'.¹²⁰

It is also important to note that Muqātil's name is mentioned by al-Tha'labī in some chains of *isnād* which are not found in Muqātil's published exegesis. Ten reports out of the fifty-seven categorized in this section have this characteristic feature. The majority of these ten reports begin with the form of this *isnād* chain: *Muqātil 'an al-Ḍaḥḥāk 'an Ibn 'Abbās*.¹²¹

Al-Suyūṭī (911/1505) says that al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim (105/723) did not meet Ibn 'Abbās (68/687), and so there is an interruption (*inqiṭā'*) in this report.¹²² Curiously enough, al-Suyūṭī gives some information about the transmitters of this chain of *isnād* from after al-Ḍaḥḥāk but he does not mention Muqātil's name. The most famous

¹¹⁷ Ibid., I, 77b.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., II, 670b.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., II, 688a. al-Tha'labī mentions this report in his other work without attributing it to Muqātil. See *'Arā'is al-majālis* (Beirut 2000), 59.

¹²⁰ Şehit, 33a.

¹²¹ Veliyyüddîn, II, 778a; III, 1042b, 1054b; Şehit, 18a, 27a, 40a. There are other *isnād* forms which do not begin with this chain of *isnād*. See Veliyyüddîn, III, 1009b; Şehit, 27b, 28a, 46a. Furāt b. Ibrāhīm al-Kūfī and 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, famous Shi'ite exegetes of the third century of Islam, mention the name of Muqātil in their exegesis though rarely. See *Tafsīr Furāt al-Kūfī*, ed. Muḥammad al-Kāzım (Beirut 1992), I, 174; II, 617; *Tafsīr al-Qummī* (Beirut 1991), II, 399, 403, 433, 454. It is also important to note that with the exception of one place (*Tafsīr Furāt* I, 174) they always use the same chain of *isnād*, namely *Muqātil-al-Ḍaḥḥāk-Ibn 'Abbās*.

¹²² Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muṣṭafā Dīb al-Bugha (Dimashq 1987), II, 1232.

transmitter in this chain of *isnād* is undoubtedly Juwaybir (150/767).¹²³ Muqātil, however, is considered more defective than Juwaybir, whose transmissions have not a good reputation in accordance with the principles of *isnād* criticism (rejection and acceptance/*jarḥ* and *ta'dīl*). Thus the presence of Muqātil in the chain of *isnād* greatly weakens the status of the *isnād*.¹²⁴

In order not to repeat them in his exegesis, al-Tha'labī gives in great detail the sources that he has benefited from in his introduction. The question remains, however, why al-Tha'labī gives the chain of *isnād* *Muqātil 'an al-Ḍaḥḥāk 'an Ibn 'Abbās* in the interpretation of some verses. If Goldfeld's edition of al-Tha'labī's introduction is considered, this question seems reasonable, because Goldfeld has made a mistake in his edition of al-Tha'labī's introduction by failing to record the transmitter 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ (114/732), who comes after Ibn 'Abbās in the second version of Bakr b. Sahl al-Dimyāṭī's (289/902) exegesis.¹²⁵ However, in al-Tha'labī's introduction the name of 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ is mentioned in the chain of *isnād* of both versions of al-Dimyāṭī's exegesis (...*Muqātil 'an al-Ḍaḥḥāk 'an 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ 'an Ibn 'Abbās*).¹²⁶ As a result of this mistake, the chain of *isnād* of al-Dimyāṭī's exegesis is confused with the *isnād* of ...*Muqātil 'an al-Ḍaḥḥāk 'an Ibn 'Abbās*.¹²⁷ There is no exegetical source in al-Tha'labī's introduction to his exegesis that shows that al-Ḍaḥḥāk had a direct transmission from Ibn 'Abbās.¹²⁸

¹²³ The names of Muqātil and Juwaybir after al-Ḍaḥḥāk are mentioned together in two of the reports in al-Tha'labī's exegesis. See Veliyyüddin, III, 1042b, 1054b.

¹²⁴ The sources have even recorded al-Ḍaḥḥāk's criticism of Muqātil's excessive usage of unnecessary details in the interpretation of the Qur'an. See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl* XXVIII, 440; 'Abd Allāh Maḥmūd Shaḥāta, *Tafsīr Muqātil* (V), 62–3.

¹²⁵ Işḥāq Goldfeld, *Mufasssırü*, 22.

¹²⁶ Veliyyüddin, I, 2b. Although the name of 'Aṭā' is skipped in the manuscript of Istanbul University (Arabic writings no.1811) which is used by Goldfeld (See 1b), the name of 'Aṭā' occurred in another manuscript (Yozgat writings no. 94) which Goldfeld also used (See 2b). Interestingly enough, Goldfeld does not even draw attention to this. al-Suyūṭī traces al-Dimyāṭī's exegesis back to Ibn Jurayj, but no further. See *al-Itqān*, II, 1231.

¹²⁷ There are reports, which are narrated by these two chain of *isnād* in Muqātil's published exegesis. Thus Goldfeld's mistake makes the sources of some reports indefinite and vague. See Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 351, 428, 540, 627, 635; III, 54; IV, 202, 244, 389.

¹²⁸ For Goldfeld's other editorial mistakes see Mehmet Akif Koç, *Tefsirde Bir Kaynak İncelemesi: eṣ-Şa'lebī Tefsirinde Muqātil b. Sulaymān Rivayetleri* (Ankara, 2005), 23–5.

Differences Due to Preference and Inadvertent Error

Transmission by Meaning

There are two types of transmission: one is literal and the other is a transmission of the meaning or idea of the saying. Naturally, the transmission of meaning varies in accordance with every person's own usage of the language. In addition to this, there is a common view that the *marfū' ḥadīths* were being transmitted for a while by meaning.¹²⁹ Because of this, it is not plausible to argue that the exegetes transmitted their interpretation literally. Furthermore, should it be claimed or assumed that the copiers did not take any initiative in their copying of these exegetical works? Of course not, because these copiers were human and did not work mechanically. For all these reasons it is not wise to deal with these fifty-four reports one by one. Instead discussion will be limited to a few examples:

- i. This example is connected with the definition of the word *ṣābi'īn* in verse 2:62. According to al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil, they are defined as the people who direct their prayer towards al-Ka'ba¹³⁰ while in Muqātil's published exegesis they are described as the people who turn their faces towards the *qibla* (the direction of al-Ka'ba).¹³¹
- ii. Verse 2:81 describes the state of a man in hell and uses the expression 'his sin surrounded him'. Concerning the identification of this man, al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil says that this man is a person who insists on his sin, wrong action, etc.¹³² In Muqātil's published exegesis, there is an explanation that says 'Thus he died on disbelief'.¹³³
- iii. This example is connected with the explanation of the word *furqān* which occurs in verse 8:29. According to al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil, Muqātil interprets this word as *manfadh* (hole/vent)¹³⁴ while in Muqātil's published exegesis it is explained using the word *makhraj* (outlet).¹³⁵

¹²⁹ Selman Başaran, 'Hadislerin lafız ve Mana Olarak Rivayeti Meselesi', *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, III (1991) 51–64, 60; Enbiya Yıldırım, *Hadis Problemleri* (Istanbul 2001), 67.

¹³⁰ Veliyyüddîn, I, 55b; Yozgat, I, 43b.

¹³¹ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I, 112.

¹³² Veliyyüddîn, I, 62a.

¹³³ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I, 119.

¹³⁴ Veliyyüddîn, II, 593b.

¹³⁵ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I, 110.

- iv. Verse 20:40 ends with the statement of ‘And now you have come as ordained/’*alā qadar* (by Me), O Moses’. In al-Tha‘labī’s narration from Muqātil, the expression ‘*alā qadar* is explained as ‘*alā maw‘id* (determined time span).¹³⁶ In Muqātil’s published exegesis, however, the same expression is clarified as ‘*alā mīqāt* (fixed time).¹³⁷
- v. In verse 32:3 it is stated ‘Or they say: He has invented it (the Qur‘ān). Nay, but it is the Truth from your Lord, that you may warn a folk to whom no warner came before you, that haply they may walk aright.’ On the basis of this verse Muqātil tries to find an answer for the question ‘In which period of time did the warner not come to the Arabs?’ According to al-Tha‘labī’s narration from Muqātil, Muqātil gives the answer to this question as follows: ‘The warner did not come to the Arabs between the time of Jesus and the Prophet Muḥammad.’¹³⁸ In Muqātil’s published exegesis, however, it is explained in a way similar to the meaning of the verse ‘there is no warner to the Arabs before you O Muḥammad.’¹³⁹

Similarity Among Letters and Words

As is very well known, the addition of one dot or its removal causes serious changes in the meaning of Arabic words. Similarly, it is clear that in Arabic one can only reach a correct understanding on the basis of a correct reading of the statements and, conversely, a correct reading can only be achieved on the basis of a correct understanding. Taking the continuation of the tradition into account this can be seen to happen within the boundaries of the Arabic language. The Arabic language, however, has undergone a gradual process of change over many generations. Thus it is reasonable to conclude that the differences among the letters and words in various manuscripts are the product of this evolution and that this is an inevitable result.¹⁴⁰ There are fourteen reports in this group which we will consider. The differences are shown in the lists below:

¹³⁶ Veliyyüddîn, III, 907a.

¹³⁷ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 27–8.

¹³⁸ Veliyyüddîn, III, 1100b.

¹³⁹ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 448.

¹⁴⁰ Ibn al-Sayyid al-Baṭalyawṣī (521/1127) wrote a book on this topic. He investigated why the Jurists had various opinions and concluded that one of the main reasons is the nature of the Arabic language. Thus he dealt with this issue under the heading of *al-taṣḥīf* (*taḥrīf*). See *al-Inṣāf fī tanbīh ‘alā al-ma‘ānī wa al-asbāb allatī awjabat al-ikhtilāf bayna al-muslimīn fī ārā‘ihim*, ed. Muḥammad Riḍwān al-Dāya (Dimashq 1983), 174–7.

Al-Tha'labī's narration from Muqātil	Muqātil's published exegesis
<i>al-jināyāt</i> ¹⁴¹	<i>al-janābat</i> ¹⁴²
<i>fanazā'a</i> ¹⁴³	<i>faḡazi'ū</i> ¹⁴⁴
<i>jibillatihī</i> ¹⁴⁵	<i>jadīlatihī</i> ¹⁴⁶
<i>Tamlīkhā-Faṭrūs</i> ¹⁴⁷	<i>Yamlīkhā-Farṭus</i> ¹⁴⁸
<i>yawm</i> ¹⁴⁹	<i>yawma'idhin</i> ¹⁵⁰
<i>N-b-ʿa-t</i> ¹⁵¹	<i>N-f-ʿa-t</i> ¹⁵²
<i>ghalaw</i> ¹⁵³	<i>ʿalaw</i> ¹⁵⁴
<i>Ḥarbīl</i> ¹⁵⁵	<i>H-z-qīl</i> ¹⁵⁶
<i>Bint Yāmūshā</i> ¹⁵⁷	<i>Ibnat Nāmūthiya</i> ¹⁵⁸
<i>al-safīh</i> ¹⁵⁹	<i>al-safāla</i> ¹⁶⁰
<i>Sayyār</i> ¹⁶¹	<i>Yassār</i> ¹⁶²
<i>Tūmār-Mātūs</i> ¹⁶³	<i>Tūmān-Yūnus</i> ¹⁶⁴

¹⁴¹ Veliyyüddîn, I, 157a.

¹⁴² Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I, 192.

¹⁴³ Veliyyüddîn, II, 581a; in the Yozgat, II. manuscript it is written as *fanad'u*.

See 239a.

¹⁴⁴ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 82.

¹⁴⁵ Veliyyüddîn, II, 838b.

¹⁴⁶ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 547.

¹⁴⁷ Veliyyüddîn, III, 866b.

¹⁴⁸ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 584.

¹⁴⁹ Veliyyüddîn, III, 891b.

¹⁵⁰ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 626.

¹⁵¹ Veliyyüddîn, III, 905b. Because we do not read this word in full we only write its letters.

¹⁵² Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 25; in the Hasan Hüsnü manuscript (178b) it is written as *b-k-ʿa-t*.

¹⁵³ Veliyyüddîn, III, 1002b; In the Ayasofya manuscript (27a) it is written as *ʿalaw*.

¹⁵⁴ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 230.

¹⁵⁵ Veliyyüddîn, III, 1021b. In the Ayasofya manuscript (292a) it is written as *Ḥarbīl*.

¹⁵⁶ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 268.

¹⁵⁷ Veliyyüddîn, III, 1021b. In the Ayasofya manuscript (292a) it is written as *bint nāmūsā*.

¹⁵⁸ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 268.

¹⁵⁹ Veliyyüddîn, III, 1024b. In the Ayasofya manuscript (295b) it is written as *al-safāla*.

¹⁶⁰ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 273.

¹⁶¹ Şehit, 48a. In Veliyyüddîn, IV, 1255a, it is written as *Yassār*.

¹⁶² Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 745.

¹⁶³ Şehit, 13a. In Veliyyüddîn, III, 1170a, it is written as *tūmāl-mālūs*.

¹⁶⁴ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 575. In the Hasan Hüsnü (252b) it is written as *yūmān-yūnus*.

*Shamʿān*¹⁶⁵*Ḥabīb b. Isrāʿīl*¹⁶⁷*Shamʿūn*¹⁶⁶*Ḥabīb min Banī Isrāʿīl*¹⁶⁸

The narrations of Muqātil are found sometimes in an abbreviated form in both his published exegesis and in al-Thaʿlabī's exegesis. For example, the narratives such as the seventy people chosen by Moses, and life in the hereafter mentioned in verses 19:39 and 37:50 respectively are discussed in great detail in Muqātil's published exegesis.¹⁶⁹ The same episodes, however, are merely outlined in al-Thaʿlabī's narration from Muqātil.¹⁷⁰ On the other hand, the narratives such as the casting of Joseph into the depths of the well and the men of the cave are summarised in Muqātil's published exegesis,¹⁷¹ whereas they are examined in detail in al-Thaʿlabī's narrations from Muqātil.¹⁷²

Conclusion

In al-Thaʿlabī's exegesis, Muqātil b. Sulaymān's name is mentioned about 630 times. Approximately one quarter of al-Thaʿlabī's references are inconsistent with Muqātil's published exegesis. It is safe to assume that most of these inconsistencies are due to inadvertent errors which could expectedly occur during the production and reproduction of the manuscripts. Moreover, it is possible to find some contradictory reports, as claimed by Josef van Ess,¹⁷³ which give the impression that Muqātil's exegesis was revised. There are some particular inconsistencies between the Khurāsānī version of Muqātil's exegesis, which is partly covered by al-Thaʿlabī's exegesis, and his published commentary i.e. the Baghdādī version, which cannot be explained on the basis of errors possibly occurring during the production of manuscripts. However, careful examination shows that these inconsistencies were not caused by a systematic effort either.

Today there is not enough evidence about the great influence on later commentaries of the exegeses of al-Māturīdī (333/945) and Abū al-Layth (373/983), who used Muqātil's exegesis before al-

¹⁶⁵ Şehit, 13a. In Veliyyüddîn, III, 1170a, it is written as *simʿān*.

¹⁶⁶ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 575.

¹⁶⁷ Şehit, 13a.

¹⁶⁸ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 576–7.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., I, 116; II, 628–9; III, 607.

¹⁷⁰ Veliyyüddîn, I, 60b; III, 893a; Şehit, 17b.

¹⁷¹ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 320, 578.

¹⁷² Veliyyüddîn, II, 702b; III, 861a.

¹⁷³ Josef van Ess, *Theologie* II, 522, 528–9.

Tha'labī. Thus it is to be assumed that both exegesesees had a limited influence on the legitimization process of Muqātil's commentary. When al-Tha'labī's commentary is considered, there is no doubt that he contributed greatly to the legitimization of Muqātil's exegesis. Al-Tha'labī, who received the heritage of the exegesesees of the third century, passed this on to the fourth and fifth-centuries via al-Wāhidī (468/1076)¹⁷⁴ and al-Baghawī (516/1122) respectively. Al-Baghawī, who mentions the name of al-Tha'labī¹⁷⁵ specifically in the introduction of his exegesis, benefited substantially from al-Tha'labī's work. The relation between the studentship of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's (606/1209) father, Ḍiyā' al-Dīn 'Umar,¹⁷⁶ to Baghawī, and the possible influence of this mentor-pupil (Baghawī-Ḍiyā' al-Dīn 'Umar) relationship on al-Rāzī calls for further investigation. In addition to this, there are other evidences which show the strong relation between the exegesis of al-Tha'labī and al-Rāzī. First of all, al-Rāzī's primary source in the exegesis of the Qur'ān is al-Wāhidī (468/1076)¹⁷⁷ and it is well known that al-Wāhidī is a pupil of al-Tha'labī. Most importantly, al-Rāzī says several times in his exegesis that he has benefited from the exegesis of al-Tha'labī.¹⁷⁸ al-Tha'labī's exegesis was also popular in the Western part of the Islamic world,¹⁷⁹ to the extent that the famous Andalusian scholar, Muḥammad b. al-Walīd al-Ṭurṭūshī (520/1126), made an abbreviated version of it.¹⁸⁰

Probably, al-Māturīdī's, Abū al-Layth's and al-Tha'labī's usage of Muqātil's exegesis was facilitated by their being Muqātil's fellow countrymen; all four came from the region of Khorasan. This factor alone connects Muqātil to al-Māturīdī and Abū al-Layth. Al-Tha'labī's usage of Muqātil, however, might have been affected by their sectarian relationship (connection through a particular school of thought). Walid Saleh, who has investigated al-Tha'labī's exegesis,

¹⁷⁴ Jawda Muḥammad al-Mahdī, *al-Wāhidī wa-manhajuhū fī al-tafsīr* (Cairo 1978), 68.

¹⁷⁵ *Ma'ālim al-tanzīl* (Beirut 1993), I, 4.

¹⁷⁶ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' abl al-zamān* (Cairo 1948), III, 384; Khalīl Mays, 'Muqaddima', in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (Beirut 1990), I, 9.

¹⁷⁷ Jawda Muḥammad al-Mahdī, *al-Wāhidī*, 412–26.

¹⁷⁸ Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* I, 181; X, 149; XXI, 187, 202; XXII, 3; XXXI, 148. For example, in the interpretation of the *basmala* (the beginning of every *sūra* of the Qur'ān) al-Rāzī mentions nearly ten reports and then says 'know! I have narrated all these reports from the Shaykh Abū Ishāq al-Tha'labī.' See *Ibid.*, I, 201–2.

¹⁷⁹ For instance, al-Qurṭubī (671/1272) expresses openly his deep respect for al-Tha'labī in his exegesis. See, al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-ahkām* XIII, 18.

¹⁸⁰ Ibn Khayr, *Fahrasa*, eds. Franciscu Codera-J. Ribera Tarrago (Baghdād 1963), 59.

found that one of the leading teachers of al-Tha'labī (Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Ḥabīb al-Naysābūrī 406/1015) belonged to the Karrāmī school of thought. Saleh argues that the Karrāmī school had a great influence on Muslim exegeses in the Middle Ages via al-Tha'labī's exegesis.¹⁸¹ The importance of the Karrāmī school of thought for this study is to be found in its image of God. The Karrāmīs were primarily accused of believing that God resembles a human being in certain respects (appearance, behaviour, etc).¹⁸² It is generally accepted that Muqātil b. Sulaymān, who has been blamed for accepting *tashbīh* and *tajsīm* (anthropomorphic ideas), was among the vanguard of the Karrāmī school of thought.¹⁸³

Now, on the basis of Walid Saleh's above-mentioned finding, it is possible to venture to explain why al-Tha'labī used Muqātil's exegesis to such a great extent: having been brought up under the influence of a *Karrāmī* mentor (al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Ḥabīb), al-Tha'labī presumably was interested in benefiting from Muqātil's exegesis, because the anthropomorphic ideas (*tashbīh/tajsīm*) which were considered acceptable to *Karrāmiyya*, were also attributed earlier to Muqātil. Having transmitted more than twenty exegesis to Tha'labī, Ibn Ḥabīb,¹⁸⁴ also narrated two versions of

¹⁸¹ Walid Saleh, 'The Qur'an Commentary of al-Tha'labī (d.427/1035)', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Yale University 2001), 3, 6. Saleh evaluates the narration of Ibn Ḥabīb's renunciation of the ideas of the Karrāmīs and his acceptance of Shāfiite tenets [See al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-wāfi bi al-wafayāt* (Wiesbaden 1985), XII, 239; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 145] as an attempt to clear the name of Ibn Ḥabīb. See Walid Saleh, 'The Qur'an Commentary', 32.

¹⁸² Al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-firaq* ed. Muḥammad Badr (Egypt n.d.), 203.

¹⁸³ Al-Baghdādī (429/1037) presents the *Karrāmiyya* as a sub-section of *Mushabbīha*. See al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq* 217. Although the starting points of *Mushabbīha* and the *Mujassima* — the Karrāmīs are generally accused of the second one — differ to some extent, there is a close similarity between their beliefs concerning the image of God. See Suhayr Muḥammad Mukhtār, *al-Tajsīm 'inda al-muslimīn 'madhhab al-Karrāmiyya'* (Egypt 1971), 9. Ulrich Rudolph holds the view that Abū Muṭīr Makhūl al-Nasafī (318/930) and al-Māturidī (333/945) do not agree on the question of the inclusion of the *Karrāmiyya* within the *Mushabbīha*. See Ulrich Rudolph, *al-Māturidī und die Sunnitische Theologie in Samerkand* (Brill 1997), 169. In the work of Makhūl, whose book is considered the oldest surviving Eastern text written on the sects, neither the name of Muḥammad b. Karrām nor the title of *Karrāmiyya* is found. See Abū Muṭīr Makhūl al-Nasafī, 'Kitāb al-radd 'alā ahl al-bida' wa al-ahwā', ed. Marie Bernand, *Annales Islamologiques*, 16 (1980), 53–126. Following Makhūl, al-Māturidī does not tolerate Karrāmī ideas; he criticizes the Karrāmī understanding of *īmān* (belief/faith) in both works available today. See al-Māturidī, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* 492–4; *Tāwilāt ahl al-sunna*, see especially the pages. I, 449; IV, 550.

¹⁸⁴ Al-Tha'labī generally attributes his mentor's name al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad to his grandfather and mentions it as Ibn Ḥabīb.

Muqātil's exegesis.¹⁸⁵ One of them, however, was narrated via Abū Ṭīma Nūḥ b. Abī Maryam (173/789), who was criticized by *jarḥ* and *ta'dīl* scholars severely.¹⁸⁶ The work of Ibn Ḥabīb also confirms that concerning the usage of Muqātil's exegesis he is in the vanguard of transmitters of al-Tha'labī's exegesis.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Ishāq Goldfeld, *Mufasssīrūn*, 39–40. For some of al-Tha'labī's other references to Ibn Ḥabīb see Veliyyüddîn, I, 14a–b, 20b, 22a, 23a, 27b; II, 8b; Şehit, 42a, 53a. Having written the Islamic expression 'May God forgive him (Ibn Ḥabīb)/*rahimahu Allāh*', al-Tha'labī quotes from Ibn Ḥabīb in the interpretation of verse 21:83. This shows clearly that during this period of al-Tha'labī's exegesis, Ibn Ḥabīb was no longer alive.

¹⁸⁶ Nūḥ b. Abī Maryam, who was a student of Abū Ḥanīfa and a jurist in the city of Marw, was the stepson of Muqātil b. Sulaymān. See Ibn 'Adiyy, *al-Kāmil* VI, 2428–29. Aḥmad Naim (1353/1934) and Kāmil Miras (1377/1957) defended Nūḥ against the critics, who argued that Nūḥ had fabricated reports and traditions concerning the virtues of the Quranic *Sūrās*. See al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-i'tidāl* IV, 279; al-Zabidī, *Sahih-i Buhārī Muhtasarı ve Tecrid-i Sarih Tercemesi*, tr. Ahmed Naim (Ankara 1957), I, 285–7, 496–8. In addition, Abū Ghudda also addresses the claims about Nūḥ and makes necessary criticisms of them. See Abū Ghudda, 'al-Istidrāk', *Zaḡar al-amānī bi-sharḥ mukhtaşar al-sayyid al-sharif al-Jurjānī fī muştalah al-ḥadīth li al-Laknawī* (Aleppo 1416), 573–80. Further see Hayri Kırbasoğlu, *Alternatif Hadis Metodolojisi* (Ankara 2002), 155–63. Nonetheless, of those defending Nūḥ, nobody has discussed the kinship of Muqātil and Nūḥ. Most probably, the critical attitude towards Nūḥ might be due to his usage of Muqātil's exegesis, which, it is considered, should be treated with great caution. The reason advanced in the criticism of Nūḥ is closely related to the science of exegesis, therefore the last view seems very plausible in this regard. Josef van Ess says that Nūḥ was an anthropomorphist. See Josef van Ess, *Theologie*, II, 529, 550–1. Van Ess's evaluation relies exclusively on the presence of Nūḥ in the chain of *isnād* of *marfū'* reports which state that God will be seen in the hereafter. See Ibn Manda, *al-Radd 'alā al-jahmiyya*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad Nāşir (Madina 1981), 96; al-Lālakā'ī, *Sharḥ uşūl i'tiqād ahl al-sunna wa al-jamā'a min al-kitāb wa al-sunna wa-ijmā al-şahāba wa al-tābi'ina min ba'dihim*, ed. Aḥmad Sa'd Ḥamdān (Riyadh n.d.), II, 456. Nūḥ's mere presence as a transmitter in this kind of report does not prove that he was an anthropomorphist. More importantly, there is no information in relevant sources indicating that Nūḥ was an anthropomorphist.

¹⁸⁷ There are two quotations from Muqātil in Ibn Ḥabīb's surviving work (*ilm nuzūl al-Qur'ān*). See the Library of Köprülü no. 15, 3b, 6a. There is a problem in both quotations from the perspective of Muqātil's published exegesis. According to the first quotation Muqātil was of the opinion that the first *Sūra* of the Qur'ān (*Sūrah Fātiḥa*) was revealed in Mecca. However, in Muqātil's published exegesis it is recorded that this *Sūra* is revealed in Medina. See Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I, 35. In his second quotation there is a piece of information which is not found in Muqātil's published exegesis. The two works of Ibn Ḥabīb are the above mentioned treatise (*Ilm nuzūl al-Qur'ān*), which consists of nine pages of manuscript; the second is a literary work which has been translated and published by Şüle Publishing House (See *Akıllı Deliler Kitabı*, tr. Yahya Atak, Istanbul, 2002). Walid Saleh notes that a part of Ibn Ḥabīb's exegesis is now in the libraries of Istanbul. See Walid Saleh, 'The Qur'ān Commentary', 30. Concerning these discrepancies, Saleh mainly depends

Like Josef van Ess, Walid Saleh also concentrates on a treatise written by an anonymous Karrāmī writer.¹⁸⁸ Saleh finds various similarities between the exegetical topics of this treatise and al-Tha‘labī’s promises to undertake to address certain issues¹⁸⁹ in his exegesis.¹⁹⁰ He uses this finding in order to prove a possible Karrāmī influence on al-Tha‘labī’s exegesis. The topics which are given priority in this treatise are as follows: *al-Bisāt*, *al-akhbār wa al-hikāyāt*, *al-wujūh wa al-nazā’ir*, *al-nukat wa al-ishārāt*, *al-ḥaqā’iq wa al-abkām* and *al-tabkiya*.¹⁹¹ al-Tha‘labī too places special stress on these topics, with the exception of the heading *al-tabkiya*.¹⁹²

Walid Saleh also explains why al-Tha‘labī notes the number of verses, words and letters at the beginning of the interpretation of each *sūra*, attributing this to the influence of the Karrāmīs.¹⁹³ A similar method (counting the number of verses, words and letters in each *Sūra*) is also observed in the introduction of an anonymous exegesis published by Arthur Jeffery.¹⁹⁴ Saleh asserts that this exegesis was written by a Karrāmī exegete.¹⁹⁵ Muqātil’s exegesis also has features

on the index published in 1987 in Jordan. See *al-Fahras al-shāmil li al-turūth al-‘arabī al-islāmī al-makḥḥūt, ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān, makḥḥūtāt al-tafsīr*, I, 128–9. The name attached to the work mentioned in this index in the manuscript catalogue numbers ‘Kara Mustafa Paşa no. 68’ and ‘Mihrişah Sultan no. 31’ is that of Nizām al-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Naysābūrī, who passed away in 728/1328. His exegesis name was *Gharā’ib al-Qur’ān wa-ragḥā’ib al-furqān* (ed. Ibrāhīm ‘Aṭwa ‘Awḍ, Egypt 1962). The index categorises this *Tafsīr* as the exegesis of Ibn Ḥabīb (406/1015). Probably, this mistake derives from a misreading of the library’s catalogue cards. In the department of Kara Mustafa Paşa where it is situated in the library of Beyazıt, the death date of the exegete is given as 406, which is actually Ibn Ḥabīb’s death date instead of the exegete’s real death date, 728. In the later cards of the Beyazıt library, the same mistake is repeated. See Veliyyüddin Efendi no. 276–81. Moreover, as in the department of Mihrişah Sultan, there is no work in relation to this topic in the Madrasa of Muşallā no. 39 (in the library of the Süleymaniye) which is mentioned in the index. Although Walid Saleh notes the similarity between the names of al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Ḥabīb and Nizām al-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad as the possible cause of the confusion, he fails to avoid the same mistake. See Walid Saleh, ‘The Qur’ān Commentary’, 30, (footnote 70).

¹⁸⁸ Josef van Ess, *Ungenützte Texte zur Karrāmīya* (Heidelberg 1980).

¹⁸⁹ Işhāq Goldfeld, *Mufasssīrū* 19.

¹⁹⁰ Walid Saleh, ‘The Qur’ān Commentary’, 91–2.

¹⁹¹ Josef van Ess, *Ungenützte*, 42.

¹⁹² Işhāq Goldfeld, *Mufasssīrū* 19.

¹⁹³ Walid Saleh, ‘The Qur’ān Commentary’, 89.

¹⁹⁴ Ed. Arthur Jeffery, *Muqaddimatān fī ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān* (Cairo 1954), 235–50.

¹⁹⁵ On this issue, the article of Aron Zysow, to which Saleh rightly makes reference, is convincing. Zysow finds that in this introduction (*muqaddima*) the author refers to Ibn Karrām with his praiseworthy words. See ‘Two Unrecognized Karrāmī

which would have been appreciated by Karrāmīs. At the beginning of his exegesis, Muqātil focuses on counting (*jummal*) and he calculates the values of every letter as numerals, and goes into detail about them.¹⁹⁶

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¹⁹⁶ Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I, 28.

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