Tajallī wa-Ru'ya: A Study of Anthropomorphic Theophany and *Visio Dei* in the Hebrew Bible, the Qur'ān and Early Sunnī Islam

by

W. Wesley Williams

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Near Eastern Studies)
in The University of Michigan
2008

Doctoral Committee:

  Professor Sherman A. Jackson, Chair
  Professor Juan R. Cole
  Professor Alexander D. Knysh
  Associate Professor Brian B. Schmidt

Acknowledgements

First, I must acknowledge and thank God, without whom I could have never completed this long and difficult journey. My thanks to Professor Alexander (Sasha) Knysh who, when I felt overwhelmed early in this process and ready to quite, he encouraged me to continue on. My thanks to Professor Sherman Jackson, my advisor and in many ways my mentor. Thank you for your time and guidance. Thanks to my Committee, Professors Sherman A. Jackson, Alexander Knysh, Juan R. Cole and Brian B. Schmidt. To Professor Gary Beckman, Margaret Casazza, Angela Beskow, and all of the staff and faculty at the Department of Near Eastern Studies who were in any way involved in this process with me: thank you for your patient assistance. To Douglas Keasal for all of the much needed financial support he helped me secure: thanks a million.

A special thanks to Roger Doster. Quite frankly without your efforts I would not have entered the program, and without your continued efforts I would not have made it through. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

A special thanks also to Victoria Bells for your great sacrifices. I will always be mindful of them and appreciative of you for them.

I don't think any one has willingly sacrificed for this cause as much as has Laurita Thomas, my blessed Mother. Ma, what can I say? Thank you a million times could never adequately convey my gratitude. I love you infinitely. To all of my family: Aunti (Eva), Moe, Courtney, Jaci, Charita, Aunt Charlene, Nanna, Aunt Janet and Uncle CJ, Aunt Denise and Uncle Mike, Paul, DaShanne: without your help with childcare, a daughter's hair, and numerous other matters, this Dad could not have pulled this off. Thank you.

To my little sparrows, Ava and Islam: thank you babies. You too have sacrificed so much. I am so sorry if I failed to do some of the things that maybe could have minimized those sacrifices.

To Leslie Ann Williams and Dorthea Breckenridge: Ma, Grandma, I love you and I miss you.

Table of Contents

Abbreviations

ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AcOr	*Acta Orientalia*
ANE	*Ancient Near East(ern)*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang Der Römischen Welt*
ARW	*Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BARev	*Biblical Archaeologist Review*
BBSMES	*Bulletin of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies*
Bib	*Biblica*
BibRev	*The Biblical Review*
BR	*Biblical Review*
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BSOAS	*Bulletin for the School of Oriental and African Studies*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
DDD	*Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*
EI¹	*Encyclopedia of Islam. First Edition* Leiden 1913-38
EI²	*Encyclopedia of Islam. New Edition* Leiden 1954-
EQ	*Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān*
ER	*Encyclopedia of Religion*
ERE	*Encyclopedia of Religion and ethics*
HAR	*Hebrew Annual Review*
HB	*Hebrew Bible*
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IC	*Islamic Culture*
IDB	*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup	*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
IJMES	*International Journal of Middle East Studies*
Int	*Interpretation*
IOS	*Israel Oriental Studies*
IPQ	*International Philosophical Quarterly*
IS	*Islamic Studies*
ISBE	*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
JA	*Journal Asiatique*

JANES	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*
JANESCU	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JJTP	*Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JQS	*Journal of Qur'ānic Studies*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JRelS	*Journal of Religious Studies*
JSAI	*Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*
JSJ	***Journal for the Study of Judaism***
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LXX	*Septuagint*
MIO	*Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung*
MT	*Masoretic Text*
MTSR	*Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*
Mus	*Le Muséon*
MW	*The Muslim World*
NOAB	**New Oxford Annotated Bible**
NTS	**New Testament Studies**
OTS	*Oudtestamentische Studiën*
RB	*Revue biblique*
REI	*Revue des Etudes Islamiques*
Rel. Stud.	*Religious Studies*
RHR	*Revue de l'histoire des religious*
SI	*Studia Islamica*
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SJRJ	*Scottish Journal of Religious Studies*
SR	*Studies in Religion/Sciences religiouses*
StPatr	*Studia Patristica*
StTh	*Studia Theologica*
THAT	*Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, ed. E. Jenni and C.W. Westermann
ThLZ	*Theologisches Literatur Zeitung*
TG	*Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra*, Josef van Ess
TDNT	**Theological Dictionary of the New Testament**
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*

TLOT	*Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*
TToday	*Theology Today*
TWAT	*Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament,* ed. C.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
UF	*Ugaritische Forschungen*
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	*Vetus Testamentum Supplement*
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Verwandte Gebiete*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

Chapter I:

Introduction to this Study

1.1 Theophany and *Visio Dei* in Islamic Tradition?

Until relatively recently it was axiomatic that Judaism is the religion of the invisible

and non-theophanous deity; the God of Israel is heard but not seen.[1] Critical

scholarship, however, has demonstrated that this characterization is inaccurate both for

biblical as well as extra-biblical religion.[2] Indeed, ancient Israel shared its neighbors'

preoccupation with theophany and *Visio Dei*.[3] Daniel Boyarin argues that it is only under

Hellenistic influence that Jewish cultures exhibited any anxiety about the visibility of God:

> The biblical and Rabbinic religions were quite free of such influences and anxieties.
> Thus I would identify Greek influences on Judaism in the Middle Ages as being the
> major force for *repressing* the visual. The Neoplatonic and Aristotelian revision of
> Judaism undertaken by the Jewish scholastics was so successful that it has resulted in the
> near-total forgetting of the biblical and Rabbinic traditions of God's visibility.[4]

This near-total forgetting of an earlier tradition of theophany and *Visio Dei* finds its

parallel, it will be argued, in the history of Islamic theological development. Islam is often

---

[1]Martin Jay took it as a given that the God of Judaism was "invisible and non-theophanous": "The Rise of
Hermeneutics and the Crises of Ocularcentrism," *Poetics Today* 9 (1988): 308 [art.=307-326]. See also José
Faur, *Golden Doves with Silver Dots: Semiotics and Textuality in Rabbinic Tradition* (Bloomington: Indiana
University Press, 1986), 29-30: "Verbal representation of God, even in anthropomorphic terms, is common
both to Scripture and to the rabbis. What was offensive to the Hebrew was 'to see' God; that is, to express
His reality at the visual level."

[2] See below, Chapter Two.

[3] See Jeffery J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant & Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids,
Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995) and below, Chapter Two.

[4] Boyarin, Daniel. "The Eye in the Torah: Ocular Desire in Midrashic Hermeneutic," *Critical Inquiry* 16
(Spring 1990): 533-4 [art.=532-550].

viewed as the religion *par excellence* of divine transcendence.[5] While the post-mortem Beatific Vision would become a cardinal point of Sunnī orthodoxy,[6] this is to be understood against the backdrop of Islam's zealous defense of God's absolute 'otherness' (*mukhālafa*). The latter precludes divine corporeality, and corporeality is the *sine qua non* of any object of ocular perception.[7] No true 'seeing' of God, therefore is possible. This is especially true of humans in this world, even the prophets. Muḥammad's revelatory experience was completely auditory.[8] Though he was hearing the very Speech of God (*Kalām Allāh*), he saw only the intermediating angel Jibrīl - never God himself. Faruq Sherif's statement in his, ***A Guide to the Contents of the Qur'an***, would be found acceptable to Sunnī and Shī'ī theologians alike:

> It follows clearly from the Qur'anic revelation that Allah does not reveal Himself through incarnation in human form or human attributes. The absolutely transcendent Deity cannot be directly apprehended by man.[9]

---

[5] See e.g. William A. Graham, "Transcendence in Islam," in Edwin Dowdy (ed.), *Ways of Transcendence; Insights From Major Religions and Modern Thought* (Bedford Park, South Australia: Australian Association 1982) 7-23; Muhammad Ibrahim H.I. Surty, "The Conception of God In Muslim Tradition," *IQ* 37 (1993):127ff. J. Windrow Sweetman (*Islam and Christian Theology*, 3 Parts, 4 vols. [London: Lutterworth Press, 1947] pointed out back in 1947 that "(m)any writers have observed that Islam overemphasizes the transcendence of God." H. U. Weitbrecht Stanton (*The Teaching of the Qur'ān* [London: Central Board of Missions and Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1919], 35) likewise observed that "The idea of divine transcendence (is) so relentlessly developed by Moslem theology in its conception of *tanzīh* = removal and *mukhālafah* = contrariety (between Allāh and the creature)..." See also W.M. Watt's comments ("Some Muslim Discussions of Anthropomorphism," in idem, *Early Islam: Collected Articles* [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990] 87): "We in the West tend to speak of Islam as stressing the transcendence of God, but it has to be remembered that, while for the West the chief aspect of transcendence is probably God's might and majesty, for Islam it is rather His otherness from His creatures. This aspect is present in the Old Testament...but in the Muslim outlook its relative importance is greater."

[6] See *EI²* 8:649 s.v. Ru'yat Allāh by D. Gimaret; Anthony Keith Tuft, "The Origins and Development of the Controversy over Ru'ya in Medieval Islam and its Relation to Contemporary Visual Theory." (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1979); Abdus Subhan, "Mu'tazilite View on Beatific Vision," *IC* 15 (1941): 422-428.

[7] On the 'orthodox' belief in divine otherness=incorporeality see Watt, "Some Muslim Discussions," 87-9.

[8] Yaqub Zaki, "The Qur'an and Revelation," in Dan Cohn-Sherbok (ed.), *Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991) 44, 51-54; Abdullah Saeed, "Rethinking 'Revelation' as a Precondition for Reinterpreting the Qur'an: A Qur'anic Perspective," *JQS* 1 (1999): 101, 108-109. According to Khalifa Abdul Hakim (*Islamic Ideology* [Pakistan: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1993], 48), "Belief in...an Unseen God is a fundamental postulate of Islam." See also Nagendra Kr. Singh, *Unseen God* (Chitli Qabar, Delhi: Adam Publisher & Distributors, 1997).

[9] (Reding, 1995), 24.

Western scholars of Islam, often impressed by and even humbled before Islam's "radical" doctrine of divine transcendence,[10] have confirmed for us Islam's categorical rejection of theophany and *Visio Dei*. Helmut Ritter, for example argued in 1955:

> Islamic orthodoxy will absolutely not accept attributing a particular form to God. It concedes to the foremost of the senses (according to our conception, not that of the Arabs), the sense of sight, no share in God's revelation, whereas it is all the more generous with regard to the second sense, that of hearing. To orthodox Islam the idea that God could have a visible form is an abomination.[11]

The advancement in scholarship since Ritter wrote has done little to modify this view of Islam's revelatory process. Stefan Wild, for example, in explaining why *nuzūl*, a technical term for the revelation of the Qur'ān, should *not* be translated by "revelation," argues:

> The translation of "revelation" for the Arabic word *nuzūl* is as inevitable as it is problematic. The Christian term "revelation" (Latin *revelatio*, Greek *apokalypsis*) is a metaphor meaning something like "unveiling"; the word "epiphany" (*epiphaneia*) means "becoming visible and audible for mankind, to reveal Himself." This concept is foreign to the Qur'ān and Islam.[12]

Thus, both Muslim theologians and Western scholars tend to agree that for "orthodox," "normative," or "mainstream" Islam, and by implication for Muḥammad as well, God's utter 'otherness' necessitates divine incorporeality and invisibility and therefore precludes any theophanic encounter for the prophets or any others.[13] Indeed, God is so transcendentally unique that one wonders how a Muslim may experience him at all.[14]

---

[10] See e.g. Samuel M. Zwemer, "The Allah of Islam and the God of Jesus Christ," *TToday* 3 (1946): 64-77; Stanton, *Teaching of the Qur'an*, 35.

[11] *Das Meer Der Seele* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955): 439 (=*The Ocean of the Soul: Man, the World and God in the Stories of Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār*. Translated and Edited by John O'Kane and Bernd Radtke [Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003] 453).

[12]"'We Have Sent Down to Thee the Book With Truth…' Spatial and temporal implications of the *Qur'ānic concepts of nuzūl, tanzīl*, and *'inzāl*," in idem (ed.), *The Qur'an as Text* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996) 137. See also Daniel A. Madigan, *The Qur'ān's Self–Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001) 140.

[13]Theodore Nöldeke, *Sketches From Eastern History* (London; A. Edinburgh, and C. Black, 1892), 23: "Mohammed's transcendental idea of God, as a being exalted altogether above the world, excludes the thought of direct intercourse between the Prophet and God." See also Zaki, "The Qur'an and Revelation"; idem, "The Concept of Revelation in Islam," in Henry Thompson (ed.), *Unity in Diversity: Essays in Religion* (Barrytown, NY: The Seminary, 1984) 59-71; Ismail A.B. Balogun, "Relation between God and His

1.2. Western Studies on *Visio Dei* in Islam

During the 8th through the 10th centuries Islam experienced what A.J. Wensinck characterized as a "dogmatic crises."[15] Various personalities and groups - stimulated both by indigenous concerns as well as foreign influences - contemplated and speculated on a host of theological issues and articulated novel doctrines and ideas, for which some were censured by the more moderate scholars. Many of these controversies revolved around the nature of God and his Attributes.[16] Of fundamental concern to the disputants was *Ru'ya*, the Vision of God. While both traditionalists (*ahl al-ḥadīth*) and speculative theologians (*mutakallimūn*) generally denied that God could be seen in this life - the traditionalists basing their position on prophetic narrations[17] and the theologians employing logical arguments as well as qur'ānic proofs[18] - the two sides polemicized furiously against one another over whether or not God will be seen by the faithful on the Day of Judgment. In the end, the Beatific Vision would become a pillar of Sunnī doctrine.[19]

Within the larger controversy over *Ru'ya* there was the equally vexing issue of whether or not the Prophet himself saw God during his lifetime. Despite the guarantee from both

Creation: Revelation and Authority in Islam," in Hans Koechler (ed.), *The Concept of Monotheism in Islam and Christianity. Papers of the International Symposion organized in Rome, Italy, 17-19 November 1981, under the patronage of H. R. H. Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan by the International Progress Organization* (Vienna, Austria: Wilhelm Brau, 1982) 76 [art.=71-85].

[14] Thus Abdoldjavad Falatūri opens his article, "How can a Muslim Experience God, Given Islam's Radical Monotheism": "Experiencing God is a problem in Islam because, in general, Muslim philosophical and theological thought has understood God as transcending all possible catergories of being, because of his absolute unity and uniqueness. God is consequently so separated from man that the most he can hope for is an abstract, rational experience of God, provided he has been thoroughly trained in philosophy." In Annemarie Schimmel and Abdoldjavad Falatūri (edd.), *We Believe in One God: The Experience of God in Christianity and Islam* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979) 77.

[15] *The Muslim Creed* (1932; reprint, New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation,1979), 83ff.

[16] John Pavlin, "Sunni *kalām* and theological controversies," in Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (edd.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 2 vols. (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), 1:105.

[17] Al-Nasāʾī reports from the Prophet, "You will not see God until you die." *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, 6 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīya, 1991), 4:419, #7764.

[18] See Tuft, "The Origins and Development."

[19] For a look at classic traditionalist defense of the Beatific Vision see Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Radd ʿalā 'l-Zanādiqa wa 'l-Jahmīya* (Cairo, 1973)

Muslim and Western scholars that the God of Islam reveals himself to no one, there are numerous reports in the classical Arabic literature describing Muḥammad's visual encounter with his Lord. The subject of this alleged vision of God was even more divisive than that of the Beatific Vision proper. Not only were the traditionalists and speculative theologians divided on the issue, but the ḥadīth literature presents what could be described as a "heated" discussion among the Companions of the Prophet . This controversy over theophany and *Visio Dei* in Islam has received scant attention in the academic literature. Most handbooks on Islamic theological development say little or nothing about it.[20] Such neglect seems to have been inherited from later Muslim authors for whom God's *mukhālafa* militated against any visionary experience by anyone in this world (*al-Dunyā*). Shahrastānī (d. 1153), in his **Kitāb al-milal wa 'l-niḥal**,[21] enumerates ten disputes which occupied the community of the *Ṣaḥāba*, though he says nothing of the controversy which, according to the ḥadīth literature, involved hard feelings, harsh accusations and a great many of the most famous Companions, 19 of which allegedly reported Muḥammad's vision of God.[22] Denial of the experience is attributed to ʿĀʾisha, Muḥammad's favorite wife, as well as Abū Hurayra and ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd.[23]

Other than a brief mention or a discussion of the conflicting interpretations of *Sūrat al-Najm* (53:1-18) and its relation to both Muḥammad's Call and his ascension to heaven (*miʿrāj*),[24] very few studies have devoted serious attention to this controversy, and those

---

[20] See for example: Tilman Nagel, *The History of Islamic Theology from Muhammad to the Present* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Weiner Publishers, 2000); W.M. Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998); John Pavlin, "Sunni *kalām*,"; Ziauddin Ahmed, "A Survey of the Development of Theology in Islam," *IS* 11 (1972): 93-111; Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981); A.S. Tritton, *Muslim Theology* (Luzac & Company LTD, 1947); D. B. Macdonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903); Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*; Louis Gardet and M.-M. Anawati, *Introduction a la Théologie Musulmane: Essai de Théologie Comparée* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1948).

[21] Translated by A.K. Kazi and J.G. Flynn (London; Kegan Paul International, 1984).

[22] See below Chapter VI..

[23] See al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 11 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1994), 2:10f and below.

[24] See e.g. B. Schrieke, "Die Himmelsreise Muhammeds," *Der Islam* 6 (1915-16): 20; J. Horovitz, "Muhammeds Himmelfahrt," *Der Islam* 9 (1919): 159f; Richard Bell, "Muhammad's Visions," *MW* 24 (1934): 145-154; idem, *Introduction to the Qurʾān* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1953) 29-36; Rudi Paret, *Mohammed und der Koran* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1957) 44-46; W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953) 39-44; idem, *Islamic Revelation in the Modern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1969) 12-17; Theodor Lohman, "Sure 96 und die Berufung Muhammeds,"

that have suffer from too limited a number of relevant sources used and from presuppositions that skewed the researchers perspective and precluded their appreciation of the place of this debate in the history of Islamic theological development. Tor Andrae, in his thesis of 1917,[25] was probably the first to recognize the importance tracing this dispute has for our understanding of the Islamic view of the divine.[26] His eighteen-page discussion (68-85) is still foundational to any treatment of the subject.[27] Andrae's primary interest was Muḥammad's *Himmelfahrt* and it was only in that context that he was able to discuss the dispute over Muḥammad's alleged visionary encounter with God. This preoccupation is a major short-coming of the discussion. The *ru'ya*-tradition and the *mi'rāj*-tradition, though at times converging, are different traditions and must be analyzed as such[28]; conflating the two only precludes adequate understanding of either, particularly the former.

Andrae noted that following the dispute in the sources was difficult due to the conflicting testimonies often attributed to the same authorities, early as well as later. As an example he cites the 'double-face' (*Doppelgesicht*) worn by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal on this issue, at least according to the sources.[29] But Andrae's sources were severely limited, a short-coming that limited the value of the entire discussion. We hope to demonstrate that a more comprehensive use of the available source material for Ibn Ḥanbal's *'aqīda* (creed), while certainly presenting conflicting views on a number of issues, nevertheless allows us to reconstruct the "Imām of Baghdad's" position on this matter with a measure of

---

MIO 14 (1968): 248-302, 416-469, esp. 279-302; Tuft, "Origins and Development," 24-32; W. Montgomery Watt and Alford T. Welch, *Der Islam: I Mohammed und die Frühzeit – Islamisches Recht – Religiöses Leben* 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1980) I: 53-60; Alford T. Welch, "Muhammad's Understanding of Himself: The Koranic Data," in Richard G. Hovannisian and Vryonis Speros, Jr. (edd.), *Islam's Understanding of Itself (Giorgio Levi Della Vida Conferences)* (Malibu, Calif.: Undena Publications, 1982) 30-33; Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger* Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985) 158-166; *EI²* "7:99 s.v. Mi'rādj by B. Schrieke [J. Horovitz]; F.E. Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994) 141-147.

[25] *Die person Muhammeds in lehre und glauben seiner gemeinde* (Stockholm: P.A. Vorstedt og söner, 1918).

[26] "In der tat ist die entwicklung der streitfrage für die islamische gottesauffassung wie für die schätzung des propheten von grosser bedeutung (73)."

[27] See also his "Die legenden von der berufung Muḥammeds," *Le Monde Oriental* 6 (1912): 5-18, esp. 13ff.

[28] See below.

[29] *Die person Muhammeds*, 74-5.

6

confidence. Doing so is important, as Ibn Ḥanbal was the architect of the early Sunnī *'aqīda* and his followers remained its guardians for centuries thereafter.[30] Andrae argued that, "Die legenden, die unbeflangen von der persönlichen begegnung des propheten mit seinem Gotte reden, stellen also volksglauben, nicht theologische lehre dar."[31] We shall argue that this assessment is inaccurate. While many of the reports may in fact be anchored in *volksglauben*, and this latter was certainly influenced by *aḥādīth al-ru'ya*,[32] still Muḥammad's *ru'ya* indeed became theological doctrine.

J. Windrow Sweetman included a brief discussion in his **Islam and Christian Theology**, claiming that "A large number of the orthodox Sunnīs" admit such a vision.[33] On the other hand, Hellmut Ritter was adamant that Islamic orthodoxy, admitting to only an acoustic revelation, rejected these reports in sum: "God reveals Himself to His prophets through acts of hearing, not through visions."[34] The idea of a visible, morphic deity - an idea that was 'intolerable to orthodox Muslims'- invaded Islam ('in den Islam ungedrungen ist'[35]), maybe from Persian song, and is thus non-indigenous.

In his discussion of "Le Problème de la Vision de Dieu *(Ru'ya)* d'après quelques auteurs šī'ites duodécimains," Georges Vajda noted that though the problem of theophany occupied an important place in Muslim theological discourse, particularly of the second and third centuries AH, "il n'a pas été…traité de façon suffisamment ample et encore moins approfondie."[36] While our focus here is on the problem as it is discussed in Sunnī literature, Vajda's discussion is limited to Shī'ī literature. Anthony Keith Tuft wrote his dissertation on the *ru'ya* controversy, but he was concerned only with "the

---

[30] See below.

[31] "The legends which unabashedly speak of the Prophet's encounter with God depict popular belief, not theological doctrine": *Die person Muhammeds*, 77.

[32] See below.

[33] I.II:220-223.

[34] "Philologica II," *Der Islam* 17 (1928): 255-257; idem, *The Ocean of the Soul*, 453-263.

[35] "Philologica II," 257.

[36] Georges Vajda, "Le Problème de la Vision de Dieu *(Ru'ya)* d'après quelques auteurs šī'ites duodécimains," in *Le Shī'isme Imânite. Colloque de Strasbourg (6-9 mai 1968)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970) 31.

controversy…at its most dramatic level, the vision of God after death."[37] Daniel Gimaret, in his article on "Ru'yat Allāh" for ***The Encyclopedia of Islam*** likewise concentrates on Sunnī discussions of the post-mortem Beatific Vision, only briefly mentioning that the question of Muḥammad's vision of God in this world was controversial on account of two contradictory statements attributed to Ibn 'Abbās and 'Ā'isha.[38] In two separate writings, Gimaret gives a number of the relevant reports extensive treatment;[39] but his interest was not in the controversy per se, but in the various interpretations given to these reports by anti-anthropomorphist theologians.

The exception to this neglect among Western scholars is Josef van Ess who, in several writings, has expounded on the controversy as it relates to *sūrat al-Najm*[53]:1-18 and the narratives of Muḥammad's Ascension to Heaven, the *Mi'rāj*. [40] *Sūrat al-Najm* makes a highly ambiguous and enigmatic reference to two visionary encounters of the Prophet at the beginning of his career. Van Ess, following a long established Western tradition of reading these verses as expressing Muḥammad's belief (unfounded, for sure) that he had seen God, is convinced, again in agreement with that same Western tradition of reading, that Muḥammad will later realize his error and acknowledge that it was only an angel that he had actually seen and mistaken for God, citing here *sūrat al-Takwīr* [81]:15-24, which van Ess takes as a later reference to one of the two visions mentioned in *sūrat al-Najm*.[41] Nevertheless, van Ess argued that, though Muslim orthodoxy, both Sunnī and Shī'ī, will come to identify the *mar'īy* or object of Muḥammad's visions there recorded as

---

[37] "Origins and Development," 3. See also ibid.

[38] *EI*² 8:649 s.v. Ru'yat Allāh.

[39] *Dieu à l'image de l'homme: les anthropomorphismes de la sunna et leur interprétation par les théologiens* (Paris: Cerf, 1997), 143ff; idem, "Au Cœur du *MI'RĀǦ*, un Hadith Interpolé," in Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi (ed.), *Le Voyage Initiatique en Terre D'Islam* (Louvain-Paris: Peeters, 1991) 67-82.

[40] *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra* (hereafter *TG*), 6. vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), 4:387-395; *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006) Chapter Two; "Le *MI'RĀǦ* et la Vision de Dieu dans les Premières Spéculations Théologiques en Islam," in Amir-Moezzi, *Le Voyage Initiatique*, 27-56; "Muhammad's Ascension to Heaven and the Beginning of Islamic Theology," unpublished lecture, 1998, University of Michigan; "Vision and Ascension: *Sūrat al-Najm* and its relationship with Muhammad's *mi'rāj*," *JQS* 1.1 (1999): 47-62; "The Youthful God: Anthropomorphism in Early Islam." The University Lecture in Religion at Arizona State University, March 3, 1988 (Tempe: Arizona State University, 1988).

[41] "Le *MI'RĀǦ* et la Vision de Dieu," 30-31; *Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 51-53, 69; "Vision and Ascension," 49-50.

Jibrīl, the Angel of Revelation, at a earlier period, i. e, the late Umayyad period, "a broad consensus" supported the opposite interpretation: Muḥammad saw God.[42] But this popular tradition of theophany and *visio Dei* will not survive the 'Mu'tazilī onslaught,' van Ess informs us. As a result of the Mu'tazilī critique Sunnism will acquire the anti-anthropomorphist sensibility of its theological enemy and jettison Muḥammad's Vision.[43] In doing this, however, Sunnism only followed Muḥammad's example, for he too jettisoned the 'Vision' when, in Medina surrounded by Jews who knew better, he learned that God could not be seen.[44]

In this dissertation we shall present evidence suggesting that this 'broad consensus' did indeed survive the 'Mu'tazilī onslaught.' We shall argue that anthropomorphic theophany and Muḥammad's *visio Dei* remained important, even *defining* aspects of traditionalist Sunnism long after the critique and subsequent fall of the Mu'tazila. We shall argue also that this tradition of anthropomorphic theophany likely originated with Muḥammad himself rather than with later theological reflection.[45] *Pace* van Ess and others, we shall

---

[42] Van Ess, "Vision and Ascension," 55; *Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 72;

[43] "Unrestricted anthropomorphism did not withstand the onslaught of the Mu'tazila: their theology in this respect shaped the Islamic identity until today." *EI²* 10:343 s.v. Tashbīh wa-Tanzīh by Josef van Ess [art.=341-344]. As a result of this new scandalizing of anthropomorphism the community came to interpret the visions as visions of the angel Jibrīl (*Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 55; "Muhammad's Ascension," 9; "Verbal inspiration? Lanquage and revelation in Classical Islamic theology," in Wild, *Qur'an as Text*, 187). Consequently, "l'ancienne exégèse anthropomorphiste [of Q 53:1-18] survécut, bein qu'en marge de la théologie officielle." "Le *MI'RĀĞ* et la Vision de Dieu," 41.

[44] "Le *MI'RĀĞ* et la Vision de Dieu," 48-49; *Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 52; "Vision and Ascension," 49-50.

[45] I assume here that the Qur'ān is the genuine document of Muḥammad's communications to his listeners, rather than a later compilation from diverse traditions emanating from a monotheistic sectarian milieu à la John Wansbrough (*Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977]; *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978]). See especially Angelika Neuwirth, "Meccan Texts – Medinan Additions? Politics and the Re-Reading of Liturgical Communications," in Rüdiger Arnzen and J. Thielmann (edd.), *Words, Texts, and Concepts Cruising the Mediterranean Sea: Studies on the sources, contents and influences of Islamic civilization and Arabic philosophy and science: Dedicated to Gerhard Endress on his sixty-fifth birthday* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004) 71-93; idem, *Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1981). On the various views regarding this question see Angelika Neuwirth "Qur'an and History – A Disputed Relationship: Some Reflections on Qur'anic History and History in the Qur'an," *JQS* 5 (2003): 1-18; Harald Motzki, "The Collection of the Qur'ān: A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments," *Der Islam* 78 (2001): 1-34; *What the Koran Really Says: language, text, and commentary*, edited with translations by Ibn Warraq (Amherst, N.Y. : Prometheus Books, 2002); Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: the beginnings of Islamic historical writing* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1998).

argue that there is no evidence that Muḥammad changed his position in Medina with regard to his visionary encounters.

1.3. Islam and the Semitic Monotheistic Tradition

Gerald R. Hawting, in taking up and elaborating upon John Wansbrough's insistence that emergent Islam be seen as a continuation of the Near Eastern Semitic monotheistic tradition,[46] makes an observation of great importance for this study:

> That Islam is indeed related to Judaism and Christianity as part of the Middle Eastern, Abrahamic or Semitic tradition of monotheism seems so obvious and is so often said that it might be wondered why it was thought necessary to repeat it. The reason is that although it is often said, acceptance of Islam as a representative of the monotheist religious tradition *is not always accompanied by willingness to think through the implications of the statement* (emphasis added).[47]

While both Muslim tradition and Western scholarship articulate a recognition of Islam's place within the Semitic monotheistic tradition, not only is there often an unwillingness to embrace the implications of this recognition, but there is also in practice the tendency to *distance* Islam from that tradition.[48] This is particularly the case regarding the Islamic *Gotteslehre*. Islam's characteristic doctrine of *mukhālafa*, "(divine) otherness," precludes the attribution to God of anything like corporeality, which is, as the Muʿtazila will argue, *conditio sine qua non* of visibility.[49] But such a model of divine transcendence is Hellenistic, not Semitic.[50] The Semitic, and the ancient Near Eastern (ANE) model in general, embraced both 'otherness' and corporeality/anthropomorphism: the gods were

---

[46] See especially his *Sectarian Milieu*.

[47] G.R. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) xi-xii.

[48] See Gerald Hawting, "John Wansbrough, Islam, and monotheism," *MTSR* 9 (1997), special issue, *Islamic Origins Reconsidered: John Wansbrough and the Study of Early Islam*, ed. Herbert Berg. 23-38; Chase F. Robinson, "Reconstructing Early Islam: Truth and Consequences," in Herbert Berg (ed.), *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins* (Leiden: Brill, 2003)102-134.

[49] J. Windrow Sweetman defined the principle of *mukhālafa*, to which "the majority (of Muslims) adhered": "all that is said of God is said with a difference and it has become proverbial that nothing the mind can devise can convey anything about Allah… there can be no doubt that the rejection of the corporeality of God is essential." *Islam and Christian Theology* 2 vols. (London: Lutterworth Press, 1947), 1. 2:34, 36. See also *EI²* 1:410f. s.v. Allāh by Gardet.

[50] See Excursus below.

'transcendently anthropomorphic,' to use Ronald Hendel's term.[51] That is to say, the gods possessed a form of human shape but of divine substance and quality.[52]

Ancient Israel stood in linguistic, cultural and religious continuity with her neighbors in the Levant.[53] And as Morton Smith pointed out in a classic article, Israel participated in "the common theology of the ancient Near East."[54] This means that the god(s) of Israel and the gods of the ANE actually differed less than has been supposed.[55] Like the gods of

---

[51] Ronald S.Hendel, "Aniconism and Anthropomorphism in Ancient Israel," in Karel van der Toorn (ed.), *The Image and the Book. Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (CBET 21; Leuven: Uitgewerig Peeters, 1997) 205-228.

[52] On transcendent anthropomorphism in ancient Near Eastern and Classical tradition see Hendel, "Aniconism and Anthropomorphism"; Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Dim Body, Dazzling Body," in Michel Feher, Ramona Naddaff and Nadia Tazi (edd.), *Fragments for a History of the Human Body: Part One* (New York: Zone, 1989): 19-47. On ANE anthropomorphism generally see Esther J. Hamori, "'When Gods Were Men': Biblical Theophany and Anthropomorphic Realism" (Ph.D. diss. New York University, 2004) 191-235; Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 27-35; Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: the 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1993) 3-39; Georges Roux, *Ancient Iraq*, Third Edition (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1992) 85-98; W.G. Lambert, "Ancient Mesopotamian Gods: Superstition, Philosophy, Theology," *RHR* 204 (1990): 115-30; Maryo Christina Annette Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1990; but on Korpel's forced attempt to impute metaphoric intentions to the Canaanites see the review by Marvin H. Pope in *UF* 22 [1990]:497-502); Marvin H. Pope and Jeffrey H. Tigay, "A Description of Baal," *UF* 3 (1971): 117-129; James B. Pritchard, "The Gods and their Symbols," in idem, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures, Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton university Press, 1954), 160-85. Edwin M. Yamauchi, in his artcle "Anthropomorphism in Ancient Religions," *BSac* 125 (1968): 29-44, adequately understanding neither ancient Near Eastern nor Israelite anthropomorphism, overstated the differences between the two. See also his "Anthropomorphism in Hellenism and in Judaism," *BSac* 127 (1970): 212-22.

[53] Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2nd Edition (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2002) 19-31; Michael David Coogan, "Canaanite Origins and Lineage: Reflections on the Religion of Ancient Israel," in Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (edd.), *Ancient Israelite religion: essays in honor of Frank Moore Cross* (Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1987) 115-124; John Day, "Ugarit and the Bible: Do They Presuppose the Same Canaanite Mythology and Religion?" in George J. Brooke, Adrian H.W. Curtis and John F. Healey (edd.), *Ugarit and the Bible: proceedings of the International Symposium on Ugarit and the Bible, Manchester, September 1992* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1994) 35-52.

[54] "The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East," *JBL* 71 (1952): 135-147.

[55] Bernhard Lang, *The Hebrew God: Portrait of an Ancient Deity* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2002); Nicholas Wyatt, "Degrees of Divinity: Some mythical and ritual aspects of West Semitic kingship," *UF* 31 (1999): 853-87; Edward L Greenstein, "The God of Israel and the Gods of Canaan: How Different were they?" *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, July 29-August 5, 1997*, Division A (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1999) 47-58; J. J. M. Roberts, "Divine Freedom and Cultic Manipulation in Israel and Mesopotamia," in idem, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Collected Essays* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2002) 72-85; E. Theodore Mullen, Jr. *The Assembly of the Gods: The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (Harvard Semitic Monographs 24; Chico: Scholars Press, 1980).

the ANE, the god(s) of Israel and biblical tradition was anthropomorphic.[56] This ancient Near Eastern/Semitic transcendent anthropomorphism stands in stark contrast to normative Islamic notions of divine transcendence. But the latter, as Fazlur Rahman well pointed out, "does not emerge from the Qur'an, but from later theological development in Islam."[57] This 'later theological development' included the appropriation of Hellenistic concepts in order to interpret the Qur'ān and the Sunna, particularly the statements about God[58] and Duad Rahbar correctly drew attention to the "difference between Hellenized Islamic theology…and the simple Semitic atmosphere of the world-view of the Qur'an."[59] This disparity between Semetic and Islamic notions of divine transcendence becomes more acute when one considers the insistence, by Islamic tradition and Western scholarship, that the deity is the same in the three monotheistic traditions: "The monotheists not only worship one God; he is the same god for all. Whether called Yahweh or Elohim, God the Father or Allah, it is the selfsame deity who created the

---

[56] On biblical anthropomorphism and an anthropomorphic deity see below.

[57] Fazlur Rahman, "The Qur'ānic Concept of God, the Universe and Man," *IS* 6(1967): 2 [art.=1-19].

[58] Morris S. Seal, *Muslim Theology: A Study of Origins with Reference to the Church Fathers* (London: Luzac and Company Limited, 1964); R.M. Frank, "The Neoplantonism of Ǧahm Ibn Ṣafwân," *Mus* 78 (1965): 395-424; idem, "The Divine Attributes According to the Teachings of Abu L-Hudhayl Al-'Allaf," *Le Museon* 82 (1969): 451-506; Binyamin Abrahamov, " 'Abbāb ibn Sulaymān on God's Transcendence, Some Notes." *Der Islam* 71 (1994): 109-120; idem, "Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the Knowability of God's Essence and Attributes," *Arabica* 49 (2002): 204-230; Ian Richard Netton, *Allāh Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology*. (London, New York: Routledge, 1989). On Hellenism and Islam see further F.E.Peters, "Hellenism and the Near East," *BA* (Winter 1983): 33-39; idem, *Allah's Commonwealth. A History of Islam in the Near East 600-1200 A.D.* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973); idem, "The Origins of Islamic Platonism: The School Tradition," in Parviz Morewedge (ed.). *Islamic Philosophical Theology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979) 14-45; Gustave E. von Grunbaum, "Islam and Hellenism," in idem, *Islam and Medieval Hellenism: Social and Cultural Perspectives* (ed. Dunning S. Wilson; London: Variorum Reprints, 1976) 21-27; Averil Cameron, "The Eastern Provinces in the 7th Century A.D. Hellenism and the Emergence of Islam," in S. Said (ed.) *Hellenismos: Quelques jalons pour une histoire de l'identité grecque: actes du Colloque de Strasbourg, 25-27 octobre 1989* (Leiden ; New York : E.J. Brill, 1991) 287-313; W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: an Extended Survey* (2nd Edition; Edinburgh : University Press, 1985): 37-49; G.W. Bowersock, "Hellenism and Islam," in idem, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Jerome Lectures 18; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990) 71-82; W.F. Albright, "Islam and the Religions of the Ancient Orient," *JAOS* 60 (1940): 283-301. On the early orthodox rejection of Greek scientific works thought to be "contaminated" by theological error see Ignaz Goldziher, "The Attitude of Orthodox Islam Toward the 'Ancient Sciences," in Merlin L. Swartz (ed.), *Studies on Islam* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) 185-215.

[59] Daud Rahbar, "Relation of Muslim Theology to the Qur'ān," *MW* 51 (1961): 45[art.=44-49].

12

world out of nothing."[60] What then is the relation between the anthropomorphic and visible Yahweh-El[61] and the incorporeal and invisible Allāh?

Part of the reason this disparity is rarely noticed or mentioned[62] is because there is operating certain misperceptions regarding the monotheistic *Gottesauffassung*,[63] and these misperceptions inform the study of Islamic theology. Take for example Ritter's statement that for Islam "God reveals Himself to His prophets through acts of hearing, not through visions," and that Islam's "horror of the idea of a visible form of God is a Jewish legacy."[64] Relevant too is W.M. Watt's contention that the early Meccan Muslims abandoned their initial belief that Muḥammad saw God because

> in the course of time, through contact with Jews and Christians and in other ways, the Muslims would realize that it was widely believed that God could not be seen by man in the world-as (Sura) 6.103 puts it, 'sight reaches him (God) not'-and would therefore interpret the figure seen (in *Sūrat al-Najm* 1-18)…as that of an angel.[65]

Implied in both statements is the common belief that in Jewish and Christian tradition God is incorporeal, and therefore invisible.[66] For sure, this is an accurate reading of post-Maimonidean Judaism and hellenized Christianity; but it is certainly a mischaracterization of most forms of Second- and Post-Temple Judaism and early Christianity, Jewish and otherwise.[67] And as will be demonstrated in the first part of this

---

[60] F.E. Peters, *The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, Islam* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004) 1. See also Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam* (New York: Paragon House, 1994) xviii: "The Koran, the Hadith, and the whole Islamic tradition maintain that the God of the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims is a single God." This insistence is of course qur'ānic: See 29:46; 42:14, 2:130-136

[61] See Chapter II below.

[62] But cf. Peters, *Children of Abraham*, 2.

[63] Murata and Chittick's general observation (*Vision*, 46) is therefore a particularly apt one here: "It is true that the Koran's view of things has a deep kinship with both the Jewish and Christian world views, but most people in the modern world have little understanding of those world views either."

[64] *Das Meer Der Seele*, 439 (=*The Ocean of the Soul*, 453).

[65] W.N. Watt, *Islamic Revelation in the Modern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1969) 13.

[66] See Boyarin's discussion, "The Eye in the Torah."

[67] On divine corporeality, visibility and theophany in Rabbinic Judaism see Jacob Neusner, *The Incarnation of God: The Character of Divinity in Formative Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988); idem, "Conversation in Nauvoo about the Corporeality of God," *BYU Studies* 36 (1996-97): 7-30; Boyarin, "Eye in the Torah";

dissertation, it is patently false in regards the biblical *Gotteslehren* in their many and at times divergent articulations.[68]

1.4. The Qur'ān and Biblical Tradition

"to understand the Qur'ān outside of the Biblical tradition...would seem in the end to place the researcher in a rather ridiculous position."[69]

Islam is, among other things for sure, clearly a formulation of ancient Near Eastern mythological tradition[70] and Andrew Rippin rightly insists that the Qur'ān in particular

---

David H. Aaron, "Imagery of the Divine and the Human: On the Mythology of Genesis Rabba 8 § 1," *JJTP* 5 (1995): 1-62; Arthur Green, "The Children in Egypt and the Theophany at the Sea," *Judaism* 24 (1975): 446-456; Meir Bar-Ilan, "The Hand of God: A Chapter in Rabbinic Anthropomorphism," in Gabrielle Sed-Rajna (ed.), *Rashi 1040-1990 Hommage à Ephraïm E. Urbach: Congrès européen des Études juives* (Paris: Patrimoines, 1993) 321-335; Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines. Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), esp. 13-51; Alon Goshen Gottstein, "The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature," *HTR* 87 (1994): 171-195; Jacob Z. Lauterbach, "A Significant Controversy Between the Sadducees and the Pharisees," *HUCA* 4 (1927): 173-205; Louis Finkelstein, "The Oldest Midrash: Pre-Rabbinic Ideals and Teachings in the Passover Haggadah," *HTR* 3 (1937): 309-312 [art.=291-317]; Artur Marmerstein *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God: Essays in Anthropomorphism* (New York: Ktav, 1937); Gilbert S. Rosenthal, "Omnipotence, Omniscience and a Finite God," *Judaism* 39 (1990): 55-72; in Jewish Christianity and Gnosticism see Gilles Quispel, "Ezekiel 1:26 in Jewish Mysticism," *VC* 34 (1980): 1-13; Jarl Fossum, "Jewish-Christian Christology and Jewish Mysticism," *VC* 37 (1983): 26-287; idem, "The Magharians: A Pre-Christian Jewish Sect and its Significance for the Study of Gnosticism and Christianity," *Henoch* 9 (1987): 303-343; April D. De Conick, *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996). On divine corporeality in the Church see Roland J. Teske, S.J., "The Aim of Augustine's Proof That God truly Is," *IPQ* 26 (1986): 253-268, esp. 255-257; David L. Paulsen, "Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses," *HTR* 83 (1990): 105-116; idem, "Reply to Kim Paffenroth's Comment," *HTR* 86 (1993): 235-39; idem, "The Doctrine of Divine Embodiment: Restoration, Judeo-Christian, and Philosophical Perspectives," *BYU Studies* 35 (1995-96): 7-94; Carl W. Griffin and David L. Paulsen, "Augustine and the Corporeality of God," *HTR* 95 (2002): 97-118. On *Visio Dei* in Christian tradition see further below.

[68] As we hope to show, E, J, P and the Deuteronomists explicitly or implicitly recognized the visual theophany, as did the Prophets and Pslamists.

[69] A. Rippin, "The Qur'ān as Literature: Perils, Pitfalls and Prospects," *BBSMES* 10 (1983): 45 [art.=38-47].

[70] "The Qur'ân is not only a genizah of various trajectories of biblical and near eastern *aggadot*, but also a kaleidoscope which gives these trajectories a new vision": Aaron Hughes, "The stranger at the sea: Mythopoesis in the Qur'ân and early tafsîr," *SR* 32 (2003): 266 [art.=61-279]; "It is no deprecation of Muḥammad's religious fervour to show his deep roots in ancient Near Eastern tradition; it is on the contrary, a tribute to his genius which enabled him to pour new wine into old skins. Neither need we assume direct borrowing from contemporary sources. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as Gnosticism and Mandean thought drew their inspiration from the same reservoir of ancient beliefs, each filling them with new meanings through their own peculiar genius." Ilse Lichtenstadter, "Origin and Interpretation of Some Qur'ānic Symbols," *Studi Orientalistic in Onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida* 2 (1956): 79-80 [art.=58-80]. On Islam and ancient Near Eastern mythological tradition see also idem, "Origin and Interpretation of Some Koranic Symbols," in George Makdisi (ed.), *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of*

14

be studied in the context of the overall Near Eastern religious milieu which preceded Islam's emergence.[71] It is specifically the 'oriental monotheism,' to use John Wansbrough's characterization of the ancient Near Eastern biblical tradition, to which Islam and the Qur'ān are heir,[72] a point the latter concedes.[73] As Roberto Tottoli has emphasized, a number of Qur'ānic verses (e.g. 4:163; 42:13; 3:84) present Muḥammad as

Hamilton A.R. Gibb (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965) 426-36; Geo Widengren, *Muhammad, the Apostle of God, and His Ascension (King and Savor Vol. 5)* (Uppsala: A.-B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln, and Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1955); Cesar E. Dubler, "Survivances de l'ancien Orient dans l'Islam (Considerations Generales)," *SI* 7 (1957): 47-75. See also Jonathan P. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and below n. 71.

[71] Rippin, "The Qur'ān as Literature," 45. See also idem, "God," in Andrew Rippin (ed.), *Blackwell Companion to the Qur'ān* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2006) 225. This point was made as well by Umar F. Abd-Allāh, "The Perceptible and the Unseen: The Qur'anic Conception of Man's Relationship to God and Realities Beyond Human Perception," in Spencer J. Palmer (ed.), *Mormons & Muslims: Spiritual Foundations and Modern Manifestations* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 2002) 161 [art.=153-204]: "Accurate understanding of the pre-Islamic background within which Islām arose is essential to the full understanding of the Islāmic religion." See also Mondher Sfar, *Le Coran, la Bible et l'Orient ancien* (Paris: Cassini, 1997). Though ancient Arabia is sometimes thought of as religiously isolated from the ANE, archeological and epigraphic evidence for North and South Arabia indicates otherwise. As relatively scant as this evidence is, nevertheless it clearly shows pre-Islamic Arabia to have been within the 'mythological orbit' of the Near East, particularly in terms of motifs of the gods. For example, motifs associated with the cult of baetyls; the motif of the deity and his three hypostatic daughters; the motif of the winged-disk and its tauroform compliment; the divine triad; and of the anthropomorphic god surrounded by his divine assembly, all characteristic of the ANE mythic tradition, were also part of the Arabian mythic tradition as well. See e.g. Werner Daum, *Ursemitische Religion* (Stuttgart; Berlin; Köln; Mainz: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1985); Hildegard Lewy, "Origin and Significance of the *Mâgên Dâwîd*: A Comparative Study of the Ancient Religions of Jerusalem and Mecca," *Archiv Orientalni* 18 (1950) 330-365; Ult Oldenburg, "Above the Stars of El: El in Ancient South Arabic Religion" *ZAW* 82 (1970): 187-208; Javier Teixidor, *The Pagan God: Popular Religion in the Greco-Roman Near East* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977); Cyrus H. Gordon, "The Daughters of Baal and Allah," *MW* 33 (1943): 50-51; Stephanie Dalley, "The God Salmu and the Winged Disk," *Iraq* 48 (1986): 85-101.

[72] On the mythological assonance among the three Semitic religions see e.g. A.J. Wensinck, *The Ideas of Western Semites Concerning the Navel of the Earth* (Afdeeling Letterkunde, 1916); idem, *The Ocean in the Literature of Western Semites* (Afdeeling Letterkunde, 1918); idem, *Tree and Bird as Cosmological Symbols in Western Asia* (Afdeeling Letterkunde, 1921).

[73] As John C. Reeves noted ("Preface," in idem [ed.], *Bible and Qur'ān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality* [Leiden: Brill, 2004] ix) the Qur'ān "places itself within the biblical world of discourse". See also Daniel A. Madigan, *The Qur'ān's Self—Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001) 193: "What is often overlooked in discussing the relationship of Islam to earlier religious traditions is that the Qur'ān in effect chooses to define itself in their terms." Wansbrough (*Qur'ānic Studies*, 20) points out that the Qur'ān establishes its relevance and authority by situating itself fully within the context of 'generic scripture."

"the legitimate continuator of the Biblical tradition and…the sole heir of the progeny of the Israelite prophets".[74]

How is one to define the Qur'ān's relation to biblical tradition? We encounter within the former so many biblical characters, themes and parallel narratives that it indeed seems that Islam's scripture "could not possibly exist without its scriptural predecessors as subtext."[75] The Qur'ān's "extremely referential nature" can be seen as an acknowledgement of this biblical subtext. That is to say, instead of reproducing biblical narratives the Qur'ān often gives a 'truncated' version or makes an obscure allusion to a narrative in such a way as to presume on the part of its audience knowledge of the fuller narrative and details.[76] But the parallels are not usually exact or the allusions 'accurate' from the perspective of the biblical text.[77] Nineteenth and early twentieth century Orientalists accounted for these divergent parallels by assuming Muḥammad's reliance on Jewish or Christian tutors whose lessons Muḥammad received poorly.[78] A newer approach, however, suggests that these 'biblical materials' in the Qur'ān are indebted to

---

[74] Robert Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qur'ān and Muslim Literature* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2002) 7.

[75] Reuven Firestone, "The Qur'ān and the Bible: Some Modern Studies of Their Relationship," in Reeves, *Bible and Qur'ān*, 2-3. See also Thomas J. O'Shaughnessy S.J., "God's Throne and the Biblical Symbolism of the Qur'ān," *Numen* 20 (1973): 202-221; Dwight Baker, "Islam and the Judaeo-Christian Tradition: The Significance of Qur'anic and Biblical Parelles (sic)," *Bangalore Theological Forum* 14 (1982): 44-68.

[76] Sidney H. Griffith, "The Gospel, the Qur'ān, and the Presentation of Jesus in al-Ya'qūbī's *Ta'rīkh*," in Reeves, *Bible and Qur'ān*,134; Firestone, "The Qur'ān and the Bible," 3; idem, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany: SUNY, 1990) 6; Andrew Rippin, "Interpreting the Bible through the Qur'ān," in G. Hawting and A. Shareef (edd.), *Approaches to the Qur'ān* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) 250-51 [art.=249-59].

[77] For an illustrative case study see Muhib O. Opeloye, "Confluence and Conflict in the Qur'ānic and Biblical Accounts of the Life of Prophet Mūsā," *Islamochristiana* 16 (1990): 25-41.

[78] Julian Obermann pointed out the "gross discrepancies, inaccuracies, and delusions" Muḥammad invariably exhibits when treating Old Testament data: "Koran and Agada: The Events at Mount Sinai," *AJSL* 58 (1941): 25 [art.=23-48]. See also Abraham Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?* (1835), translated into English as *Judaism and Islam* (Madras, 1933); Charles C. Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam* (New York: Bloch, 1933); S.D. Goitein, "Muhammad's Inspiration by Judaism," *JJS* 9 (1958): 149-162; Richard Bell, "Muhammad's Knowledge of the Old Testament," in C.J.M. Weir (ed.), *Presentation Volume to William Barron Stevenson* (Glasgow: Glasgow University, 1945) 1-20; idem, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment* (London, 1926); Arthur Jeffery, "Had Muhammad a Scripture Teacher?" in George Livingston Robinson (ed.), *From the Pyramids to Paul* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1935) 95-118.

local oral, intertextual traditions,[79] not the biblical text, and that the Bible and Qur'ān both "share and exploit a common layer of discourse".[80] Underlying such an approach is the insight from the literary-critical study of the Hebrew Bible that the *textus receptus* (MT) is but one 'crystallization' of ancient oral tradition, other 'crystallizations' found in the Versions[81] as well as extracanonical, exegetical, and apocryphal biblically affiliated literatures (so-called 're-written' Bibles).[82] All of these crystallizations, including the *textus receptus*, represent 'versions of the Bible.' On this reading, both the Bible and the Qur'ān, as well as extracanonical biblically affiliated literatures,[83] are distinct reifications of traditional lore circulating within a shared discourse environment.[84] These studies suggest that the qur'ānic divergences from the biblical text evince authentic Jewish and Christian extracanonical lore occasionally preserved only in the Qur'ān, rather than Muḥammad's having 'gotten it wrong.'[85] It seems clear also that at times the (chronologically) later

---

[79] On the overwhelmingly oral culture of the pre-Islamic Hijaz see Michael Swettler, *The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1978).

[80] Vernon K. Robbins and Gordon D. Newby, "The Relation of the Qur'ān and the Bible," in Reeves, *Bible and Qur'ān*, 42; Reuven Firestone, "Abraham's Journey to Mecca in Islamic Exegesis: A Form-Critical Study of a Tradition," *SI* 76 (1992): 5-24; idem, *Journeys*; Marilyn R. Waldman, "New Approaches to 'Biblical' Materials in the Qur'ān," *MW* 75 (1985): 1-16.

[81] On the ancient Versions of the Bible see *ABD* 6:787-813 sv. Versions, Ancient.

[82] S. Talmon "Textual Criticism: The Ancient Versions," in A.D.H. Mayes (ed.), *Text in Context: Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 157; Eugene Ulrich, "The Text of the Hebrew Scriptures at the Time of Hillel and Jesus," in A. Lemaire (ed.), *Congress Volume Basel 2001* (Leiden: Brill, 2002) 86-108; idem, "The Bible in the Making: The Scriptures Found at Qumran," in Peter W. Flint (ed.), *The Bible at Qumran: Text, Shape, and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids Michigan and Cambidge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001) 51-66; idem, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company and Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1999). See also Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press and Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1992); idem, "Textual Criticism (OT)," *ABD* 6:393-412.

[83] On 'biblically affiliated literatures' see Talmon "Textual Criticism."

[84] On the Qur'ān as such a 'crystalization' see John C. Reeves, "Toward a Rapprochement between Bible and Qur'ān," *Religious Studies News-SBL Edition* 2.9 (December 2001) at http://www.sbl-site.org/Newsletter/12_2001/ReevesFull.htm.

[85] Madigan, *The Qur'ān's Self–Image*, 210: "the way the Qur'ān alludes to earlier scriptures has long been recognized as incompatible with actual textual dependence. These allusions reflect, rather, a familiarity with oral tradition, both canonical and extra-canonical. In some cases the allusions may even contain remnants of traditions now lost that were once part of the common stock of Judaic oral literature." See also Griffith, "The Gospel, the Qur'ān, and the Presentation of Jesus," 134-5; Reuven Firestone, "Comparative

reification, the Qur'ān, is in conversation with and even comments on the earlier reifications or crystallizations (the Bible and biblically affiliated literatures).[86] The Qur'ān, therefore did not 'borrow' from the Bible or biblical literature, rather they both "tap and channel a rich reservoir of traditional lore."[87]

From a Qu'ānic/Islamic perspective, the Bible and affiliated literature represent imperfect 'versions of the Qur'ān,' the heavenly Qur'ān from which the earthly Qur'ān as well as the prior scriptures (*Tawrāt* [Torah], *Zabur* [Psalms], *Injīl* [Gospel]) derived; these are all revealed 'portions' of the 'Mother of the Book,' *Umm al-Kitāb* in God's possession (43:4; cf. 56:78, 85:22).[88] The parallels between the Qur'ān and Bible/biblical literature are therefore to be expected due to the texts common origin in this heavenly Qur'ān.[89] The discrepancies, on the other hand, are attributed to the imperfect reception history of the two prior 'communities of the Book,' which are charged with altering their scriptures.[90] Current literary-critical studies of the Hebrew Bible (hereafter HB)

Studies in Bible and Qur'ān: A Fresh Look at Genesis 22 in Light of Sura 37," in Benjamin H. Hary, John L. Hayes and Fred Astern (edd.), *Judaism and Islam: Boundaries, Communication and Interaction. Essays in Honor of William M. Brinner* (Leiden: Brill, 2000) 169-84.

[86] John C. Reeves has uncovered some intriguing intertextual strands that subtly join Genesis, the *Book of Jubilees, I Enoch*, and the Qur'ān: "Toward a Rapprochement"; idem, "Some Explorations," 43-60. On the Qur'ān as commentary on the Bible and related literatures see Griffith, "The Gospel, the Qur'ān, and the Presentation of Jesus," 133-38; Ida J. Glaser, "Qur'anic Challenges for Genesis," *JSOT* 75 (1997): 3-19; M.S. Seal, "How the Qur'an Interprets the Bible," in idem, *Qur'an and Bible: Studies in Interpretation and Dialogue* (London: Croom Helm, 1984) 71-77.

[87] John C. Reeves, "Some Explorations of Intertwining of Bible and Qur'ān," in idem, *Bible and Qur'ān*, 43; Tryggve Kronholm, "Dependence and Prophetic Originality in the Koran," *Orientalia Suecana* 31-32 (1982-1983): 47-70.

[88] *EQ* 2:412-414 s.v. Heavenly Book by Robet Wisnovsky; Arthur Jeffery, "The Qur'ān as Scripture," *MW* 40 (1950): 41-55. On the history-of-religions background of Islam's 'heavenly book' see also Geo Widengren, "Holy Book and Holy Tradition in Islam," in F.F. Bruce and E.G. Rupp (edd.), *Holy Book and Holy Tradition. International Colloquium Held in the Faculty of Theology University of Manchester* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968); idem, *The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book (King and Saviour III)* (Uppsala: A.B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln and Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1950).

[89] On the Qur'ān as the 'New Torah' in qur'ānic/early Islamic tradition see Brannon Wheeler, " 'This is the Torah That God Sent Down to Moses': Some Early Islamic Views of the Qur'an and Other Revealed Books," in Vassilios Christides and Theodore Papadopoullos (edd.), *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Graeco-Oriental and African Studies Nicosia 30 April – 5 May 1996* (Nicosia: Bureau of the History of Cyprus, 2000) 571-604.

[90] M. Accad, "Corruption and/or Misinterpretation of the Bible: The Story of the Islâmic Usage of *Tahrîf*," *Theological Review* 24 (2003): 67-97; Abdullah Saeed, "The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scriptures," *MW* 92 (2002): 419-436; *EI²* 10: 111-12 s.v. Tahrīf by Hava Lazarus-Yahfeh; idem, *Intertwined*

encourage us to understand 'biblical tradition' as much broader than the canonical Bible and include within it the latter as well as the extracanonical literatures. The Qur'ān apparently agrees. The parallels with biblical materials are more often with extracanonical Jewish and Christian apocrapha and exegetical literature than with the Bible proper,[91] and the Qur'ān seems to actually quote the apocraphal *Book of Enoch* as scripture.[92]

Thus, whether one privileges the Western or Qur'ānic/Islamic explanation of these parallels, the Bible and Qur'ān are understood as literary concretizations of a shared oral tradition: either traditional lore (Western) or revelatory discourse (qur'ānic). This clarification of the Qur'ān's relation to biblical tradition has great interpretative value. Hava Lazarus-Yafeh keenly observed that:

> it is impossible to understand (Islamic) literature properly without paying serious attention to its various predecessors...One should not think in terms of influences or cultural borrowing only, however. It has been said that the Near East resembles a palimpsest, layer upon layer, tradition upon tradition, intertwined to the extent that one cannot really grasp one without the other, certainly not the later without the earlier, but often also not the earlier without considering the shapes it took later.[93]

Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992) Chapter Two; Jean-Marie Gaudeul and Robert Casper, "Textes de la tradition musulmane concernant le Taḥrīf (falsification) des Ecritures," *Islamochristiana* 6 (1980): 61-104.

[91] Griffith, "The Gospel, the Qur'ān, and Jesus," 134-35; Firestone, *Journeys*, 156; Bernhard Heller, "The Relation of the Aggada to Islamic Legends," *MW* 24 (1934): 281 [art.=281-86]: "The Koran...knows less of the Bible than of the Agada-in fact the Koran sees the Bible in the light of the Agada"; Julian Obermann, "Islamic Origins: A Study in Background and Foundation," in Nabih Amin Faris (ed.), *The Arab Heritage* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944) 94-6: "(Muhammad's) 'recounting' of biblical materials in noncanonical literature so often and so closely that his knowledge of this literature, especially of rabbinical Agada, would seem to be astonishingly wide, solid, and versatile. Yet, it is out of the question that Muhammad had direct access to the written works of the Agada or any other branch of postbiblical literature...To the extent...to which (the Koran) 'recounts' biblical material and embodies a mass of Jewish and Christian lore, the ultimate sources of its substance must be looked for not in Scripture itself but rather in the postcanonical periphery of Scripture: in the Agada, the Targum, the Midrash of the Jews, and the apocryphal, patristic, homiletical and liturgical literature of the Christians." See also idem, "Koran and Agada."

[92] 19:56-57. See Reeves, "Some Explorations," 44.

[93] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, 4.

The Bible and Qur'ān, as alternative crystallizations of 'biblical tradition,' may therefore shed a mutually illuminating light on each other. [94] It will be argued here that, indeed, the biblical and the ancient Near Eastern theophany traditions can shed light on the qur'ānic allusions to and later Islamic discussions of theophany and *visio Dei*.

---

[94] Sidney H. Griffith ("The Gospel, the Qur'ān, and the Presentation of Jesus," 135) has well argued that the intertextual character of the biblical and qur'ānic narratives suggests that the Bible's main characters as they function in the several religious communities are not narratively complete either in the Bible or in the Qur'ān. These two sources, as well as the earlier extracanonical biblical literature, are all part of the fuller narrative. See also Reeves, "Toward a Rapprochement." On the great possibility of Islamic tradition shedding light on biblical materials see esp. David J. Halperin, "The Hidden Made Manifest: Muslim Traditions and the 'Latent Content' of Biblical and Rabbinic Stories," in David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman and Avi Hurvitz (edd.), *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995) 581-594.

Chapter II:

Seeing and Not Seeing God in Biblical Tradition

The God of the world's great religions - all-powerful, all-knowing, invisible, and omnipresent - has been a staple of Western thought for some time. Yet…this God is not the same as the God of most of the Bible, the God who appeared to Abraham, Moses, and other biblical heroes. That God, the 'God of Old,' was actually perceived in a very different way…

The God of Old was not invisible or abstract. He *appeared* to people-usually unexpectedly; He was not sought out. He was not even recognized. Many biblical stories thus center on a 'moment of confusion,' in which an encounter with God is first mistaken for an ordinary, human meeting. In the biblical world…the spiritual and the material overlapped: everyday perception was in constant danger of sliding into something else, stark but oddly familiar. God was always standing just behind the curtain of ordinary reality.[95]

2.1. *Deus Invisibilis* in the Hebrew Bible?

It is commonly assumed that the God of biblical tradition is incorporeal and (therefore) invisible. J. Behm, writing in the ***Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*** argued: "In the OT it is a fundamentally alien and impossible thought that God should have a form open to human perception, or that he reveal himself in sensual form."[96] Gerhard von Rad claimed also: "As everywhere attested in the OT, God is intrinsically invisible."[97] In his 1931 study, "*Deus Invisibilis*: Eine Studie Zur Biblischen Gottesvorstellung," Erich Fascher set out to show that the New Testament's θεος αορατος/*deus aoratos* (Jhn 1:18, 1 Tim 6, 16), which for Fascher is "der Gott, welcher nie zu sehen war und ist und welcher von Menschen aus überhaupt nicht gesehen werden

---

[95] James L. Kugel, *the God of Old: Inside the Lost World of the Bible* (New York: The Free Press, 2003), front jacket flap.

[96] *TDNT* 4:749 s.v. μορφη by Behm.

[97] *TDNT* 238 s.v. כבוד in the OT by Von Rad.

kann,"[98] is present already in the HB: "Es entspricht der „Transzendenz" Gottes und

dem Deus invisibilis schon im A.T., daß man ihn „hört", aber nicht „sieht"…"[99] This list

could go on, [100] though it should not suggest unanimity.[101]   More recently a number of

scholars have suggested that these views are anachronistic. "Clearly modern ambivalence

about seeing God is here projected onto the ancient myths" of the HB, which otherwise

affirms divine visibility.[102] This modern ambivalence is rooted in the Greek philosophic

rejection of anthropomorphism,[103] and is encountered already in the Greek translation of

---

[98] "the God who was and is never to be seen and who cannot be seen by humans at all." Erich Fascher, "*Deus Invisibilis*: Eine Studie Zur Biblischen Gottesvorstellung," *Marburger theologische Studien* 1 (1931): 44 [art.=40-77].

[99] "It speaks of the 'transcendent God' and the *Deus Invisibilis* already in the Old Testament, whom man 'hears' but doesn't 'see'…" Ibid., 55.

[100] See for example Ricahrd Elliot Friedman, *The Hidden Face of God* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995) 12: "The consistent biblical conception of God is that God cannot possibly be seen by a human"; Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence: Towards a New Biblical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 112: "The invisibility of a God who yet speaks remains the cardinal tenet of a Hebraic theology of presence."

[101] T.K. Cheyne and J. Sutherland Black (edd.), *Encyclopædia Biblica: A Critical Dictionary of the Literary, Political and Religious History, the Archæology, Geography and Natural History of the Bible* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1903) 4:5033 s.v. "Theophany": "The invisibility of God formed no part of early Hebrew belief"; Rudolf Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting* (1956, reprint; New York: New American Library, 1974) 22-23: "God is not invisible to the senses as a matter of principle. Indeed, Hebrew has no word for 'invisible'."; Helmer Ringgren, *Israelite Religion* (London: SPCK, 1966), 69f: "It is stated a few times that no man can look upon God (Exod. 33:20; Judg. 13:22); but this does not mean that God has no form, but rather that his divinity is so terrible that whoever sees him cannot remain alive (cf. Judg. 6:22; Deut. 5:26). Likewise the statement that God is spirit and not flesh (cf. Isa. 31:3) can hardly mean that God is invisible; it rather indicates that he is totally different from man (cf. Num. 23:19)"; George Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1972), 169: "The statements that no man can see him (Ex.33:20) and that he is spirit, not flesh (Isa.31:3) of course do not mean that he is formless or invisible, but rather that man cannot endure the sight of him (cf. Judge. 13:22) and that, in contrast to transitory 'flesh,' he possesses an eternal vitality."

[102] Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, "The Averted Gaze" in idem, *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994) 69. See also Kugel, *the God of Old*, 99.

[103] On the philosophic critique of Homeric anthropomorphism see *ER* 1:318-19 s.v. Anthropomorphism by R.J. Zwi Werblowsky; Frances M. Young, "The God of the Greeks and the Nature of Religious Language," in William R. Schoedel and Robert L. Wilekn (edd.), *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition. In Honorem Robert M. Grant* (Theologie historique 53; Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1979) 45-74; Harold W. Attridge, "The Philosophic Critique of Religion under the Early Empire," *ANRW* 16 (1980): 45-78; Michael Eisenstadt, "Xenophanes' Proposed Reform of Greek Religion," *Hermes* 102 (1974): 142-150; Werner Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers. The Gifford Lectures, 1936* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1947) Chap. III.

22

the HB (the Septuagint, hereafter LXX).[104] But according to Daniel Boyarin and others, "*only* under Hellenic influence do Jewish cultures exhibit any anxiety about the corporeality or visibility of God; the biblical and Rabbinic religions were quite free of such influences and anxieties (emphasis original)."[105]

Boyarin is undoubtedly correct, though he overstates his case. While the *Deus philosophorum* with its characteristic incorporeality and ontological invisibility is foreign to the biblical tradition,[106] some measure of anxiety over *visio Dei* is not.[107] Elliot Wolfson, pointing to the multivocality of the HB, even suggests that "a fundamental tension emerges from the various literary units of the Bible" with respect to the question of anthropomorphism and divine visibility.[108] A number of texts appear to be categorical denials of divine visibility (Deut. 4:12, 15-19; Ex. 33:18-23; 1 Kgs 19:9-18), while others seem just as clear in their affirmation (Ex. 24:9-11; Num. 12:8; Isa. 6; I Kings 22; Ezek. 1). Thus, Christi Dianne Bamford in her study on "Seeing God in the Hebrew Bible," reasons:

---

[104] Anthony Hanson, "The Treatment in the LXX of the Theme of Seeing God," in Brooke and Lindars (edd.), *Septuagint, Scrolls, and Cognate Writings. Papers Presented to the International Symposium on the Septuagint and its Relations to the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992. 557-568; Charles T. Fritsch, "A Study of the Greek Translation of the Hebrew Verbs 'To See' with Deity as Subject or Object," *Eretz-Israel* 16 (1982): 51-56.

[105] Boyarin, "Eye in the Torah," 533. See also David Stern, "*Imitatio Hominis*: Anthropomorphism and the Character(s) of God in Rabbinic Literature," *Prooftexts* 12 (1992): 153: "The first unequivocal evidence in Jewish literature for discomfort with anthropomorphism - that is, the first time that anthropomorphism appears as a problem, as a source of error and misinterpretation-comes only in the early Middle Ages, with Saadiah Gaon and the arrival of a philosophical conception of God predicating the absolute incorporeality, unity, and incomparability of the divine being."

[106] Horst Dietrich Preuss, *Old Testament Theology* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 245; Benjamin Uffenheimer, "Biblical Theology and Monotheistic Myth," *Immanuel* 14 (1982): 19-20 [art.=7-25]; E.LaB. Cherbonnier, "The Logic of Biblical Anthropomorphism," *HTR* 55 (1962): 187-208. See further below.

[107] See e.g. the early change of ראה Qal to Niphal in such passages as Exod. 23:15; 34:20 and Deut. 16:16; Carmel McCarthy, *Tiqqune Sopherim and Other Theological Corrections in the Masoretic Text of the Old Testament* (Orbis biblicus et orientalis 36; Friburg [Schweiz]: Universitätsverlaq and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1981) 197-204.

[108] *Through a Speculum*, 25. See also Brent A. Strawn, "To See/Not See God: A Biblical-Theological Cutting on The Knowability of God," *Koinonia* 7 (1995): 157-180; Christi Dianne Bamford, "Seeing God in the Hebrew Bible: The Name, the Glory, and the Messenger" (M.A. thesis, University of Georgia, 2001), viii; W.W.Graf Baudissin, " 'Gott schauen' in der attestamentlichen Religion," *ARW* 18 (1915): 184f [art.=173-239].

The reason for much of the confusion is that many different authors and editors from different time periods contributed to the biblical text, and they each had different means of representing God...Any question brought to the text, including the present: "Is it possible to see God?" might turn up numerous different answers, depending upon the tradition consulted.[109]

The diversity of the traditions represented in the biblical canon must certainly be respected, but the significance of this diversity for our subject seems overstated as well. A more nuanced reading of the relevant passages in their individual contexts do not really suggest "a fundamental tension" over the question of divine visibility. According to Binyamin Uffenheimer, "The dispute between these traditions relates to the question whether it is *permitted* to see Him, though all are agreed that it is *possible* to see Him."[110] Thus, Deut. 4:12, 15-19, thought to be the origin or at least the clearest articulation of the biblical doctrine of divine invisibility/incorporeality,[111] may in fact suggest otherwise: God has a visible form (*tĕmûnâ*), which he purposefully concealed behind a cloud of fire and darkness so as not to tempt Israel into idolatry.[112] For all their qualifications and

---

[109] Bamford, "Seeing God," 10, 14.

[110] Benjamin Uffenheimer, "Myth and Reality in Ancient Israel," in S.N. Eisenstadt (ed.), *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986) 149 [art.=135-168]; idem, "Biblical Theology," 18.

[111] "12 Then the Lord spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form, only a voice...15 Since you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire, take care and watch yourselves closely, 16 so that you do not act corruptly by making an idol for yourselves, in the form of any figure...(NOAB modified)" See Bamford, "Seeing God" 38: "the God of the Deuteronomistic tradition is explicitly aniconic, and the reason for the ban on images is that God has no form that has been revealed to mankind (Deut. 4:12, 15)"; Wolfson, *Through a speculum*, 14:"The underlying conceptual assumption here (Deut. 4) is clear enough: God possesses no visible form and therefore cannot be worshiped through created images"; Hendel, "Aniconism and Anthropomorphism," 221: "The classical Deuteronomistic theology of the representation of God, presented most vividly in Deuteronomy 4, precludes the idea that God can be seen at all...The Deuteronomistic theology of God's presence rejects the premise that God has a form (*tĕmûnâ*) at all"; Eliezer Berkovits, *God, Man and History in Jewish Interpretation* (New York: Jonathan David, 1959), 15: "The text (Deut. 4) insists, of course, on the incorporeity of God." On Deut 4 as the origin of the biblical doctrine of divine incorporeality see Baudissin, "Gott schauen," 195-6; Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972), 191-209. See also Eugen H. Maly, " '...The Highest Heavens Cannot Contain You...' (2Kngs 8,27): Immanence and Transcendence in the Deuteronomist," in A Finkel and L. Frizzel (edd.), *Standing Before God: Studies on Prayer in Scriptures and in Tradition with Essays in Honor of John M. Oesterreicher* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1981) 23-30.

[112] Thus, Brian B. Schmidt, "The Aniconic Tradition: On Reading Images and Viewing Texts," in Diana Vikander Edelman (ed.), *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996): "For the early audiences, the wholesale denial of all material images of YHWH, whether man-made or naturally occurring is nowhere in view. Rather, the passage addresses the nation's ignorance of, or disregard for, YHWH's proper symbolism according to deuteronomistic standards. As (Deut.) 4:11 reiterates, when the Sinai theophany took place, the people did

24

restrictions, the Deuteronomists could apparently countenance divine visibility.[113] Similarly, passages such as Exod 33:18-23 and 1 Kgs 19:9-18 are better read as qualifications of Yahweh's visibility rather than categorical denials.[114]

---

not see, and were therefore ignorant of, YHWH's 'genuine' form, for they stood below at the foot of the mountan (Exod. 34:3-4). Only Moses saw YHWH's form or תמונת, face to face, as traditions like Num 12:8 and Deut 34:10 make clear"; Jean Marcel Vincent, "Aspekte der Begegnung mit Gott im Alten Testament: Die Erfahrung der göttlichen Gegenwart im Schauen Gottes," *RB* 103 (1996): 7 [art.=5-39]: "Doch schließt eigentlich das Bildverbot die Anschaulichkeit Gottes nicht aus, sondern gerade ein. Anders formuliert: Das Bildverbot setzt voraus, daß Gott geschaut werden kann, wenn es auch die Vergegenständlichung des persönlich begegnenden JHWHs in einem Bild verbietet"; Ian Wilson, *Out of the Midst of the Fire: Divine Presence in Deuteronomy* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) 74 n. 116: "the prohibition is based not on the objective absence of any form…but on the people's non-perception of the same"; Edward M. Curtis, "The Theological Basis for the Prohibition of Images in the Old Testament," *JETS* 28 (September 1985): 283: "This passage (i.e. Deut. 4:12-18) does not argue that Yahweh never assumed a form; it does not argue that no one would know how to make a form of Yahweh; nor does the passage focus on the fact that because Yahweh is incomparable no form would be adequate to represent him-though certainly Moses would have agreed with the statement of Isa. 40:18, 25 that this was the case"; Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 96: "Num. 12.8 speaks of Moses beholding 'the form of the Lord'…Deut. 4:15-'you saw no form' at Sinai-does not contradict this…It speaks not of Moses but of the people *not seeing* any form; in particular, it says nothing about the possible absence of form altogether"; J. Ridderbos, *Deuteronomy* (Bible Students Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 85: "Moses did not say *(re* Deut. 4:12) that it would have been impossible to see a form…(he) simply observes that this did not happen." See also Nathan Macdonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of Monotheism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003) 196 n. 64; Robert P. Carrol, "The Aniconic God and the Cult of Images," *StTh* 31 (1977): 52-3; H.M. Ohman, "Some Remarks on the Use of the Term 'Theophany' in the Study of the Old Testament," in Riemer Faber (ed.), *Unity in Diversity: Studies Presented to Prof. Dr. Jelle Faber on the Occasion of his Retirement* (Canada: Senate of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, 1989): 7.

[113] Thus I Kings 3:5; 9:2 ("Yahweh appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon"; on these theophanies see Fretheim, *Suffering*, 85); Deut. 5:24: "And you (tribal leaders) said: Behold, Yahweh our God has shown us (הראנו) his Glory (כבודו) and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have this day seen (ראינו) God speak with man, and he liveth"; 4:36: "From the heavens he made his voice heard to chasten you, and on earth he showed you his great fire…" As Ian Wilson has argued (*Out of the Midst of the Fire*, 55-74), this "great fire" (אש הגדולה) represented the localization of Yahweh's presence and is associated with the person of Yahweh, probably as the fiery כבוד which surrounded the divine תמונה (ibid., 74.). God is a consuming fire in Deut. 4:24, cf. Isa. 33:14 and according to Ex. 24:17 the כבוד has the appearance of a consuming fire. And the כבוד was "nothing but the material form in which Jahwe was thought to reveal Himself to mortal eyes": Julian Morgenstern, "Biblical Theophanies," *ZA* 25 (1911): 140. On early Deuteronomistic countenancing of divine visibility see Cecil P. Staton, Jr., " 'And Yahweh Appeared…' A Study of the Motifs of 'Seeing God' and of 'God's Appearing' in Old Testament Narratives" (Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 1988) 289-9; Stephen A. Geller, "Fiery Wisdom: Logos and Lexis in Deuteronomy 4," *Prooftexts* 14 (1994): 115; Wilson, *loc. cit.*, 89-96. Geller's reading of Deut. 4:36 as a deuteronomistic promotion of hearing over a (now) demoted seeing is unlikely: see Macdonald, *Deuteronomy* 192-96; Michael Carasik, "To See a Sound: A Deuteronomic Rereading of Exodus 20:15," *Prooftexts* 19 (1999): 257-76. To be rejected also is Geller's claim *(loc. cit.)* that "(Deut. 4) conceives of the fiery aspect of traditions of God in purely physical terms, totally demythologized and devoid of actual theophanic content." See Wilson, *loc. cit.* 55-74.

[114] On Exod. 33:18-23 see below. On I Kgs 19:9-18 see Baudissin, "'Gott schauen'," 184-5; Vincent, "Aspekte der Begegnung, 22-25; George W. Savran, *Encountering the Divine: Theophany in Biblical Narrative* (JSOTSup 420; London and New York: T&T Clark International, 2005), 87-8, 215-29; Johan Lust, "Elijah

Nor does the ancient Israelite and biblical tradition of aniconism necessarily indicate belief in an invisible/incorporeal deity.[115] Aniconism and anthropomorphism were not mutually exclusive in the West Semitic context.[116] The empty cherubim throne located in

---

and the theophany on Mount Horeb," in J. Coppens (ed.), *La notion biblique de Dieu. Le Dieu de la Bible et le Dieu des philosophes* (BETL 41: Leuven: University Press and Uitgeverij Peeters, 1985) 91-99.

[115] Carrol, "Aniconic God," 54: "One...explanation interprets the ban on images as a result of a belief in Yahweh's invisibility. Because the deity is invisible he cannot be represented in concrete or plastic forms. This is a most unlikely explanation because the Old Testament asserts on the contrary that as part of the Sinaitic covenant process at least seventy representatives of Israel saw the god of Israel (Ex. 24:9-11)...The graphic anthropomorphisms used of Yahweh throughout the Old Testament...hardly rate invisibility as an important aspect of deity. If he is not an invisible god the ban on images of him cannot be based on his invisibility"; Elliot R. Wolfson, "Judaism and Incarnation: The Imaginal Body of God," in Tikva Frymer-Kensky et al (edd.), *Christianity in Jewish Terms* (Boulder, CO.: Westview, 2000) 242 [art.=239-254]: "This aniconism...did not imply the incorporeality of God...One must distinguish between the prohibition of depicting God in images and the claim that God, cannot be manifest in a body. One may presume, asi ndeed the evidence from the bible seems to suggest, that God is capable of assuming corporeal form, although that form should not be represented pictorially"; Savran, *Encountering the Divine,* 48: "Despite the strong aniconic tendencies in biblical religion...there is no shortage of texts describing visual apprehension of the Deity. Throughout the biblical narrative YHWH is frequently described as having appeared to various personages"; Kugel, *the God of Old,* 104: "Certainly...the Bible's prohibition of image making did not derive from any notion that God had no physical form-The God of Old, numerous texts imply, did indeed have some kind of physical being"; Curtis, "The Theological Basis," 283: "Some have concluded that in this (prohibition of images) 'God is declared to be a spirit.' It is difficult to maintain this view, however, in the light of the strongly anthropomorphic descriptions of God found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible." On *visio Dei* and the biblical aniconic tradition see also Wolfson, *Through a speculum,* 16-24. *Pace IDB* 2:419 s.v. God, OT view of: "God is invisible to man. This conviction is underscored by the Mosaic prohibition against making images (Ex. 20:4) or by the ancient belief that ordinarily no man could behold him directly and live"; Bamford, "Seeing God," 38: "the reason for the ban on images is that God has no form that has been revealed to mankind".

[116] Theodore J. Lewis, "Divine Images and Aniconism in Ancient Israel," *JAOS* 118 (1998): 50; Hendel, "Aniconism and Anthropomorphism," 212-224; Christoph Uehlinger, "Israelite Aniconism in Context," *Bib* 77 (1996): 543-45; Tryggve N.D. Mettinger, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1995) Chapt. II, V-VI. While Mettinger gives ample evidence of the coexistence of aniconism and anthropomorphism, he senses a "tension" between them: they are competing traditions or the result of a fusion of different traditions (see e.g. 53, 58, 128; see also idem, "Aniconism-A West Semitic Context for the Israelite Phenomenon?" in Walter Dietrich and Martin A. Klopfenstein [edd.], *Ein Gott allein? JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte* [OBO 139; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht; Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1994] 160, 172). Uehlinger ("Israelite Aniconism") in particular, in his review of Mettinger, has well noted the *umproblematischen Nebeneinanders* between aniconic stelae and anthropomorphic images. Mettinger responds ("Israelite Aniconism: Developments and Origins," in van der Toorn, *Image and the Book,* 199-200) by begging the question: he appeals to his coined definition of *de facto* aniconism as "tolerant," and therefore able to coexist with its ideological 'other.' But this ideological tension between material aniconism and anthropomorphic statuary is yet to be proven. Two archaeological finds suggest that Mettinger is mistaken. In the temple of 'Ayn Dara (tenth to eighth centuries B.C.E.) a series of four huge human footprints seem to depict the deity entering the temple. As Lewis observes: "The ancient artisans seem to have striven for an aniconic presence of the deity standing at the entrance to the temple before entering its inner sanctum" ("Divine Images," 40). While the absence of a cult statue may indicate an aniconic cult, the human footprints suggest an anthropomorphist theology. This is confirmed by the numerous reliefs depicting anthropomorphic deities (for illustrations see John Monson, "The New 'Ain

the inner sanctum of the Solomonic Temple hardly suggests an "empty-space aniconism" in which "God was invisibly enthroned as king."[117] As Wolfson notes:

> The fact of the matter…is that there is sufficient textual evidence from the biblical canon to demonstrate that the enthroned Presence of God in the Temple often took the form of visual images and was not restricted to the auditory realm. Thus it was especially in the Temple, the *hagios topos*, that one beheld God's countenance.[118]

That יהוה צבאות ישב הכרבים *yhwh ṣĕbā'ôt yōšēb hakkĕrūbîm*, "Yahweh of the Hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim" of the Zion-Sabaoth theology of the Jerusalem cult was visible and anthropomorphic is affirmed by both Isaiah 6 and I Kings 22:19-23 (2 Chr 18:18-22). Both prophets (Isaiah and Micaiah) claimed: "I saw the Lord sitting on a/his throne".[119]

The motif of 'seeing God' or of God's 'appearing' to man is distributed across the literary units and genres of the Bible.[120] Indeed, as Jean Marcel Vincent pointed out,

---

Dara Temple: Closest Solomonic Parallel," *BARev* 26 [2000]: 20-35). Secondly, in the Babylonian king Nabu-apla-iddina's tablet in the temple of the sun god Shamash in Sippar (9th century B.C.E.) (see L.W. King, *Babylonian Boundary Stones and Memorial Tablets* [London, 1912] 120), both the anthropomorphic deity and the aniconic *šurinnum* (emblem, standard), the sun disk, are depicted together. Mettinger discuses the latter tablet, but seems not to have understood its full significance for an understanding of West Semitic aniconism.

[117] *Pace* Mettinger, *No Graven Image?*, 16-17; idem, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth. Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies* (CWK Gleerup, 1982) 19-37; idem, "YHWH SABAOTH-The Heavenly King on the Cerubim Throne," in Tomoo Ishida (ed.), *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays. Papers Read at the International Symposium for Biblical Studies, Tokyo, 5-7 December, 1979* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1982) 109-138; idem, "The Veto on Images and the Aniconic God in Ancient Israel," in Haralds Biezais (ed.), *Religious symbols their functions: Based on Papers at the Symposium on Religious Symbols and their Functions held at Åbo on the 28th-30th of August 1978* (Stockholm/Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1979) 15-29 (27); J. G. Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sun Worship in Ancient Israel* (JSOTSup 111; Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) 30.

[118] *Through a Speculum*, 17-18. See also Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986) 449: "the ark of Jahveh…was an empty throne of God…This of course does not involve any 'purely spiritual' worship of God, but merely that the deity should assume his place on the empty throne at his epiphany"; Kugel, *the God of Old*, 106: "What is the message of such empty-space aniconism…...(God) was not represented by an image, *not* because He did not have a body, however, and not because He could not be seen by people. On the contrary: perhaps making an image of Him was forbidden precisely because the fact of His *appearing* among human beings, His being revealed, was…such a crucial item…So there were to be no cultic statues; there was only empty space, a designated area. There God could appear and be 'seen' in a privileged moment…" See also Walter Beyerlin, *Origins and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Traditions* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965) 116-17.

[119] On the anthropomorphism of Isaiah 6 see below.

[120] On seeing God in the HB see Savran, *Encountering the Divine*, esp. Chap. Three; Vincent, "Aspekte der Begegnung"; Eilberg-Schwartz, "The Averted Gaze" 59-80; Staton, Jr., " 'And Yahweh Appeared…'";

Israel's visual encounter with her God is fundamental to the origin and understanding of the HB: "das basale Interpretationsgerüst des israelitischen Glaubens aus der Ur-

Herbert Schmid, "Gottesbild, Gottesschau und Theophanie," *Judaica* 1 (1967): 241-254 who notes: "Trotz aller Kritik an der Schaubarkeit Gottes…bezeugt das AT durch seine ganze Geschichte hindurch die visio dei" (244); Kugel, *the God of Old*, 98 who notes: "God's being seen by people is something that is talked about throughout the Bible"; Bamford, "Seeing God"; *TDOT* 11: 208-242 s.v. ראה *rā'â* by Fuhs; F. Nötocher, *'Das Angesicht Gottes schauen' nach biblischer und babylonischer Auffassung* (Würzburg, 1924); Baudissin, "'Gott schauen'." See further: *Priestly*: Baruch J. Schwartz, "What Really Happened at Mount Sinai: Four Biblical Answers to One Question," *BibRev* 13 (1997): 21-30; idem, "The Priestly Account of the Theophany and Lawgiving at Sinai," in Michael A. Fox et al. (edd.), *Texts, Temples and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1996) 103-134; Stephen A. Geller, "Blood Cult: Toward a Literary Theology of the Priestly Work of the Pentateuch," *Prooftexts* 12 (1992): 97-124; Jon D. Levenson, "The Jerusalem Temple in Devotional and Visionary Experience," in Arthur Green (ed.), *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible Through the Middle Ages* New York: Crossroad, 1986): 32-61; Bamford, "Seeing God," 54; Terrien, *Elusive Presence*, 136-7. *Prophetical Writings*: Sven Tengström, "Les vision prophétiques du trône de Dieu et leur arrière-plan dans l'Ancien Testament," in Marc Philonenko (ed.), *Le Trône de Dieu* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1993) 28-99; O. Keel, *Jahwe-Visionen und Siegelkunst. Eine neue Deutung der Majestätsschilderungen Jes 6, Ez 1 und 19 und Sach 4* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1977); J.L. Crenshaw, "Amos and the Theophanic Tradition," *ZAW* 80 (1968): 203-15; Robert C. Gnuse, *The Dream Theophany of Samuel: Its Structure in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Dreams and its Theological Significance* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1984); idem, "A Reconsideration of the Form-Critical Structure in I Samuel 3: An Ancient Near Eastern Dream Theophany," *ZAW* 94 (1982): 379-390; on Isaiah and Ezekiel see further below. *Psalms*: Jeffery J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant & Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House. 1995), Chapt 8; Raymond Jacques Tournay, *Seeing and Hearing God with the Psalms: The Prophetic Liturgy of the Second Temple in Jerusalem* (JSOTSup 118; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991); J.H. Hunter, "The Literary Composition on Theophany Passages in the Hebrew Psalms," *JNSL* 15 (1989): 97-107; idem, "Theophany in the Psalms: A Study of Selected Theophany Passages" (Ph.D diss., Stellenbosch, 1987); Mark S. Smith, "'Seeing God' in the Psalms: The Background to the Beatific Vision in the Hebrew Bible," *CBQ* 50 (1988): 171-183; J. Jeremias, *Theophanie. Die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung* (2nd ed; WMANT 10; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1977); N.H. Ridderbos, "Die Theophanie in Ps. L 1-6," *OTS* 15 (1969): 213-26; Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, LTD, 1981 [1965]) 93- 101; Hans-Peter Muller, "Die kultische Darstellung der Theophany," *VT* 14 (1964): 183-91; Artur Weiser, "Zur Frage nach den Beziehungen der Psalmen zum Kult: Die Darstellung der Theophanie in den Psalmen und im Festkult," in W. Baumgartner et al (edd.) *Festschrift Alfred Bertholet zum 80. Geburtstag* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1950) 513-31; idem, *Psalms: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962) 38-43; Baudissin, "Gott schauen," 175-81; Nötocher, *'Das Angesicht Gottes schauen'. Sapiential*: Edwin M. Good, *In Turns of Tempest: A Reading of Job with a Translation* (Stanford, Cali.: Stanford University Press, 1990) 373-375; Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985) 582; Robert W.E. Forrest, "Theophany in Job and the Bhagavad Gītā," *Journal of Studies in the Bhagavadgita* 2 (1982): 25-43; G. Gerald Harrop, " 'But Now Mine Eye Seeth Thee'," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 12 (1966): 80-84; Baudissin, "Gott schauen," 178-81. *Apocalyptic*: Helge S. Kvanvig, "Throne Visions and Monsters," *ZAW* 117 (2005): 249-72; Benedikt Otzen, "Heavenly Visions in Early Judaism: Origin and Function," in W. Boyd Barrick and John R. Spencer (edd.), *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G.W. Ahlström* (JSOTSup 31; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 198-215; Daniel Merkur, "The Visionary Practices of Jewish Apocalyptists," in L. Bryce Boyer and Simon A. Grolnick (edd.), *The Psychoanalytic Study of Society*, Volume 14, *Essays in honor of Paul Parin* (Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, 1989) 120-48; Allan J. McNicol, "The Heavenly Sanctuary in Judaism: A Model for Tracing the Origin of an Apocalypse," *JRelS* 13 (1987): 66-94; Christopher Rowland, "The Visions of God in Apocalyptic Literature," *JSJ* 10 (1979): 137-154; idem, *The Open Heaven: a Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982); J. Vander Kam, "The Theophany of Enoch 1 3b-7, 9," *VT* 23 (1973): 129-50.

Erfahrung der Begegnung (Exod. 24) mit dem lebendigen Gott gebildet hat."[121] The God of Israel was theophanous: he was wont to visibly appear (נראה, Niphal of ראה)[122] to certain individuals and, more rarely, groups under special conditions.[123] Cecil P. Staton, Jr. summarizes:

> Israel's faith was that God appeared to his people and that their life and being was a result of God's direct involvement in her history, particularly with regard to the development, formation, and sustaining of the people and their faith.
>
> Yahweh appears to her forefathers with the promises of land, progeny, and blessings; or her forefathers are vouchsafed a vision of God at moments of conflict when divine intervention brings resolution. Yahweh appears to commission and to raise up heroes to deliver the people in times of crisis…Yet in all these events seeing God and the appearing of God are not taken for granted, but recognized as out of the ordinary.[124]

---

[121] "the basal interpretive framework of Israelite belief formed itself out of the original encounter with the living God (Ex. 24)": "Aspekte der Begegnung," 19. See also J. Kenneth Kuntz, *The Self-revelation of God* (Philadelphia: Westmonster Press, 1967), 36: "the faith which Israel articulated presented itself as her own response to a deity that she was given to know via theophanic meeting."

[122] *THAT* 11:700 describes נראה as "terminus technicus für das Erscheinen Gottes." See also Staton, "With regard to persons or objects the Niphal of ראה always seems to suggest that the subject appears or is seen…The Niphal of ראה is used similarly with God as subject." 31; Johannes Lindblom, "Theophanies in Holy Places in Hebrew Religion," *HUCA* 32 (1961): 96 n. 8 [art.=91-106]: "The term וירא refers the a visionary manifestation of the Deity".

[123] Kuntz, *Self-Revelation*, 40: "In her traditions, ancient Israel set forth her belief that Yahweh had both the innate capacity and active will to permit himself to be seen by man at specific moments." On theophany in the HB see, in addition to sources cited above in n. 120: Savran, *Encountering the Divine*; idem, "Theophany as Type Scene," *Prooftexts* 23 (2003): 119-49; Vincent, "Aspekte der Begegnung mit Gott"; Victor H. Matthews, "Theophanies Cultic and Cosmic: 'Prepare to Meet Thy God!'" in Avrahm Gileadi (ed.), *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988) 307-317; *IDBSup*, 896-898 s.v. "Theophany in the OT" by J. Jeremias; idem, *Theophanie*; Thomas W. Mann, *Divine Presence and Guidance in Israelite Traditions: The Typology of Exaltation* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1977); Gwyneth Windsor, "Theophany: Traditions of the Old Testament," *Theology* 75 (1972): 411-416; Frank M. Cross, *Caananite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973) 147-94; Kuntz, *Self-revelation of God*; Niehaus, *God at Sinai*; Muller, "Die kultische Darstellung"; James Muilenburg, "The Speech of Theophany," *Harvard Divinity School Bulletin* 28 (1964): 35-47; Lindblom, "Theophanies"; James Barr, "Theophany and Anthropomorphism in the Old Testament," *VTSup* 7 (1959): 31-38; Elpidius Pax, *Epiphaneia: Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Beitrg zur biblischen Theogie* (Munich: Karl Zink Verlag, 1955); J. Morgenstern, "Biblical Theophanies," *ZA* 25 (1911): 139-193, 28 (1913-14): 15-60.

[124] Staton, Jr., " 'And Yahweh Appeared…' "294.

The biblical narrative accounts of theophany[125] are not to be read figuratively.[126] "Israel…certainly took the vision of God in a very realistic sense."[127] These divine encounters were thought to have "really happened."[128] Jeffery Niehaus has demonstrated through form-critical analysis that the biblical theophany narratives partake of the same *Gattung* (literary-form) as historical accounts of interviews between humans. "Theophanies from the Old Testament and from the ancient Near East are, therefore actually cast in a mode of historical reportage."[129] While it is certainly going too far to suggest that this historiographic *Gattung* "indicates the historical verisimilitude of the theophanies,"[130] it does confirm that the biblical narrators "*regarded* (the theophanies) as sober historical fact (emphasis ours)."[131]

Excursus: Divine Corporeality and Invisibility

It is often taken for granted that invisibility necessarily implies incorporeality. Already Plato equated αορατος *aoratos* (invisible) and ασωματος *asomatos* (incorporeal) (cf. *Tim.* 46d, 36e).[132] Hellenistc Judaism and Patristic Christianity inherited this Platonic conflation.[133] For Philo of Alexandria (first century C.E.) the divine essence is both αορατος and ασωματος (*Vita M.* I, 158; *Mut. Nom.* 7)[134] and Origen (d. 254 C.E.) cites John 4:24 ("God

---

[125] On theophanies in narrative vs. poetic contexts see Savran, *Encountering the Divine*, 6-7.

[126] Barr, "Theophany and Anthropomorphism," 31; Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus*, 72, 116.

[127] Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 Vol. (Philadelphia: The Westminister Press, 1961) 2: 19.

[128] Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 39: "theophanic accounts—both biblical and extrabiblical-purport to tell about something that really happened, that is, they appear to be historical."

[129] Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 43-4.

[130] Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 43.

[131] *Encyclopædia Biblica*, 4:5036 s.v. Theophany. On the narrative context of OT theophanies, as opposed to the mythological formulations of other ancient Near Eastern peoples, see also Muilenburg, "Speech of Theophany," 37.

[132] As Cécile Blanc ("Dieu est *pneuma*. Le sens de cette expression d'après Origène," *StPatr* 16 [1985]: 227) notes: "…les deux termes qualifient ensemble une même réalité veritable, opposée au devenir, qui est corporel, visible et palpable."

[133] On the pre-Platonic distinction see below.

[134] See Blanc "Dieu est *pneuma*," 228 who notes that, "C'est sans doute sous l'influence se Platon qu'il associe fréquemment… αορατος et ασωματος…" On Philo's nuanced view of incorporeality see John

is spirit") as evidence of God's incorporeality and therefore invisibility.[135] However, an older Greek (and, as we shall see, Hebrew) view made no such necessary connection. A being or object could be both σωματος (corporeal) and αορατος (invisible) at the same time. In Classical Greek invisibility is normally affected by materially obstructing visibility.[136] Thus, in the Homeric poems and in Hesiod invisibility is "(o)ften described in terms of a 'covering' or 'clothing'", usually by a cloud, mist, or storm:

> The early Greeks, in describing invisibility, attribute it to a visible, but tenuous, agency (cloud, mist, etc)…For that which renders unseen in Homer and Hesiod is a covering material, which is *external to the concealed body* (emph. orig.).[137]

Classical Greek notions of divine invisibility therefore affirmed rather than denied corporeality.

> the gods have a body that they can at will make (or keep) totally invisible to mortal eyes- and it does not cease to be a body…In order to manifest his presence, the divinity chooses to make himself visible in the form of *a* body, rather than *his* body. From a divine perspective, the opposition visibility/invisibility is no longer entirely pertinent. Even in the framework of an epiphany, the god's body may appear to be perfectly visible and recognizable to one of the spectators while remaining, at the same time and in the same place, completely hidden to the eye of others (emph. orig.).[138]

Dillon, "*ASÔMATOS*: Nuances of Incorporeality in Philo," in *Philon d'Alexandrie et le langage de la philosophie. Actes du colloque international organize par le Centre d'etudes sur la philosophie hellenistiqu* (Brepols, 1998) 99-110.

[135] According to Gedaliahu Stroumsa ("The Incorporeality of God: Context and Implications of Origen's Position." *Religion* 13 [1983]: 350 [art.= 345-358]): "It is this equivalence…between biblical invisibility and philosophical incorporeality which constitutes the core of Origen's exegetical system." See also Blanc "Dieu est *pneuma.*" On notions of corporeality and incorporeality with Origen see further D.G. Bostock, "Quality and Corporeity in Origen," *Origeniana secunda* (1980): 323-337; Hermann S. Schibli, "Origen, Didymus, and the Vehicle of the Soul," *Origeniana quinta* (1989): 381-391; Lawrence R. Hennessey, "Λ Philosophical Issue in Origen's Eschatology: The Three Senses of Incorporeality," *Origeniana quinta* (1989): 372-380; Ugo Bianchi, "Origen's Treatment of the Soul and the Debate Over Metensomatosis," *Origeniana quarta* (1985): 270-280.

[136] Arthur Stanely Pease, "Some Aspects of Invisibility," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 53 (1942): 10-11 notes: "Man's invisibility may occur…as a result of concealment in mist or dust, natural or artificial-like the modern smokescreen-, in a tempest of wind or rain, during a solar eclipse, into darkness, in fire, into water, in fissures in the earth, by putting to sleep or temporary blinding of ones enemies, by simply slipping away and evading ones companions, or by methods not clearly stated, and hence…mysterious."

[137] R. Renehan, "On the Greek Origins of the Concepts Incorporeality and Immateriality," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 21 (1980): 108-9 [art.=105-138].

[138] Vernant, "Dim Body," 35. Cf. Balam in Num. 22.

The later development of the notion of incorporeal invisibility went hand-in-hand with the philosophic rejection of Homeric anthropomorphism.[139] This rejection is especially associated with the Greek author Xenophanes (fifth century B.C.E.), whose "pioneering for a purer conception of God"[140] laid the foundation for the development of the transcendent, incorporeal deity of theism.[141] And as Th. Kortweg has shown, this rejection of anthropomorphism was catalytic to the emergence of the philosophic θεος αορατος, *Deus aoratos*.[142] This deity is best summed up in Maximus of Tyre's Eleventh Discourse, *Who is God according to Plato?* Informing his audience of the nature (φυσις) of the invisible deity (θειον...αορατον οφθαλμοις XI 9b) Maximus wrote:

> He is the Mind which is Father and Maker of All...'The divine is invisible to the eyes, unspeakable with the voice, untouchable with the flesh, unknown to the hearing; only by the most beautiful, most pure, most intellectual...aspect of the soul is it seen through its likeness and heard through its kinship, the whole together being present to the whole understanding...' God has no size, no color, no form, nor any other accident of matter, but he has a beauty unlike any other beauty (9 c-d; II e).[143]

There is no Hebrew equivalent to the Greek *aoratos*.[144] The latter appears in the LXX three times: it translates תהו in MT Gen. 1:2, which describes the chaotic state of the pre-cosmic earth; it translates מסתרים in Isa. 45:3, a description of riches divinely hidden in secret places; in II Macc. 9:5 it describes the 'blow' or sickness with which God struck

---

[139] On the philosophic critique of Homeric anthropomorphism see above n. 103.

[140] Jaeger, *Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers*, 45.

[141] On Xenophanes' influence on Christian thought see Eric Osborn, "Iranaeus on God-Argument and Parody," *StPatr* 36 (2001): 270-281; William R. Schoedel, "Enclosing, Not Enclosed: The Early Christian Doctrine of God," in W.R. Schoedel and R.L. Wilcken (edd.), *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Tradition. In Honerem R.M. Grant* (Théologie historique 54; Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1979) 75-86.

[142] Th. Korteweg, "The Reality of the Invisible: Some Remarks on St. John XIV 8 and Greek Philosophic Tradition," in M.J. Vermaseren (ed.), *Studies in Hellenistic Religions* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979) 60-86 [art.=50-102].

[143] Quoted from Young, "God of the Greeks," 49-50.

[144] *TDNT* 5:368 n. 4. s.v. ορατος, αορατος by Michaelis.

Antiochus. But as Cécile Blanc observes, "Il n'y a pas d'exemple où il (i.e. αορατος) se rapporte à Dieu."[145]

Arthur Stanley Pease, in his discussion 'Some Aspects of Invisibility,' assumed that the prophet Isaiah, when he speaks of אל מסתתר, *'ēl mistatēr*, "God who hides himself" (Isa. 45:15), is speaking of the incorporeal θεος αορατος, *Deus aoratos*.[146] But as Samuel E. Balentine has shown, Yahweh's *hastārāt* or hiding in the HB refers, not to any ontological invisibility, but inactivity in history as a consequence of Israel's violation of the covenant.[147] According to Richard Friedman, this divine hiddenness also involves "the continuing diminishing apparent presence of Yahweh among humans".[148] Friedmann traces this diminution from Yahweh's active and visible involvement with humanity in the Garden (Gen. 1-3), through the patriarchal theophanies (where specific individuals, rather than communities, encounter 'a sort of emanation from the Godhead that is visible to human eyes' [13]), through the post-Mosaic prophetic period of divine encounters in dreams and visions, to Elijah's experience on Mt. Horeb and 'the deity's blatant refusal to appear as before' (I Kgs. 19:11, 12)[149]: 'The period of visible, audible encounters with the divine gradually passes, not subtly, but expressly in the text."[150] Friedmann's schema may

---

[145] "There is no example where (αορατος) refers to God": "Dieu est *pneuma*," 228. See also Michaelis, *TDNT* 5:368 s.v. ορατος, αορατος: "God is not called αορατος."

[146] "Some Aspects of Invisibility," 4.

[147] *The Hidden God: The Hiding of the Face of God in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

[148] "The Hidding of the Face: An Essay on the Literary Unity of Biblical Narrative," in Jacob Neusner, Baruch A. Levine, and Ernest S. Frerichs (edd.), *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987): 215 [art.=207-222]. See also idem, *Hidden Face of God*; idem, "The Biblical Expression *Mastîr Pānîm*," *HAR* 1 (1977): 139-147.

[149] Friedmann, "Hiding the Face," 218.

[150] Friedmann, *Hidden Face of God*, 16.

33

be more systematic than the texts actually support, but it is clear that the biblical *Deus absconditus* is not the same as the *Deus philosophorum* who is *Deus aoratos*.

2.2. Transcendent Anthropomorphism and Divine (In)visibility

Like the gods of her ancient Near Eastern neighbors, the god(s) of Israel were transcendently anthropomorphic; that is to say, he/they possessed bodies so sublime it/they bordered on the non-body.[151]

> Yahweh has a body, clearly anthropomorphic, but too holy for human eyes…Yahweh's body was believed to be incommensurate with mundane human existence: it has a different degree of being than human bodies… It is a transcendent anthropomorphism not in form but in its effect, approachable only by the most holy, and absent in material form in the cult…The body of God was defined in Israelite culture as both like and unlike that of humans. [152]

[151] On transcendent anthropomorphism in the ancient Near East see above n. 52. On biblical anthropomorphism and an anthropomorphic deity see Johannes Hemple, "Die Grenzen des Anthropomorphismus Jahwes im Alten Testament," *ZAW* 16 (1939): 75-85; Frank Michaeli, *Dieu a l'Image de l'Homme. Etude de la notion anthropomorphique de Dieu dans l'Ancien Testament* (Neuchâtel-Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1950); Barr, "Theophany and Anthropomorphism"; Cherbonnier, "The Logic of Biblical Anthropomorphism"; idem, "In Defense of Anthropomorphism," in *Reflections on Mormonism: Judaeo-Christian Parrallels. Papers delivered at the Religious Studies Center Symposium, Brigham Young University, March 10-11, 1978*, 155-173; Uffenheimer, "Myth and Reality in Ancient Israel"; idem, "Biblical Theology and Monotheistic Myth"; Bar-Ilan, "The Hand of God"; Jacob Neusner, "Conversation in Nauvoo about the Corporeality of God," *BYU Studies* 36 (1996-97): 7-30; Stephen Moore, "Gigantic God: Yahweh's Body," *JSOT* 70 (1996): 87-115; idem, *God's Gym: Divine Male Bodies of the Bible* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Hendel, "Aniconism and Anthropomorphism," 205-228; Rimmon Kasher, "Anthropomorphism, Holiness and the Cult: A New look at Ezekiel 40-48," *ZAW* 110 (1998): 192-208; Karel van der Toorn, "God (1) אלהים," in Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, Pieter W. van der Horst (edd.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (2nd ed.; Leiden; Boston: Brill; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999; hereafter *DDD*) 361-365; J. Andrew Dearman, "Theophany, Anthropomorphism, and the Imago Dei: Some Observations about the Incarnation in the Light of the Old Testament," in Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, Gerald O'Collins (edd.), *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) 31-46; Kugel, *the God of Old*, 5-107; Hamori, " 'When Gods Were Men' "; Ulrich Mauser, "God in Human Form," *Ex Auditu* 16 (2000): 81-100; idem, "Image of God and Incarnation," *Int* 24 (1970): 336-356; A. Dudley, "Old Testament Anthropomorphism," *Milla wa-Milla* 13 (1973): 15-19; David J.A. Clines, "Yahweh and the God of Christian Theology," *Theology* 83 (1980): 323-330.

[152] Hendel, "Aniconism and Anthropomorphism," 223, 225. See also H. Wheeler Robinson, "Hebrew Psychology," in Arthur S. Peake (ed.), *The People and the Book: Essays on the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925) 367: "The majestic figure seen by Isaiah in the temple is in human form, though endowed with superhuman qualities. If we ask for further definition, we shall find that the 'glory' of Yahweh, His full visible manifestation, is conceived in terms of dazzling and unbearable light. Yahweh's body is shaped like man's, but its substance is not flesh but 'spirit,' and spirit seen as a blaze of light. It is true that the imageless worship of prophetic religion repudiates the making of any likeness of God, and no form was seen in the storm-theophany of Sinai (Deut. iv. 12). But it is one thing to shrink from the vision of the form, and another to deny that a form exists, though a form wrought out of *rûach*-substance"; van der Toorn, "God (1) אלהים," 361f: "The Israelite concept of God shares many traits with the beliefs of its neighbors. The most

Now the deity of the Hebrew canon cannot be simply equated with the god(s) of Ancient Israel[153]; the former is actually a plurality of conceptions of God characteristic of different and divergent traditions.[154] However, this multivocality notwithstanding, anthropomorphism, as Uffenheimer well pointed out, "is in fact the core of the biblical concept of God."[155] One of the distinguishing characteristics of the body divine is its dangerously luminous and fiery nature.

---

fundamental correspondence concerns the anthropomorphic nature ascribed to God. God's anthropomorphism is external...as well as internal (also called anthropopathism)... God's qualities are human qualities, yet purified from imperfection and amplified to superhuman dimensions. Sincerity and reliability are human virtues-even if only God is wholly sincere and reliable. Strength, too, is not the exclusive prerogative of God; he is merely incomparably stronger than humans or animals. In view of the passages dwelling upon the contrast between God and man, the thesis of God's anthropomorphism should be modified in this sense that God is more than human. Though man has been created in the image of God...there is a huge difference of degree-yet not of nature. In this respect the view found in the Hebrew Bible does not radically differ from the conviction concerning the similarity between gods and humans in the Babylonian Atra Hasis myth. God has human form, but not human size. In visions, God proves to be so high and exalted that the earthly temple can barely contain the fringes of his mantel (Isa.6:1). Gates have to lift their heads when God enters Jerusalem (Ps. 24:7,9). In addition to his physical size (which transcends even the highest heaven, 1 Kgs 8:27), God surpasses humans in such aspects as wisdom (Job 32:13) and power (Ezek 28:9). His divine superiority also has a moral side: God excels in righteousness (Job 4:17; 9:2; 25:4), faithfulness (e.g. Deut 32:4), and other moral qualities."

[153] On biblical monotheism and divine plurality see: McDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of Monotheism*; Smith, *Early History of God*; idem, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*; John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (JSOTSup 265; Sheffield : Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); Samuel Shaviv, "The Polytheistic Origins of the Biblical Flood Narrative," *VT* 54 (2004): 527-548; David Noel Freedman, " 'Who is Like Thee Among the Gods?' The Religion of Ancient Israel," in Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson and S. Dean McBride (edd.), *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987) 315-335.

[154] See Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Theologies of the Old Testament: Pluralism and Syncretism in Ancient Israel's Faith* (translated by John Bowden; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002); idem, "Conflicting Theologies in the Old Testament," *HBT* 22 (2000): 120-134; Stephen A. Geller, "The God of the Covenant," in Barbara Nevling Porter (ed.), *One God or Many? Concepts of Divinity in the Ancient World* (Chebeague: Casco Bay Assyriological Institute, 2000) 273-319. On the several *Gottesbilder* of the Hebrew canon see Tryggve N.D. Mettinger, "The Elusive Essence: YHWH, El and Baal and the Distinctiveness of Israelite Faith," in Eberhard Blum (edd.), *Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte. Festschrift für Rolf Rendtorff zum 65. Geburtstag* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1990) 393-417; idem, "The Study of the Gottesbild.-Problems and Suggestions," *Svensk exegetisk arsbok* 54 (1989): 135-145; Conrad E L'Heureux, "Searching for the origins of God," in Baruch Halpern (ed.), *Traditions in transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981) 33-57.

[155] Uffenheimer, "Myth and Reality," 152; idem, "Biblical Theology," 20. See also Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, Volume 1: *Theology of Israel's Historical Tradition* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962) 1:145f: "Israel conceived even Yahweh himself as having human form"; Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion*, 169: "All the evidence suggests that from the outset Yahweh was conceived in human form"; Preuss, *Old Testament Theology*, I: 245: "While God is, without doubt, thought of also in human form, more specifically as a man (Isa 50:1; 54:1-6; 62:5; Jer 2:2; Ezekiel 23; and Hos 2:16), there is no further reflection about these representations." On biblical anthropomorphism and an anthropomorphic deity see above n. 151.

The body of the gods shines with such an intense brilliance that no human eye can bear it. Its splendor is blinding. Its radiance robs it of visibility through an excess of light the way darkness causes invisibility through a lack of light...if the god chooses to be seen in all his majesty, only the tiniest bit of the splendor of the god's size, stature, beauty and radiance can be allowed to filter through, and this already enough to strike the spectator with *thambos*, stupefaction, to plunge him into a state of reverential fear.[156] But to show themselves openly, as they truly are – *enargeis* – is a terrible favor the gods accord no one...[157]

This 'awe-inspiring luminosity' of the deities is in Akkadian termed *pulḫu melammû* (Sum. ní-melam), an hendiadys meaning 'fear, glory.'[158] This, as A. Leo Oppenheim told us in a seminal article, denotes a dazzling aureole or nimbus surrounding a divinity.[159] The *pulḫu* or *puluḫtu* is often described as a supernatural garment of fire and flame.[160] The ancient and ubiquitous garment-as-body metaphor is certainly operative here,[161] as

---

[156] See also Mahābhārata 3.40.49: "Mahādeva (Śiva) attacked the afflicted [Arjuna] with martial splendor and brilliance, stunning him out of his wits." Trans. James W. Laine, *Visions of God: Narrative of Theophany in the Mahābhārata* (Vienna, 1989), 71; M. Streck, *Assurbanipal und die letzen assyrischen Könige* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1916) 2, 8-10:84-88: "the radiance of Aššur and Ištar overwhelmed him (Luli, king of Sidon) and he went crazy."

[157] Vernant, "Dim Body," 37.

[158] M. Weinfeld (*TDOT* 7:29-30 s.v. כבוד kābōd [V. Divine Glory in the Ancient Near East] 29-31; E. Cassin, *La Splendeur Divine* (Paris and the Hague: Mouton, 1968); A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago: University Press, 1964) 98; idem, "Akadian *pul(u)ḫ(t)u* and *melammû*," *JAOS* 63 (1943): 31-34.

[159] "Akadian *pul(u)ḫ(t)u* and *melammû*," 31.

[160] Ibid.

[161] On the garment-as-body metaphor see Jung Hoon Kim, *The Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline Corpus* (London and New York: T&T Clark International, 2004) 44-52; April D. De Conick and Jarl Fossum, "Stripped before God: A New Interpretation of Logion 37 in the Gospel of Thomas," *VC* 45 (1991), 128f: Dennis Ronald MacDonald *There is no Male and Female: The Fate of a Dominical Saying in Paul and Gnosticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); 23-25; April D. De Conick, "The *Dialogue of the Savior* and the Mystical Sayings of Jesus," *VC* 50 (1996): 190-2; Sebastion Brock, "Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition," in *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter* Eichstätter Beiträge 4 (Regensburg 1982): 11-37; S. David Garber, "Symbolism of Heavenly Robes in the New Testament in Comparison with Gnostic Thought" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1974); Geo Widengren, *The Great Vohu Manah and the Apostle of God: Studies in Iranian and Manichaean Religion* (Uppsala: A.-B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1945) 50-55, 76-83. J.M. Rist, "A Common Metaphor," in idem, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 188-198. On the 'garments of the gods' see also Herbert Sauren, "Die Kleidung Der Götter," *Visible Religion* 2 (1984): 95-117; A. Leo Oppenheim, "The Golden Garments of the Gods," *JANESCU* 8 (1949): 172-193; David Freedman, "Ṣubāt Bāšti: A Robe of Splendor," *JANES* 4 (1972): 91-5; Asko Parpola, *The Sky-Garment. A study of the Harappan religion and its relation to the Mesopotamian and later Indian religion* (SO 57; Helsinki, 1985); idem, "The Harappan 'Priest-King's' Robe and the Vedic Tārpya Garment: Their Interrelation and Symbolism (Astral and Procreative)," *South Asian Archeology* 1983 1: 385-403; Alan Miller, "The Garments of the Gods in Japanese Ritual," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 5 (Summer 1991): 33-55.

pulḫu/puluḫtu is equated with the Sumerian *ní*, "body, corporeal shape."[162] The *melammû* is associated with some sort of sparkling head-wear, like a crown or even a luminous mask.[163] According to E. Cassin the *melammû* is better understood as the expression of a vital force in the form of pulsating light.[164] *pulḫu melammû* is the terrible epiphanic glory of the gods.[165] Its radiance overwhelmed enemies on the battlefield[166]: "the awe-inspiring splendor of Aššur, my Lord, overwhelmed the men"; "the effulgence of his surpassing glory consumed them."[167] Even deities seek shelter from the radiant splendor of the greater gods: "O my Lady (Inanna), the Anunna, the great gods,/Fluttering like bats fly off before you to clefts [in the rock],/They who dare not walk [?] in your terrible glance, who dare not proceed before your terrible countenance."[168]

Theirs is "A body invisible in its radiation, a face that cannot be seen directly."[169] To catch a glimpse of a deity could mean death for a human onlooker, because the mortal constitution is unable to bear it.[170] In order to be seen when such is desired or necessary, or in order to intervene directly in human affairs, the gods must conceal their divine

---

[162] Oppenheim, "Akadian *pul(u)ḫ(t)u* and *melammû*," 33-4; Nahum M. Waldman, "A Note on Ezekiel 1:18," *JBL* 103 (1984): 615.

[163] Oppenheim, "Akadian *pul(u)ḫ(t)u* and *melammû*," 31-33.

[164] *Splendeur Divine*, 79ff.

[165] Oppenheim, "Akadian *pul(u)ḫ(t)u* and *melammû*," 32: "Thus the attire of the gods in their primary epiphany was composed of a *pulḫu* (or *puluḫtu*) as garment and of a *melammu* as head-gear."

[166] *CAD* s.v. melammu; George E. Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation: The Origins of the Biblical Tradition* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973): 32-56.

[167] Assyrian sources quoted from Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation*, 48.

[168] Quoted from Weinfeld (*TDOT* 7:29-30 s.v. כבוד kābōd [V. Divine Glory in the Ancient Near East] 30) who notes: "The terrible countenance is that of the goddess; it beams forth radiance and splendor like that of the god Nanna, 'whose face is full of radiance (sag-ki-bi me-lám-gál-gim)."

[169] Vernant, "Dim Body," 37.

[170] So the well-known story of Semele who wanted to see her lover Zeus in his glory, but when he appeared in his lightning-like splendor, she could not bear it and was struck dead by a thunderbolt: Apollodorus, *Libr.* 3, 4, 3; Ovid, *Met* 3, 253-315. See Robin Lane Fox, "Seeing the Gods" in idem, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1987) 106-10 [art.=102-67]; Gerard Mussies, "Identification and Self-Identification of Gods in Classical and Hellenistic Times," in R. Van den Broek, T. Baarda and J. Mannsfeld (edd.), *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988) 3 [art.=1-18].

forms.[171] Concealment is achieved either by enveloping the divine body in a mist, fog or cloud to become invisible,[172] or by some sort of divine metamorphosis.[173] This latter is usually done by reducing the divine size and splendor and taking on the appearance of a mortal human.[174]

The God of the biblical canon also has a dangerously luminous and fiery body, called in some sources his כבוד, *kābôd*.[175] In the priestly material (P and Ezekiel) in particular כבוד יהוה *kābôd yhwh* denotes Yahweh's radiant human form, "with the strongest possible emphasis on God as light."[176] The fire that emanates from כבוד יהוה is dangerous: it

[171] Vernant, "Dim Body," 37: "The paradox of the divine body is that in order to appear to mortals, it must cease to be itself; it must clothe itself in a mist, disguise itself as a mortal, take the form of a bird, a star, a rainbow."

[172] Vernant, "Dim Body," 35; Renehan, "On the Greek Origins," 108-9; Pease, "Some Aspects," 8-11.

[173] On the nature of this metamorphosis see Vernant, "Dim Body," 31-2; Jenny Clay, "Demas and Aude: The Nature of Divine Transformation in Homer," *Hermes* 102 (1974): 129-36;

[174] Vernant, "Dim Body," 36; Mussies, "Identification and Self-Identification"; Clay, "Demas and Aude"; H.S. Versnel, "What Did Ancient Man See when He saw a God? Some Reflections on Greco-Roman Epiphany," in Dirk van der Plas (ed.), *Effigies Dei: Essays on the History of Religions* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987) 45-6 [art.=43-55]; H.J. Rose, "Divine Disguises," *HTR* 49 (1956): 62-72.

[175] For a tradition-history of the *kābôd* in the HB see especially Carey C. Newman, *Paul's Glory-Christology: Tradition and Rhetoric* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992). See also *TDOT* 7:23-38 s.v. כבוד by Weinfeld; *TDNT* 2:238-47 s.v. δόξα: C. כבוד in the OT by G. von Rad; Morgenstern, "Biblical Theophanies."

[176]*TDNT* 2:241 s.v. δόξα: C. כבוד in the OT by G. von Rad, On the luminous, anthropomorphic *kābôd* of P and priestly tradition see Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972) 191-209, esp. 200-206; idem, *TDOT* 7:31-33 s.v. כבוד; Mettinger, *Dethronement of Sabaoth*, Chapters Three and Four; J. E. Fossum, "Glory," *DDD* 348-52; A. Joseph Everson, "Ezekiel and the Glory of the Lord Tradition," in Daniel Durken (ed.), *Sin, Salvation, and the Spirit*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1979): 163-176; Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* The Anchor Bible (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1983), 52f; idem, "Ezekiel's Vision: Literary and Iconographic Aspects," in H. Tadmor and M. Weinfeld (edd.), *History, Historiography and Interpretation* (Jerusalem and Leiden: The Image Press, the Hebrew University and E.J. Brill, 1983): 159-168; Kasher, "Anthropomorphism, Holiness and the Cult"; Andrei A. Orlov, "Ex 33 on God's Face: A Lesson from the Enoch Tradition," *SBL Seminar Papers* 39 (2000): 130-147.

A number of scholars have sought to distance Ezekiel's anthropomorphic *kābôd* from P's 'abstract' *kābôd* (e.g. Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: the Priestly Torah and the Holiness School*. [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995] 128-137). Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2:32 understood P's *kābôd* to be "a formless brightness of light" and Morgenstern, "Biblical Theophanies," 1:154 assumed that the *kebhod Jahwe* of P, other than being 'something like fire' enveloped in the 'cloud of Jahwe', has no particular shape" (See also Schmid, "Gottesbild, 251": Yahweh's fire was *amorph*.) But these claims are based on the false assumption that P's theology is ant-anthropomorphist, an assumption which is to be rejected (see above). Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 200f. is surely correct: "Corporeal representation of the Deity in the Priestly document found its clearest expression in the conception of the 'Glory of God', against which the book of Deuteronomy promulgated its doctrine of 'God's Name.' The underlying imagery of the concept of God's Glory (כבוד יהוה), 'the *Kabod* of Yahweh,' embedded in Priestly tradition is drawn from corporeal and not

consumes whatever it touches.[177] Like the *pulḫu melammu* of the Mesopotamian deities, the flames of the כבוד יהוה can be unleashed on Yahweh's enemies.[178] To look upon כבוד יהוה was deadly: the brightness was too much for the mortal eye.[179] To abide with Israel, but not consume her, Yahweh, like the Homeric and Hesiodic deities,[180] cloaks his fiery כבוד with a black cloud (ערפל/ענן חשך).[181] When Yahweh wants to visit wrath on an enemy

---

abstract terms." See also Wolfson, *Through a Speculum* (23 n. 55): "while it is fair enough to contrast Ezekiel's depiction of the glory with that of the Priestly authorship, it seems to me that the anthropomorphic understanding of the glory is not completely innovated by Ezekiel. Indeed, the narrative in Exod. 33:18ff. already suggests such a conception."

[177]E.g. Lev 10:1f.

[178] Cf. Ps. 97:3f: "fire goes before Him, and burns up his adversaries round about." On the danger posed by the כבוד יהוה to Yahweh's enemies and transgressing Israelites see *TDOT* 7:31 s.v. כבוד by Weinfeld; Julian Morgenstern, *The Fire Upon the Altar* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, Inc, 1963) 11; idem, "Biblical Theophanies," 1:144-48.

[179] Exod. 33:17-23 and below. See also Morgenstern, *Fire Upon the Altar*, 16: "They (i.e. priestly editors of the Pentateuch) still had perforce to conceive of him as a fiery apparition, of such extreme radiance that for any mortal to gaze upon Him even inadvertently, or even to enter unduly into his presence, meant death."

[180] On possible traces of Indo-European myth in the HB see Lang, *Hebrew God*, 1-12 and *passim*; Nicolas Wyatt, "David's Census and the Tripartite Theory," *VT* 40 (1990): 352-60; idem, "Near Eastern Echoes of Āryan Tradition," *Studi e Materiali Di Storia Delle Religioni* 55 (1989): 5-29. On the possible relation of biblical and Classical historiography see especially J. Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983): idem, "The Primeval Histories of Greece and Israel Compared," *ZAW* 100 (1988): 1-22; S. Mandell and D.N. Freedman, *The Relationship between Herodotus' History and Primary History* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993); F.A.J. Nielsen, *The Tragedy in History: Herodotus and the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup, 251; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Jan-Wim Wesselius, "Discontinuity, Congruence and the Making of the Hebrew Bible," *SJOT* 13 (1999): 24-77 (38-48): idem, *The Origin of the History of Israel: Herotus' Histories as Blueprint for the First Books of the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002). On Homeric and Hesiodic myth and the Semitic Near East see Carolina López-Rutz, "Some Oriental Elements in Hesiod and the Orphic Cosmogonies," *JANER* 6 (2006): 71-104; Walter Burkert, *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis: Eastern Contexts of Greek Culture* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004); idem, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*, trans. Margaret E. Pinder and Walter Burkert (Cambridge and London, 1992); Robert Mondi, "Greek Mythic Thought in the Light of the Ancient Near East," in Lowell Edmunds (ed.) *Approaches to Greek Myth* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990) 141-98.

[181] Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 28: "He chooses to garb himself in a thick cloud because a full revelation of his holy presence would destroy the onlooker"; *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* 2:1695-6 s.v. Pillar of Fire and Cloud: "Because the radiance and splendor of God are so overwhelming, because no man can look on him and live (Ex 33:17-23; Jn 1:18; 6:46; I Tm 6:15, 16), that splendor is concealed within the cloud to protect man from his presence (Ex 16:10; 19:16-20; 24:15-17; Pss 18:11, 12; 97:2,3); *TDOT* 7:31 s.v. כבוד, by Weinfeld: "In P and Ezekiel the *kāḇōḏ* of Yahweh is conceived as a blazing fire surrounded by a cloud...The cloud is an indispensable element of theophany. It serves as a cloak to protect against the mortal viewing of the deity"; Gerhard von Rad, "Deuteronomy's 'Name' Theology and the Priestly Document's 'Kabod' Theology," in idem, *Studies in Deuteronomy* (trans. David Stalker; Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953) 39: "The phenomenon of the כבוד, which emits a brightness too great for the human eye to look upon, is enveloped by the cloud by means of which Jahweh himself graciously protects men from being destroyed by

39

or punish one of his own, he thrusts aside the cloud, exposing them to his undimmed radiance.[182]

2.2.1. Anthropomorphism and Theophany

Recognizing the fundamental anthropomorphism of the ancient Israelite and biblical deity is important for understanding the biblical tradition of theophany. It does not seem to be the case that "The form of the appearance of deity varies in many of the theophanies."[183] Rather, "The God whom Israel worships appears, if he wills to appear at all, in living human likeness. Anthropomorphism in the strict sense, in the sense of the appearance of God in human shape, depends for Israel in the earliest stages we can trace on the memory of the ancestors and the meeting of their God with them."[184] The ancient Near Eastern background to biblical theophany[185] and anthropomorphism makes it unlikely that this human form is a "momentarily assumed theophanic form."[186] The

the form in which he appears"; *TDOT* 11:255, s.v. ענן *'ānān* by Freedman and Willoughby: "The cloud indicates God's presence while at the same time concealing God's radiance." On the enveloping black cloud (ערפל /ענן חשך) see: *TDOT* 11:371 s.v. ערפל *'ᵃrāpel* by Mulder; ibid, 5:245-258 s.v. חשך *ḥāšak* by Mitchel et al; ibid. 11:256, s.v. ענן *'ānān* by Freedman and Willoughby; Chaim Cohen, "The Basic Meaning of the Term ערפל 'Darkness'," *Hebrew Studies* 36 (1995): 7-12; A.J. Loader, "The Concept of Darkness in the Hebrew Root 'RB/ 'RP," in I.H. Eybers et al (edd.), *De Fructu Oris Sui. Essays in Honour of Adrianus Van Selms* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971) 98-107; Forest Charles Cornelius, "The theological significance of darkness in the Old Testament," Ph.D diss. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1990, 12-51, 103-110; Leopold Sabourin, "The Biblical Cloud: Terminology and Traditions," *BTB* 4 (1974): 290-312.

[182] E.g. Num. 16:19, 20:16. See *TDOT* 7:31 s.v. כבוד by Weinfeld; Morgenstern, *Fire Upon the Altar*, 11; idem, "Biblical Theophanies," 1:144-48.

[183] John W. van Diest, "A Study of the Theophanies of the Old Testament" (MA thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1966) 46; *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (edited by Walter A. Elwell et al; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1988) 2:2050 s.v. Theophany: the human form is one of several "temporary forms" assumed by the deity during theophanies. See also *ABD* 6:508 s.v. Theophany in the OT by Theodore Hiebert; Kuntz, *Self-Revelation*, 37: "A perusal of Old Testament theophanic passages shows that there is no consistent *form* of the deity's appearance"; Sam Whittemore Fowler, "The Visual Anthropomorphic Revelation of God" (Ph.D. diss. Dallas Theological Seminary, 1978), 38, 48.

[184] Barr, "Theophany and Anthropomorphism," 38. See also Fretheim, *Suffering of God*, 93: "It is probable that all the theophanies were in human form, though it is perhaps more true to the evidence to say that there are no theophanies which are incompatible with an appearance in human form."

[185] Stanton, Jr. "And Yahweh Appeared," 103: "It is therefore very likely that Israel's confession that God is seen belongs to the common heritage of the ancient Near East." See also Niehaus, *God at Sinai*; Schmidt and Nel, "Theophany as type-scene," 262-3; Mann, *Divine Presence and Guidance*; Cross, *Caananite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 147-94; Jeremias, *Theophanie*, 73-90; Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 93-4.

[186] Baudissin, "Gott schauen," 186: "vorübergehend angenommene Erscheinungsform". See also D.J.A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," *TynBul* 19 (1968): 72: "When Yahweh appears to men in theophanies

mention in Num. 12:8 of the תמונת יהוה *těmûnat yhwh* (cf. Ps. 17:15) or "(visible) form of Yahweh"[187] suggests a permanent divine form,[188] no doubt anthropomorphic.[189]

This suggestion is not contradicted by such passages as Gen 15 and Exod 3. The latter, Yahweh's commissioning of Moses from the burning bush, likely involves an implicit anthropomorphic theophany.[190] Gen 15, on the other hand, the so-called Covenant Between the Pieces, probably doesn't describe an actual theophany at all.[191] Vv. 9-12,17 describe a covenant rite between Yahweh and Abram in which the latter cuts in half certain animals fit for sacrifice.[192] Thereafter, the patriarch is made to fall into a

---

He is indeed seen in human form (*e.g.* Gn. 18), yet there is no suggestion that this form is anything but a form which Yahweh has assumed for the sake of a temporary manifestation". Even Barr ("Theophany and Anthropomorphism," 32) speaks of God "assuming" the human form during theophanies.

[187] *TWAT* 8:678 s.v. תמונה by Waschke: "Die Grundbedeutung ist an allen Stellen „sichtbare Gestalt"."

[188] Ohmann, "'Theophany' in the Old Testament," 7.

[189] Smith, "Seeing God," 181-2. On anthropomorphism and the biblical deity see above n. 151.

[190] Bernard P. Robinson, "Moses at the Burning Bush," *JSOT* 75 (1997): 116-117 [art.=107-122]: "More probably...the idea (in Exod. 3:6) is that the messenger is *in* the flame. The messenger will, as elsewhere, be thought of as appearing in human form. He is recognized as God's envoy by the flame that surrounds him. I agree...that 3:6, 'Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look at God', most naturally suggests that there was in the bush a messenger in human shape, clothed in fire, rather than merely a flame"; Fretheim, *Suffering*, 95: "The use of the messenger language here makes it clear that the flame of fire is not to be identified as the form of the divine self-manifestation, but only as a veil or invelope for the human form of the divine appearance (see also Exod. 19:18; Deut 4:12, 15). Ezekiel 1:26-28 speaks in comparable ways about the relationship between the fire 'round about' and the 'likeness as it were of a human form." See further Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus*, 3 vols. (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 1:338-339. *Pace* Hamori, " 'When Gods Were Men,' "134; Schmid, "Gottesbild," 251 (who assumed the fire of Yahweh was 'amorph'); *Encyclopædia Biblica*, 4:5034 s.v. Theophany; *IDB* 4:619 s.v. Theophany by G. Henton Davies. On the anthropomorphic 'angel of the Lord' here note Thomas L. Thompson's observation, "The Intellectual Matrix of Early Biblical Narrative: Inclusive Monotheism in Persian Period Palestine," in Edelman, *Triumph of Elohim*, 117-18 [art.=107-24]: "The narrative as such loses meaningful plot coherence, unless in this composite theophany of tradition the three numina, אלהים (God), מלאך יהוה (angel of the Yahweh) and יהוה (Yahweh) are understood as identical: the one god of Israel." See also idem, "How Yahweh became God: Exodus 3 and 6 and the Heart of the Pentateuch," *JSOT* 68 (1995): 57-74; Aleida G. Van Daalen, "The Place Where YHWH Showed Himself to Moses: A Study of the Composition of Exodus 3," in Martin Kessler (ed.), *Voices From Amsterdam. A Modern Tradition of Reading Biblical Narrative* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994) 133-144; R.P. Carroll, "Strange Fire: Abstract of Presence Absent in the Text. Meditations on Exodus 3," *JSOT* 61 (1994): 39-58, esp. 41-49. On the divine identity of the *mal'āk yhwh* in the HB see below.

[191] On Gen 15:17-18 as a theophany see *IDBSup*, 896-898 s.v. Theophany in the OT by J. Jeremias.

[192] A three-year old heifer, a three-year-old she-goat, and a three-year-old ram.

'deep sleep' תרדמה (v. 12).[193] In what is likely a symbolic dream/vision[194] Abram sees "a smoking oven (תנור עשן) and flaming torch (ולפיד אש) which passed between these (animal) parts (v. 17)." Commentators have associated this smoking fire-pot and flaming torch with Yahweh's fiery manifestation.[195] However, the text does not support seeing these cultic instruments as an actual *Erscheinungsform*.[196] The formulaic "and Yahweh appeared unto...וירא יהוה אל־" is absent[197] and, as Kenneth Kuntz perceived, "the Yahwist[198] is obviously reluctant to suggest a simple equation" between Yahweh and the instruments.[199]

What is reported in vv. 9-12, 17 is not an 'historical' encounter with the divine, as in the case of theophanies,[200] but likely a dream-vision, specifically a symbolic dream-

---

[193] On תרדמה see T.H. McAlpine, *Sleep, Divine and Human in the Old Testament* (JSOTSup 38; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987) 76. On תרדמה in our passage and Abraham's dream see Johannes Lindblom, "Theophanies in Holy Places in Hebrew Religion," *HUCA* 32 (1961): 94 [art.=91-106].

[194] See especially the arguments of Diana Lipton, *Revisions of the Night: Politics and Promises in the Patriarchal Dreams of Genesis* (JSOTSup 288; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) Chapter Five and further Shaul Bar, *A Letter That Has Not Been Read: Dreams in the Hebrew Bible* (Monographs of the Hebrew Union College 25; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2001) 146-156.

[195] Hallvard Hagelia, *Numbering the Stars: A Phraseological Analysis of Genesis 15* (ConBOT, 39; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1994) 144-45; John Ha, *Genesis 15: A Theological Compendium of Pentateuchal History* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989) 56; G.J. Wenham, "The Symbolism of the Animal Rite in Genesis 15: A Response to G.F. Hasel, JSOT 19 (1981) 61-78," *JSOT* 22 (1982): 134-37; Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 172-80; Samuel E. Loewenstamm, "The Covenant between the pieces. A traditio-historical Investigation," in idem, *Comparative Studies in Biblical and Ancient Oriental Literatures* (Neukirchener Verlag: Verlag Butzon; Bercker Kevelaer: Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1980) 276 [art.=273-80].

[196] *Pace* G. Ch. Aadlers, "The Theophanies in the Old Testament," *Free University Quarterly* 8 (1962): 8-9 [art.=3-15]; *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* 1:871 s.v. Glory by Dillard; Morgenstern, "Biblical Theophanies," 2:29.

[197] As already pointed out by Aadlers, "Theophanies," 8. On this formula and the theophanic tradition see Hugh C. White, "The Divine Oath in Genesis," *JBL* 92 (1973): 166-179. Cf. Gen. 12:7; 17:1; 18:1; 26:2, 24; 35:1,9; 46:29; 48:3; Exod. 3:2; 6.3; 16:10; Lev. 9:23; Num. 14:10; 16:19; 17:7; 20:6; Judg. 6:12; 13:3; I Sam. 1:22; 3:21; I Kgs. 9:2; 2 Chron. 1:7; 3:1; 7:12.

[198] On Kuntz's source-critical analysis of Gen 15 see *Self-revelation of God*, 106-110, 117-20.

[199] *Self-revelation of God*, 119. See also Herman Gunkel, *Genesis: Translated and Interpreted* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997) 181: "one should note how carefully the narrator speaks. He does not say directly that this epiphany is Yahweh, but merely gives the impression. Even Abraham did not see Yahweh's form itself" and Fowler, "Visual Anthropomorphic Revelation of God," 62: "Verse 17 does not say explicitly that it was God who passed between the parts; one is left to assume so only because of the covenant-making custom (emph. orig.)."

[200] On theophany narratives and biblical historiography see above nn. 125-28.

vision.[201] As such, the imagery would be symbolic.[202] As Shaul Bar puts it: "These symbols are the emissaries of the Lord and signs of His presence."[203] The symbolic quality of the imagery is further suggested by the nature of the rite depicted. While there is no consensus among commentators on the meaning of this rite,[204] if it is in fact to be read in the light of Jer 34:18-19[205] then we at the very least are dealing with some sort of substitution rite: the dismembered animals and the cultic implements are symbolic substitutes for the two covenant parties. The animal pieces as symbols of potential covenant breakers or the vulnerable descendants of Abraham may substitute for either the divine or the human party.[206] The smoking oven and flaming torch, on the other hand, could only represent Yahweh.[207] In any case, we have to do here with symbolic substitution, not identity.

Nor is it likely that the 'Pillar of Fire and Cloud' characteristic of the Wilderness narrative is an example of a non-anthropomorphic *Erscheinungsform*.[208] Yahweh appears *in* the Pillar of Fire and Cloud (בעמוד אש וענן, *beth local*)[209] not *as* the Pillar of Fire and Cloud

---

[201]*IDB* 4:619 s.v. Theophany by G. Henton Davies: "the vision of the word of the Lord (15:1), the deep sleep (vs. 12), and the pot and torch symbolism (vs. 17) remove the story from the category of theophany."

[202] Lipton, *Revisions of the Night*, 189: "the smoking oven and the flaming torch resemble the imagery of symbolic dreams"; Hagelia, *Numbering the Stars*, 144, 151; Ha, *Genesis 15*, 74; Wenham, "Symbolism," 135. See also M. Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient near East," *JAOS* 90 (1970): 196 [art.=184-203]. On symbolic dreams/visions in biblical tradition see Jean-Marie Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Bar, *A Letter That Has Not Been Read*, Chapter 2; idem, "Dreams in the Bible" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1987) 113-34; Susan Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision in Biblical Tradition* (HSM 30; Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983).

[203] Bar, *A Letter That Has Not Been Read*, 155.

[204] See discussions in Lipton, Hagellia, Ha, Weinfeld, Loewenstamm and Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Meaning of the Animal Rite in Genesis 15," *JSOT* 19 (1981): 61-78.

[205] Hagelia, *Numbering the Stars*, 151-2; Ha, *Genesis 15*, 71-78. Hasel disagrees, "Meaning of the Animal Rite," 68-70.

[206] On the latter reading (vulnerable descendants) see Wenham, "The Symbolism," 135-36.

[207] Ha, *Genesis 15*, 74.

[208] *Pace IDB* 4:619 s.v. Theophany by G. Henton Davies; *Encyclopædia Biblica* 4:5034 s.v. Theophany; Fowler, "The Visual Anthropomorphic Revelation," 112.

[209] Exod. 14:24; cf. 13:21; 16:10; Nu. 14:14; I Kgs. 8:10-11; Ezk. 10:3-4.

(*beth essentiae*).[210] The cloud seems rather to be like a tent in which the divine radiance

abides,[211] or a garment in which it is cloaked.[212] In other words, "the pillar itself is not a

form of the divine manifestation, but envelops a form of God…Consequently, it is not the

pillar of fire or smoke/cloud which is thought to be a speaking form of God; rather, God

in human form speaks from within such surroundings,"[213] as do the Classical deities.

---

[210] *TDOT* 11:255-9 s.v. עָנָן *'ānān* by Freedman and Willoughby. *Pace* Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 189-195. We assume here that the biblical references to a 'pillar of cloud by day' and 'pillar of fire by night' (Ex. 13:21-22, 14-19-24; Num. 14:14; Neh. 9:12, 19; cf, Exod. 40:38; Num. 9:15-22; Deut. 1:33; Ps. 78:14, 105:39) speak not of two separable pillars, but of a single phenomenon manifesting differently under the contrasting conditions (i.e. day vs night; cf. Exod. 14:24). So Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 189-195; *ABD* 5:372-373 s.v. Pillar of Fire and Cloud by Joel C. Slayton; ibid., 6:9 s.v. Theophany in the OT by Theodore Hieber; J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1991) 58; W.H. Gispen, *Exodus*, Bible Students Commentary (trans. Ed van der Mass; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1982) 144; Fretheim, *Suffering*, 184 n. 19; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 164; George E. Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation; the Origins of the Biblical Tradition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973) 58. We do not, however, assume a single referent for all of the theophanic cloud-phenomena in the HB (*Pace* Paul Allen Smith, "An Investigation of the Relationship of Theophanies to God's Concealment by Clouds in the Old Testament" [Ph.D diss. New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1994]). At least two different phenomena are two be distinguished in the Wilderness narratives alone: Firstly, a locomotive or vehicular *'ānān* by which Yahweh 'descends' (ירד), presumably from 'heaven.' This 'chariot-cloud' is characteristic of E (Exod. 33:7-11; Num. 11:25; 12:5). On the other hand, "the cloud in P and in Ezekiel is the divine envelope which screens the Deity from mortal view. God doesn't *descend* (ירד) in a cloud as in the earlier sources, but *manifests himself* (נראה) in a cloud (Exod. 16:10; Num. 17:7) so that man may not gaze upon him and die" (Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 202). See also Benjamin D. Sommer, "Conflicting Constructions of Divine Presence in the Priestly Tabernacle," *Biblical Interpretation* 9 (2001): 41-63; David Frankel, "Two Priestly Conceptions of Guidance in the Wilderness," *JSOT* 81 (1998): 31-37; Thomas W. Mann, "The Pillar of Cloud in the Reed Sea Narrative," *JBL* 90 (1971): 15-30; Leopold Sabourin, "The Biblical Cloud: Terminology and Traditions," *BTB* 4 (1974): 297-303.

[211] Cf. Ps. 18:11-12 (Heb. 12-13)=2 Sam. 22:12: "He made darkness (חשך) his covering around him, his tent (סכתו) thick clouds (שחקים עבי) dark with water. 12 (13) Out of the brightness (מנגה) before him there broke through the clouds hailstones and coals of fire (NOAB trans, modified)." See further *TDOT* 11:371-75 s.v. ערפל *ʿarāpel* by Mulder; *TDNT* 4:904 s.v. νεφέλη by Oepke; "The cloud is the tent in which the deity conceals himself."

[212] On the cloud/garment association see Job 38:9: בשומי ענן לבשו וערפל חתלתו ("When I made clouds its garments, and thick darkness its swaddling band (NOAB)." Here, clouds (ענן) and thick darkness (ערפל) are parallel and are described as a garment (לבש) and swaddling band (חתלת). On this black cloud/black garment association in biblical and rabbinic tradition see further H. Torczyner, "The Firmament and the Clouds: Rāqîaʿ and Shehāqîm," *StTh* 1 (1948): 188-96. According to Freedman and Willoughby, *TDOT* 11:255 s.v. ענן *'ānān*, the theophanic cloud motif as found in Exodus "is rooted in the ancient tradition of describing God as wrapped in a cloak of clouds or light." In Rev. 10:1 the garment of the angel of revelation is a cloud. See further *TDNT* 4:902-10 s.v. νεφέλη by Oepke.

[213] Fretheim, *Suffering*, 95-6. See also Morgenstern, "Biblical Theophanies," I:154: "these pillars of cloud and fire are not the form in which Yahwe reveals Himself to mortals. They are merely the envelope or cloak in which Jahwe has shrouded Himself, so that his actual, sacred presence shall not be seen by human eye. Jahweh is in the two pillars, but is not the two pillars themselves"; Barr, "Anthropomorphism and Theophy," 35: "Yahweh is veiled from sight by being in the *'ammud he-'anan*."

2.3. Exodus 33: Divine Visibility and Human Peril

Yahweh's characteristic *Erscheinungsform* is therefore anthropomorphic,[214] and modern commentators should probably not overly stress the distinction between *Deus revelatus* and God *als er selbst*.[215] The God of Israel, like the deities of the ANE generally, was a divine *anthropos*[216] whose morphic transcendence imperils man.[217] Revelation (גלה), which often entails Yahweh's visual self-disclosure (נראה),[218] therefore of necessity "involves the

---

[214] Besides Fretheim and Barr see also Dearman, "Theophany, Anthropomorphism, and the *Imago Dei*," 34: "Not all the accounts of theophany give an indication of bodily form in their reference to God 'appearing', but when they do, it is human form rather than animal form that is indicated"; J. Maxwell Miller, "In the 'Image' and 'Likeness' of God," *JBL* 91 (1972): 292 [art.=289-304]: "the theophanic tradition is perhaps the clearest evidence that this view (anthropomorphism) existed among the people of Israel. The biblical writers were extremely cautious, of course, when describing God's theophanies, usually giving more attention to the surroundings of his appearance than to God himself. It is altogether clear from their descriptions, however, that God's bodily form was understood to be essentially like that of a man"; J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962) 227: all "God's theophanic appearances occur consistently in human form"; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, 16-24; Eilberg-Schwartz, "The Averted Gaze" 116; Lindblom, "Theophanies," 106.

[215] Kuntz, *Self-Revelation of God*, 38: "Now the Hebrew...did not call into question the genuine character of God's appearances in the world. Nor may we suggest that the Semitic mentality was amenable to affirming that Yahweh had two distinct natures, one hidden, the other revealed. Indeed, the self-disclosures of Israel's God are fraught with an unresolved tension between the hidden and the revealed. In the theophany...Yahweh's presence is quite real." See also Fretheim, *Suffering*, 105: "*the human form of the divine appearance constituted an enfleshment which bore essential continuities with the form which God was believed to have* (emphasis original)."

[216] Smith, *Early History of God*, 144 (=idem, *Origins*, 90): "The use of *dĕmût*, 'likeness,' and *ṣelem*, 'image,' in Gen. 1:26-28 presupposes the vision of the anthropomorphic god...Genesis 1 acheives the opposite effect of Ezekiel 1:26. While Ezekiel 1:26 conveys the prophet's vision of Yahweh in the likeness of the human person, Genesis 1 presents a vision of the human person in the likeness of the divine"; Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* 1:145-6: "Actually, Israel conceived even Yahweh himself as having human form... But the way of putting it which we use runs in precisely the wrong direction according to Old Testament ideas, for, according to the ideas of Yahwism, it cannot be said that Israel regarded God anthropomorphically, but the reverse, that she considered man as theomorphic...It has been rightly said that Ezek. 1.26 is the theological prelude to the *locus classicus* for the imago doctrine in Gen. 1:26...nevertheless at the same time an infinite difference and distance is tacitly recognized-first in the matter of mere stature, for Israel conceived Jahweh as gigantic (Mic. I. 3ff; Is. LXIII. Iff; Ps. XXIV. 9), but also different and distant as regards quality, for the כבוד which man has cannot, of course, be remotely compared with the fiery, intensely radiant light which is the nature of Yahweh...Yahweh himself was conceived as man." On the epithet "man (איש)" and "mighty man (גבור)" used of God see Gen. 18; 32:24-30; Ex. 15:3; 33:11; Isa 54:4; Hos 2:18; Ps. 24:7-10; 78:65; Isa. 42:13; Zeph. 1:14, 3:17; Jer. 20:11; 1QM, xii, 9-10; 1QM, xix, 2; Marmerstein *Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God*, 7ff, 65ff; J. Massingberd Ford, "The Epithet 'Man' for God," *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 38 (1971): 72-76; *TDOT* I:230-33 s.v. איש *îš; 'iššāh* by N.P. Bratsiotis and Michael Chernick; ibid., 2:373-77 s.v. גבר *gābhar* V. gibbor, by Hans Kosmala.

[217] Isa 6, Ez 1.

[218] *TDOT* 2:484-88 s.v. גלה *gālāh* by Zobel; Shemaryahu Talmon, "Revelation in biblical Times," *Hebrew Studies* 26 (1985): 53-70; J.H. Eaton, "Some Misunderstood Hebrew Words for God's Self-Revelation," *The*

gracious suspension of the nominal threat."[219] Such a "suspension" seems to be illustrated in the important passage Exod 33:18-23:

> 18. (Moses) Said: "Show me your Glory (כבודך), I pray you"
> 19. And (Yahweh) said: I will make my goodness (טובי) pass before you, and will proclaim my name, 'Yahweh'; and I will be gracious to whom I will, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."
> 20. "But," he said, "you cannot see my face (לא תוכל לראת את־פני); for no one can see Me and live כי לא־יראני האדם וחי
> 21. And Yahweh continued: "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock;
> 22. And while my Glory (כבדי) passes by I will put you in a cleft of rock, and I will cover you with my hand (כפי) until I have passed by;
> 23. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back (אחרי); but my face shall not be seen (ופני לא יראו).

James Barr described this passage as "the most sophisticated and delicate discussion of the seeing of God by man in the OT."[220] Though vv. 20 and 23b are sometimes taken as categorical denials of divine visibility,[221] 21-23a clearly state that, if Yahweh's face, *pānîm*, was not to be seen, something of the divine person, the *'āḥôr*, was. The question, of course, is what do these terms imply in this pericope and what does it mean to be able to see one and not the other? For reasons of space we will not enter the complex literary-critical discussion on chapter 33, or the larger narrative unit, chapters 32-34,[222] though

---

Bible Translator 25 (July 1974): 331-338; Rolf Rendtorff, "The Concept of Revelation," in Wolfhart Pannenberg, Rolf Rendtorff, Trutz Rendtorff, and Ulrich Wilkens (edd.), *Revelation as History*, trans. from the German by David Granskou (London: Macmillian Company, 1968) 25-53. See also Walther Zimmerli, "I am Yahweh," in idem, *I am Yahweh*, ed. Walter Brueggemann and trans. Douglas W. Scott (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982) 9 [art.=1-28]: "everything Yahweh has to announce to his people appears as an amplification of the fundamental statement, 'I am Yahweh'."

[219] Harrop, " 'Now Mine Eyes Seeth Thee'," 82. See also Berkovits, *God, Man and History*, 32, 33, 34: "The Divine Presence imperils man; not on account of God's will, directed against man, but because divine nature is so charged with primordial forcefulness and vitality of being that its nearness naturally overwhelms all individual existence...The Paradox is resolved by God, when He 'shows' Himself to man. God, who reveals His 'unbearable' Presence to the helpless creature, also sustains man in the act of revelation...All protection, however, that shields the prophet hides God from him. God can only reveal Himself to man by hiding Himself in the very act of revelation. In the peril, which is implied-and yet restrained-in the encounter, God reveals and hides Himself in one...He reveals Himself as the 'hiding' God that man may live in His sight."

[220] Barr, "Theophany and Anthropomorphism," 35.

[221] *IDB* 2:419 s.v. God, OT view of.

[222] Houtman, *Exodus*, 3:605-733; John Van Seters, *The Life of Moses. The Yahwist as Historia in Exodus-Numbers* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994) Chapters 12 and 13; Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of*

we admit with a number of scholars that the former must be read in the context of the latter.[223] We also accept with most commentators that 33:18-23 is an ancient, independent tradition, having no original connection with the other tradition units isolated from Exodus 33 (vv. 1-6, 7-11, 12-17), but our focus here will be on what the later redactor may have intended by bringing these units together in this canonical form.[224] Specifically, what does he intend by Yahweh's rebuff to Moses: לא־יראני האדם וחי לא תוכל לראת את־פני כי (v. 20). In this regard, Julian Morgenstern, in his study "Biblical Theophanies," cautioned us: "To rightly understand the narrative (Exod. 33) it must be studied carefully in the light of the principles of theophany in the O.T."[225] Since, as Frank Polak noted, "The theophany theme dominates the entire book of Exodus,"[226] Morgenstern's point is well taken. What light does the larger theophanic tradition shed on this "most profound and mysterious" passage?[227]

It is important to point out first that danger associated with seeing the deity is a common biblical theme (Gen. 32:30; Exod. 19:21; 24:11; Judg. 6:23; 13:22).[228] But the issue here is not divine visibility or invisibility, but divine holiness. "The belief that one cannot see God and live is best understood as a motif of Israelite folklore, rooted in

---

Exodus. A Critical, Theological Commentary (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974) Chapts. 21-23; Beyerlin, *Origins and History*, 18-26, 77-143; Martin Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962) Chapter 5.

[223] Houtman, *Exodus* 3:605; Van Seters, *Life of Moses*, 319; John Durham, *Exodus* (Waco, TX: World Books, 1987) 418; R.W.L. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32-34* (JSOTSup 22; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983); Childs, *Book of Exodus*, 586; Noth, *Exodus*, 243 (though he suggests that chapter 33 is a later addition).

[224] So Childs, *Book of Exodus*, 586: "the decisive stage in the formation of the chapter (viz. 33) stems from the redactor's hand, rather than from existing sources."

[225] Morgenstern, "Biblical Theophanies," I:171.

[226] Frank Polak, "Theophany and Mediator: The Unfolding of a Theme in the Book of Exodus," in W. H. Schmidt (ed.), *Studies in the Book of Exodus: redaction, reception, interpretation* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996) 113 [art.=113-147]. See also Martin Ravndal Hauge, *The Descent from the Mountain: Narrative Patterns in Exodus 19-40* (JSOTSup 323; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

[227] Moberly's characterization of 33:18-23: *At the Mountain*, 80.

[228] J. Jeremias even suggested, "Normative for the OT are the words: 'Man shall not see me and live'": *IDBSup*, 897 s.v. Theophany in the OT.

popular conceptions concerning purity and danger."[229] Yahweh's holiness is violently incompatible with impurity and sin, and thus, direct encounters with the divine always put mortals at risk.

> Die Unvereinbarkeit von Gott und Sünde wird fast im Sinne eines Automatismus gedacht, der alles, was der Heiligkeit Gottes entgegensteht, in dessen Nähe ausgerottet sein läßt.
> Auf diesem Hintergrund ist auch zu sehen, daß jeder Kontakt mit dem Heiligen als Gefahr betrachtet wird, weil Verfehlungen und Vergehen zur sofortigen Vernichtung führen müssen. Da in biblischer Vorstellung das Sehen immer eine unmittelbare Erfahrung bedeutet, wird das Sehen auch und gerade in diesem Kontext der besonderen Nähe zum Heiligen problematisiert.[230]

Exod. 33:18-33 equates Yahweh's כבוד *kābōd* with his פנים *pānîm*.[231] Thus, while the latter has a range of meanings in the biblical text,[232] its synonymity here with Yahweh's fiery, anthropomorphic כבוד[233] means that the mortal danger associated with seeing the

---

[229] Hendel, "Aniconism and Anthropomorphism," 221. Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity*, 22-23: "God is invisible because he wills to be so. To see God would be to die…(Judges 13.22; Isa. 6.5)…God's invisibility is his holiness."

[230] "The incompatibility of God and sin is thought of almost in the sense of an automatism; that everything in a state contrary to the holiness of God, in His vicinity, is eradicated. On this background also is to be seen that every contact with the holy is regarded as a danger, because mistakes and offense must lead to immediate annihilation. Because in the biblical conception *seeing* always entails a direct experience, *seeing* in this particular context of the (immediate) vicinity of the holy becomes also problematised." Christoph Dohmen, " »Nicht sieht mich der Mensch und lebt« (Ex 33, 20): Aspekte der Gottesschau im Alten Testament" *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 13 (1998): 36 [art.=31-51]. See also Barr, "Theophany and Anthropomorphism," 34: "There is…from early times, the tradition not so much that the deity is invisible as that it is deadly for man to see him…This line of thought…does not assert that the deity is invisible, but depends on the holiness and awfulness of his aspect which must bring death to men who see him." See also below.

[231] As noticed by Terrien, *Elusive Presence*, 144, 146; On the *pānîm* as Yahweh's cultic, theophanic presence see Beyerin, *Origins and History*, 104-106.

[232] *DDD* 322-325 s.v. Face פנים by C.L. Seow; Joseph Reindl, *Das Angesicht Gottes im Sprachgebrauch des Alten Testaments* (Leipzig: St. Benno, 1970); Nötscher, *"Das Angesicht Gottes schauen"*, Aubrey R. Johnson, "Aspects of the Use of the Term PNYM in the Old Testament," in Johann Fück (ed.), *Festschrift Otto Eissfeldt* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1947) 155-59.

[233] That the כבוד יהוה in this pericope is "exceedingly" or "intensely" anthropomorphic has been pointed by a number of commentators. See Kuntz, *Self-Revelation*, 39; Morgenstern, "Biblical Theophanies," I:178; Carolyn J. Sharp, "Dancing Across the Seams: The Interplay of Public and Private Theophany," *Church Divinity* (1991-1992): 16-18 [art.=12-21]; Rachel M. Billings, "The Problem of the Divine Presence: Source-Critical Suggestions for the Analysis of Exodus XXXIII 12-23," *VT* 54 (2004): 427-444, suggests that vv. 19-20 are secondary "exegetical commentary" on the strongly anthropomorphic theophany of vv. 18, 21-23, the purpose of which is to "deanthropomorphize" the theophany. Her source-critical division has little to commend it however, and she failed to grasp the relation between the *kābôd* and *pānîm* in this pericope.

48

divine פנים can be understood in relation to the danger elsewhere associated with the

כבוד. Thus, Lev. 10:1-3 describes the incineration of Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu who

approached Yahweh with 'strange fire.'[234] In reaction, divine fire flared from the פנים of

Yahweh and consumed the boys (ותאכל אותם). In v. 3 Moses describes this lethal reaction

from the פנים as Yahweh 'showing himself holy' (אקדש) and being 'glorified' (אכבד)

before the people. Here, as in other instances (e.g. Ezek 28:22; cf. Exod. 14:4; Lev. 22:32;

Num. 20:12-13), the verbs are synonymous and denote a form of divine punishment.[235]

As J.H. Eaton notes: "God...'asserts his holiness' when he blazes out with fire against

imposters in the sanctuary".[236] This is likely the background to the description of יהוה

כבוד as/like a "consuming fire" (אש אכלה Deut. 4:24; Exod. 24:17).[237]

This is also the background against which we must understand the pericope in Exod.

33:18-23.[238] Moses, by asking to see כבוד יהוה in v. 18 is not requesting a new experience

of the divine. He and the Israelites had indeed "witnessed God's glory often (e.g. Exod

16:10; 24:9-11, 16-17; 33:7-11)." [239] Exod. 33:11 even sets the stage for our pericope[240] by

---

[234] For Lev. 10 as an expression of the biblical "conviction that visual contact with the divine is lethal" see Savran, *Encountering the Divine*, 19.

[235] See especially Peretz Segal, "The Divine Verdict of Leviticus X 3," *VT* 29 (1989): 91-95.

[236] Eaton, "Some Misunderstood Hebrew Words For God's Self-Revelation," 336. Cf. Num. 11:1-3.

[237] Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 209.

[238] W. Brueggemann, "The Crises and Promise of Presence in Israel," in P.D. Miller (ed.), *Old Testament Theology: Essays on Structure, Theme and Text* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) 161 [art.=150-83] observes that v. 20 "reasserts what must be an old premise of biblical faith. That is the beginning point of the problem of visible revelation. It is *dangerous* (emphasis original)."

[239] Daniel W. Ulrich, "Exodus 33:12-23," *Int* (October 2002): 411. See also Michael Widmer, *Moses, God, and the Dynamics of Intercessory Prayer. A Study of Exodus 32-34 and Numbers 13-14* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe 8; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004) 143: "According to the book of Exodus, YHWH's כבוד has already been revealed on a number of occasions, most importantly in the theophany at Mount Sinai before the breach of covenant. On that occasion YHWH's כבוד was publicly visible in the form of a devouring fire (24:17 כאש אכלה). Moreover, Moses has already experienced YHWH's כבוד in the liberation from Egypt (cf. 9:16, 14:4, 18), and in the miraculous providence in the desert, where God escorted His people in a pillar of cloud and fire through the wilderness (16:7, 10). Thus it appears that Moses asks for a divine manifestation that he and the people have already seen and experienced before."

[240] Widmer *Moses, God, and the Dynamics of Intercessory Prayer*, 143 argues that "Exod 33:1-11 not only prepares the stage for Moses' dialogue with Yahweh (33:12-23), but also provides essential information for the logic of the ensuing narrative." And Houtman, *Exodus*, 3:686 notes that "The intermezzo is not arbitrary. The section 33:4-11 serves to lay the groundwork for a fruitful continuance of the dialogue...in the current

---

49

recalling that it had previously been Moses' habit[241] to speak to Yahweh in the "tent of meeting" "face-to-face" (פנים אל־פנים) as one man speaks to his friend. While פנים אל־פנים is idiomatic and suggests "intimate" dialoguing,[242] we cannot agree with Walther Eichrodt that the expression "is nothing more than a heightened metaphor for a personal meeting and speaking with the invisible God."[243] The redactor, by introducing the pericope found in 33:18-23 by that found in 33:7-11,[244] clearly intends to contrast the two situations. The idiom "face-to-face" here suggests that "In these passages Yahweh removed the concealing cloud" and that "only Moses was allowed to look on Yahweh without his 'veil'."[245] That Moses' distinction as being the one to whom Yahweh spoke 'face-to-face' involves a visual component is confirmed by Num. 12:8: "With him (i.e. Moses) I speak mouth to mouth (פה אל־פה), clearly, not in riddles; and he beholds the (very) form of Yahweh (תמונת יהוה)." Speaking with Moses 'mouth-to-mouth', a cognate of 'face-to-face', is here qualified by Moses' distinct privilege of beholding Yahweh's תמונה *tĕmûnâ*. In Ps. 17:15, the divine תמונה and פנים are synonymously parallel and are the object of the psalmist's visual desire. Also, the LXX renders Num. 12:8: και την δοξαν κυρίου ειδεν.

---

context 33:4-11 serves as setting the stage for 33:12ff"; and James Muilenburg, "The Intercession of the Covenant Mediator (Exodus 33:1a, 12-17," in Peter R. Ackroyd and Barnabas Lindars (edd.), *Words and Meanings: Essays Presented to David winton Thomas on his reirement from the Regius Professorship of Hebrew in the University of Cambridge, 1968* (Cambridge: University Press, 1968) 163 suggested that "the editor or compiler may have considered verse 11 a fitting context for verses 12-17".

[241] The verbs throughout vv. 7-11 are in the imperfect and have a frequentative force. Most commentators therefore interpret this unit (vv.7-11) as a reference to the habitual practice of Moses throughout the wilderness wanderings of setting up the Tent at every encampment. See e.g. Mann, *Divine Presence*, 144; Noth, *Exodus*, 255. Moberly's (*At the Mountain*, 64, 171-2) alternative reading of these imperfect verbs, viz. that (1) they are intended to convey the sense of an impermant tent in lieu of Yahweh's now withdrawn presence, and (2) they are a literary device to slow the narrative at a transitional point, is less than convincing. Cf. also Houtman, *Exodus*, 3:693 who reads this unit as a description of Moses' reaction to the Calf incident, with 33:7 relating a one-time incident, while 7b-11 describe events that frequently took place thereafter.

[242] Mark D. Wessner, "Toward a Literary Understanding of Moses and the Lord 'Face to Face' (אל-פנים פנים) in Exodus 33:7-11," *Restoration Quarterly* 44 (2002):109-116; Terrien, *Elusive Presence*, 178;

[243] *Theology*, 2:37

[244] On the redactor's purposeful integration of the tradition represented by vv. 7-11 into the larger narrative of chapter 33 see Childs, *Book of Exodus*, 589-93.

[245] *TDOT* 11:256 s.v. ענן *'ānān* by Freedman and Willoughby.

The MT's תמונת is translated δόξα, the LXX's normal translation for כבוד.[246] The use here of the aorist (adverting to some past occasion) suggests that the LXX translator understood the verse to reference a past viewing of Yahweh's *kābôd* by Moses; the reference may very well be to the experiences alluded to in Exod 33:11.[247] Thus, Moses' face-to-face encounter with Yahweh likely involved his beholding the deity's luminous *kābôd/pānîm*.[248]

Though Moses and the Israelites used to be able to see the *kābōd yhwh*, the Golden Calf incident (chapter 32) that begins this larger narrative unit (chapters 32-34) has rendered them impure; Yahweh's presence, פנים, can no longer abide in their midst lest it consume (אכל) them (Exod. 33:3).[249] This is the main point of the chapter. As Moberly wrote, "The problem in the present context…is how a holy God can abide with a sinful people."[250] And as Barr pointed out, this is the issue undergirding the discussion over seeing Yahweh in 33:18-23

> in this chapter the problem is not really the problem of anthropomorphism as such…It seems clear that the passage was written for its context, that is, to follow immediately after the incident of the sin of Israel in making the golden calf. The problem is therefore: how can Yahweh now go with Israel on their journey? The danger is that if he goes with them personally, he will consume them-clearly, because of their rebelliousness…the problem which interests the writer is not that of anthropomorphism and transcendence but that of sin and atonement in relation to (a) the accompanying presence and (b) the vision or appearance of Yahweh.[251]

---

[246] Newman, *Paul's Glory-Christology*, Chapter Seven; *TDNT* 2:242-45 s.v. δοξα: D. δόξα in the LXX and Hellenistic Apocrypha by G. von Rad,; L.H. Brockington, "The Septuagintal Background to the New Testament use of ΔΟΞΑ," in D.E. Nineham (ed.), *Studies in the Gospels. Essays in Memory of R.H. Lightfoot* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955) 1-8.

[247] So Wessner, "Toward a Literary ," 114 n. 22; Van Seters, *Life of Moses*, 238, 343.

[248] Dohmen " »Nicht sieht«," 40 notes that 'face-to-face' and 'seeing the form' (Num. 12:8) represent "verwendten hebräischen Gedanken".

[249] Van Seters, *Life of Moses*, 332 notes: "It is the divine presence in the form of fire that is associated with the verb 'to consume' (*'kl*)." See also Dohmen, " »Nicht sieht«," 33-4.

[250] *At the Mountain*, 67.

[251] "Theophany and Anthropomorphism," 35-6. See also Hauge, *Descent from the Mountain*, 117: "While ideas of human sin as well as divine grace must be relevant, the categories of encounter and theophany as well as the elite character of the *visio* experience suggest that the story probes far bolder and deeper into the very nature of the religious experience."

As the famous second century Rabbi Simeon b. Jonai is given to say: "Before the golden calf incident Israel could look at the devouring appearance of God and not be alarmed. After the incident, however, they dare not even approach Moses with the glory of his face (cf. Exod. 34:29-35)."[252] But how does one explain that "even Moses, the mediator who did not participate in the sin of the people, and was assured of YHWH's ongoing פנים (33:14), is (also) in danger of His consuming holy פנים and therefore is in need of special assistance (33:20, 23)"? [253] Moses is here a synecdoche for the house of Israel.[254] And as the status of the prophet mirrors the status of the covenant,[255] Moses' experience on Mount Sinai reflects the new status of Israel and the covenant. His new *inability* to bare Yahweh's Glory is reflective of Israel's new condition.[256] Moses' insistent inclusion of Israel in his dialogue with and petitions to Yahweh[257] indeed amounted to a 'costly solidarity,' as Michael Widmer termed it.[258]

But Moses, and therefore Israel, does get a vision of Yahweh, albeit not what he/they had hoped for. What does Moses see? Yahweh places Moses in the cleft of a rock to shield

---

[252] H.G. Kuhn (ed.), *Sifre zu Numeri Tannaitische Midrashim* (Stuttgart, 1959) 13.

[253] Widmer, *Moses, God, and the Dynamics*, 165.

[254] Leslie Brisman, "On the Divine Presence in Exodus," in Harold Bloom (ed.), *Exodus* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987) 108 [art.=105-122].

[255] As pointed out by Brian Britt, "Prophetic Concealment in a Biblical Type Scene," *CBQ* 64 (2002): 52.

[256] Thus Ulrich, "Exodus 33:12-23," 412: "Moses has chosen to stand in solidarity with the rest of Israel, and like the rest of Israel he will need divine protection in order to survive in God's presence." *Pace* Sharp, "Dancing Across the Seams," 18: "It can be clearly seen that the glory material focuses entirely on the apprehension of divine presence by Moses as an individual. Neither continuity with patriarchal theophanies nor subsequent instruction of Israel by Moses on the basis of his experience is suggested in the text." This may be true of the pre-canonical, independent tradition, but in its current context it is clearly connected to Moses' role as covenant mediator and his insistent solidarity with Israel.

[257] On which see Widmer, *Moses, God, and the Dynamics*, 153-54; William H. Irwin, "The Course of the Dialogue between Moses and Yhwh in Exodus 33:12-17," *CBQ* 59 (1997): 629-36; Dale Ralph Davis, "Rebellion, Presence, and Covenant: A Study in Exodus 32-34," *WTJ* 44 (1982): 71-87; Childs, *Book of Exodus*, 595.

[258] Widmer, *Moses, God, and the Dynamics*, 123. Van Seters, *Life of Moses*, 334 fails to discern in this dialogue a discrepancy between Yahweh's willingness to accommodate Moses only, and the latter's insistence that Israel be included as well. He argues, "Whatever the deity does for Moses as leader, he does for the people as a whole". This is contradicted, however, by Exod. 32:9-10: "Yahweh said to Moses, 'I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you (Moses) I will make a great nation.'"

him from the overbearing radiance of the *kābōd/pānîm* as it passes by him.[259] As an extra

precaution, he also shields Moses with his hand (כף), or maybe his skirt (כנף).[260] When

Yahweh's *kābōd/pānîm* passes and Yahweh lowers his hand/skirt, Moses is able to see

Yahwhe's אחור, hinder-parts. What is the divine אחור? Its juxtaposition here to the

פנים/כבוד, Yahweh's dangerously luminous *body*, rules out all attempts to read אחור

temporally (as a reference to the future deeds of Yahweh),[261] or abstractly (as a reference

to some of Yahweh's more benign attributes).[262] R.W.L. Moberly's interpretation,

"afterglow" is suggestive.[263] The divine אחור, whatever its relation to the טוב ('goodness')

and שם ('name') of Exod 33:19,[264] is possibly a less radiant, though not necessarily 'non-

radiant,'[265] appearance, one more accommodating to human frailty. As the gods of

---

[259] Cf. Isa. 2:20-21: "On that day people will throw away to the moles and to the bats their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship, to enter the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the crags, from the terror (פחד) of Yahweh, and from the glory of his majesty (מהדר גאונו), when he rises to terrify the earth." See also the Mesopotamian account of the deities "fluttering like bates" to "fly off to the clefts of rocks" from before the radiant countenance of Iananna. *ANET³*, 579-8.

[260] See Meir Malul's arguments, "כפי (Ex 33,22) and בחפנין (Prov 30, 4): Hand or Skirt?" *ZAW* 109 (1997): 356-68.

[261] Terrien, *Elusive Presence*, 146-8; W.J. Peter Boyd, "The Mystery of God and Revelation," *SJT* 13 (1960): 178-182.

[262] Brisman, "On the Divine Presence," 122; U. Cassuto, *A Commentary of the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem, 1967): 436; Hourtman, *Exodus*, 704.

[263] *At the Mountain*, 82. Aalders. "Theophanies in the Old Testament," 6 describes it as "a weak reflection of the glory of the Lord." Manfred Oeming, "Gottes Offenbarung »von hinten« Zu einem wenig beachteten Aspekt des alttestamentlichen Offenbarungsverständnisses," in Friedholm Krüger (ed.), *Gottes Offenbarung in der Welt: Horst Georg Pöhlmann zum 65. Geburtstag* (Gütersloh, Germany: Kaiser, 1998) 298 [art.=292-304] wondered if Exod 33 wasn't as "narrative Form von erkenntnistheoretischem Platonismus im Alten Testament": "Was Platon im Höhlengeichnis mythisch ausdrückte, faßt Ex 33 in eine theologische Erzählung: Das Ding an sich (die Idee Gottes) ist menschlichem Erfassen entzogen, unsere Vernunft muß sich mit der Rückansicht, der schattenhaften Erscheinung begnügen?"

[264] We cannot give here a tradition-history of the various terms used in this pericope to designate (aspects of) the divine presence. On the relation and significances of these various terms see Widmer, *Moses, God, and the Dynamics*, 149-68; Polak, "Theophany and Mediator," 144; Brueggemann, "Crises and Promise," 162; Terrien, *Elusive Presence*, 146-8; Gordon McConville, "God's 'Name' and God's 'Glory'," *TynBul* 30 (1979): 149-63; Childs, *Book of Exodus*, 596; Morgenstern, "Biblical Theophanies," 2:36.

[265] *À la* Herbert Chanan Brichto, "The Worship of the Golden Calf: A Literary Analysis of a Fable on Idolatry," *HUCA* 54 (1983): 28 [art.=1-44].

Homer could 'turn it down' for the purposes of initiating human contact, so too could (apparently) Israel's deity.[266]

Exod 33:18-23 is therefore not a categorical denial of divine visibility. The important issues touched upon in this pericope are divine holiness and human sin, and how the encounter between the two imperils man. George Savran has argued that "Seeing Yahweh is the ultimate experience in biblical theophany."[267] Because of the (spatial) intimacy involved in such an experience, and therefore the potential encountering of holiness with impurity, seeing Yahweh is also the most perilous experience in biblical theophany.[268] "Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings? (Isa. 33:14)" This pericope does not imply that Yahweh is invisible, but that he is dangerously holy, and mortal (i.e. impure) eyes gaze at their own risk.[269]

2.4. Anthropomorphic Theophany and the Prophetic Call

Eliezer Berkovits suggested that "The encounter with God is *conditio sine qua non* of all prophecy,"[270] and according to Y. Kaufmann "Prophecy is entirely rooted in popular conceptions of theophany."[271] If Klaus Baltzer is correct and the prophetic call narratives are the most likely source to find information about "the essence and function of the

---

[266] See further below.

[267] Savran, *Encountering the Divine*, 52.

[268] Dohmen, " »Nicht sieht «" 36. On the lethality of divine encounters see also Savran, *Encountering the Divine*, Chapter 6 ("On the Lethal Nature of the divine Presence"); Matthews, "Theophanies Cultic and Cosmic," 308-10. Cf. the fear of death from the sound of Yahweh's voice, e.g. Exod. 20:18; Deut. 5:25, 18:16.

[269] *TDNT* 5:332 s.v. οραω by to Michaelis: "The basic principle of Ex. 33:20b, namely, that he who sees God must die, is not thinking of death as a fixed penalty for violation of a corresponding prohibition, for no such prohibition is stated either here or elsewhere. Rather the holiness and majesty of God on the one side, and the unworthiness of man on the other, mean that man cannot see God without being completely destroyed"; Wolfson, *Trough a Speculum*, 27: "The seeing of God's face (Ex. 33) is objectionable not because it is theologically impossible but rather because of the ensuing danger that it necessarily entails."

[270] Berkovits, *God, Man and History*, 27.

[271] Y. Kaufmann, *Toledot ha-'Emunah ha-Yisre'elit*, I, 1955, 229, quoted from Kasher, "Anthropomorphism, Holiness and Cult: ," 192.

prophetic office,"[272] these observations stand confirmed, because theophany and *visio Dei* constitute a defining aspect of the biblical prophetic call narrative.[273] Savran aptly describes the call-narratives as "a particular subset of initial theophany narratives."[274] Already H. Ewald, who saw in the call-event "eine wirkliche, geheimnisvolle Gottesbegegnung," argued that there was no genuine prophets of Yahweh "der nicht zuvor seinen Blick in die volle Herrlichkeit und Heiligkeit Jahve's selbst geworfen (hätte)".[275] There is of course no way of knowing exactly what the prophets of ancient Israel actually experienced on the occasion of their 'call,' or even what they thought they had experienced; the narratives in the biblical text treating these events are apologetic, not autobiographical, and therefore employ rather conventional literary methods.[276] They are also likely the work of later tradents concerned with vindicating the prophet.[277] The *Berufungsbericht* therefore tells us more about the socio-religious community's

---

[272] Klaus Baltzer, "Considerations Regarding the Office and Calling of the Prophet," *HTR* 6 (1968): 568.

[273] J.O. Akao, "Biblical Call Narratives: An Investigation onto the Underlying Structures," *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 8D (1993):5 [art.=1-11]: "In their call experiences, the emphasis of having been to (sic) the immediate presence of the Deity becomes necessary in order to authenticate the message delivered. Thus most of the prophets with call narrative are found describing how in one form or another they have interacted with the deity in the process of their commissioning (Jer 1⁹; Is 6⁷; Ez 2⁹ cf Gen. 24⁸⁻⁹ and 24⁴¹)"; Johannes Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1962) 192: "This conviction of being called is often based on a particular experience in the life of the prophet, combined with a theophany in the form of an ecstatic vision or audition." Regarding 'vision or audition' see Savran, *Encountering the Divine*, 52: "visual contact with the divine is not simply important, but represents a fundamental form of validation of the theophanic experience. In many theophany narratives an initial visual encounter is essential to the experience of the divine, and seems to be an integral part of the process of initiation into further (usually verbal) contact with the divine."

[274]*Encountering the Divine*, 13; idem, "Theophany as Type Scene," 126.

[275] *Die Propheten des Alten Bundes* I (Stuttgart, 1840) 20.

[276] Scott J. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel. The Letter/Spirit Contreast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1995) 47-62; J.L. Berquist, "Prophetic Legitimation in Jeremiah," *VT* 39 (1989): 130-131 [art.=129-139]; Rudolf Killian, "Die Prophetischen Berufungberichte," *Theologie im Wandel. Festschrift zum 150 jährigen Bestehen der Katholisch-Theologischen Fakultät an der Universität Tübingen, 1817-1967* (München: Wewel, 1967): 375 [art.=356-376]; Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* II: *The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965) 55; Baltzer, "Considerations," 568; N. Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," *ZAW* 77 (1965): 317 [art.=297-323].

[277] See especially Burke O. Long, "Prophetic Authority as Social Reality," in G.W. Coats and B.O. Long (edd.), *Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament Religion and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977): 3-20; Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, 60-62; von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* II: 56.

expectations regarding such an event than it does about the prophet's personal experience itself.[278]

Scholars, observing the basic structural similarities between such call accounts as Exod. 3.1-4, Judg. 6, Jer. 1, Isa 6, and Ezek. 1, have attempted to discern and define a *Gattung* (basic literary form) behind the various call-narratives, a literary paradigm defined by a number of mandatory components that appear in a fixed or nearly fixed order.[279] The assumption is that the tradents appealed to this socially accepted (and expected) *Gattung* when composing the apologetic *Berufungsbericht* for the prophet(s).[280] On the other

---

[278] See Robert D. Miller, "The Form-Critical Problem of Moses' Call," *Proceedings of the Eastern Great Lakes & Midwestern Biblical Society* 15 (1995): 113-119; M. Bus, "An Anthropological Perspective on Prophetic Call Naratives," *Semeia* 21 (1982): 16-17 [art.=9-30].

[279] See the various form-critical discussions in Savran, *Encountering the Divine*, 8-13; idem, "Theophany as Type-Scene," 121-26; Gregory Yuri Glazov, *The Bridling of the Tongue and the Opening of the Mouth in Biblical Prophecy* (JSOTSup 311; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001) Chapter I; Uriel Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997) 51-56; Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, 47-62; J.O. Akao, "The Burning Bush: An Investigation of the Form and Meaning in Exodus 3 and 4" (Ph.D. diss., Glasgow University, 1985) 149-217; idem, "Biblical Call Narratives"; Dieter Vieweger, *Die Spezifik der Berufungsberichte Jeremias und Ezechiels im Umfeld ähnlicher Einheiten des Alten Testaments* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1986) 11-24; Benjamin J. Hubbard, "Commissioning Stories in Luke-Acts: A Study of Their Antecedents, Form and Content," *Semeia* 8 (1977): 103-126; idem, *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning: An Exegesis of Matthew 28: 16-20* (SBL Dissertation Series 19; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974) 25-62; Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979) 97-100; Dorthy Irvin, "The Joseph and Moses stories as narrative in the light of ancient Near Eastern narrative. J: The traditional episode of sending the saviour," in John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller (edd.), *Israelite and Judean History* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977) 200-209; Klaus Baltzer, *Biographie der Propheten* (Neukirchen-Vluyn; Neukirchen Verlag, 1975); idem, "Considerations"; Gregorio del Olmo Lete, *La vocacion del liber en el antiquo Israel: Morfologia de los relatos biblicos de vocacion* (Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia, 1973); W. Vogels, "Les récits de vocation des prophètes," *Nouvelle Revue Theologique* 95:1 (1973): 3-24; Wolfgang Richter, *Die sogenannten vorprophetischen Berufungsberichte: Eine literaturwissenschaftliche Studie zu 1 Sam 9, 1-10, 16, Ex 3f. und Ri 6, 11b-17* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970); idem, *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Richterbuch* (Bonn: Peter Hanstein Verlag GmbH., 1963): 149-55; Killian, "Prophetischen Berufungberichte"; Habel, "Form and Significance"; Henning Graf Reventlow, *Liturgie und prophetisches Ich bei Jeremia* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1963) 22-77; Georg Fohrer, "Die Gattung der Berichte über symbolische Handlungen der Propheten," *ZAW* 54 (1952): 101-20; Ernst-Joachim Waschke, "Berufung II. Altes Testament," in *RRR⁴* 1:1347-49; Ernst Kutsch, "Gideons Berufung und Altarbau Jdc 6, 11-24," *ThLZ* 81 (1956): 75-84.

[280] Habel, "Form and Significance," 317: "the prophetic call accounts...seem to be the product of later reflection as the prophets concerned announce their credentials to Israel at large, either orally or in writing, in accordance with the tradition of their predecessors. By employing this form the prophets publicly identify themselves as God's ambassadors. The call narratives, therefore, are not primarily pieces of autobiographical information but open proclamations of the prophet's claim to be Yahweh's agent at work in Israel...The employment of the literary form in no way negates the reality of the call encounter itself, but underscores the relevance of this form for the public affirmation of the claims which the prophet is making as Yahweh's spokesman." See also von Rod, *Old Testament Theology*, II:56.

hand, Savran prefers to speak of a "type-scene" instead of a *Gattung*: while the latter is characterized by a rigid form to which all examples are expected to, or even (by later form-critics) made to, conform, the former is characterized by a number of recurrent motifs, each to be variously applied or not according to the literary objective of the narrative in which they are embedded.[281] Such an abandonment of the form-critical method was already anticipated by Wolfgang Richter, who was able to show that, instead of a *Gattung*, the *Berufungsberichte* exhibit a certain 'schema,' with a number of *Schemata* which, when taken up in various genre, shaped these materials rather than defined them.[282] We will not enter this form-critical debate here, except to say that we are convinced by the latter arguments.

While there is currently no consensus regarding the nature or contours of a prophetic call *Gattung*, or the exact components or schemata of a type-scene/schema, a number of key elements have been isolated. These include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) a divine encounter (Exod. 3:1-4; Judg. 6:11-12; Isa. 6:1-2; Jer. 1:4; Ez. 1:1-28; I Sam. 3:10; Isa. 40:1-11); a commission (Exod. 3:10; Judg. 6:11-12; Isa. 6:8-10; Jer. 1:5; Ezek. 2:6, 8); an objection from the *vocandus* (one called) to the commission or an obstacle to be overcome before the commission can proceed (Exod. 3:11; Judg. 6:15; Isa. 6:11; Jer. 6; Ezek. 2:6,8 [or 4:14[283]]),[284] and a sign of assurance (Exod. 3:12; Judg. 6:17; Jer. 1-9-10; Ezek. 2:8-3:11).[285] Of the several recurrent motifs that might constitute a prophetic call type-scene, one will concern us here, as it is especially important in understanding the

---

[281] *Encountering the Divine*, Chapter 1; idem, "Theophany as Type-Scene." See already N.F. Schmidt and P.J. Nel, "Theophany as type-scene in the Hebrew Bible," *Journal for Semitics* 11 (2002): 256-281.

[282] *Die sogenannten vorprophetischen Berufungsberichte*, 136-81.

[283] See D. Nathan Phinney, "The Prophetic Objection in Ezekiel IV 14 and its Relation to Ezekiel's Call," *VT* 55 (2005): 75-87.

[284] Hafemann, *Paul, Moses and the History of Israel*, 60 argues that the 'center of gravity in the prophetic call narratives is the objection/obstacle motif'. For a cross-culturally look at prophetic call narratives and the element of objection/resistance see Buss, "An Anthropological Perspective," 13-14.

[285] These schemata are taken from the influential call-*Gattung* proposed by Habel, "Form and Significance". For similar models see Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, 49; Hubbard, "Commissioning Stories," 104-06; idem, *Matthean Redaction*, 25-62; Vieweger, *Spezifik*, 36-44; Richter, *Die sogenannten vorprophetischen Berufungsberichte*, 136-69; Waschke, "Berufung II," 1348; Kutsch, "Gideons Berufung," 79.

Qur'ānic allusions to Muḥammad's prophetic call: the initial divine encounter. Later we shall have occasion to examine a second relevant motif, namely the prophetic sign (*'oth*).

2.4.1. The Divine Encounter

In his commentary on Ezekiel, Walther Zimmerli delineated form-critically two different types of call narratives.[286] One, represented by the calls of Jeremiah (Jer 1:4-10), Moses (Exod. 3:1-4:17), Gideon (Judg. 6:11-24), and Saul (I Sam. 9:15-27),[287] was characterized by a very personal encounter between the *vocandus* and the divine, either Yahweh or his (angelic) messenger. A dialogue transpires, during which the *vocandus* displays some reluctance or even offers objections, which Yahweh overcomes through the granting of signs. In this "Jeremian type of call account," the *word* of Yahweh dominates. In the second type, represented by I Kings 22:19-21[288] and Isa. 6:1-8, the *vocandus* encounters Yahweh in a vision enthroned among his heavenly host, the Israelite version of the ANE divine council.[289] The distance between Yahweh and the *vocandus* is emphasized, and the latter has no room to object; no dialogue takes place. In this second type of call narrative, the *vision* of Yahweh dominates. Ezekiel's call, argues Zimmerli, is a mix of the two call-types.

---

[286] *Ezekiel 1*, 97-100.

[287] The anointing of Saul as king of Israel is, however, not a prophetic call, as is recognized by commentators.

[288] Zimmerli *Ezekiel 1*, 99 admits that 1 Kngs.22:19-21 "contains no call narrative in the strict sense," but its "strong connections" with Isa. 6:1-8 "justify us speaking of a type of commission narrative, which underlies Isaiah 6". See also von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* II:56.

[289] On the divine council in biblical tradition see Michael S. Heiser, "The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2004); Smith, *Origins*, 41-53; Lowell K. Handy, "The Appearance of the Pantheon in Judah," in Edelman, *Triumph of Elohim*, 27-43; idem, *Among the Host of Heaven: The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1994); idem, "The Authorization of Divine Power and the Guilt of God in the Book of Job: Useful Ugaritic Parallels," *JSOT* 60 (1993): 107-18; idem, "Dissenting Deities or Obedient Angels: Divine Hierarchies in Ugarit and the Bible," *Biblical Research* 35 (1990): 18-35; Timothy M. Willis, "Yahweh's Elders (Isa 24,23): Senior Officials of the Divine Court," *ZAW* 103 (1991): 375-85; P.D. Miller, "Cosmology and World Order in the Old Testament: The Divine Council as Cosmic-Political Symbol," *HBT* 9 (1987): 53-78; Mullen, Jr., *Assembly of the Gods*; Richard J. Clifford, "The Tent of El and the Israelite Tent of Meeting," *CBQ* 33 (1971): 221-27; Matitiahu Tsevat, "God and the Gods in Assembly: An Interpretation of Psalm 82," *HUCA* 40 (1969): 123-37; Gerald Cooke, "The Sons of (The) God(s)," *ZAW* 76 (1964): 22-47; Julian Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," *HUCA* 14 (1939): 29-126.

Not everyone accepts Zimmerli's basic premise of two call-typse.[290] Both Norman Habel and Burke O. Long saw only "one essential type" behind the various call accounts.[291] We accept Zimmerli's basic premise; his characterization of the two types, however, stand in need of revision. It is clear that the accounts of Moses and Gideon on the one hand, and Isaiah and Ezekiel on the other, are fundamentally different experiences. While the former have personal, one-on-one encounters with *mal'āk Yhwh*, whom they both initially misidentify,[292] the latter encounter Yahweh in his glory, enthroned and often surrounded by his court. The former are initially indifferent to the divine presence before them, the latter are overwhelmed. The former dialogue with the divine "as one man speaks to his friend," the latter have few words to say before the holiness confronting them. These are indeed different experiences narrated. A number of scholars distinguish between the call of a savior/hero (Moses/Gideon) and the call of a prophet (Jeremiah/Isaiah/Ezekiel).[293] This seems reasonable. But how do we understand the differences in divine manifestations?

2.4.1.1. The Kābôd (Glory) Theophany

Zimmerli, by characterizing the distinction between the two call types as *auditory* versus *visionary*, has obscured their character and relation rather than clarified them. The distinction implies that theophany and *visio Dei* are key elements in only the second type.[294] As a particular sub-set of the theophany narrative, [295] we would expect theophany

---

[290] For a review of Zimmerli's thesis and reactions to it see Killian, "Prophetischen Berufungberichte."

[291] Habel, "Form and Significance"; Burke O. Long, "Prophetic Call Traditions and Reports of Visions," *ZAW* 84 (1972): 494-500. See also Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, 48; Reventlow, *Liturgie*, 22-77. On the other hand, Vogels "Les récits de vocation," delineates four commission types.

[292] On this *initial error* as recurrent motif in call-narratives see Simon, *Reading*, 54, who describes this initial error as the messengers' mistake in initially identifying the one calling him, such as Gideon addressing the *mal'ak Yhwh* as "my lord" instead of "My Lord" (Judg. 6:13), or Moses thinking he was turning aside only to see a flaming bush that failed to burn (Exod. 3:3), or Samuel thrice failing to identify the source of the voicing calling him (1 Sam. 3:4-8).

[293] Akao, "Biblical Call Narratives," 5; "Burning Bush," 176-80; Vieweger, *Die Spezifik*, 95-105, 131-35; Richter, *Die sogenannten vorprophetischen Berufungsberichte*, 158-66; idem, *Traditionsgeschichtliche*, 149-55.

[294] See e.g. Kilian's summary of Zimmerli's thesis, "Prophetischen Berufungberichte," 359-64 and Glazov, *Bridling of the Tongue*, 61.

[295] Savran, *Encountering the Divine*, 13; idem, "Theophany as Type Scene," 126.

to be a key element in call-narratives generally. Indeed it is according to several form-critics.[296] But for a number of these scholars the term 'theophany' is used too broadly: subsumed under this rubric are not just appearances of Yahweh, but of his "heavenly messenger" as well.[297] We would argue that this broad use of 'theophany' is counter-productive, and that theophany *stricto sensu* is a *sine qua non* of a prophetic call-narrative. The difference between Zimmerli's two call-types is not audition versus vision, or theophany verses non-theophany (though he did not explicitly present the distinction as such); one of the key differences is in the *manner* of theophany or, better, the *Erscheinungsformen*. In one (type 2) we encounter what could be called a 'Glory' theophany, where Yahweh appears to the future prophet in his transcendently anthropomorphic form (Isa 6; Ezek. 1).[298] This is also referred to as Yahweh's 'throne theophany' as the deity is seen sitting enthroned in royal splendor and in the company of his divine court.[299] The Israelite prophet is the messenger of the divine court; he announces to Israel the decrees of the Council, over which Yahweh sits as Judge and King. Indeed, "The intrinsic authority of the prophet's message derives from the fact that he participated in the divine council (Amos 3:7; Jer. 23:18)."[300] During this encounter, the prophet-to-be is

---

[296]On theophany as a key element in the call narrative see Savran, *Encountering the Divine*, 16-18; Glazov, *Bridling of the Tongue*, 51; Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, 49; Akao, "Biblical Call Narratives"; idem, "Burning Bush," 150ff; Del Olmo Lete, *La vocacion*, 377-86; Long, "Prophetic Call Traditions"; Baltzer, "Considerations" 568; Kilian, "Prophetischen Berufungberichte,"370-71; Habel, "Form and Significance," 316-17; Reventlow, *Liturgie*, 70ff. See also von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* II:57-9. *Pace* Richter, *Die sogenannten vorprophetischen Berufungsberichte*, 141-42. See also Norman Habel, Review of Richter, *Die sogenannten vorprophetischen Berufungsberichte* in *Bib* 52 (1971): 442-46.

[297] See e.g. Savran, *Encountering the Divine*, 16; idem, "Theophany as Type-Scene," 128; Habel, "Form and Significance," 317.

[298] Assuming, with the majority opinion, that Isaiah 6 represents the prophet's call-account.

[299] On the 'throne-theophany' see Matthew Black, "The Throne-Theophany Prophetic Commission and the 'Son of Man'," in Robert Hamerton-Kelly and Robin Scroggs (edd.), *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity. Essays in Honor of William David Davies* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 57-71; Blake Thomas Ostler, "The Throne-Theophany and Prophetic Commission in 1 Nephi: A Form-Critical Analysis," *BYU Studies* 26 (1986): 67-87. On prophetic visions of the divine council see Guy Couturier, "La Vision du Conseil Divin: étude d'une forme commune au prophétisme et à l'apocalyptique," *Science et Esprit* 36 (1984): 5-43; N.L.A. Tidwell, "*WĀ'ŌMAR* (Zech 3:5) and the Genre of Zechariah's Fourth Vision," *JBL* 94 (1975): 343-55; Daniel Merkur, "Prophetic Initiation in Israel and Judah," in L. Bryce Boyer and Simon A. Grolnick (edd.), *The Psychoanalytic Study of Society*, Volume 12, *Essays in honor of George Devereux* (Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, 1989) 37-67.

[300] Benjamin Uffenheimer, *Early Prophecy in Israel* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1999) 19. On Hebrew prophecy and the divine council see further: Martti Nissinen, "Prophets and the Divine Council," in Ulrich

unexpectedly confronted by Yahweh's transcendent form in its holiness and brilliance and suffers, or fears suffering, as a result. Isaiah, after unexpectedly seeing Yahweh as a transcendent *anthropos* enthroned within the Temple,[301] cries in fear:

> Woe is me! For I am undone,[302]
> For I am a man of unclean lips,
> And I dwell among an unclean people;
> Yet my eyes have seen the king,
> Yahweh of Hosts (6.5)

Hübner and Ernst Axel Knauf (edd.), *Kein Land für sich allein: Studien zum Kulturkontakt in Kanaan, Israel/Palästina und Ebirnari für Manfred Weippert zum 65. Geburtstag* (Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002) 4-19; Robert Gordon, "From Mari to Moses: Prophecy at Mari and in Ancient Israel," in Heather A. McKay and David J.A. Clines (edd.), *Of Prophets' Visions and the Wisdom of Sages: Essays in Honour of R. Norman Whybray on his Seventieth Birthday* (JSOTSup 162; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) 63-79; Abraham Malamat, "The Secret Council and Prophetic Involvement," in R. Liwak and S. Wagner (edd.), *Prophetie und geschichtliche Wirklichkeit im alten Israel. Festschrift für Siegfried Herrmann zum 65. Geburtstag* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1991) 231-35; Christopher R. Seitz, "The Divine Council: Temporal Transition and New Prophecy in the Book of Isaiah," *JBL* 109 (1990): 229-47; Max E. Polley, "Hebrew Prophecy within the Council of Yahweh, Examined in its Ancient Near Eastern Setting," in Carl D. Evans, William W. Hallo, John B. White (edd.), *Scripture in context: essays on the comparative method* (Pittsburg: Pickwick Press, 1980) 141-156; R.N. Whybray, *The Heavenly Counsellor in Isaiah xl 13-14: A Study of the sources of the Theology of Deutero-Isaiah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); Patrick D. Miller, "Divine Council and the Prophetic Call to War," *VT* 18 (1968): 100-107; Edwin C. Kingsbury, "The Prophets and the Council of Yahweh," *JBL* 83 (1964): 279-286; James F. Ross, "The Prophet as Yahweh's Messenger," in Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson (edd.), *Israel's prophetic heritage; essays in honor of James Muilenburg* (New York: Harper, 1962) 98-107; F.M. Cross, "The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah," *JNES* 12 (1953): 274-77; Robinson, H.W. "The Council of Yahweh," *JTS* 45 (1944): 151-157.

[301] On the anthropomorphism of Isaiah 6 see Savran, *Encountering the Divine*, 69-74; Smith, *Origins*, 86, 88; idem, "Divine Form and Size in Ugaritic and Pre-Exilic Israelite Religion," *ZAW* 100 (1988): 424-27; Lyle Eslinger, "The Infinite in a Finite Organical Perception (Isaiah VI 1-5)," *VT* 45 (1995): 145-173; Jonas C. Greenfield, "Ba'al's Throne and Isa. 6:1," in A. Caquot, S. Légasse and M. Tardieu (edd.), *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l'honneur de M. Mathias Delcor* (AOAT 215; Kevalaer: Verlag Butzon und Bercker; Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlaq, 1985) 193-198; G.R. Driver, "Isaiah 6:1 'his train filled the temple'," in Hans Goedicke (ed.), *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1971) 87-96; Robinson, 'Hebrew Psychology,' 367. Barr, "Theophany and Anthropomorphism," 36 noted: "Though the figure may be of human likeness, the main impression given is something above and beyond the human." On Yahweh's holiness as his otherness in Isaiah 6 see Francis Landy, "Strategies of Concentration and Diffusion in Isaiah 6," *Biblical Interpretation* 7 (1999): 64 [art.=58-86]; Jonathan Magonet, "The Structure of Isaiah 6," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, August 4-12, 1985* Division A: *The Period of the Bible*, 92 [art.=91-97]. On Isaiah 6 and the Temple see Levenson, "Jerusalem Temple"; McNicol, "Heaven Sanctuary"; Otzen, "Heavenly Visions"; Rolf Knierim, "The Vocation of Isaiah," *VT* 18 (1968): 47-68 (50-54);

[302] On this reading of *nidmêti* see Savran, *Divine Encounters*, 104-06. See further the discussion in Glazov, *Bridling of the Tongue*, 130-42.

Isaiah, realizing that his mortal impurity (indicated by his unclean lips)[303] is here confronted by the thrice-great holiness of Yahweh (as indicated by the seraphic chant of the Trisagion, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is Yahweh of Host' v. 3),[304] is struck with dread because of the inherent and well-known danger of such an encounter.[305] But before he could suffer the effects of his trespass becoming, in Kuntz's words, a "victim of the theophanic encounter,"[306] Isaiah is purified by one of Yahweh's angelic attendants (vv. 6-7) and made ready to stand before the holy deity and participate in the deliberations of the council.[307]

Ezekiel too sees Yahweh as an enthroned, transcendent *anthropos* (Ezek. 1:1-28),[308] though not within the context of a divine council scene.[309] Indeed, Ezekiel's vision of the deity is at once the most transcendent and the most anthropomorphic of the entire Bible.[310] During his call Ezekiel comes closer than Isaiah to becoming a 'victim' of the

---

[303] On the impure lips as synecdoche see Landy, "Strategies of Concentration," 65-6; Victor (Avigdor) Hurowitz, "Isaiah's Impure Lips and Their Purification in Light of Akkadian Sources," *HUCA* 60 (1990): 39-89.

[304] R.W.L. Moberly, " 'Holy, Holy, Holy': Isaiah's Vision of God," in Stephen C. Barton (ed.), *Holiness: Past and Present* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2003) 122-39; Hurowitz, "Isaiah's Impure Lips," 77.

[305] According to Savran, *Divine Encounters*, 19 Isa 6.5 "describes not simply Isaiah's shocked silence after his vision of the heavenly throne, but his actual conviction that he is going to die as a result of the experience." See also Glazov, *Bridling of the Tongue*, 130-36; Paul R. House, "Isaiah's Call and its Context in Isaiah 1-6," *Criswell Theological Review* 62 (1993): 219 [art.=207-22]; Hurowitz, "Isaiah's Impure Lips," 83.

[306] Kuntz, *Self-Revelation*, 18.

[307] Hurowitz, "Isaiah's Impure Lips," 61 notes: "The complete purity signified by the purity of the lips is the purity which enables a man to stand with the gods."

[308] Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:146: "The light-phenomenon of the 'glory of God' (in Ezekiel 1) clearly displays human contours...nevertheless at the same time an infinite difference and distance is tacitly recognized-first in the matter of mere stature, for Israel conceived Jahweh as gigantic (Mic. I. 3ff.; Is. LXIII. Iff; Ps. XXIV. 9), but also different and distant as regards quality, for the (*kābôd*) which man has cannot, of course, be remotely compared with the fiery, intensely radiant light which is the nature of Jahweh." See also above n. 176.

[309] Thus Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12. A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) 253-4: "The four living creatures which...encircle the throne of God, are in reality nothing more than accessories...there is no glimpse into the heavenly meeting of the full council. Therefore, Ezekiel does not really depict an actual סוד (divine council)."

[310] Compare Kasher, "Anthropomorphism, Holiness and Cult," 192: "there is perhaps no other biblical prophet whose God is so corporeal as Ezekiel. Anthropomoprhism did not, of course, originate with Ezekiel; the Bible offers many anthropomorphic descriptions of the Deity...The prophet Ezekiel belongs to this general biblical tradition and in fact amplifies it" and Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 106-8: "With respect to force and awesomeness, no theophany in the entire OT matches Ezekiel's inaugural vision...First, the vision proclaims the transcendent glory of God. Everything about the apparition proclaims his glory: the dazzling

theophanic encounter: after a detailed description of the approaching chariot-throne, Ezekiel's attention shifts to the brilliantly radiant *anthropos* seated thereupon.[311] After an 'emotional' description loaded with qualifiers, indicating that the prophet was searching for the right words to describe the undescribable,[312] Ezekiel falls to the ground in a faint.[313] It required a divine act (a spirit from Yahweh coming upon him 2:1-2) to enable the prophet to stand on his feet and receive the commission.[314] Ezekiel's physical breakdown in the face of the divine, and Isaiah's purification in order to stand before the divine safely, suggests that these experiences are not visionary, but real.[315]

---

brilliance of the entire image, the gleam of the creatures' bronze legs, the jewels on the wheels, the crystalline platform, the lapis lazuli throne, the amberous and fiery form of the 'man.' Everything about the vision cries 'Glory!' (cf. Ps. 29:9), even the prophet's frustrating search for adequate forms of expression…Everything about the vision is in the superlative mode. God is alone above the platform, removed from all creatures, and stunning in his radiance."

[311] On Ezek. 1 as an example of "gradual revelation of the divine by means of visual depictions which increase in intensity in anticipation of the ultimate stage of visual revelation" see Savran, *Divine Encounters*, 54-60.

[312] As John F. Kutsko ("Ezekiel's Anthropology and Its Ethical Implications," in Margaret S. Odell and Joihn T. Strong [edd.], *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000] 132 notes: "in 1:26-28, Ezekiel struggles to find appropriate language that indicates both human likeness and divine incomparability." See also Daniel I. Block, "Text and Emotion: A Study in the 'Corruptions' in Ezekiel's Inaugural Vision (Ezekiel 1:4-28)," *CBQ* 50 (1988): 429-430 [art.=418-442]; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, 121; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 52f; idem, "Ezekiel's Vision," 159-168; Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: a Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982) 95.

[313] Savran, *Divine Encounters*, 19, 116: "In the case of Ezekiel one sees the initiate's fascination in the elaborately detailed description of the chariot. Yet when he actually sees the figure on the heavenly chariot he faints, not out of rapture, but out of fright in the face of the numinous…While elsewhere the phrase ("I fell on my face" v. 28) has connotations of prayer, or dismay, here it indicates physical breakdown." See also ibid., 116-19; Block, "Text and Emotion," 430-1, 434.

[314] Ibid.

[315] Thus Wildberger, *Isaiah*, 260 describes Isaiah's experience as a *visio externa* (actual external vision): "If one thinks that the 'seeing' might really refer to an *inner* seeing, one must recognize that v.5 clearly maintains ('…for *my eyes* have seen the king, Yahweh of Hosts), that Isaiah is talking about a *visio corporalis* (an actual vision), no matter what approach we might use to try to explain what happened." See also Landy, "Strategies of Concentration," 61; idem, "Vision and Voice in Isaiah," *JSOT* 88 (2000): 21 [art.=19-36]; Robert P. Carroll, "Blindsight and the Vision Thing: Blindness and Insight in the Book of Isaiah," in Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans (edd.), *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah. Studies of an Interpretative Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1997) 79-93 (82). On Ezekiel see especially Margaret S. Odell, "Ezekiel Saw What He Said He Saw: Genres, Forms, and the Vision of Ezekiel 1," in Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi (edd.), *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003) 162-76. On dream theophanies in ANE and biblical tradition see below.

2.4.1.2. The Angelomorphic Theophany or *God incogniti*

The above experiences are altogether different from those of Moses and Gideon
(Zimmmerli's call-type I). In these latter encounters, there is no *kābôd Yahweh*; it is not even
clear at first sight that there is Yahweh. The encounter in these call-narratives is with the
מלאך יהוה *mal'āk Yhwh* (Exod. 3:2a; Jdg 6:11ff), most commonly translated as 'the Angel
of the Lord.' But this translation, as is widely recognized, is inadequate.[316] The Hebrew
mal'āk is not the same phenomenon as the figures of later Jewish and Christian
angelology;[317] no wings or halo, so familiar to us from Renaissance art, are implied.[318]
Indeed, "Divine messengers are usually depicted as indistinguishable from human
beings".[319] As James Kugel points out: "angels…look like men, they talk like men, they
can sit down and walk around and maybe even eat like men." [320] This is true of the
mal'āk Yhwh as well: "the Angel of the Lord appeared in human form…and performed
human functions".[321]

The Hebrew term מלאך is thought to be the nominal construct form of the verb לאך,
unattested in Hebrew, but found in Ugaritic, Arabic, Ethiopic and Phoenician with the

---

[316] As S.A. Meier notes (*DDD* 47 s.v. Angel I מלאך): "The translation of *mal'āk* by 'angel' in English Bibles
obscures the ancient Israelite perception of the divine realm." See also Bamford, "Seeing God," 83;

[317] Darrell D. Hannah, *Michael and Christ: Michael Traditions and Angel Christology in Early Christianity*
(Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2/109; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 20;
J.O. Akao, "Yahweh and the Mal'ak in the Early Traditions of Israel: A Study of the Underlying Traditions
of Yahweh/Angel Theophany in Exodus 3," *Irish Biblical Studies* 12 (1990): 75 [art.=72-85]; Robert North,
S.J. "Separated Spiritual Substances in the Old Testament," *CBQ* 29 (1967): 113-143. On Jewish
angelology see M. Mach, *Entwicklungsstadien des jüdischen Engelglaubens in vorrabbinisher Zeit* (TSAJ 34; Tübingen:
Mohr/Siebeck, 1992); On Christian angelology see *DDD* 90-96 s.v. Angel II αγγελος by J. van Henten.

[318] Claus Westermann, *God's Angels Need No Wings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979) 23-25.

[319] *DDD* s.v. Angel I מלאך by S.A. Meier, 48. He continues, "…while it is in the later books of the OT that
they are depicted in overwhelmingly supernatural terms."

[320] Kugel, *God of Old*, 23-24.

[321] *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* 2:2051 s.v. Theophany. See also Morgenstern, "Biblical Theophanies,"
2:27: "almost without exception this *mal'ak* is conceived of in human form." On the anthropomorphic
mal'āk hā 'ēlōhîm/yahweh see Kugel, *God of Old*, 5-36; Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology:
Antecedents and Early Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 1998) Chap. Three; Hannah, *Michael and Christ*, Chap. One;
Günther H. Juncker, "Jesus and the Angel of the Lord: An Old Testament Paradigm for New Testament
Christology" (Ph.D diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2001); *ABD* 1:250 s.v. Angels by Carol A.
Newsom; Wolfson, "Judaism and Incarnation," 244-46.

meaning "to send"[322]; thus the common translation "messenger." This translation too can be misleading. Jesus-Luis Cunchillos has demonstrated that activity, the carrying out of a (com)mission, in addition to and sometimes instead of orality, the delivering of a message, is important to the Biblical Hebrew מלאך and the מלאך יהוה in particular.[323] The term therefore denotes function, not ontology, as it is applied to humans, angels and God (Gen. 31:10-13; 48:15-16).[324] Indeed, like אלהים, מלאך seems to blur ontological distinctions.[325]

Mal'ākîm, both human and supernatural, are widely attested in the Bible. But the מלאך יהוה is an exceptional figure in that, in the narratives in which he appears, he is indistinguishable from Yahweh himself.[326] As Carol A. Newsom remarks:

---

[322] Samuel A. Meier, *The Messenger in the Ancient Semitic World* (HSM 45; Atltanta: Sholars Press, 1988) 11; *TDOT* 1:76-80 s.v. αγγελος (D. מלאך in the OT) by G. von Rad.

[323] "Étude philologique de *mal'āk:* Perspectives sur le *mal'āk* de la divinité dans la biblical hebraïque," *Congress Volume, Vienna 1980* (VTSup 32; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981) 31-51; idem, "La 'ika, mal'āk et mᵉlā'kâh en sémitique nord-occidental," *Rivista di studi fenici* 10 (1982): 153-60. See also *ABD* 1:249 s.v. Angels by Carol A. Newsom: "The term 'messenger' should not be construed too narrowly, however, for these divine beings carry out a variety of tasks." See further John T. Greene, *The Role of the Messenger and Message in the Ancient Near East. Oral and Written Communication in the Ancient Near East and in the Hebrew Scriptures: Communicators and Communiques in Context* (BJS 169; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); North, "Separated Spiritual Substances," 126.

[324] See below.

[325] See Dmitri Slivniak, "Our God(s) is One: Biblical אלהים and the Indeterminacy of Meaning," *SJOT* 19 (2005): 13, 14 [art.=5-23] who observes regarding the Jabbok story (Gen. 32:25-33): "the disgnation אלהים ("numen") and איש (man) in the Jabbok story contain a whole 'Jacob's ladder' of meaning pertaining to the identity of Jacob's adversary: from human's via angels or other minor divine beings...to God. Our text not only obscures the difference between different kinds of אלהים (angel, God of Israel), but, taken together with (Gen.) 33,10, to a certain extent even erases the boundary between divine and human beings...The use of the word אלהים in 32, 29; 32, 31 and 33,10 is thus related to the blurring of oppositions between the God of Israel and other divine beings, as well as between divine beings and humans..." See also Kugel, *God of Old*, 36, 23-24: "there is, I think, an important difference between the way that most people nowadays...are accustomed to conceive the spiritual and the way this same thing was conceived in ancient Israel...There are not two realms in the Bible, this world and the other, the spiritual and the material-or rather, these two realms are not neatly segregated but intersect constantly. God turns up around the street corner, dressed like an ordinary person...angels...look like men, they talk like men, they can sit down and walk around and maybe even eat like men. Then, all of a sudden, the whole thing turns out to have been an illusion: their true identity is revealed, and people realize who they are and bow down in reverence...the world in which angels can suddenly appear or disappear is a world in which the border between the spiritual and the physical is not all that clear, or at least not all that respected." The suggestion of Mark Smith, "Remembering God: Collective Memory in Israelite Religion," *CBQ* 64 (2002): 631-51 that this 'slippage of divine identity' results from later Israel's 'cultural amnesia' concerning earlier notions of divinity is therefore to be rejected.

[326] For a summary of scholarship on this figure see Meier, "Angel of Yahweh"; Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, Chap. Three; H. Röttger, *Mal'ak Jahwe – Bote von Gott* (Regensburger Studien zur Theologie 13; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1978) I-xxii, 12-32.

Many of these narratives about the *mal'āk yhwh* pose a long-standing problem of interpretation: what is the relationship between the messenger/angel of Yahweh and Yahweh? In many of the narratives the *mal'āk* initially appears to be a distinct figure. But at some point in the account it appears as though Yahweh were personally present instead of the *mal'āk yhwh*.[327]

In the story of Hagar's escape to the wilderness (Gen. 16:7-14), for example, we are told that the *mal'āk yhwh* found Hagar by a spring of water. Using the divine "I" the *mal'āk* speaks to Hagar as if he were the deity: "I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude (v. 10 NOAB)."[328] And even though the *mal'āk* refers to Yahweh in the third person ("Yahweh has given heed to your affliction" v. 11), the narrator seems to confirm our suspicions that this is actually Yahweh by informing us that it is indeed Yahweh who is speaking to Hagar (v.13). She then names the deity speaking to her, *El-roi* אל־ראי, possibly a *double entendre* meaning both "God who appears/may be seen" and "God who sees."[329] Hagar exclaims: "Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?"[330]

How does one account for this "casual transit between *yhwh* and his *mal'āk*"?[331] A number of theories have been proffered in an attempt to precisely identify the מלאך יהוה and define his relation to יהוה.[332] Three theories seem to enjoy greatest currency: (1) the *interpolation theory*, according to which the *mal'āk* was added by a later redactor to a narrative that originally spoke boldly of an anthropomorphic theophany;[333] (2)

---

[327] *ABD* 1:250 s.v. Angels by Carol A. Newsom.

[328] See Meier, "Angel of Yahweh," 56.

[329] Paul Edward Hughes, "Seeing Hagar Seeing God. *Leitwort* and Petite Narrative in Genesis 16:1-16," *Didaskalia* 8 (Spring 1997): 53 [art.=43-59]; Matitiahu Tsevat, "Hagar and the Birth of Ishmael," in idem, *The Meaning of the Book of Job and Other Biblical Studies: Essays on the Literature and Religion of the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Ktav Pub. House; Dallas: Institute for Jewish Studies, 1980) 63 [art.=53-76].

[330] NOAB. On this difficult passage see A. Schoors, "A Tiqqun Soperim in Genesis XVI 13B?" *VT* 32 (1982): 494-495; Th. Booij, "Hagar's Words in Genesis XVI 13B," *VT* 30 (1980): 1-7; H. Seebass, "Zum Text von Gen. XVI 13B," *VT* 21 (1971): 254-256; J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (Berlin, 1905) 323, 324, n.1.

[331] Words of North, "Separated Spiritual Substances," 128.

[332] For a recent review of the various theories of interpretation see Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 53-57.

[333] Endorsed most recently by S.A. Meier: *DDD* s.v. Angel of Yahweh מלאך יהוה 53-59; H. Gunkel, *Genesis* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1997) 184-87; D. Irvin, *Mytharion: The Comparison of Tales from the Old*

66

representative theory, according to which the מלאך יהוה is a representative of Yahweh, an agent distinct from him who only speaks and acts in Yahweh's name as messengers from the ANE were known to do;[334] (3) the *identity theory*, according to which the מלאך יהוה is a particular corporeal manefestation of Yahweh himself.[335]

An examination of all of the passages wherein the singular מלאך יהוה/(ה)אלהים occurs as a designation for a non-human allows us to make the following claims with confidence:[336] (1) no one theory can accommodate all of the occurrences[337] and (2) each of the theories adequately explains particular passages. An important point of departure in any attempt to understand the enigmatic 'Angel of the Lord' figure is the recognition that distinct phenomena are subsumed under the designation מלאך יהוה/(ה)אלהים.[338] Because the Hebrew definite article cannot be employed in the genitive construct when the *nomen rectum* is a proper name, we are never sure (grammatically) when we are dealing with "*a* messenger/angel of Yahweh," i.e. an indeterminate agent of the deity of no particular significance, or "*the* messenger/angel of Yahweh," i.e. a specific figure. Contextually, however, it is clear that some occurrences concern an agent distinct from Yahweh who merely represents him (e.g. 2 Sam. 24:15-17); thus, the *representative theory*. Even the important 'Angel of the Name' of Exod. 23:20-21, in whose midst the Name (*šēm*)of Yahweh is placed, while sharing the nature of the deity (by virtue of the name

---

Testament and the Ancient Near East (AOAT 32; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1978) 103-104; Bamford, "Seeing God," 103-106; Akao, "Yahweh and the Mal'ak."

[334] *TLOT* 2:669, 671 s.v. *mal'ak*, messenger by R. Ficker [art.=666-72]; Cf. also C. Westermann, *Genesis 12-36: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995) 244; V. Hirth, *Gottes Botten im Alten Testament* (Theologische Arbeiten 32; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1975) 25-31.

[335] Kugel, *God of Old*, 34; Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 55, 57; Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2.27-29; V. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 451: the מלאך יהוה is "more a representation of God than a representative of God."

[336] For a collation of the passages involving the singular *mal'ak*, collocated ontologically (human, angelic, divine, uncertain) see Juncker, "Jesus and the Angel of the Lord," 33-34.

[337] As Meier, "Angel of Yahweh," 55 notes: "Few generalizations can be made about all the passages, and each must be discussed on its own terms."

[338] Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 56: "we do not find a uniform Angel of the Lord tradition which leaves the same footprint in each text in which it appears; rather, we find variable traditions". See also Meier, "Angel of Yahweh," 54.

being in him[339]), is yet clearly distinct from Yahweh. This figure is not the same as the מלאך יהוה of such passages as Gen. 16:7-14; Exod. 3:2-6; Jdgs. 6:11-23; 13: 1-22. [340]

The *representative theory* cannot account for the chief peculiarity of these latter passages: "the figure of the *mal'ak YHWH* is often perplexingly and inconsistently identified with Yahweh himself."[341] An adequate explanation of this identification resists appeal to the well-known speech patterns of ANE messengers where the oscillation between first and third person was not anomalous.[342] As S.A. Meier has pointed out:

> It is frequently asserted that messengers, when delivering their messages, often did not distinguish between themselves and the one who sent them. It is true that messengers do speak in the first person as if they were the sender of the message, but it is crucial to note that such speech, in unequivocal messenger contexts, is always preceded by a prefatory comment along the lines of 'PN [the sender] said to you' after which the message is provided; thus, a messenger clearly identifies the words of the one who sent the message. A messenger would subvert the communication process were he or she to fail to identify the one who sent the messenger on his or her mission. In texts that are sufficiently well preserved, there is never a question as to who is speaking, whether it be the messenger or the one who sent the messenger.
>
> There is therefore no evidence for the frequently made assertion that messengers need not make any distinction between themselves and the ones who sent them…The only contexts in biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature where no distinction seems to be made between sender and messenger occur in the case of the "angel (literally "messenger") of Yahweh (*mal'ak YHWH*)." It is precisely the lack of differentiation that occurs with this figure, and this figure alone among messengers, that raise the question as to whether this is even a messenger of God at all…It must be underscored that the angel of Yahweh in these perplexing biblical narratives does not behave like any other messenger known in the divine or human realm. Although the term 'messenger' is present, the narrative itself omits the indispensable features of messenger activity and presents instead the activities which one associates with Yahweh or the other gods of the ancient Near East.[343]

---

[339] J. Barr, "The Symbolism of Names in the Old Testament," *BJRL* 52 (1969): 28 [art.=11-29].

[340] Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 57: "Unlike texts involving the Angel of the Lord in which he is a manifestation of God, the angel that is spoken of here is clearly distinct from God, but not completely separate from him. Because the Name of God is synonymous with his divine nature, the angel or being who has his Name should be regarded as a person possessing his full divine authority and power."

[341] *DDD* s.v. Angel of Yahweh מלאך יהוה by S.A. Meier, 55.

[342] *Pace* e.g. Arthur S. Herbert, *Genesis 12-50: Abraham and his Heirs* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1962) 39: "The Angel and the Lord are apparently identified. This is quite appropriate to ancient thought forms, where the agent in the discharge of his mission is regarded as the extension of the personality of the sender."

[343] *DDD* s.v. Angel I מלאך by S.A. Meier, 49.

Meier's last point warrants further consideration. Not only are the actions of the מלאך

יהוה inconsistent with ancient Near Eastern messenger activity, they are incompatible

with it as well.

> A representative may indeed speak in the person of his principal, but a representative will
> never say, for example, 'I am the king of Babylon.' Now the *mal'ak-Yahweh* did say, 'I am
> the God of Bethel…I am the God of your father.' Would anyone ever address a king's
> representative, 'My King!' Yet Gedeon (sic) said to the *mal'ak-Yahweh*, 'Yahweh, Lord.'
> The persons to whom the *mal'ak* appeared, as well as the ancient witnesses to the
> accounts, regarded the manifestation simply as God Himself.[344]

Dorothy Irvin has compared the *mal'āk yhwh* texts of Genesis with "[t]he entirety of the

narrative material of the Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Hittite, Ugaritic, and Egyptian

literature," and has concluded that the *mal'āk yhwh*'s words and actions are analogues, not

to those of the messenger figures of these literatures, but to those of the deities themselves:

> [W]hen the messenger of Yahweh or Elohim speaks, he is not understood to be acting as
> a messenger, even though he is called a messenger. On the basis of comparable narrative
> material, it can be said that no delivery of a message takes place. It can be concluded that
> the messenger of Yahweh or Elohim is *not* thought of in these Genesis stories as being, in
> fact, a messenger…[I]n the Genesis messenger stories the *word* 'messenger' is used, but
> the *concept* of the being, brought out by what he does, is the *concept* of a god…The word
> *mal'ak* as used there is empty of content, other than the concept identical to the role
> played by the *deity* in similar extra-biblical stories. Nothing of the belief in the angel as we
> know it from post-exilic thought, the angel functioning as *intermediary*, is found in our
> stories.[345]

Likewise, the *interpolation theory* makes sense of some passages, but not all. Thus, the

מלאך יהוה who appeared to Balaam and his donkey in Num. 22 may very well have

originally been Yahweh. The excision of מלאך from the text alters the narrative not the

slightest. The reason for the *mal'āk's* introduction here may have been (*mal'āk*) Yahweh's

---

[344] P. Heinisch, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1950) 108 (ellipsis original).

[345] Irvin, *Mytharion*, 99, 103. This fact, it seems to me, adequately addresses Meier's observation: "those who
posit an identity…between Yahweh and the *mal'ak YHWH* apart from this theory (i.e. the *interpolation theory*)
do not do justice to the full significance of the term *mal'ak* which must mean a subordinate": *DDD* s.v. Angel
I מלאך 58. On the contrary, the noted *mal'ak yhwh* phenomena suggested to Robert North ("Separated
Spiritual Substances," 118) a different meaning of the Hebrew מלאך: "it has seemed to us that the basic
sense of *mal'āk*…is 'Presence.' As applied to God himself appearing to men, this presence may be called
'manifestation'…As implying the 'production' of a form or credential under which God makes himself
present in a way not normal, the *mal'āk* is like *mᵉlā'kâ* a form of 'work' or operation." See also idem,
"Angel-Prophet or Satan-Prophet?" *ZAW* 82 (1970): 33 [art.=31-67].

description in this narrative as a *śāṭān* (adversary) in v. 22.[346] In this regard Eichrodt calls attention to Exod. 12:23 where first Yahweh, then, apparently as a gloss, an angel (*hammašḥît*, 'the destroyer') is credited with smiting the Egyptian first-born. He also cites 2 Sam 24:1 where Yahweh incited David to take a census of Israel, resulting in Yahweh's wrath. In the later parallel account in 1 Chron. 21 it is Satan, not Yahweh who so incited the king.[347] Other demonstrated examples could be cited.[348] But Bamford rightly notes: "the interpolation of the word *mal'āk* before Yahweh is a satisfactory explanation for some but not all of the confusing passages."[349] The Genesis and Judges passages are cases in point.[350] As James Barr pointed out:

> When we come to the *mal'ak* of the old stories, it seems to me even more doubtful whether we can understand the purpose of its introduction and development as a mitigation of the direct anthropomorphic theophany...Firstly, the introduction of the *mal'ak* is too extremely spasmodic, and leaves too many fierce anthropomorphisms untouched, for its intoduction to be understood in this way. The voice and presence of the *mal'ak* alternates in a number of stories so much with the voice and appearing of Yahweh that it is hardly possible to understand his place as a substitute for the latter.[351]

2.4.1.2.1 *Mal'āk yhwh* as Yahweh

In Gen. 31:11-13, the *mal'āk hā'ĕlōhîm* appeared to Jacob in a dream and declared, "I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me (NOAB)." The reference here is clearly to the theophany recorded in Gen. 28:10-17 where Yahweh himself appeared to Jacob at Bethel in a dream and Jacob anointed a pillar and vowed to him.[352] This reference leaves no doubt that Yahweh and the *mal'āk hā'ĕlōhîm* are the same.[353] Also explicit is Gen. 48:15-16 where Jacob blessed Joseph and his sons with the words:

---

[346] Meier, "Angel of Yahweh," 58; Bamford, "Seeing God," 103.

[347] Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 25.

[348] See Meier, "Angel of Yahweh," 56, 58.

[349] Bamford, "Seeing God," 102.

[350] *Pace* Meier, "Angel of Yahweh," 58.

[351] "Theophany and Anthropomorphism," 33.

[352] Herbert, *Genesis 12-50*, 99.

[353] E. Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte* (WMANT 57; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984) 118: "Der Bezug auf 28, 10ff ist so explizit, das man es sich nur wünschen kann: Gott [sic!] stellt sich selbst

The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,
The God who has led me all my life long to this day,
The *mal'āk* who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads (NOAB).

In this passage we see the same oscillation between God and the *mal'āk* in three parallel statements about God's protective activity with "the most powerful saving intervention [being] precisely that ascribed to an angel."[354] As D.R. de Lacey observes: "Clearly the passage is picking up previous references to the מלאך יהוה in earlier chapters; but equally clearly the parallelism here removes the possibility of any ambiguity such as may be present in those earlier chapters."[355] Here then we have the evidence that, in the HB "God sometimes chooses to appear and function as an angel."[356] As Eichrodt notes: "If then full value is to be accorded to the evidence of the ancient (Hebrew) narrators, they saw in the *mal'ak yhwh* in certain cases the operation of God himself".[357]

It is commonly recognized that the *mal'āk yhwh* is God's anthropomorphic theophany.[358] However, this *Erscheinungsform* differs from that of the *kābôd*-theophany in that here, instead of appearing in his transcendently anthropomorphic form (Isa 6; Ezek. 1) God appears as a "fairly ordinary looking human."[359] He is in fact initially unrecognized by the recipient of the theophany. As the gods of Homer and Hesiod were

---

als 'der Gott in/von Bethel' vor"; Alexander Rofé, "Israelite Belief in Angels in the Pre-Exilic Period as Evidenced by Biblical Traditions" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1969) xviii.

[354] Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2:26.

[355] D.R. de Lacey, "Jesus as Mediator," *JSNT* 29 (1987): 103, n. 15 [art.=101-121].

[356] Juncker, "Jesus and the Angel of the Lord," 26.

[357] Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2:27. See also North, "Separated Spiritual Substances," 118: "As implying the 'production' of a form or credential under which God makes himself present in a way not normal, the *mal'āk* is like *mᵉlā'kâ* a form of 'work' or operation."

[358] *Encyclopædia Biblical*, 4:5035 s.v. "Theophany": "the 'angel of Yahwè is an occasional manifestation of Yahwè in human form"; Wolfson, "Judaism and Incarnation," 244: "the ancient Israelite belief was that God could appear as an angelic presence to human beings, and the shape this presence took was that of an anthropos. The angelic form...is the garment...in which the divine is clad when it is manifest in the world in the shape of an anthropos." Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1: 287: "The angel of Jahweh is Jahweh himself, appearing to human beings in human form."

[359] Kugel, *God of Old*, 34.

wont to don the disguise of a mortal human in order to engage an unsuspecting mortal,[360] Yahweh too "appears in the guise of the angel"[361] to fulfill a particular objective.[362]

> What an 'angel' really *is*, these texts are saying, is a way of reporting that God Himself appeared to someone in human form, or more precisely, in what *at first looked like human form*…the angel is essentially an illusion, a piece of the supernatural that poses as ordinary reality for a time. The angel, in other words, is not some lesser order of divine being; it is God himself, but God unrecognized, God intruding into ordinary reality.[363]

The *mal'āk yhwh* is, therefore, *god incogniti*. This 'anthropomorphic realism,' as Esther Hamori describes it, accommodates "the capabilities of human senses".[364] As Gieschen notes:

> The earliest Angel of the Lord traditions…must center on the holiness of God which makes his normal visible form something that brings death to the viewer. Therefore, when God manifests himself in these ancient Angel of the Lord traditions, he visibly appears as an angel so as not to destroy those who see him.[365]

We recall that this is precisely the reason the gods of Homer and Hesiod "assume the mask of a mortal character." [366]

---

[360] See above.

[361] Wolfson, "Judaism and Incarnation," 244.

[362] Lindblom, "Theophanies in Holy Places in Hebrew Religion," 102: "The human figure in which God reveals Himself is called מלאך, messenger, because his mission is always to deliver a message, an order, a promise."

[363] Kugel, *God of Old*, 31, 34.

[364] Mendenhall, *Tenth Generation*, 61., 61.

[365]Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 55.

[366] Clay, "Demas and Aude," 129.

2.5. Concluding Remarks

Our study of the prophetic call tradition of the HB[367] has made two points relevant to our discussion of theophany and *visio Dei* in Islam. Firstly, the biblical prophetic call involves a theophany.[368] The *vocandus* encounters God visually during his commissioning and the report of this encounter authenticates his message to those to whom it is delivered. Angels do not initiate prophetic calls in the HB. The call of Moses narrated in Exodus 3 is no exception: the *mal'āk yhwh* who appeared to Moses in the burning bush was God, but God unrecognized.[369] The 'Angel of the Lord,' we have seen above, is God himself in mortal disguise (Judges 6 and 13) and/or simply unrecognized (Exodus 3). Exodus 3 thus narrates an angelomorphic theophany, not an angelophony. The relevance of this to our study will be highlighted in our discussion of Muḥammad's prophetic call. The canonical tradition of Muḥammad's call involves an angelophany. The qur'ānic allusions to this event, however, suggest that it involved a theophany. The Qur'ān's insistence on revelatory continuity with the Torah and the Hebrew prophets (see below) leads us to expect Muḥammad's call and commission to involve a theophany.

Also relevant to our study is the biblical tradition of the throne-theophany. In the calls of Isaiah and Ezekiel God appears as an enthroned transcendent anthropos. This transcendent anthropomorphism is characterized by luminosity. This biblical throne-theophany tradition will have an influential *nachleben*.[370] The Apostle Paul may have

[367] On the NT's commissioning stories and their relation to prophetic call narratives see Hubbard, "Commisssion Stories"; idem, *The Matthean Redaction*; John E. Alsup, *The Post-Resurrection Appearance Stories of the Gospel Tradition. A history-of-tradition analysis With Text-Synopsis* (Sturrgart: Calwer Verlag, 1975); Gerhard Lohfink, *The Conversion of St. Paul: Narrative and History in Acts*, ed. and trans. Bruce J. Malina (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1975) 61-73; idem, Eine alttestamentliche Darstellungsform für Gotteserscheinungen in den Damaskusberichten (Apg. 9; 22; 26)," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 4 (1965): 246-257.

[368] The calls of Jerimiah (Jer. 1) and Samuel (I Sam. 3) are difficult to place form-critically. However, they both involve theophanies. On Samuel see esp. Gnuse, *Dream Theophany*. On Jeremiah see below n. 842.

[369] On the non-recognition and misidentification of the divine as a recuring element of the prophetic call narrative see Simon, *Reading*, 51-8. On Moses' 'uncomprehending gaze' in Exodus 3 see Savran, *Encountering the Divine*, 64-69. On Moses' ignorance of his cultural tradition and thus non-recognition of the God calling him in Exodus 3 see Jonathan Magonet, "The Bush that Never Burnt (Narrative Techniques in Exodus 3 and 6)," *Heythrop* 16 (1975): 304-311. Cf. Kåre Berge, *Reading Sources in a Text. Coherence and Literary Criticism in the Call of Moses* (Sankt Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1997) 144ff.

[370] See e.g. Michael Lieb, *The Visionary Mode: Biblical Prophecy, Hermeneutics, and Cultural Change* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991).

understood the Christophany that inaugurated his mission in terms consistent with the biblical throne-theophany.[371] The latter will occupy a central place in post-biblical mysticism and esotericism,[372] and through these will impact Islamic tradition and esotericism.[373]

Erich Fascher's claim to have found the NT's *Deus invisibilis* already in the HB is therefore to be rejected.[374] It is not certain, nor even likely, that the *Deus aoratos* of the Greek NT is the philosophic *Deus invisibilis* with its ontological invisibility.[375] If the Jewish

---

[371] J.W. Bowker, " 'Merkabah' Visions and the Visions of Paul," *JSS* 16 (1971): 157-173; Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1981) 137-267; Alan F. Segal, "Paul and the Beginning of Jewish Mysticism," in John J. Collins and Michael Fishbane (edd.) *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995) 95-122; idem, *Paul the Convert. The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1990) 35-71; idem, "The Risen Christ and the Angelic Mediator Figures in Light of Qumran," in James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 302-328; Markus Bockmuehl, "'The Form of God' (Phil. 2:6): Variation on a Theme of Jewish Mysticism," *JTS* 48 (1997) 1-23; Marvin W. Meyer, "The Light and the Voice on the Damascus Road," *Foundations & Facets Forum* 2 (1986): 27-35; J.M. Scott, "The Triumph of God in 2 Cor 2.14: Additional Evidence of Merkabah Mysticism in Paul," *NTS* 42 (1996): 260-281; C.R.A. Morray-Jones, "Paradise Revisted (2 Cor. 12:1-12): The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul's Apostolate," *HTR* 86 (1993): 177-217, 265-92 (but cf. the critique by A. Goshen-Gottstein, "Four Entered Paradise Revisited," *HTR* 88 [1995]: 69-133 and also P. Schäfer, "New Testament and Hekhalot Literature: The Journey into Heaven in Paul and in Merkavah Mysticsm," *JJS* 35 [1984]: 1935). On HB theophanies and NT christophanies see further Edward Adams, "The 'Coming of God' Tradition and its Influence on New Testament Parousia Texts," in Charlotte Hempel and Judith M. Lieu (edd.), *Biblical Traditions in Transmission: Essays in Honour of Michael A. Knibb* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006) 1-19; T. Francis Glasson, "Theophany and Parousia," *NTS* 34 (1988): 259-270; Benedict Kominiak, *The Theophanies of the Old Testament in the Writings of St. Justin* (CUA Studies in Sacred Theology 2/14; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1948).

[372] Maria E. Subtelny, "The Tale of the Four Sages who Entered the *Pardes*: A Talmudic Enigma from a Persian Perspective," *JSQ* 11 (2004): 3-58; Daphna Arbel, *Beholders of Divine Secrets: Mysticism and Myth in the Hekhalot and Merkavah Literature* (Albany, NY.: State University of New York Press, 2003); Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, 85-108; Rachel Elior, "The Concept of God in Hekhalot Literature," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6:1-2 (1987): 13-58 (Hebrew. Translated by Dena Ordan in Joseph Dan [ed.] *Binah: Studies in Jewish Thought* [New York: Praeger, 1989] 97-120); Ira Chernus, "Visions of God in Merkabah Mysticism," *JSJ* 13 (1982): 142-3;

[373] O'Shaughnessy, "God's Throne and Biblical Symbolism in the Qur'an"; Maria E. Subtelny, "Le motif du trône et les rapports entre mystique islamique et mystigue juive," in Mohammad Ali Amir–Moezzi, Christian Jambet, and Pierre Lory (edd.), *Henry Corbin: Philosophies et sagesses des religions du Livre* (Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences Religieuses, 126; Brepols, 2005) 195–212.

[374] Fascher, *"Deus Invisibilis,"* 44.

[375] See especially Jonathan A. Draper, "Practising the Presence of God in John: Ritual Use Scripture and the *EIDOS THEOU* in John 5:37," in idem (ed.), *Orality, Literacy, and Colonialism in Antiquity* (Semeia Studies 47; Leiden: Brill and Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2004) 155-170. On various views on the Vision of God within Christian tradition see further: Shannon-Elizabeth Farrell, "Seing the Father (Jn 6:46, 14:9)" *Science et Esprit* 44 (1992): 1-24, 159-183, 307-329; Stephen D. Moore, "The Beatific Vision as a Posing Exhibition: Revelation's Hypermasculine Diety," *JSNT* 60 (1995): 27-55; Marianne Meye Thompson, " 'God's Voice

encounter with Hellenism did not necessarily give rise to Jewish anxieties about divine corporeality and visibility, it was certainly catalytic to the development of the Jewish *Gotteslehre*, made orthodox by Maimonides (d. 1204), according to which God is incorporeal and invisible.[376] The HB's *'ēl mistatēr* or Hidden God is of a different kind. He is hidden behind a veil, a cloud, or a mortal human form precisely because he can be seen and this seeing could be fatal to his elect. This god is corporeal and anthropomorphic, but transcendently anthropomorphic. The two deities - the transcendently anthropomorphic god of the HB and the transcendently incorporeal god of Hellenistic tradition (Jewish and otherwise) – must not be conflated as we attempt to discover the qur'ānic *Lehre* on the Vision of God.

You Have Never Heard, God's Form You Have Never Seen':The Characterization of God in the Gospel of John," *Semeia* 63 (1993): 177-204; April D. De Conick, " 'Blessed Are Those Who Have Not See' (Jn 20:29): Johannine Dramatization of an Early Christian Discourse," in John D. Turner and Anne McGuire (edd.), *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years. Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* (Leiden: Brill, 1997) 381-398; idem, "The *Dialogue of the Savior* and the Mystical Sayings of Jesus," *VC* 50 (1996): 178-199; idem, *Seek to See Him*; Michael Goulder, "Vision and Knowledge," *JSNT* 56 (1994): 53-71; Kenneth E. Kirk, *The Vision of God: The Christian Doctrine of the Summun Bonum. The Bampton Lectures for 1928* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1977); Roland J. Teske, "St. Augustine and the Vision of God," in Joseph C. Schnaubelt, Frederick van Fleteren, and Joesph Reino (edd.), *Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue (Collectanea Augustiniana)* (New York: Peter Lang Pub Inc, 1994) 287-308; Michel René Barnes, "The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity: Mt. 5:8 in Augustine's Trinitarian Theology of 400," *Modern Theology* 19 (2003): 329-355; Alexander Golitzin, "The Demons Suggest an Illusion of God's Glory in a Form," *Studia Monastica* 44 (2002): 13-43; Idem. "The Vision of God and the Form of Glory: More Reflections on the Anthropomorphite Controversy of AD 399," in John Behr, Andrew Louth and Dimitri Conomos (edd.). *Abba: The Tradition of Orthodoxy in the West: Festschrift for Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003) 273-297.

[376] Fritsch, "A Study"; Hanson, "The Treatment in the LXX"; Donald A. Hagner, "The Vision of God in Philo and John: A Comparative Study," *JETS* 14 (1971): 81-93; Ellen Birnbaum, "What Does Philo Mean by 'Seeing God'? Some Methodological Considerations," *SBL Seminar Papers* 34 (1995): 535-552. On Maimonides and the incorporeality of God in Judaism see Harry A. Wolfson, "Maimonides on the Unity and Incorporeality of God," *JQR* 56 (1965): 112-136.

Chapter III:

Theophany and **Visio Dei***: the Qur'ānic Perspective*

3.1. *Deus Invisibilis* in the Qur'ān?

Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick are sure that, according to the Qur'ān, "God lies beyond the range of our vision."[377] According to their reading, divine invisibility in the Qur'ān is ontological: "when the Koran speaks about the 'unseen,' it does not seem to mean that which our eyes do not reach in practice, but rather that which our eyes do not reach in principle...God and the angels are invisible."[378] Invisible and therefore non-theophanous. Mustansir Mir even suggests that "theophany probably would not have belonged in the theoretical framework of the Qur'ān."[379] It is certainly true that, as Tuft observed, the Qur'ān presents no explicit theology on the vision of God.[380] It is also true, as van Ess points out, that speculation on the issue began not with the Book but with later Muslim tradition.[381] However, the above cited position of Murata and Chittick rests on a number of qur'ānic passages which appear to speak to the issue (e.g. *al-An'ām* [6]:103, *al-A'rāf* [7]:143, *al-Baqarah* [2]:55, *al-Nisā'* [4]:153). Tuft notes: "Understood literally, all of these passages would seem a fairly direct denial of the possibility of *ru'ya*".[382] Nevertheless, as M. Chodkiewicz notes, "Despite their obvious

---

[377] *The Vision of Islam* (New York: Paragon House, 1994) 47.

[378] Murata and Chittick, *Vision*, 79, 88. See also Singh, *Unseen God* i: "God of the Qur'ān is...invisible, inaccessible, and beyond the understanding of human being(s)," and Abd-Allāh, "The Perceptible and the Unseen," 171 for whom God and the angels are *al-ghayb*, "unseen," because of their "nonmaterial nature."

[379] *EQ* 5:275 s.v. Theophany by Mustansir Mir.

[380] Anthony Keith Tuft, "The *Ru'ya* Controversy and the Interpretation of Qur'ān Verse VII (*Al-A'raf*):143," *Hamdard Islamicus* 7 (1983): 4 [art.=3-41].

[381] J. van Ess, "Scauen und Sehen als ontologisches Problem in der frühen islamischen Theologie," in É. Chaumont et al (edd.), *Autour du Regard. Mélanges Gimaret* (Paris: Peeters, 2003) 3 [art.=1-13].

[382] Tuft, "Origins and Development," 60.

sense, these verses (6:103 and 7:143) were interpreted in many ways in Islamic tradition and, more often than one would expect, in such a way as to safeguard the possibility of the vision of God."[383] Is it the case that Islamic tradition eisegetically forced a positive reading on these clearly 'negative' passages? Rather than speaking of an 'obvious' or 'literal' sense of these verses van Ess, more accurately no doubt, speaks of their 'ambiguity.'[384] However, we will argue here that a philological and traditio-historical examination throws great interpretive light on these passages and seem to suggest that, rather than being "fairly direct denial(s)" of God's visibility, these passages affirm, but with qualifications, the possibility of theophany and *visio Dei*.

3.2. Revelation and *Ru'ya*

Abdullah Saeed, in his article "Rethinking 'Revelation' as a Precondition for Reinterpreting the Qur'an: A Qur'anic Perspective," argues:

> Revelation (in the Qur'ān) does not mean that God is making His being known…The Prophet does not 'see' God, and such 'seeing' is emphatically denied throughout the Qur'an. There is no single instance in the Qur'an which unambiguously declares that, in the process of receiving revelation, the Prophet 'sees' God's being, or that there is a self-manifestation of God. The only instance which could be considered to have any link to such a probable 'seeing' (Q 53:1-18) is problematic, as it refers to a 'seeing' with the 'heart,' not with the eyes.[385]

Saeed makes a number of assumptions that will be examined more closely in this dissertation:

1. Seeing God is 'emphatically,' and thus unambiguously denied 'throughout the Qur'an.'
2. On the other hand, there is not a single unambiguous instance of *ru'ya* or *tajallī* in the Qur'ān.
3. The only 'probable' instance, Q 53:1-18, really is no such case because the instrument of 'seeing' was the Prophet's heart, not his eyes.
4. Thus, *ru'ya* and *tajallī* play no part in the qur'ānic perspective on revelation.

---

[383] "En dépit de leur obvie, ces deux versets sont cependant, dans la tradition islamique, interpétés de bien des manières et, plus souvent qu'on ne s'y attendrait, d'une façon qui sauvegarde la possibilité de la vision": "La vision de Dieu selon Ibn 'Arabī," in Chaumont et al, *Autour du Regard*, 159 [art.=160-172].

[384] Van Ess, "Scauen und Sehen," 3.

[385] Saeed, "Rethinking 'Revelation',"109.

More accurate is surely N. Hanif's measured statement: "The Qur'ânic notion of revelation has less to do with the vision of Allah, His person, than with His speech."[386] The Qur'ān does indeed present itself largely as an auditory revelation.[387] But as Montgomery Watt points out:

> (Muḥammad's) experience of revelation was not of a single type, but varied from time to time, even if latterly it came near to a single form. This is the simplest way of accounting for the wide variations in the Qur'ānic language in respect of this matter.[388]

The question is, of course, do any of these revelatory 'types' involve visionary experiences of God?[389] The Qur'ān's affirmation of continuity between qur'ānic and ancient Hebrew modes of revelation[390] would suggest so, even if most writers would answer negatively:

---

[386] *Encyclopedia of the Holy Quran*, 4 vols. (Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2000) 4:1231 s.v. Revelation by N. Hanif [art.=1229-37.]

[387] Ary A. Roest Crollius, *Thus Were They Hearing: The Word in the Experience of Revelation in the Qur'ān and Hindu Scriptures* (Roma: Università Gregoriana Editrice, 1917) 7.

[388] W. Montgomery Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca: History in the Qur'ān* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988) 65.

[389] On revelation in qur'ānic and Islamic tradition see also: *EI²* 11:53-56 s.v. Waḥy by A.J. Wensinck and Andrew Rippin; *EI²* 8:93-97 s.v. Nubuwwa by T. Fahd; *EQ* 4: 289-306 s.v. Prophets and Prophethood by Uri Rubin; *EQ* 4: 437-448 s.v. Revelation and Inspiration by Daniel A. Madigan; *ERE* 7:354-357 s.v. Inspiration (Muslim) byE. Sell; Tor Andrae, "Muḥammad's Doctrine of Revelation." *MW* 23 (1933): 252-71; Richard Bell, "Muhammad and Previous Messengers," *MW* 24 (1934): 330-340; Abd-Allāh, "The Perceptible and the Unseen"; Mohammed Arkoun, "The Notion of Revelation: From *Ahl al-Kitāb* to the Societies of the Book," *Die Welt des Islams* 28 (1988): 62-89; Crollius, *Thus Were They Hearing*; Josef van Ess, "Muhammad and the Qur'an: Prophecy and Revelation," in Hans Küng (ed.), *Christianity and the World Religions: Paths of Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, INC., 1986) 5-18; Hans Küng, "Muhammad and the Qur'an: Prophecy and Revelation: A Christian Response," in ibid, 19-36; Yohanan Friedmann, "Finality of Prophethood in Sunnī Islām," *JSAI* 7 (1986): 177-215; Idem, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadī Religious Thought and its Medieval Background* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1989); William A. Graham, *Divine word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam. A Reconsideration of the Sources, with Special Reference to the Divine Saying or Ḥadîth Qudsî* (The Hague: Mouton, 1977); Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, "Arabian Prophecy," in Martti Nissinen (ed.), *Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context: Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000) 115-146; George Hourani, "The Qur'ān's Doctrine of Prophecy," in Roger M. Savory and Dionisius A. Agius (edd.), *Logos Islamikos: Studia Islamica in Honorem Georgii Michaelis Wickens* (Toronto, Can.: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984) 175-181; Mohammed Zakyi Ibrahim, "Communication Models in the Holy Qur'ān: God-Human Interaction" (Ma. thesis, McGill University, 1997); Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran. Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung* (Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1964) 133-193; Fazlur Rahman, "Prophethood and Revelation," in idem, *Major Themes of the Qur'ān* (Minneapolis and Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980) Chapter Five; idem, „Divine Revelation and the Prophet (P.B.H.),“ in Hakim Mohammed Said (ed.), *Essays on Islam, Felicitation Volume in honour of Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah* (Hamdard, Pakistan: Hamdard Foundation Pakistan, 1992) 106-115; W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Revelation in the Modern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1969);

The Qur'ān often refers to itself as a 'Reminder.' That is to say, the Qur'ān does not consider itself a totally new revelation, but rather a new form of a revelation which has remained consistent throughout the history of God's interaction with man.[391]

The important place occupied by theophany and *visio Dei* in Hebrew prophecy suggests that they at least play *some* role within the qur'ānic paradigm of prophecy or, to use Mir's words, they must at least "belong to the theoretical framework of the Qur'ān,"[392] one would think. Otherwise, the Qur'ān would stand in radical discontinuity with the revelatory/prophetic tradition of which it claims to be the culmination. This point alone is *prima facie* evidence warranting a closer look at the relevant passages. If the Qur'ān is anything like "a genizah of various trajectories of biblical and near eastern *aggadot*,"[393] can we identify the biblical/near eastern subtext/context of these passages and if so, what light, if any, might they shine on the qur'ānic discourse on divine (in)visibility?

3.2.1. *Sūrat al-Shūrā* [42]: 50: Veiled, not Invisible

It is not for man that God speaks to him (*yukallimahu*) except by revealation (*waḥyan*) or from behind a veil (*ḥijāb*), or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He pleases. Surely He is High, Wise.

---

idem. "The Nature of Muhammad's Prophethood," *SJRS* 8 (1987): 77-84; Shabbir Akhtar, "An Islamic Model of Revelation," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 2 (1991): 95-105.

[390] 4:163: "Surely We have revealed to you as We have revealed to Noah, and the prophets after him, and We revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon…" See also 73:15; *EQ* 4: 294 s.v. Prophets and Prophethood by Uri Rubin. Abd-Allāh, "The Perceptible and the Unseen," 161 noted as well: "The paradigm of prophecy in Islamic religion is essentially the same as that of the Mosaic prophets of the biblical tradition. In both, the office of prophecy began with a call – often in the form of a vision…"

[391] Fred Miller, "Prophecy in Judaism and Islam." *IS* 17 (1978): 37 [art.=27-44]. According to Miller the qur'ānic view of revelation should be seen as "a culmination of the historical development …found in the Hebrew Bible" and that Muḥammad is "the logical culmination of the development of Israelite prophecy." See also Crollius, *Thus Were They Hearing*, 95: "The Prophet of Islām consciously stands in the Near Eastern prophetical tradition." On Hebrew and Islamic prophecy see further Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qur'ān and Muslim Literature*; William. M. Brinner, "Prophets and Prophecy in the Islamic and Jewish Traditions," in William M. Brinner and Stephen D. Ricks (edd.), *Studies in Islamic and Judaic Traditions II: Papers Presented at the Institute for Islamic-Judaic Studies. Center for Judaic Studies, University of Denver* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); E. Dada Adelọwọ, "A Comparative Study of the Phenomenon of Prophecy in the Bible and the Qur'an," *Ife Journal of Religions* 2 (1982): 38-55; A.J.Wensinck, "Muḥammad and the Prophets," in Uri Rubin (ed.), *The Life of the Muḥammad* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1998; translation of "Muhammad und die Propheten," *Acta Orientalia* 2 [Oslo, 1924] 168-198 by Melanie Richter-Bernburg See also Abd-Allāh, "The Perceptible and the Unseen," 161.

[392] Which Mir himself denied. *EQ* 5:275 s.v. Theophany.

[393] Hughes, "stranger at the sea," 266.

79

This passage is often taken as the Qur'ān's own definition of the revelatory process.[394] Three modes of communicating, literally "speaking," to man are enumerated signifying, so it seems, a "gradation of decreasing immediateness."[395] The first is through *waḥy*, often itself translated as 'revelation.' But *waḥy* in the Qur'ān has a much wider signification than what is generally understood by the term 'revelation.'[396] According to Ibn Manẓūr *waḥy* can signify inspiration (*al-ilhām*), a signal (*al-ishāra*), writing (*al-kitāba*), hidden speech (*al-kalām al-khafī*) or whatever is imparted in a hidden or near hidden manner.[397] Of the three 'modes' of 'speaking' to man *waḥy* is usually the most direct manner of God's communication because often no intermediary is involved, in contrast to mode three, which is the sending of an angelic messenger according to commentators.[398] While *waḥy* does not have to involve *ru'ya* it sometimes does.[399] But *ru'yat Allāh*?

Of particular significance for our discussion is mode two, God's speaking to man *min warā'i ḥijābin*, 'from behind a veil.' Muslim commentators generally concluded that while God's *kalām* remained unobstructed, the veil obfuscated *ru'ya*.[400] This is interpreted in two ways. Firstly, it is sometimes assumed that the "veil" here is a dream or vision (*ru'yā*).[401] Because God won't speak directly to man, he communicates through visionary dreams.

---

[394] E.g. Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, 1.2., 124; Ibrahim, "Communication Models."

[395] Crollius, *Thus Were They Hearing*, 41.

[396] *EI²* 11:53-56 s.v. Waḥy by A.J. Wensinck and Andrew Rippin; *EQ* 4: 437-448 s.v. Revelation and Inspiration by Daniel A. Madigan; *ERE* 7:354-357 s.v. Inspiration (Muslim), by E. Sell.

[397] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 15 vols. (Beirut, 1955-1956) 6:892.

[398] As Daniel A. Madigan observes regarding *waḥy* in this passage: "The verse indicates that the Qur'ān envisages a process of revelation that does not involve an angelic go-between." *EQ* 4:440 s.v. Revelation and Inspiration; Saeed, "Rethinking Reelation," 100. *Pace* Ibrahim, "Communication Models," 110.

[399] E.g. Q 53:1-18; Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur'ān: The Early Revelations* (Ashland, Oregon: White Cloud Press, 1999) 45; *EQ* 4:439 s.v. Revelation and Inspiration by Daniel A. Madigan; *EI²* 11:54 s.v. Waḥy by A.J. Wensinck and Andrew Rippin. See also below.

[400] Al-Ṭabarī. *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān* (Egypt: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1954-1968) 11:162; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Khashshāf* (Cairo, 1968) 3:475-6; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*. (ed. 'Abd Raḥmān Muḥammad; Egypt: Maṭba'a Bahīya al-Miṣrīya, 1934-62) 27:160.

[401] Balogan, "Relation," 75; Hanif, "Revelation," 4:1230.

The dreams of prophets are revelation (e.g. Q 37:102),[402] and oneiric theophanies are truthful.[403] More often, at least in traditionalist Sunnī circles, the veil is understood literally as a veil that prevents mortals from gazing at God and perishing. As J. Chelhod puts it: the veil was "apparently intended to protect the elect from the brilliance of the Divine countenance."[404] This motif, we recall, is biblical as well: Yahweh veils his luminosity in a dark cloud in order to protect his elect from its brilliance. The Qur'ān seems to share the biblical/ANE tradition of God's luminosity: "And the earth is lit up with the light (nūr) of its Lord (39:69)"; "And Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth (22:35)"; "Your Lord's Face (wajh), possessor of Glory (jalāl) and honor, [alone] will survive (55:27)." Jalāl is "suggestive of effulgence."[405] The veil is light too,[406] but apparently a much dimmer light than that of God's Jalāl. According to a number of ḥadīth reports the veil protects man from the scorching effulgence of God's Face. "His (God's) veil is light. If He would remove it, the august splendor of Allāh's Face would burn everything of his creation to which his glance reaches."[407] As the Shāfi'ite traditionalist Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Khuzayma (d. 924) eloquently wrote:

> His (God's) face is that which He described with splendor (jalāl) and venerability (ikrām) in His statement, "The face of your Lord remains, possessor of Splendor, Venerability"…And we say that the face of our Lord (radiates) a brilliant, radiant light (al-nūr wa al-ḍiyā' wa-bahā') which, if His veil is removed the glory of His face will scorch everything that sees it.[408]

---

[402] Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya 14 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1985) 1:148 quoting this statement on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās; Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, Fath al-Bārī bi-sharh Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1989) 12:354.

[403] See below.

[404] EI² 3:359 s.v. Ḥijāb; EQ 5:413 s.v. Veil by Mona Siddiqui. See further Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ, vol. 9 #536; Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ [English] (New Delhi: Kitāb Bhavan, 1994) # 296, 343, 346, 347; Ibn Majah, Sunan (trans. Muhammad Tufail Ansari; New Delhi: Kitabbhavan, n.d.) 1:104 # 186; Ibn Kuzayma. Kitāb al-tawḥīd wa-ithbāt ṣifāt al-Rabb (ed. Muḥammad Khalīl Harrās; Cairo: 1968), 10, 22f; Ibn Kathīr, Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Abridged Translation under the supervision of Shaykh Safiur-Rahman al-Mubarakpuri. (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2000) 10:272.

[405] EQ 5:275 s.v. Theophany by Mustansir Mir.

[406] Abū Mūsā reported from the Prophet: "His veil is light." Muslim. Ṣaḥīḥ, 1:113, #343.

[407] Muslim. Ṣaḥīḥ, kitāb al-imān, 79, 343; Ibn Majah, Sunan, 1:110 #195.

[408] Ibn Kuzayma. Kitāb al-tawḥīd, 10f, 22f.

The veil over God's Face intervening between him and man's vision of him is also called his *ridā' al-kibriyā'*, Mantel of Grandeur.[409] This brings to mind the Akkadian *pulḫu* or 'garment of fire and flame,' the dangerously luminous *body* of the Mesopotamian deities.[410] In Paradise "(Allāh) will lift the veil and (the people) will look at Him."[411] They will not then be harmed by God's brilliant person. [412]

> Abū Sa'id: "We asked Allāh's Messenger: 'Shall we see our Lord?' He said: 'Do you crowd (and press one another) to look at the sun at midday without cloud?' We replied in the negative. He said: 'Do you suffer any harm in seeing the moon of the night of full moon without clouds?' They (the inquirers) said: 'No, (we feel no harm).' Then, he said that indeed you would not suffer any harm in seeing Him (the Lord) but to that extent you feel harm in seeing them (the sun and the moon)."[413]

As the scorching brilliance of the midday Sun on a cloudless day does no harm to an onlooker, so the scorching brilliance of the Lord's person, previously veiled, will do no harm to the dwellers of Paradise rewarded with *ru'ya*. But in this world the veil is necessary to protect mortal man according to this traditionalist Sunnī formulation. This may very well be a sectarian reading of the qur'ānic passage, but Sarah Stroumsa

---

[409] "Nothing will prevent the blessed from seeing their Lord in the Garden of 'Ad except the Mantel of Grandeur (*ridā' al-kibriyā'*) covering His face." Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *imān*, #296; Ibn Majah, *Sunan*, 1:104 # 186.

[410] See above.

[411] Ibn Majah, *Sunan*, 1:104 #187. See e.g. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Al-Radd 'ala 'l-Zanādiqa wa 'l-Jahmīya*, translated by Morris S. Seal, *Muslim Theology: A Study of Origins with Reference to the Church Fathers* [London: Luzac and Company Limited, 1964], 113: "We asked (the Jahmīya): 'Why do you deny that those in paradise will look at their Lord...There are...traditions in the keeping of the learned, which they have from the Prophet, that those in Paradise will see their Lord...there is...the ḥadīth by Thābit al-Bunānī, on the authority of 'Abdu'l Raḥmān b. Abū Laila (c. 702), who said: "When those in Paradise have settled there, a herald will cry saying: 'Dwellers of Paradise! Allah has allowed you a visit'. Then will the veil be lifted and they will look upon Allah. There is no god besides Him!" We truly hope that Jahm and his faction will be among those who will not see their Lord, and will be shut out from His presence, because Allah has said of the unbelievers: 'Yes, they shall be shut out as by a veil from their Lord on that day.' (Q. 83:15."

[412] On *wajh Allāh* as *pars pro toto* of God himself see *EQ* 5:264 s.v. Theology and the Qur'ān by T. Nagel [art.=256-275]; J.M.S. Balyon, " 'To Seek the Face of God' in Koran and Hadîth," *AcOr* 21 (1953): 255 [art.=254-266].

[413] Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 9 #532; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *kitāb al-imān*, 79, # 349; Ibn Majah, *Sunan*, 1:99 # 179 ; Abū Dā'ūd al-Sijistānī, *Sunan*, *kitāb al-sunna*, # 4712 ; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Radd*, 112-113; 'Uthmān b. Sa'īd Al-Dārimī, *al-Radd 'alā l-Jahmiyya*, ed. Gösta Vitestam (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup and Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960) 45ff; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr* (Aridged) 10:272; Ibn Kuzayma. *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 44ff.

appropriately speaks of the natural "connotation théophanique" of the *ḥijāb*.[414] An invisible, non-theophanous deity does not need a veil.[415] If the veil is necessary to obstruct vision, the vision of God is possible under normal circumstances (i.e. unveiled). The vision may be lethal, but it is possible nonetheless.[416] Thus in ancient Israel, as the anthropomorphic Yahweh sat in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle/Temple "the veil comes between the glory of God and the eyes of the Israelites, and prevents the latter from seeing."[417] This analogy finds some support from the Qur'ān. At 33:53 the same expression as found in Q 42:50 is used: the believers entering the Prophet's house must speak to his wives *min warā'i ḥijābin*. The veil is thus no indication of invisibility. Just the opposite seems to be the case. The God of Sunnī tradition, and probably the Qur'ān, needs a veil just as the visible, theophanous God of biblical tradition does: to protect mortal onlookers from his fiery Glory.

3.3. *Sūrat al-An'ām* [6]:103: Seeing vs. Perceiving

lā tudrikuhu 'l-abṣār wa huwa yudrik 'l-abṣār

'(Physical) vision [*al-abṣār*] comprehends Him not, and He comprehends vision'

According to Tuft, "the most literal interpretation of [this] text…seems to declare the impossibility of the vision of God."[418] It is indeed taken as such a declaration in the

---

[414] "Voiles et Mirors: Visions surnaturelles en théologie Judéo-Arabe médiévale," in Chaumont et all, *Autour du Regard*, 85 [art.=77-96].

[415] Thus Saeed's statement in incoherent: 'behind a veil' "means that God speaks to a person without hearer seeing the one who speaks to him, since in his essence God is invisible." "Rethinking Revelation," 101. If 'in his essence' God was invisible there would be no need of a veil.

[416] The Ḥanifī *qāḍī* 'Alī b. 'Alī b. Abī al 'Izz (d.1390) thus declared: " We don't see Him in this life because our vision is incapable of that, not because He cannot be seen. If someone tries to see the sun, he cannot, but not because it cannot be seen but because our eyes are too weak." *Sharḥ al-'aqīdat al-Ṭaḥāwīya* 2 vols. (ed. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Muḥsin; Beirut, 1408/1987 =*Commentary on the Creed of aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī by Ibn Abī al-'Izz* [trns. Muhammad 'Abdul-Haqq Ansari; Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 2000] 127).

[417] *TDNT* 3:359 s.v. κάλυμμα by Oepke. Al-Alūsī's illustration is therefore apt: "like a king talking to his distinguished subjects from behind curtains, so that they could hear him without seeing him." *Rūḥ al-ma'ānī fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm wa 'l-sab' al-mathānī*, 30 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1970) 25:54-55.

[418] Tuft, "Origins and Development," 91.

Classical literature, particularly by the Mu'tazilites.[419] For Sunnīs, however, the verse may qualify the vision of God, but it in no way denies its possibility. What is denied is a vision of God in this world, we are assured, not a vision in the hereafter; or, what is denied is a comprehensive vision, not a mere physical seeing of God.[420] *Adraka/yudriku/idrāk* has the basic meaning 'to overtake, catch up with, catch.'[421] It implies a sense of ultimacy or comprehensiveness (e.g. 10:90, 4:78, 100).[422] Sunnī scholars therefore not inappropriately equated *idrāk* in this verse (6:103) with *iḥāṭa*, "encirclement, encompassment."[423] *Idrāk* is thus understood as a 'total seeing' versus *ru'ya* which is understood as a general, limited seeing. For the Sunnī *mutakallim* Abū Mansur al-Māturīdī (d. 944), for instance,

> *ru'ya* denotes the perceptible presence of a thing, while *idrāk* denotes perception of the thing as a whole, including its boundaries. God...is perceptible in the sense of *ru'ya* but not in the sense of *idrāk*; verse VI:103 merely acknowledges this fact. It does not rule out the vision (*ru'ya*) of God.[424]

Mu'tazilī theologians rejected this distinction, arguing that *lā farqa bayna 'l-idrāk wal- ru'yati*, "there is no difference between *idrāk* and *ru'ya*."[425] But that there is a difference is supported by Q 26:61-62:

> So when the two groups saw each other (*tarā'a*) the companions of Moses cried out, "Surely we shall be overtaken (*mudrakūna*)." He said: "By no means! Surely my Lord is with me – He will guide me."

---

[419] See Tuft, "Origin and Development," 98-101; Subhan, "Mu'tazilite View" 423; Ibrahim Abu Bakar, "The Qur'ān and the Beatific Vision in Muslim Rationalist and Traditionalist Theologies," *Hamdard Islamicus* 27 (2004): 60 [art.=55-61].

[420] Tuft, "Origin and Development," 91-98.

[421] Aḥmad b. Fāris, *Maqāyīs al-lugha*, 6 vols. (ed. A.M. Harun; Cairo, 1969-1972) s.v.; R.M. Frank, "Perceiving and Perception: Aš'arites Equivocities," in Chaumont et al, *Autour du Regard*, 15 [art.=15-31].

[422] E.W. Lane, *Arabic~English Lexicon* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society), 1:873-874 s.v. درك.

[423] E.g. Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* (ed. Fathalla Kholeif; Beirut: Dar El-Machreq Éditeurs, 1970) 3-14, 81; Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 11 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1994) 2:11; Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī bi-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1989) 8:607.

[424] Tuft, "Origins and Development," 95 summarizing al-Māturīdī's *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*.

[425] See e.g. Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarā'īnī and 'Abd al-Jabbar; Frank, "Perceiving and Perception," 17 n. 13.

Here, the distinction between *ru'ya* and *idrāk* is instructively affirmed. *Ru'ya* did occur between the two groups – the passage declares it – but *idrāk* will not, according to Moses' prophetic guarantee. The Ḥanifī *qāḍī* ʿAlī b. ʿAlī b. Abī al ʿIzz (d.1390) therefore observed regarding this passage: "Moses doesn't deny being seen (*ru'ya*). He only denied that they would be overtaken (*idrāk*)." The *qāḍī* concludes: "One can see Allāh but cannot grasp Him, just as one can know Him but cannot comprehend Him."[426] Regarding *sūrat al-Anʿām* [6]:103 Ibn Ḥajar concludes: "the intent of the verse is the denial of encompassment (*iḥāṭa*) of Him by means of vision (*ru'yā*), not the denial of the theoretical basis (*aṣl*) of a vision of Him."[427]

3.3.1. Seeing and Not Perceiving

In the Qur'ān the locus of comprehension is the heart, not the eyes (6:25; 17:46; 18:57; 63:3):[428] "hearts they (i.e. those destined for Hell) do not use for comprehension (*lā yafqahūna bihā*), eyes they do not use for sight, ears they do not use for hearing (7:179)." When God veils the heart of the wrongdoer, even though his eyes may see he will not perceive or comprehend what he sees (22:46; 6:25; 9:127).

> Seeing could be disbelieving if the hearts spiritual vision is obscured by darkness…Those who believe have true vision because their hearts perceive the spiritual reality of the unseen consequences of action.[429]

Sūrat al-Anʿām's [6]:103 exclusion of a role to *al-abṣār* (physical vision) in *idrāk* (comprehension/apprehension) is consistent with the Qur'ān's overall position that the eyes are not the instrument of comprehension. *Ru'ya* is therefore not at issue here except by implication: one may see God, but this seeing (*al-abṣār*) does not guarantee

---

[426] Ibn Abī al ʿIzz, *Sharḥ al-ʿaqīdat al-Ṭaḥāwīya*, 1:57 (=*Commentary*, 125).

[427] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 8:607. See also al-Nawawī: "*idrāk* is *iḥāṭa* and Allāh Most High is not encompassed by *ru'ya* (vision). Hence, the text (6:103) furnishes a denial of encompassment (*iḥāṭa*). The denial of non-encompassing *ru'ya* does not necessarily follow from that" (*Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Mslim*, 2:11) and further the position of the Ashʿarite theologian Abū al-Qāsim al-Anṣārī (d.1110): "Perception in the strict sense (*al-idrāk al-ḥaqīqī*) is that which presents the perceptum as it really is and when it presents it differently than it really is it is an illusion (*takhayyul*) and in this case the word *ru'ya* is employed in an extended sense (*tawassuʿan*): *Sharḥ Irshād*, quoted in Frank, "Perceiving and Perception," 24.

[428] *EQ* 2:407 s.v. heart by Jane Dammen McAuliffe.

[429] *EQ* 5:447 s.v. Vision and Blindness by S. Kugle.

comprehension (*idrāk*). The Shāfi'ite polymath Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 1390) perceptively took note of this implication:

> If we make the perception (*al-idrāk*) an expression for vision from the standpoint of encircling one from all sides and boundaries, then the verse (*sūrat al-An'ām* [6]:103) indicates that the Vision is allowable, nay rather it is verified even more clearly as real, for the meaning is that Allah although seen, is not perceived by the eyes because He is exalted of Himself above being limited and described by boundaries and sides.[430]

This distinction between seeing God and perceiving him "as he really is" also has strong traditio-historical support. The gods of the ancient pantheons were said to walk the earth disguised as mortals.[431] Thus "ancient man could never be sure whether the person he was talking with was not actually a god in (mortal) disguise."[432] As noted above, this mortal disguise was (at least partly) for the protection of the human recipient of the theophany; the divine form puts humans in peril, therefore a more 'mundane' or, to use Esther Hamori's term, 'anthropormorphically real' form is assumed for their protection. In such encounters, the human would see and not see – or, rather, not perceive – the god.

> It is as if Homer interposed two stages between divine and human dimensions. One purely physical in which a hero could see god…The other involved mental recognition…Ordinarily in this world, and even in the next, seeing someone and recognizing him were two logically linked steps…For man to see a god, however, either in his real form or in disguise, and to recognize his identity were difficult barriers to cross…
> What qualities then were needed to penetrate the disguise…? Very often the answer to this question is perfectly ordinary without any hint of mysterious powers. An alert mortal could read the signs, make the necessary deductions, and reach a likely conclusion regarding the divine presence.[433]

In Indic tradition the gods must bestow on a seer a 'divine eyesight (*cakṣur divyam*)' so that he may perceive the gods as they truly are in their 'divine form (*rūpam aiśvaram*).'[434]

---

[430] *A Commentary of the Creed of Islam: Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī on the Creed of Najm al- Dīn al-Nasafī*, translated by Earl Edgar Elder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950) 79.

[431] "Essentially anthropomorphic, the gods stalked the world as mortals, disguising themselves so well that people could never be totally sure that a stranger was all that he seemed." Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1987) 106.

[432] Versnel, "What Did Ancient Man See," 46.

[433] B.C. Dietrich, "Divine Epiphanies in Homer," *Numen* 30 (1983): 65-66. On Classical myth and ANE tradition see above.

[434] Laine, *Visions of God*, 239-40.

When Arjuna requested to behold Lord Kṛṣṇa's luminous 'universal form' the god answered:

> But with your own eyesight, you cannot see me – I grant you [then] a divine eyesight. Now, see my sovereign power![435]

But as James W. Laine pointed out, this 'divine eyesight' is more cognitive than ocular:

> divine eyesight is more than simply a special visual capacity to see the divine supernal form, but it is the quality of insight, a faculty which allows the 'seer' to gain a divine perspective on the nature of things.[436]

The same motif is found in Homeric tradition.

> Men…must be wise to perceive a god, for the gods remain hidden from those who are not 'in the know'.[437]

On this reading *sūrat al-Anʿām* [6]:103 is not a "fairly direct denial of the possibility of *ruʾya*" as Tuft assumed nor does the positive interpretation offered by later Sunnī exegetes seem far off the mark. The passage would be a qurʾānic articulation of the ANE/ Mediterranean /biblical motif of seeing but not perceiving the deity *as he really is*. As ʿIkrima (d. 723-4), freed slave of the famed Companion of the Prophet and "Interpreter of the Qurʾān," Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 688), related:

> Ibn ʿAbbās said, "He saw Him descend another time (Q. 53:13)," meaning the Prophet saw his Lord. A man said to [ʿIkrima]: "Didn't He say, 'Vision comprehends Him not and He comprehends all vision' (Q. 6:103)." ʿIkrima said to him: "Do you see the sky?" He said yes. He said, "[Do] you see all of the sky[?]"[438]

The meaning here is clear. Like al-Māturīdī in the 10th century and others, ʿIkrima distinguishes between *idrāk* which, for our exegete, implies a total perception of a thing,

---

[435] *Mahābhārata* 6.33.8; trans. Laine, *Visions of God*, 136. This very motif appears in Muslim commentaries on *sūrat al-Anʿām* [6]:103. Al-Qurṭubī, for instance, argued that it is possible to see God, but ordinary vision can not attain him. God therefore creates in certain men – like Muḥammad – a special eyesight by which they can perceive him. Muḥammad al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*. 29 vols. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīya, 1967) 7:54, 278-80.

[436] Laine, *Visions of God*, 240.

[437] Fox, "Seeing the Gods," 138.

[438] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 27:52; Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Al-Sunna*, 1:307.

and *ru'ya* which is the simple act of seeing. To see a thing with the eyes does not imply that the viewed is fully perceived (*idrāk*) by the viewer. What is certain is that *sūrat al-Anʿām*'s denial here of a role to physical vision in the process of 'comprehending (*idrāk*)' God does not necessarily suggest an invisible deity. The eye failed also to comprehend the otherwise visible, corporeal gods of Indic/Mediterranean mythic tradition.

3.4. *Sūrat al-Aʿrāf* [7]:143: Divine Visibility and Human Peril

> And when Moses came at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said: "My Lord, show Yourself to me that I may look upon You (*aranī anẓuru ilayka*)." [God] said: "You can't see Me (*lan taranī*); but look at the mountain. If it remains in its place then you will see Me. So when his Lord appeared (*tajallā*) to the mountain He made it crumble (*jaʿalahu dakk*ᵃⁿ) and Moses fell dumbstruck on account of the lightning (*wa-kharra Mūsā ṣaʿiq*ᵃⁿ). Then when he recovered, he said: Glory to You! I turn to You, and I am the first of the believers!

Like *sūrat al-Anʿām* [6]:103, this verse (*al-Aʿrāf* [7]:143) is often read as an affirmation of God's invisibility.[439] This passage is usually read in conjunction with *surat al-Baqarah* [2]: 55-56 and *surat al-Nisāʾ* [4]: 153 (see below). Tuft suggested:

> Understood literally, all of these verses (7:143, 2:55-56, 4:153) would seem a fairly direct denial of the possibility of *ru'ya*, and they also appear to brand as disgraceful even the request made for it.[440]

A closer reading of these passages in the context of the possible biblical/Jewish subtext suggests a different conclusion: these passages actually affirm *ru'ya*, but they affirm also the lethal consequences of *ru'ya*.

Sūrat al-Aʿrāf [7]:143 is a qurʾānic version of the events on Mount Sinai recorded in Exodus 33:-18-23.[441] As we have demonstrated above the biblical version does not deny God's visibility. The issue addressed there is the violent incompatibility between God's holiness and Israel's sinful impurity resulting from the Golden Calf incident. The encounter between the two imperils man. A theophany does take place on Mount Sinai, but one involving the "gracious suspension of the nominal threat." That is to say, no

---

[439] *EQ* 5:445 s.v. Vision and Blindness by S. Kugle; Tuft, "Origins and Development," 60.

[440] Tuft, "Origins and Development," 60.

[441] Tuft, "The *Ru'yā* Controversy," 3; Halperin, "The Hidden Made Manifest," 583.

longer able to bear a vision of Yahweh's fiery *kābôd/pānîm* (Glory/Face), Moses and Israel must satisfy themselves with the vision of his less radiant and therefore more accommodating *'āḥôr*, "Back." But the difference between the biblical and qur'ānic narratives is not that the former involves theophany and the latter does not. As Mustansir Mir admits: "In the Qur'ān, the closest one comes to a visible appearance of God is Q 7:143."[442] The difference is that the qur'ānic narrative lacks the "suspension of the nominal threat" featured in the biblical narrative.

The key phrase is: "So when his Lord appeared (*tajallā*) to the mountain He made it crumble (*ja'alahu dakk*[an])." The verb *tajallā* is Form V of the root *j – l – w*, "to appear, come to light, to be clear or brilliant, apparent, manifest."[443] *Tajalliti 'l-shams*, for instance, is "The sun became unobscured, exposed to view, ceased to be eclipsed."[444] *Surat al-A'rāf* [7]:143 is thus literally a theophany narrative. As Mir reluctantly admits again: "Thus, in reference to Q 7:143, the most one can say is that God *did* manifest himself on the mountain but that Moses was unable to see him (emphasis mine – WW)." Was Moses unable to see him or unable to *bear seeing* him?

Tajallā may also be read as "He manifested his *jalāl*, Majesty." As Mir points out, *jalāl* "comes closest to being the qur'ānic term for glory."[445] The term *tajallā* used in 7: 143 is therefore "suggestive of effulgence."[446] As pointed out above the Qur'ān seems to share the biblical tradition of God's luminosity. Some commentators read *tajallā rabbuhu lil-jabal* (7:143) as *tajallī bi-nūri*, "He manifested by light."[447] But it was only a small portion of his light, tradition tells us: the equivalent of his little finger,[448] for "if the god chooses to be

---

[442] *EQ* V:275 s.v. Theophany by Mustansir Mir.

[443] Lane, *Arabic~English Lexicon* 1:446 s.v. جلو; *EI²* 10:60 s.v. Tadjallī by E. Geoffroy.

[444] Lane, *Arabic~English Lexicon* 1:446 s.v. جلو.

[445] *EQ* 2:315 s.v. Glory by Mustansir Mir.

[446] *EQ* 5:275 s.v. Theophany by Mustansir Mir.

[447] Lane, *Arabic~English Lexicon* 1:446 s.v. جله. See also Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī, *Al-Qur'ān al-Mufassar* (Cairo, 1903) 214: "The intent of this (passage, 7:143) is not that God appeared (*ẓahara*) to the mountain, but that he struck near it with a beam of light."

[448] See e.g. Ibn Kathīr who reports in his *Tafsīr* on this verse a ḥadīth from Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad* according to which the Prophet said concerning "And when his Lord appeared to the mountain": *hākadhā* ("like this"),

seen in all his majesty, only the tiniest bit of the splendor of the god's size, stature, beauty and radiance can be allowed to filter through, and this already enough to strike the spectator with *thambos*, stupefaction, to plunge him into a state of reverential fear."[449] This is precisely what we read here: *wa-kharra Mūsā ṣaʿiqan*, "then Moses fell dumbstruck on account of the lightning." *Ṣāʿiqa* is a lightning bolt when it burns a human or fire that falls from the sky with a terrible thunder-clap (see 2:55-56, 4:153) or maybe from God's *jalāl*.[450] This is reminiscent of the destructive fire emanating from Yahweh's *kābôd*. Moses' inability to see God (*lan taranī*) would then be due to God's unbearable effulgence from which the destructive *ṣāʿiqa* emerges, not ontological invisibility. Nature's convulsion and the leveling of mountains is a characteristic feature of biblical theophanies.[451] "The mountains quake before Him, the hills melt (Na. 1:5)"; "The mountain saw Thee and writhed (*yāḥilu*) (Hab. 3:10)"; "His lightnings lighten the world; the earth sees and writhes. The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of the earth (Ps. 97:4-5)." Samuel Loewenstamm, in his study of "The Trembling of Nature during the Theophany," notes: "the Biblical passages...all speak of the magnificence of the glory of God at whose terrifying appearance the whole world...either trembles or is rent asunder."[452] Read in this light *sūrat al-Aʿrāf* [7]:143 is an account of an actual theophany and its tragic consequences to man and nature. As the Mālikī jurist al-Qayrawānī (d. 996) said in his creed: "God addressed Moses by His speech, which is an attribute of His

---

then he held out the tip of his little finger. The conclusion is that "only the extent of the little finger appeared to (Moses)." See *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* (Abridged) 4:156-157 (*ad Sūrat al-Aʿrāf*).

[449] Vernant, "Dim Body," 37.

[450] Lane, *Lexicon* 1:1690 s.v. صعق; *EQ* 2:212 s.v. Fire by Heidi Toelle.

[451] Samuel Loewenstamm, "The Trembling of Nature during the Theophany," in idem, *Comparative Studies in Biblical and Ancient Oriental Literatures* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1980) 172-89; Jeremias, *Theophanie*, 73-90, 174; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 147-77.

[452] Loewenstamm, "The Trembling of Nature," 177. It is thus not necessary to resort here to the old idea that God endow inanimate objects with sight in order to explain the leveling of the mountain at the appearance of God, as did Tuft, "Origins and Development," 23 (see e.g. Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl*, ed. M. Anwar [Cairo, 1353 AH] 221: "It is said that God endowed the mountain with life and sight, so that it saw Him.")

essence, not one of His creatures. He appeared to the mountain and it became leveled at His Majesty."[453]

This point is illustrated unmistakably by the classical *mufassir* al-Ṭabarī (d. 923). In his treatment of our passage al-Ṭabarī quotes a lengthy tradition that Ibn Isḥāq reputedly got from "a certain expert in the traditions of the People of the Book (*baʿḍ ahl ʿilm al-awwal bi'aḥādīth ahl al-kitāb*).[454] Al-Ṭabarī cites this tradition approvingly.[455] After asking God for a vision of his Face (*wajh*) God replies: "Do you know what you are saying, son of ʿImrān? I have spoken to you directly, which is a greater thing than [any granted] to another creature. No one sees me and lives after!" Moses repeats the request, adding that death at the sight of God is preferable to living having not seen him. God finally relents and directs Moses to a large crevice in a rock, "that Moses might not be burned up, *li'allā yaḥtariq Mūsā*." The dramatic scene now begins. God sends down six successive ranks of angels, each more terrifying than the former. After the second rank of angels stands Moses' hair on end he tries to withdraw his request. An angel retorts, however: "Endure what you demanded, Mūsā!" After the sixth rank descends, God commands the angels: "pass me over My servant that he may see Me (*marrū bī ʿalā ʿabdī li-yarānī*)."[456] As the light of God's throne envelops the mountain and the angels raise their voices in chorus, the mountain shakes and falls to pieces. Moses is struck dead. After God revives him Moses repents: "I confess that none can see you and live." Tuft rightly points out: "The narrative concludes with Moses repenting because the sight of God is fatal, not because it is impossible."[457] For al-Ṭabarī, M. Chodkiewicz notes, the theophany on Sinai that pulverized the

---

[453] Trans. By William Montfomery Watt, *Islamic Creeds. A Selection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994) 70.

[454] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 13:91-92. On this narrative see also G.D. Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet: A Reconstruction of the Earliest Biography of Muhammad* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989) 135-38; C. Sirat, "Un midraš juif en habit musulman: La Vision de Moïse sur le mont Sinaï," *RHR* 168 (1965): 15-28.

[455] Tuft, "The *Ruʾyā* Controversy," 9.

[456] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 13:97.

[457] Tuft, "The *Ruʾyā* Controversy," 8.

91

mountain demonstrates, not God's invisibility, but mortals' radical inability to support such a vision.[458] Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ's point is therefore plausible:

> This verse...means that Moses saw Allāh and that is why he fell down in a swoon...His manifestation to the mountain was His appearance to Moses so that, according to this statement, he actually saw Him.[459]

This interpretation of the qur'ānic narrative is consistent with a plain reading of the narrative and its likely biblical subtext.

3.5. *Sūrat al-Baqarah* [2]: 55-56 and *Sūrat al-Nisā'* [4]: 153: Israel as Victims of Theophany

> And remember you (Israel) said: "O Moses! We shall never believe in thee until we see God openly (*jahrat*ᵃⁿ)." So the lightning (*ṣā'iqah*) overtook them as they looked on.

> Then We raised you up after your death that you may be grateful. (2:55-56)

> The People of the Book ask thee (Muḥammad) to cause a book to descend to thee from heaven; indeed they asked Moses for an even greater (miracle), for they said: "Show us God openly (*jahrat*ᵃⁿ)." So lightning (*ṣā'iqah*) overtook them on account of their *zulm*. Then (*thumma*) they worshipped the calf after clear signs had come to them. We pardoned this. And We gave Moses clear authority. (4:153)

The literal reading of these verses, Tuft suggests, "brands as disgraceful even the request for *ru'ya*," as it is "put in the mouth of rebellious jews (*sic*) as a sort of verbal golden calf."[460] *Surat al-A'rāf* [7]: 143 is usually read in the context of these passages. The Mu'tazilites, who seem to have been the first to do so,[461] argued that Moses, who well knew that God is invisible, only requested to see him at the behest of his people who clamored to see God face-to-face. Moses accordingly hoped to solicit from God a dramatic denial.[462] This ignorant request elicits God's furious anger. "Had they asked for

---

[458] "La vision de Dieu selon Ibn 'Arabī," in Chaument et al, *Autour du Regard*, 160-72.

[459] Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ b. Mūsā 'l-Yaḥsūbī, *al-Shifa*, translated by Aisha Abdarrahman Bewley as *Muhammad, Messenger of Allah:* Ash-Shifa *of Qadi 'Iyad* (Islamic Classical Library Edition; Scotland: Madinah Press, Inverness, 2004) 104.

[460] See Tuft, "Origins and Development," 60.

[461] Ibid., Chapter Seven.

[462] 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Mutashābihāt al-Qur'ān* (Cairo, n.d.) 1:293, 2-294, 5; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* 2:111-112; 113, 7-8.

something possible," al-Zamakhsharī informs us, "they (Israel) would not have been called 'wrong doers' (i.e. Q 4:153, from *zulm*)."[463]

It seems unlikely that this is a correct reading of these passages. The biblical/rabbinic subtexts here suggests a reading more consistent with the plain sense of *surat al-Aʿrāf* [7] 143: the *ṣāʿiqah* that strikes and kills the onlookers ("as they looked on," *tanzurūna*, Q 2:55) derived from the *jalāl* of God. The people died, not because they asked for an ontological impossibility and were therefore punished, but because they presumptuously demanded that which they were, in their mortal state, constitutionally unable to bear. They thus became, in Kuntz's words, 'victims of the theophanic encounter.' The biblical/rabbinic subtexts also shine a light on other aspects of these passages: why was believing in Moses made contingent upon seeing God "openly," *jahratan*? What does seeing God "openly" mean or imply? On account of what "wrong-doing" (*zulm*) were the Jews struck and killed by the *ṣāʿiqah*?

3.5.1. The Biblical Subtext

Three months after departing Egypt Israel entered the wilderness of Sinai and camped at the foot of the mountain (Exodus 19:1). Calling from the mountain, God instructs Moses to tell his people that if they obey his word and keep his covenant they would be made "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The people respond: "Everything the Lord says, we will do (vv. 5-8)." God then informs Moses:

> Behold, I will come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak to you, and believe you forever...
>
> Then the Lord said to Moses: "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people (vv. 9-11)."

The purpose of this theophany "in the sight of all the people" is to put fear in the hearts of Israel for God and, therefore, confirm Moses' prophetic role (make the people "believe

---

[463] Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 1:235.

93

in" or "trust in" [Hiph. ב האמין] Moses).[464] The thick cloud (*'ab he'ānān*) covering the *kābôd*,[465] like the boundaries set to keep the people from coming too close to the mountain (vv. 12-13), is clearly for the protection of the people relatively fresh out of idolatrous Egypt and therefore unable to withstand a direct visionary encounter with the divine Glory. This is indicated, for example, in vv. 20-22:

> 20 Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. 21 And the Lord said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the Lord, and many of them perish. 22 Also let the priests who come near the Lord consecrate themselves, lest the Lord break out against them."

All of the precautions taken – the established boundaries, the washing of cloths, and the abstaining from sexual relations – all seem to be designed to protect a currently unholy people from the natural and well-known effects of a visual encounter with the holy God.[466] Even the mildly consecrated priests run the risk of Yahweh "breaking out (*yifrōṣ*)" against them, i.e. the flames of Yahweh's fiery *kābôd* lashing out and consuming them. After God descended on the mountain on the third day and the people witnessed the seismic and meteorological phenomena, they trembled and said to Moses: "You speak to us, and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, lest we die (20:18-18)."

John W. Hilber has pointed out that central to the covenant is Yahweh's theophanic presence among the people and their response to it.[467] Elliot Wolfson has shown the connection made in Jewish sources between circumcision, which is the mark of the covenant, and the vision of God's full Glory.[468] The consequence of breaking the covenant is the withdrawing of the divine presence (Exod. 33:3, 14-15); the reward for

---

[464] See Moshe Greenberg, "נסה in Exodus 20 20 and the Purpose of the Sinaitic Theophany," *JBL* 79 (1960): 273-76; Polak, "Theophany and Mediator," 138; Dale Patrick, *The Rhetoric of Revelation in the Hebrew Bible: Overtures to Biblical Theology* (Augsburg: Fortress Publishers, 1999) 59-60.

[465] See Exod. 24:16-17; Deut. 5:12.

[466] Morgenstern, "Biblical Theophanies," 1:149; Polak, "Theophany and Mediator," 136.

[467] "Theology of Worship in Exodus 24," *JETS* 39 (June 1996): 177-89.

[468] "Circumcision, Vision of God, and Textual Interpretation: From Midrashic Trope to Mystical Symbol," *HR* 27 (1987): 189-215.

keeping the covenant is an unmediated visual encounter with God (Exod. 24:9-11).[469] Following Israel's promise to keep the covenant with the words, "All that the Lord said we will do, and we will hear (24:7)," the covenant is ratified by the sprinkling of blood on the people. As E. Nicholson has argued, the blood rite described in v. 8 likely signified Israel becoming a "holy people to Yahweh."[470] The successful ratification of the covenant had the effect of changing the state of the people (now they are 'holy') and thus their visual access to God. The covenant ceremony therefore climaxes with an unprecedented unmediated visual encounter with God:

> 24: 9 Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. 10 And they saw the God of Israel. And there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, like the very heavens in its clarity. 11 But on the nobles of the children of Israel he (God) did not lay his hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank.

The "seventy elders of Israel" likely represent "the whole of Israel,"[471] thus it is the newly consecrated people who are vouchsafed this unprecedented *visio Dei*. "But on the nobles of the children of Israel he (God) did not lay his hand": that is to say, they did not suffer the normal consequences associated with such a vision.[472] The two canonical encounters with God must be seen in context: in Exodus 19 the still unconsecrated people see God's *kābôd* only from a distance and concealed within the cloud. After being "made holy" via the covenant ratification ceremony Israel, through her elders, sees God's unmediated Glory and suffer no harm (Exodus 24).[473]

---

[469] Hilber, "Theology of Worship," 187.

[470] E.W. Nicholson, "The Covenant Ritual in Exodus XXIV 3-8," *VT* 32 (1982): 74-86. See also Hilber, "Theology of Worship," 181.

[471] Hilber, "Theology of Worship," 180; Th.C. Vriezen, "The Exegesis of Exodus XXIV 9-11," in *The Witness of Tradition*, *OTS* 24 (1972): 107 [art.=100-133].

[472] Patrick, *The Rhetoric of Revelation*, 61; E.W. Nicholson, "The Interpretation of Exodus XXIV 9-11," *VT* 24 (1974): 82 [art.=77-96]. See also idem, "The Origin of the Tradition in Exodus XXIV 9-11," *VT* 26 (1976): 150 [art.=148-160]; idem, "The antiquity of the tradition in Exodus XXIV 9-11," *VT* 25 (1975): 69-79.

[473] Exodus 19 and 24 may have originally reported two different versions of the same event (see below). However, the Priestly canonical narrative, with all of its contradictions, is still clearly intended to be read coherently.

3.5.2. The Rabbinic Subtext

The biblical text provides a quite optimistic reading of Israel at Sinai. Having confessed their obedience to God and the covenant Israel were made holy and consequently granted a direct vision of God, which they were now able to withstand. This canonical account of the events on Sinai is not the only account, however. Indeed, from the canonical narrative itself one may separate multiple and divergent traditions regarding what happened at Sinai that the Priestly redactor artistically brought together as a unified whole.[474] Other traditions tell a more pessimistic story of Israel's response to God on that day. According to Ps. 78:36-37, Israel simply flattered God when they confessed, "All that the Lord said we will do, and we will hear."

> And they flattered Him with their mouth. With their tongues they lied to Him, while their heart was not straight with Him. And they kept no faith with His covenant.

A number of rabbinic texts also accuse Israel of pretense and lip service at Sinai.

> (God said to Israel): "Yesterday you pretended. 'All that the Lord said we shall do, and we shall hear' and today you declare (of the golden calf): 'This is your god, O Israel (Exod. 24:7, 32:8).' Nay, at the very day when they stood at Sinai and said with their mouth, 'we shall do and we shall hear,' their heart was intent upon idolatry."[475]

According to some sources Exod. 19:17, "And they stood beneath the mount," indicates that God

> covered the mountain over them like a basin and said: "If you take upon yourself the Law – good; if not, here will you find your grave" or "if not, I shall force the mountain down upon you and kill you."[476]

Israel is here presented as being compelled to accept the covenant. As Julian Obermann remarked:

---

[474] Schwartz, "Priestly Account"; idem, "What Really Happened at Mount Sinai," 20-30, 46; Th. Booij, "Mountain and Theophany in the Sinai Narrative," *Bib* 65 (1984): 1-26; Benjamin D. Sommer, "Revelation at Sinai in the Hebrew Bible and in Jewish Tradition," *JR* 79 (1999): 422-51.

[475] *Exod. R.* 58b-59, quoted from Julian Obermann, "Koran and Agada: The Events at Mount Sinai," *AJSL* 58 (1941): 44. For more positive readings of Israel at Sinai in rabbinic sources see Joel S. Kaminsky, "Paradise Regained: Rabbinic Reflections on Israel at Sinai," Alice Bellis and Joel S. Kaminsky (edd.), *Jews, Christians and the Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures* (Atlanta: Society of biblical Literature, 2000), 15-43.

[476] *B. Shabb.* 88a; *B. Ab. Za.* 2b; *Cant. R.* 45a; Obermann, "Koran and Agada," 35.

The implication…is that Israel had not been quite willing to submit to the covenant of the Law and had to be forced into its acceptance by the mountain threatening to fall upon them.[477]

According to this alternate tradition of Israel's encounter with God at Sinai, they were not made holy; in their hearts was hypocrisy. The encounter with God therefore ended differently than as presented by the Priestly redactors of the Torah. They did see God's Glory, per their own request, and died.

R. Levi said: Israel asked of God two things – that they should see His glory and hear His voice; and they did see His glory and hear his voice, for it says, *And ye said: Behold, the Lord our God hath shown us His Glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice out of the midst of the fire* (Deut. V, 21). But they had no strength to endure [this Revelation], for when they came to Sinai and God revealed Himself to them, their souls fled because He spoke with them, as it says, *My soul failed me when He spoke* (S.S. v, 6). It was the Torah that pleaded for mercy for them before God: 'Is there a king who gives his daughter (i.e. Torah) away in marriage and slays his own family? The whole world is now rejoicing, yet Thine own children are dead.' Whereupon their souls immediately returned, for it says, *The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul* (Ps. XIX, 8). R. Levi said: Was it not obvious to God that if He revealed His glory to Israel and made them hear His voice, they would not be able to endure it? God, however, foresaw that they would one day worship idols, and to prevent them pleading, 'Had God shown us His glory and greatness, and made us hear His voice, we would *not* have worshipped idols' – for this reason does it say, '*Hear, O My people, and I will speak.*'[478]

Here we learn, as also alleged in the Qur'ān, that Israel specifically asked to see God's glory, *kābôd*. Also as in the Qur'ān, but contrary to the biblical narrative, Israel were not able to endure the encounter and therefore died. They were resurrected however, as was the case with the qur'ānic Israel. In other rabbinic sources the cause of death is specified as 'burning,' the 'laying of hand' mentioned in Exod. 24:11 ("and upon the nobles of Israel He laid *not* his hand").[479]

These biblical and rabbinic sources therefore differ on the status of Israel at Sinai and the outcome of their visual encounter with God. They both agree, however, that Israel saw God's glory. The more optimistic biblical tradition has Israel earning the privilege as

---

[477] Obermann, "Koran and Agada," 36.

[478] *Exod. R.* 29.4. Soncino translation. See also *Exod. R.* 41.3.

[479] *Num. R.* 15.24.

a result of the successful ratification of the covenant. Other Jewish sources, however, have Israel giving lip service to the covenant and foolishly asking to see God's *kābôd*.[480] They are burned by the glory as they look on and die as a result, victims of the theophany. Israel are restored by God at the pleading of the personified Torah, as the qur'ānic Israel are restored.

3.5.3. Qur'ānic Text, Biblical/Extra-Biblical Subtexts

The Qur'ān shares the pessimistic view of Israel's behavior at Sinai. Indeed, as Obermann has demonstrated, the qur'ānic treatment "resounds the spirit and no doubt the very words" of the pessimistic rabbinic sources, not the optimistic biblical narrative. Thus "Agada, over against the Old Testament proper, (is) an indispensable, methodical criterion for literary and religious-historical criticism of the Koran."[481] The Qur'ān's Israel likewise gave lip service at the foot of the mountain: they said with their mouths *sami'nā wa -'aṭa'nā*, "we shall hear and we shall obey" (5:7) but said in their hearts *sami'nā wa -'aṣaynā*, "we shall hear and we shall *disobey* (2:87, 4:48-49)."[482] As in the rabbinic sources God had to threaten Israel with the mountain hanging above their heads:

> And We shook the mountain over them as if it was a roof, and they thought that it was falling down upon them. [We said]: Hold with firmness what We have given you and remember what is in it, mayhaps you will become God-fearing. 7:170 (2:60, 4:153)

This pretense and lip service, hypocrisy in short, is likely the *zulm* on account of which Israel were struck and killed by the *ṣā'iqah*, (theophanic) lightning (4:153). They were so struck "as they looked on, *tanzurūna*" Q 2:55, likely meaning "as they looked at God" as in the biblical and rabbinic traditions. In Classical Greek tradition Semele wanted to see her lover the god Zeus in his glorious form. When he appeared to her as she requested, however, she could not bear the sight: she was struck by lightning and killed.[483] The qur'ānic Jews insist that they want to see God *jahratan*, "openly/face-to-face," which

---

[480] As R. Phinehas is given to ask regarding Israel's request: "Does then one comply with the request of a fool?" *Exod. R.* 41.3.

[481] Obermann, "Koran and Agada,"29.

[482] See discussion by Obermann, "Koran and Agada," 31, 40-42.

[483] Apollodorus, *Libr.* 3,4,3; Ovid, *Met.* 3, 253-315.

suggests that they were not satisfied with the cloud-veiled theophany reported in Exodus 19. Like the Jews of *Exod. R.* 29.4 they want to see God's unmediated "glory"; only then will they "believe in" (*amina li*) Moses (2:55). As in the pessimistic rabbinic sources as well, God (likely) showed his unveiled Glory to the presumptuous Jews of Q 2:55 and 4:153 and burned them, making them too victims of the theophany.[484] As Morgenstern says regarding the biblical tradition:

> The momentary removal of the cloud and the open manifestation of the *kᵉbhod Jahwe* in its undimmed brilliance is…generally the sign of Jahwe's anger and His immediate punishment of those who had excited his wrath.[485]

This idea no doubt lies behind this statement 'Ikrima (d. 723-4) attributes to the famous Companion and "Interpreter of the Qur'ān," 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās:

> When Allāh decides to put fear in the hearts of His creatures, He manifests a part of Himself (*abdā 'an ba'ḍihi*) to the earth and it quakes; but when He wishes to destroy a people, He manifests Himself [fully] to it.[486]

This partial manifestation that quakes the earth and instills fear is exemplified in *sūrat al-A'rāf* [7]:143. Read in the context of the biblical/rabbinic subtext *sūrat al-Baqarah* [2]: 55-56 and *sūrat al-Nisā'* [4]: 153 seem to exemplify God's genocidal full manifestation. The passages thus do not "brand as disgraceful even the request for *ru'ya*." The clamorous Jews were not punished because they asked for what was ontologically impossible for God; they were likely punished for insisting on that which they were constitutionally unable to bear. Punished apparently for their hypocrisy and presumption (their *zulm*), their sentence was the granting of their very request for an unmediated *ru'ya*; a display of God's *jalāl* which scorched them.

---

[484] On these qur'ānic passages as "echos" of the rabbinic tradition of the Israelites death and resurrection at Sinai after seeing God's Glory see David Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot. Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1988) 484.

[485] "Biblical Theophanies," 1:148.

[486] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Daf Shubah al-tashbīh bi-akaff al-tanzīh* ('Ammān: Dār al-Imām Nawawī, 1991) 54; idem, *Kitāb akhbār al-ṣifāt*, edited and translated by Merlin Swartz in *A Medieval Critique of Anthropomorphism: Ibn al-Jawzī's* Kitāb Akhbār aṣ-Ṣifāt, *a Citical Edition of the Arabic Text with Translation, Introduction and Notes* (Leiden: Brill, 2002) 20; Abū Bakr b. Fūrak. *Mushkil al-ḥadīth wa-bayānuh* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1979) 254.

3.6. Concluding Remarks

Saeed's claim that seeing God is "emphatically denied throughout the Qur'an" and that "there is no single instance in the Qur'an which unambiguously declares that…there is a self-manifestation of God" is therefore greatly overstated. Upon closer examination none of the passages discussed above 'emphatically' deny the possibility of *ru'ya* and *sūrat al-A'rāf* [7]:143 is in fact that 'single instance' where the Qur'ān declares that there is a self-manifestation of God: *fa-lammā tajallā rabbuhu lil-jabali ja'alahu dakk^{an}*. Theophany therefore does belong "in the theoretical framework of the Qur'ān," *pace* Mustansir Mir.[487] None of these passages support Murata and Chittick's claim that God in the Qur'ān is ontologically invisible.

---

[487] *EQ* 5:275 s.v. Theophany.

Chapter IV:

Tajallī wa-Ru'ya: The Qur'ānic Perspective
Part II

4.1. *Sūrat al-Najm* and the Question of *Ru'ya*

> In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful
> 1. By the star when it sets
> 2. Your companion errs not, nor does he deviate
> 3. Nor does he speak out of desire
> 4. It is indeed revelation (*waḥy*) that is revealed
> 5. One mighty in power has taught him
> 6. Possessor of strength (*shadīd al-quwā*), He/he *istiwā*
> 7. While He/he was on the uppermost horizon (*al-ufuq al-a'lā*).
> 8. Then He/he drew near, drew nearer still
> 9. Until He/he was the measure of two bows or closer
> 10. Then He/he revealed to His servant what He/he revealed.
> 11. His heart did not lie concerning that which he/it saw.
> 12. Do you then dispute with him over what he saw?
> 13. He indeed saw Him/him in another descent
> 14. At the Lote-tree of the Boundary
> 15. Near it is the Garden of Repose
> 16. When that which covers covered the Lote-tree.
> 17. The eyes turned not aside, nor did they exceed the limit
> 18. Certainly he saw of the greatest signs of his Lord.

There are a number of studies of *sūrat al-Najm*'s possible meaning(s) and relevance to the Prophet's call and the later Ascension (*mi'rāj/isrā*) narratives.[488] The first eighteen verses of this early Meccan passage, which describe an enigmatic visual encounter Muḥammad[489] had with an unidentified being, would become the center of debate in the

---

[488] See above n. 24.

[489] Though the subject is not explicitly identified in the passages, both Muslim and Western commentators take it for granted that it is the Prophet: "None of the pronouns is identified in these verses, though there is little doubt that the recipient of the vision was Muhammad." Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam*, 142. See also Richard Bell, *A Commentary on the Qur'ān* 2 vols. (edd. C. Edmund Bosworth and M.E.J. Richardson; Manchester, England: University of Manchester, 1991) 2:315.

discussion over whether or not the Prophet saw God in this world (along with *sūrat al-Takwīr* 81: 15-24, which alludes again to one of these visions; see below). The traditional interpretation reads Jibrīl into the passage, making him the object (*mar'īy*) of Muḥammad's two visions. Western scholars, primarily for philological reasons, have generally taken these visions to be visions of God.[490] As Muslim and Non-Muslim commentators fundamentally disagree over the interpretation of these verses, a critical examination of *Sūrat al-Najm* is warranted.

4.2. 'One Mighty in Power has Taught Him': Jibrīl or God?

The *mar'īy* appears to be introduced in v. 5 as *shadīd al-quwā*, very powerful, and is said to have taught Muḥammad (presumably the Qur'ān[491]). Now this could very well describe the angel Jibrīl which,[492] according to the traditional account, mediated all revelation to the Prophet. But the traditional account does not quite square with the qur'ānic data on Muḥammad's revelatory experiences, as pointed out by Charles Adams.

> The description of the revelation in the pages of the Qur'ān is somewhat more complex than that set out in the scenario of the traditional account. While it confirms much of the tradition…the Qur'ān also differs from the tradition in important ways…
> One example of the differences has to do with the role of Gabriel as the intermediary in the revelation and is, in turn, related to the matter of the Prophet's visions. Two prophetic visions are mentioned in the Qur'ān, both in surah 53 (1-12 and 13-18), but in neither case does the name Gabriel appear…The matter is more complicated by the fact that Gabriel is mentioned but three (*sic*) times in the Qur'ān, and only in [sura 2:97, a late Medina passage - WW] is he associated with the revelation. Further…Gabriel is not specifically identified in the Qur'ān as an angel, nor dos the Qur'ān present the angels

---

[490] *EQ* 2:324 s.v. God and his Attributes by Gerhard Böwering; Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam*, 142-43; Schrieke, "Die Himmelsreise Muhammeds," 20; Bell, "Muhammad's Visions," 145ff; idem., *Commentary*, 2:315f; W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 42f; van Ess, "Le *MI'RĀǦ* et la Vision de Dieu," 27-56; Tuft, "Origins and Development," 24f; Gerhard Böwering, "From the Word of God to the Vision of God: Muḥammad's Heavenly Journey in Classical Ṣūfī Qur'ān Commentary," in Amir-Moezzi, *Le Voyage Initiatique*, 206f; Welch, "Muhammad's Understanding of Himself," 33; *EQ* 5:261 s.v. Theology and the Qur'ān by T. Nagel; Rudi Paret, *Mohammad und der Koran* (Stuttgart, 1957) 44-6. Notable exceptions are A.A. Bevan, "Mohammaded's Ascension to Heavean," *Studien zur Semitischen Philologie und Religionsgeschichte Julius Wellhausen zum 70. Geburtstag* (Giessen, 1914), 52 and Horovitz, "Muhammeds Himmelfahrt," 159f.

[491] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 27:42.

[492] Ibid.; al-Ḥusayn b. Mas'ūd al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, 4 vols. (Multān: Idārat Tālīfāt Ashrafīyah, 1988) 4:245; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 5:636.

generally as bearers of revelation[493]...Neither is the Qur'ān strictly consistent about who is speaking when the revelations are delivered. At times God himself seems to speak directly to the Prophet...In other respects as well there is basis to question whether the Qur'ān gives evidence for the firm stand of tradition...[494]

In the case of the great prophets preceding Muḥammad - Noah, Abraham, and Moses - God seems to address them directly.[495] Early Meccan passages imply that Muḥammad too received revelations from God (73:1-5, 27:6, etc.); sura 55:1-2 even declares that *al-Rahmān* taught the Qur'ān.[496] These early suggestions of non-mediated revelation are consistent with the lack of emphasis in the early suras on angelic revelatory participation and,[497] more significantly, the complete lack of reference to Jibrīl.[498]

there is abundant evidence that Muhammad not only did not identify Gabriel as the agent of revelation until his Medina days, but that while at Mecca he was criticized for

---

[493] See also Rahman, *Major Themes*, 93-5.

[494] *ER* 11: 158-59 s.v. Qur'ān: The Text and Its History by Charles Adams [art.=156-176]. On the discontinuity between qu'ranic and later Islamic tradition see also Welch, "Muhammad's Understanding of Himself," 15-52.

[495] Rahman, *Major Themes*, 96.

[496] See also Ibn Kathīr's discussion, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* (Abridged) 9:377; Welch, "Muhammad's Understanding of Himself," 31. While there is the possibility that an angelic mediator is implied in these passages, this seems unlikely. *Sūrat al-Muzzammil* [73]: 1-5 reads like a first person address from God to Muḥammad. *Sūrat al-Naml* [27]: 6 seems resistant to such an implication as well: "And thou (Muḥammad) art surely made to receive the Qur'ān from the Wise, the Knowing." This is immediately followed, as if as an illustration, by an account of God's direct conversation with Moses at the sacred valley of Tuwā (see also 20:1-20).

[497] Angels are mentioned in the Meccan passages serving diverse roles (e.g. 6:112, 35:1, 42:5, 13:11, etc.). However, the role of messenger from God to humans is excluded by the Early Meccan *sūrat al-Banī Isrā'īl* [17] 94-95: "And nothing prevents people from believing, when the guidance comes to them, except that they say: Has God raised up a mortal to be a messenger? Say: Had there been in the earth angels walking about secure, We would have sent down to them from the heaven an angel as a messenger."

[498] Hyondo Park, "Muḥammad's Call Revisited: A Critical Approach to Muslim Tradition" (MA. thesis, McGill University, 1996) 71: "Although the Qur'ān is silent about the beginning of Muhammad's call, it does at least offer evidence that the introduction of the angelic messenger for the Qur'ānic revelation or for Muhammad's vision on the horizon cannot be ascribed to the beginning of Muhammad's revelatory experience; rather, the *hadiths* involving either Gabriel or the angel from the very beginning of Muhammad's religious experience seem to be nothing but an expanded exegesis of the Qur'ānic allusions to Muhammad's religious experiences." John Clark Archer, *Mystical Elements in Mohammed* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1924) 83: "it cannot be said that Mohammed made overmuch of Gabriel. He is at most merely included in the revelation, whenever he does figure at all in the record...In the Koran Gabriel is mentioned by name only twice...Both references, it will be noted, are late." See also Richard Bell and W. Montgomery Watt, *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'ān* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1977) 19.

the fact that God had not sent an angelic messenger…Muhammad's earliest response did not encourage them to think that there was in fact an angel in God's revelation to him.[499]

This is certainly the case. Muḥammad's (or God's) retort to the Meccan criticism that an angel had not been sent to/with him leaves no room to doubt: at this early period Muḥammad knew of no angelic mediation:

And nothing prevents people from believing, when the guidance comes to them, except that they say: "Has God raised up a mortal to be a messenger?" Say: "Had there been in the earth angels walking about secure, We would have sent down to them from the heaven an angel as a messenger." Q 17:94-95

And they say: "Why has not an angel been sent down to him?" And if We send down an angel, the matter would be decided and then they would not be respited. And if We had made him an angel, We certainly would have made him a man, and (thus) made confused to them what they confuse. Q 6: 8-9.

And they say: 'O thou to whom the Reminder is revealed , thou art indeed *majnūn* (possessd by a jinn). Why bringest thou not the angels to us, if thou art of the truthful?'

We send not angels but with truth, and then they would be respited. Q 15: 6-8.

And they say: "What a Messenger is this? He eats food and walks about in the markets. Why has not an angel been sent down to him to be a warner with him? Or a treasure given to him, or a garden from which to eat?" And the evildoers say: "You follow but a man bewitched!" Look at how they give you parables – they have gone astray, so they cannot find a way. Blessed is He Who if He please, will give thee what is better than this: Gardens wherein rivers flow. And He will give thee palaces. Q 25: 7-10.

Thus, when confronted with the specific criticism that an angel had not been sent to him, and that he was therefore *majnūn*, i.e. he received his mantic communications from a jinn or *shayṭān*,[500] instead of disabusing his detractors of this erroneous belief by affirming that an angel actually had been sent to him, Muḥammad is made to explain:

(A) Angels are sent to angels as messengers, not to humans.

(B) If God did send an angel to him, this would have two consequences that are clearly not part of the divine plan: (1) the matter would be decided and therefore no respite would be

---

[499] Peters, *Muhammad*, 143. See also Bevan, "Mohammaded's Ascension to Heavean," 52; Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 42.

[500] On this meaning of *majnūn* see Welch, "Muhammad's Understanding of Himself," 27.

available to the disbelivers and (2) because angels themselves appear as men, sending an angel would only further confuse a situation that the detractors had already confused.

(C) After dismissing this and other criticisms as the going astray of evil doers it is affirmed that, if God pleases, he would give the Prophet something better than what the detractors demand.

These reponses simply do not square with the Jibrīlocentric account of Muḥammad's early prophecy. As Alford Welch observes:

> It is striking that the only response the Koran gives to these accusations that Muhammad was inspired by jinn or demons consists of simple denials of the charge and affirmations that the revelation came from God. There are no references to any intermediary agents of revelation.[501]

The early Meccan *sūrat al-Najm* should therefore not be read in the light of the two late (Medinan) qur'ānic references to Jibrīl.[502]

Nor are the traditional sources unanimous regarding Jibrīl's early role. According to some reports, which are more consistent with the qur'ānic data, Muḥammad did not see Jibrīl until the late Meccan or early Medinan period.[503] According to other traditions

---

[501] Welch, "Muhammad's Understanding of Himself," 27. See e.g. Q 38:43:"No! I swear by what you see and by what you don't see. It is the discourse of a noble messenger; it is not a poets discourse, nor a *kahins* discourse – a revelation from the Lord of the Worlds."

[502] Bell, "Muhammad's Visions," 149-50: "There is no doubt that in Medina Muhammad let it be understood that it was Gabriel who conveyed the revelations to him. But we are hardly justified in reading that back into the early Meccan period. When the objection was raised that an angel should have been sent as a messenger, or at least an angel should have been conjoined with him, his reply is, not an angel is actually conveying the messages to him, but simply that all former messengers have been men, xvi:45, or that if an angel had been sent, that would have been the end of the matter, and there would have been no respite, vi:8." See also Rahman, *Major Themes*, 94-97: "the standard revelatory experience of the Prophet was a matter of the 'heart'…The term 'angel' is, strictly speaking, not quite accurate for the agent of Revelation sent to Muhammad…the Qur'ān does not mention (angels) as agents of Revelation…There is no doubt that the agent of Revelation to Muhammad is this 'Spirit.' The Meccans…often asked of Muhammad that an 'angel be sent down upon him,' to which the Qur'ān often replied that angels cannot be sent to humans as prophets (sometimes the Qur'ān also threatened that 'we do not send angels except with the final Decision and in that case they [the Prophet's opponents] will not be given respite' [15:81]). It is, therefore, certain that angels did not come to the prophet - his Revelation came from the Holy Spirit, also described as the 'Trusted Spirit' (26:193)."

[503] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *kitāb al-faḍā'il* (Book 28), *bāb: kam aqām li-nabiyy (ṣ) bi-Makka wa-l-Madīna* (CMLXXI, #5809), on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās: "Allah's Messenger (ṣ) stayed in Mecca for fifteen years and he heard the voice of Gabriel and saw his radiance for seven years but did not see any visible form, and then received revelation for ten years, and he stayed in Medina for ten years." In an earlier version of this report the sounds and radiance are not even identified as that of the angel Jibrīl: Yaḥyā b. 'Abbād < Hammād b. Salama < Ibn 'Abbās: "Verily the Apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him, said: 'O Khadījah I hear sounds

Jibrīl was not even the first angel Muḥammad encountered: it was Michael or Saraphel or maybe Isrāfil who first instructed him into the prophetic trade.[504] Some present God himself revealing the Qur'ān to Muḥammad.[505] These data simply do not support the early, central role attributed to the angel Jibrīl in Muḥammad's early revelatory experiences, as Welch concludes: "The evidence of the Koran does not support the later Hadith accounts that place Gabriel at the very beginning of Muhammad's prophetic experience."[506]

4.3. 'He Revealed to His Servant': Evidence of Theophany

It is thus inconsistent with the qur'ānic data to read the angel Jibrīl into this early passage and identify him as the *marʾīy* of these early Meccan visionary encounters. As Fazlur Rahman already pointed out, "Those Ḥadīth stories...where the angel Gabriel is depicted as a public figure conversing with the Prophet...must be regarded as later fictions" (see below).[507] Who then did Muḥammad see on the horizon and at the Lote-tree of the Boundary? His own shadow projected on the horizon?[508] A pagan numen?[509]

---

and see light and I fear I am mad.' She said: 'O son of 'Abd Allāh! Allāh will not do it with you. Then she approached Waraqah..." Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr* (trans. S. Moinul Haq and H. K. Ghazanfar; Karachi, Pakistan Historical Society, 1967-) 225. This latter is a call-report.

[504] Abī Bakr 'Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, 12 vols. (Johannesburg, South Africa: al-Majlis al-'Ilmī; Beirut: tawzīʿ al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1983) 3:599 #6785 on the authority of al-Shaʿbī: "Mīkāʾīl entrusted the Messenger of God, when he was 40; he taught him the fundamentals of prophethood (*asbāb al-nubuwwa*) for three tears. When he was 43 Jibrāʾīl came to him in Mecca ten years and in Median ten years." On Saraphel see Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*, 220.

[505] "Ibn 'Abbās: God has sent down the Qur'ān to the lowest heaven on the night of divine decree, and whenever He wanted to reveal anything of it He revealed it." Al-Ṭabarī , *Jāmiʿ*, 11:84-5; Ibn Abī Shaybah, *al-Kitāb al-muṣannaf fī al-aḥādīth wa-al-āthār*, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1989) 7:191. Compare this with Ibn Manda, *Kitāb al-imān*, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1996) 2: 705: "Ibn 'Abbās: The Qur'ān was sent down in one piece from the preserved tablet to the lowest heaven and then Jibrīl revealed it to Muḥammad." The angel has here replaced God in the revelation of the Book once it has been sent to the lowest heaven. For a discussion of these and similar traditions see further Aliza Shnizer, "Sacrality and Collection," in Rippin, *Blackwell Companion to the Qur'ān* 159-171, esp. 162.

[506] Welch, "Muhammad's Understanding of Himself" 29.

[507] Rahman, *Major Themes*, 97; Park, "Muhammad's Call Revisited," 71.

[508] S. Khuda Bukhsh, "Mohammed's Call to Prophetship," *The Modern Review* 15 (1914) 146-148.

[509] Jaako Hämeen-Anttila ("Descent and Ascent in Islamic Myth," in R.M. Whiting [ed.], *Mythology and Mythologies: Methodological Approaches to Intercultural Influences. Proceedings of the Second Annual Symposium of the Assyrian and Babylonian Intellectual Heritage Project Held in Paris, France, October 4-7, 1999* [Melammu Symposia

One of the supernatural beings described to Muḥammad by Jews and Christians?[510] "On the contrary" wrote W.H.T. Gairdner, "No one can read these two passages (suras 53 and 81) without feeling that Muhammad's awful visitant *on those two occasions* was the One of absolute supreme rank in the heavenlies."[511] According to David A. Madigan "the most straightforward reading (of *sūrat al-Najm*) indicates a vision of God."[512] For Western scholars beginning with B. Schrieke[513] v. 10, "So He revealed to His servant what he revealed," is decisive proof that Muḥammad, at least in the early period of his mission, understood these visions as theophanies. Bell argued in 1934:

> Who then was it that had thus appeared to him? Moslem interpretation assumes that Gabriel is meant. That is natural on the orthodox theory of how the Qur'ān was revealed. But v. 10 points to its having been Allāh himself. In that verse, the Moslem commentators have to assume that the subject to the verb is Gabriel, but that the pronoun "his" in "his servant" refers to Allāh - surely an unnatural use of language. The pronoun indeed must refer to Allāh, for Muḥammad is Allah's servant, not Gabriel's. But this involves that Allāh is also the subject of the verb, and in fact is being spoken of all through.[514]

W.M. Watt and Josef van Ess will later concur.[515] This argument is quite compelling. There are three unidentified pronouns in this verse (*'he* revealed/*his* servant/*he* revealed). Classical Muslim exegetes indeed agreed that *'abdihi* is a reference to Muḥammad and the

---

II; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001] 51) argues: "as there is almost no Biblical influence in the Surah, we have think of the descending numen in more pagan terms."

[510] Maxime Robinson, *Muhammad* (New Press, 2002) 77 suggested "that what Muhammad saw and heard may have been the supernatural beings described to him by the Jews and Christians with whom he talked."

[511] W.H.T. Gairdner, *al-Ghazzālī's Miskāt al-Anwār* ("*The Niche for Light*") (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1924) 20.

[512] *EQ* 4:445 s.v. Revelation by Daniel A. Madigan.

[513] Schrieke, "Die Himmelsreise Muhammeds," 20.

[514] Bell, "Muhammad's Visions," 148f. See also van Ess, "Vision and Ascension," 50; Andrae, "Die legenden," 14.

[515] Watt notes that " 'His servant' must mean God's servant, as is agreed by Muslims; but that makes the construction awkward unless God is also the implied subject of the verbs (*Muhammad at Mecca*, 42)." Van Ess argues " 'His servant' can only be God's servant there, namely Muhammad. This would imply that 'he' who revealed was not the 'noble messenger'; and since 'he' who revealed was identical with him who had been seen He who had been seen had to be God Himself ('Muhammad's Ascension, 8)." See also *ER* 11:158 s.v. Qur'ān: The Text and its History by Charles J. Adams.

possessive pronoun a reference to God.[516] The most straightforward reading of the verse then would be to assume that the other two pronouns, i.e. the subjects of the verb *awḥā*, are God as well; thus, 'He revealed to His servant that which He revealed." This is the reading of al-Baghawī,[517] al-Qurṭubī,[518] and al-Suyūṭī.[519] This reading however, forces the conclusion that it is in fact God who is being discussed throughout the passage, unless one assumes one antecedent (Jibrīl) for the preceding pronouns in vv. 5-9, and another (God) for the pronouns of v. 10. Three hermeneutical stratagems were later introduced in order to avoid the doctrinal difficulty involved with the straightforward reading. Some exegetes read two antecedents for the three pronouns of this verse, "he (Jibrīl) revealed to His (God's) servant that which he (Jibrīl) revealed."[520] Others read, "he (Jibrīl) revealed to His (God's) servant (Muḥammad) that which He (God) revealed to him (Jibrīl)."[521] Still others, though preferring the natural reading of one antecedent (God) for the pronouns, introduced Jibrīl as an implied medium (*wāsiṭa*), thus reading; "God revealed to His servant Muḥammad, by means of Jibrīl (*'ala lisān Jabrīl* or *bi-wāsiṭati Jabrīl*), that which He revealed."[522]

These hermeneutical stratagems are grammatically cumbersome and smack of subterfuge - an apparent eisegetic attempt to avoid the implications of the plain text. Tor Andrae aptly described them as the commentators "desperate way out (*verzweifelte auswege*)" of the implications of the plain reading of this passage.[523] Al-Baghawī, al-

---

[516] Al-Ṭabarī. *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 27: 47; 246; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 17:92; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿazīm* 8 vols. (Riyād: al-Mamlakah al-ʿArabīyah al-Saʿūdīyah: Dār Ṭibah, 1997-) 7:448; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr fī al-tafsīr al-māthūr* 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1983) 7:646.

[517] Al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, 4:246.

[518] Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 17:92.

[519] Al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-durr al-manthūr*, 7: 646.

[520] Thus Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 7:448; Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī, *Tafsīr al-Qāsimī al-musammā maḥāsin al-taʾwīl* 17 vols. (Cairo: Dār Aḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabīya, 1957-60) 6:364.

[521] Thus al-Ṭabarī. *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 27:47.

[522] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 7:448.

[523] Andrae, " Die legenden," 14.

Qurṭubī, and al-Suyūṭī rejected them.[524] There is likely a single antecedent to the pronouns of v. 10, God, a fact that compels us to read God as the antecedent to the pronouns of vv. 6-9: "He (God) *istawā*, while He/he (God/Muḥammad?) was on the highest horizon. Then He (God) drew near and hung suspended, until He/he (God/Muḥammad) was the measure of two bows or closer. Then He (God) revealed to His (God's) servant (Muḥammad) that which He (God) revealed."

The grammatical phenomenon *iltifāt*, while recognized as a 'daring' rhetorical feature of qur'ānic discourse,[525] fails to account for the unannounced shift in antecedents implied by the traditional reading ["He (Jibrīl) *istiwā*, while he (Jibrīl) was on the highest horizon. Then he (Jibrīl) drew near and hung suspended, until he (Jibrīl) was the measure of two bows or closer. Then he (God) revealed to his (God's) servant (Muḥammad), by means of Jabrīl, that which he (God) revealed"]. An important condition of *iltifāt* or the unannounced change of person(al pronouns) (e.g. from 3rd to 1st person) or number (from singular to plural) is that the antecedent remain the same: "the pronoun in the person/thing one turns to should refer to the same person/thing from which one turned."[526] Thus sura 16:1f:

> The command of Allāh comes; so seek not to hasten it. Glory be to Him! High be He exalted above that which they associate with Him. He sends down His angels with the Spirit on whomsoever He wills of His servants, *Warn that there is no deity but I. So fear Me!*

This sudden and unannounced shift from third person reference to God to first person speech of God still maintains a single antecedent, namely God. *Iltifāt* therefore may involve a shift in pronouns and a single antecedent, but not a single pronoun and a shift in antecedent, as posited by the traditional reading of *surat al-Najm*. Van Ess's analysis is thus likely correct: "'His servant' (of v. 10) can only be God's servant there, namely

---

[524] Al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, 4:246; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 17:92; Al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-durr al-manthūr*, 7: 646.

[525] Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qurʾān: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text* (2nd edition; Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003) 245-255; M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, "Grammatical Shift for Rhetorical Purposes: *Iltifāt* and Related Features in the Qurʾān," *BSOAS* 55 (1992) 407-432.

[526] Haleem, "Grammatical Shift," 411.

Muhammad. But the 'he' who revealed…would have to be God Himself and God would also be the object of the vision."[527]

4.4. *Sūrat al-Najm* and the Throne-Theophany Tradition

The *mar'īy* of Muḥammad's two visions recorded in *sūrat al-Najm* is undoubtedly God. Indeed, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 728) understood the *shadīd al-quwā* of v. 5 as a reference to God. *Al-Quwwa*, he says, is from the *Ṣifāt Allāh*.[528] Al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī records the same opinion from some anonymous exegetes (he uses *qīla*).[529] This exegesis finds support from 51:58, where God is called *Dhū 'l-quwwa 'l-matīn*, "Lord of Power, the Strong." Muḥammad also is called *dhī quwwa* in *Sūrat al-Takwīr* (v. 20).[530] The two appellations differ however in that *dhī qūwa* appropriately lacks the definite article found in *Dhū 'l-quwwa 'l-matīn*. In the Qurʾān, Muḥammad is given names of God minus the article. God is e.g. *al-Raʾūf* and *al-Raḥīm*, while Muḥammad is *raʾūf* and *raḥīm* (9:128).

According to v. 6 the *mar'īy* is *dhū mirra* which could mean either "possessor of firmness of shape" or "of intelligence."[531] Most exegetes seem to have read *dhū mirra* as *dhū quwwa*, possessor of strength, or as *dhū khalq ḥasan*, possessor of a beautiful body.[532] Ibn ʿAbbās said "possessor of a beautiful appearance (*dhū manẓar ḥasan*)" and Qatāda said a "large (*ṭawīl*) beautiful make."[533] Al-Ṭabarī accepted this corporeal interpretation, reading "sound of body (*ṣiḥḥat 'l-jism*)".[534]

---

[527] "Vision and Ascension," 50.

[528] Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 17:85. No exegesis of this verse is provided, however, in Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥīm's edition of al-Ḥasan's *Tafsīr*: *Tafsīr al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1992) 2: 306-9.

[529] Al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 19:27.

[530] See below.

[531] Bell, *A Commentary on the Qurʾān*, 2:315.

[532] E.g. Al-Ṭabarī. *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 27:42ff; al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, 4:245; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-durr al-manthūr*, 7:643.

[533] Al-Ṭabarī. *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 27:42ff.

[534] Al-Ṭabarī. *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 27:43. He was no anthropomorphist however; al-Ṭabarī preferred the Jibrīlian interpretation of this passage. *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 27:47.

The *dhū mirra* is said to have made *istiwā* on the highest horizon (*al-ufuq al-a'lā*). The highest horizon is taken to mean "the eastern horizon from wench comes dawn."[535] Al-Qurṭubī lists six possible readings for *istawā*.[536] How one reads the verb depends on how one identifies the *mustawin* (the one who makes *istawā*); if it is Jibrīl *istawā* means *istiqām*, i.e. Jibrīl stood erect on the highest horizon. Ibn Isḥāq (d. 767) is said to have contributed to this reading becoming orthodoxy[537]; he records in his *Sīrat rasūl Allāh* that Muḥammad saw the angel in the form of a man "with feet astride the horizon."[538] The Mu'tazilī al-Zamakhsharī preferred this interpretation.[539] But as we saw above, a Jibrīlian reading of this early Meccan passage is not likely correct, as Jibrīl is not mentioned until the Medina period and angelic revelatory mediation is not emphasized in this early period. If the *wa hūwa* of v. 7 refers to Muḥammad,[540] *istiwā* then means *i'tidāl*: Muhammad is straight or balanced in his power (*quwwa*) or his mission (*risāla*),[541] or that the Prophet was established in a high place when he saw the being; this is the reading of the 'Asharite Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.[542] If the *mustawin* is God, however, as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and others believed (see below), then *istawā* is to be read *istawā 'alā 'l-'arsh*, "(God) sat upright on the Throne." [543]

The *mustawin/mar'ïy* is then said to "draw near and hang suspended *thumma danā fa-tadallā*," coming so close to Muḥammad that the two were only distant "the measure of two bows or closer (vv. 8-9)." The traditional account has Jibrīl descending, a reading attributed to 'Ā'isha and 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ūd.[544] But Ibn 'Abbās and Anas b. Mālik both

---

[535] Al-Ṭabarī. *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 27:44; al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, 4:245.

[536] Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 17:87ff. See also al-Qāsimī,. *Tafsīr al-Qāsimī*, 6:360ff.

[537] Van Ess, *TG* 4:387.

[538] Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrat rasūl Allāh*, trans. A. Guillaume in *The Life of Muhammad* (Lahore, Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 1967), 106.

[539] Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 5: 636.

[540] Al-Baghawī reads it thus; *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, 4:245. See also al-Qāsimī, *Tafsīr al-Qāsimī*, 6:362.

[541] Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 17:87.

[542] Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, 28:285.

[543] Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 17:88; al-Qāsimī, *Tafsīr al-Qāsimī*, 6:363.

[544] Al-Ṭabarī. *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 27:44; al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, 4:245f; al- Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-durr al-manthūr*, 7:644.

said God drew close to Muḥammad and hung suspended.[545] Anas b. Mālik's narrative was actually canonized in al-Bukhārī.[546] Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Qurṭī related from "some of the Companions" that the Prophet cited *thumma danā fa-tadallā* as proof that he had seen God.[547] Al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim (d. 723), who represented the exegetical tradition connected with Ibn 'Abbās' name in Eastern Iran, narrated on the latter's authority the following report about the Prophet's encounter with God:

> [The Prophet said]: I looked at Him with my heart until I was sure that He was present and that I really saw Him. For suddenly He removed the curtain and there He was, sitting on His throne in all His dignity and glory…He bent over a little bit in His dignity towards me and bade me draw nearer. For this is the word of the Scripture where He reports how He treated me and glorified me (53:5-10) "He who is mighty in power, very strong. He held himself upright (v. 6)"- which, in this context, can only mean: on the throne, being on the higher horizon. "Then he drew near and hung suspended, two bows'-length away, or nearer…And he revealed to His servant that which He revealed," namely the task He had decided to impose on me…He put one of His hands between my shoulder-blades, and for some time I felt the coolness of his fingers coming through my heart…[548]

This reading of vv. 6-10 as a throne theophany had illustrious support and wide currency at an early period in Islam.[549] No less than the great al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 728) supported it.[550] The wide currency of this interpretation is suggested by a late Umayyad polemic against Islam by the Manichean author Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. 756). The text of this

---

[545] Al-Ṭabarī. *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 27:45; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 17: 89; al-Lālikāʾī, *Sharḥ uṣūl iʿtiqād ahl l-sunna wa l-jamāʿa* 2 vols. (Riyāḍ, 1985) 2:516: Abū Salama from Ibn 'Abbās re: "He saw him descend again by the Lote-tree of the Boundary (53: 13-14)." He said: "His Lord came near to him and hung suspended until he was the measure of two bows or closer, then He revealed to His servant what He revealed."

[546] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (trans. Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khān; Beirut: Dār al- 'Arabia, 1985), *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 37. It is a Miʿrāj narrative in which Ibn Mālik declared: "When the holy Prophet reached *sidrat al-mutaḥā*, God Most High drew near him and hung suspended above him till there remained between the Prophet and Him a distance equal to two bow-lengths or even less." See further below.

[547] Al-Ṭabarī. *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 27: 47; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 7:449; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-durr al-manthūr*, 7:644.

[548] Al- Suyūṭī, *al-Laʾālī al-maṣnūʿa fī al-aḥādīth al-mawḍūʿa* 2 vols. (Egypt: al-Maktaba al-Tijārīya al-Kubrā, 1962), 1:74, 14 ff.

[549] On the "high degree of acceptance which the anthropomorphic interpretation of *sūrat al-Najm* found in the early community" see van Ess, *Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 59, 63; idem, "Vision and Ascension," 55.

[550] Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 17:88; al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 10. 17:88; al-Qāsimī, *Tafsīr al-Qāsimī*, 6:363.

polemic itself is no longer extant, but fragments are preserved in a refutation of it by the Zaydī imam al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm (d. 860).[551] Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, the "closet" *zindiq* of Persian origin who served as secretary to Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid governors,[552] wrote the anti-Islamic polemic in which he accused the Muslims of pretending that "their Lord is sitting (*qāʿid*) on His throne" and that He "descends (*tadallā*) and draws near, two bows'-length away or nearer."[553] This is an obvious reference to *sūrat al-Najm*. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ was certainly not speaking as a simple outsider. Being on intimate terms with the court privied him to at least a casual knowledge of the views of his patrons. His use of *rabbahum* (their Lord) suggests that Ibn al-Maqaffaʿ was speaking for the Muslims in general and therefore describing a popular notion. In reply, al-Qāsim confirms that such a picture was widespread, but argues for a metaphorical interpretation of "throne." He suggests that *sūrat al-Najm* was understood as a throne-theophany by a large majority of the people, at least in the region where he wrote (probably Egypt).[554] In any case, the theophanic interpretation of this passage appears to have enjoyed popular and/or official support during the period in which he wrote.[555]

Now it is certainly bad methodology to draw any conclusions concerning Muslim religiosity solely from a hostile source such as Ibn al-Maqaffaʿ's polemic. However, the sources strongly indicate that Ibn al-Maqaffaʿ was truthful in his presentation of late Umayyad dogma,[556] at least in regards to the popular interpretation of *surāt al-Najm* as evidence of theophany and *Visio Dei*.[557] This reading of v. 6 as suggesting a throne-theophany would put Muḥammad's call securely within the biblical prophetic call

---

[551] These fragments are published by Michelangelo Guidi in *La Lotta Tra l'Islam E Il Manicheismo* (Rome: R. Accademia Nazionale Dei Lincei, 1927).

[552] On him see *EI²* 3:883ff s.v. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ by F. Gabrielli.

[553] Guidi in *La Lotta Tra l'Islam*, Arabic text, 35.

[554] Van Ess, "Le *MIʿRĀǦ*," 43.

[555] Van Ess, "Le *MIʿRĀǦ* et la Vision de Dieu," 42f; idem., "Muhammad's Ascension," 14.

[556] On Late Umayyad religiosity see Wadād Al-Qāḍī, "The Religious Foundation of Late Umayyad Ideology and Practice," in Manuela Marín and Mercedes García-Arenal (edd.), *Saber religioso y poder pol itico en el Islam: actas del simposio internacional, Granada, 15-18 octubre 1991* (Madrid: Agencia Española de Cooperaci on Internacional, 1994) 231-274.

[557] Van Ess, "Vision and Ascension," 59 and below.

tradition and would correspond to Walther Zimmerli's 'Type 2' call account featuring the *vocandus*' vision of God as a glorious anthropos enthroned in majesty. This motif and imagery would be developed in the ḥadīth literature.[558]

4.5. 'His Heart Lied Not'

The description of the first vision ends with, "The heart did not lie (*kadhaba*) concerning that which he/it saw (v.11)." Upon this verse hinged the debate over the manner in which Muḥammad saw his Lord, with his eyes or with his heart. In other words, was it a physical seeing or a dream-vision (*ru'yā*), for seeing with the heart meant seeing in a dream-vision.[559] Muslim relates in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* from Ibn ʿAbbās concerning this verse, "he saw Him with his heart twice."[560] Al-Qurṭubī, who held that Muḥammad saw God with his heart during his *Miʿrāj*, said this is the position of "Abū Dharr and a group of Companions."[561] They said that "God placed Muḥammad's eyes in his heart and his heart saw Him, not his eyes."[562] Al-Baghawī on the other hand cites Anas b. Mālik, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and ʿIkrima as a group who claimed Muḥammad saw God with his eyes.[563] This is certainly the implication of v. 17, "The eyes turned not aside, nor exceeded the limit" (see below). This debate influenced how one read the verb *kadhaba* of v. 11; when read with *takhfīf* (*kadhaba*) Muḥammad's heart does the seeing, i.e., "Muḥammad's heart did not lie concerning that which it saw." When read with *tashdīd* however (*kadhdhaba*), we get "Muḥammad's heart did not deny that which his eyes saw, rather it affirmed it (*ṣaddaqahu wa ḥaqqaqahu*)."[564] Thus the famed qurʾānic exegete Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 767) interpreted the verse: " 'his heart lied not about what he saw' i.e. the

---

[558] See below.

[559] See below.

[560] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* [English], 1:111.

[561] Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 17:92.

[562] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 27: 47; Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 17:92.

[563] Al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, 4:247. Al-Qurṭubī traces this view to "Anas and a goup." Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 17:92. Ibn Kathīr doesn't much care for this statement by al-Baghawī (Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 7:448).

[564] Al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, 4: 236.

heart of Muḥammad did not lie about what his vision (*baṣar*) saw, the matter of his Lord on that night."[565]   As al-Zamakhsharī explains:

> The Prophet's heart (and mind) in no way falsified that which he saw with his eyes...When the Prophet saw the angel with his eyes, his heart did not say 'I don't know who you are'; if it said so, it would have been a liar, because he knew him...[566]

According to Qaḍī 'Iyad this was the common reading of the verse:

> The qur'ānic commentators say that His words 'The heart did not lie about what it saw' means that the heart did not imagine the eye to have been other than truthful. It confirmed what was seen. In other words his heart did not reject what his eye saw.[567]

In the light of v. 17 this seems reasonable (see below). It is also consistent with the qur'ānic position that the heart is the locus of comprehension.

> We have cast veils (*akinna*) over their hearts so that they understand it not and a deafness in their ears. And if they see every sign (*āya*) they will not believe in it. So much so that when they come to thee they only want to dispute with thee. Q. 6:25

> For surely it is not the eyes (*al-abṣār*) that are blind but blind are the hearts which are in their breasts. Q. 22:46

If the heart is darkened and the understanding of reality is off, seeing would be disbelieving, even the signs (*āyāt*) of God. Only a pure heart can properly perceive divine workings. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Matthew 5:6)." One must be of pure heart in order to see God. On this reading Q. 53:11 seems to be affirming the proper state of Muḥammad's heart at the time of the encounter, which allowed him to perceive his visitant correctly. Contrarily, Muḥammad's Meccan opponents, whose hearts were veiled, doubted the divine source of his revelations. *Majnūn* (one possessed by a jinn/insane) is what they called him, claiming that his visitant was nothing more than a

---

[565] Muqatīl b. Sulaymān. *Tafsīr*, 4 vols. (ed. Mahmud Sahata. Cairo: al-Hay'a, 1980-88) 4: 160.

[566] al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Khashshāf*, 4:420.

[567] *Al-Shifa*, 101. See also Qārī al-Harawī, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1992) 9:626.

115

shaytān.[568] But Muḥammad, we are told, knew better. "His heart lied not concerning what he saw."

4.6. *Sūrat al-Najm* and the *Mi'rāj*?

Verses 13-16 give intriguing details concerning the second vision: "And indeed he saw him descend again, at the Lote-tree of the Boundary. Near it is the Garden of Refuge. When that which covers covered the lote-tree." This vision is taken by most exegetes to have occurred during Muḥammad's Ascension to heaven (*Mi'rāj*).[569] There are difficulties with this interpretation, however. First, this verse clearly describes, not the *ascent* of the *rā'ī* (seer), but the *descent* of the *mar'īy* (seen).[570] Richard Bell notes that the verb *nazala* used in this verse "implies a descent – one would expect to earth."[571] Josef van Ess correctly observes that, had the second encounter occurred in heaven, it would have been something altogether different from the first encounter, which clearly took place on earth.[572] But the *ukhrā* ("again") suggests that the experiences were similar.

> Dans la vision coranique il n'est nullement dit que Muḥammad *monte* quelque part; au contraire quelqu'un *descend* vers lui. Le récit de la seconde vision commence ainsi: «il l'a vu descendre une autre fois» (*wa laqad ra'āhu nazlatan uḫrā*). Muḥammad se trouve quelque part sur la terre; cela va sans dire pour la première vision où il voit quelqu'un «à l'horizon supérieur» (53/7) et si la seconde vision avait eu lieu au ciel, la difference éclatante avec la première aurait raisonnablement entraîné une autre introduction ou une insistance

---

[568] Concerning the temporary cessation of revelation (*fatra*) which reportedly caused Muḥammad much grief, Umm Junbul, wife of Abū Lahab, said: "O Muḥammad, I see your *shaytān* has left you!" This is reported in al-Zamakhsharī, *Kashshaf*, 766.

[569] Al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, 4:247; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 7:451; van Ess, "Vision and Ascension."

[570] As Rahman, *Major Themes*, 92 points out: "instead of the Prophet 'going up' in Ascension, in both cases the agent of Revelation 'came down'." See also Bell, "Muhammad's Visions," 150; van Ess, "Le *MI'RĀǦ* et la Vision de Dieu," 32 and below.

[571] Bell, *Commentary on the Qur'ān*, 2:316. See also Kees Wagtendonk, *Fasting in the Koran* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968) 111 n. 3: "Both visions of S. 53 take palce on earth."

[572] Van Ess, "Le *MI'RĀǦ* et la Vision de Dieu," 32. On divine descent in ANE and Islamic tradition see Hämeen-Anttila, "Descent and Ascent"; Guy S. Stroumsa, "Mystical Descents," in John J. Collins and Michael Fishbane (edd.), *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995) 139-154; Charles H. Talbert, "The Myth of a Descending-Ascending Redeemer in Mediterranean Antiquity," *NTS* 22 (1976): 418-439.

particulière sur cet apogée du récit («il l'a même vu au ciel quand il y fut élevé» ou quelque chose de ce genre au lieu de «il l'a vu descendre une autre fois»).[573]

The terms *sidrat al-muntahā* (Lote-Tree of the Boundary) and *jannat al-ma'wā* (Garden of Refuge) would later become catch words for Paradise (Cf. 32:19). This is probably why some Muslims transferred the vision to heaven. But the terms have mundane meanings as well. The *sidra*-tree was familiar in Arabia.[574] Richard Bell thus concluded that the terms indicated well-known landmarks near Mecca.[575] On the other hand *janna* may mean "Paradise" here, but some early Muslims knew of a terrestrial paradise. They shared with local Jewish tradition the notion of a terrestrial Paradise in Jerusalem where God himself lived for forty years after creation.[576] Afterwards he ascended to heaven from the Rock of Jerusalem, leaving behind his footprint for all posterity to witness;[577] The Resurrection and Judgment assembly will be there.[578] Mecca too was considered a paradise.[579] It was

---

[573] Van Ess, "Le *MI'RĀǦ* et la Vision de Dieu," 32. "In the qur'ānic vision it is not at all said that Muḥammad *ascended* somewhere; on the contrary someone *descended* toward him. The narration of the second vision begins thus: 'he saw him descend another time' (*wa laqad ra'āhu nazlatan uḫrā*). Muḥammad is somewhere on earth; it goes without saying for the first vision where he sees someone 'on the highest horizon' (53/7) and if the second vision had taken place in the sky, the vivid difference with the first [vision] would have reasonably brought another introduction or a particular insistence at the beginning of the narrative ('he even saw him in the sky when he was raised there' or something similar instead of 'he saw him descend another time')."

[574] Bell, "Muhammads Visions," 150; *EI²* 9:549-550 s.v. Sidr by Remke Kruk.

[575] Bell, "Muhammad's Visions," 150. See also van Ess, "Vision and Ascension," 50-51.

[576] On the authority of 'Ubāda b. al-Ṣāmit (d. 654). See Abū al-Ma'ālī al-Musharraf b. Murajjā, *Kitāb Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis wa-al-Khalīl wa- Faḍā'il al-Shām*, ed. O. Livne-Kafri (Shfaram, 1995) 114 #132; al-Wāsiṭī, *Faḍā'il Bayt al-Muqqadas*, ed. I. Hasson (Jerusalem 1978) 69 #113. See further M.J. Kister, "You Shall Set Out for Three Mosques: A Study of an Early Tradition," *Mus* 82 (1969): 195; van Ess, *TG* 4:389-395.

[577] Al-Faqīh, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1855) 97; Josef van Ess, "'Abd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock. An Analysis of Some Texts," in Julian Raby and Jeremy Johns (edd.), *Bayt al-Maqdis, 'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 96; idem, "The Youthful God," 1f; O. Grabar, *The Shape of the Holy, Early Islamic Jerusalem* (Princeton, 1996), 113; Charles D. Mathews, *Palestine-Mohammedan Holy Land* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), 15. The Syrians are particularly associated – and censored – for such views. See e.g. Rabī' b. Ḥabīb al-Farāhīdī, *al-Jāmi' Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4 vols. (Cairo, n.d.) 3:35, where Muḥammad b. Ḥanafiyya, the son of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalib is given to say: "These damned Syrians, how pagan they are! They pretend that God put his foot on the Rock in Jerusalem, though (only) one person ever put his foot on a rock (in this way), namely Abraham when he made it the *qibla* for all mankind..."

[578] Mathews, *Palestine-Mohammedan Holy Land*, 30; Ofer Livne-Kafri, "Jerusalem in Early Islam: The Eschatological Aspect," *Arabica* 53 (2006): 382-403; idem, "*Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis* (The merits of Jerusalem): Two Additional Notes," *Quaderni di Sstudi Arabi* 19 (2001): 63-66.

117

in al-Ṭā'if, not Jerusalem, where God's footprint remains from his ascent to heaven after creation.[580]

Secondly, the Ascension is extra-qur'ānic; there is no mention of it in the text and only later was the miracle described.[581] Indeed, the Qur'ān seems to actually reject the very idea of an ascension of the prophet:

> They say: 'We will not believe thee till thou makest a spring to gush forth from the earth for us…or till thou goest up into heaven; and we will not believe thy going up till thou bringest down on us a book that we may read.' Say (Muḥammad): 'glory be to my Lord! Am I but a mortal, a messenger? (17:90-93)

As Archer observes, "The matter of any miraculous power of his is practically dismissed by him in *sura* 17:92-97."[582] Hāmeen-Anttila likewise notes: "Qur'ān 6:35 mentions ladders with which to ascend to Heaven, but the implication is that not even Muḥammad can ascend to Heaven. The idea of an ascent was familiar but rejected."[583] But the pressure from the Shī'ī heroes who earlier claimed heavenly ascent and (mainly) Christian apologists who argued that Islam is no true religion because Muḥammad had no evidentiary miracles as indicated in the Qur'ān itself inspired the development of the *mi'rāj* legend.[584] The weavers of this legend made considerable use of the sacral king

---

[579] See sources and discussion in M.J. Kister, "Some Reports Concerning Al-Ṭā'if," in idem, *Studies in Jāhiliyya and Early Islam* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1980) XI:18 [art.=1-18]; van Ess, *TG* 4:396.

[580] Ibid.

[581] *EQ* 1:176 s.v. Ascension by Michael Sells: "The qur'ānic grounding of the ascent (*mi'rāj*) is tenuous in two ways. In the first place, the ascent is not described and the term *mi'rāj* is not used in the Qur'ān. Secondly, Qur'ān stresses that Muḥammad brings no miracle other than the divinely-wrought miracle of the Qur'ān itself." See also *EI²* 7:100 s.v. Mi'rādj: In Arabic Literature by J.E, Bencheikh.

[582] Archer, *Mystical Elements in Mohammed*, 49.

[583] Hāmeen-Anttila, "Descent and Ascent," 50. See also Angelika Neuwirth, "From the Sacred Mosque to the Remote Temple: Sūrat al-Isrā' between Text and Commentary," in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Barry D. Walfish and Joseph W. Goering (edd.), *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 396-98 [art.=376-407]. See also Wagtendonk, *Fasting in the Koran*, 109: "The idea of an ascending-to-heaven by Mohammed in order to receive the revelation occurs in the same verse (i.e. Q 17:93[95]) although there it is rejected."

[584] Joseph Horovitz, "The Growth of the Mohammed Legend," *MW* 10 (1920):50: "Not naively, as did the popular imagination, but consciously and deliberately the theologians transferred to Mohammed what they had heard in the miracle-legends related by those of other faiths. This process of assimilation of the miracles performed by earlier saints and prophets…was made imperative…both by the requirements of the popular faith and by compulsion of the theological propaganda." On Christian apologetics and the Muslim need for evidentiary miracles by the Prophet see Sidney H. Griffith, "The Prophet Muḥammad, His Scripture

118

mythology of the ANE as well as Jewish Apocalyptic literature.[585] Geo Widengren concluded:

> In spite of the clear statement of the Qur'ān there has grown up a whole literature describing the ascension of the Apostle of God and his receiving in the highest heaven from the hands of God himself the Qur'ān, taken from the treasures of Allāh's throne...We are entitled to say that the old pattern of the Ancient Near East has triumphed over historical truth.[586]

It at least triumphed over qur'ānic truth, or so it would appear. While the *mi'rāj* tradition is certainly non-qur'ānic the Qur'ān does makes a very obscure allusion to a miraculous, nocturnal journey of the Prophet: "Glory to Him Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque (*al-masjid al-ḥarām*) to the Furthest Mosque (*al-majid al-aqṣā*),

---

and His Message According to the Christian Apologies in Arabic and Syriac From the First Abbasid Century," in *La Vie du prophete Mahomet; colloque de Strasbourg, octobre 1980* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1983) 99-146; idem, "Comparative Religion in the Apologetics of the First Christian Arabic Theologians," in *Proceedings of the Patristic, Mediaeval and Renaissance Conference* 4 (1979): 63-87; Sara Stroumsa, "The Signs of Prophecy: The Emergence and Early Development of a Theme in Arabic Theological Literature," *HTR* 78 (1985): 101-14; Richard C. Martin, "The Role of the Basrah Mutazilah in Formulating the Doctrine of the apologetic Miracle," *JNES* 39 (1980) 175-89. On Shī'ism and the Ascension tradition see Geo Widengren, *Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, and his Ascension* (Uppasala/Wiesbaden, 1955); van Ess, *TG* 4:388; idem, "*Mi'rāj* et la vision de Dieu," 51-2.

[585] Harris Birkeland, *The Lord Guideth. Studies on Primitive Islam* (Oslo: I Kommisjon Hos H. Aschehoug & Co. [W. Nygaard], 1956) 59: "the legend of Muhammed developed soon after his death. The religious movement behind this legend was connected with the syncretism of the Near East in contact with which Islam entered as a consequence of the great conquests, a contact starting immediately after the Prophet's death. Especially the legend of the Ascension clearly shows the influence of this syncretistic world." See further Widengren, *Muḥammad*; Mordechai Nisan, "Notes on a Possible Jewish Sources for Muhammad's 'Night Journey'," *Arabica* 47 (2000): 274-277; David J. Halperin, "Hekhalot and Mi'rāj: Observations on the Heavenly Journey in Judaism and Islam," in John J. Collins and Michael Fishbane (edd.), *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995) 269-288; Dan Merkur, "Muhammad and his Mi'raj," in idem, *Gnosis: An Esoteric Tradition of Mystical Visions and Unions* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1993) 181-198; Ioan Petru Culianu, *Psychanodia* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983) 55-58; Heribert Busse, "Jerusalem in the Story of Muhammad's Night Journey and Ascension," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 14 (1991): 21-25, 39. On the Mi'rāj see also Frederick Stephen Colby, "Constructing an Islamic Ascension Narrative: the Interplay of Official and Popular Culture in Pseudo-Ibn 'Abbas" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2002); Brooke Elise Olson, "Heavenly Journeys, Earthly Concerns: The Legacy of the *Mi'raj* in the Formation of Islam" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2002; *ER¹* 9:552-556 s.v. Mi'rāj by Gerhard Böwering; J.R. Porter, "Muhammad's Journey to Heaven," *Numen* 21 (1974): 64-80 (=idem, "Muhammad's Journey to Heaven," H.R. Ellis Davidson [ed.], *The Journey to the Other World* [Folklore Society, 1975] 1-26); Earle Howard Waugh, "Religious Aspects of the Mi'rāj Legends," in *Etudes arabes et islamiques; actes du XXIXe Congres international des orientalistes* (Paris: L'Asiatheque, 1976) 236-244; Miguel Asin Palacios, *Islam and the Divine Comedy* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1968).

[586] "Holy Book and Holy Tradition in Islam," in F.F. Bruce and E.G. Rupp (edd.), *Holy Book and Holy Tradition: International Colloquium Held in the Faculty of Theology, University of Manchester* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968) 219 [art.=210-236]

119

whose precincts We have blessed, that We might show him of Our signs (*āyāt*) (17:1)." All
the problems with this verse and the difficulty in identifying the two masjids will not
concern us here.[587] Suffice it to say that Muslim tradition, not without cause, has
identified the first with the Sacred Mosque in Mecca and the latter with Jerusalem.[588]
This *isrā*', as the night journey is called, would therefore be a *horizontal* journey from
Mecca to Jerusalem, not a vertical ascension.[589] In an insightful study Angelika Neuwirth
has well argued that the vertical interpretation of Q. 17:1 is part of later "mythologizing
exegesis" built upon the dissolution of the qur'ānic discourse into isolated elements from
which side-plots and background images were constructed.[590] Van Ess has made the case
recently that the vertical interpretation of the *isrā* resulted from a protracted theological
debate involving popular beliefs on the one hand and the increasing 'scandalization' of
anthropomorphism on the other. When Muslim theology 'discovered' divine
immutability the ascent of the prophet, even to see God, became more palatable than the
descent of God to the prophet at the conclusion of a horizontal journey of the latter.[591]

---

[587] Busse, "Jerusalem in the Story of Muhammad's Night Journey and Ascension"; Martin Plessner,
"Muḥammad's Clandestine 'Umra in the Ḏu 'l-Qaʿda 8 H. and Sūra 17, 1," *Rivista Degli Studi Orientali* 32
(1957): 525-30.

[588] Western scholars are divided over the correct identification of *al-majid al-aqṣā*. Since J. Horovitz's
fundamental study ("Muhammeds Himmelfahrt," *Der Islam* 9 [1919]: 159-183) most have departed from
Muslim tradition and identified the 'furthest mosque' with a heavenly sanctuary. (See also B. Schrieke, "Die
Himmelsreise Muhammeds," *Der Islam* 6 [1915-16]: 1-30; *EI*² 7:97-100 s.v. "Miʿrādj: In Islamic exegesis
and in the popular and mystical tradition of the Arab world" by B. Schrieke and J. Horovitz.) But as
Angelika Neuwirth has recently stressed, the consistent qur'ānic rejection of prophetic miracles in general
and ascension in particular (17:93; cf. 6:35) and the negative associations with the latter tell against this
reading. See Angelika Neuwirth, "From the Sacred Mosque to the Remote Temple: Sūrat al-Isrā' between
Text and Commentary," in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Barry D. Walfish and Joseph W. Goering (edd.),
With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Oxford: Oxford
University Press, 2003) 395-398 [art.=376-407]; idem, "The Spiritual Meaning of Jerusalem in Islam," in
Nitza Rosovsky (ed.), *City of the Great King: Jerusalem from David to the Present* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard
University Press, 1996) 93-116. For arguments in favor of the traditional identification see Neuwirth, "From
the Sacred Mosque," 381-383 and Plessner, "Muḥammad's Clandestine 'Umra."

[589] The legend of the Ascension was later affixed to the story of the *isrā*', being said to have commenced
after the Prophet reached Jerusalem. But the two stories are demonstrably separate and presuppose two
totally different periods in the Prophet's career (Bevan, "Mohammed's Ascension to Heaven," 56).

[590] Neuwirth, "From the Sacred Mosque," 398-399. She cites as examples the reference to night (*laylan*) in
the verse (17:1) which provoked the image of the Prophet's deep sleep in tradition; the identification of the
starting point of the journey as the sacred sanctuary in Mecca meant that the Prophet was asleep *within the
sanctuary*; and the destination sanctuary's description as having been 'blessed' gave rise to the tradition of the
personal presence of bearers of that blessing, the prophets, there to greet Muḥammad.

[591] Van Ess, "Muhammad's Ascension," 16; idem, "Vision and Ascension," 56.

While at *al-majid al-aqṣā* Muḥammad is said to have been shown some of God's *āyāt*, usually translated as "signs." What were these *āyāt*? The reports are not unanimous, ranging from *Burāq*, the fabulous winged steed, half mule, half donkey who transported Muḥammad, to the prophets Abraham, Moses and Jesus who were there assembled on his arrival at Jerusalem, to the vessels of milk, wine and water presented to the Prophet.[592] It is not impossible that all may fall under the designation *āyāt*. But Ibn Isḥāq seems to have dematerialized the *āyāt*, thinking instead in terms of God's "mighty sovereignty and power by which He does what He wills to do,"[593] presumably a reference to God's ability to transport the Prophet to and from Jerusalem in a single night.

There is a tradition that the Prophet saw God in Jerusalem. According to Sufyān b. 'Uyayna (d. 813), Ibn 'Abbās interpreted Q 17:1 as a vision of God with his eyes.[594] Ibn 'Abbās allegedly reported from the Prophet that he had seen God during his nocturnal journey sitting on a throne, "under the form of a young beardless man (*shābb amrad*)" possessing a "twinkling light (*nūr yatala'la'*)."[595] It is likewise reported on the authority of both Anas b. Mālik and Muʿādh b. 'Afrāʾ that Muḥammad saw him during the *isrāʾ* under the same form (*shābb*) wearing a crown of pearls.[596] All we can say for sure however is that *some* people understood the nocturnal journey of Q 17:1 to have concluded with an encounter with God in Jerusalem, His Paradise on earth, and that this vision was considered among the *āyāt* of God mentioned there. This association of the *āyāt* with this image of God as a youth we shall return to shortly.

---

[592] For narratives that go into great detail regarding the Prophet's visionary experiences see Palacios, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*, 4-9.

[593] Ibn Isḥāq, *The Life of Muhammad*, 182.

[594] Ibn Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 202.

[595] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Daf' Shubah al-tashbīh*, 151.

[596] See below. For a discussion of Muhammad's encounter in Jerusalem with this youthful deity see van Ess, "'Abd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock," 96f; idem, "Youthful God"," and below.

4.7. *Ru'ya bi 'l-baṣar* (Vision of the Eyes) or *Ru'ya bi 'l-qalb* (Vision of the Heart)?

Concerning this second vision by the Lote-Tree of the Boundary v. 17 declares: "His eyes (*baṣar*) did not turn away (*mā zāgha*) nor did they exceed the limit (*mā ṭaghā*)." Richard Bell argued: "The impression of the passage as a whole is that the visions were actually seen with the eye; v. 17 can mean nothing less."[597] Gerhard Böwering argued as well that the exegesis "closest to the qur'ānic text" is that which has Muḥammad seeing God with his eyes. Many Muslim commentators agreed. Qāḍī 'Iyad for example argued: " 'The eyes did not swerve (53:16)': the vision is clearly ascribed to the eyes."[598] A History-of-Religions elucidation of this verse supports the view that *sūrat al-Najm* recounts physical visions of God by Muḥammad. Because seeing God's glorious, luminous form was dangerous to mortal vision,[599] when confronted by the divine presence humans turned the eyes away or hid their face. "Because humans cannot look gods in the face they must look away."[600] As it is said in Exod 3:6: "And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God."[601] Enoch trembled as he entered the heavenly house and saw God.

---

[597] Bell, "Muhammad's Visions," 151.

[598] *Al-Shifa*, 101.

[599] That Muḥammad saw a luminous form is supposed by some scholars. Yahiya Emerick, in narrating the traditional account of the Prophet's call, noted: "Muhammad awoke and was startled to see a vision of light in the form of a man standing before him." *The Life and Work of Muhammad* (Critical Lives; Indianapolis: Alpha, 2002) 57. Henry P. Smith, *The Bible and Islam: The Influence of the Old and New Testaments on the Religion of Mohammed* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1897) 175 also suggested that "he (Muḥammad) sees a radiant form." This has some support in the ḥadīth reports. In a Call-fragment on the authority of 'Ā'isha describing the initial circumstances of Muḥammad's call (see below) the beginning of revelation is said to have come to him in the form of truthful dreams (*al-ru'yā al-ṣādiqa*) likened to day-break, *falaq al-subḥ*, which Ibn 'Abbās interpreted as "sunlight during the day and moonlight at night." (See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IV, 91 *tabīr al-ru'ya, bāb* 1, # 1, 347:4) Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, 225), relates two call-fragments, one on the authority of Hishām b. 'Urwa, the other on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, according to which the prophet told Khādījah presumably after the initial encounter with the numinous, "O Khādījah, I see light and hear sounds and I fear I shall be a soothsayer."

[600] *Odyssey*, 16.179.

[601] Weiner H. Schmidt, *Exodus* (Neukirchen, 1988) II/1, 159 noted: „Jedenfalls ist Moses Geste Ausdruck der Ehrfurcht vor Gott und zugleich Bewahrung des Menschen vor dem Anblick der verzehrenden Majestät Gottes."/ "In any case Moses' gesture is the expression of the reverence for God and at the same time man's protection from the vision of the consuming majesty of God." The same motif is probably found in Exod. 24:11 and Isaiah 6:1. The restriction of the description of the vision of the God of Israel to the throne beneath his feet at Exod. 24:11 "suggests...that the humans lowered their eyes in humility (Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 59) and Isaiah's description of the hem (?) of the divine robe may indicate that "he had not dared to lift up his eyes" (von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:64).

Until then I was prostrate on my face covered and trembling. And the Lord called me with his own mouth and said to me: "Come near to me, Enoch, and to my holy word." And he lifted me up and brought me near to the gate, but I continued to look down with my face. [I En 14:24-25][602]

As Daniel Merkur notes: "Enoch had seen God; but now, as he recovered from his physical collapse, he averted his gaze with his vision in order to avoid renewing the collapse."[603] Likewise, when Telemachus saw the radiant Odysseus he "turn(ed) his eyes away for fear of looking on a god."[604] When the mortal Anchises was confronted by the radiant beauty of the goddess Aphrodite he turned his gaze away in terror, hid his face under the covers and begged for mercy.[605] In the *Mahābhārata* the Indic hero Bhīma was granted his request to see the glorious form of the monkey deity Hanumān: "With splenour like the sun, like a golden mountain, making space itself ablaze. Bhīma shut his eyes (3.149.7)."[606] This is not only a self-preserving gesture; it is also the proper etiquette when confronted by the divine:

> the face-to-face encounter implies a relationship of parity between partners who look one another in the eyes. Looking away, lowering one's eyes to the ground, covering one's head: mortals have no other way to acknowledge their unworthiness and avoid the risk of confronting the unequalled, unbearable splendor of the divine countenance."[607]

Sūrat al-Najm [53]:17 however declares that Allah's Apostle *did not* turn his gaze away. This is cited as proof of Muḥammad's superiority over all previous prophets.[608]

---

[602] Translation quoted from Daniel Merkur, "The Visionary Practices of Jewish Apocalyptists," *Psychoanalytic Study of Society* 14 (1989): 137.

[603] Ibid.

[604] *Odyssey*, 16.173-83.

[605] *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 1.181-190. On this same motif in Indic tradition see Laine, *Visions of God*, 94.

[606] Translation by Laine, *Visions of God*, 94.

[607] Vernant, "Dim Body," 37-8.

[608] See Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenge: the veneration of the Prophet in Islamic piety* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985) 163. On the key importance of Muḥammad's gaze not swerving see also Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur'ān: The Early Revelations* (Ashland, Oregon: White Cloud Press, 1999) 45.

4.8. Theophany and the *Āyāt* (Signs) of God

If v. 10 is for Western scholars decisive in support of the theophanic interpretation of the passage, v. 18 ("He indeed saw of the greatest signs [*āyāt*] of his Lord") is for many Muslim scholars decisive against it.[609] "The signs of God are other than God," some declared.[610] On the other hand in one of the reports of 'Ā'isha's denial of such a vision (to be treated below) the Tābi' Masrūq (d. 682) advances this verse (53:18) as *proof* that Muḥammad *did* see his Lord.[611] We recall that sura 17:1, which affirms that the Prophet was shown the *āyāt Allāh* during his nocturnal journey, was in certain quarters read as a reference to Muḥammad's vision of God. It is my opinion that reading this passage against the biblical background will help us elucidate the significance of v.18 for the discussion of whether or not *sūrat al-Najm* can be read as an account of theophany.

The visions here recorded in *sūrat al-Najm* are usually understood as the prophet's inaugural visions i.e., the visions experienced during his prophetic calling.[612] We discovered above that, according to many form-critics the biblical prophetic call *Gattung* or *schema* included a divine encounter between the deity and the *vocandus* as well as a sign of assurance (*'ōth*) from the deity to overcome the objections advanced by the reluctant prophet-to-be.[613] The *'ōth*, according to C.H. Keller, is an *Offenbarungszeichen Gottes*, "a sign through which God makes Himself manifest."[614] "The aim of the sign," Cornelis den Hertog notes, "is to lead the addressee to the conclusion that the word spoken is reliable.

---

[609]al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, 295; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 7:454; al-Qāsimī, *Tafsīr al-Qāsimī*, 368; S. Abul A'lā Maudūdi, *The Meaning of the Qur'ān* (trans. 'Abdul 'Aziz Kamāl; Lahor, Pakistan: Islamic Publications [Pvt.] LTD., 1986) 244.

[610] Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* (Ṭihrān: Maktabāt al-Būzarjumahrī Muṣṭafavī, 1955), 66f; Ibn Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 201.

[611] Al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, apud al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuḥfa al-aḥwadhī bi sharḥ jāmi' al-Tirmidhī*, 10 vols. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1979), 9: 166, #3332; al-Suyūtī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7:247.

[612]Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam*, 149; Watt, *Muhammad's Mecca*, 55; Tor Andrae, *Mohammed, the Man and his Faith* (New York: Harper, 1960) 46-7.

[613] See above.

[614] *Das Wort Oth als "Offenbarungszeichen Gottes"* (Ph.D diss., Basel, 1946) 100.

In such cases therefore a sign has the function of evidence."[615] The addressee or *vocandus* is often suspicious of the source of the words he hears and the nature of the being encountered. Gideon needed a sign of assurance - the miraculous burning of the meal by the touch of the *mal'āk Yahweh* - in order to be sure that "it is You (Yahweh) who talks with me (Judges 6:17)." The sign therefore serves to "prove the identity of the ultimate commissioner: YHWH,"[616] thus assuring the prophet as well as authenticating him to others.[617]

The *'ōth* is usually an extraordinary or miraculous event, occurrence, or action "by which a person recognizes, learns, remembers, or perceives the authority of something."[618] Prophetic signs were necessary to convince the people of the legitimacy and authenticity of the prophetic role and message of the one called.[619] Because Moses feared that the elders of Israel "will not believe me, nor hearken to my voice; for they will say: Yahweh hath not appeared unto thee (Exod. 4:1)" he is given signs or authenticating miracles for the benefit of the incredulous leaders of Israel.[620] But for his own benefit the theophany, either at the Burning Bush or at Sinai, is given as the *'ōth* or sign to Moses that "I have sent you (3:12)."[621]

This motif of the theophany itself constituting the confirming prophetic sign is an important one. The call-report is an announcing of credentials, orally or in writing, to the

---

[615] Cornelis den Hertog, "Concerning the Sign of Sinai (Ex. 3:12), Including a Survey of Prophetic and Call Signs," in *Unless Someone Guide Me – Festschrift for Karel A. Deurloo* (Maastricht: Shaker, 2001) 35 [art.=33-41].

[616] Ibid., 38.

[617] *TDOT* 1:187 s.v. אות *'ōth* by F.J. Helfmeyer; *TDNT* 7:210-219 s.v. σημειον on Jewish Soil by F.J. Helfmeyer.

[618] Ibid., 170. The *'ōth* could also be a vision granted to the prophet-to-be by the deity. See Štefan Porúbčan, "The Word *'ot* in Isaia 7, 14," *CBQ* 22 (1960): 144-159.

[619] Habel, "Form and Significance," 319: "the signs which the prophets received were also public credentials of their commission."

[620] See the interesting discussion by Avi Rabinowitz, "Moses' Three signs: Symbol and Augury," *JBQ* 20 (1991): 115-21.

[621] On the nature of the sign mentioned in Exod. 3:12 see: Hertog, "Concerning the Sign of Sinai (Ex. 3:12)"; Esther Starobinski-Safran, "Le rôle des signes dans l'épisode du buisson ardent," *Judaica* 35 (1979): 63-76; Habel, "Form and Significance," 304; Brisman, "On the Divine Presence in Exodus," 114; Robinson, "Moses at the Burning Bush," 116; Polack, "Theophany and Mediator," 123; M. Greenberg, *Understanding Exodus* (New York: Behrman House, 1969) 758.

community at large in accordance with the tradition of their predecessors.[622] The legitimacy of the true prophet and the authority of his message are established by his call.[623]

> In their call experiences, the emphasis of having been to the immediate presence of the Deity becomes necessary in order to authenticate the message delivered. Thus most of the prophets with call narratives are found describing how in one form or another they have interacted with the deity in the process of their commissioning (Jer 1[9]; Is 6[7]; Ez 2[9] cf Gen. 24[8-9] and 24[41])."[624]

The *'ōth* or authenticating sign could therefore be a description of the encounter with the deity, such as Jeremiah's description of seeing God's hand touch his lips during his call experience (Jer. 1:9).[625]

The Hebrew term *'ōth* is cognate to the Aramaic *'āthā* and the Arabic *āya* (pl. *āyāt*).[626] The latter term denotes a sign, token, marvel, or mark by which a person or thing is known.[627] Like the Hebrew *'ōth* the Arabic *āya* often has a confirming or authenticating function.[628] And like the Hebrew prophets before him Muḥammad found himself constantly called upon to produce this most important credential.

> (The disbelievers) say: "Why has no sign (*āya*) been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say: "Allah surely is able to send down a sign, but most of them know not (6:37)"
>
> Now therefore let him (Muḥammad) bring us a sign such as the (former) prophets were sent with (21:5).

During the early Meccan period this was a persistent demand by the disbelieving Meccans as Richard Paul Bode demonstrated in his Th.D. thesis on the subject:

---

[622] Habel, "Form and Significance," 317. See also von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 55. "The call commissioned the prophet: the act of writing down an account of it was aimed at those sections of the public in whose eyes he had to justify himself."

[623] Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 182.

[624] Akao, "Biblical Call Narratives," 5.

[625] Habel, "Form and Significance," 309 and below.

[626] *TDOT* 1:167 s.v. אות *'ōth* by F.J. Helfmeyer.

[627] See Lane, *Arabic~English Lexicon* 1:135 s.v. آى; *EQ* 5:2-11 s.v. Signs by Binyamin Abrahamov.

[628] *EQ* 5:2 s.v. Signs by Binyamin Abrahamov.

The multiplicity of passages referring to the request or demand for signs would indicate that it was not a one-time or even occasional incident in the ministry of Muhammad. Rather it seems obvious that the request for signs on the part of his opponents must have been a persistent one. His non-performance of signs brought forth scoffing and jesting on the part of his opponents. The passages clearly show that they rejected Muhammad's message, or at least claimed to do so, because he did not back up his message with miraculous signs.[629]

George Hourani Muḥammad's pointed out as well:

Prophets who claimed a special relation with God were expected to give proof of the authenticity of this relation...So what miracle could Muḥammad perform as a sign (*āya*) of his authentic divine inspiration? Such a sign was urgently needed by him because from an early date of his mission he was accused by his opponents in Mecca of being an imposter and a liar.[630]

What miracle could the Meccan prophet offer? Richard Bell observed:

It was natural that the Meccans should ask for a sign, and at a certain stage Muhammad is much occupied with the problem of what signs he can offer...the most he alleges of a miraculous kind is the having seen one or two visions.[631]

Indeed the anxiety over Muḥammad's "critical need to authenticate his ministry"[632] is clearly felt in the words of *sūrat al-Najm*.[633] He is citing the two visions, which were apparently already a matter of dispute in the community (v. 12: "Do you then dispute with him concerning what he saw [lit. "sees"]?"),[634] as "his supreme justification for

---

[629] Richard Paul Bode, "The Qur'anic Response to the Request that Muhammad Perform Signs" (Th.D. thesis, Concordia Seminary, 1977) 48.

[630] Hourani, "The Qur'ān's Doctrine of Prophecy," 180.

[631] Richard Bell, *Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment: the Gunning lectures, Edinburgh University 1925* (London: Cass, 1968) 109.

[632] Bode, "Qur'anic Response," 131-132.

[633] Bell, "Muhammad's Visions," 146: "Muhammad's object in recounting these visions evidently is to combat objections, or at least, excuses for indifference, to his work. He is not speaking because he wishes to speak, but he has been impelled to do so; and he is not in error, because it is impossible to doubt the source of the impulse which impels him. He has actually seen the heavenly personality from whom the impulse came on two different occasions."

[634] On the possibility of reading 53:19 ("Have you *seen*, *a-fa-ra'ya-tumū*, Al-Lat and Al-'Uzza, and Manat the third, the other?") as part of the Vision-controversy alluded to in vv. 1-18 see Jaako Hämeen-Anttila, "Qur. 53:19, the prophetic experience and the 'Satanic verses' – a reconsideration," *ActOr* 58 (1997): 24-34.

thinking that he was 'the messenger of God'."[635] Like the Hebrew prophets before him Muḥammad claimed a visionary encounter with God as the authenticating sign of his ministry. "What seems to be certain is that Muhammad defended the truthfulness of his revelation by claiming as its proof his visionary experience of a divine being on the horizon."[636] God, presumably the voice heard in this passage, therefore affirms in v.18 that the theophany experienced by the Arabian prophet was indeed the greatest of the *āyāt* or authenticating miracles: he saw God in his glory and his eyes did not swerve.

4.8.1. The Greatest of God's *Āyāt*: His Theophanic Form?

The term *āya*, according to Lane, can have the following meanings (among many others): (1) a sign, token, or mark by which a thing is known; (2) "any apparent thing inseparable from a thing not equally apparent, so that when one perceives the former, he knows that he perceives the other, which he cannot perceive by itself, when the two things are of one predicament;"[637] (3) a sign as an indication, evidence or proof; (4) a miracle, wonder, or prodigy (*āyāt Allāh* as "the wonders of Allah"); (5) the body (*jism*) or corporeal form of a figure or substance or of a man "*which one sees from a distance.*"[638] (6) A person or individual. It is here a synonym of *shakhṣ*, individual/person/figure.

These are illuminating definitions of *āyāt* and quite possibly offer us further insight into the thinking of those who read Q 53:18 as proof of *Visio Dei*. Definitions (2) and (5) may suggest a particular corporeal, theophanic form used by an otherwise unperceivable deity in order to be perceived. Such a motif, the duality of the unperceivable God and his visible (and sometimes hypostatic) form, is of course an ancient commonplace.[639] This paradox was embraced by biblical and biblically affiliated traditions as well. [640]

---

[635] W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (1961 reprint; London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 15. See also van Ess, *Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 70, 71.

[636] Park, "Muhammad's Call Revisited," 72.

[637] Lane, *Arabic~English Lexicon*, 1: 135.

[638] Ibid.

[639] Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1958), 420ff; Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, "Form(s) of God: Some Notes on Meṭaṭron and Christ," *HTR* 76 (1983): 269-88.

[640] Terrien, *Elusive Presence*, 119: "The God of biblical faith, even in the midst of a theophany, is at once *Deus revelatus atque absconditus.*"

The Divine Presence imperils man...God, who reveals His 'unbearable' Presence to the helpless creature, also sustains man in the act of revelation...All protection, however, that shields the prophet hides God from him. God can only reveal Himself to man by hiding Himself in the very act of revelation.[641]

As Jean-Pierre Vernant points out, "The paradox of the divine body is that in order to appear to mortals, it must cease to be itself".[642] It must clothe itself in veils or mortal disguises.

the apparition, rather than revealing the being of a god, hides it behind the multiple disguises of a 'seeming to be' that is adapted to feeble human vision. If a god's body can take on so many different forms, it is because not one of them can encompass within itself the Power that surpasses each of them and would impoverish itself if it were to be identified with any one of the figures that lends it its appearance. [643]

Jewish mystics accepted this "paradox of the visibility of the essentially invisible deity" on the basis of the principle of *coincidentia oppositorum* or the "coinciding of opposites."[644] By positing a special theophanic form for God, the singularity of *deus absconditus* and *deus revelatus* is affirmed; the two are seen as but two manifestations of a single ontic reality.[645] *Gevûrāh* (lit. "Power"), according to Michael Fishbane, represents the essence of God in rabbinic literature.[646] It is made manifest to mortals through his *dᵉmût* (lit. "Likness") or special corporeal theophanic form.[647] Islam inherited some of these notions from Jews

---

[641] Berkovits, *God, Man and History*, 32, 33, 34.

[642] Vernant, "Dim Body," 37

[643] Ibid.

[644] On God according to this principle see Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, 419ff.

[645] Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, 107; Michael Fishbane, "Some Forms of Divine Appearance in Ancient Jewish Thought," in Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, Nahum M. Sarna, and Josua Bell (edd.), *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 261-270.

[646] Ibid.

[647] On the theophanic/hypostatic form of God in Jewish tradition see further C.R.A. Morray-Jones, "Transformational Mysticism in the Apocalyptic-Merkabah Tradition," *JJS* 43 (1992): 1-31; Nathaniel Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate: angelic vice regency in late antiquity* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 1999); Daniel Abrams, "The Boundaries of Divine Ontology: The Inclusion and Exclusion of Metatron in the Godhead," *HTR* 87 (1994): 291-321; idem, "From Divine Shape to Angelic Being: The Career of Akatriel in Jewish Literature," *JR* 76 (1996): 43-63; Quispel, "Ezekiel 1:26 in Jewish Mysticism and Gnosis"; Stroumsa, "Form(s) of God"; Fossum, "Jewish-Christian Christology"; idem, *The Name and Angel of the Lord*.

and Christians in Arabia. The mystical notions of *lāhūt* (divinity) and *nāsūt* (humanity), borrowed from Arabic speaking Christians, resemble the Jewish notion of *gevûrāh* and *dᵉmût*.[648] Similarly, for Muslim mystics such as al-Ḥallāj, *lāhūt* represents God's sublime divinity and *nāsūt* his corporeal, theophanic form: "Glory be to Him," says al-Ḥallāj, "whose *nāsūt* manifested the secret of His dazzling *lāhūt*'s sublimity, in the form of a man who eats and drinks."[649]

This clearly demonstrates that such notions existed in Islam. The duality is present already in the Qur'ān: God is both *al-Bāṭin* (the Inner, the Hidden) and *al-Ẓāhir* (the Outward/Exterior, the Manifest) (57:3). This resembles the Jewish Gnostic adage that "God is both non-apparent and most apparent"[650] and suggests that the duality of the Hidden and Manifest God – similar to what Henry Corbin called the *paradox de monothéisme*[651] - so important in the ANE, Classical, biblical, and Jewish mystical traditions,[652] was not neglected by Muḥammad even if it suffered some modifications later.

Can this help us in understanding *sūrat al-Najm*? It may at least help us understand those who understood *sūrat al-Najm* as a record of theophany. The *āya* seen by Muḥammad according to v. 18 might well have been understood as a special theophanic form in which God was encountered by his servant, a "morphic veil (*ḥijāb al-ṣūra*)" as suggested by the Ḥanafī imām Ibn Humām (d. 1457).[653] *Āya*, like the Hebrew *dᵉmût* and Latin *formae* (at least as used by the Church Fathers)[654] might have carried the meaning of

---

[648] On *lāhūt* and *nāsūt* see *EI²* 5:611-614 s.v. Lāhūt and Nāsūt by R. Arnaldez. On *gevûrāh* and *dᵉmût* see Fishbane, "Some Forms of Divine Appearance," 265f and Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 35.

[649] From his *Diwān*, see *EI²* 5:614 s.v. Lāhūt and Nāsūt.

[650] See Stroumsa, "Form(s) of God," 274.

[651] *Le paradox de monothéisme* (Paris: l'Herne, 1981). The paradox is that the invisible divine essence can only be known through the mediation of theophanies, but these cannot be considered as representative because that which is represented in transcendent. I say 'similar' because in these traditions God is concealed behind a theophanic 'mask' not because he is invisible but because he is dangerously luminous.

[652] See Peter Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God: Some Major Themes in Early Jewish Mysticism*, trans. Aubrey Pomerance (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 163.

[653] Al-Suyūtī, *Al-La'āli' al-maṣnū'a fī al-aḥādīth al-mawḍu'a*, 2 vols. (Egypt: al-Maktaba al-Tijārīya al-Kubrā, 1965) 1:29-30.

[654] Stroumsa, "Form(s) of God," 273.

"the body (*jism*) or corporeal form of a figure or substance" of a man/God which "*one* (Muḥammad) *sees from a distance*," i.e. on the distant horizon. It was certainly later understood as a reference to a special *angelo*phanic form. Commentators have read "he saw of the greatest signs of his Lord (v. 18)" as Muḥammad saw the angel Jibrīl in his non-human, winged form in which he was created and which the Prophet only saw on those two occasions mentioned in the passage. Every other occasion Muḥammad saw only Jibrīl's earthly form.[655] Others thought the reference was to a green screen/cushion (*rafraf*) from Paradise obstructing the horizon.[656] Some say Muḥammad saw Jibrīl in a green garment (*ḥulla*) made of *rafraf*.[657] Al-Suyūṭī for example quotes the following *tafsīr* from Ibn Masʿūd:

> The Messenger of God (ṣ) did not see Jibrīl in his [true] form except twice. As for the first time he asked [Jibrīl] if he could see him in his form, then he saw his form obstructing the horizon. As for the second time it was [while] Jibrīl was with him while on high (*ḥayth ṣuʿd*, i.e. during the Ascension?). That is [the meaning of] His statements "He was on the highest horizon (53:7)" [and] "He indeed saw of the greatest signs of his Lord (53:18)." [Ibn Masʿūd] said: the form (*khalq*) of Jibrīl.[658]

But the passage in all likely-hood *should* be read *theo*phanically for the reasons we have adduced above. If lexically the greatest of the *āyāt* of God could be a reference to a special angelophanic form then it is not far fetched to suggest that it also was understood as a reference to a special theophanic form by those who read the passage as a record of theophany. The *dhū mirra* of v. 6 might then be read with Ibn ʿAbbās, Qatada, and al-Ṭabarī as "possessor of a beautiful make (*dhū khalq ḥasan*)" which may be a reference to that "most beautiful form" of God reportedly seen by the Prophet.[659] Muḥammad would have seen this beautiful body first at a distance, on the highest horizon (v. 7). One of

---

[655] Al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, 4:249.

[656] Al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7: 651; see also al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 27:57.

[657] Nasāʾī, *Sunan*, 11:273 # 11467; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 17: 98.

[658] Al- Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr* 7:643.

[659] See below.

Lane's definitions for *āya* is thus: "the body, or corporeal form or figure or substance, of a man, which one sees at a distance."[660]

4.9.   *Sūrat al-Takwīr* vs. *Sūrat al-Najm?*

Sūrat al-Najm is no doubt an account of a theophany, two theophanies actually. Muḥammad claims to have seen God first on a distant horizon, then again at some as yet undetermined location on earth, in Mecca or maybe in Jerusalem. The first vision on the horizon is alluded to also in *sūrat al-Takwīr* [81]: 15-24.

> 15. Nay! I swear by the retreating stars,
> 16. Running their course and setting
> 17. And the night when it departs
> 18. And the morning when it brightens,
> 19. (That) surely it is the word of a noble messenger, *innahu laqawl rasūl karīm*
> 20. Possessor of strength, established with the Lord of the Throne
> 21. One to be obeyed there, faithful.
> 22. And your companion is not mad.
> 23. He truly saw him on the clear horizon (*al-ufuq al-mubīn*)
> 24. And he is not *zanīn/ḍanīn* regarding *al-Ghayb*.

If Muslim and Western scholars disagree over the interpretation of *sūrat al-Najm* – the latter generally reading it as a theophany the former as an angelophany - there is some agreement on the interpretation of this passage. The "noble messenger" is generally understood to be the angel Jibrīl who was seen by Muḥammad on the clear horizon (v. 23). [661] Even when Western scholars assume that the object of the 'horizon' vision was God in *sūrat al-Najm*, some also assume that by the time of the revelation of *sūrat al-Takwīr* – maybe Medina, but certainly later than *sūrat al-Najm*, we are told – Muḥammad

---

[660] Lane, *Arabic~English Lexicon*,1:135.

[661] Al-Ṭabarī. *Jāmiʿ al-bayān* 30:79f; al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, 4:453; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 14:270; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-durr al-manthūr*, 8: 435; al-Qāsimī, *Tafsīr al-Qāsimī*, 7: 272; van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 50-1; Watt, *Muhammad's Mecca*, 56-7; Welch, "Muhammad's Understanding of Himself," 30 (but cf. 26); Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam*, 142; Jarl E. Fossum, "The Apostle Concept in the Qurʾān and Pre-Islamic Near Eastern Literature," in Mustansir Mir (ed.), *Literary Heritage of Classical Islam. Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of James A. Bellamy* (Princeton, New Jersey: the Darwin Press, Inc., 1993) 149-167.

changed his view,[662] now believing that he had been wrong all along in his thinking that God could appear to him, a change in perspective inspired by contact with Jews and Christians in Medina and reflected in *sūrat al-Takwīr*.[663]

> Muhammad, at least for a time, believed he had seen the supreme deity, and presumably still believed this when *Sura* 53 was revealed. Later, especially when he learnt that Jews and Christians held that God cannot be seen, he came to think that the vision had been not of God but of an angel.[664]

This certainty that Muhammad changed his view is based on two assumptions: (1) *sūrat al-Takwīr* is later than *sūrat al-Najm* and (2) the "noble messenger" mentioned in v. 19 is the object of Muhammad's vision. Neither of these assumptions is likely correct. Muslim scholars treat *sūrat al-Takwīr* as an early Meccan revelation, indeed one of the earliest.[665] Ibn Kathīr assumed the chronological priority of this revelation over *sūrat al-Najm*, another early Meccan text, due to the fact that only one of the two visions is mentioned here. This suggested to him that only one vision had occurred at the time of the revelation of these verses.[666] Western scholars generally agree in dating *sūrat al-Takwīr* earlier than *sūrat al-Najm*.[667] On the other hand, a number of scholars recently tend to think of *sūrat al-Takwīr* as later.[668] Because the *rasūl karīm* of v. 19 is taken to be the *marʿīy* here and therefore identified with the angel Jibrīl, these scholars suggest that the passage must be Medinan. Jibrīl, we recall, is only introduced in Medina passages. Van Ess argued for example:

---

[662] Bell, "Muhammad's Vision's," 149-50; Paret, *Mohammed*, 44-45; Watt, *Muhammad's Mecca*, 56-7; Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins*, 149; van Ess, *Flowering*, 51-53.

[663] Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 51-53;

[664] Watt, *Muhammad's Mecca*, 56-7

[665] See Maudūdi, *The Meaning of the Qur'ān*, 15:293f.

[666] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 14:271.

[667] H. Grimme, *Mohammed* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1832-95) II/25; Theodor Nöldeke and Friedrich Schwally, *Geschichte des Qorāns* (Leipzig: Nachdruck Hildesheim, 1961) 59; Régis Blachère, *Le Coran* 2 vols. (Paris: G.P. Maisonneuve et Co., 1949) 2:36-39; Richard Bell, *The Qur'ān, Translated, with a critical re-arrangement of the Surahs* (2 vols.; Edinburgh, 1937, 1939) 602; Welch, "Muhammad's Understanding of Himself," 25-6; Neuwirth, *Studien*, 221.

[668] See above n. 662.

The fundamental conditions had changed. The verses in surat al-Takwīr were certainly later than those of surat al-Najm, for now the vision is no longer described in detail, but simply mentioned as something already known. The public addressed in surat al-Takwīr may have lived in Medina, where the Jewish community listened to the Prophet's revelation with a critical ear.[669]

Van Ess's argument for the late date of *surat al-Takwīr* is incoherent. Because the description of one of the two visions is less detailed than that found in *surat al-Najm* van Ess assumes, not without warrant, that the reference is to 'something already known' by Muḥammad's audience. But *surat al-Najm* gives an even stronger impression of the audience's knowledge of the context of Muḥammad's references. "Do you (listeners) then dispute with him concerning what he saw? (v.12)" The claim "He indeed saw him" needed not be any more precise because his listeners clearly knew whom Muḥammad claimed to have seen and some had already disputed this claim. Van Ess acknowledges this circumstance. The reference in *surat al-Najm* to the visions were originally "an allusion made by the Prophet to something previously known, as a proof of his veracity in a delicate moment."[670] Since both passages are admittedly allusions to 'something previously known,' this circumstance cannot be used to assign priority to either. Ibn Kathīr's attention to the fact that in *surat al-Takwīr* only one of the visions is mentioned suggesting thereby that only one encounter had occurred is much more persuasive. While it is not terribly difficult to imagine circumstances in which the invoking of only one of two known events is necessary or desirable in order to make a point, some attention must be given to the fact of the singularity of the reference, particularly since this single reference is to the *first* of the two encounters. Considering also that the language of *surat al-Takwīr* is distinctly Meccan,[671] there is no internal evidence to impeach the Muslim/Western agreement on the historical priority of *surat al-Takwīr* to *surat al-Najm*.

It boils down to the question who is the *rasūl karīm*? Hyondo Park points out:

---

[669] Van Ess, *Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 51-53.

[670] Ibid., 71; idem, "Vision and Ascension," 58.

[671] For example Muḥammad's vindication in 81:22 from the charge of being *majnūn*, "jinn-possessed" or insane. This terminology is distinctly early Meccan, replaced in late Meccan and Medinan passages with *bihi jinnatᵘⁿ*. See *EI²* 5:1101-1102 s.v. Madjnūn by A.T. Welch. Also, the *maw'ūda* of vv. 8-9 supports a Meccan locale.

The object of Muhammad's vision in 81:19 is obscure and hard to determine. It depends on whom 'the noble messenger (*rasūl karīm*)' in 81:19 refers to and whether or not it is the object of the vision in 81:23. What is certain is that the expression 'noble messenger' is consistently used in the Qur'an for a prophet.[672] In light of this evidence, the noble messenger in 81:19 must refer to Muhammad; therefore, it cannot be the object of the vision in 81:23, which means the *"hu"* of *"ra'āhu"* there must remain unidentified. Textual evidence in 53:1-12 shows that the object of Muhammad's vision is God...[673]

In 44:17 Moses is described as *rasūl karīm*, and in *sūrat al-Ḥāqqa* [69:38-43], false charges issued against Muhammad by the disbelievers are refuted in a manner remarkably similar to our passage from *sūrat al-Takwīr*.

> 38. But nay! I swear by that which you see
> 39. And that which you see not
> 40. Surely, it is the word of a noble messenger, *innahu laqawl rasūl karīm*
> 41. And it is not the word of a poet. Little it is that you believe
> 42. Nor the word of a soothsayer. Little it is that you mind.
> 43. It is a revelation from the Lord of the Worlds.

Muhammad is described in v. 40 with the same words of 81:19, *innahu laqawl rasūl karīm*. Welch thus concludes:

> Note that 69.40 is verbatim duplication of 81.19. In 69.40 it is clear that the expression *rasūl karīm*...refers to Muhammad...the consistent use of *rasūl karīm* as an expression for a prophet in other parts of the Koran...supports the view that it referred at least originally to a prophet, Muhammad.[674]

We therefore have no reason to doubt that the two verses, 69:40 and 81:19 refer to the same subject: Muhammad. The noble messenger of *sūrat al-Takwīr* is to be obeyed, *muṭāʿin* (v. 21), and in *sūrat al-Nisā'* (4:64) God declares "We sent no messenger except he should be obeyed by Allah's command." [675] The noble messenger is faithful, *amīn*, and one of Muhammad's *alqāb* is al-Amīn. Al-Qurṭubī records this very interpretation from some

---

[672] Moses 44:17 (16), Muhammad 69:40.

[673] Park, "Muhammad's Call Revisited," 73.

[674] Welch, "Muhammad's Understanding of Himself," 26.

[675] On Muhammad's 'profoundly ingenious' restructuring of the socially, culturally, and politically vital principal of *sunna* so as to found upon it the radically new obligation of *obedience* to God's messengers, in contrast to his mantic rivals the poets and *kukhān* "whom no one seems to have followed and who seems not to have expected to be obeyed" see Michael Zwettler, "A Mantic Manifesto: The Sūra of 'The Poets' and the Qur'ānic Foundations of Prophetic Authority," in James L. Kugel (ed.), *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990) 116-119 [art.= 75-119].

anonymous exegetes (he uses *qīla* and *man qāla*).[676] According to these, vv. 19 and 22 are responses to the *mushrikūn* who alleged that the Prophet was *majnūn*/mad or possessed by a jinn. He is therefore vindicated as a noble messenger who is quite sane, and who truly saw what he claims he saw. *Dhū quwwa* (v. 20) and *muṭāʿin* (v. 21) are interpreted by these anonymous exegetes as attributes of the Prophet: possessor of strength regarding conveyance of the message, *tablīgh al-risāla*, and those who obey Allah must obey him.[677]

If the "noble messenger" of v. 19 is Muḥammad, as seems likely, we are forced to reconsider the traditional interpretation of v. 23, "And he truly saw him on the clear horizon." While it is indeed still possible to interpret the *marʾy* here as Jibrīl, it is no longer *necessary* to do so. If the passage is Meccan, however, which seems likely, it *can't* be Jibrīl. On the contrary, there are hints in the passage that suggest a theocentric interpretation. The next verse reads: "Nor is he *ẓanīn/ḍanīn* regarding *al-Ghayb* (v. 24)" The readers (*qurrāʾ*) apparently disagreed over the reading (*qirāʾa*) of this verse. The Medinese *qurrāʾ* read *ḍanīn* with a *ḍād*, meaning stingy/niggardly. Many Meccans, Kufans and Baṣrans read *ẓanīn* with a *ẓāʾ*.[678] Ibn Kathīr preferred *ẓanīn* quoting Sufyān b. ʿUyayna's definition as "one who is suspected of dishonesty (*al-muttaham*)."[679] The polytheists either accused Muhammad of lying or of concealing portions of revelation. As it is difficult to imagine those disbelievers in the revelation accusing the Prophet of being stingy in its regard, the former reading seems more consistent with the context. What is the Prophet supposed to have lied about or followed false conjecture concerning? Clearly this verse is to be read in the context of the previous verse, "he indeed saw him on the clear horizon." Verse 24 absolves Muhammad of *ẓanīn* regarding *al-Ghayb*. The classical interpretation of *al-Ghayb* here is "the Qurʾān"- so Qatāda said, "The Qurʾān was unseen

---

[676] Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 19: 238.

[677] Ibid.

[678] Al-Ṭabarī. *Jāmiʿ al-bayān* 30:81.

[679] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 14:271. For this translation of *al-muthim* See *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* (Abridged) 10:385.

and Allah revealed it to Muḥammad."[680] But this makes no sense in light of v. 23. Did the Prophet see the Qur'ān on the clear horizon? Certainly not.

While *al-Ghayb* has the popular meaning of unseen or unknowable, "hidden things," in religious literature it often refers to the absolute mystery of God Himself.[681] Did Muḥammad see God on the clear horizon? This is certainly one way of reading the passage. It is therefore no surprise that certain early *mufassirūn* interpreted 81:23 as a vision of God by Muhammad. Al-Qurṭubī, again using the anonymous *qīla*, cites as an interpretation of this verse: "Muḥammad saw his Lord on the clear horizon."[682] According to one version of the ḥadīth of 'Ā'isha's famed rejection of Muḥammad having seen God, Masrūq advanced as proof that Muḥammad did see his Lord this very verse 81:23.[683]

4.10. Concluding Remarks

Pace Saeed,[684] the evidence strongly suggests that *sūrat al-Najm* [53]: 1-18 reports an instance of Muhammad having seen God with his eyes. The text seems to indicate that Muḥammad invoked these visions as his authenticating prophetic sign in response to the demand for such by his Meccan detractors. Hämeen-Anttila's claim that "as there is almost no biblical influence in this surah, we have to think of the descending numen in more pagan terms"[685] is to be rejected. The passage evidently presents experiences of the Prophet that are consistent with and understandable against the backdrop of the biblical prophetic call/theophany tradition.[686] There is no evidence that Muḥammad changed his

---

[680] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 14:271; al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, 4:454; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-durr al-manthūr*, 8:435.

[681]*EI²* 2:1025 s.v. al-Ghayb by D.B. MacDonald; see also Lane, *Arabic~English Lexicon*, 2:2312f s.v. غيب.

[682] Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 19: 240.

[683] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 7: 452.

[684] "Rethinking Revelation," 109.

[685] "Descent and Ascent," 51.

[686] On Muḥammad's prophetic experience and the biblical prophets see Anton Wessels, "The Experience of the Prophet Mohammed," in Jerald D. Gort et al (edd.), *On Sharing Religious Experience: Possibilities of Interfaith Mutuality* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992) 228-244; A.J. Wensinck, "The Refused Dignity," in T.W. Arnold and Reynold A. Nicholson (edd.), *A Volume of Oriental*

view regarding whom he saw on/against the horizon. His claim in *sūrat al-Najm* of having seen God is not contradicted in *sūrat al-Takwīr*, as assumed by van Ess and others.

The Qur'ān therefore reports the theophanic experiences of two prophets: Moses and Muḥammad. Even though Moses was apparently a bystander at the theophany directed toward the mountain (Q 7:143), he suffered the theophanic after-effects for being in the visual vicinity. Having likely seen God as he manifested his *jalāl* or majesty to the mountain, Moses fell dumbstruck, as is common in theophanic encounters. Muḥammad, on the other hand, saw God and like the elders of Israel on Mountain Sinai (Exod. 24:9-11) suffered no harm for having done so: "On (Muḥammad) He laid not His hand." Unlike the elders of Israel, however, who seem to have averted their gaze during the theophany, Muḥammad's eyes swerved not. This circumstance may be the qur'ānic inspiration for the later granting to Muḥammad superiority over Moses on account of his (Muḥammad's) vision of God.[687]

Studies, Presented to Edward G. Browne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922) 491-499; idem, "Muḥammad and the Prophets." See also Smith, *Bible and Islam*, 177: "both in the matter of dreams and of waking visions, Mohammed's was similar to that of the Biblical organs of revelation."

[687] See below.

Chapter V:

Muḥammad's Prophetic Call: From Theophany to Angelophany

5.1. The Angel Jibrīl and the Canonical Call-Account

One version of the canonical account of Muḥammad's call to prophecy is provided by

Ibn Isḥāq (d. 767) in his *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, the earliest extant biography of the Prophet.

> The apostle would pray in seclusion on Ḥirā' every year for a month to practice *taḥannuth*
> as was the custom of Quraysh in heathen days. *Taḥannuth* is religious devotion[688]...When it
> was the night on which God honoured him with his mission and showed mercy on His
> servants thereby, Gabriel brought him the command of God. 'He came to me,' said the
> apostle of God, 'while I was asleep, with a coverlet of brocade whereon was some writing,
> and said, "Read (*iqrā*)!" I said, "What shall I read?" He pressed me with it so tightly that I
> thought it was death; then he let me go and said "Read!" I said, "What shall I read?" He
> pressed me with it again so that I thought it was death; then he let me go and said
> "Read!" I said, "What shall I read?" He pressed me with it a third time so that I thought
> it was death and said, "Read!" I said, "What then shall I read?" --- and this I said only to
> deliver myself from him, lest he should do the same to me again. He said: "Read in the
> name of thy Lord Who created, Who created man of blood coagulated. Read! Thy Lord
> is the most beneficent, Who taught by the pen, Taught that which they knew not unto
> men (Q 96:1-5)." So I read it, and he departed from me. And I awoke from my sleep, and
> it was as though these words were written on my heart. When I was midway on the
> mountain, I heard a voice from heaven saying, "O Muhammad! thou art the apostle of
> God and I am Gabriel." I raised my head towards heaven to see (who was speaking), and
> lo, Gabriel in the form of a man with feet astride the horizon, saying, "O Muhammad!
> thou art the apostle of God and I am Gabriel." I stood gazing at him, moving neither
> forward nor backward; then I began to turn my face away from him, but towards
> whatever region of the sky I looked I saw him as before. And I continued standing there,
> neither advancing nor turning back, until Khadīja sent her messengers in search of me
> and they gained the high ground above Mecca and returned to her while I was standing
> in the same place; then he parted from me and I from him, returning to my family. And I
> came to Khadīja and sat by her thigh and drew close to her. She said: "O Abū'l-Qāsim,
> where hast thou been? By God I sent my messengers in search of thee, and they reached
> the high ground above Mecca and returned to me." I told her of what I had seen; and she
> said: "Rejoice, O son of my uncle, and be of good heart. Verily, by Him in whose hand is
> Khadīja's soul, I have hope that thou wilt be the prophet of this people."' Then she rose
> and gathered her garments about her and set forth to her cousin Waraqa b. Nawfal

---

[688] See M.J. Kister, " 'Al-Tahannuth': An Inquiry into the Meaning of a Term," *BSOAS* 31 (1968): 223-236.

b. Asad b. 'Abdul'l-'Uzzā b. Quṣay, who had become a Christian and read the scriptures and learned from those that follow the Torah and the Gospel. And when she related to him what the apostle of God told her he had seen and heard, Waraqa cried, 'Holy! Holy! Verily by Him in whose hand is Waraqa's soul, if thou hast spoken the truth, O Khadīja, there has come unto him the greatest Nāmūs who came to Moses aforetime, and lo, he is the prophet of this people. Bid him be of good heart.' So Khadīja returned to the apostle of God and told him what Waraqa had said. And when the Apostle of God had finished his period of seclusion and returned (to Mecca), in the first place he performed the circumambulation of the Ka'ba, as was his wont. While doing it, Waraqa met him and said, 'O son of my brother, tell me what thou hast seen and heard.' The apostle told him, and Waraqa said, 'Surely, by Him in whose hand is Waraqa's soul, thou art the prophet of this people. Thou will be called a liar, and they will also use thee despitefully and cast thee out and fight against thee. Verily, if I live to see that day, I will help God in such wise as He knoweth.' Then he brought his head near to him and kissed his forehead; and the apostle went to his own house.[689]

Versions of this account appear in al-Bukhārī (d. 870) and al-Ṭabarī (d. 923).[690] While there are in these three sources significant differences in detail across the accounts,[691] the basic story is the same: while in seclusion in the cave of Ḥira' Muḥammad suddenly encounters (in his sleep) the angel Jibrīl who eventually reveals to him the first five verses of *sūrat al-'Alaq*. When the prophet awakens and begins his descent down the mountain he again encounters the angel, this time while awake. He sees him against the horizon in the form of a man with feet astride the horizon, a clear allusion to the vision recounted in *sūrat al-Najm* [53]:7.[692] But in the Qur'ān the one seen against the horizon was likely God, not Jibrīl.[693]

As demonstrated by several scholars much of Muḥammad's biography is pious legend, not scientific history.[694] Like the Ascension narrative, the canonical account of

---

[689] Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, trans. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 105-107.

[690] See below nn. 707 and 708.

[691] See further Rudolf Sellheim, "Muhammeds Erstes Offenbarungserlebnis: Zum Problem müdlicher und schriftlicher Überlieferung im 1./7. und 2./8. Jahrhundert," *JSAI* 10 (1987): 1-16.

[692] Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam*, 149.

[693] *EQ* 5:261 s.v. Theology and the Qur'ān by T. Nagel: "In Q 53, the Qur'ān speaks frankly about Muhammad's encounter with the one God, repudiating the reproaches of Muḥammad's fellow Meccan citizen's who consider him a fool for what he relates." See also above.

[694] *EQ* 5:29-51 s.v. Sīra and the Qur'ān by Wim Raven: "The *sīra* as a whole is a vehicle of salvation history rather than scientific history"; Welch, "Muhammad's Understanding of Himself," 52; "there is very little Koranic foundation for certain Islamic beliefs such as the sinlessness of Muhammad, his superiority over other prophets, and his proclivity and even ability to perform miracles...The Koran presents Muhammad as a great man, but also as a very human one. In the generations after his death historical fact gave way to

140

Muḥammad's call to prophecy is a tendentious product of a later age.[695] The problem solved by this legend was anthropomorphism. As F.E. Peters remarks: "This tradition…is exegetical, assuring the Muslim that the unidentified presence in Sura 53: 5-10, which is obviously the inspiration for this story, was not God, as we have reason to suspect, but Gabriel…"[696] Jibrīl here thus plays the role of "theological safeguard," as Daniel A. Madigan put it: "If the Prophet has dealings only with Gabriel and not with God directly, the absolute transcendence and immateriality of God is safeguarded."[697] But Jibrīl, as we discovered above, was not recognized in the early revelations and some traditions even introduce him late in the Prophet's career. [698]

The Ascension narrative is composite, composed of "preconstituted ensembles endowed with a certain autonomy of one in relation to the others."[699] That is to say, it

---

an idealized Muhammad of pious legend, a miracle worker, a hero, and a paragon of virtue and all other human traits of excellence. From the Koran it appears that Muhammad himself did not wish this to happen." See further Ibn Warraq, *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad* (Amherst, NY: 2000); Herbert Berg, *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); H. Motzi (ed.), *The Biography of Muhammad. The Issue of the Sources* (Leiden, 2000); Michael Cook, *Muhammad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) Chapter 7 ("The sources"); Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims. A Textual Analysis* (Princeton, New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 1995); M. Schöller, *Exegetisches Denken und Prophetenbiographie. Eine quellenkritische Analyse der Sīra Überlieferung zu Muḥammads Konflikt mit den Juden* (Berlin, 1996); F.E. Peters, "The Quest of the Historical Muhammad," *IJMES* 23 (1991): 291-315; Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987) Chapter 9 ("The Sources"); Wansbrough, *Sectarian milieu*; Harris Birkland, *The Legend of the Opening of Muhammad's Breast* (Oslo: I Kommisjon Hos Jacob Dybwad, 1955); Joseph Horovitz, "The Growth of the Mohammed Legend," *MW* 10 (1920): 49-58; Isaiah Goldfeld, "The Illiterate Prophet (*Nabī Ummī*): An inquiry into the development of a dogma in Islamic Tradition" *Der Islam* 57 (1980): 58-67; Sebastian Günther, "Muḥammad, the Illiterate Prophet: An Islamic Creed in the Qur'an and Qur'anic Exegesis," *JQS* 4 (2002): 1-26; R. Sellheim, "Prophet, Calif und Geschichte. Die Muhammad-Biographie des Ibn Isḥāq," *Oriens* 18-19 (1965-66): 33-91; Andrae, *Die person Muhammeds*.

[695] Bell, "Mohammed's Call," 16: "The whole story is the invention of a later age"; Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 55: "To the modern scholar it is virtually certain that what happened was different from what is asserted here. For one thing it is only after the Hijra that Gabriel appears in the Qur'ān as the bearer of revelation [2.97]"; Rahman, *Major Themes*, 96-7: "Those Ḥadīth stories, then, where the angel Gabriel is depicted as a public figure conversing with the Prophet…must be regarded as later fictions."

[696] Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam*, 149. See also As van Ess *Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 55: "Those who were put off by anthropomorphism would soon come to believe that the Prophet had seen Gabriel"; Park, "Muhammad's Call Revisited," 74: "The traditional claim that Muhammad saw Gabriel, or an angel on the horizon seems to have been derived from later exegetical efforts to avoid interpreting the object of the vision in the Qur'anic verse as God."

[697] *EQ* 4:445 s.v. Revelation by Daniel A. Madigan.

[698] See above.

[699] Jamel Eddine Bencheikh, *Le Voyage Nocturne de Mahomet* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1988) 283.

was progressively fabricated from independent narrames (bits of narrative) drawn from diverse contexts: from the Qur'ān, ḥadīth, the "stories of the prophets," cosmogonic and eschatological texts.[700] Ibn Hishām admits to producing the Ascension narrative of Ibn Isḥāq's *Sīra* by combining ḥadīth reports of various companions.[701] Likewise, the canonical Call-narrative is recognized as being a 'Konglomerat.' "That the (call) account had been wielded together from several traditions which had been used differently by the various revisers and by means of content-correction were conformed to one another is indeed obvious at first glance," argued Tor Andrae.[702] The independent narrems brought together in the canonical account of Muḥammad's call to prophecy are:

1.] The Pre-prophetic 'truthful dreams' (*al-ru'yā al-ṣādiqa*) narreme [i.e., before Muḥammad's actual call-encounter he experienced "truthful dreams" that came to him like the brightness of daylight].[703]

2.] The *taḥannuth*-narrame [i.e. the account of Muḥammad's performance of certain undefined religious devotions prior to his call].

3.] The *iqrā'*-legend [i.e. the legend of the nocturnal appearance of the angel to Muḥammad in the cave of Ḥirā', who forced him to recite/read (the emphatic *iqrā'* – Read!) sūra 96:1-5 in spite of Muḥammad's refusal three times].[704]

4.] The *ufuq*-legend [i.e. the legend of Muḥammad's diurnal encounter with a heavenly being whom he saw against the horizon].[705]

---

[700] Ibn Isḥāq's *mi'rāj* narrative is a "weaving together of a number of traditions stemming from various intimates of Muhammad." Porter, "Muhammad's Journey to Heaven," 1. On the composite nature of the Ascension narratives see further Colby, "Constructing an Islamic Ascension Narrative."

[701] Ibn Hishām remarks that he takes the accounts of eight Companions, "combined [them] in this ḥadīth report, each telling a part of the matter of when [Muḥammad] was caused to journey by night." *Kitāb Sīrat Rasūl Allāh: Das Leben Muhammed's nach Muhammed Ibn Isḥāk bearbeitet von Abd el-Malik Ibn Hischām*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, vol. 1/I (Göttingen, 1856), 263.

[702] "Dass die erzählung aus mehreren traditionen zusammengeschweisst worden ist, die von den verschiedenen bearbeitern verschieden angebracht und durch inhaltliche korrekturen einander angepasst wurden, ist in der tat auf den ersten blick ersichtlich." Tor Andrae, "Die legenden," 5. See further Lohman, "Sure 96 und die Berufung Muhammeds," 417, 441, 449; Sellheim, "Muhammeds erstes Offenbarungserlebnis."

[703] E.g. al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:2, *kitāb al-waḥy* # 3. "The beginning of revelations to the Apostle of Allah, may Allah be pleased with him, was in the form of true visions during sleep, which came to him like daylight."

[704] See further Gregor Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996) Chapter Two; Uri Rubin, "*Iqra' Bi-smi Rabbika...!* Some Notes on the Interpretation of *Sūrat al-'Alaq* (vs. 1-5)," *IOS* 13 (1993): 213-230.

5.] The Khadīja narreme [i.e. the Prophet's fleeing home and confiding in his wife what had happened, and her reassuring words to him, "Rejoice, O son of my uncle..."].[706]

6.] The Waraqa-legend [i.e. Muḥammad's seeking out the counsel of Khadīja's Christian cousin who affirms that he will be the prophet to his people].[707]

7.] The *fatra*-narreme [i.e. the tale of the temporary cessation of revelation, which caused the Prophet great anxiety and sorrow such that he considered throwing himself off a cliff].[708]

"Proof," Gregor Schoeler writes, "that [the canonical account of the Call] actually concerns a conglomerate is the fact that practically every element appears in other traditions, isolated and in combination with other motifs."[709] A number of these narremes appear in Ibn Saʿd's **Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr** as independent traditions.[710] Further proof of the independence of the narremes integrated into the canonical Call-tradition is found in the respective accounts reported by al-Bukhārī and al-Ṭabarī. Common narremes are there used, but deployed in entirely different narrative sequences.[711] The order of the appearance of the narremes in the respective accounts is as follows:

---

[705] See especially Andrae, "Die legenden."

[706] See Uri Rubin, "The Khadīja-Waraqa Story," in idem, *Eye of the Beholder*, 103-112.

[707] Ibid.

[708] See Uri Rubin, "The Lapse of Revelation (*Fatrat al-waḥy*)," in idem, *Eye of the Beholder*, 113-123.

[709] "Beweis dafür, dass es sich tatsächlich um ein Konglomerat handelt, ist die Tatsache, dass praktisch alle Elemente in anderer Überlieferung auch isoliert bzw. in Kombinationen mit anderen Motiven vorkommen." *Charakter und Authentie*, 65.

[710] *True visions*: Zuhrī < ʿUrwa < ʿĀʾisha (Eng. 224); *ufuq-legend + Khadījah + Waraqa*: Dāʾwūd b. al-Ḥusayn < ʿIkrima < Ibn ʿAbbās (Eng. 224-225); *Khadījah*: Hammād v. Salamah < Hishām b. ʿUrwa < ʿUrwa (Eng. 225); *Khadījah + Waraqa*: Yaḥyā b. Abbād < Hammād b. Salamah < Ibn ʿAbbās (Eng. 225); *revelation of sūrat al-ʿAlaq by the angel*: Maʿmar b. Rāshid < al-Zuhrī < Muḥammad b. ʿAbbād b. Jaʿfar and Shuʿbah < ʿAmr b. Dīnār < ʿUbayd b. ʿUmayr (Eng. 226); *fatra + ufuq*: Dāwūd b. al-Ḥusayn < Ibn Ghaṭfān b. Ṭarīf < Ibn ʿAbbās (Eng. 226-227).

[711] Or "gänzlich abweichender ordnung der eingelnen teile": Andrae, "Die legenden," 6; See also Park, "Muhammad's Call," 48-49: "the *hadīth* alleged to have been transmitted through al-Zuhrī --- ʿUrwah --- ʿĀʾishah contains Muḥammad's experience of true vision in Ibn Isḥāq, but true vision plus *tahannuth* in Ibn Saʿd. At the time of al-Bukhārī, it included true vision, *tahannuth* and the revelation of *Sura* 96 mereged into a single connected narrative. In al-Tabari, it follows al-Bukhari, and they share many narrative elements, but the context and detailed narrative sequences are entirely different."

143

al-Bukhārī: (1) true visions (2) *tahannuth* (3) coming of the angel (4) *iqrā'*-legend (5) Khadīja (6) Waraqa (7) *fatra* (8) considers suicide (9) *ufuq*.[712]

al-Ṭabarī: (1) true visions (2) *tahannuth* (3) coming of the numen (4) Khadīja I (5) coming of the numen again (6) *fatra* (7) considers suicide (8) *ufuq*-legend (9) *iqrā'*-legend (10) Khadīja II (11) Waraqa.[713]

---

[712] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IV, 91, *Ta'bīr Ru'yā*, *bāb* 1, # 1: al-Zuhrī < 'Urwa < 'Ā'isha: "(1) The beginning of revelations to the Apostle of Allah, may Allah be pleased with him, was in the form of true visions during sleep, which came to him like daylight. (2) He used to go to Hira' where he practiced *tahannuth*, which is *ta'abbud*, for a number of nights before returning to his family to take provisions for it. He used to take with him the journey food for the stay and then come back to Khadījah to take his likewise again till (3) suddenly *al-Ḥaqq* came to him while he was in the cave of Hira. (4) The angel came to him and asked him to read. The Prophet replied, 'I do not know how to read.' The Prophet added, 'The angel caught me (forcefully) and pressed me so hard that I could not bear it any more. He then released me and again asked me to read and I replied, 'I do not know how to read.' Thereupon he caught me again and pressed me a second time till I could not bear it anymore. He then released me and again asked me to read but again I replied, 'I do not know how to read (or what shall I read?)' Thereupon he caught me for a third time and pressed me, and then released me and said, 'Read in the Name of thy Lord, who created' up to 'that he knew not (96:1-5).' (5) Then Allah's Apostle returned with the Revelation and with his heart beating severely. They covered him till his fear was over and then he said, 'O Khadīja, what is wrong with me?' Then he told her everything that had happened and said, 'I fear that something may happen to me.' Khadīja said, 'Never! But have the glad tidings, for by Allah, Allah will never disgrace you as you keep good relations with your Kith and kin, speak the truth, help the poor and the destitute, serve your guest generously and assist the deserving, calamity-afflicted ones.' (6) Khadīja then accompanied him to (her cousin) Waraqa bin Nawfal bin Asad bin 'Abdul 'Uzza bin Qusai. Waraqa was the son of her paternal uncle, i.e., her father's brother, who during the Pre-Islamic Period became a Christian and used to write the Arabic writing and used to write of the Gospels in Arabic as much as Allah wished him to write. He was an old man and had lost his eyesight. Khadīja said to him, 'O my cousin! Listen to the story of your nephew.' Waraqa asked, 'O my nephew! What have you seen?' The Prophet described whatever he had seen. Waraqa said, 'This is the same Namus whom Allah had sent to Moses. I wish I were young and could live up to the time when your people would turn you out.' Allah's Apostle asked, 'Will they turn me out?' Waraqa replied in the affirmative and said: 'Never did a man come with something similar to what you have brought but was treated with hostility. If I should remain alive till the day when you will be turned out then I would support you strongly.' (7 and 8) But after a few days Waraqa died and the Revelation was also paused for a while and the Prophet became so sad as we have heard that he intended several times to throw himself from the tops of high mountains and every time he went up the top of a mountain in order to throw himself down, (9) Gabriel would appear before him and say, 'O Muḥammad! You are indeed Allah's Apostle in truth' whereupon his heart would become quiet and he would calm down and would return home. And whenever interruption of revelation used to become long, he would do as before, but when he used to reach the top of a mountain, Gabriel would appear before him and say to him what he had said before."

[713] Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, trns. W. Montgomery Watt and M. V. McDonald (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988) 67-69: al-Zuhrī < 'Urwa < 'Ā'isha: "(1) The first form in which the revelation came to the Messenger of God was true vision; this used to come to him like the break of dawn. (2) After that, he grew to love solitude and used to remain in a cave on Hira' engaged in *tahannuth* for a number of days before returning to his family. The he would return to his family and supply himself with provisions for a similar number of days. (3) This continued until *al-Ḥaqq* came to him unexpectedly, and said, 'Muḥammad, you are the Messenger of God.' (Describing what happened next,) the Messenger of God said, 'I had been standing, but fell to my knees; and crawled away, my shoulders trembling. (4) I went to Khadijah and said, 'Cover me! Cover me!' (5) When the terror left me, he came to me and said, 'Muḥammad, you are the Messenger of God.' (6 and 7; see below) He (Muḥammad) said: I had been thinking of throwing myself down from a mountain crag, but he appeared to me (8; see below), as I was thinking about this, and said, 'Muḥammad, I am Gabriel and you are the Messenger of God.' (9) Then he

144

In al-Bukhārī's call-report the angel comes to the Prophet in his sleep, apparently *with* 'the truth (*al-Ḥaqq*),' the truth (presumably) of revelation. This angelophany constitutes Muḥammad's call-experience, during which the first five verses of *sūrat al-ʿAlaq* are revealed. After awakening and returning home a bit shaken he tells Khadīja of his experience. His wife encourages him and accompanies Muḥammad to her cousin Waraqa who, learned in the scriptures, confirms Muḥammad's experience as a true divine calling. Shortly thereafter, Waraqa dies and revelation to Muḥammad temporarily ceases. This cessation deeply depressed Muḥammad; he contemplated suicide on several occasions, each time prevented by the angel who intervened and reassured him that he is indeed the messenger of Allāh.

In al-Ṭabarī's account the events transpire differently. While standing in the cave (and thus *awake*) al-Ḥaqq comes to Muḥammad without the angel (the latter appears only later) and declares to him: "You are the Messenger of God." There is no qur'ānic revelation, as in al-Bukhārī. While al-Bukhārī's wording (*ḥattā jā'ahu al-Ḥaqq...fa jā'ahu 'l-malak*, "until the truth came to him...so the angel came to him") suggests that the angel came to Muḥammad bringing him the truth, al-Ṭabarī's suggests something else. *Al-Ḥaqq*

---

said, 'Read (*iqrā*)!' I said, 'What shall I read?' He took me and pressed me three times tightly until I was nearly stifled and was utterly exhausted, then he said: 'Read in the Name of thy Lord who created,' and I read it. (10) Then I went to Khadijah and said, 'I have been in fear for life.' When I told her what had happened, she said, 'Rejoice, for God will never put you to shame, for you treat your kinsfolk well, tell the truth, deliver what is entrusted to you, endure fatigue, offer hospitality to the guest, and aid people in misfortune.' (11) Then she took me to Waraqah b. Nawfal b. Asad and said to him, 'Listen to your brother's son.' He questioned me and I told him what had happened. He said, 'This is the Nāmūs which was sent down to Moses, son of ʿImrān. Would that I were a young man now, and would that I could be alive when your people drive you out!' I said, 'Will they drive me out?' 'Yes,' he said. 'No man has ever brought the message which you have brought without being met with enmity. If I live to see that day, I shall come firmly to your aid'."

This is an obvious summary with some details left out. However, al-Ṭabarī provides these missing details in a number of accompanying reports. For example, while the *fatra*-legend (6), suicide attempt (7) and *ufuq*-legend (8) are only vaguely alluded to in the above account, they are elaborated in an accompanying report from al-Zuhrī: "The revelation ceased to come to the Messenger of God for a while, and he was deeply grieved. He began to go to the tops of mountain crags, in order to throw himself from them; but every time he reached the summit of the mountain, Gabriel appeared to him and said to him, 'You are the Prophet of God.' Thereupon his anxiety would subside and he would come back to himself. The Prophet used to relate this story as follows: 'I was walking one day when I saw the angel who used to come to me at Ḥira' on a throne between heaven and earth. I was terror-stricken by him, and I went back to Khadijah and said, "Wrap me up!" So we wrapped him up, that is, enveloped him in a cloak, and God revealed: O you enveloped in your cloak, arise and warn! Your Lord magnify, your raiment purify (74:1-3). Al-Ṭabarī, Al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 76.

145

is here personified and speaks to Muḥammad.[714] There is no mention of the angel here and as W.M. Watt pointed out in his discussion of this account, *al-Ḥaqq* is a name of God and its usuage here suggests a theophany.[715] Muḥammad's reaction to the epiphany is also consistent with a theophany: he falls to his knees trembling and terrified.[716] *Al-Ḥaqq* does not reveal *sūrat al-ʿAlaq* here. He only announces to Muḥammad his prophethood. After 'crawling away' and returning home Muḥammad does not confide in Khadīja as he does in al-Bukhārī's account: he simply cries to her for a covering. Once he calms Muḥammad considers suicide. At this point the angel appears and reassures him. The *iqrāʾ*-legend and the Khadīja-Waraqa narreme follow here.

These two canonical accounts thus differ radically all while using the same set of narremes to tell the story of Muḥammad's call to prophethood. Ibn Isḥāq's account quoted above narrates yet a different order of events. The angel comes to Muḥammad in his sleep (apparently in agreement with al-Bukhārī but in contrast to al-Ṭabarī) in the cave of Ḥirāʾ with a brocade coverleaf in his hand and reveals the first five verse of *sūrat al-ʿAlaq*: the *iqrāʾ*-legend here. The brocade coverleaf is mentioned by neither al-Bukhārī's nor al-Ṭabarī's above quoted accounts. After awaking and beginning his descent down the mountain Muḥammad encounters the angel for a second time against the horizon with his feet parallel: the *ufuq*-legend. Thus, in contrast to both al-Bukhārī and al-Ṭabarī Ibn Isḥāq has both the *iqrāʾ*-encounter and the *ufuq*-encounter occure before Muḥammad reaches Khadīja at home!

---

[714] See van Ess, "Le *MIʿRĀǦ* et la Vision de Dieu," 50: "Selon Zuhrī, ʿĀʾiša aurait même utilize le terme *al-ḥaqq* pour exprimer l'identité de l'entité manifestée."

[715] Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 40. Al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 67 n. 96. See van Ess, "Le *MIʿRĀǦ* et la Vision de Dieu," 50: "Ce ne fut qu'à la suite d'événements circonstanciels que l'on finit par identifier cet ange (*al-ḥaqq*) avec de la révélation, c'est-à-dire Gabriel."

[716] Rubin, *Eye of the Beholder*, 109. "The fear with which Muhammad reacts to his first prophetic experience in the story seems to have its origin in biblical conventions of the terror and fright with which prophets and other human beings react to the appearance of God (e.g. Judges 6:22-23; 13:22; Isaiah 6:5)." Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 21: "Part of the fear was probably the old Semitic fear of the divine as of something dangerous, of which there are examples in the Old Testament." On such reactions to theophany to Savran, *Encountering the Divine*, Chapter 4 "Human Responses to Theophany" and above.

5.2. The Canonical Call-Account and the Early Qussās (Storytellers)

Who assembled the narrames together to produce this narrative in all its variants? Al-Bukhārī traces this 'conglomerate' back to 'Ā'isha via al-Zuhrī < 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr. But in the earlier *Sīra* text of Ibn Isḥāq-Ibn Hishām as well as in Ibn Saʻd only the "true vision" narreme is traced back to the Mother of the Faithful.[717] The call-account proper Ibn Isḥāq-Ibn Hishām traces back to 'Ubayd b. 'Umayr (d. 687),[718] the *qāṣṣ* (storyteller) in the Meccan mosque under the Caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 644). According to Ibn Isḥāq-Ibn Hishām Wahb b. Kaysān, a client of the family of al-Zubayr and Ibn Isḥāq's direct informant, was present at a large gathering when he heard 'Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr (d. 692) ask Ubayd to tell the gathering about the beginning of Muḥammad's mission. The Meccan *qāṣṣ* told the canonical tale. Aloys Sprenger suggested in 1839 that Wahb passed the story on to 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 712), 'Abd Allah's brother, who erroneously attributed it to 'Ā'isha, 'Urwa and 'Abd Allah's aunt.[719] According to G.H.A. Juynboll's research, however, it was not 'Urwa but his master student al-Zuhrī who originated the *isnād marfūʻ* via 'Urwa < 'Ā'isha.[720] Because the *qussās* (storytellers, pl. of *qāṣṣ*) fell into disrepute[721] the popular call-narrative, if it were to survive the *qaṣāṣ*-purge, had to be traced back to a more reputable source: al-Zuhrī thus replaced 'Ubayd with 'Ā'isha.[722]

The most thorough discussion of this tradition and its origin to date is that of Gregor Schoeler, whose meticulous tradition-history of the tale strongly suggests that the storyteller 'Ubayd was indeed the source of the canonical call-account as it appears in the *sīra* and *ḥadīth* literature.[723] Because 'Ubayd preached for 'Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr the

---

[717] Ibn Saʻd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*, 1:224.

[718] But in the Kufan redaction of Ibn Isḥāq's *Sīra* by al-'Uṭāridi (d. 886) the story is traced back to an anonymous source: see Sellheim, "Muhammeds erstes Offenbarungserlebnis," 5.

[719] *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammed* (Berlin, 1839) 1:339ff.

[720] G.H.A. Juynboll, "Early Islamic Society as Reflected in its Use of *Isnād's*," *Mus* 107 (1994): 165 [art.=151-194]. 'Urwa's son Hishām, the second (with al-Zuhrī) of the two primary transmitters of 'Urwa's materials, does not trace the call-narrative back to 'Ā'isha, but only to is father.

[721] See Khalil 'Athamina, "Al-Qasas: Its Emergence, Religious Origin and Its Socio-Political Impact on Early Muslim Society," *SI* 76 (1992): 53-74.

[722] Juynboll, "Early Islamic Society," 165-67.

[723] Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie*, Chapter II.

tale circulated as a Zubayrid family tradition. 'Urwa picked it up as such, not directly from Wahb (*pace* Sprenger). It was 'Urwa who cleansed the tale of its *qāṣṣ*-elements and reworked it into ḥadīth format, according to Schoeler.

While we may not yet be sure who raised the *isnād* of this tradition back to 'Ā'isha, it is pretty certain that the Mother of the Faithful was not the source of this 'Konglomerat.'[724] Like so much of the *Muhammadlegend*, this call-*Konglomerat* originated in the circles of the popular preachers/storytellers.[725]

> It is clear, then that much of the classical Muslim understanding of the Qur'ān rests on the work of popular storytellers, such storytellers being the first to propose particular historical contexts for particular verses. It should be clear that this is the major reason why the exegetical tradition is so unreliable a guide to the original meaning of the Qur'ān and history alike: as might be expected of storytellers, they made up their stories in complete disregard or ignorance of both.
>   It is, similarly, thanks to the contribution of the storytellers that the historical tradition is so short of authentic information...Storytellers do not distinguish between true and false in the realistic sense of a secular historian...It is because the storyteller played such a crucial role in the formation that there is so little historicity to it. As storyteller followed upon storyteller, *the recollection of the past was reduced to a common stock of stories, themes, and motifs that could be combined and recombined in a profusion of apparently factual accounts* (emph. added).[726]

While Patricia Crone's view of the Islamic historical/exegetical tradition may seem a little too pessimistic, it is apparently right on when it comes to the canonical account of Muḥammad's call to prophecy. "The whole story is the invention of a later age," declared Richard Bell.[727]

5.3. Muḥammad's Call and the Throne-Theophany Tradition

What, then, can we say with some assurance of likelihood about Muḥammad's earliest prophetic experience? "If we follow the Quran," F.E. Peters suggests, "it began with a

---

[724] Andrae, "Die legenden," 13; Bell, "Mohammed's Call," 13-14.

[725] On the *quṣṣāṣ* and the *Muhammadlegend* see Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 214-230. See also Louis Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1997) 113: "The spontaneous movement of the *quṣṣāṣ*, so profoundly popular and later so maligned, was the foundation of apologetic religious instruction in Islam (Qur'ānic school and Friday sermon)..."

[726] Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 216, 221, 225.

[727] Bell, "Mohammed's Call," 16.

vision, or a number of visions, that Muhammad first thought was of God Himself".[728]

Andrae argued as well:

> in the Koran there is not the slightest reference to a vision such as that beheld in the cave of Mt. Hira. In order to combat the statement that he was possessed by the *jinni*, or spirit, Mohammed refers in two different places (i.e. 53:1-18; 81: 19) to an appearance in which he himself saw that being whose voice had spoken Allah's word's into his ear or his heart...The call-vision which was decisive for Mohammed was thus a vision which he saw out in the open.[729] A being appeared to him whose majesty and glory so filled him with trembling awe as to assure him for all time that the voice which spoke to him did not come from a being of the *jinn* species...[730]

According to the biblical prophetic tradition to which Muḥammad claimed to be heir the call of the prophet involved a theophany, not an angelophany; maybe an *angelomorphic* theophany (i.e. God himself appearing in the disguise of a *mal'āk*, angel), but a theophany nonetheless.[731] The most awesome of these call-encounters is the throne-theophany. As we saw above, many in the early Islamic community read *sūrat al-Najm* [53]:6-9 as an account of the Prophet's experience of a throne-theophany.[732] There is even in the *sīra*/ḥadīth literature alternatives to the canonical call-account which involved a throne-theophany.

> Yaḥyā (b. Kathīr) reports: I asked Abū Salama: "Which part of the Qur'ān was revealed first?" He answered: Sūra 74 (*yā ayyuhā 'l-muddaththir*). I said: "But I have been told it is Sūra 96 (*iqrā' bismi rabbika*)." Abū Salama answered: "Long ago I put the same question to Jābir b. 'Abd Allah, and he also said: Sūra 74. I reacted then the same way you did now: "But I was told it is Sūra 96," I said, and he replied: "I can only tell you what I heard from the Messenger of God himself, namely: 'I (this is Muḥammad speaking) had retreated to Mount Ḥirā' for contemplation. When I had finished my spiritual exercises I descended to the bottom of the wādī. I heard a voice calling me, and I looked around, in front of me, behind me, to my right, to my left. (But then) Lo, there He was,[733] sitting upon a throne (*huwa jālis 'alā 'arsh*), between Heaven and earth. I went to Khadīja and said to her: "Cover me with a mantel and pour cold water on me!" Then the revelation came

---

[728] Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam*, 149.

[729] Andrae interprets the *al-ufuq al-mubīn* ("clear horizon") of 81:23 as indicating in the open and in the full daylight ("offenbar im freien und bei vollem tageslicht," "Die legenden," 13).

[730] *Mohammed*, 46.

[731] See above.

[732] See above.

[733] On reading "there He was" as opposed to "there he was" see: van Ess, *Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 58; Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam*, 149; Bell, "Mohammed's Call," 17.

upon me: *Yā ayyuhā 'l-muddaththir*, "O thou shrouded in thy mantle, arise and warn! Thy Lord magnify…"[734]

The primary issue here is of course which was the first qur'ānic passage revealed: *sūrat al-'Alaq*, *sūrat al-Muddaththir*, or maybe *sūrat al-Fātiḥah*, among other contestants.[735] Yaḥyā b. Kathīr is polemicizing against the likely earlier tradition giving *sūrat al-'Alaq* pride of place. The throne-vision itself, however, is independent of this chronological issue as it is found in narrative contexts that show no interest in it.[736] This vision reported on the authority of the Companion Jābir b. 'Abd Allah (d. 697) is no doubt another version of the *ufuq*-legend anchored in the visions recounted in the Qur'ān (53:6-9; 81:23).[737] The most important question for our purposes is who is here seen enthroned? He is simply identified as "he, *huwa*." In a variant of this tradition reported by al-Bukhārī the Prophet says simply: *fa-rafa'tu ra'sī fa-ra'aytu shay'an*, "Then I looked up and saw something."[738] In yet another version of this tradition narrated by Yaḥyā b. Kathīr's rival, al-Zuhrī,[739] the throne occupant is specifically identified as the angel Jibrīl:

> (The Prophet said:) One day while I was walking, I heard a voice from heaven and I raised up my eyes, and lo! (I saw) the angel who used to come to me at Ḥirā' on a throne (*kursī*) between heaven and earth. I was stricken with fear of him, and returned to Khadījah, and said, "Cover me, cover me!" Then Allah revealed: "O thou who art clothed! Arise and warn. Thy Lord do Magnify…"[740]

In this narration by al-Zuhrī a number of changes have been introduced besides the explicit identification of the enthroned one as the angel. In Yaḥyā's narration the vision is

---

[734] Al- Bukhārī, *Sahih* (Eng.), 6:419.

[735] See Andrae, "Die legenden," 15-18

[736] E.g. Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*, 224. See also Andrae, "Die Legenden," 11.

[737] Andrae, "Die legenden," 11: "That the legend of Jābir is identical with our *ufuq*-legend cannot be doubted („Dass die legende des GÅBIR mit unserer *ufuq*-legende identisch ist, wird man nicht bezweifeln können"). As Sprenger, *Leben* 1:306, remarked as well the *ufuq*-legend is identical to that narrated in 81:23 and 53:6-9. See also Rubin, "*Iqra' bi-smi rabbika…!*" 219; idem, *Eye of the Beholder*, 110.

[738] Al- Bukhārī, *Sahih*, 6: 418.

[739] On this rivalry between Yaḥyā Ibn Kathīr and al-Zuhrī see Juynboll, "Early Islamic Society," 171; Andrae, "Die legenden," 10.

[740] Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, 76.

Muḥammad's inaugural vision, that is to say his call experience. In al-Zuhrī's narration, however, the encounter occurs after the *fatra* or temporary cessation or revelation.[741] It was al-Zuhrī who likely originated the idea of the *fatra*.[742] Also, the throne (*'arsh*) of Yaḥyā's narration is replaced in al-Zuhrī's *fatra*-account by chair (*kursī*). The introduction of Jibrīl into this tradition is clearly secondary, as Richard Bell saw already in 1934:

> this story (of Jābir b. 'Abd Allah) says nothing about Gabriel, but…seems to imply that what Mohammed saw was Allah himself sitting upon the throne…this apparently caused aversion; for in one form of the story, Mohammed is made to say simply that he saw 'something'; in other forms, that it was the angel who had appeared to him on Hirā', who thus appeared to him a second time…Gabriel is imported into the story fairly early…The 'throne,' however, is appropriate to Allah, not an angel…This tradition…in the form which implied that the vision was one of Allah, was contrary to orthodox sentiment. It must have come into existence before orthodox tradition was fixed.[743]

Tor Andrae argued the point also:

> The sitting on the throne seems to me still a feature that too strongly emerges from Muhammad and his companions' portrayal of God to be allowed to have originally applied to Gabriel. That is perhaps the reason why in the versions of Zuhrī…the word *'arsh*, which Yaḥyā Ibn Kathī has twice, has been interchanged with *kursī*. One compares also the restraining inhibition („zurückhaltende") when…instead of a closer description it says only "I saw something."[744]

The qur'ānic evidence supports the conclusion that the enthroned being could only have been God originally, as Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks point out in their discussion of this narrative:

> an analysis of the Qur'ān's use of the term *throne* (Arabic *kursī/'arsh*) serves to strengthen the assumption that it is none other than God himself who is referred to here…A survey of the Qur'ānic data supports the association of the throne exclusively with God. Throughout the Qur'ān, God is described as "the lord of the throne." He is *rabb al-'arsh*…Q 9:129, 23:86, and 43:82; at Q 27:26 he is uniquely so. In Q 40:15, 81:20, and

---

[741] See Andrae, "Die legenden," 11-13.

[742] Juynboll, "Early Islamic Society," 170: "The insertion of the…*fatra*…is apparently the device introduced by Zuhrī to counter Yaḥyā's attack on his earlier *iqra'* tradition." Juynboll cites as evidence that al-Zuhrī originated the *fatra*-tradition the *Handbook* and *Concordance* of Wensinck which list al-Zuhrī as the only traditionist with traditions treating the *fatra*: "Early Islamic Society," 171 n. 48. See also Andrae, "Die legenden," 11-12.

[743] Bell, "Mohammed's Call," 17, 18.

[744] Andrae, "Die legenden," 14-15.

85:15, he is *dhū al-ʿarsh* ("possessor of the throne"). While nondivine thrones are mentioned Qurʾānically in both the story of Joseph and his parents (Q 12:100) and the Queen of Sheba (Q 27:23, 38, 41, 42), neither Gabriel nor any other angel is ever associated with a throne. Indeed, at Q 17:42 (cf. Q 21:22), God is asserted to be uniquely *dhū al-ʿarsh* in distinction even to hypothetical other gods. It seems unlikely, therefore, that Gabriel, a mere angel and thus a creature, would possess a throne.[745]

Van Ess's interpretation of this throne-vision reported by Jābir b. ʿAbd Allah is therefore probably correct: "The Prophet thus saw God in all his might and glory seated on his throne."[746]

This call-report of the Prophet's encountering in an open wādī God sitting on his throne is an ancient alternative to the canonical call-account reporting Muḥammad's initial encounter with the angel standing in the air against the horizon.[747] The latter is clearly a tendentious exegetical tradition. It is not impossible that the throne-theophany tradition of Jābir b. ʿAbd Allah is as well.[748] It could very well have been fabricated by any of those many readers of the Qurʾān criticized by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ who took *sūrat al-Najm* [53]:6-9 as an account of a throne-theophany.[749] Be that as it may "the general character of this vision agrees with the Qurʾānic (visions)"[750] and thus may very well be authentic.[751]

---

[745] Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, "The Throne Theophany/Prophetic Call of Muḥammad," in Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Perry, and Andrew Hedges (edd.), *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson* (Provo, Utah: The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies at Brigham Young University, 2000) 324-325 [art.=323-337]. See also Gösta Vitestam, " ʿArsh and kursī. An Essay on the Throne Traditions in Islam," in Egon Keck, Svend Søndergaard, Ellen Wulff (edd.), *Living Waters: Scandinavian orientalistic studies presented to Frede Løkkegaard on his seventy-fifth birthday, January 27th 1990* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1990) 369-378.

[746] *Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 58; "Muhammad's Ascension," 10.

[747] On this throne-theophany account as an „schon befindlichen alten tradition (already anciently situated tradition)" see Andrae, "Die legenden," 15.

[748] Park, "Muhammad's Call," 75.

[749] See above.

[750] Andrae, "Die legenden," 13: „Der allgemeine character dieser vision stimmt mit der qorʾānischen überein."

[751] Peterson and Ricks, "Throne Theophany/Prophetic Call," 333 wonders: "What role might the throne-theophany vision, an important component in the account of the prophetic commission of earlier Abrahamic prophets...have played in Muḥammad's call as a prophet? Representing as it does a very typical Near Eastern literary genre designed to affirm publicly the authority of the prophet, it seems worth investigating whether it originally performed the same function in Muslim belief and may have been as essential a part of Muḥammad's credentials as a prophet in the ancient Abrahamic tradition." It seems that we can answer this question in the affirmative. It appears that Muhammad himself might have used his experience(s) with the divine throne as the authenticating miracle (sign, *aya*) of his mission.

5.4. The Jibrīlian Redaction: From Theophany to Angelophany

Al-Zuhrī's narration with the angel, the *fatra*, and the *kursī* is no doubt secondary to Yahyā b. Kathīr's call-account with throne-theophany.[752] Evidence of a 'Jibrīlian Redaction' of this tradition is found elsewhere as well. Most interesting is a later variant of this same vision reported by Jābir b. 'Abd Allah, this time however reported by 'Ā'isha who here claims to be the first in the community to have asked the Prophet had he seen the angel in Ajyād in Mecca. While there,

> Jibrīl called to him, "O Muhammad, O Muhammad." (Muhammad) looked right and left three times but saw nothing. Then he raised his head and lo! There he was on the sky's horizon, one leg folded over the other (*ihdā rijlayhi 'alā l-ukhrā*). Then he said: "O Muhammad, (I am) Jibrīl, (I am) Jibrīl" He calmed (the Prophet) then the Prophet (s) fled, until he came upon the people. Then he looked and saw nothing. He left from the people and looked and he saw him. Thus that is (the meaning) of God's words, "By the star when it sets. Your companion errs not nor does he deviate" to his statement "then he descended and hung suspended (53:1-8)," meaning Jibrīl to Muhammad.[753]

A similar report is found in Ibn Sa'd's ***Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*** on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās as a call-account.[754] Our attention is here drawn to the strange pose struck by the angel on the horizon: one leg folded over the other (*ihdā rijlayhi 'alā l-ukhrā*). This contradicts the earlier report from Ibn Ishaq where the angel appears on the higher horizon "in the form of a man with his feet juxtaposed." Where did such an image of the

---

[752] Bell, "Mohammed's Call," 18: "it is fairly evident that this story of the *fatra* and the new beginning with lxxiv, 1-7 is a reconciling tradition, which aims at bringing the two traditions, as to which was the earliest revelation into agreement with each other, and to satisfy as far as possible the conflicting claims of both." See also Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 41: John Burton, *An Introduction to the Hadīth* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 1994), 31; Juynboll, "Early Islamic Society," 170.

[753] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 27: 46; Ibn Abī Hātim, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'azīm musnadan 'an Rasūl Allāh wa-'l-ṣahābah wa-al-tābi'īn* (Mecca, Riyad: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā, 1997) 10: 3319 #18700; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* 7:447; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7: 644.

[754] Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*, 1:225: Muhammad b. 'Umar < Ibrahim b. Isma'il < Da'wud b. al-Husayn < 'Ikrima < Ibn 'Abbas: When at Ajyād, he saw an angel, with one leg on the other, in the horizon, and calling: O Muhammad! I am Gabriel…The Apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him, was terrified. Whenever he raised his head towards the heaven he saw him; so he returned hastily to Khadijah and conveyed this information to her. He said: O Khadijah! By Allah, I have never hated anything so much as idols and sooth-sayers, and I am afraid that I shall myself become a sooth-sayer. She said: O my uncle's son, never! Do not repeat this. Verily, Allah will not do this with you, because you fulfill (the obligation of) relationship, speak truth, return things entrusted to you and your character is noble. Then she went to Waraqah Ibn Nawfal and it was… "

angel with crossed legs on the horizon come from? Clearly, if Jibrīl is standing on the horizon, the preferred picture, it would have been terribly difficult for him to strike such a pose.[755]

The image instead originated with certain anthropomorphist traditions in which God is said to sit on his throne in that manner. It is reported from Qatāda b. Nu'mān: "When Allah was relieved from His creation he established Himself on His Throne (*istawa' 'ala 'arshihi*) and reclined (*istalqa*) and placed one of His legs on top of the other (*wa wada'a ihda rijlayhi 'ala al-ukhra*)." Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, in his **Al-Sunna** narrates also: "When Allāh finished His creation, He laid down (*istalqaya*) and placed one of His legs over the other."[756] Ka'b al-Aḥbār forbade al-Ash'at b. Qays from sitting with his legs crossed proclaiming: "It is the Lord who sits like that! (*innahā jilsatu r-rabbi ta'ālā*)."[757] Tor Andrae,[758] Geo Windengren[759] and van Ess[760] are therefore likely correct in suggesting that this image of the angel on the horizon with his legs crossed was originally Allah seated on His Throne on the horizon, as it is written, "Possessor of a beautiful make, He held Himself upright on the Throne, while He was on the highest horizon (53:6-7)." Van Ess is no doubt correct: "Il faut lire ces textes as des palimpsests."[761] The throne and God have disappeared in the 'Ā'isha-report and all that remains is the angel in this throne posture without a throne.

---

[755] As van Ess, "Le *MI'RĀǦ* et la Vision de Dieu," 44 notes this is a "posture assez malaisée pour 'se tenir debout' mais bien convenable pour quelqu'un qui est «assis»".

[756] Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *Al-Sunna*, I:389 #580. .

[757] Ibn Fūrak, *Mushkil al-ḥadīth* 128ff.

[758] Andrae, "Die legenden," 14.

[759] Widengren, *Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, and his Ascension*, 126.

[760] van Ess, "Le *MI'RĀǦ* et la Vision de Dieu," 44.

[761] Ibid.

Chapter VI:

Did Muḥammad See His Lord?
The Ru'ya *Controversy Among the* Ṣaḥāba *and the* Tābi'īn

6.1. The Controversy According to Ḥadīth

Gibril Fouad Haddad, in his short study on "The Vision of Allah in the World and the Hereafter" notes:

> Many sound reports show that the Companions differed sharply whether the Prophet (ṣ) saw Allah or not. Ibn 'Abbas related that he did, while Ibn Mas'ud, 'A'isha, Abu Hurayra, and Abu Dharr related reports to the contrary, stating that the verses of Sura (sic) al-Najm and other Suras referred to Jibril, and that the Prophet (ṣ) said that he saw light.[762]

As Shaykh Haddad rightly points out here, many ḥadīth reports give the impression of intense controversy among the Ṣaḥāba (Companions of the Prophet) over the question of Muḥammad's visionary encounter with God. Less sound, however, is Haddad's suggestion that Ibn 'Abbas, the cousin of the Prophet and famed qur'ānic exegete, was the lone advocate of the Prophet's *Visio Dei*, while Ibn Mas'ūd, 'Ā'isha, Abū Hurayra, and Abu Dharr denied it because they read *sūrat al-Najm* as an account of angelophanies rather than theophanies. In fact many more persons were involved in this discussion according to the reports, and the numbers are clearly on the side of the advocates. Also, Haddad has conflated two opinions that don't necessarily go together: the opinion that *sūrat al-Najm* is to be read as an account of angelophanies rather than theophanies on the one hand and the opinion that Muḥammad did not see God on the other. The latter opinion does not necessarily follow from the former. Granted, many who adopted the Jibrīlian reading of *sūrat al-Najm* also – even consequently – denied that Muḥammad ever

---

[762] Gibril Fouad Haddad, "Appendix 3: The Vision of Allah in the World and the Hereafter," in al-Bayhaqi, *Allah's Names and Attributes (al-Asma' wa al-Sifat), Excerpts*, trans. Dr. Gibril Fouad Haddad (Islamic Doctrines and Beliefs Vol. 4;Damascus, 1998) 78.

saw God. Many others did not, however. That is to say, even some of those who argued that the early Meccan visions recounted in *sūrat al-Najm* were visions of the angel still affirmed that Muḥammad did see God at a later date, in Medina for instance. We shall return to this point below.

The editors of al-Dāraquṭnī's (d. 995) important **Kitāb al-Ru'ya** are a bit more perceptive in their reading of the sources:

> The fifth problem regarding the Prophet's vision of his Lord Most High in this world. The Salaf and the Khalaf disagree irreconcilably (*ikhtilāfan mutabāyinan*) over this issue, some affirming, others denying, while others suspending judgment (*al-mutawaqqif*). As for those who affirm that (the Prophet) saw his Lord Most High there is a group of the Ṣaḥāba and the Tābi'īn and others. 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbās, Interpreter of the Qur'ān, and Anas b. Mālik, Abū Dharr, and it is reported on the authority of Abū Hurayra, and Ibn Mas'ūd...and Ka'b al-Aḥbār...
>   As for those who are of the opinion that the Prophet did not see his Lord Most High, a group of Ṣaḥāba and the Tābi'īn also: our Mother 'Ā'isha and Ibn Mas'ūd. And it was disputed regarding him and Abū Hurayra and Abū Dharr.[763]

According to this reading of the sources Ibn 'Abbās does not stand alone in his advocacy of the Prophet's experience of *Visio Dei*. With him were other famed Companions such as Anas b. Mālik, Ka'b al-Aḥbār, and Abū Dharr. The problem is that the latter, along with the other noted Companions Abū Hurayra and Ibn Mas'ūd, are also listed among those who denied *al-Ru'ya*. This is the *Doppelgesicht* or 'double-face' phenomenon pointed out by Tor Andrae in his foundational discussion of this controversy.[764] That is to say, the same names will often appear on both sides of a controversy advocating diametrically opposed positions. It is thus difficult on first sight to discern anyone's true stance in these discussions assuming, of course, that such a discussion actually took place (see below). As we will demonstrate here many of the *Doppelgesichten* are artificial. That is to say, the sources don't really support the existence of two positions for an individual, but later scholars have without warrant created such an impression. Also, those involved in the controversy are more numerous than even the above reading of the sources admits. In this chapter we will list all of the major

---

[763] Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. 'Umar al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-Ru'ya* (edd. Ibrāhīm Muḥammad 'Alī and Aḥmad Fakhrī al-Rifā'ī; Jordan, 1411/1990), 73-74.

[764] *Die Person Muhammeds*, 74f.

participants in this controversy as well as their recorded positions, as best as we have been able to find them.

6.1.1. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās (d. 688)

Also called al-Ḥibr ("the Doctor") and al-Baḥr ("the Sea") Ibn 'Abbās is reputed to have been the first interpreter of the Qur'ān.[765] His person as found in the sources is largely legendary however.[766] Nonetheless, it is no doubt he who is most often associated with the affirmation of Muḥammad's vision of God. We learn from Ibn 'Abbās that God singled three prophets out for special blessings: Ibrāhīm (Abraham) was made the friend (Khalīl) of God, Mūsā (Moses) spoke to God, and Muḥammad saw God.[767]

[A.] Sufyān b. 'Uyayna < Mujālid b. Sa'īd < 'Abd Allāh b. Ḥārith:

Ibn 'Abbās met Ka'b (al-Aḥbār) at 'Arafat and asked him concerning a certain thing. Then he said, 'God is great,' until the mountains returned the echo. Then Ibn 'Abbās said, "We belong to the Banū Hāshim. We say: Verily, Muhammad saw his Lord twice." Ka'b replied, "Verily God Most High divided His vision and His conversation between Muḥammad and Mūsā. He spoke to Mūsā twice; and Muḥammad saw Him twice."[768]

Ka'b's claim that Moses spoke to God twice is probably based on the two accounts in Q 19:52 and 7:143. A theocentric interpretation of sūrat al-Najm, particularly vs. 7 and 14, was undoubtedly behind Ibn 'Abbās's claim that Muḥammad saw God twice. Such an interpretation is offered in another report:

---

[765] See EI¹ I:40f. s.v. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās by L. Veccia Vaglieri.

[766] On the mythic figure of Ibn 'Abbās in Sunnī and Shī'ī tradition see Claude Gilliot, "Portrait 'mythique' d'Ibn 'Abbās," Arabica 32 (1985): 1927-84.

[767] Mu'adh b. Hishām < his father < Qatada b. Di'āma < 'Ikrima b. 'Abd Allāh < Ibn 'Abbās: "Are you amazed that Friendship (al-Khulla) was for Abraham, Direct Speech (al-Kalām) was for Moses and Visio Dei (al-Ru'ya) was for Muḥammad?" Also: "Allah distinguished Abraham with Friendship (al-Khulla). He distinguished Moses with Direct Speech (al-Kalām) and He distinguished Muḥammad with Visio Dei (al-Ru'ya)." Al-Nasā'ī, Sunan 10:276 #11475; 'Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad, Kitāb al-Sunna 2 vols. (ed. Muḥammad b. Sa'īd b. Salīm al-Qahtanī; Damman: Dār Ibn al-Qayyīm, 1986), 1:298f, # 576f; al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi' al-bayān, 27: 48; Al-Lālikā'ī, Sharḥ uṣūl i'tiqād ahl l-sunna wa l-jamā'a (Riyāḍ, 1985), 2: 515; al-Dāraquṭnī, Kitāb al-Ru'ya, 344 # 261; 345 # 262.

[768] Al-Tirmidhī, Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ, apud al-Mubārakfūrī, Tuḥfa al-aḥwadhī 9: 166, #3332; al-Dāraquṭnī, Kitāb al-Ru'ya, 308 # 226; al-Suyūṭī, Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr, 7: 247.

[B.] Al-A'mash (Sulaymān b. Miḥran) < Ziyād b. al-Ḥaṣīn < Abū al-'Āliya < Ibn 'Abbās:

> (Regarding the *āya*) "The heart lied not concerning that which he saw (53:11)" (Ibn 'Abbās) said: "(Muḥammad) saw his Lord, May He be Exalted and Great, with his heart twice." (Regarding the *āya*) "He indeed saw Him at another descent by the Lote-tree of the Boundary (53:14)" he said: "He saw his Lord." (Regarding the *āya*) "Till He was the measure of two bows or closer. Then He revealed to His servant what He revealed (53:9-10)" Ibn 'Abbās said: "Indeed the Prophet saw Him."[769]

The famed *mufassir* is here presented as reading the verb of 53:11 with *takhfīf (kadhaba)* rather than with *tashdīd (kadhdhiba)*. It was therefore a *ru'ya bi 'l-qalb* (vision of the heart), not a *ru'ya bi 'l-baṣar* (vision of the eyes). Muslim reports in his **Ṣaḥīḥ** from Ibn 'Abbās that Muḥammad "saw Allāh with his heart (twice)."[770] It is here, however, where we get our first, and only, glimpse of Ibn 'Abbās's *Doppelgesicht* in this particular controversy. Ibn Fūrak reports from 'Ikrima, freed servant of Ibn 'Abbās, that the latter said regarding "Indeed he saw Him at another descent (53:14)": "Muḥammad saw his Lord with his eyes so that there appeared to him the crown covered in pearls."[771] Al-Baghawī and al-Suyūṭī report from Ibn 'Abbās this same opinion that he saw God with his eyes.[772] Ibn Ḥajar and al-Suyūṭī report that Ibn 'Abbās said once, "Muḥammad saw his Lord twice: once with his eyes and once with his heart."[773] We are told that the "Interpreter of the Qur'ān" read Q 17:60 "We did not make the vision which we showed thee…" as an indication that the Prophet saw God during his *Isrā'* or Night Journey to Jerusalem with his eyes.[774] Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ's (d. 1149) confidence therefore is almost understandable when he declares: "The best known opinion is that he saw his Lord with his eyes. This is related from (Ibn 'Abbās) by various paths of transmission."[775] Still, there are enough reports attributed to Ibn 'Abbās in support of both positions to make it impossible identify one of them as his likely

---

[769] al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-Ru'ya*, 351 #274; al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2:8 #285.

[770] *Ṣaḥīḥ* (English) 1:111, #334; Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 10: 275 #11471; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 3:425 #1956.

[771] Ibn Fūrak, *Mushkil al-ḥadīth* 386.

[772] Al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, 4:247; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7:647.

[773] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ Bārī*, 8:608; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7:647.

[774] Thus reported Sufyān b. 'Uyayna: Ibn Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 202.

[775] *Al-Shifa*, 101.

position.

[C.] Salm b. Ja'far < Al-Ḥakam b. Abān al-'Adanī < 'Ikrima:

Once I ('Ikrima) asked Ibn 'Abbās if Muḥammad had seen his Lord. He answered: "Yes, he saw Him as if He had His feet in verdure, and in front of him a curtain (sitr) of pearls." Following which, 'Ikrima said to Ibn 'Abbās: "Didn't God say: lā tudrikuhu l-abṣāru (6:103)?" Ibn 'Abbās answered: "God wanted to speak of His light: when He appeared in His light, nothing can reach Him (lā yudrikuhu shay'). [Muḥammad indeed saw his Lord twice.]'[776]

God is here seen behind a screen or curtain, though only his feet are described: they are "in verdure."[777] This description of the feet might suggest an averted gaze here, except that in other similar reports the curtain is specifically placed before the face of God.[778] What is noticeable here is that even with the presence of the veil intervening between God and Muḥammad it is affirmed that the Prophet saw God. We have come to expect something different. The ḥijāb is supposed to be prohibitive (al-māni') in regards to ru'ya. "(A) veil conveys the idea of a separation that excludes a visual perception," says Ary Crollius.[779] Here, however, it is the veil that makes vision of God possible. This is indicated by Ibn 'Abbās' interpretation (or the interpretation here attributed to him) of sūrat al-An'ām [6]: 103, "Vision comprehends Him not." According to Ibn 'Abbās' response the verse indicates that eyes don't idrāk God when he appears in his light, presumably his divine light (as opposed to his "veil of light"; see below). When God appears in his jalāl or luminous splendor, lā tudrikuhu l-abṣār. But because God's jalāl is here veiled Muḥammad is able to see him. The veil or curtain is here permissive (mubīḥ) rather than prohibitive, and this probably because it is protective. Al-Bayḍāwī (d. 1280) thus says concerning sūrat al-Shūrā [42]:50 that the expression min warā'i ḥijābin ("from behind a

---

[776] Al-Tirmidhī, Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ, apud al-Mubārakfūrī, Tuḥfa al-aḥwadhī 9: 168, #3333; al-Bayhaqī, al-Asma' wa al-Ṣifāt, 2 vols. (ed. 'Abd Allah b. Muhammad al-Hashidi; Jidda: Maktaba al-Suwādī, 1993), 2:362; al-Lālikā'ī, Sharḥ uṣūl, 2: 521; Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, Al-Sunna 2 vols. (Riyāḍ: Dār al-Ṣumay'ī, 1998), 1: 308; al-Dāraquṭnī, Kitāb al-Ru'ya, 353 #278.

[777] Khuḍratin. Gimaret, Dieu à l'image de l'homme, 154 n. 3, says we are undoubtedly to understand by this expression a lawn or prairie.

[778] See e.g. the report from Umm al-Ṭufayl below.

[779] Thus Were They Hearing, 41. Watt, Muhammad's Mecca, 62 likewise assumed that that revelation from behind a veil "implies hearing without seeing."

veil") "is an indication of the letting through of a vision, not of its being withheld."[780]
This language suggests a *translucent* veil.

This is consistent with the biblical tradition of the veiled presence of God. "Because the radiance and splendor of God are so overwhelming, because no man can look on him and live (Ex 33:17-23; Jn 1:18; 6:46; I Tm 6:15, 16), that splendor is concealed within the cloud to protect man from his presence (Ex 16:10; 19:16-20; 24:15-17; Pss 18:11, 12; 97:2,3)."[781] Still, "The cloud theophany…is a visible expression of the presence of God."[782] The veiled image of God would be similar to "the approach of towering black clouds lighted from within by so-called sheet lightning."[783]

Ibn ʿAbbās' response also indicates that Muḥammad's vision of the veiled deity was a *ruʾya bi ʾl-baṣar* (vision of the eyes). The veil here is thus not the dream-vision (*ruʾya bi ʾl-qalb*) that some commentators say the *min warāʾi ḥijābin* of *sūrat al-Shūrā* [42]:50 signifies.[784] This is confirmed in a related ḥadīth. A listener objects to ʿIkrima's narration from Ibn ʿAbbās that the Prophet saw his Lord with this same verse (6:103) and ʿIkrima gives a somewhat different reply than that above, yet still affirming a *ruʾya bi ʾl-baṣar*.

> Ibn ʿAbbās said, "He saw Him descend another time (53:13)," meaning the Prophet saw his Lord. A man said to [ʿIkrima]: "Didn't He say, 'Vision comprehends Him not and He comprehends all vision'." ʿIkrima said to him: "Do you see the sky?" He said yes. He said, "[Do] you see all of the sky[?]"[785]

As noted above ʿIkrima distinguishes between *idrāk*, which he takes to imply a total perception of a thing, and *ruʾya*, specifically *ruʾya bi ʾl-baṣar*, the simple act of seeing. To see a thing with the eyes does not imply that the viewed is fully perceived (*idrāk*) by the viewer.

---

[780] Al Baydāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa asrār* (Cairo, n.d.) *ad sūrat al-Shūrā* [42]:50. Quoted from Crollius, *Thus Were They Hearing*, 41.

[781] *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* 2:1695-6 s.v. Pillar of Fire and Cloud.

[782] Ibid., 1696.

[783] The words of F.M. Cross, Jr. regarding the approach of the Israelite "storm-god": *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 169.

[784] See above.

[785] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 27:52; Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Al-Sunna*, 1:307.

Thus, while Muḥammad indeed saw God, this 'seeing' did not afford him a complete perception of the Divine Majesty.

These two traditions present a scenario distinctly different from what we find in *sūrat al-Najm*. There the implication is that Muḥammad did see the unveiled majesty of God. The stress on his eyes not swerving in v. 17 suggests that the expectation is that his eyes would have or should have swerved and this 'averted gaze,' we discovered above, is the viewer's protection against the effects of seeing God's brilliant majesty.[786] The averted gaze would be unnecessary before the protectively veiled presence of God except as a display of humility. The implication of v. 17 is not however that Muḥammad's steady gaze was a mark of arrogance or pomposity, such as that attributed in some rabbinic sources to the elders of Israel on Mount Sinai who "feasted their eyes" on God instead of humbly averting their gaze.[787] Our discussion of Q 53:11 suggested that "his heart lied not concerning what he saw" indicated a positive valuation of Muḥammad's heart which allowed him to properly perceive his visitant.[788] The visions recorded in the above traditions would thus not be identical with those alluded to in *sūrat al-Najm* [53]: 1-18.

[D.] Muḥammad b. Isḥāq < 'Abd al-Raḥman b. al-Ḥārith < 'Abd Allāh b. Abī Salama:

> ['Abd Allāh b. Abī Salama] narrates: [One day], 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar (the son of second Caliph) sent [a messenger] to ask 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās if Muḥammad had seen his Lord. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās made him answer yes. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar sent him his messenger again, to ask him *how* he had seen Him. [Ibn 'Abbās] had him answer that he had seen Him in a verdant garden, [in the form of a young man (*shābb*)[789]] having under him a carpet of gold, [and also] on a footstool of gold that carried four angels, an angel in the

---

[786] See above.

[787] *Exod. R.* 3.1; *Num. R.* 2.25; *Lev. R.* 20.10; Ira Chernus, "Nourished by the Splendor of the of the Shekinah:" A Mystical Motif in Rabbinic Midrash," in idem, *Mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism* (Studia Judaica 11; Berlin and New York: Walter De Gruyter, 1982) 74-87.

[788] See above.

[789] See e.g. Ibn Fūrak, *Mushkil al-ḥadīth*, 386: Ibn 'Umar to Ibn 'Abbās: "Did the Messenger of God see his Lord?" "Yes, he saw Him in His form (*ṣūratihi*) on a golden throne, veiled with a golden cover, in the form of a young man (*shābb rajul*)." On this image of God in the form of a young man see below.

form of a man, an angel in the form of a bull, an angel in the form of an eagle, an angel in the form of a lion.[790]

A remarkable image! This is clearly an Islamic version of the paramount manifestation of the *kābôd yhwh* found in the Book of Ezekiel.

> And I looked, and behold, a whirlwind…and out of the midst thereof came four living creatures…As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man and a lion, on the right side: an ox and an eagle on the left…And above the firmament that was above their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the appearance of a man above it…And this was the appearance of the likeness of the *kābôd yhwh* (Ezek. 1:4-28).

David Halperin has demonstrated the likelihood that seventh-century Arabian Judaism was aware of some *Merkabah* traditions and through themt some later Muslims probably learned to identify the *ḥamalat al-ʿarsh* or "Throne-bearers" of the Qurʾān (40:7; 69:17) with the *ḥayyôt* or living creatures associated with the divine throne in Ezekiel's vision.[791] Halperin uncovers intriguing evidence that Muḥammad himself came into contact with this Arabian Jewish *Merkabah* speculation.[792] Halperin took a close look at the Islamic traditions concerning Ibn Ṣayyād, the Jewish youth of Medina and contemporary of Muḥammad there who claimed to be a prophet himself and, consequently, is cast in later Muslim tradition as al-Dajjāl, the Muslim antichrist.[793] The early Ibn Ṣayyād traditions, Halperin suspects, are authentic, fragmentary reports of contact between Muḥammad and his Jewish rival in Medina. The traditions are inconvenient and at times quite embarrassing from a Muslim perspective (a sentiment evidenced by Muslim treatment of the traditions[794]); it is hard to imagine a Muslim traditionist fabricating these reports. Nor do these fragments show any political or sectarian tendency.[795]

---

[790] Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Asmaʾ wa al-Ṣifāt*, 2:361f, 443-4; Ibn Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 198; Abū Bakr al-ʾAjurī, *al-Sharīʿa*, (ed.) Muhamma Hāmid al-Fiqī (Cairo, 1950) 494; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb Akhbār al-Ṣifāt*, 48-49; Ibn Fūrak, *Mushkil al-ḥadīth*, 386; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7: 648.

[791] "Appendix II: Islamic Reflections of Merkabah Traditions," in idem, *Faces of the Chariot*, 467-490.

[792] David J. Halperin, "Ibn Ṣayyād Traditions and the Legend of al-Dajjāl," *JAOS* 96 (1976): 213-225.

[793] See the Arabic sources cited and discussed in Halperin, "Ibn Ṣayyād Traditions."

[794] Ibid., 216, 219.

[795] Ibid., 216.

Most important for our discussion is the fragment unit that Halperin labels the Throne-Unit. These fragments depict a conversation between Muḥammad and Ibn Ṣayyād, apparently while the latter is experiencing a *Merkabah* vision.

[A] The Apostle of God said to Ibn Ṣā'id[796], what do you see?
He said, "I see a throne upon the sea (*baḥr*; var., *mā'*, water), around it *al-ḥayyāt* (var., *ḥayyāt*)."
The Apostle of God said, "He sees the Throne of the Devil (*'arsh iblīs*)."[797]

[B] The Prophet said to him, "What do you see?"
He said, "I see a throne above the water."
The Prophet said, "He sees the Throne of the Devil above the sea."[798]

Josef van Ess, who has also looked at these traditions, notes: "Il semble donc qu'Ibn Ṣayyād ait prétendu avoir eu une vision de Dieu, tout comme Muḥammad."[799] The Qur'ān locates God's throne upon water (11:7). Rumors circulated that *al-Raḥmān*, i.e. Allāh but also the God of the South Arabian Jews, had visited Ibn Ṣayyād, but "in darkness," viz. not as a luminous being but in a terrifying appearance.[800] This interpretation that Ibn Ṣayyād had seen Iblīs rather than God is not likely his.[801] Halperin has pointed out that *ḥayyāt*, the term used in the first and probably earlier fragment to describe those around the throne,[802] is an Arabized form of the Hebrew *ḥayyôt*, the living creatures that bear the divine throne in Ezekiel 1.[803] Halperin therefore suggests that Ibn Ṣayyād's vision evinces Merkabah mysticism. Van Ess disagrees however:

---

[796] Variant of name found in the sources.

[797] Ibn Ḥanbal *Musnad*, 6 vols. (Cairo, 1313 H; hereafter *Musnad¹*).III:66; Halperin, "Ibn Ṣayyād Traditions," 217.

[798] Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, # 2349; Halperin, "Ibn Ṣayyād Traditions," 217.

[799] Van Ess, "Le *MIʿRĀǦ* et la Vision de Dieu," 44: "It seems that Ibn Ṣayyād had pretended to have had a vision of God just like Muḥammad."

[800] Ibid.; idem, "Muhammad's Ascension," 15.

[801] Van Ess, "Le *MIʿRĀǦ* et la Vision de Dieu," 44.

[802] The first fragment appears in Ibn Ḥanbal's (d. 855) collection; the second appears in Tirmidhī's (d. 892).

[803] Halperin, "Ibn Ṣayyād Traditions," 217.

Mais nos sources visent autre chose: Ibn Ṣayyād prétendait être l'égal du Prophète; il aurait eu les mêmes expériences mais de façon negative. Effectivement la resemblance avec l'image du Trône de la sourate 53 est éclatante.[804]

If the resemblance to the (throne-)vision of *sūrat al-Najm* is clear, the resemblance to the throne-vision of the Ibn ʿUmar-Ibn ʿAbbās exchange is the more so. In the Ibn Ṣayyād fragment [B] the *ḥayyāt* disappear: the demonic throne is described simply as "above the sea/water." The later identification of the qurʾānic *ḥamala al-ʿarsh* or "Throne-bearers" with Ezekiel's *ḥayyōt* may account for this disappearance. Once the *ḥayyāt* were identified with the throne of God, as in the above *ḥadīth al-ruʾya*, they could no longer serve as bearers of the throne of Iblīs.

[E.] Maʿmar b. Rāshid < Ayyub al-Sikhtiyānī < Abū Qilāba al-Baṣrī < Ibn ʿAbbās:

[Ibn ʿAbbās] narrates: [One day,] the Messenger of God said: "My Lord came to me tonight, under the most beautiful form (*fī aḥsani ṣūratin*)"—I think, says [Ibn ʿAbbās], that he meant "during my sleep." "And He said [to me]: ʿOh Muḥammad, do you know what the Exalted Assembly is disputing?' — 'No,' I responded. Then He put His hand between my shoulder blades, to the point that I felt its coolness between my nipples, and I knew from that moment [all] that is in the heavens and on the earth. He said [to me]: '[And well,] oh Muḥammad, do you know what the Exalted Assembly (*al-mala' al-aʿlā*)[805] is disputing?'—'Yes,' I said: of atonements and of degrees. [—And what are atonements and degrees? Atonements, that is to live in the mosque after the canonical prayer, to go on foot to the gatherings, to proceed as it is necessary to the ablution when it is disagreeable... (...) And the degrees, it is to spread greetings, to give to eat [to the needy], to pray all night while people sleep'."[806]

The God of Muḥammad is beautiful, we are told in another ḥadīth, and he loves beauty.[807] We now learn that this includes morphic beauty. Ignaz Goldziher saw in this

---

[804] Van Ess, "Le *MIʿRĀǦ* et la Vision de Dieu," 44: "But the sources aim at something else: Ibn Ṣayyād pretended to be the Prophet's equal; he would have had the same experiences but in a negative way. In fact, the resemblance to the picture of the Throne of sūra 53 is clear."

[805] The Islamic version of the ANE/biblical "Divine Council." See Q 37:8; 38:69; *EQ* 1:462-463 s.v. Court by Khalid Yahya Blankinship.

[806] Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad[1]*, 3:437, #3483; Al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, *apud* al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuḥfa al-aḥwadhī*, 9:101ff, #3286; Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Asmaʾ wa al-Ṣifāt*, 2:300; al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-Ruʾya*, 329 #244; Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī, *Musnad Abī Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī* (ed. Ḥusayn Salim Asad; Damascus: Dār al-Maʾmūn lil-Turāth, 1984-), 4: 475, #281.

[807] Fudayl b. ʿAmr al-Fuqymī < Ibrāhīm al-Nahāʾī < ʿAlqama b. Qays < ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd: "The Messenger of God answered: God is beautiful (*jamīl*). He loves beauty." Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *imān* 147; Ibn Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 384.

family of reports "flagrant anthropomorphism."[808] Indeed, the physical contact between Lord and Prophet here described is not only the "summit of intimacy" as Josef van Ess has described it,[809] but the summit of corporeal expression as well: Allāh physically touches Muḥammad. Such a theophany offended the sensibilities of the anti-anthropomorphist theologians who subjected the report to de-anthropomorphizing interpretations.[810] Other scholars tried to impugn the authenticity of the ḥadīth.[811] But the traditionalists generally accepted it.[812] This report and its variants is narrated on the authority of 12 other Companions: Muʿadh b. Jabal,[813] Jābir b. Samura,[814] Abū Hurayra,[815] Anas b. Mālik,[816] Abū Umāma,[817] Abū ʿUbayda b. al-Jarrāḥ,[818] ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. ʿAʾis,[819] Thawbān, *mawla rasūli llah*,[820] ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar,[821] Abū Rāfiʿ,[822]

---

[808] Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, 107.

[809] Van Ess, "Le *MIʿRĀǦ* et la Vision de Dieu," 48.

[810] The Ashʿarite Ibn Fūrak, for example, recounts in his *Mushkil al-ḥadīth wa bayānuh*, 70f, several interpretations advanced by the theologians: either the "most beautiful form" refers to the Prophet who saw God while in this state, or it refers to a created form used by God to communicate to His Prophet, or even the form of an angel in which God inheres. The *muḥaddithūn* polemicized violently against these hermeneutics (see below). For a discussion of this ḥadīth see Daniel Gimaret, *Dieu à l'image de l'homme*, 143ff; idem, "Au Cœur du *MIʿRĀǦ*, un Hadith Interpolé," in Amir-Moezzi, *Le Voyage Initiatique en Terre D'Islam*, 67-82.

[811] The Ashʿarite Al-Bayhaqī (d. 1066), *Al-Asmaʾ wa al-Ṣifāt*, 2:79 declared "all of [the reports] are *ḍaʿīf* (weak)" and Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1200) said, "It is not sound" (*Daf Shubah al-tashbīh bi-akaff al-tanzīh* ['Ammān: Dār al-Imām Nawawī, 1991], 149).

[812] See following notes.

[813] Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad¹*, 5:243; al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, apud al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuḥfa al-aḥwadhī*, 9: 106ff, #3288; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7:203.

[814] Al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7:203, *sūra Ṣad*.

[815] Al-Lālikāʾī, *Sharḥ uṣūl* 2: 520; al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-Ruʾya*, 342 #257; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7: 203.

[816] Al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-Ruʾya*, 333 #247; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7: 204; idem, *al-Laʿālīʾ*, 31; al-Dhahabī, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-ʿIlal al-mutanāhīya li-Ibn al-Jawzī* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd : Sharikat al-Riyāḍ, 1998) 26.

[817] Al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7: 204; Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī, *Kitāb majmaʿ al-baḥrayn fī zawāʾid al-muʿjamayn* (Riyāḍ: Maktabāt al-Rushd, 1992), 370; Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Al-Sunna*, 1: 326, #475.

[818] Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, 14 vols. (Cairo, 1931), 8: 151; Al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7: 205.

[819] Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 30 vols. (ed. Shuʿayb al-Arnāʾut. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risālah, 1993; hereafter *Musnad²*) 27: 171, #16621; ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Dārimī, *Sunan al-Dārimī*, 2 vols.

'Abd al-Raḥman b. Sābiṭ,[823] and Abu al-Darda'.[824] This tradition is reported by Ibn Ḥanbal, Al-Tirmidhī, Abī Ya'lā al-Mawṣilī (d. 919), 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dārimī (d. 869), 'Uthman al-Dārimī (d. 895)[825] Ibn Abī 'Āṣim (d. 900), al-Ṭabarānī (d. 971), Al-Lālikā'ī (d. 1027), Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī (d. 1405), Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 1449), and al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505). Ibn Ḥanbal judged it ṣaḥīḥ.[826] Al-Tirmidhī judged it ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ and said: "I asked Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl (al-Bukhārī) about this ḥadīth and he said: hadhā ṣaḥīḥ ("This is sound").[827] Khaldūn Aḥdab declared, "The ḥadīth is ṣaḥīḥ. It was reported by a group of Companions, among them: Mu'ādh b. Jabal, Ibn 'Abbas, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Ā'is, Ibn 'Umar, Abū Hurayra, and Anas, may God be pleased with them"[828] and Ibn Mandah, in his **Al-Maṣdar al-Sābiq** said also: "This ḥadīth is reported from ten (sic) Companions of the Prophet; and the Imāms of the countries, from the people of the east to the west, relayed it from them."[829] Thus, whatever its actual status vis-à-vis authenticity, traditionalist Sunnism embraced the report.

Besides the "flagrant anthropomorphism" our attention is also drawn to Ibn 'Abbās's suggestion that the Prophet *meant* that God came to him in his sleep (aḥsabuhu ya'nī fī 'n-

---

(Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2000), 1: 606f; Al-Lālikā'ī, *Sharḥ uṣūl* 2: 514; Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Asma' wa al-Ṣifāt*, 2: 63; Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *al-Āḥād wa al-mathānī* (Riyāḍ, 1991), 5: 48; al-Haythamī, *Kitāb majma' al-baḥrayn*, 366.

[820] Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *Al-Sunna*, 1: 328, #479; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7: 205; al-Haythamī, *Kitāb majma'*, 367.

[821] Al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-Ru'ya*, 336 # 252; al-Haythamī, *Kitāb majma' al-baḥrayn*, 369, #11743.

[822] Al-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Mu'jam al-kabīr* (Baghdād: al-Dār al-'Arabīyah lil-Ṭibā'ah, 1978; hereafter *Al-Mu'jam¹*), 1: 296, #938.

[823] Ibn Abī Shaybah, *al-Kitāb al-muṣannaf fī al-aḥādīth wa-al-āthār* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1989), 7:424.

[824] Al-Faḍl b. Shādhān, *al-Īḍāḥ* (ed. Jalal al-Din al-Husayni al-Urmawi; Tihrān, 1972) 26.

[825] Uthmān b. Sa'īd al-Dārimī, *Naqd al-Imām Abī Sa'īd 'Uthmān b. Sa'īd 'alā al-Marīsī al-Jahmī al-'anīd*, 2 vols. (Riyāḍ: al-Mamlaka al-'Arabīya al-Sa'ūdīya: Maktaba al-Rushd: Sharikat al-Riyāḍ, 1998), 2: 733ff.

[826] 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abī, *Al-Kāmil fī ḍu'afā' al-rijāl*, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1984), 6: 2344. Ibn 'Abī reports concerning the Mu'adh b. Jabal report: "I saw Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal declare sound this report...He (Ibn Ḥanbal) said: 'This, I consider it sound'."

[827] Al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, apud al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuhfa al-aḥwadhī*, 9: 106ff, #3288.

[828] Khaldūn Aḥdab, *Zawā'id Tārīkh Baghdād 'ala al-kutub al-sittah* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1996), 6: 253.

[829] *Apud* al-Dārimī, *Naqd*, 2:734.

nawm). In the versions of this ḥadīth, call it *ḥadīth aḥsan ṣūra* ("report of the 'beautiful

form'"), on the authority of Mu'adh b. Jabal and Anas b. Mālik the Prophet explicitly says

he saw God while asleep.[830] This would then be a dream theophany. This contradicts the

plain sense of the qur'ānic description of Muḥammad's visionary experience (53:17).[831]

But those qur'ānic visions would have taken place while the Prophet was still in Mecca.

This dream theophany, however, would have taken place in Medina. This is made clear

in the preamble to the Mu'adh b. Jabal report.

> [Mu'adh] narrates: One morning, the Messenger of God took a long time to come join us
> for the dawn prayer, until the moment where we were on the point of seeing the sun
> come up. The Prophet then came out hurriedly. They did the second call to prayer, and
> the Messenger of God did the prayer, but his prayer was short. When he had
> pronounced the final salutation, he shouted to us: "Remain in rows as you are!" Then he
> turned towards us and said: "I am going to tell you what made me late this morning. I
> got up last night [to pray]. I did the ablution, I prayed what destiny wished that I pray;
> then while I was praying, sleepiness took me, and I fell asleep. And there, in front of me,
> was my Lord, under the most beautiful form. He said [to me]: "Oh Muḥammad"...[832]

Also in the report on the authority of Thawbān it is stated: "The Messenger of God left

our meeting after the morning-prayer and said [to us]: 'My Lord came to me tonight in

the most beautiful form'..."[833] Muḥammad therefore recounts this dream theophany

after the ritual communal morning prayer, which suggests a Medinan context.[834] This

means the vision would have occurred in Medina. Muḥammad accordingly would have

experienced at least three visions of God: two visions *bi-'l-baṣar* in Mecca and one *bi 'l-qalb*

in Medina. This circumstance may account for a curious statement attributed to 'Ikrima:

> 'Abbād b. Manṣūr said: "I asked 'Ikrima about God's statement, 'his heart lied not
> concerning what he saw (53:11)' and he said: 'You expect that (*turīd in*) I will report to you
> that (the Prophet) saw his Lord? Yes he saw Him. Then he saw Him. Then he saw
> Him..."[835]

---

[830] See above nn. 813, 816. On the variant reading of the Mu'adh b. Jabal report see below.

[831] See above.

[832] See above n. 813.

[833] See above n. 820.

[834] On the development of the communical prayer in Islam see e.g. *EQ* 4:215-231 s.v. Prayer by Gerhard
Böwering.

[835] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 27: 48; al-Lālikāʾī, *Sharḥ uṣūl* 2: 516.

Three 'God-sightings' are here mentioned.[836] This also may account for the seeming ambivalence attributed to Ibn 'Abbās over whether Muḥammad saw God with his eyes, his heart, or both on different occasions. Because this vision of God is Medinan and thus distinct from the visions alluded to in *sūrat al-Najm* a Jibrīlian reading of the latter does not necessarily mean that the exegete denies that Muḥammad ever saw God. A clear statement to this effect is given by Taqī ad-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taymīya (d. 1328):

> It is sound (*ṣaḥḥ*) from (Ibn 'Abbās) that (the Prophet) said "I saw my Lord, Glorious and Most High." But this was not during the Night Journey. Rather it was in Medina when the Prophet was held back from the morning prayer. Then he reported to them about the Vision of his Lord Most High that night in his sleep…And as for Ibn 'Abbās's statement that (the Prophet) saw God twice with his heart then this is based on God's statement, "The heart lied not concerning what he saw (53:11)" and His statement "Indeed he saw him descend again (53:13)"…It is sound regarding theses verse that the one seen here is Jibrīl. He saw him twice in his original form…[837]

Ibn Taymīya supports the secondary Jibrīlian reading of *sūrat al-Najm* but is also an advocate of Muḥammad's *ru'yat Allāh* because the latter happened later in Medina according to these reports from Ibn 'Abbās, Mu'adh and Thawbān. This should caution us against assuming that a Jibrīlian reading of *sūrat al-Najm* attributed to a Companion of Muḥammad necessarily means that this Companion denies the Prophet's *ru'ya*.

The dream-theophany is an important means of revelation in ANE, Mediterranean and biblical traditions and a brief look at these traditions may shed some light on this oneiric epiphany allegedly experienced by Muḥammad. Ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean peoples, including Israel, understood dreams differently than do we in post-Freudian society. We tend to think of dreams as unreal, internal, subjective phenomena. But in these ancient traditions dreams were external experiences in the sleep and genuine divine communications.[838] Ancient dreams fall into three major categories:

---

[836] In Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 7:450 'Ikrima says rather: "Yes. He saw Him, then he saw Him," i.e. only two sightings.

[837] Ibn Qayyīm al-Jawzīya, *Zād al-ma'ād fī hady khayr al-'ibād*, 6 vols. (Beirut, Lebanon: Manshūrāt Muḥammad 'Alī Bayḍūn, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1998) 3: 28-29; al-Qāsimī, *Tafsīr al-Qāsimī*, 15: 367-68.

[838] See the foundational study by Leo Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East: With a Translation of an Assyrian Dream-Book* (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 46, pt. 3; Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1956); idem, "Mantic Dreams in the Ancient Near East," in G.E. von Grunebaum and R. Callois (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966) 341-350. See also Frances Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests: Jewish Dreams in the Hellenistic and Roman Eras* (Journal

the message dream, the symbolic dream, and the psychological status dream. Only the first two have revelatory import.[839] They do not originate from the psychology of the dreamer. They come to the dreamer from the outside - from the divine realm.

The symbolic dream consists of imagery, sometimes bizarre, that usually requires the interpretive assistance of an oneirocritic. A symbolic dream-report must then include both the dream and its interpretation.[840] While the god may appear in the symbolic dream acting out a scene, theophany proper is not characteristic of these dreams; in the biblical symbolic dream God never appears.[841] In contrast the message dream involves an anthropomorphic theophany and a clear message communicated to the dreamer from the deity.[842] An oneirocritic is not usually required.[843] A dialogue between deity and dreamer often ensues, frequently with the deity questioning the dreamer.[844] The *actual* presence of the deity in the dream is usually stressed.[845] "Overall, the [message-dream] stresses the objective reality of the dream as a genuine epiphany of a deity."[846] The 'reality' of the

---

for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series 90; Leiden: Brill, 2004) Chapter One; Robert C. Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus: A Traditio-Historical Analysis* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996) Chapter Two.

[839] The psychological status dream includes content that reflects the psychological and/or physical status of the dreamer. See Oppenhiem, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 184; Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 19.

[840] Oppenhiem, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 206.

[841] Bar, *A Letter That Has Not Been Read*, 45; idem, "Dreams in the Bible," XIII, 113.

[842] "The auditory message dream is a clearly understood vocal message by the deity with no visual communication of the message other than the physical appearance of the deity." Robert C. Gnuse, "A Reconsideration of the Form-Critical Structure in I Samuel 3: An Ancient Near Eastern Dream Theophany," *ZAW* 94 (1982): 380 [art.=379-390]. On dream-theophanies in ANE and biblical traditions see further: Robert C. Gnuse, "Dreams in the Night – scholarly mirage or theophanic formula?: The dream report as a motif of the so-called elohist tradition," *BZ* 39 (1995): 28-53; idem. *The Dream Theophany of Samuel: Its Structure in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Dreams and its Theological Significance.* Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1984; Murray Lichtenstein, "Dream-Theophany and the E Document," *JANESCU* 1-2 (1969): 45-54; U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch. Eight Lectures* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961) 59-63.

[843] Gnuse, *Dream Theophany*, 16.

[844] Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 21; Gnuse, "Dreams in the Night," 35; Burke O. Long, "Reports of Visions Among the Prophets," *JBL* 95 (1976): 356 [art.=353-365].

[845] Ibid. 18: "The dream content often stresses the actual presence of the deity."

[846] Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 21. Flannery-Dailey stresses again that the oneiric visit from the deity is "an actual epiphany" 37; Versnel, "What Did Ancient Man See," 48; Oppenheim, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 188.

theophany is at times guaranteed by an act of the deity that encroaches upon the waking life of the dreamer. A gesture, for example, might break through such as the hand of the deity leaving a physical token behind or even touching the dreamer.[847] In an Assyrian letter describing a dream-theophany by the god Bêl the supplicant noted: "he (Bêl) placed his hand upon my hand [saying]: 'My hand [is] upon your hand'."[848] As Leo Oppenheim observed: "Here, the wording of the divine message is accompanied and underlined by a gesture which breaks through the curtain separating the world of the gods from that of man."[849] Similarly, in what is likely his prophetic call-vision, the prophet Jeremiah experiences a theophany and sees Yahweh extend his hand and touch Jeremiah's mouth (Jer. 1:9).[850] In this case the extended divine hand and touching constitutes Jeremiah's prophetic sign ('ōth).[851]

The biblical dream-theophany report does not include a description of God's *Erscheinungsform*.[852] On the other hand ANE and Mediterranean dream reports often stress the giganticism and/or beauty of the deity.[853] The line between a dream-theophany and a

---

[847] Oppenhiem, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 188, 191; Gnuse, "Dreams in the Night," 51.

[848] Quoted from Oppenhiem, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 192.

[849] Ibid.

[850] Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 182: "This vision contains a theophany, but there are few descriptive details." See also Habel, "Form and Significance," 317: "Jeremiah himself makes clear in 23 16-18 that in contrast to the visions of the human imagination which false prophets recount, he stood in the heavenly council (סוד) and heard (שמא) the word (דבר). This דבר in Jer 23 is virtually a synonym for the קול which summons the other prophets with the heavenly council (Ez 1 28 Is 40 3.6 6 4.6.). If this is true, then the opening line of Jeremiah's call may be the summons of Yahweh from the heavenly council in which Yahweh Himself is present to address the prophet (1 7.9), to stretch forth his hand toward the prophet (I 9) as in Ez 2 9, and to make contact with his mouth (1 9) as in Is 6 7);" Jack. R.   Lundbom, "Rhetorical Structures in Jeremiah 1," *ZAW* 103 (1991): 206 [art.=193-210]; Walther Zimmerli, "Visionary experience in Jeremiah," in Richard Coggins, Anthony Phillips and Michael Knibb (edd.), *Israel's Prophetic Tradition: Essays in Honour of Peter R. Ackroyd* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1982) 96-97 [art.=95-118]. This is *pace* von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 66. "There is no indication...that he saw Jahweh as well as heard him."

[851] William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1-25*, edited by Paul D. Hanson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1986) 29; Habel, "Form and Significance," 309; J.L. Berquist, "Prophetic Legitimation in Jeremiah," *VT* 39 (1989): 132 [art.=129-139].

[852] Bar, *A Letter That Has Not Been Read*, 16.

[853] "The dream figure of the deity is quite distinct. The deity may be of gigantic proportions...The figure is sometimes described as being very beautiful." Gnuse, *Dream Theophany*, 18; John S. Hanson, "Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity," *ANRW* II, 23.2 (1980): 1410 [art.=1395-1427]; Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 21; Oppenhiem, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 189.

waking theophany was not distinct. They were both considered actual theophanies.[854] There is, however, a significant difference between the two.

> In the Near East…the theophany is the prototype of the 'message dream'…The essential feature of the theophany, however, its dramatic, soul-shocking impact, the shattering inroad of the supernatural into the reality of this world, the terror-inspiring sight of the deity, etc., have disappeared in the transfer from consciousness to dream. The change of reality level acts as a cushion to soften the contact between god and man.[855]

The issue resolved by the dream-theophany is thus not the problem of anthropomorphism vs. transcendence,[856] but the problem of the encounter between the holy and the impure and the consequences that follow. As Terence Fretheim explains:

> in a dream the whole person, with all senses functioning, is not engaged in the experience, particularly from a physical point of view. Thus, the full engagement of the person, not just the eyes, is seen to make for some difference in the experience. An actual appearance creates the supreme effect. Nevertheless…there is no elimination of the *form* of God in dream appearances (cf. Gen. 28:13; 15:5).[857]

It is important to point out here that dream reports across time and space show surprising conformity, being written in standardized patterns that transcend cultural, linguistic and geographic lines. As Frances Flannery-Daily notes: "Ishtar appears in much the same way and for many of the same purposes as Athena and Yahweh."[858] We might

---

[854] Fretheim, *Suffering*, 88-9: "It is striking that these appearances (in dreams or visions) are referred to later in the respective narratives without any reference to the fact that they occurred in dreams (see Gen. 35:1, 9; 48:3; I Kings 11:9). They are apparently recognized as no different in kind from those which occur during wakefulness…"; Versnel, "What Did Ancient Man See," 48; Lichtenstein, "Dream-Theophany," 51; Burke O. Long, "Prophetic Call Traditions and Reports of Visions," *ZAW* 84 (1972): 496 [art.=494-500]. For a discussion on the relation between prophetic dreams and prophetic visions see Bar, *A Letter That Has Not Been Read*, Chapter 5; James E. Miller, "Dreams and Prophetic Visions," *Biblica* 71 (1990): 400-404; Friedrich Horst, "Die Visionsschilderungen der alttestamentlichen Propheten." *Evangelische Theologie* 20 (1960): 193-205; M. Sister, "Die Typen der prophetischen Visionen in der Bibel," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 78 (1934): 399-430.

[855] Oppenhiem, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 192. See further Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 22.

[856] *Pace* Robert Gnuse, "Dreams and their Theological Significance in the Biblical Tradition," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 8 (1981): 169 [art.=166-177]; idem, "Dreams in the Night," 49. On this point Lichtenstein, "Dream-Theophany," surely survives Gnuse's extensive critique.

[857] Fretheim, *Suffering*, 88-9.

[858] Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 17. See also Bar, *A Letter That Has Not Been Read*, 9: "The prophetic dreams in the Bible…were set down according to a standard paradigm, which can be traced and reconstructed on the basis of sources that run from Sumeria of the third millennium BCE through the poems of Homer on to Ptolemaic Egypt."

now add Allāh as well. This dream theophany to Muḥammad conforms to the ancient paradigm of the message dream.[859] The introduction "My Lord came to me *(atānī rabbī)* tonight" conforms to the technical language used in the ancient message dream report: "But God came *(wayyābo' 'ĕlohîm)* to Abimelek in a dream by night (Gen. 20:3; cf. 31:24; Num. 22:20; I Kings 3:5)."[860] Also consistent with the ancient paradigm is the dialogue that ensues initiated by the deity's question to Muḥammad; the stress on Allāh's morphic beauty; and the touch from the divine hand that encroached upon the Prophet's waking life. The place where God's hand touched him between the shoulders, we are told, the Prophet honored by the extremity of his turban.[861]

[F.] Ḥammād b. Salama < Qatāda < 'Ikrima < Ibn 'Abbās:

The Messenger of God said: "I saw my Lord under the form of a young man *(shābb)* ose beardless *(amrad)* with curly hair *(ja'd)* and clothed in a green [or: red[862]] garment *(ḥulla).*"[863]

---

[859] Muslim oneirocriticism likewise distinguishes between literal message dreams and symbolic dreams that require interpretation. In the former, the dream figure – usually the Prophet but also God and the angels – is understood as the actual presence of the Prophet or God/angel. This is based on a popular prophetic ḥadīth: "He who sees me in a dream sees me in reality, because Satan does not take up my appearance." (al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Volume 9, Book 87, # 122, 123, 126; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ, kitāb al ru□ya*, # 5635, 5636, 5637; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad¹*, 5:138, #3410, 304, #3798; see further Leah Kinberg, "Literal Dreams and Prophetic *Ḥadīṯ*s in classical Islam – a comparison of two ways of legitimation," *Der Islam* 70 [1993]: 279-300). According to Ibn Khaldun, *al-Muqaddimah* (trans. Franz Rosenthal; Princeton University Press, 1967) 80-81 argues: "Therefore, it has been said in the *Sahih* 'There are three kinds of dream visions. There are dream visions from God, dream visions from the angels, and dream visions from Satan.' Dream visons from God are those that are evident and need no explanation. Dream visons from an angel are true dreams that require interpretation. And dream visons from Satan are confused dreams (translation modified)". On oneiric visions of God in Muslim tradition see further Pierre Lory, "La Vision de Dieu dans l'Onirocritique Musulmane Médiévale," in Todd Lawson (ed.), *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought. Essays in Honour of Hermann Landolt* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006) 353-363 and below.

[860] Gnuse, *Dream Theophany*, 144; idem, "Dreams in the Night," 35; Oppenhiem, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 188.

[861] See Qari al-Harawī, *Kitāb jam' al-wasā'il fī sharḥ al-shamā'il* (Istānbūl: Ma'ba'at Shaykh Yaḥyá, 1874), 209. According to a report on the authority of Ibn 'Umar, the Prophet used to wind the turban around his head and tuck it in behind him, letting its extremity hang down between his shoulders. (Cf. Ṭabarānī, *al-Kabīr* 12:379 #13405).

[862] Sometimes the *ḥulla* is given as *ḥamrā'* (red), but mostly as *khaḍār* (green).

[863] Ibn Adī, *al-Kāmil*, 2:677; Al-Bayhaqī, *al-Asma' wa 'ṣ-Ṣifāt*, 2:363; Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta' rīkh Baghdād*, 11: 214; al-Suyūṭī, *al-La'ālī'*, 29f; 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-'ummāl fī sanan al-aqwāl wa 'l-af āl*, 18 vols. (Haydar Abād al-Dakan: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniya, 1945) I:58; Khaldūn Aḥdab, *Zawā'id Tārīkh Baghdād*, 8:37 #1662. See also al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-i'tidāl fī naqd al-rijāl* (Cairo: 'Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1963-) 1:278 s.v. Ḥammād b. Salamma.

If Hebraic notions of the Godhead typically stressed an aged deity with curly white hair and beard,[864] Islam preferred a young, beardless God with black hair.[865] At least this is what we get from the ḥadīth reports. The youthful god motif is of course not peculiar to Islam. The same is found in ancient Egypt,[866] India,[867] and in the exegetical literature of the Rabbis.[868] But while in these traditions the youthful god was only one alternative among several anthropomorphic models, Islam showed a loyalty to the divine youth motif; rarely do we find alternative (anthropomorphic) descriptions of deity.[869]

Shābb is the intermediate stage between a boy before puberty (*ṣabī*, 15-18 years old) and a mature man (*kahl*, 30-33 years old). In the Imāmī versions of this ḥadīth, however, the *shābb* is specifically described as 30 years old.[870] The famous qur'ānic exegete Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 767), who undoubtedly based his ideas of God on the above tradition,[871] stated his Lord was 32 years old.[872] In contrast to the old bearded God this youthful deity of Islam is beardless. Now the Islamic morale advocates wearing a beard. The people of Paradise, however, are beardless, except Mūsā.[873] Adam, too, was created beardless. It was his sons who grew beards due to their father's sin.[874] *Ḥulla*, according to Ibn Manẓūr,

---

[864] See e.g. Dan 7:9. But cf. below.

[865] Josef van Ess, "Youthful God".

[866] Jan Zandee, *De hymnen aan Amun van Papyrus Leiden I 350* (Leiden, 1948), 19f.

[867] Laine, *Visions of God*, 237. See below.

[868] See below.

[869] Ritter (*Das Meer der Seele*, 446 [=*Ocean of the Soul*, 460], however quotes from Āmidī's (d. 1233 ?) *Abkār al-afkār* the statement: "And some among them (the *mujassima*, anthropomorphists) say that He has the form of an old man with grey (*sic*) hair and a grey beard (*shaykh asmaṭ al-ra's wa'l-liḥya*)."

[870] Ibāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Khazzāz and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn said: "We met Abū al-Ḥasan (Imām ʿAlī Riḍā, 765-818) and we reported to him that Muḥammad saw his Lord in the form of a fortunate (*muwaffaq*) young man, his age about thirty years; his feet were in greenness." The Imām loudly replied in horror: "Whatever you have imagined, you must imagine God as being other than that." Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* (Ṭihrān: Maktabat al-Būzarjumahrī Muṣṭafavī, 1955), 28; Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī fī ʿIlm al-dīn*, 8 vols. (ed. ʿAlī Akbar al-Ghaffārī; Ṭihrān, 1955-), 1:100f.

[871] See van Ess, "Youthful God," 10.

[872] Van Ess, *TG* 2:530.

[873] Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, *janna* 8 and 12.

[874] See C. Shöck, *Adam im Islam* (Berlin, 1993), 121f.

designates an ensemble of two or three items constituting a complete suit.[875] Most of the reports describe the *ḥulla* as green, though some say red. It is a green *ḥulla* that Jibrīl adorns and Muḥammad on the Day of Resurrection will likewise be so attired.[876]

According to Helmut Ritter the thought that God could have a particular form – that of a beardless young man, an idea popular among the Ṣūfī's – "was intolerable for orthodox Muslims" who thus "in sum rejected" these reports.[877] Both of these claims are anachronistic and, therefore, wrong. Abū Saʿīd ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-Dārimī, a leading traditionalist of Harāt (d. 895) did "totally reject"[878] this *ḥadīth al-shabb* from Ibn ʿAbbās because it is opposed by contrary reports from Abū Darr and ʿĀʾisha (see below).[879] However, this report generally had great support among the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*. Ibn Ḥanbal,[880] ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad,[881] Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim,[882] ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAdī,[883] al-Ṭabarānī,[884] al-Lālikāʾī,[885] and Abū Bakr al-ʾAjurī[886] reported it in full or *mukhtaṣar* (abridged).[887] Criticisms of this ḥadīth - and how could there not be criticisms! - have

---

[875] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 11: 172.

[876] Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir; Egypt: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1949-) (hereafter *Musnad³*), 3:456.

[877] *Das Meer der Seele*, 445 [=*Ocean of the Soul*, 459]; idem, "Philologica II," 257.

[878] He says *astankaruhu jidd^an*. Abū Saʿīd ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-Dārimī, *Naqd al-Imām Abī Saʿīd ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd ʿalā al-Marīsī al-Jahmī al-ʿanīd*, 2 vols. (Riyāḍ: al-Mamlaka al-ʿArabīya al-Saʿūdīya: Maktabāt al-Rushd: Sharikat al-Riyāḍ, 1998), 2: 726.

[879] Al-Dārimī, *Naqd*, 2:726; idem, *al-Radd ʿalā l-Jahmiyya* (Cairo, 1985), 53.

[880] Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad²*, 4:350f, #2580.

[881] ʿAbd Allāh, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 2: 484, 503, #'s 1116, 1117, 1168.

[882] Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Al-Sunna*, 1:307, #442.

[883] Ibn ʿAdī, *Al-Kāmil*, 2:677.

[884] Al-Ṭabarānī, *Kitāb al-sunna*, *apud* al-Muttaqī, *Kanz al-ʿummāl*, I:58.

[885] Al-Lālikāʾī, *Sharḥ uṣūl* 2: 512.

[886] Al-ʾAjurī, *al-Sharīʿa*, 491f.

[887] Ritter's claim that "the traditions were in sum rejected by the orthodox" is inaccurate for the modern world as well. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (d. 1958), editor of Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad* and clearly the "greatest traditionalist of his time (G.H. A. Juynboll, "Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir [1892-1958] and his edition of Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad*," *Studies on the Origins and Uses of Islamic Ḥadīth* [Brookfield, Vt.: Variorum, 1996], 222)" declared: "the ḥadīth in its essence is *ṣaḥīḥ*." Likewise Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, editor of Ibn Abī

mainly come from those already adverse to the anthropomorphism and tended to focus on Ḥammād b. Salama. According to Ibn al-Jawzī "this is a ḥadīth that is not affirmed; all of its routes are from Ḥammād b. Salama."[888] And, we are assured, Ḥammād had a foster son, Ibn Abī al-'Awjā', who was a *zandīq* (heretic) and used to interpolate (*yaḍussu*) in Ḥammād's books these types of *aḥādīth*.[889] Contrarily, Ibrāhīm b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī claimed that Ḥammād didn't know these *aḥādīth* until he went to 'Abbādān, among a settlement of Ṣūfis. He then came back reporting them. [890]

The *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* or traditionalists rejected both of the above accounts.[891] Ḥammād, for his part, claimed to have gotten the report directly from Qatāda.[892] Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn reported a similar account:

> I was with Ḥammād b. Salama and a candid writing came to him censuring him for those *aḥādīth* he reported - meaning in the Vision - and commanding him to retract them. Ḥammād said: "I will not do it! I heard them from reliable people and I reported them as I heard them!" [893]

Ibn 'Adī argued,

> Ibn Abī Dāwud said to us: (Aswad b. 'Āmir) Shādhān reported this ḥadīth as well as Ibrāhīm b. Abī Suwayd [al-Darra], 'Affān b. Muslim, and 'Abd al-Ṣamad b. Kaysān, from Ḥammād, and al-Ḥakam b. Abān reported it from Zayrik, from 'Ikrima. These *aḥādīth* reported from Ḥammād b. Salama in the Vision and in the people of Paradise's vision of their Creator, other than Ḥammād reported them. Ḥammād is not alone in reporting this so it (the report) is not to be denied.[894]

'Āṣim, *Kitāb al-sunna*, says of this report: *ḥadīth ṣaḥīḥ rijāluhu rijāl al-Ṣaḥīḥ* "the report is sound. Its transmitters are men from the sound ḥadīth collections": Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *Al-Sunna*, 1:311.

[888] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Daf' Shubah al-tashbīh*, 154, n. 81.

[889] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Daf' Shubah al-tashbīh*, 155. Cf. Johann Fück, "Spuren des Zindīqtums in der islamischen Tradition," in *Arabishe Kultur und Islam im Mittelater* (Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger Weimar, 1981), 267-271.

[890] Al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-i'tidāl*, 1: 594.

[891] 'Abd Allah al-Ḥashidī, editor of al-Bayhaqī's *al-Asmā' wa 'ṣ-Ṣifāt*, finds these reports problematic as well, in as much as neither Ibrāhīm's father, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī, who actually narrated from Ḥammād, nor any of the latter's companions, mention this. See Al-Bayhaqī, *al-Asmā' wa 'l-Ṣifāt*, 2: 366.

[892] Al-Lālikā'ī, *Sharḥ uṣūl* 2: 513.

[893] Muḥammad b. 'Imrān al-Marzubānī, *Kitāb nūr al-qabas al-mukhtaṣar* (Fīsbādin: Dār al-Nashr Frāntis Shitāyinir, 1964-) 1: 48.

[894] Ibn 'Adī, *al-Kāmil*, 2:278.

That this report was not to be denied seems to have been the general sentiment among the traditionalists. Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn said: "Ḥammād is from the best of the Muslims and the People of the Sunna. He is reliable and trustworthy with us. And the *aḥādīth* that he reported in the Vision, we believe in them. He who denies them is with us an innovator. We do not interpret them."[895] Abū Bakr b. Ṣadaqa reports hearing the great *muḥaddith* Abu Zurʿa al-Rāzī (d. 878) say: "The ḥadīth of Qatāda from ʿIkrima from Ibn ʿAbāss in the Vision is sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*). (Aswad b. ʿĀmir) Shādhān and ʿAbd al-Ṣamad (b. Kaysān) and Ibrāhīm b. Abī Suwayd reported it and none denies it except the Muʿtazila."[896] This *ḥadīth al shabb* (report of the [divine] youth) and its image of God, *pace* Ritter, would go on to have a significant impact on the Sunnī *Gotteslehre*.[897]

6.1.2. Abū Hurayra (d. 678)

Abū Hurayra is a controversial figure. Though he reportedly spent only two years with the Prophet he is the most abundant Companion-narrator of prophetic ḥadīth: a staggering 5000+ according to some estimates (compared, e.g. to the 142 that Abū Bakr's 23 years with Muḥammad could generate). According to later commentators Abū Hurayra shows a *Doppelgesicht* in this controversy over Muḥammad's *Visio Dei*. He is presented as both an affirmer and denier of the Vision. An interesting illustration is in al-Lālikāʾī's (d.1027) ***Sharḥ uṣūl iʿtiqād ahl l-sunna wa l-jamāʿa***. His chapter discussing "That which is reported regarding the Prophet's (ṣ) seeing God" is subtitled: "The reports concerning that on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās and Abū Hurayra."[898] The chapter includes 11 reports affirming the Prophet's *ruʾya*: ten from Ibn ʿAbbās and the other from Abū Hurayra. Al-Lālikāʾī's editor, Aḥmad Saʿd Ḥamdān, after listing in a note those who affirm the Vision (Ibn ʿAbbās and all of his companions, Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, and Abū Dharr) and those who deny it (ʿĀʾisha and Ibn Masʿūd), then claims that "both

---

[895] Al-Marzubānī, *Kitāb nūr al-qabas*, 1: 48.

[896] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Laʿālīʿ*, 30; al-Muttaqī, *Kanz al-ʿummāl*, I:58 (both quoting Al-Ṭabarānī, *Kitāb al-sunna*).

[897] See below.

[898] al-Lālikāʾī, *Sharḥ uṣūl* 2:512.

176

positions appear on the authority of Abū Hurayra."[899] Yet there is no statement from Abū Hurayra denying the *ru'ya*. This *Doppelgesicht* of Abū Hurayra is artificial. The sources don't support the presumed ambivalence on his part.

[A.] 'Alī b. Mashar < 'Abd al-Mālik < 'Aṭā' < Abū Hurayra:

re: "He saw him at another descent (53:13)":(Abū Hurayra said): "He saw Jibrīl, peace be upon him."[900]

According to this tradition Abū Hurayra read *sūrat al-Najm* angelophanically. This is likely the reason he is often placed in that group who denied Muḥammad's Vision.[901] But as pointed out above the former position does not necessarily imply the latter. Indeed, while Abū Hurayra is not on record explicitly denying the Vision he is on record explicitly affirming it.

[B.] Yūnus b. Bakīr < Muḥammad b. Isḥāq < Dāwud b. Ḥaṣīn < Mawān (b. Ḥakam?):

Mawān asked Abū Hurayra: "Did Muḥammad see his Lord?" He said: "Yes, he saw Him."[902]

[C.] Abū Sufyān b. Wakī' < 'Ubayd Allāh b. Abī Ḥamīd < Abū al-Malīḥ < Abū Hurayra:

The Messenger of God said: "I saw my Lord, May He be exalted and great, in the most beautiful form. He said to me, 'O Muḥammad!' I said: 'Here I am at Your service!' He said: 'Do you know over what the Exalted Assembly dispute'..."[903]

[D.] Abū Hurayra:

The Messenger of God said: "I saw my Lord in a verdant garden curly haired (*ja'd qaṭaṭ*[an]).[904]

---

[899] Ibid. n. 1.

[900] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, #178; al-Bahayqī, *al-Asma' wa al-Ṣifāt* 2:351; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 7:453; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7: 649.

[901] E.g. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 7: 447.

[902] 'Abd Allāh, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 1:175, #217; al-Lālikā'ī, *Sharḥ uṣūl* 2:516 #908.

[903] Al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-Ru'ya*, 342 #257; al-Lālikā'ī, *Sharḥ uṣūl*, 2:520 #919; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7:203.

[904] Ibn Shādhān, *al-Iḍāḥ*, 20-21.

The "paragon of the Sunna" (as he has been called) is thus presented as an advocate of the Prophet's vision of God in his most beautiful form of a curly-haired youth. The authenticity question could be raised for all of these reports. What is to be noted, however, is that the sources don't present Abū Hurayra as denying the Vision. They present him as affirming it for Muḥammad (probably while in Medina as the *ḥadīth aḥsan ṣūra* implies) and as reading *sūrat al-Najm* as visions of the angel. As shown above the two positions are not mutually exclusive. There is thus no evidence in the sources indicating a *Doppelgesicht* for this Companion.

6.1.3. Anas b. Mālik (d. 709 or 712)

This famed Ṣaḥābī and Anṣārī is presented with only a 'single face': he affirmed the Prophet's Vision of God. According to al-Baghawī and al-Qurṭubī Anas affirmed a *ru'ya bi 'l-baṣar* or vision with his eyes.[905]

[A.] 'Īsā al-Buḥturī al-Miṣī < Rishdīn < Abū 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Ḥārithī < Qatāda < Anas b. Mālik:

The Messenger of God said: God fashioned Friendship for Abraham, Direct Speech for Moses, and *Visio Dei (al-Ru'ya)* for Muḥammad."[906]

[B.] Abū Baḥr al-Bakarāwī < Shu'ba b. al-Ḥajjāj < < Qatāda < Anas:

Muḥammad saw his Lord, Blessed and Most High.[907]

[C.] Al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ṣubāḥ < Yūsuf b. 'Aṭīya al-Ṣufār < Qatāda < Anas:

A new day dawned on us and the Messenger of God came and reported to us: "My Lord came to me in my sleep in the most beautiful form, and he placed his hand between my shoulder blades, to the point that I could feel its coolness between my nipples. Then he made known to me everything. And he said, 'O Muḥammad'...[908]

---

[905] Al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, 4:247; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 17:92.

[906] Al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-Ru'ya*, 190 # 66.

[907] Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *al-Sunna*, 1:306; Ibn Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 199.

[908] Al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-Ru'ya*, 333 # 247; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7:204; idem, *al-La'ālī'*, 31. See also al-Dhahabī, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-'Ilal al-mutanāhīya li-Ibn al-Jawzī* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd: Sharikat al-Riyāḍ, 1998), 26.

[D.] Al-Layth b. Sa'd < Isḥāq b. 'Abd Allāh b. Abī Farwa < Mukḥūl < Anas:

The Messenger of God said: I saw (my Lord) in His most beautiful form like a young man with exuberant hair (al-muwaffar), sitting on the Throne of Grace, around him a golden carpet. He put His hand between my shoulders and I felt its coolness in my liver. He said to me, 'O Muḥammad'...".[909]

These last two reports, which clearly are meant to represent the same *aḥsan ṣūra* dream theophany, may at first sight appear to contradict al-Baghawī's and al-Qurṭubī's claim that Anas affirmed a *ruʾya bi 'l-baṣar* or it may suggest that he actually does show a *Doppelgesicht* in this controversy. This is not necessary, however. Unlike Abū Hurayra, or at least how Abū Hurayra is presented, Anas did not read *sūrat al-Najm* angelophanically. He read it, according to what has been attributed to him, as evidence of Muḥammad's visionary encounter with God during the Night Journey/Ascension, which was a real (i.e. physical) event, we are told. Anas could therefore have affirmed both a *ruʾya bi 'l-baṣar* and a *ruʾya bi 'l-qalb* occurring on different occasions.

[E.] ('Abd Allāh ?) b. Wahb < Sulaymāb b. Bilāl < Sharīk b. Abī Namir:

(Sharīk) said: "I heard Anas b. Mālik narrate to us concerning the Messenger of God's (ṣ) Night Journey (laylat al-masrā): 'Jibrīl ascended with the Messenger of God (ṣ) to the seventh heaven. Then he ascended with him to only God knows where until he (Muḥammad) came to the Lote-Tree of the Boundary (cf. 53:14) and the Omnipotent (al-Jabbār), Lord of Might "drew close, drew closer still until He was from him the measure of two bows or closer. Then God revealed to him what He wished (53:8-10)." God revealed to him that which concerns the imposition of the fifty prayers on his community every day and night'."[910]

[F.] Sa'īd b. Maṣūr < al-Ḥārith b. 'Ubayd < Abū 'Umrān al-Jawnī < Anas:

The Messenger of God said (re: "Then he revealed to His servant what He revealed [53:10]"): "I saw a great light, before it a veil of *rafraf* covered with pearls and rubies. Then God revealed to me what He wished to reveal."[911]

[G.] Muḥammad b. Sulaymān b. Ḥabīb Luwayn < Suwayd b. 'Abd al-Azīz < Humayd al-Tawīl < Anas:

[909] Al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-Ruʾya*, 356-7 # 285.

[910] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 27:45. See also Bhukari, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 37.

[911] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 7: 445; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7:646.

The Messenger of God said: "The Night of my *isrā'* concluded with me in Heaven. Then I saw my Lord. Between Him and me was a raised (*bāriz*) veil. And I saw every thing from Him, so that I indeed saw a crown woven from pearls."[912]

According to these traditions Anas affirmed both the theophanic reading of *sūrat al-Najm* and that the visions there mentioned included a vision of God during the non-qur'ānic *mi'rāj* (Ascension) which is here conflated with the qur'ānic *isrā'* (horizontal Night Journey). Traditions [E] and [F] may at first sight seem at odds: did Muḥammad see God or just a veil? But the "great light" before the veil in report [E] may very well be the God behind the raised veil of report [F]. Indeed, in a narrative reported by Ibn Sa'd on the authority of Anas we read:

Then he (Jibrīl) opened the door of heavens for me. I saw *the Great Light* and there was before me a curtain, with patterns of pearls and rubies in it. Then Allāh revealed to me what he willed.[913]

"The Great Light" behind the curtain could be Allāh who revealed to Muḥammad what he did. If so, this will not be the last time we encounter this motif of a vision of God described as a vision of a great light.[914] God's *jalāl*, Majesty, we recall, is brilliantly luminous, i.e. a "great light."[915]

6.1.4. Asmā' bint Abī Bakr (d. 692-3)

'Ā'isha, daughter of Abū Bakr the first Caliph and beloved wife of the Prophet, rejected the claim that Muḥammad saw God according to reports. According to the reports as well she seems to have been isolated with this position, not only in the community of the Companions generally, but apparently within her own family as well. We are told that her father Abū Bakr even asked the Prophet if he saw God and got an

---

[912] Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī. *Ta' rīkh Baghdād*, 10: 135; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-mawḍū'āt min al-aḥadīth al-marfū'āt* (Riyāḍ: Maktaba Aḍwā' al-Salaf, 1997), 1:165; idem, *Kitāb Akhbār al-Ṣifāt*, 184 (Eng.); al-Suyūṭī, *al-La'ālī'*,13f.

[913] *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*, 1:196.

[914] See below.

[915] See above.

affirmative answer.[916] 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr, her nephew and important transmitter of her materials, affirmed the Vision and said her rejection of it was painful for him.[917] Another daughter of the first Caliph, Asmā' bint Abī Bakr, 'Ā'isha's half sister, reportedly narrated Muḥammad's affirmation of the Vision as well.

[A.] Yaḥyā b. 'Abbād b. 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr < 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr < his grandfather < Asmā':

> I heard the Messenger of God (ṣ) say while describing the *sidrat al-muntahā* (Lote-Tree of the Boundary, 53:16): "On it was a covering (*firāsh*) made of gold and its fruits were few (?, *thamaruhā ka-'l-qilāl*), its foliage like elephant ears." Then I (Asmā') said: "O Messenger of God, what did you see by it?" He said: "I saw my Lord by it."[918]

[B.] 'Abd Allāh b. Lahī'a < Yūnus b. Yazīd < Muḥammad b. Isḥāq < Yaḥyā b. 'Abbād < Asmā':

> (The Prophet said): "I saw my Lord on the Day of 'Arafa in 'Arafa upon a red camel. He was wearing two sheets and saying: 'I have pardoned, I have forgiven, except acts of injustice".[919]

Asmā' is here presented, in contrast to 'Ā'isha's famous stance, as an advocate of the theophanic reading of *sūrat al-Najm* and of Muḥammad's vision of God. Report [B.] seems to have an eschatological setting. As Suliman Bashear has demonstrated, the 'rider of the [red] camel, *rakīb al-ba'īr [aḥmar]*' was one of the titles of the awaited redeemer in Jewish and Christian tradition.[920] Eventually Muslim tradition will appropriate the sign/title as a proof of Muḥammad's prophecy.[921] According to some Shī'ī writers it was popular in some Sunnī circles that the rider of the camel was the youthful Allāh.[922] The ninth

---

[916] See Ibn Taymīya, *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawīya* (Cairo, 1964) 2:511. Ibn Taymīya rejects this report as a lie, but he likewise rejects the report of 'Ā'isha as a lie as well.

[917] Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 8:608.

[918] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Khaṣā'iṣ al-kubrā aw kifāyat al-ṭālib al-labīb fī khaṣā'iṣ al-ḥabīb*, ed. Muḥammad Khalīl Harrās (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, 1967) 1:438.

[919] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-mawḍū'āt min al-aḥadīth al-marfū'āt* (Riyāḍ: Maktabāt Aḍwā' al-Salaf, 1997), 1:180; Al-Dhahabī, *Tartīb al-mawḍū'āt* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1994), 22; al-Suyūṭī, *al-La'ālī'*, 23; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Lisān al-Mīzān* (Multān: Idārat Tālīfāt Ashrafīyah, 1911-1912), 2:238.

[920] "Riding Beasts on Divine Missions: An Examination of the Ass and Camel Traditions," *JSS* 36 (1991): 37-75.

[921] Ibid.

[922] See below.

century Imāmī Al-Faḍl b. Shadhān attributed to Abū Hurayra the claim that "Allāh will come on the evening of 'Arafa on a red camel".[923] It is likewise reported on the authority of Abū Razīl al-'Aqīl that the Prophet said "I saw my Lord in Mina dressed in a *jubba* (on) an ass-colored camel."[924]

6.1.5. Umm al-Ṭufayl, wife of 'Ubayy b. Ka'b (d. 642)

Nu'aym b. Ḥammād < 'Abd Allāh b. Wahb < 'Amr b. al-Ḥārith < Sa'īd b. Abī Hilāl < Marwān b. Uthmān < 'Umāra b. 'Āmir < Umm al-Ṭufayl:

> Umm al-Ṭufayl narrates that one day she heard the Messenger of God say that he had seen his Lord, during his sleep, under the most beautiful form, [like] a young man (*shābb*) with long hair (*muwaffar*),[925] His two feet in verdure, having on Him sandals of gold, and on His face a veil of gold.[926]

It is not surprising that such a report greatly perturbed those Muslim theologians put off by anthropomorphism. Even some staunch traditionalists (*aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*) reportedly rejected this ḥadīth, though on the grounds of *isnād* criticism rather than theological content. When asked about the narration Ibn Ḥanbal reportedly declared, "This is an unconfirmed ḥadīth (*hadhā ḥadīth munkarun*). Marwān b. Uthmān and 'Umāra (b. 'Āmir) are unknown (*majhūl*)."[927] On the other hand al-Dāraquṭnī reports in his **Kitāb al-Ru'ya** from Abū Zur'a al-Dimashqī concerning this report:

> All of these men are known. Their lineage (*ansāb*) is in Medina. As for Marwān b. Uthmān he is Marwān b. Uthmān b. Abī Sa'īd al-Mu'allā al-Anṣārī. As for 'Umāra he is Ibn 'Āmir b. 'Amr b. Hajan, Companion of the Messenger of God. And 'Umarū (*sic*) b. al-Ḥārith and Sa'īd b. Abī Hilāl. There is no doubt in it.[928]

---

[923] Ibn Shadhān, *al-Īḍāḥ*, 15.

[924] Ibn Hajar, *Lisān al-Mīzān*, 2:238. The isnād is: Ḥammād b. Salama < Ya'lā b. 'Aṭā' < Wakī b. 'Udus < Abū Razīl al-'Aqīl.

[925] According to Ibn Manẓūr in his *Lisān al-'Arab* 5:288, *wafra* denotes hair that reaches down to the earlobe or even further.

[926] Al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr* (Cairo: Maktaba Ibn Taymīyya, n.d) (hereafter *Al-Mu'jam²*), 25: 143; Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *al-Sunna*, 1:328; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Asma' wa al-Ṣifāt*, 2:368; al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-Ru'ya*, 358 #286; al-Suyūṭī, *al-La'āli'*, 28f; al-Muttaqī, *Kanz al-'ummāl*, I:58; al-Haythamī, *Kitāb majma'*, 370.

[927] Al-Dhahabī, *Tartīb al-mawḍū'āt*, 22; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Daf' Shubah al-tashbīh*, 152.

[928] Al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-Ru'ya*, 358.

Ibn al-Jawzī and al-Suyūṭī considered this report invented (mawḍuʿ).[929] Ibn al-Jawzī suggests that it was invented by Nuʿaym b. Ḥammād (d. 843) who, he claims, falsely attributed the report to ʿAbd Allāh b. Wahb (d. 813) whom he follows in the isnād. On the other hand al-Suyūṭī reports that "a group reported it from Ibn Wahb,"[930] including Yaḥyā b. Sulaymān, Rawḥ b. al-Faraj, Yaḥyā b. Bukayr, Aḥmad b. Rashīdīn, and ʿAbd Allah b. Ṣāliḥ.[931]

If criticisms of the ḥadīth of Umm al-Ṭufayl were readily available, support for the report came from renowned scholars. Al-Suyūṭī describes Nuʿaym b. Ḥammād as one of the eminent Imāms (al-aʾimma al-aʿlām) and the first to compile a Musnad.[932] Al-Bukhārī, Abū Dāwud, al-Tirmidhī, and Ibn Mājah reported from him. ʿAbd Allāh b. Wahb (d. 813) is the famed Mālikī muḥaddith who introduced traditions into Egypt. Al-Ṭabarānī, Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, and Al-Lālikāʾī[933] reported the ḥadīth in their collections. Abu al-Ḥasan b. Bashshār (d. 925) declared it ṣaḥīḥ[934] and al-Ashʿarī counted it a ruʾya ḥaqīqa (true vision).[935]

6.1.6. Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (d. 652)

Abū Dharr shows the most renowned Doppelgesicht in this controversy. Did he affirm or deny the Vision? If he affirmed it did he affirm a ruʾya bi ʾl-qalb or a ruʾya bi ʾl-baṣar?[936] His most famous statement on the matter could be read as an affirmation or a denial. Taking the reports together rather than in isolation may, however, bring some clarity to Abū Dharr's position, at least as found in the literature.

---

[929] Ibn al-Jawzī, Kitāb al-mawḍūʿāt, 1:181; al-Suyūṭī, al-Laʾālī, 29.

[930] Al-Suyūṭī, Al-Laʾālī, 29.

[931] Al-Suyūṭī, Al-Laʾālī, 28

[932] Al-Suyūṭī, Al-Laʾālī, 29. On Nuʿaym see Georges Vajda, "Nuʿaym b. Ḥammād et Naṣr Allāh Ibn Šuqayr," Arabica 8:1 (1961):99; EI² 8: 87 s.v. Nuʿaym b. Ḥammād by Ch. Pellat.

[933] Al-Ṭabarānī, Al-Muʿjam², 25: 143; Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, Al-Sunna, 1:328; idem, Āḥād wa al-Mithānī, 6: 158; Al-Lālikāʾī, Sharḥ uṣūl 2: 512.

[934] Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, Ṭabqāt, 2:59.

[935] Abū Bakr b. Fūrak, Mujarrad maqālāt al-Ashʿarī (ed. Daniel Gimaret; Beirut: 1987) 86.

[936] Ruʾya bi-ʾl-qalb: al-Qurṭubī, al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān, 17:93. Ruʾya bi-ʾl-baṣar: al-Nawawī, Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 10; Qārī al-Harawī, Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ, 9:627.

[A.] Yazīd b. Ibrāhīm < Qatāda < Abd Allāh b. Shaqīq < Abū Dharr:

Abd Allāh b. Shaqīq narrates: I said to Abū Dharr: If I had met the Prophet I would have asked him a question.'
-What question? (asked Abū Dharr)
-I would have asked him whether he had seen God.
-Abū Dharr replied: But this is exactly what I asked him.
-And what did he say?
-Light! How could I have seen Him? [or: Light! Indeed I saw.][937]

In a variant of this tradition reported by Mu'adh b. Hishām the Prophet responds to Abū Dharr's question, "Did you see your Lord?," simply with: *ra'aytu nūran*, "I saw Light."[938] What is the relation of this light to God? Is this an affirmation or a denial of *Ru'ya*? The crux of this report is the Arabic of the last line. As Ibn Khuzayma noted: "(the ḥadīth) is reported with a wording (*lafẓ*) that carries both a denial and an affirmation according to the range of the Arabic language."[939] It could be read either as *nūr^{un} annā arāhu* or as *nūr innī arāhu*. If the first word (*nūr*) ends with *tanwīn* and the second (*in*) has *fatḥa 'l-hamza* with *tashdīd al-nūn* and *fatḥa*, thus read as *annā*, the sentence could be read as a denial, i.e. "How (*annā*) could I have seen Him [the light obstructed my vision]." Or as al-Qurṭubī paraphrases it: "The light overwhelmed me (*ghalabnī*) and dazzled my eyes (*baharanī*) preventing me from seeing Him."[940] The light is thus a "prohibitive light," *al-nūr al-māni'*. It would thus be the light that serves as a veil. Abū Mūsā reported from the Prophet: "His veil is light."[941] The Tābi' Abū al-'Āliya reported also: "The Messenger of God was asked, 'Did you see your Lord?' and he answered: 'I saw a river, and across the river I saw a veil; beyond the veil I saw light. I didn't see other than that'."[942] Even though the light is sub-velar this last line suggests that he did not see God. But Abū al-'Āliya is also on record interpreting *sūrat al-*

---

[937] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ imān* #341 and #342; al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, *apud* al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuḥfa* 9:171 #3337; Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *al-Sunna*, 1:311; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān* 17:93; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 7: 453.

[938] Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2:15.

[939] Ibn Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 207.

[940] Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān* 17:93.

[941]Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ, imān*, #343.

[942] Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān* 17:92f; Qārī al-Harawī, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, 9: 625f; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* 7: 450; Ibn Qayyīm, *Zād al-ma'ād*, 3: 26ff.

Najm [53]: 11 ("His heart lied not concerning what he saw") as meaning: "Muḥammad saw Him with his heart, he didn't see Him with his eyes."[943] Is this famed Tābiʿ showing a *Doppelgesicht* here? Maybe not.

If the sentence is read with *fatḥa 'l-rāʾ* (*nūra*) and *kasra al-nūn* with *tashdīd al-nūn* (*innī*), as found in Ibn Ḥanbal's **Musnad**,[944] the line then reads: "Light, indeed I saw Him."[945] Qārī al-Harawī explains:

> *Nūr*, i.e. He is a great light, and the intent (of this expression) is that He is the Light of lights. Thus His statement, "Allāh is the light of the heavens and the earth (24:35)," i.e. he illuminates the two.[946]

On this reading the light was not a prohibitive light; it was God's own luminosity. Thus, in another ḥadīth Qatāda reports that, after Ibn Shaqīq said to Abū Dharr: 'If I saw the Prophet I would have asked him did he see his Lord,' Abū Dharr replied: 'I asked him and he said, 'I saw Him.'"[947] Al-Nasāʾī likewise reported from Abū Dharr: "The Messenger of Allāh saw his Lord with his heart; he didn't see him with his eyes."[948] According to al-Qurṭubī the meaning of Abū Dharr's statement that "The Messenger of Allāh saw his Lord with his heart" is that "Allāh placed (Muḥammad's) eyes in his heart until he saw his Lord Most High and Allāh made that a (true) vision (*ruʾya*)."[949]

Josef van Ess says of this difficult line from the report [A.] of Abū Dharr:

> The last sentence is somewhat difficult to interpret, and variants do exist. But the intention of the story is clear. Light has no form: thus, God does not assume any shape (*ṣūra*), and the vision is reduced to a sort of bedazzlement.[950]

---

[943] Al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7: 648.

[944] Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* 5: 148; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 7: 453.

[945] The line could also be read with *fataḥ al-rāʾ* and *kasra al-nūn* with *tashdīd al-yāʾ*. See the discussion in al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2:16; Qārī al-Harawī, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, 9:625.

[946] *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥā*, 9:625.

[947] ʿAbd Allāh, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 1: 290.

[948] Al-Nasāʾī, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, #11536; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* 7:453; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7: 249.

[949] Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 17:92.

[950] *Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 62f; idem, "Le MIʿRĀǦ et la Vision de Dieu," 41; "Muhammad's Ascension," 12.

This is not at all clear nor is it likely. According to Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawāliqī (f. eighth century) God possesses a human form made out of a radiant light with a white glow.[951] The Ḥanbalī jurist and theologian Abū 'Abd Allāh b. Ḥāmid al-Warrāq (d. 1013) even quoted a tradition from Ibn 'Abbās according to which the Prophet saw God during his Night Journey in the form of a young man of "twinkling light, *nūr yatala'la'u*."[952] However much the Shi'ite *ghālin* (Hishām) exceeds the bounds of acceptable Shi'ite dogma on other matters,[953] or however excessive Ibn Ḥāmid's anthropomorphism was found to later Ḥanbalī *mutakallamūn* like Ibn al-Jawzī, they both stand firmly within biblical, qur'ānic and Sunnī tradition with this anthropomorphic luminosity, as we have demonstrated above.[954]

Along with these six Companions cited above, Muḥammad's Vision is reported on the authority of 13 others (plus some anonymous Companions[955]), making a total of nineteen (+) Ṣaḥāba who affirmed the Prophet's seeing God in one form or another: Mu'adh b. Jabal,[956] Jābir b. Samura,[957] Abū Umāma,[958] Abū 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrāḥ,[959]

---

[951] Al-Ash'arī. *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* (ed. Helmut Ritter; Istanbul, 1929-33) 34.

[952] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Daf' Shubah al-tashbīh*, 31.

[953] The early Shī'ī 'Gnostics' Mughīra b. Sa'īd (d. 736) and Bayān b. Sam'ān (d. 736) likewise described God as an anthropomorphic light. See Israel Friedlaender, "The Heterodoxies of the Shiites in the Presentation of Ibn Hazm," *JAOS* 28 (1907) 59-61 [art.=1-80; 29 (1908): 1-183]; William F. Tucker, "Bayān b. Sam'ān and the Bayāniyya: Shī'ite Extremists of Umayyad Iraq," *MW* 45 (1975): 241-53; idem, "Rebels and Gnostics: Muġīra b. Sa'īd and the Muġīriyya," *Arabica* 22 (1975): 33-47; Steve Wasserstrom, "The Moving Finger Writes: Mughīra b. Sa'īd's Islamic Gnosis and the Myths of its Rejection," *HR* 25 (1985): 1-29. For a critical look at the alleged 'gnosticism' of these early *ghulāt* see Tanima Bayhom-Daou, "The Second-Century Šī'ite Ġulāt: Were They Gnostic?" *JAIS* 5 (2003): 13-61.

[954] Van Ess claims *TG* 4:386 „Sunnitische Belege sind ohnehin nicht ganz so häufig." As evidence of this marginal Sunnī tradition van Ess cites a statemnent by Qatada, the Caliph 'Abd al Mālik and a single „aberrante" ḥadīth according to which God created angels from the light of his arms and breast. But as we have shown above this motif of divine luminosity is attested in a relatively large number of non-Ṣūfī Sunnī sources.

[955] Abū Sa'īd al-Ashaj < Abū Khālid < Mūsā b. 'Ubayda < Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Qurazī: "Some of the Companions of the Prophet (ṣ): 'We said, "O Messenger of God, did you see your Lord?' to which he replied: 'I didn't see Him with my eyes, [rather] I saw Him with my heart twice.' Then he recited: 'Then He drew near, drew nearer still (53:8)' (also: 'I saw Him with my heart twice.' Then he read: 'The heart lied not of that which it saw [53:11]')." Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 27:46f; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 17:93; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* 7:449; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7:648.

[956] Ḥadīth *aḥsan ṣūra*. See above n. 813.

[957] Ḥadīth *aḥsan ṣūra*. See above n. 814.

'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Ā'ish,[960] Thawbān, *mawla rasūli llah*,[961] 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar,[962] Abū Rāfiʿ,[963] 'Abd al-Raḥman b. Sābiṭ,[964] Abu al-Darda',[965] Mu'adh b. 'Afrā',[966] Ka'b al-Aḥbār[967] and Abū Razīl al-'Aqīlī.[968] By conspicuous contrast only two companions are on record explicitly denying the Vision: 'Ā'isha and Ibn Mas'ūd. These two, however, show a *Doppelgesicht*.

6.1.7. 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd (d. 652)

Reputedly the sixth convert to Islam after Muḥammad began preaching in Mecca and one of the closest of the Prophet's companions Ibn Mas'ūd is one of four persons Muḥammad reportedly instructed Muslims to learn Qur'ān from.[969] His position on

---

[958] Ḥadīth *aḥsan ṣūra*. See above n. 817.

[959] Ḥadīth *aḥsan ṣūra*. See above n. 818.

[960] Ḥadīth *aḥsan ṣūra*. See above n. 819.

[961] Ḥadīth *aḥsan ṣūra*. See above n. 820.

[962] Ḥadīth *aḥsan ṣūra*. See above n. 821.

[963] Ḥadīth *aḥsan ṣūra*. See above n. 822.

[964] Ḥadīth *aḥsan ṣūra*. See above n. 823.

[965] Ibn Shadhān, *al-Īḍāḥ*, 26.

[966] Sufyān b. Ziyād < his paternal uncle Sulaym b. Ziyād < Ibn Mu'adh < his father Mu'adh b. 'Afrā': Sulaym b. Ziyād narrates: "[As I was coming out of the mosque of the Messenger of God,] I met 'Ikrima, Ibn 'Abbās' freed slave, who said [to me]: 'Wait, I must have you hear what this man said!' This man, he was a son of Mu'adh b. 'Afrā'. ['Ikrima] said [to him]: 'Tell me [again] then what your father said to you of what the Messenger of God said!' [The man] answered: 'My father told me that the Messenger of God had told him that he had seen the Lord of the worlds in an enclosure of Paradise (Jerusalem?), under the form of a young man, [wearing a crown] and with a twinkling glance'." Sufyān b. Ziyād said: "Later, I [myself] met 'Ikrima, and I questioned him [about] this report. He answered me: 'Yes it is well that he said that to me, except that he said that [the Prophet] had seen this by his heart (*bi-fu'adihi*)'." Ibn Fūrak, *Mushkil al-ḥadīth*, 387; al-Suyūṭī, *al-La'ālī'*, 30; al-Muttaqī, *Kanz al-'ummāl*, I:58 (the latter two quoting al-Ṭabarānī, *Kitāb al-sunna*).

[967] 'Abd Allāh b. Ḥārith b. Nawfal reported from Ka'b that he said: "Verily God, Blessed and Most High, divided His Vision and His Speech between Moses and Muḥammad. Moses spoke to Him twice and Muḥammad saw Him twice." Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 27: 51; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* 7:449.

[968] See above n. 915.

[969] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Volume 5, Book 58 # 150: Narrated 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr: "I heard the Prophet saying, 'Learn the recitation of Qur'ān from four persons: 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd, Salīm, the freed slave of Abū Hudhaifa, Ubayy b. Ka'b and Mu'adh b. Jabal."

Muḥammad's Vision is unclear, however. See for example the synopsis of Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ (d. 1149) as quoted by al-Nawawī (d. 1278):

> The Pious Ancestors (*al-Salaf*) and the Successors (*al-Khalaf*) disagree: did the Prophet (ṣ) see his Lord during his Night Journey? 'Ā'isha, may Allāh be pleased with her, denied it…and the likes (of this denial) comes (also) on the authority of Abū Hurayra and a group (of others), and it is well-known (*al-mashhūr*) from Ibn Mas'ūd and a group of ḥadīth scholars and theologians went this way (as well). (On the other hand) it is reported on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, may Allāh be pleased with him, that he did see Him with his eyes, and the likes (of this affirmation) is reported on the authority of Abū Dharr and Ka'b – may Allāh be pleased with them – and al-Ḥasan (al-Baṣrī), may Allāh have mercy on him, used to swear on that. And its like is also related about Ibn Mas'ūd and Abū Hurayra…[970]

Did this famed Companion deny or affirm the Vision? Like Abū Hurayra, Ibn Mas'ūd's *Doppelgesicht* seems to be only apparent.

[A.] Ḥammād b. Salama < 'Āṣam < Zirr b. Ḥubaysh < Ibn Mas'ūd:

> Re: "he indeed saw him at another descent, by the Lote-tree of the boundary (53:13-14)": The Prophet (ṣ) said: "I saw Jibrīl by the lote-tree of the boundary with six hundred wings on him shaking off a plume (?, *yanfuḍu min rīsha*) of ornamental flourishes (*al-tahāwīl*), pearls and corundum (*al-yāqūt*)."[971]

The "well-known (*al-mashhūr*)" position of Ibn Mas'ūd cited above by Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ is actually not a categorical denial of *ru'ya* but an angelophanic interpretation of *sūrat al-Najm*. According to Ibn Mas'ūd the two visions alluded to in these verses were of Jibrīl in his heavenly form with six-hundred wings.[972] Al-Nasā'ī reports Ibn Mas'ūd's interpretation of 53:13 as: "The Prophet of God saw Jibrīl on a *rafraf*, filling the space between heaven and earth. He did not see his Lord, Blessed and Most High."[973] As should be clear now, such a position is not tantamount to denying a Vision of God. This denial contextually only applies to the visions of *sūrat al-Najm* and therefore may not be a

---

[970] al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2:9.

[971] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 27:49; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Asma' wa al-Ṣifāt*, 2:347; Ibn Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 205; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr* 7:644.

[972] Al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ, apud* al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuḥfa* 9:165 #3331; al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr* 7:643.

[973] Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 10:277 #11477. This is quoted by Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 8:609.

categorical denial of *ru'ya*. Other reports strengthen this suggestion.

> [B.] 'Uthmān b. 'Amr < Sulaymāb b. 'Ubayda < Ḍaḥāk b. Muzāḥim < Ibn Mas'ūd:

> The Messenger of God (ṣ) reported to (Ibn Mas'ūd) about his Lord, may He be Exalted and Great. He (God) said: "I presented to Abraham my Friendship, I spoke to Moses directly and I granted Muḥammad *al-Kifāḥ*." A man from the people said, "What is *al-Kifāḥ?* (Ibn Mas'ūd) said: "O Glory to God! *Al-Kifāḥ* is unknown to an Arab?! *Al-Kifāḥ* is *al-Mushāfaha*, speaking mouth to mouth." 'Uthmān b. 'Amr said: "I asked Yūnus al-Naḥwī about *al-Kifāḥ* and he said, 'i.e. *wājiha muwājha*, face to face encounter'."[974]

This is clearly a variant of the report listing the "tripartite schema of increasing intimacy," as van Ess describes it[975]: Abraham was taken as God's friend, Moses spoke to God directly, and Muḥammad saw God.[976] *Al-Kifāḥ* replaces, and apparently includes, *al-Ru'ya* in this report. We are told here that *Al-Kifāḥ* is *al-Mushāfaha*, speaking mouth to mouth and *wājiha muwājha*, face to face encounter. This is no doubt why al-Dāraquṭnī cites it in his ***Kitāb al-Ru'ya***. Likewise, while discussing the fact that "most of the scholars" are of the opinion that Muḥammad saw his Lord during his Night Journey, al-Ālūsī points out in his ***Rūḥ al-ma'ānī fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm*** that it is ascribed to Ibn Mas'ūd and others that God spoke to the prophet with no intermediary (*bi-ghayr wāsiṭa*).[977] Although God spoke directly to Moses, he did so only from behind a veil. To Muḥammad, on the other hand, God spoke directly with no veil obstructing his vision.

> Although I (God) spoke to Moses, I did so from behind a veil on [Mount] Sinai. But I spoke to you [Muḥammad] on a carpet of nearness (*bisāṭ al-qurb*) with no veil.[978]

It is therefore possible that Ibn Mas'ūd's *Doppelgesicht* is artificial. The reports attributed to him do not necessarily suggest that he denied the Vision categorically. They might suggest only that he interpreted *sūrat al-Najm* angelophanically and that he affirmed some visionary encounter with God on some other occasion.

---

[974] Al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-Ru'ya*, 279-80 # 168, 169.

[975] *Flowering of Muslim theology*, 46.

[976] See above.

[977] Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-ma'ānī*, 25:56.

[978] 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās, *al-Isrā' wa al-Mi'rāj* (Beirut, 1983) 36.

6.1.8. 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr (d. 678)

[A.] Ismā'īl b. Ibrāhīm < Dāwud b. Abī Hind < 'Āmir b. Sharāḥīl al-Sha'bī < Masrūq b. al-Ajda':

(Masrūq said): "I was sitting back in 'Ā'isha's house when she said: 'O Abū 'Ā'isha, there are three things, whoever says any of which, he is lying about Allāh in the most hateful manner.' I asked: 'Which things?' She said: '[First,] whoever tells you that Muḥammad saw his Lord, he is lying about Allāh in the most hateful manner.' I was sitting back, so I sat up and said: 'O Mother of the Faithful! Give me a moment and do not rush me. Did not Allāh Almighty say "Surely he beheld him on the clear horizon (81:23)"?' She replied: 'I was the first in the entire community to have asked Allāh's Messenger about this, and he said: "It is but Jibrīl, I did not see him in the actual form in which he was created other than these two times. I saw him alighting from heaven, covering it all. The magnitude of his frame spans what lies between the heaven and the earth".' Then she said: 'Did you not hear Allāh say: "Vision comprehends Him not, but He comprehends all vision. He is the Subtle, the Aware (6:103)?" Did you not hear Allāh say: "And it is not (vouchsafed) to any mortal that Allāh should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil, or (that) He sends a messenger to reveal what He will by His leave. Lo! He is Exalted, Wise (42:51)"?' She continued: '[Second,] whoever claims that Allāh's Messenger concealed any part of Allāh's Book, he is lying about Allāh in the most hateful manner when Allāh is saying: "O Messenger, make known that which has been revealed unto you from your Lord, for if you do it not, you will not have conveyed His Message (5:67)."' She continued: '[Third,] whoever claims that he can tell what shall happen tomorrow, he is lying about Allāh in the most hateful manner, since Allah is saying: "Say: None in the heavens and the earth knoweth the Unseen save Allāh [and they know not when they will be raised again (27:65)".'[979]

[B.] Ismā'īl (b. Ibrāhīm) < 'Āmir (b. Sharāḥīl al-Sha'bī) < Masrūq:

Masrūq said: "I went to 'Ā'isha and said, 'Did Muḥammad see his Lord?' She answered, 'Thou hast said something that makes my hair stand on end.' I said, 'Be easy.' Then I recited the words 'He certainly saw some of the greatest signs of his Lord (53: 18).' She said, 'Wherever are the words carrying you? It was only Jiabrīl. Whoever claims that Muḥammad saw his Lord, or concealed anything of what he was commanded, or knew the five things which God Most High, that with Him is knowledge of the Hour of the Resurrection and that he sends down the rain and the rest, utters against God an enormous lie.'[980]

---

[979] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 98:93 #477; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:111, #337; al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, apud al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuḥfa* 9:167-8 # 3332; Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 27:51; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Asma' wa al-Ṣifāt*, 2:349-352; Ibn Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 222f; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* 7:449.

[980] Al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, apud al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuḥfa* 9: 166, #3332; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* 7:452; al-Suyūtī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr* 7: 247.

[C.] 'Abd Allāh b. Lahī'a < Abū al-Aswad Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān <
'Urwa b. al-Zubayr < 'Ā'isha:

I was the first to ask the Messenger of God (ṣ) if he saw Jibrīl while asleep in 'Ajyād. Then
he went to complete his thing (?, *ḥājatahu*) and Jibrīl called to him, "O Muḥammad, O
Muḥammad." (Muḥammad) looked right and left three times but saw nothing. Then he
raised his head and lo! There he was on the sky's horizon, one leg folded over the other.
Then he said: "O Muḥammad, (I am) Jibrīl, (I am) Jibrīl" He calmed (the Prophet) then
the Prophet (ṣ) fled, until he came upon the people. Then he looked and saw nothing. He
left from the people and looked and he saw him. Thus that is (the meaning) of God's
words, "By the star when it sets. Your companion errs not nor does he deviate" to his
statement "then he descended and hung suspended (53:1-8)," meaning Jiabrīl to
Muḥammad.[981]

[D.] Wahīb b. Khālid < Yazīd b. Zarī' < Dāwud b. Abī Hind < Masrūq:

Masrūq said: "I asked 'Ā'isha (r) about God's statement, May He be Exalted and Great,
'He indeed saw him at another descent (53:23)' (and) 'He indeed saw him on the clear
horizon (81:23).' She said: 'I was the first of this Umma to ask the Messenger of God (ṣ)
this and he said, "Jiabrīl, I saw him twice: I saw him on the highest horizon (*al-ufuq al-a'lā*)
and I saw him on the clear horizon (*al-ufuq al-mubīn*)"."[982]

The Mother of the Faithful thus passionately rejects in the strongest language the claim

that Muḥammad saw God. Those who make this claim are even accused of telling great

lies against God! It is often pointed out in the Vision-affirming Sunnī circles that the basis

of 'Ā'isha's rejection seems not to be an express denial of the Prophet but rather an

angelophnic interpretation of *sūrat al-Najm* on the authority of the Prophet,[983] as well as an

interpretation of *sūrat al-An'ām* [6]:103.[984] If Ibn 'Abbās is *the* authority for the theophanic

interpretation of *sūrat al-Najm*, 'Ā'isha is *the* authority for the angelophnic interpretation.

According to van Ess "('Ā'isha's) commentaries are mingled with polemical remarks

against certain (later) Shiite currents and are therefore apocryphal, or have at least been

reformulated."[985] This is apparent.[986] But this denial is probably reformulated rather than

---

[981] See above n. 753.

[982] al-Bayhaqī, *al-Asma' wa al-Ṣifāt*, 2:351 #924.

[983] However cf. below n. 986.

[984] See below.

[985] Van Ess, *Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 72.

[986] While enumerating the "enormous lies" 'Ā'isha mentions those who claim that Muḥammad "concealed
anything of what he was commanded." The idea that the Prophet concealed portions of the revelation,

fabricated. 'Ā'isha's nephew the famed *muḥaddith* and *Tābi'ī* Urwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 713), who affirmed the Vision, said it was difficult for him whenever his aunt's denial was mentioned to him.[987] Nevertheless, the Mother of the Faithful does show a 'double-face' in the sources.

[E.] Muḥammad b. 'Umar < Ma'mar b. Rāshid < al-Zuhrī < 'Urwa < 'Ā'isha:

The beginning of revelations to the Apostle of Allah, may Allah be pleased with him, was in the form of true dreams. He did not dream but it came to him like daybreak. She said: He remained in this condition as long as Allah willed. Solitude was liked by him; nothing was dearer to him. He would retire to the cave of Hira' taking provisions for several nights, after which he would return to his family. Then he would come to Khadīja to take provisions again until *al-Ḥaqq* came to him while he was in the cave of Hira'.[988]

This is the Call-report fragment as found in Ibn Sa'd's ***Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr***. *Al-Ḥaqq* is of course a name God. Its usage here, according to Watt, supports the view that Muḥammad originally took the visions of *sūrat al-Najm* as visions of God.[989] In this fragment as found later integrated into the canonical Call-account 'Ā'isha is made to say something more:

The beginning of revelations to the Apostle of Allah, may Allah be pleased with him, was in the form of true visions during sleep, which came to him like daylight. Then the love of seclusion was bestowed on him. He used to go in seclusion in the cave of Hira' where he

---

such as the succession of 'Alī, was distinctly Shī'ite, in particular Saba'ite (Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985], 16ff). Among the elements in this report that betray marks of later trends 'Ā'isha's claim that she was to "first in the community" to ask the Prophet about this does so most clearly. It is difficult to believe the Mother of the Faithful would have made such a bold claim of being "the first" to have asked the Prophet about this *sūra* or his Inaugural Vision (as it is believed *Sūrat al-Najm* describes). 'Ā'isha bt. 'Abī Bakr was born *circa* 607-611 and died in 678. She married Muḥammad *circa* 617-622 or 621-625. The events recounted in *Sūrat al-Najm*, if they in fact reference inaugural Visions, would have taken place in 605 or thereabout (the *sūra* was reportedly revealed in Ramaḍān 610; see Maudūdi, *The Meaning of the Qur'ān*, 227). It would be 2-4 years later before 'Ā'isha is born and 10-14 years before she marries the Prophet. In as much as the Mother of the Faithful was a pre-teen at the time, we are probably justified in allowing for another couple of years or so before she would have questioned Muḥammad on such matters. We thus have 12-16 years passing since the time of the Prophet's Inaugural Vision, or 7-11 years from the revelation of the *sūra*, and no one from the community questions him about it? This defies credulity and it contradicts other reports (*Sūra* 7:60 suggests that there was indeed controversy in the early community surrounding these claims by Muḥammad. See Bell, "Muhammad's Visions," 151; *ER* 9:552 s.v. Mi'rāj by Gerhard Böwering.)

[987] Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 8:608.

[988] Translation modified from Haq and Ghazanfar, *Ibn Sa'd's Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kabir*, 1: 224.

[989] Al-Ṭabarī, *History* 67 n. 96 comments by Watt. Also Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 40. See also above.

used to worship (Allah alone) continuously for many days before his desire to see his family. He used to take with him the journey food for the stay and then come back to Khadīja to take his likewise again till suddenly *al-Ḥaqq* came to him while he was in the cave of Ḥira'. *The angel came to him* and asked him to read. The Prophet replied, "I do not know how to read."[990]

"*Al-Ḥaqq* came to him" is now qualified by "the angel came to him." This might suggest a Jibrīlian redaction of a report attributed to 'Ā'isha that seems to have originally spoke only of God.[991]

[F.] 'Abd al-Mālik b. 'Abd al-'Azīz b, Jurayj < Safwān b. Sulaym < 'Ā'isha:

The Prophet saw his Lord under the form of a young man seated on a footstool, his foot in verdure [made] of (?) twinkling light (*fī khuḍratin min nūrin yatala'la'u*[992]).[993]

I have only found this report quoted by al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505) in his ***al-La'ālī' al-maṣnū'a fī al-aḥādīth al-mawḍu'a***, who quotes it from al-Ṭabarānī's (d. 971) ***Kitāb al-sunna***.[994] In as much as Safwān b. Sulaym died c. 750 and 'Ā'isha in 678, this *isnād* would understandably be considered "weak." However, G.H.A. Juynboll, in his ***Muslim Tradition***,[995] has argued that, though the *isnād* attached to reports may indeed be fabrications, as a whole the reports give an accurate picture of the theological situation at the time. Could it be that this *matn* still reflects a position 'Ā'isha held or was thought to have actually held? What an extreme example of a *Doppelgesicht*! Or is it? Daniel Gimaret considered this in his discussion of this report and opined:

Mais il n'y a pas nécessairement contradiction. Peut-être a-t-elle voulu dire que Muḥammad n'a jamais vu *pour de bon* Dieu ici-bas, sans exclure la possibilité qu'il L'ait vu *en rêve*, comme c'est dit dans le hadith d'Umm aṭ-Ṭufayl?[996]

---

[990] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:2, *kitāb al-waḥy* # 3.

[991] See above.

[992] On this difficult phrase see Gimaret, *Dieu à l'image de l'homme*, 161.

[993] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-La'ālī'*, 30.

[994] Ibid.

[995] Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

[996] *Dieu à l'image de l'homme*, 161 n. 4: "But there isn't necessarily a contradiction here. Perhaps she meant that Mohammad never *really* saw God here below, without excluding the possibility that he had seen Him *in a dream*, as it is stated in the ḥadīth of Umm aṭ-Ṭufayl?"

I am not convinced. Nevertheless, such is indeed the harmonizing approach taken by later ḥadīth scholars, as we show below.

6.2. Islam's Youthful Deity and its History-of-Religions Background

Unlike the biblical, and for that matter qur'ānic, theophany tradition which lacks all descriptive detail of the divine *Erscheinungsform*, the Islamic theophany tradition as found in these reports is similar to the ANE/Mediterranean and Rabbinc (see below) traditions in that it is rather generous with the descriptive details. How are we to understand this image of Islam's youthful deity? Even though young gods are found in various religious/mythological traditions, it is my opinion that a particular ancient Semitic and esoteric Jewish tradition may help us contextualize this remarkable Islamic image.

This divine youth plays an important role in the Jewish esoteric/mystical tradition called *maʿaśeh merkabah* or the "Work of the Divine Chariot-Throne," in particular in texts (*Heikhalôt*, s. *heikhal* "palace") concerned with descriptions of journeys through the seven celestial palaces culminating in a vision of the divine *merkabah* and its divine occupant,[997] as well as texts (*Shiʿur Qomah*, "Measure of the [Divine] Body) concerned with graphically enumerating the astronomical measurements of the limbs and body parts as well as their secret names of the anthropomorphic creator-god.[998] According to an important study by

---

[997] See Chernus, "Visions of God in Merkabah Mysticism." On *Heikhalôt* literature see Arbel, *Beholders of Divine Secrets*; Rachel Elior, *The Three Temples. On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism* (trans. David Louvish; Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004); idem, "The Priestly Nature of the Mystical Heritage in *Heykalôt Literature*," in Paul B. Fenton and Roland Goetschel (edd.), *Expépience et Écriture Mystiques dans les Religions du Livre: Actes d'un colloque international tenu par le Centre d'études juives Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne 1994* (Leiden: Brill, 2000) 41-54; idem, "The *Merkavah* Tradition and the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism," in Aharon Oppenheimer (ed.), *Sino-Judaica: Jews and Chinese in Historical Dialogue* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1999) 101-158; Gershom Sholem *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1988); idem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965); Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden : E. J. Brill, 1980).

[998] Martin Samuel Cohen, *The Shiʿur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy in Pre-Kabbalistic Jewish Mysticism* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983) 52ff; idem, *The Shiʿur Qomah: Texts and Recensions* (Tübingen, 1985); Pieter W. van der Horst, "The Measurement of the Body: A Chapter in the History of Ancient Jewish Mysticism," in Dirk van der Plas (ed.), *Effigies Dei: Essays on the History of Religions*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987) 56-68, esp. 57-58; Sholem *Major Trends*, 63-67; idem, "Shiur Komah," in *Encyclopedia Judaica* 14 (1972): 1417-1419; idem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts of the Kabbalah* (New York: Schocken Books, 1991); idem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 36-42; Joseph Dan, "Shiʿur Komah," in idem, *The Ancient Jewish Mysticism* (Tel-Aviv: MOD Books, 1993) 74f; idem, "The Concept of Knowledge in the *Shiʿur Qomah*," in

Christopher Morray-Jones, the *Shi'ur Qomah* tradition originally concerned the measurements of two divine figures: (1) the *Yôṣer Bĕre'sǐt*, "creator of the beginning," who is identical with the divine *kābôd* or Glory of the Holy One (God) and (2) a divine messianic 'youth (*na'ar*),' sometimes in these sources identified with the supreme angel Meṭaṭron.[999] This divine youth is highly exalted, on the surface indistinguishable from God himself. One text says of him:

> And see the Youth, who goes forth to meet you from behind the throne of glory. Do not worship him, for his crown is like the crown of his King, the sandals on his feet are like the sandals of his King, the garment on him is like the garment of his King, and a garment of stone is girded on his loins. The sun is poured from the belt in front of him and the moon from the knots behind him. His eyes kindle like torches, and his eyeballs kindle like lamps. His splendor is like the splendor of his King, and his adornment like the adornment of his Creator.[1000]

The crown, sandals, and garment remind us of the same accessories worn by Islam's divine youth (*shābb*).[1001] Like the Islamic *shābb* the Hebrew *na'ar* is beautiful: a number of his names (e.g Yophiel, "the Beauty of God") attest to it.[1002] But here the *na'ar* is distinguished from God, even though his attire and splendor are like God's. The question of the *na'ar*'s relation to God is not easy to answer. In the above passage the perspective traveler is warned *not* to worship the Youth. In other texts, however, he *is* the object of veneration. As an object of measuring in *Shi'ur Qomah* texts he is, as Morray-Jones shows

---

Siegfried Stein and Raphael Loewe (edd.), *Studies in Jewish and intellectual History, presented to Alexander Altmann*, (University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1979) 67-73; Howard Jackson, "The Origins and Development of *Shi'ur Qomah* Revelation in Jewish Mysticism," *JSJ* 31 (2000): 373-415.

[999] "The Body of Glory: The *Shi'ur Qomah* in Judaism, Gnosticism and the Epistle to the Ephesians," forthcoming in Christopher Rowland and C.R.A. Morray-Jones (edd.), *The Mystery of God: Jewish Mystical Traditions in the New Testament* (CRINT 3; Assen and Minneapolis: Van Gorcum/Fortress). My thanks to Morray-Jones for providing the author with a manuscript copy.

[1000] Quote from a *Heikhalot* text, which Halperin (*Faces of the Chariot*, 368) has dubbed the Ozhayah text after the name of the angel-narrator who gives the reader instructions on how to carry out successfully the journey to the Merkabah. Translation from James R. Davila, "Melchizedek, the 'Youth,' and Jesus," in James R. Davila (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Postbiblical Judaism and Early Christianity. Papers From an International Conference at St. Andrews in 2001* (STDJ 46; Leiden: Brill, 2003) 255 [art.=248-274].

[1001] See e.g. the reports from Anas b. Mālik [F.]and Umm al-Ṭufayl above.

[1002] Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 425.

us, an object of praise.[1003] In the twenty-second chapter of *2 Enoch* (Vienna Codex) God instructs his glorious ones to bow down before the Youth and in two *Heikhalot* texts the angelic hosts are pictured prostrate before the Youth in the presence of God while the *na'ar* inserts the fire of deafness into their ears.[1004] Indeed, the *na'ar* of the *Heikhalot* texts seems to be "in some sense an embodiment of the Divine Glory"[1005] and "a manifestation of God."[1006] He is identified with the presence (*panîm*) of God of Exod. 33:15 and the *mal'āk* of Exod. 23:21, in whom dwelled the Name of God: he thus had the nature of God in him.[1007] He shares God's Name. The revelation of the enigmatic divine name in Exod. 3:14, *'ehye(h) 'ăšer 'ehye(h)* (? "I Am That I Am") seems to be understood in this tradition as naming both God and the Youth: the first *'ehye(h)* referring to God, the second to the divine *na'ar*.

> The Youth thus manifests and mediates the Glory of the Holy One, with Whom he is partly similar and partly dissimilar, since the "I AM THAT I AM" relationship between the two is expressive of both identity and difference.[1008]

The divine youth and his relation to God was the source of great anxiety and debate in Jewish circles during the first centuries of the common era and maybe before.[1009] As Daniel Boyarin has shown, binitarianism (i.e. belief in "two powers" in heaven) was

---

[1003] Morray-Jones, "Body of Glory," 111-115. On the Youth/Meṭaṭron and *Shi'ur Qomah* see further Andrei A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition* (TSAJ 107; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005)143-146; Elliot R. Wolfson, "Metatron and Shi'ur Qomah in the Writings of Haside Ashkenaz," in Karl Erich Grözinger and Joseph Dan (edd.), *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism. International Symposium Held in Frankfurt a.M. 1991* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995) 60-92; idem, *Through a Speculum*, 214ff.

[1004] See discussion by Orlov, *Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, 219-226; idem, "Celestial Chroirmaster: The Liturgical Role of Enoch-Metatron in *2 Enoch* and the Merkabah Tradition," *JSP* 14 (2004):127-8 [art.=3-29].

[1005] Morray-Jones, "Body of Glory," 119.

[1006] Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 258.

[1007] See sources and discussion in ibid.

[1008] Morray-Jones, "Body of Glory," 121.

[1009] On this debate see the important study by Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism* (SJLA 25; Leiden: Brill, 1977) and more recently Daniel Boyarin, "Two Powers in Heaven; Or, The Making of a Heresy," in Judith H. Newman, Hindy Najman and James Kugel (edd.), *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel* (SJSJ 83; Leiden: Brill, 2004) 331-370.

widespread in the thought-world of first and even second century Judaism(s).[1010] The later rabbinic polemics against this Jewish binitarianism makes it clear that the 'two powers' posited were generally God depicted as an old man – the *'attîq yômîn* or 'Ancient of Days' of Dan. 7:9 – and this divine messianic youth, associated with the 'one like a son of man' also from Dan. 7.9.[1011] The controversy revolved around the young god's relation to the old. The 'orthodox' rabbinic position in this controversy is most instructive.

> Then God (*'ĕlohîm*) said: "*I am YHWH your God (*'ĕlohîm*)* (Ex. 20:2)": Why is this said? Because at the (Red) Sea He revealed Himself as a young man making war, as it is said, "*YHWH is a man of war* (Ex. 15:3)."
>
> At Sinai He revealed Himself as an old man full of mercy, as it is said, "And they saw the God (*'ĕlohîm*) of Israel" etc (Ex. 24:10 f.)…
>
> And it says, "I beheld till the *thrones* (plural) were placed, and One that was ancient of days (*'attîq yômîn*) did sit" (Dan. 7:9); but it says, "a fiery stream issued and came forth from *Him* (singular)" (Dan. 7:10).
>
> Now, in order to give no opening to the nations of the world to say, "There are 'two powers,' Scripture reads, "*I am YHWH your 'ĕlohîm*."
>
> > I was in Egypt,
> > I was at the Sea
> > I was in the past, I will be in the Age to come
> > I am in this world, I am in the World to Come.[1012]

As has been pointed out by Alan Segal, this *midrash* and others like it reveal that the 'heretics' here polemicized against held that there were two divine beings based on the physical descriptions as well as distribution of divine names in the biblical texts.[1013] The presumably old god at Sinai, who shows mercy to Israel by not making them 'victims of the theophany,' is called *'ĕlohîm* in Exod. 24:10. On the other hand, the young "man of

---

[1010] Boyarin, "Two Powers in Heaven"; idem, "The Gospel of the *Memra*: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John," *HTR* 94 (2003): 243-84.

[1011] Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, Chapter Two.

[1012] Mekhilta d'Rabbi Ishma'el, fourth-century. See Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 33-34.

[1013] Ibid., 38f; N.A. Dahl and Alan F. Segal, "Philo and the Rabbis on the Names of God," *JSJ* 9 (1978): 1-28.

war" who justly slew the Egyptians at the Red Sea is *yhwh*. Some Jewish and Samaritan exegetes took them both as different divine powers,[1014] something like:

Elohim		*Yahweh*
Old, gray-haired man	::	Young, black-haired man[1015]
Merciful teacher	::	Just warrior
Mount Sinai	::	Red Sea
Primordial God	::	Eschatological God[1016]

The rabbis on the other hand, while acknowledging these two distinct manifestations, affirm that they were two manifestations of the one God, not 'two powers' with independent wills.[1017] In other rabbinic texts we are specifically given to believe that the primordial old god *transforms into* the eschatological young god.[1018] This motif does not seem to be an innovation of the rabbis. In 1960 Julian Morgenstern found evidence of a West Semitic tradition according to which an aged, father-god dies and is buried, only to be reborn later as a young son-god.[1019] The old and young deities, Morgenstern tells us,

---

[1014] On the Samaritan evidence see Fossum, *Name of God*, 226-228.

[1015] The attribution of black hair derives from Cant. 5:11 where the Beloved, identified as God, is described as a young man whose "locks are curled and black as a raven." On the apparent, but not real, contradiction between this description of God as a young man with curly black hair and the description in Dan. 7:9 of God as an old man with white hair see *b. Ḥag* 14a.

[1016] The affirmation that closes the midrash, "I was in Egypt, I was at the Sea; I was in the past, I will be in the Age to come; I am in this world, I am in the World to Come," suggests that the 'heretics' attributed temporal significance to the 'two powers' as well: the old god, i.e. the Creator, versus the future, eschatological god who is called 'youth' because he is a "Johny-come-lately among the celestial beings," to use Halperin's words (*Faces of the Chariot*, 421). In *3 Enoch* 4:10 it is explained that he "is a youth among them in days and months and years and that is why they call me 'youth'." *3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch*, ed. and tr. Hugo Odeberg (Cambridge; The University press, 1928) 13. The name of God *'ehye(h) 'ăšer 'ehye(h)* (? "I Am That I Am"), that signified the two powers in later *Heikhalôt* tradition and the old and young manifestations of God in rabbinic, was also read by the latter as possessing past and future significance as well. See Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 37.

[1017] On the significance of the complementary wills of the two manifestations according to the rabbis in contrast to the dualism of the Gnostics see also Alan F. Segal, "Dualism in Judaism, Christianity, and Gnosticism: A Definitive Issue," in idem, *The Other Judaisms of Late Antiquity* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987) 1-40.

[1018] For example *Pesikta Rabbati*, Piska 21:8, where Deut. 5:4 "Face *after* face the Lord spoke to you," is discussed. See Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 34ff. On this 'transformation of God' see further Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, 33-41; Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, "Polymorphie divine et transformations d'un mythologème: L'»Apocryphon de Jean« et ses sources," *VC* 35 (1981): 412-434.

[1019] On the designation 'son' for the youthful deity of the 'two powers' controversy and later *Heikhalot* see Boyarin, "Two Powers," 344; Morray-Jones, "Body of Glory," 123.

are but two complementary forms of the divine being.[1020] For the rabbis, these biblical passages "emphasized that the Israelites would have to recognize God in different forms throughout their history."[1021] We will encounter this need to be able to recognize God in varying theophanic forms again when we return to Islam's youthful deity.

Several rabbinic texts give us a more detailed picture of God in his youthful manifestation at the Sea. See for example *Exodus Rabbah* 23:8:

> Rabbi Judah says: "Who spoke the praise of God? The (male) children whom Pharaoh had sought to cast into the Nile-they are the ones who recognized God. How is this? When Israel were in Egypt and an Israelite woman felt that she was about to give birth, she would go out to the fields and have her children there. After she given birth, she would leave the infant there, saying to God: 'Lord of the Worlds! I have done mine, now You do yours!'"

> Rabbi Yohanan said: "God [in His Glory] would immediately come down to cut the umbilical cord and to wash the infant...He would place two stones in the child's hand. From one he could suckle oil, and from the other honey...and so the children would grow up in the fields...When they were asked: 'Who took care of you?,' they replied: 'A certain beautiful and praiseworthy young man came down and took care of all our needs,' as is written: 'My beloved is fair and ruddy, a paragon among ten thousands'" (Cant. 5:10).

> When Israel reached the Sea, those same children were among them. They saw God at the Sea, and said to their parents: "This is the one who did all those things for us when we were in Egypt!" Thus, Scripture says: "*This* is my God and I will glorify Him!" (Ex. 15:2).[1022]

As Arthur Green has pointed out in his discussion of this and related narratives, the crossing at the Sea is here made "the moment of a great visionary experience."[1023] God is seen in his beautiful young man *Erscheinungsform*. Important for our discussion also is the emphasis placed on the *recognition* of God by the abandoned children: "*they* are the ones who recognized God" it is stressed. The implication seems to be that the other Israelites

---

[1020] Julian Morgenstern, "The King-God Among the Western Semites and the Meaning of Epiphanes," *VT* 10 (1960): 140-156 [art.=139-197]. On the old god/young god paradigm in ANE tradition see also Ivan Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967) 9, 19, 54-55.

[1021] Segal, "Dualism in Judaism, Christianity, and Gnosticism," 5.

[1022] Translation by Arthur Green, "The Children in Egypt and the Theophany at the Sea," *Judaism* 24 (1975): 448-449 [art.=446-456].

[1023] Ibid., 453.

at the Sea did not recognize him. But the boys who were with God in the fields of Egypt were the ones who recognized him at the Sea and thus sung his praise.

Can any of this help us understand Islam's youthful deity? Even though we really only hear of Allāh's youthful *Erscheinungsform* in the literature, apparently this was only one of at least two such theophanic forms. It seems also to have been his *eschatological Erscheinungsform*, distinguished from his primordial form. See, for example, a report found in al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and Ibn Ḥanbal.

Zayd b. Aslam < 'Aṭā' b. Yasār < Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī:

We said, "O Allāh's Apostle! Shall we see our Lord on the Day of Resurrection?" He said, "Do you have any difficulty in seeing the sun and the moon when the sky is clear?" We said, "No." He said, "So you will have no difficulty in seeing your Lord on that Day as you have no difficulty in seeing the sun and the moon (in a clear sky)." The Prophet then said, "Somebody will then announce, 'Let every nation follow what they used to worship.' So the companions of the cross will go with their cross, and the idolaters (will go) with their idols, and the companions of every god (false deities) (will go) with their god, till there remain those who used to worship Allāh, both the obedient ones and the mischievous ones, and some of the people of the Scripture. Then Hell will be presented to them as if it were a mirage.

Then it will be said to the Jews, 'What did you use to worship?' They will reply, 'We used to worship Ezra, the son of Allah.' It will be said to them, 'You are liars, for Allah has neither a wife nor a son. What do you want (now)?' They will reply, 'We want You to provide us with water.' Then it will be said to them 'Drink,' and they will fall down in Hell (instead). Then it will be said to the Christians, 'What did you use to worship?' They will reply, 'We used to worship Messiah, the son of Allāh.' It will be said, 'You are liars, for Allāh has neither a wife nor a son. What (do you want now)?' They will say, 'We want You to provide us with water.' It will be said to them, 'Drink,' and they will fall down in Hell (instead).

When there remain only those who used to worship Allāh (alone), both the obedient ones and the mischievous ones, it will be said to them, 'What keeps you here when all the people have gone?' They will say, 'We parted with them (in the world) when we were in greater need of them than we are today, we heard the call of one proclaiming, 'Let every nation follow what they used to worship,' and now we are waiting for our Lord.' Then the Almighty will come to them in a form (*sūra*) other than the one which they saw the first time, and He will say, 'I am your Lord,' [They will say: "(God protects us from you!) We associate nothing with God!" (We will stay here until our Lord comes to us. When our Lord comes, we will recognize Him!")][1024] And none will speak to Him then but the Prophets, and then it will be said to them, 'Do you know any sign by which you can

---

[1024] Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad¹*, 2:275; idem, *Kitab al-Sunna* (ed. ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥasan b. Ḥusayn; Maṭbaʿat al-Salafiyya, 1931), 42.

recognize Him?' ["Yes!" they will say. "*So, a leg will be uncovered* (68:42)."] and so Allāh will then uncover His Leg whereupon every believer will prostrate before Him…"[1025]

God will thus appear on the Day of Judgment in a visible form (*ṣūra*), but one that the believers won't recognize. It differs, we are told, from the form God had the 'first time' the people saw him. The commentators tell us that 'the first time' is a reference to the Primordial Covenant (*mithāq*) alluded to in *sūrat al 'Araf* [7]:172.[1026] The pre-incarnate souls of humanity, prior to the creation of Adam's physical body, entered into a primordial covenant with their creator to serve him alone once they are sent to earth. The first time the people saw God, then, was prior to creation; they saw then God's *primordial* form. It is this divine form the people expected to see on the Day of Judgment. Instead, however, God shows up in a new, unrecognized form. The commentators tended to understand the point of this test (*imtiḥān*) as a means of distinguishing the true believers from the hypocrites and others.[1027] The faithful are expected to recognize their Lord, the strange form notwithstanding.

The important question is, of course, what is the nature of these two forms? The primordial form is presumably anthropomorphic: the sign of the *leg* suggests this. A variant of this ḥadīth reads, "Then the Lord of the worlds will come to them under a more lowly form (*fī andā ṣūratin*) than that under which they had seen Him [before]."[1028] It is not clear what makes this eschatological form "lowly" or how exactly it differs from the primordial form of God. However, as we saw above, the eschatological form had been identified in some circles with the youthful form (*shābb*).[1029] In this case, Islam would seem to have taken a 'rabbinic' approach to the question of the relation of the young eschatological deity to the (old) primordial deity: they are the same deity in distinct theophanic forms. There are a number of points of contact between the Islamic and Jewish traditions, this 'transfiguration of God' motif for starters. In both traditions the

---

[1025] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *tawḥīd* 24/5; *tafsīr* 4/8; Muslim, *imān* 302; Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad¹*, 2:275.

[1026] For a discussion of this ḥadīth, its variants, and the various interpretations of the commentators see Gimaret, *Dieu à l'image de l'homme*, 137-142.

[1027] See Gimaret, *Dieu à l'image de l'homme*, 139.

[1028] Al-Bukhārī, *tawḥīd* 24/5.

[1029] See above.

ability/inability of the believers to *recognize* the eschatological (youthful) deity as God is stressed. Both traditions also stress the beauty of the youthful *Erscheinungsform*. In the Jewish tradition the divine 'Youth' is specifically 'given' to Moses: "he (the 'Youth') was not given to Adam, nor to Shem, nor to Abraham, nor to Isaac, nor to Jacob, but only to Moses."[1030] This youthful deity is the Master of the mysteries and has all the treasuries of wisdom, which he opened up to Moses alone, revealing to him the Torah (Written and Oral), the secret of the creation of heaven and earth, plus the "Wisdom and Knowledge and Thought and the Gnosis of things above and the fear of heaven."[1031] In the cognate Islamic tradition it is Muḥammad to whom the beautiful divine youth appears and reveals the knowledge of "all that is in the heavens and on the earth."

Both David Halperin and Josef van Ess have pointed to these Jewish precedents to Islam's youthful deity.[1032] They both also assume that the Jewish tradition influenced the Islamic through the mediation of Shīī Gnosticism. This cannot be correct. The widespread acceptance of this divine imagery in early Sunnism and its relatively early rejection by Shi'ism argues against this assumption. Also, the "influence" of one tradition by another is probably not what we are dealing with here. Rather, in the cultural milieu of the sixth and seventh century Near East the elements of religious discourse, concerning the Vision of God and other issues, "circulated freely, being transformed and adapted to the particular needs of each religion."[1033] Michael Zwettler plausibly suggests that "among the predominantly monotheistic milieu of the sixth- and seventh-century Near East there had evolved a reasonably conventionalized, perhaps even sacralized, mode or genre of discourse for representing instances of divine intervention and communication."[1034] That this motif of the Old and Young deities was a part of that conventionalized discourse is likely.

[1030] Peter Schäfer et al, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1981) # 396.

[1031] Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, II:177-78. See further Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, 101ff; idem, ""Titles of Enoch-Metatron in *2 Enoch*," *JSP* 18 (1998): 75 [art.=71-86].

[1032] Halperin, "Hekhalot and Mi'rāj," 281-282; van Ess, "Youthful God," 12.

[1033] Stroumsa, "Voiles et Miroirs," 78.

[1034] Zwettler, "Mantic Manifesto," 100.

6.3. Concluding Remarks

Van Ess appropriately points out that we can not be sure whether this discussion of theophany and *Visio Dei* in the *Urgemeinde* actually took place. The Companions of Muḥammad would become symbols of identity for certain groups and tendencies that used them as label and pretence.[1035] Much of what is related about them is therefore projection rather than reality. Van Ess is therefore "pretty sure that the question became a matter of serious dispute only later on, perhaps not before the end of the first century."[1036] This last point does not seem likely. Our reading of *sūrat al-Najm* [53]:1-18, particularly v. 12 ("Do you then dispute with him concerning what he saw?") suggests that already in the early Meccan community there was a controversy over Muḥammad's claim to have seen God.[1037] The affair of Muḥammad's prophetic rival in Medina, Ibn Ṣayyād, who mimicked Muḥammad by claiming to have experienced a throne-theophany, suggests two things relevant here: (1) in Medina Muḥammad was still claiming a vision of God as his prophetic credential, *pace* van Ess and others who assume that he abandoned this claim there; (2) the rumors that circulated among the Companions regarding Ibn Ṣayyād's visionary claim and Muḥammad's rejection of these claims and characterization of his rival's vision as that of the Devil indicates some measure of continuing controversy over claims of *visio Dei* in the *Urgemeinde*. While these circumstances don't guarantee the authenticity of the ḥadīth reports cited above, they do argue against a late first/seventh century date for the beginning of a dispute over *visio Dei*.

[1035] Van Ess, "Muhammad's Ascension," 18-19; idem, "Vision and Ascension," 59.

[1036] Van Ess, "Vision and Scension," 59.

[1037] See also Q 17:60, "The Vision We showed you was only a test for people". Wagtendonk, *Fasting in the Koran*, 109 n. 3 notes regarding this verse: "it...appears that the representation of a vision as reality led to disbelief among the hearers."

Chapter VII:

Al-Ru'ya *and the Articulation of Sunnism*

"The severely anthropomorphic image of God of oldest Islam is of course very early and was not at all objected to by rationalist considerations alone. The legends which unabashedly speak of the Prophet's encounter with God depict popular belief, not theological doctrine." Tor Andrae, ***Die person Muhammeds in lehre und glauben seiner gemeinde***.

7.1. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, *al-Ru'ya* and Proto-Sunnism

Josef van Ess took note of the "high degree of acceptance which the anthropomorphic interpretation of *sūrat al-Najm* found in the early community."[1038] But this widespread affirmation of Muḥammad's *ru'yat Allāh* was not confined to the *ʿāmma* or common folk as implied by Andrae's statement above. Rather, the Vision found wide acceptance among the intellectual elite of the proto-Sunnī circles of the General Religious Movement in particular.[1039] Especially indicative of the place of Muḥammad's Vision in proto-Sunnī thought is its affirmation by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 728).

W. Montgomery Watt assesses al-Ḥasan "*the* outstanding representative of the earlier religious scholars."[1040] According to Duncan Black Macdonald "[al-Ḥasan] seems to have been the chief center of the religious life and movements of his time"[1041] and Louis Massignon sees in him the "first historical manifestation of Sunnism."[1042] A distinct

---

[1038] "Vision and Ascension," 59.

[1039] On the General Religious Movement see Watt, *Formative Period*, 63-81; Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 1:241-79 (he calls this group the "Piety-minded").

[1040] Watt, *Formative Period*, 64.

[1041] *Development of Muslim Theology*, 129.

[1042]Louis Massignon, *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane* (Paris: J. Vran, 1954) 174-201.

'Sunnism,' Jonathan Berkey reminds us, was not yet articulated during al-Ḥasan's time[1043]: "first historical manifestation of proto-Sunnism" might therefore be a more apt characterization. The high regard with which al-Ḥasan is held by Muslims of all eras has made him the mouthpiece for several later trends seeking validation by the orthodox.[1044] Statements attributed to him must therefore be approached with caution. But his secure place at the very center of late Umayyad religiosity makes his dogmatic ideas profoundly significant for an understanding of doctrinal trends in that period.

Al-Ḥasan is best known for his Qadarite leanings as indicated in his *Risāla* or epistle allegedly written to and upon the request of the caliph 'Abd al-Mālik (r. 684-704).[1045] But his views on the Divine Attributes appear just as radical. Al-Ḥasan affirmed that the pious will see God openly on the Day of Resurrection. Prophet Muḥammad, on the other hand, saw God in this world.[1046] According to Massignon "on the vision of God (*ru'ya*) [al-Ḥasan] was almost alone with Ibn 'Abbās in affirming that it was really the divine essence (and not the angel) that Muhammad beheld during his night journey."[1047] While we now know that these two were in no way alone in affirming Muḥammad's vision of God, al-Ḥasan's affirmation is notable. According to al-Mubārak b. Faḍālah (d. 782), pupil of al-Ḥasan, the latter "swore by Allāh (*ḥalafa bi-llāhi*)" that Muḥammad saw his Lord.[1048] Ibn Abī Ḥātim (d. 938) relates in his ***Tafsīr*** the following report from 'Abbād b. Maṣūr:

I ['Abbād] asked 'Ikrima [about] "His heart lied not about what he saw (53:11)." 'Ikrima

---

[1043] *Formation of Islam*, 85.

[1044] See especially Suleiman Ali Mourad, *Early Islam Between Myth and History: Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110H/728 CE) and the Formation of His Legacy in Classical Islamic Scholarship* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006).

[1045] Oberman Julian, "Political Theology in Early Islam, Ḥasan Baṣrī's Treatise on Qadar," *JAOS* 55 (1935): 138-162; M. Schwarz, "The Letter Al-Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī," *Oriens* 20 (1967): 15-30. For a skeptical look at the authenticity of the epistle see Mourad, *Early Islam*; Michael Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma: A Source-Critical Study* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[1046] G.C. Anawati and Louis Gardet, *Mystique Musulmane* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1976) 24.

[1047] *Essai*, 27. See also A. Altmann, "The Ladder of Ascension," in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion. Presented to Gershom G. Scholem on his Seventieth Birthday by Pupils, Colleagues and Friends* (Jerusalm: Magnes Press, 1967) 3 [art.= 1-32].

[1048] 'Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ḥimyarī, *Tafsīr 'Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ṣan'ānī*, 3 vols. (ed. Maḥūd Muḥammad 'Abduh; Beirut: Mansūrāt Muḥammad 'Alī Bayḍūn, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1999) 2:253; Ibn Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 200; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ nahj al-balāghah* (Cairo: 'Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1959-), 3: 237; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 8:608.

said: "You expect that I will report to you that [Muḥammad] saw Him?"
I ['Abbād] said: "Yes." ['Ikrima] said: "Indeed he saw Him. Then he saw Him [again]." I
['Abbād] asked al-Ḥasan about it and he said: "He saw His splendor, and His majesty,
and His garment (ridā'hu)."[1049]

Exactly what al-Ḥasan might have meant by "His garment" is not clear. Is it the ridā' al-
kibriyā', Mantel of Grandeur that covers God's Face? Or is it the red or green ḥulla
donned by the youthful God of several reports? This cannot be answered definitively. Did
the Prophet see God with his eyes or heart? This too is difficult to answer. According to
al-Baghawī al-Ḥasan believed the Prophet saw God with his eyes.[1050] Ibn Kathīr found
this speculative.[1051] On the other hand al-Ḥasan is said to have interpreted Muḥammad's
Night Journey spiritually: isrā' bi-rūḥ rasūl Allāh (ṣ) wa huwa nā'im 'alā firāshihi, "the Night
Journey was in the Messenger of God's (ṣ) spirit while he was asleep in his bed."[1052] It is
not clear, however, that al-Ḥasan assumed the Night Journey to be the occasion of the
Vision.[1053]

According to the above ḥadīth from 'Abbād b. Maṣūr al-Ḥasan interpreted sūrat al-
Najm [53]:11 theophanically.[1054] When 'Abbād asked him regarding 53: 8 ("he drew near
and hung suspended") "Who drew near, Abū Saʿīd?" al-Ḥasan reportedly answered:
"My Lord."[1055] Ibn Mubārik reported that al-Ḥasan said concerning "He saw him
descend another time (53:13)": "Muḥammad saw his Lord."[1056] Al-Qurṭubī and al-
Nawawī report that al-Ḥasan read istawā of 53:9 as istawā 'alā 'l-'arsh, "(God) sat upright

[1049] Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm: musnadan 'an Rasūl Allāh wa-al-ṣaḥābah wa-al-tābi'īn (ed. Asʿad
Muḥammad al-Ṭayyib; Makkah al-Mukarramah, al-Mamlakah al-'Arabīyah al-Saʿūdīyah; al-
Riyāḍ: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafá al-Bāz, 1997) 10:3317-18 #18697; Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'ān 7:450.

[1050] Al-Baghawī, Tafsīr, 4: 247.

[1051] Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'ān 7:448.

[1052] Al-Balādhurī, Ansāb al-asrāf (ed. Muḥammad Hamīdullah; Cairo, 1959) 253 # 593; Ibn Qayyīm al-
Jawzīya. Zād al-maʿād, 3:30.

[1053] Pace Anawati and Gardet, Mystique Musulmane, 24; Massignon, Essai, 27.

[1054] See also Muḥammad 'Abd al-Raḥīm, Tafsīr al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1992) 2: 308.

[1055] Ibn Khuzayma, Kitāb al-tawḥīd, 213.

[1056] 'Abd Allāh, Kitāb al-Sunna, 1: 293, #565 (Cf. Ibid., 1:178, # 221); al-Baghawī, Tafsīr, 4: 247. See also
Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ, al-Shifa, 107.

on the Throne." [1057] But an angelophanic reading of these verses is also attributed to al-Ḥasan. Al-Ṭabarī reports regarding 53:8 that it was Jibrīl who drew close and hung suspended according to al-Ḥasan.[1058] According to Muḥammad 'Abd al-Raḥīm's ***Tafsīr al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī*** al-Ḥasan read 53:6-9 as: "After establishing himself (*istiwāhu*) on the highest horizon Jibrīl drew near to the earth and then descended to the Messenger of God (ṣ)."[1059]

Al-Ḥasan therefore shows a *Doppelgesicht* in the sources regarding the interpretation of *sūrat al-Najm*. He doesn't, however, regarding whether or not the Prophet saw God. It is not entirely clear whether he saw Him during the Night Journey or on some other occasion, or if he saw Him with his eyes or in a dream-vision, but this "first historical manifestation of (proto-)Sunnism" apparently emphatically affirmed that he did see God. And in this he was not alone among the scholars of proto-Sunnism. 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr, whom we will probably discover is our best available source for an authentically early (though not necessarily *authentic*) biography of the Prophet,[1060] affirmed the Vision despite the passionate rejection of his famous aunt.[1061] 'Urwa's famous student al-Zuhrī affirmed it,[1062] as did Abū Ṣaliḥ b. Ṣāliḥ (d. 720),[1063] Makḥūl al-Shāmī (d. 730-35),[1064] Ma'mar b. Rāshid (d. 770),[1065] al-'Awzā'ī (d. 773),[1066] and apparently even Ibn Isḥāq (d. 767), the

---

[1057] Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 17:88; al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2:10; al-Qāsimī, *Tafsīr al-Qāsimī*, 6:363.

[1058] Al-Ṭabarī. *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 27:44.

[1059] Muḥammad 'Abd al-Rahīm, *Tafsīr al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī*, 307.

[1060] Andreas Görke and Gregor Schoeler, "Reconstructing the Earliest *sīra* Text: the Hiǧra in the Corpus of 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr," *Der Islam* 82 (2005): 209-220; G. Schoeler, "Foundations for a New Biography of Muḥammad: the Production and Evaluation of the Corpus of Traditions according to 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr," in Herbert Berg (ed.), *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins* (Leiden, 2003) 21-28.

[1061] Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 8:608.

[1062] Ibid.

[1063] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* 7:448; al-Suyūṭī, *al-La'ālī'*, 28.

[1064] Makḥūl transmitted *ḥadīth aḥsan ṣūra* from 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Ā'ish and *ḥadīth al-shābb* from Anas b. Mālik. See al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr* 4:69; Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *Al-Sunna*, 1: 326; al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-Ru'ya*, 319 # 235; 322 #237.

[1065] 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr* 2:252; Ibn Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 229.

author of the canonical biography (*Sīra*) of the Prophet.[1067]

7.2. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Ru'ya* and Sunnism

Van Ess is therefore undoubtedly correct in suggesting that in the late Umayyad period "a broad consensus" supported a theophanic interpretation of *Sūrat al-Najm* and/or affirmed Muḥammad's visionary encounter with God.[1068] He errs, though, in his suggestion that such notions were relegated to the "margins of official theology" once the doctrinal ecumenism that characterized the General Religious Movement of the 8th century gave way in the 9th century onward to an emerging concept of orthodoxy and deviance.[1069] On the contrary, the sources clearly and unambiguously indicate that Sunnī orthodoxy,[1070] in its beginnings in Baghdād in the 9th century until its maturity in the 10-

---

[1066] Al-'Awzā'ī transmitted *ḥadīth aḥsan ṣūra* on the authority of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Ā'ish. He reportedly stopped Khālid b. al-Lajlāj as he passed by and asked him to recite this ḥadīth, after which al-'Awzā'ī proclaimed: "I have not seen one more knowledgeable in this ḥadīth that this man!" See al-Lālikā'ī, *Sharḥ uṣūl* 2: 514 # 902; al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Asma' wa al-Ṣifāt*, 2:73ff; al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-Ru'ya*, 319 #235.

[1067] According to van Ess (*Flowering of Muslim theology*, 73) Ibn Isḥāq "could hardly conceive of the idea that the Prophet had seen God in person." This cannot be correct. Ibn Isḥāq, we learn from Ibn al-Jawzī (*Kitāb Akhbār al-Ṣifāt*, 182 [Eng.]) was the sole transmitter of the *ḥadīth al-shabb* featuring Ibn 'Umar's query to Ibn 'Abbās. Ibn Isḥāq transmitted, or according Ibn al-Jawzī *fabricated*, the following ḥadīth: "[The Prophet] saw [his Lord], and it appeared that His legs were covered with a green garment and that He was shielded by a screen made of pearls (Ibid. See also al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Asma' wa al-Ṣifāt*, 2:445)." Ibn Isḥāq, we are also told, transmitted the *ḥadīth al-ru'ya* of Asma' and the report of Abū Hurayra affirming that Muḥammad indeed saw God. Ibn Isḥāq is associated with too many of these reports for van Ess's assessment to be accurate. If we wonder why none of these traditions feature in his *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* we need only consult Ibn Hishām's preamble to his edition of this work where he admits to: "omitting some things recorded in this book in which there is no mention of the Apostle and about which the Qur'ān says nothing and which are not relevant to anything in this book or an explanation of it or evidence for it...things which it is disgraceful to discuss; matters which would distress certain people; and such reports as al-Bakkā'ī told me he could not accept as trustworthy – all these things I have omitted." Guillaume, 691.

[1068] Van Ess, "Vision and Ascension," 55.

[1069] Van Ess, "Le *MI'RĀǦ* et la Vision de Dieu," 41.

[1070] I use the terms 'orthodox/heresy' hesitantly, recognizing the difficulty with which they are employed in an Islamic context. Islam has no machinery comparable to the ecumenical councils of Christendom whereby a doctrinal tenet could be formally declared 'orthodox' or 'heretical'. However, by a process of *ijmā'* or consensus a wide area of agreement may be reached, giving a doctrine or set of doctrines or practices legitimacy. (See Watt, *The Formative Period*, 5f. Also Alexander Knysh, "'Orthodoxy' and 'Heresy' in Medieval Islam: An Essay in Reassessment." *MW* 83 [1993]: 48-67. But cf. John B. Henderson, *The Construction of Orthodoxy and Heresy* [New York: State University of New York Press, 1998], 49ff). Prof. Sherman Jackson has well made the point that even in the absence of such formal mechanisms, via the informal authority of groups and individuals a community, in this case the Muslim community, can regulate theological dissent and gain publick recognition for what it deems to be 'right' as opposed to 'wrong' belief. (Sherman A. Jackson, *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam. Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī's* Fayṣal al-

11th centuries,[1071] included in its dogmatic articulation the affirmation of Muḥammad's vision of his Lord.

Sunnī orthodoxy consolidated in the 9th century around Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 855).[1072] If, as Henry Laoust suggested, Islamic orthodoxy can be likened to a series of concentric circles with the traditionalists (aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth) innermost, Christopher Melchert proposes that Ibn Ḥanbal was at the very center for the 9th century.[1073] Indeed, due largely to his (at least popularly perceived) defiant stance during the Miḥna (833-850) Ibn Ḥanbal's 'aqīda (dogmatic creed) became the shibboleth of early Sunnī doctrine.[1074] It was probably through his efforts that Muḥammad's ru'yat Allāh became a fundamental tenet of early Sunnism.

Tafriqa [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002] 30-31).   On Orthodoxy in Islam see also Norman Calder, "The Limits of Islamic Orthodoxy" in Farhad Daftery (ed.), *Intellectual Traditions in Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2001) 66-85; Devin J. Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy: Twelver Shiite Responses to the Sunni Legal System* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998) 45-48.

[1071] It was in the cosmopolitan city of Baghdād that Sunnī orthodoxy evolved. See Van Ess, *TG* 3: 29ff; Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics Under the Early 'Abbāsids: the Emrgence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 161. On Baghdād and Sunnī orthodoxy see further Berkey, *Formation of Islam*, 187; George Makdisi, "Remarks on Traditionalism in Islamic Religious History," in Carl Leiden (ed.), *The Conflict of Traditionalism and Modernism in the Muslim Middle East* (Austin, Texas: University Texas, 1966) 81 [art.=77-86].

[1072] Christopher Melchert observed that: "By and large, Sunni orthodoxy crystallized in the third Islamic century/ninth century CE. At the center of the new orthodoxy lay the traditionalist creed of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and his followers." "Sectaries in the Six Books: Evidence for the Exclusion from the Sunni Community," *MW* 82 (1992): 287 [art.=287-295]. Nagel, *History of Islamic Theology*, 237 notes as well: "As far as we can tell from the sources...a clear idea of what orthodoxy was developed mainly among Ahmad ibn Hanbal's students and their students in Baghdad." See also Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 391-2.

[1073] Christopher Melchert, "The Adversaries of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal," *Arabica* 44 [1997], 235: "The popular, traditionalist party in Baghdad collected in the first half of the ninth century CE. around Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal"); idem, "Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and the Qur'an," *JQS* 6 (2004): 22 [art.=22-34]: "Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal...was the central, defining figure of Sunnism in the earlier ninth century CE". Al-Khāṭib al-Baghdādī introduced Ibn Ḥanbal as "the champion of the Sunna, the senior figure of his community, and the exemplar of his class (ta'ifa)." Al-Khāṭib al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 14 vols. (Cairo: al-Maktabat al-'Arabiya bi-Baghdad, 1931), 3:336.

[1074] Wilfred Madelung notes that "it was no doubt due to the authority of Ibn Ḥanbal than to Ibn Kullāb that the eternity of the Koran henceforth became a dogma for the great majority of Sunnite Muslims." "The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran," in his *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985), V: 515. This is true for many aspects of Sunnī doctrine (See also Henderson, *The Construction of Orthodoxy and Heresy*, 58). Makdisi, "Remarks," 79: "Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal...is responsible for Traditionalism's triumph in the realm of theology."

Ibn Ḥanbal reported the *ḥadīth aḥsan ṣūra* with four *asānīd* (chains of transmission) in his ***Musnad***.[1075] For example:

> Abū 'Āmir < Zuhayr b. Muḥammad < Yazīd b. Yazīd b. Jābir < Khālid b. al-Lajlāj < 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Ā'ish < some of the Companions of the Prophet:

> One morning, the Messenger of God went out to them (his companions) in a joyous mood and a radiant face. We said [to him]: "Oh Messenger of God, here you are in a joyous mood and a glowing face!" "How could I not be?" he answered. "My Lord came to me last night under the most beautiful form, and He said [to me]: 'Oh Muḥammad!' —'Here I am, Lord, at Your order!' He said [to me]: 'Over what disputes the Exalted Assembly?' —'I do not know, Lord.' He posed [to me] two or three times the same question. Then He put His palm between my shoulder blades, to the point where I felt its coolness between my nipples, and from that moment appeared to me [all] that is in the heavens and on the earth...'" etc.[1076]

There is controversy over the Imām's position on this particular report from 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Ā'ish. Ibn Ḥajar reports from Abū Zur'a (d.878) that the latter asked Ibn Ḥanbal about this report and he replied: "This is of no consequence (*hadhā laysa bi-shay'in*)."[1077] Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1200) reports a similar position from Aḥmad in his ***Dafʿ Shubah al-tashbīh bi-akaff al-tanzīh***. He quotes the Imām as stating: "The origins of this ḥadīth and its sources are disturbed (*muḍṭariba*)."[1078] Yet, Ibn al-Jawzī reports this very narration from Ibn Ḥanbal in his ***Al-'Ilal l-mutanāhiya fī 'l-aḥādīth al-wāhiya***.[1079] 'Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad (d. 903), the Imām's son and the person most responsible for the publication of his dogmatic works, likewise narrates the ḥadīth from his father in his ***Kitāb al-Sunna***.[1080] According to Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī, when Ibn

---

[1075] Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad¹*, 1:368, 4: 66, 5: 243, 5:378.

[1076] Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad²* , 27:171, #16621.

[1077] Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Kitāb Tahdhīb "al-Tahdhīb"* 12 vols. (Ḥaydrābād al-Dakan: Maṭba'at Majlis Dā'irat al-Mā'arif al-Niẓāmīya, 1907-1909), 6:204.

[1078] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Dafʿ Dafʿ Shubah al-tashbīh*, 149.; idem, *Kitāb Akhbār al-Ṣifāt*, 45 (Eng. 176).

[1079] Al-Dhahabī, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-'Ilal al-mutanāhīya li-Ibn al-Jawzī* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd: Sharikat al-Riyāḍ, 1998), 25.

[1080] Ibn Ḥanbal, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 159.

Ḥanbal was asked about the report, he declared it correct/right (ṣawāb).[1081] In any case, whatever criticisms Ibn Ḥanbal may have had with the *isnād* of this particular report on the authority of Ibn ʿĀʾish, the Imām explicitly declared *ṣaḥīḥ* (sound) the cognate report from Muʿadh b. Jabal.[1082] The Imām's acceptance of *aḥādīth aḥsan ṣūra* is therefore not really in question.

How did Ibn Ḥanbal understand this report? The Ḥanbalī *mutakallim* Ibn al-Jawzī reports from the Ḥanbalī al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā's (d. 1066) **Kitāb al-Kifāya** that Aḥmad stated: "'I saw my Lord in the most beautiful form,' i.e., in the best position (*mawḍiʿ*)."[1083] Interpreting "most beautiful form" as "best position" effectively eliminates the anthropomorphism of the text. But there are problems with this report from Ibn al-Jawzī. First, it is at variance with al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā's own exegesis of this narration as found in his **Kitāb al-Muʿtamad fī Uṣūl al-Dīn**. According to what we read, God truly has a most beautiful form, in the same manner he has a soul and an essence:

> If it is said, "He is a person (*shakhṣ*) or form (*ṣūra*)," it (should be) said: The report from different routes on the night of the *miʿrāj* mentioned, "I saw my Lord in the most beautiful form"…And the application of that is not to be refused. Just as "soul" (*nafs*) not like souls and essence (*dhāt*) not like essences weren't denied Him. Likewise form unlike forms, for the *shariʿa* (uses it in this manner).[1084]

Secondly, ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad quotes from his father a startlingly different exegesis of this ḥadīth, startling in its frank anthropomorphic suggestions.

> [ʿAbd Allāh said]: My father (Ibn Ḥanbal) reported to me…from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-ʿĀʾish from some of the companions of the Prophet: "He came out to them one morning while in a joyous mood and a radiant face. We said [to him]: 'Oh Messenger of God, here you are in a joyous mood and a glowing face!' --'How could I not be?' he answered. 'My Lord came to me last night under the most beautiful form, and He said [to me]: "'O Muhammad!'…" And my father (Ibn Ḥanbal) reported to us, ʿAbd al-Razzāq from Maʿmar from Qatāda [from the Prophet], "Allah created Adam according to His form."

[1081] Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Abi Bakr al-Haythamī, *Kitāb majmaʿ al-baḥrayn fī zawāʾid al-muʿjamayn* (Riyāḍ: Maktabāt al-Rushd, 1992), 368, #11741.

[1082] ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbī, *Al-Kāmil fī ḍuʿafāʾ al-rijāl*, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1984), 6:2344.

[1083] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Daf Daf Shubah al-tashbīh*, 151.

[1084] al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā, *Kitāb al-Muʿtammad fī uṣūl al-dīn*. Edition with Introduction and Notes by W.Z. Haddad (Beirut: Dar El-Mashreq, 1974), 58. Cf. 85.

My father reported to us, 'Abd al-Razzāq from Ma'mar from Qatāda, "'in the best stature (fī aḥsani taqwīmin)' meaning 'in the most beautiful form (fī aḥsani ṣūratin)'." Ibrāhīm b. al-Hajjāj reported to us, Hammād (b. Salama) reported to us...that the Prophet said, "Allāh is beautiful and He loves beauty."[1085]

The implication of this collection of traditions is unmistakable. The "most beautiful form" is first identified with that form of God according to which Adam was created. This identification is further supported by the Imām's interpretation of *Sūrat al-Tīn*, "Surely We created man in the best stature (fī aḥsani taqwīmin) (95:4)." Ibn Ḥanbal accepts the *tafsīr* or exegesis of Qatāda identifying man's "best stature" with God's "most beautiful form."[1086] Because Adam was created according to God's own form, this identification is logical. It is then affirmed that God is physically beautiful.[1087] On this reading the 'Imām of Baghdād' quite clearly took the theophanic form of God seriously.

Ibn Ḥanbal seems to have been the first traditionalist to include Muḥammad's visionary encounter with God in his creed.[1088] He declared in his *'Aqīda III*[1089] that one of the fundamental principles of the Sunna (uṣūl al-sunna) was:

> to have faith in the Beatific Vision on the Day of Judgment...and that the Prophet has seen his Lord, since this has been transmitted from the Messenger of God and is correct and authentic. It has been reported from Qatāda, from 'Ikrima, from Ibn 'Abbās and al-Ḥakam b. Abān reported it from 'Ikrima, from Ibn 'Abbās and 'Alī b. Zayd likewise reported it from Yūsuf b. Mahrān, from Ibn 'Abbās.
>
> And the ḥadīth, in our estimation, is to be taken upon its apparent meaning ('alā ẓāhirihi), as it has come from the Prophet. Indulging in *Kalām* (theological speculation) with respect to it is an innovation. But we have faith in it as it came, upon its apparent meaning, and we do not dispute with anyone regarding it."[1090]

[1085] Ibn Ḥanbal, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 159.

[1086] 'Abd Allāh, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 2:490.

[1087] On the hadith, "God is beautiful..." Daniel Gimaret notes: "the sense of the word *jamīl* is unequivocal: it is about beauty, and of physical, material beauty." *Dieu à l'image*, 260. Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad²*, 28:437f, #17206.

[1088] The Shāfi'ite al-Lālikā'ī (d. 1027), in his *Sharḥ uṣūl i'tiqād ahl 'l-sunna wa 'l-jamā'a* reports *'aqā'id* for the various *muḥaddithūn* but Muḥammad's *ru'yat Allāh* is not found in any of the pre-Ḥanbalī creeds.

[1089] I use here Henry Laoust's classication of Ibn Ḥanbal's creeds found in Ibn Abī Ya'lā's *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* 2 vols. (ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fīqī; Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sunna al-Muḥammadīya, 1952). See. Henry Laoust, "Les Premières Professions de foi Hanbalites," in *Mélanges Louis Massignon*, PIFD, 3 (Damas: Institut Francais De Damas, 1957), 12ff.

[1090] Ibn Ḥanbal, *'Aqīda III, apud* Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:246.

A literalist interpretation (*'alā 'l-ẓāhir*) of the reports of Muḥammad's *Visio Dei* has therefore been made a doctrinal mandate by the "Imām of Baghdad." In his *'Aqīda V* Aḥmad argued that "Belief in that (Muḥammad's *ru'yat Allāh*) and counting it true is obligatory."[1091] Which reports is Ibn Ḥanbal invoking in whose belief is obligatory? As far as the *isnād* 'Alī b. Zayd < Yūsuf b. Mahrān < Ibn 'Abbās I checked the twenty-three occurrences of this chain listed in the index of Shu'ayb al-Arnā'ut's edition of Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad* and found no *ḥadīth al-Ru'yā*,[1092] nor have I located this report in any other source. I likewise checked the four listings of the *isnād* al-Ḥakam b. Abān < 'Ikrima < Ibn 'Abbās and found no *ḥadīth al-Ru'yā*.[1093] However, Ḥanbalī *mutakallim* Ibn al-Jawzī reports in his *Daf' Shubah al-tashbīh* a report with this chain: "The Prophet said: 'I saw my lord curly haired and beardless, on Him a green *ḥulla*."[1094] Ibn 'Adī in his *al-Kāmil* and al-Dhahabī in his *Mīzān al-i'tidāl fī naqd al-rijāl* report a similar ḥadīth with the chain al-Ḥakam b. Abān < Zirik < 'Ikrima < Ibn 'Abbās: "[The Prophet said]: I saw my Lord in the form of a young man, curly haired and beardless."[1095] There is also another *ḥadīth al-Ru'ya* with this chain reported in several collections, including Al-Tirmidhī's *Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥī*, narrated, however, from al-Ḥakam b. Abān by Salm b. Ja'far rather than Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥakam b. Abān as in the ḥadīth reported by Ibn al-Jawzī:

> Once I ('Ikrima) asked Ibn 'Abbās if Muḥammad had seen his Lord. He answered: "Yes, he saw Him as if He had His feet in verdure, and in front of him a curtain of pearls." Following which, 'Ikrima said to Ibn 'Abbās: "Didn't God say: *lā tudrikuhu l-abṣāru* (6:103)?" Ibn 'Abbās answered: "God wanted to speak of His light: when He appeared in His light, nothing can reach Him (*lā yudrikuhu shay'*). [Muḥammad indeed saw his Lord twice.]"[1096]

[1091] Ibn Ḥanbal, *'Aqīda V, apud* Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt* 1:312.

[1092] Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 30 vols. (ed. Shu'ayb al-Arnā'ut; Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1993; hereafter *Musnad²*) 30:438 s.v. Yūsuf b. Mahrān. On ḥadīth reports transmitted by Aḥmad but 'missing' from the *Musnad* see Christopher Melchert, "The *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal: How It Was Composed and What Distinguishes It from the Six Books," *Der Islam* 82 (2005): 39ff [art.=32-51].

[1093] Ibn Ḥanbal *Musnad²*, 30:128 s.v. al-Ḥakam b. Abān.

[1094] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Daf' Shubah al-tashbīh*, 153. Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥakam b. Abān reports from hid father this report.

[1095] Ibn 'Adī, *al-Kāmil* 2: 678; al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-i'tidāl*, 1:278.

[1096] See above n. 776.

There is nothing to tell us which of these reports Ibn Ḥanbal had in mind in his *'Aqīda III*. We are on firmer ground, however, with the first chain he cites: Qatāda < 'Ikrima < Ibn 'Abbās. This report is cited twice in his ***Musnad***:

> Aswad b. 'Āmir [Shādhān] reported to us: Hammād b. Salama reported to us on the authority of Qatāda, on the authority of 'Ikrima, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās. He said: "The Messenger of God (ṣ) said: 'I saw my Lord, Blessed and Most High'."[1097]

> 'Affān (b. Muslim) reported to us: 'Abd al-Ṣammad b. Kaysān reported to us: Hammād b. Salama reported to us on the authority of Qatāda, on the authority of 'Ikrima, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās. He said: "The Messenger of God (ṣ) said: 'I saw my Lord, Blessed and Most High'."[1098]

These two *ru'ya*-traditions are here reported *mukhtaṣar* or abridged from a fuller ḥadīth as was the common practice at this time.[1099] The question is, Which *ḥadīth al-ru'ya* are these abridgments of? Ibn Kathīr suggests that the Aswad b. 'Āmir, etc. report was abridged from *ḥadīth al-manām* ("report of the dream [vision]") and quotes from Ibn Ḥanbal's ***Musnad*** the *ḥadīth aḥsan ṣūra* from Ma'mar b. Rāshid < Ayyub al-Sikhtiyānī < Abū Qilāba al-Baṣrī < Ibn 'Abbās < the Prophet[1100]: " 'My Lord came to me last night in the most beautiful form' – I think (says Ibn 'Abbās) he meant in his sleep." But this identification is impossible; the *isnāds* conflict. There is a *ḥadīth aḥsan ṣūra* with the partial *isnād* Qatāda < 'Ikrima < Ibn 'Abbās, but it is reported from al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-Baṣrī < Ibrāhīm b. Abū Suwayd < Hammād < Qatada, etc.,[1101] not Aswad b. 'Āmir < Hammād < Qatada, etc (#2580 in Ibn Ḥanbal's ***Musnad***), nor 'Affān b. Muslim < 'Abd al-

---

[1097] Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad²*, 4:351 #2580.

[1098] Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad²*, 4:221 #2634.

[1099] Ibn Abī 'Āṣim (822-900), for example, a younger contemporary of Ibn Ḥanbal, after reporting in his *al-Sunna* the same tradition from Aswad b. 'Āmir, etc., "The Messenger of God (ṣ) said: 'I saw my Lord, Blessed and Most High'" (1:311 #449) then adds, "then he (i.e. Muḥammad) mentioned the (full) wording, *thumma dhikara kalām*ᵃⁿ" This latter phrase indicates clearly that "I saw my Lord" is simply shorthand, and is not be taken as the full report. This point is confirmed by Ibn Abī 'Āṣim's editor, Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, who notes regarding this tradition *huwa mukhtaṣar min ḥadīth al-ru'yā*, "it is abridged from the report of the Vision." On Ibn Ḥanbal's (?) abridgment see Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 7: 450; Khaldūn Aḥdad, *Zawā'id*, 8:37-40.

[1100] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 7: 450.

[1101] Al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-Ru'ya*, 347 # 267. But according to al-Dhahabī, *Talkhīṣ*, 26 this is a *ḥadīth al-shābb*.

Ṣammad b. Kaysān < Ḥammād < Qatāda, etc. (#2634 in Ibn Ḥanbal's **Musnad**).[1102] The Aswad b. 'Āmir, etc., tradition is quoted in full by Ibn 'Adī,[1103] al-Bayhaqī,[1104] al-Dhahabī,[1105] and al-Suyūtī[1106] while the 'Affān b. Muslim, etc. tradition by Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī,[1107] al-Dhahabī,[1108] Khāldūn Aḥdad,[1109] and al-Suyūtī.[1110]

> Aswad b. 'Āmir < Ḥammād < Qatāda < 'Ikrima < Ibn 'Abbās < the Prophet: "I saw my Lord Blessed and Most High [in the form of a young man], curly-haired and beardless."

> 'Affān b. Muslim < 'Abd al-Ṣammad b. Kaysān < Ḥammād < Qatāda < 'Ikrima < Ibn 'Abbās < the Prophet: "I saw My Lord Blessed and Most High in the form of a young man, beardless, on him a red/green garment.[1111]

The reports abbreviated in Ibn Ḥanbal's **Musnad** are therefore *aḥādīth al-shābb* or Reports of the (Divine) Youth. This shortening of the reports has suggested to some the Imām's reluctance to attribute to God such an uncompromisingly anthropomorphic description.[1112] But there is sufficient evidence to dismiss this suggestion. The Ḥanbalī al-Ṭabarānī (d. 971), for example, reported in his **al-Sunna** from 'Abd Allāh, Ibn Ḥanbal's son:

> My father reported to us (that) Aswad b. 'Āmir and Muḥammad b. Muḥammad 'Aqaba al-Shaybānī al-Kūfī reported (that) al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-Ḥalwānī reported (that) 'Affān

---

[1102] Ḥammād transmits another *ḥadīth aḥsan ṣūra*, but from Thābit < Anas b. Mālik. Al-Dhahabī, *Talkhīs*, 26; al-Suyūtī, *al-La'ālī*, 31. The *isnād* is Sufyān b. Zuyād < Fahd b. 'Awwaf < Ḥammād, etc.

[1103] *Al-Kāmil*, 2:677.

[1104] *Al-Asmā' wa al-Ṣifāt*, 2:363 # 938.

[1105] *Mīzān al-i'tidāl*, 1:278.

[1106] *Al-La'ālī*, 1:29.

[1107] *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*. 14 vols. (Cairo, 1931) 8:214, 5924.

[1108] *Talkhīs*, 26.

[1109] *Zawā'id*, 8:37.

[1110] *Al-La'ālī*, 1:30.

[1111] *Red*: Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, 8:214, 5924; Khāldūn Aḥdad, *Zawā'id*, 8:37. *Green*: al-Suyūtī, *al-La'ālī*, 1:30.

[1112] 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Hāshidī, editor of al-Bayhaqī's *al-Asmā' wa al-Ṣifāt*, suggested for example that the abridged narrations evince the Imām's rejection of the expression "beardless, curly haired" and presumably "form of a young man." 2:364.

reported (that) 'Abd al-Ṣammad b. Kaysān reported, and Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ b. al-Walīd al-Narsī reported (that) 'Isā b. Shādhān reported (that) Ibrāhīm b. Abī Suwayd al-Dirā' reported; they all said: Hammād b. Salama reported to us on the authority of Qatāda, on the authority of 'Ikrima, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās. He said: "The Messenger of God (ṣ) said: 'I saw my Lord in the form of a young man with abundant hair.'"[1113]

Ibn Ḥanbal thus narrated from multiple chains the *ḥadīth al shābb*. Abū Bakr al-Marrudhī (d. 888), reputedly "the preferred disciple of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal," asked his imām about this ḥadīth, the latter getting visibly angry at those who denied it.

> I read to Abū 'Abd Allāh (Ibn Ḥanbal): "(Aswad b. 'Āmir) Shādhān reported to us…from Ibn 'Abbās (that) the Messenger of Allāh (ṣ) said, 'I saw my Lord as a young man, beardless and curly haired, and on Him a green garment'." [I then said to Ibn Ḥanbal]: "They say[1114] [no one] reported [this ḥadīth] except Shādhān." He (Ibn Ḥanbal) got angry and said, "Who said this?! 'Affān reported to us that 'Abd al-Ṣammad b. Kaysān reported to us that Hammād reported from Qatāda from 'Ikrima from Ibn 'Abbās from the Messenger of Allāh, 'I saw my Lord, Exalted and Great'." I [then] said to [Ibn Ḥanbal]: "O Abū 'Abd Allāh, they say Qatāda didn't report anything from 'Ikrima."[1115] [He got angry and] said: "Who said this?!" Then he pulled out [his book and in it] five, six, or seven *aḥādīth* from Qatāda from 'Ikrima.[1116]

It is evident from this report that, for Ibn Ḥanbal, "I saw my Lord" was simply shorthand for the *ḥadīth al shābb* and did not imply a rejection of its full content. This is further confirmed by a report from 'Abd al-Ṣammad b. Yaḥyā that he was instructed to specifically question the imām about this ḥadīth:

> [Shādhān said to me]:"Go to Abū 'Abd Allāh and say, 'Do you tell me that I should report the ḥadīth of Qatāda from 'Ikrima from Ibn 'Abbās, "I saw my Lord in the form of a young man"?'" So I came to Abū 'Abd Allāh and said it to him, and he said to me: "Report it, because the *'ulamā'* (religious scholars) have reported it."[1117]

[1113] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Laʿālī*, 29.

[1114] In a slightly different version reported by Ibn 'Adī, instead of "they say (*innahum yaqulūna*)" we find, "you say (*taqulūna*)." Ibn 'Adī, *Al-Kāmil*, 2:677.

[1115] Ibn 'Adī's version reads: "They say Qatada didn't hear from 'Ikrima." *Al-Kāmil* 2:677.

[1116] Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:45f; Ibn 'Adī, *Al-Kāmil*, 2:677.

[1117] Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt*, I:218.

A final piece of evidence that Ibn Ḥanbal affirmed the most blatantly anthropomorphic expressions of this report comes from an anti-anthropomorphist among the Ḥanābila, Ibn ʿAqīl (d. 1119). Yūsuf b. ʿAbd al-Hadī reported from Ibn ʿAqil's lost **Irshād** on theology:

> Someone asked Ibn Ḥanbal if he could report the ḥadīth of Ibn ʿAbbās…in which the Prophet reported to have seen his Lord with short curly hair, and Aḥmad is said to have told him to report it, since the religious scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) have reported it. On this, Ibn ʿAqīl said: "I treat these two traditions in the same way, in that Ibn Ḥanbal permitted him to report them interpreted metaphorically, not unqualifiedly, so that the form and the short curly hair are related to Muḥammad, not to his Lord." [1118]

The above report, coming from one so hostile to anthropomorphism, is strong evidence of the Imām's affirmation of the anthropomorphisms of this ḥadīth. While Ibn ʿAqīl does not hesitate to deem apocryphal any report offensive to God's transcendence, in spite of its acceptance by the majority of his companions,[1119] Ibn Ḥanbal's affirming the use of these expressions was apparently too well established for even him to deny. Instead, Ibn ʿAqīl chose a route he has traveled before: attribute to the Imām the use of *taʾwīl* (metaphorical interpretation) to do away with the anthropomorphism. This is contradicted, however, by Ibn Ḥanbal's own discussion of the report in which he condemns *taʾwīl* in its regard:

> And the ḥadīth, in our estimation, is to be taken by its apparent meaning (*ʿalā ẓāhirihi*), as it has come from the Prophet. And indulging in theological rhetoric with respect to it is an innovation. But we have faith in it as it came, upon its apparent meaning and we do not dispute with anyone regarding it.[1120]

While Ibn Ḥanbal's support for *ḥadīth al-shābb* from Ibn ʿAbbās is therefore clear, he apparently rejected the *ḥadīth al-shābb* from Umm al-Ṭufayl. When asked about the narration, the Imām reportedly declared, "This is an unconfirmed ḥadīth (*hadhā ḥadīth munkar*). Marwān b. ʿUthmān and ʿUmāra (b. ʿĀmir) are unknown (*majhūl*)."[1121] The

---

[1118] See George Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl: Religion and Culture in Classical Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997) 130ff.

[1119] Ibid., 104.

[1120] Ibn Ḥanbal, *ʿAqīda* III, *apud* Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt*, I:246.

[1121] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Dafʿ Shubah al-tashbīh*, 152; idem, *Kitāb Akhbār al Ṣifāt*, 48 (Eng. 181).

Imām is not rejecting the *Gottesbild* found in this report – he finds the *isnād* (chain of transmission) defective but says nothing of the *matn* (text). Ibn Hanbal's rejection of this report is therefore based on strict *isnād* criticism, not dogmatic considerations. Al-Dhahabī likewise cited Aḥmad's negative judgment of the Umm al-Ṭufayl report in his ***Tartīb al mawḍūʿāt***.[1122] In his ***Mīzān al-iʿtidāl fī naqd al-rijāl*** al-Dhahabī considers the *ḥadīth al-shābb* from Ibn ʿAbbās.[1123] Al-Dhahabī is himself somewhat ambivalent regarding this report. He considered it one of the *ankar* or rejected transmissions of Ḥammād b. Salama, but then says, *hādhihi 'l-ruʾya ruʾya manām in ṣaḥḥa*, "This vision is a dream-vision if it is sound."[1124] Al-Dhahabī then reports what he obviously considers Ibn Ḥanbal's position on the ḥadīth, citing al-Marrudhī's report of Ibn Ḥanbal's support for the ḥadīth and anger with those who rejected it.[1125]

7.2.1. *Ruʾya biʾl-baṣar* or *Ruʾya biʾl-qalb*? Ibn Ḥanbal's *Doppelgesicht*

The central figure of 9th century Sunnism therefore not only affirmed Muḥammad's visual encounter with a corporeal deity but he declared such affirmation a criterion of true faith. But what was the nature of this encounter? Did the Prophet see God with his eyes or with his heart? The reports are too conflicting to allow us to say for sure. According to Ibn Qayyīm al-Jawzīya the confusion began with a group of the Imām's followers:

> But Aḥmad did not say that [the Prophet] saw Him with the eyes of his head...Rather, he said once, "he saw Him" and once he said, "he saw Him with his heart"...And a third [opinion] is reported from him (Aḥmad) from the exaggeration (*tasarruf*) of some of his companions that he said "he saw Him with the eyes of his head." And the texts of Aḥmad are available and that is not in them.[1126]

The situation is not this simple, however. Ibn Ḥanbal does report in his ***Musnad*** the

---

[1122] Al-Dhahabī, *Tartīb al-mawḍūʿāt*, 22.

[1123] Al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-iʿtidāl*, 1:594.

[1124] Ibid.

[1125] See also Al-Dhahabī, *Talkhīs*, 26.

[1126] Ibn Qayyīm al-Jawzīya. *Zād al-maʿād*, 3:29; Cf. Ibn Taymīya. *Al-Qawl al-Aḥmad fī bayān ghalāt man ghaliṭa ʿalā al-Imām Aḥmad* (Riyāḍ: Dār al-ʿĀṣimah, 1998) 133.

exegetical tradition for *sūrat al-Najm* [53]:1-18 from Ibn 'Abbās, "he saw his Lord with his heart twice,"[1127] as well as the *ḥadīth aḥsan sūra* in which Ibn 'Abbās hazards the suggestion: "I think he meant during (his) sleep."[1128] Al-Lālikā'ī reports in his **Sharḥ uṣūl i'tiqād** that Ibn Ḥanbal was asked, "Which position do you take (*ilā ayy shay' tadhhabu*) regarding Muḥammad's vision of his Lord?" to which the Imām replied: "(The position reflected in) the ḥadīth of al-A'mish, on the authority of Ziyād b. al-Ḥaṣīn, on the authority of Abū al-'Āliya, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās. He said: 'The Prophet saw his Lord with his heart.'"[1129]

On the other hand, there is also textual evidence that the Imām acknowledged a vision of God during a wakened state. In the **Musnad** we read a *ḥadīth aḥsan sūra* on the authority of Mu'adh b. Jabal in which the Prophet said:

> I got up last night [to pray]. I did the ablution, I prayed what destiny wished that I pray; then while I was praying, sleepiness took me, and I fell asleep, until I woke up (*ḥattā stayqaztu*) and there, in front of me, was my Lord, under the most beautiful form...[1130]

Al-Tirmidhī reported this ḥadīth from Mu'adh with the words *fa-stathqaltu* "then I dozed off"[1131] instead of *ḥattā stayqaztu*, making the appearance a dream-vision. Ibn Ḥanbal is alone in using the phrase *ḥattā stayqaztu* ("until I woke up") implying a physical seeing of God.[1132] Al-Mubārakfūrī relates the theory that *istayqaztu* is a copyist misspelling (*taṣḥīf*) from *istathqaltu*,[1133] but Ibn al-Jawzī narrated the ḥadīth from the Imām with the disputed words in place,[1134] making the theory unlikely. According to Abū Muḥammad al-Tamimī (d. 1095) and al-Qāḍī Abū Ya'lā, Ibn Ḥanbal believed the Prophet saw God

[1127] Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad²*, 3:425, #1957.

[1128] Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad²*, 5:437, #3484.

[1129] Al-Lālikā'ī. *Sharḥ uṣūl i'tiqād*, 2:519 #916.

[1130] Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad¹*, 5:243.

[1131] Al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuḥfa al-aḥwadhī*, 9:107.

[1132] Gimaret, *Dieu à l'image*, 145ff.

[1133] Al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuḥfa al-aḥwadhī*, 9:103.

[1134] Al-Dhahabī, *Talkhīṣ*, 25.

during the *miʿrāj* (ascension) with his eyes.[1135] Abū Bakr al-Naqqash (d. 351/962) also reports the Imām as declaring: "I say that the ḥadīth of Ibn ʿAbbās means that (the Prophet) saw Him with his eyes."[1136]

There is no way to tell which tradition represents Ibn Ḥanbal's position. Maybe both do; perhaps the Imām affirmed both a *ruʾya biʾl-baṣar* and a *ruʾya biʾl-qalb* occurring on different occasions. In either case the Prophet's visionary encounter with God was real according to Ibn Ḥanbal who affirmed: "Yes, he saw Him in reality (*raʾhu ḥaqqan*), for the visions of the prophets are real."[1137]

7.2.2. Ibn Ḥanbal, *Ḥadīth al-Shābb* and the Sunnī *Gottesbild*

Ibn Ḥanbal was not the only leading traditionalist who made acceptance of *ḥadīth al-shābb* a criterion of right belief. The famous *muḥaddith* Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn (d. 847), about whom it is stated that the Prophet's bedstead (*sarīr*) was brought out for him to be carried on when he died during Hajj in 847, condemned anyone who denied this particular report as an innovator (*mubtadiʿ*),[1138] and according to the traditionalist Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī (d. 878) "none denies it except the Muʿtazila."[1139] Nascent (traditionalist) Sunnism was therefore characterized by belief in this corporeal and theophanous deity. We learn from the Zaydī imām al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm (d. 860) that the popular proto-Sunnī movement that looked to Ibn Ḥanbal as its figurehead accepted the report and based its view of God on it. Al-Qāsim wrote in his ***Kitāb al-Mustarshid***

> The Muslims (lit. those who pray) have agreed with us that the glances will not perceive God, except for a group of the *Rāwafid*, and the *Ḥashwīya* who agree with them. They said the Prophet had seen his Lord white-skinned and dark-haired. They related in another way that He had been seen in the form of an adolescent whose hair was cut off.

[1135] Ibn Ḥanbal, *ʿAqīda* VII, *apud* Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:271.

[1136] Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *al-Shifa*, 102; Andrae, *Die Person*, 75.

[1137] Ibn Qayyīm al-Jawzīya. *Zād al-maʿād*, 3:29.

[1138] Al-Marzubānī, *Kitāb nūr al-qabas al-mukhtaṣar*, 1: 48.

[1139] Muttaqī, *Kanz al-ummāl*, 58 # 1153; Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Laʿālīʿ*, 30.

Some of them claimed that this seeing was with the heart, and some others claimed that it was with the eyes.[1140]

For al-Qāsim, *ḥashw al-ʿāmma* and *ḥashwiyya* denoted the pro-Umayyad, anthropomorphist traditionalists who accepted Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal as their principle authority.[1141] Binyamin Abrahamov, editor of al-Qāsim's works, translates the term as "scholars of the masses," indicating the general acceptance of these ideas within the community.[1142] The Muʿtazilī essayist al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 869) writing around the same time describes the same doctrinal trend among the early Sunnīs. He characterizes Ibn Ḥanbal's supporters as *Nābita*,[1143] that is "contemptable, suddenly powerful, irritating sprouters on the scene."[1144] According to al-Jāḥiẓ the *Nābita* insisted that God "is a body, and they ascribed a form (*ṣūra*) and limits to Him and declared anyone who believes in *al-Ruʾya* without *tajsīm* (ascribing a body to God) and *taṣwīr* (ascribing a form to God) to be a *kāfir* (infidel)."[1145] The *ṣūra* that the *Nābita* attributed to God was no doubt that of a *shābb*, "young man," judging from al-Qāsim's contemporary report and from later polemics against the group.[1146] Al-Jāḥiẓ informs us that, because of Ibn Ḥanbal and the concurrence of "the masses, the pious

---

[1140] Al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, *Kitāb al-Mustarshid*, ed. and trns. by Binyamin Abrahamov in *Anthropomorphism and Interpretation of the Qurʾān in the Theology of Al- Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996], 133.

[1141] Al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, *Kitāb al-Dalīl al-Kabīr*, ed. and trns. by Binyamin Abrahamov in *al-Ḵāsim b. Ibrāhīm on the Proof of God's Existence* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), 188; Abrahamov, *Anthropomorphism and Interpretation of the Qurʾān*, 133, n. 160.

[1142] Marshall Hodgson likewise argues that *ḥashwīya* meant 'vulgar populace' and indicated 'men of the people, of the majority.' *Venture of Islam*, 1: 392 See also Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, 55.

[1143] *EI²* 7:843 s.v. Nābita by Ch. Pellat

[1144] Wadād al-Qāḍī, "The Earliest 'Nābita' and the Paradigmatic 'Nawābit'," *Studia Islamica* 78 (1993): 59. On the *nābita/ḥashwīya* see also A. S. Halkin, "The Ḥashwiyya" *JAOS* 54 (1934): 1-28: *EI²* 3:269 s.v. Ḥashwiyya by ed.; G. van Vloten, "Les Hachwia et Nabita," *Actes du Onzième Congrès International des Orientalistes, Paris, 1897* (Paris, 1899) 99-123; M. Th. Houtsma, "Die Ḥashwiya," *ZA* 26 (1912):196-202; Fritz Steppat, "From *'Ahd Ardasir* to Al-Maʾmūn: A Persian Element in the Policy of the Miḥna," in Wadād al-Qāḍī (ed.), *Studia Arabica et Islamica: Festschrift for Ihsan ʿAbbas* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981), 451ff; Ch. Pellat, "La 'nābita'de Djahiz," *Annales de l'institut d'études orientales* [Alger], 10 (1952): 302-325; I. Alon, "Farabi's Funny Flora: al-Nawābit as 'Opposition'," *JRAS* 37 (1988), 222-25; W. Madelung, *Der Imam al-Qasim ibn Ibrahim* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter & Co., 1965), 223ff.

[1145] Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Risāla fī al-Nabīta*, apud Al-Jāḥiẓ *Rasāʾil al-Jāḥiẓ*,, 2:18.

[1146] See for example the rescript of the Caliph al-Rāḍi in 935 below.

recluse, the jurists, and the ḥadīth people,"[1147] the prevailing trend (*ghālib*) of the community had become anthropomorphism and determinism.[1148]

Ninth century Sunnism was therefore characterized by anthropomorphism based in part on *ḥadīth al-shābb*.[1149] Muḥammad's reported visionary encounter with God in corporeal form will continue to be an important aspect of Sunnī doctrine well into the 10th and 11th centuries, the period in which the creed more or less assumed its final form.[1150] The Shī'a, who in its early days countenanced Muḥammad's vision,[1151] rejected it after accommodating and eventually embracing Mu'tazilism.[1152] But in the formulation of their theological self-definition, Shī'ite doctors contrasted themselves with their Sunnī rivals who, in their eyes, characteristically affirmed the Vision. Ibn Bābawayh (d. 991) relates in his ***Kitāb al-tawḥīd*** a discussion between the *muḥaddith* Abū Qurra Mūsā b. Tarīq al-Yamanī al-Zabudī (d. 818) and Imām 'Alī Riḍā (765-818) concerning the Vision. It is here quoted at length because it gives us insight into 10th century Sunnism, as least as conceived by 10th century Shiism. Abū Qurra begins: "We (the *muḥaddithūn*) narrate that Allah, the Almighty has divided His being seen (*al-Ru'ya*) and His speech (*al-Kalām*) between the two prophets. He gave Moses the opportunity to hear His speech. He granted to Prophet Muḥammad the opportunity to see Him."

> Imām Abū al-Ḥasan ('Alī Riḍā) said, "Who conveyed the message from Allāh to the two heavy communities, mankind and the Jinn, that says, '*The eyes can not comprehend Him*

[1147] Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb fī khalq al-Qur'ān, apud* al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il al-Jāḥiẓ*, 3:297

[1148] Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Risāla fī al-Nābita, apud* al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il al-Jāḥiẓ*, 2:20.

[1149] On anthropomorphists trends within 9th century Sunni movements see also Wesley Williams, "Aspects of the Creed of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal," 450ff; Nimrod Hurvitz, "Miḥna as Self-Defence," *Studia Islamica* 92 (2001): 93-111; Robert M. Haddad, "Iconoclasts and *Mu'tazila*: The Politics of Anthropomorphism." *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 27 (Summer – Fall 1982): 287-305.

[1150] Watt argues: "By the time of al-Ash'arī the doctrines of the creed had assumed more or less their final form, not merely for the Sunnites but also for the Imāmites and the Ismā'īlite Shī'ites...By 950 (despite) continuing (Sunni) rivalries there was in actual practice a wide area of agreement." *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, 317.

[1151] See e.g. 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, ed. al-Sayyid Ṭayyib al-Mūsawī al-Jazā'irī (Najaf: Matba'at al Najaf, 1386) 1:20.

[1152] Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:95ff; Ibn Bābawayh, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 66f; Vajda, "Le Problème de la Vision de Dieu (ru'ya)." On Mu'tazilism and the Shi'a see Wilferd Madelung, "Imamism and Mu'tazilite Theology," in his *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985), VII.

(6:103),' *'they can not limit Him through their knowledge (20:110),' 'there is nothing similar to Him*(42:11);'* was it not Muḥammad?'" asked the Imām. Abū Qurra then replied: "Yes, He was Prophet Muḥammad." The Imām said: "How can a person who brought such messages to all creatures and told them that he has brought such messages from Allāh and called them to Allāh by His commands and said, 'The eyes can not comprehend Him,' 'they can not limit Him through their knowledge,' 'there is nothing similar to Him,' then say, 'I saw Him with my own eyes. I did limit Him in my knowledge and that He is similar to a man'? Should you not be ashamed of yourselves? Even the atheist have not said that the Prophet first brought one thing from Allāh and then announced from Him other things contrary to the first." Abū Qurra then said: "Does Allāh Himself not say, *'Indeed he saw him in another descent* (53: 13)." Imām Abū al-Ḥasan said: "The other verses point out what the Prophet actually saw. Allāh has said, *'His heart did not lie about what he saw* (53: 11).' It means that the heart of Muḥammad did not belie what his eyes saw. Therefore, Allāh in the subsequent verse has said, *'Indeed he saw of the greatest signs of his Lord* (53:18).' The signs of Allāh are different from Allah Himself. Allah has also said, *'They can not limit Him in their knowledge.'* If the eyes could see Him, then people might limit Him in their knowledge and He could be fully defined." Abū Qurra then asked: "Do you disregard ḥadīth?" Imām Abū al-Ḥasan replied, "If *aḥādīth* are contrary to Qur'ān, I disregard them. Besides, all Muslims believe that Allah cannot be limited by knowledge, that eyes can not see Him and that nothing is similar to Him." [1153]

Apocryphal though this anecdote no doubt is, it is significant for what it suggests about religious trends in 10th century Baghdād. Shiism is here presented as champion of the type of divine transcendence that characterized the Mu'tazila and that will eventually characterize Sunnī Islam.[1154] Sunnism, on the other hand, which is still traditionalist, is depicted as anthropomorphist and this based on a theocentric interpretation of *Sūrat al-Najm* and ḥadīth reports of Muḥammad's Vision. This is certainly consistent with what we otherwise know of 10th century Sunnism in Baghdād and elsewhere and thus cannot be dismissed as sectarian propaganda.

7.3. The Ḥanābila, *al-Ruʾya* and Sunnī Orthodoxy in the 10th- 11th Centuries

In order to fully appreciate the significance of Muḥammad's Vision for Sunnism one must have a proper perspective of the place of Ḥanbalism (the followers/school of Ibn Ḥanbal) within Sunnism. In his groundbreaking 1897 study of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal Walter Patton concluded:

[1153] Ibn Bābawayh, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 66f.

[1154] Madelung, "Imamism and Mu'tazilite Theology," VII: 19. On Sunnī Islam and Mu'tazilī transcendence see *EI²* 10:343 s.v. Tashbīh wa-Tanzīh by Joesf van Ess.

223

The character of Ahmed (*sic*) as a traditionist, and his aversion to generalization and deduction, prevented him from leaving behind any system of opinions…Hence, *the uninfluential character of the Hanbalite school.* Their master's teaching was unsystematic, and much ground was lost ere his spirit and teaching could be put before the world in such a form as to accomplish any powerful effect. His personality in his lifetime and after his death was a great force in the Muslim world; and the personality seems yet to be as powerful in its influence as the opinions which he enunciated, *though his following has never been as great in comparison with that of the other three orthodox Imâm's* (emphasis added-WW)."[1155]

This observation of the relative smallness of the Hanābila and their consequent lack of influence will survive the sympathetic Laoust-Makdisi revision of the Western historiography of Hanbalism.[1156] Thus, Wael Hallaq, in explaining his uneven treatment

---

[1155] Walter Patton, *Ahmed Ibn Hanbal and the Mihna* (Leide: Brill, 1897) 194.

[1156] The tone for 20th century Hanbalī studies was set by Ignaz Goldziher's unsympathetic characterization of the Hanābila as "fanatic terrorists" who in their intolerance delayed the eventual triumph of mediatory Ash'arism for three centuries. In the 6th/12th century, the fanatics were finally defeated and reduced to a tolerated 'Unterstömung.' (See Ignaz Goldziher, "Patton's *Ahmed ibn Hanbal and the Mihna*," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 52 [1898]: 158; idem, "Zur Geschichte der hanbalitischen Bewegungen," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 62 [1908]: 21; idem, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, trans. Andras and Ruth Hamori [Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981], 9ff). On this unsympathetic study of Hanbalism in Western scholarship see George Makdisi, "Hanbalite Islam: Western Orientalism and Muslim Religious History," in Merlin L. Swartz (ed.), *Studies on Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 217-274. The rehabilitation of the school in Western literature was initiated by the French scholar Henri Laoust who, with his student George Makdisi, greatly advanced our knowledge of Muslim intellectual history and the Hanābila's place within it. Henri Laoust: *Essai sur les doctrines socials et politiques de Taki-d-Din Ahmad b. Taimiya* (Cairo: Impr. de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1939); *Le précis de droit d'Ibn Qudāma* (Beirut: Institut Français de Damas, 1950); "Les Premières Professions de foi Hanbalites," in *Mélanges Louis Massignon*, PIFD, 3 (Damas: Institut Francais De Damas, 1957), 7-35; *La Profession de foi d'Ibn Batta* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1958); "Le Hanbalisme sous le califat de Bagdad (241/855-656/1258)," *REI* 27 (1959): 67-128; "Le Hanbalisme sous le Mamluks bahrides," *REI* 28 (1960): 1-71; *EI¹*I:272-277 s.v. Ahmad B. Hanbal; *EI¹* 3:158-162 s.v. Hanābila (and various articles in *EI¹* on various Hanbalīs); *La Profession de foi d'Ibn Taymiyya* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1986). George Makdisi: "Autograph Diary of an Eleventh-Century Historian of Baghdād," *BSOAS* 18 (1956): 2-31, 239-26; 19 (1957): 13-48, 281-303, 426-443; "Nouveaux details sur l'affaire d'Ibn 'Aqīl," in *Mélanges Louis Massignon*, PIFD, 3 (Damas: Institut Francais De Damas, 1957), 91-126; *Ibn Qudāma's Censure of Speculative Theology* (London: Luzac, 1962); *Ibn 'Aqīl et la resurgence de l'Islam traditionaliste au XIᵉ Siècle* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1963); "Le livre de la dialectique d'Ibn 'Aqīl," *BEO* 20 (1967): 119-206; "L'Isnād initiatique soufi de Muwaffaq al-Dīn Ibn Qudāma," in Jean Franüois Six (ed.), *Louis Massignon* (Paris: Éditions de l'Herne, 1970), 88-96; *The Notebooks of Ibn 'Aqīl: Arabic Text Edited with Introduction and Critical Notes*, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1970-71); "Ibn Taimiya: A Sūfi of the Qādiriya Order," *American Journal of Arabic Studies* 1 (1973): 118-129; "The Hanbalī School and Sufism," *Humaniora Islamica* 2 (1974): 61-72; "Hanbalite Islam," op. cit., 217-274; Idem, "Meditations and Sermons of Ibn 'Aqīl in Eleventh- and Early Twelfth-Century Baghdad," in G. Makdisi and D. Sourdel (edd.), *Prédication et Propagande au Moyen Age: Islam, Byzance, Occident* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983): 149-164; *ER²* 4: 3759-3769 s.v. Hanābilah; *Ibn 'Aqīl: Religion and Culture in Classical Islam*. This more sympathetic tradition of scholarship is continued today by Makdisi's students Merlin Swartz and Christopher Melchert as well as Nimrod Hurvitz: Merlin Swartz, "Ibn al-Jawzī: A Study of His Life and Work as a Preacher, including a critical edition of his Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa'l-Mudhakkirūn" (2 vols. PhD. Diss., Harvard University, 1967); idem, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa'l-Mudhakkirūn, Including a Critical Edition, Annotated Translation and Introduction* (Beirut: Institut de Lettres Orientales, 1971); idem, "A Seventh-Century Sunnī Creed: The *'Aqīda*

of the four *madhāhib* (legal schools) during his elucidation of juristic typologies admits that the Ḥanābila got the short end of his stick, if you will, and then explains: "While in other parts of this study the Ḥanbalite presence is felt more, it almost never matches that of the other three schools. (The relative meagerness of Ḥanbalite sources is not only a function of the small size of the school in terms of the number of followers, but a historical phenomenon that has more serious dimensions still awaiting study.)"[1157] Among those "more serious dimensions" is Ibn Ḥanbal's "notoriously imperfect record as a jurist."[1158] It is indeed true that Ibn Ḥanbal's most attractive attributes lie elsewhere, e.g. in dogmatics (*'aqīda, uṣūl al-dīn*) and *ḥadīth*; it is also true that, *as a legal methodology*, Ḥanbalism has had fewer takers than its rivals. What is important to note, however, and what is regularly overlooked, is that Ḥanbalism did not suffer in influence due to its legal mediocrity; on the contrary, Ḥanbalism was, for centuries, *the most influential of the schools in spite of its legal shortcomings.*[1159] We will explain.

Wasiṭīya of Ibn Taymīya," *Humaniora Islamica* 1 (1974): 91-131; idem, "The Rules of Popular Preaching in Twelfth-Century Baghdad, According to Ibn al-Jawzī," in G. Makdisi and D. Sourdel (edd.), *Prédication et Propagande au Moyen Age: Islam, Byzance, Occident*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), 223-239; idem, *A Medieval Critique of Anthropomorphism: Ibn al-Jawzī's* Kitāb Akhbār aṣ-Ṣifāt, *a Citical Edition of the Arabic Text with Translation, Introduction and Notes* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Christopher Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th-10th Centuries C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), Chapter Seven "Al-Khallāl and the Classical Hanbali School," 137-155; idem, "The Adversaries of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal"; idem, "The Ḥanābila and the Early Sufis," *Arabica* 48 (2001): 353-367; idem, "Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and the Qur'an"; idem, *Ahmad ibn Hanbal* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006); Nimrod Hurvitz, "Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and the Formation of Islamic Orthodoxy" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1994); idem, "Schools of Law and Historical Context: Re-examining the Formation of the Ḥanbali *Madhhab*," *Islamic Law and Society* 7 (2000), 37-64; idem, *The Formation of Ḥanbalism: Piety into Power* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).

[1157] Wael Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xiv. See also Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam: The View From the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) who describes the Ḥanābila as "a local Baghdad rite with few followers elsewhere (146)."

[1158] Ibid., 42.

[1159] On Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and Ḥanbalism see further: Ziauddin Ahmad, "Aḥmad B. Ḥanbal-His Life And Works," *Journal of Asiatic Society of Pakistan* 11 (1966): 21-36; idem, "Aḥmad b. Ḥanabl and the Problems of 'Īmān," *IS* 11 (1972): 261-270; idem, "Some Aspects of the Political Theology of Ahmad B. Hanbal," *IS* 12 (1973): 53-66; Ziaul Haque, "Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal: The Saint-Scholar of Baghdad," *Hamdard Islamicus* 8:3 (1985): 67-90; *ERE* 7: 69-70 s.v. Ibn Hanbal by Th. W. Juynboll; Daniel Gimaret, "Théories de l'acte humain dans l'ecole ḥanbalite," *BEO* 29 (1977): 157-78; Michael Cooperson, "Ibn Ḥanbal and Bishr al-Ḥāfī: A Case Study in Biographical Traditions," *SI* 86 (1997): 71-100; idem, "The Heirs of the Prophets in Classical Arabic Biography" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1994) Section IV. On Ḥanbalī law see S. A. Spectorsky, "Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's Fiqh," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 102 (1982): 461-465; idem, *Chapters on Marriage and Divorce, Responses of Ibn Ḥanbal and Ibn Rāhwayh* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993); Anas Khalid, "The 'Mukhtaṣar' of al-Khirāqī: A Tenth Century Work on Islamic Jurisprudence" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1992); Abdul Hakim I. al-Matroudi, *The Ḥanbalī*

7.3.1. Ḥanbalī Origins

It was once thought that the *madhāhib* originated with their eponymous founders.[1160]
Thanks largely to the meticulous investigation of Christopher Melchert, we can now state
unequivocally that they did not.[1161] Melchert quite convincingly demonstrates that the
three *madhāhib* of Baghdād and the Islamic East - Shāfiʿī, Ḥanafī and Ḥanbalī - coalesced
in the 10ᵗʰ century.[1162] Their true founders, he argues, were Ibn Surayj (d. 918), Abū al-
Ḥasan al-Karkhī (d. 952), and Abū Bakr al-Khallāl (d. 923) respectively and in that order.
George Makdisi, using a different criterion, gives the Ḥanābila historical priority, not the
Shāfiʿīya.[1163] They both concur, however, in attributing the founding of the *classical
Ḥanbalī school* (Makdisi's *guild school*), as defined by their respective criteria, to al-
Khallāl.[1164] On the other hand, Nimrod Hurvitz de-emphasizes legal doctrine as the
central factor in school formation.[1165] Rather he focuses on the circle that surround and

---

School of Law and Ibn Taymiyyah (London and New York: Routledge, 2006). On theology v. A. Al-Azmeh,
"Orthodoxy and Ḥanbalite Fideism," *Arabica* 35 (1988): 253-266; Hans Daiber, "The Quran as a
'Shibboleth' of Varying Conceptions of the Godhead: A 12ᵗʰ century Ḥanbalite-Ashʿarite discussion and its
theological sequel in the protocol of Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī," *IOS* 14 (1994): 249-293; idem, "The Creed
('*Aqīda*) of the Ḥanbalite Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī. A Newly Discovered Text," in Wadād al-Qāḍī (ed.),
Studia Arabica et Islamica. Festschrift Iḥsān ʿAbbās on His Sixtieth Birthday (Beirut: American University, 1981) 105-
125; Wesley Williams, "Aspects of the Creed of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal: A Study of Anthropomorphism is
Early Islamic Discourse," *IJMES* 34 (2002): 441-463. On Ḥanbalī movements see S. Mughni, "Ḥanbalī
Movements in Baghdād from Abū Muḥammad al-Barbaharī (d. 329/941) to Abū Jaʿfar al-Hāshimī (d.
470/1077)" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1990).

[1160] Al-Shāfiʿī (d. 820), Abū Ḥanīfa (d.767), Mālik b. Anas (d. 795) and Ahmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 855).

[1161] *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law.*

[1162] Melchert argues that the Mālikīya never functioned coherently as an organization in Baghdad where it
would eventual die out. In the West, the Mālikīya would incorporate the innovations of the East. *Formation
of the Sunni Schools*, Chapter Eight.

[1163] For Melchert the existence of a "classical school" is indicated by four criteria: the recognition of a chief
scholar (*raʾīs*), the production of commentaries (*taʿlīqas*) on legal epitomes (*mukhtaṣars*), and the regular
transmission of legal knowledge, whereby students were recognized as having completed their legal
education under a specific jurist. For Makdisi, on the other hand, a school's existence is indicated by the
publication of *Ṭabaqāt* works (biographical compendia) ("*Ṭabaqāt*-Biography: Law and Orthodoxy in
Classical Islam," *IS* 32 [1993]: 371-96). Because the first of the four law schools to publish such a work was
the Ḥanābila, they are Makdisi choice for the first *madhhab* as *a legal guild* (379f.) For an examination of both
views see Devin J. Stewart, "Review of Melchert, Christopher: *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9ᵗʰ-
10ᵗʰ Centuries C.E.*," *Islamic Law and Society* 6 (1999): 275-281.

[1164] Melchert, *Formation of the Sunni Schools*, 137ff; Makdisi, "*Ṭabaqāt*-Biography," 379. See also Ziauddin
Ahmad, "Abū al-Khallāl-the Compiler of the Teachings of Imām Ahmad b. Ḥanabl," *IS* 9 (1970): 245-54.

[1165] Hurvitz, "Schools of Law and Historical Context," 46ff.

pledged loyalty to Ibn Ḥanbal. Hurvitz wants to argue that "the legal, theological and moral foundations of the Ḥanbalis were laid during Ibn Ḥanbal's life and a short while thereafter."[1166] Moreover, "a chain of transmission of knowledge begins with Ibn Ḥanbal and continues consecutively through the next centuries. Although later generations of Ḥanbalis did a great deal to change and reshape Ḥanbalī ideas and doctrine, the foundations were first put in place during the life of Ibn Ḥanbal."[1167]

While Hurvitz's suggestion seems plausible enough, it is rather difficult to identify those foundations from the mass of often contradictory material attributed to Ibn Ḥanbal-difficult, but perhaps not impossible.[1168] In any case, refocusing attention away from legal doctrine per se to the personal relations that constituted the master-disciple nexus is appropriate and indeed allows us to make out the contours of a micro-community that grew up around Ibn Ḥanbal, inspired by his piety, attracted to his moral outlook, and committed to the preservation of his juridical-theology, as Hurvitz argues.[1169]

7.3.2. Ḥanbalism and the Maturation of Sunnism

The failure of the *Miḥna* would have profound significance for the future development of Islamic intellectual history in general, and Islamic theology in particular. The so-called rationalist debacle of the 3rd/9th century "marked the triumph of Traditionalism and the juridical approach over speculative theology and Rationalism."[1170] With the consolidation of the *madhāhib* in the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries, juristic dominance over Islamic religious discourse and institutions was firmly established.[1171] The increasing professionalization of the *madhāhib* in the 10th and 11th centuries only

---

[1166] Hurvitz, *Formation of Ḥanbalism*, 15.

[1167] Ibid.

[1168] For a look at such an attempt to discern aspects of the "theological foundations" laid by Ibn Ḥanbal see Williams, "Aspects of the Creed of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal."

[1169] Ḥanbalī sources acknowledge 500 disciples of Ibn Ḥanbal, of which 120 adopted and transmitted his legal method. Ibn Abī Yaʻlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, 1:7.

[1170] In the words of Prof. Sherman Jackson, *Islamic Law and the State: the Constitutional Jurisprudence of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), xxvii.

[1171] Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, 1; George Makdisi, "Scholasticism and Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West," *JAOS* 109 (1989): 176 [art.=175-182].

served to enhance the juristic monopoly of religious authority in Islam.[1172] The establishment of endowed law colleges (*madāris*, s. *madrasa*) clearly and permanently delimited participation in defining orthodoxy. The student was required to study a formal legal curriculum, a curriculum determined by the traditionalist jurists, in a regular four year law course followed by ten to twenty years of advanced graduate study in law and disputation (*munāzara*). Upon completion of this study, the student received from his law professor the *ijāzat al-tadrīs wa 'l-iftā'*, the "license to teach law and grant legal *responsa*." This degree alone enabled one to participate in the elaboration of the law, and hence orthodoxy; all who lacked this credential were excluded from this process.[1173] Henceforth, "any system of thought, in order to survive, had to be affiliated with one of the schools of law. A theological system, in order to be sanctioned as legitimate, to propagate its doctrine, to provide for its perpetuation, had to be adopted by a legal system."[1174] The *madhhab* thus came to serve as "the umbrella of orthodoxy, the legitimizing agency whose shelter was sought by all who coveted the stamp of legitimacy."[1175]

In order to properly assess and, as Makdisi challenged us, "elucidate the place of Hanbalite Islam in the larger history of Islamic thought,"[1176] it is important to keep in mind that, unlike its rival *madhhab*s, Hanbalism is *both a law school and a theological school*.[1177] That is to say, being a Hanbalī was not only a commitment to a particular legal methodology, but was also a commitment to a particular theological orientation and even a set of theological principles. That orientation is often described as *traditionalism*, at the

---

[1172] Norman Calder sees the production of *mukhtaṣar*s (lit. "abridgements," compilations of rules specific to a law school) in the 10th century as indicative of the beginning of a transition into more formal legal scholarship on the part of law schools. See Norman Calder, *Studies in Early Muslim Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 245ff.

[1173] See Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, 27.

[1174] George Makdisi, "Ash'ari and the Ash'arites in Islamic Religious History," *SI* 17 (1962): 46 [art.= 37-80]; *ER²* 4:3762 sv. Hanābilah by George Makdisi.

[1175] George Makdisi, *The Rise of the Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 9; idem, "The Significance of the Sunni Schools of Law in Islamic Religious History," *IJMES* 10 (1979): 7.

[1176] Makdisi, "Hanbalite Islam," 216.

[1177] *ER²* 4:3762 sv. Hanābilah by George Makdisi.

core of which is the privileging of revealed sources over human reason (but not necessarily to the exclusion of reason[1178]) in matters of law and in matters of dogma. In regards dogma, traditionalism anchor's all statements about God (for example) in Qur'ān and ḥadīth, even when what is found therein flies in the face of rational expectations. Traditionalism has been associated with, and rightly so, literalism (but not necessarily fideism[1179]), anthropomorphism, and determinism.[1180]

The Shāfiʿī, Ḥanafī and Mālikī *mahhab*s were law schools only, with no corresponding theologies. As such, each school played host to different theological trends. While there are exceptions, the Shāfiʿī and Mālikī schools tended to attract traditionalism and its opposite Ashʿarism, and the Ḥanafī tended to attract Muʿtazilism or Māturīdism.[1181] Thus, one would often find a traditionalist Shāfiʿī and an Ashʿarite-Shāfiʿī, both agreeing on legal methodology, but quarreling vociferously over fundamental matters of theology.[1182] Ḥanbalism, being both a law and theological school, generally avoided such factionalism. Ibn ʿAqīl (d. 1119) and Ibn al-Jawzī (d.1201) are exceptions that prove the rule.[1183]

[1178] On the place of reason in Ibn Ḥanbal's traditionalism see Williams, "Aspects of the Creed of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal," 445, 449f. On traditionalism and reason generally see Binyamin Abrahamov, *Islamic theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998) and the critigue by Jackson, *On the Boundaries*, 16-29.

[1179] Williams, "Aspects of the Creed of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal," 445, 449f.

[1180] While these three associations were likewise made by pre-Laoust-Makdisi, unfriendly studies of Ḥanbalism, an impartial study reveals that while the associations stand true, the negative valuations provided by those studies obscured the real nature of, say traditionalist anthropomorphism. See Williams, "Aspects of the Creed of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal."

[1181] See George Makdisi, "Ashʿari and the Ashʿarites in Islamic Religious History," *Studia Islamica* 17 (1962): 37-80; 18 (1963): 19-39; Daphna Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition: The Sunni 'Ulama' of Eleventh-Century Baghdad* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000) 41. On Māturīdism and the Ḥanafīya see W. Madelung, "The Spread of Māturīdism and the Turks," *Actas IV Congresso De Estudos Árabes e Islâmicos* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), 110-168.

[1182] See for example the remonstrations of the Shāfiʿite-Ashʿarit Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209) against the traditionalist Shāfiʿite Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Khuzayma (d. 924) (*al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, ed. ʿAbd Raḥmān Muḥammad [Cairo, n.d], 14: 27). Al-Rāzī's rage was directed against Ibn Khuzayma's book *Kitāb al-tawḥīd wa-ithbāt ṣifāt al-Rabb*, a collection of ḥadīth reports touching on the various Attributes of God. Al-Rāzī called the book *Kitāb al-shirk*.

[1183] As demonstrated by the fact that both of these Ḥanbalī *mutakallamānī* were arrested and exiled by their peers. Ibn ʿAqīl was even made to sign a retraction in 465/1072 admitting his error in "frequenting the heretical innovators," the Muʿtazila and others. See George Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl et la resurgence de l'Islam traditionaliste au xiᵉ siècle (vᵉ siècle de l'Hégire)* (Beirut: Institut Français de Damas, 1963) and *Ibn ʿAqīl: Religion and*

Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal was the main architect of traditionalist Sunnism. As Melchert points out, during the ninth and tenth centuries "Men would assert as a badge of orthodoxy that their creed was Aḥmad's."[1184] Examples include al-Muzanī (d. 878),[1185] al-Ṭabarī (d. 923),[1186] and al-Ashʿarī (d. 936).[1187] Traditionalist Sunnism among the other *madhhabs* was distinctly Ḥanbalite.[1188] This is clearly seen by examining the creeds of such non-Ḥanbalī traditionalists as Ibn Khuzayma (d. 924)[1189] and Abū Bakr al-Ājurrī (d. 971),[1190] both Shāfiʿīs, and al-Qayrawānī (d. 996), a Mālikī.[1191] That is to say, while *legal* Ḥanbalism made little headway, *theological* Ḥanbalism won the day.

Baghdād was the cultural and intellectual center of the Muslim world long after it ceased being the political and economic center.[1192] It was the traditionalist triumph in Baghdād that guaranteed a traditionalist Sunnī orthodoxy elsewhere.[1193] And that triumph was a Ḥanbalī triumph.[1194] From its inception Ḥanbalism was a popular

---

Culture. On Ibn al-Jawzī's affair see Swartz, *A Medieval Critique,* 23-27. This does not mean, however, that Hanbali scholars did not disagree. See Makdisi, "Remarks," 78.

[1184] Melchert, "Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and the Qur'an," 22.

[1185] Fuat Sezgīn, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* 9 vols. (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1967-)1:493 # 2 and 508 #22.

[1186] Dominique Sourdel, "Une profession de foi de l'historien al-Ṭabarī," *REI* 36 (1968): 177-99; Claude Gilliot, *Exégèse, lanque et théologie en islam: l'exégèse coranique de Tabari* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1990) 258-9.

[1187] Al-Ashʿarī, *al-Ibāna ʿan uṣūl al-diyāna,* translated into English by Walter Conrad Klein (New Haven, 1940) 49; Daniel Gimaret, "Bibliographie d'Ashʿarī: un réexamen," *JA* 273 (1985): 278.

[1188] Makdisi, "Hanbalite Islam," 240.

[1189] See his *Kitāb al-tawḥīd.*

[1190] See his *al-Sharīʿa.*

[1191] See William Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Creeds: A Selection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994) 69-72.

[1192] Berkey, *Formation of Islam,* 186-7.

[1193] Hodgson noted (*Venture of Islam,* 391-2): "The viewpoint of the Hadith folk was launched toward general success with its victory in Baghdad." See also Makdisi, "Remarks," 81: "any movement aspiring to a dominant position had to prove its strength in Baghdad, cultural center of the Muslim world. And from the beginning of the (eleventh) century it was clear that Baghdad was in the firm grip of the Traditionalists," i.e. Ḥanbalīs. Traditionalists from other centers, such as Egypt, still in the 10th-11th centuries felt the need to seek the orthodox position on a locally disputed issue from the religious scholars of Baghdad. See Berkey, *Formation of Islam,* 187.

[1194] George Makdisi, "Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh Century Baghdad," *BSOAS* 24 (1961) 47 [art.=1-56]; idem, "The Sunni Revival," in D. S. Richards (ed.), *Islamic Civilization, 950-1150,* (Oxford:

movement. The mainstay of Ḥanbalī support was the *'āmma,* the urban masses.[1195] S. Sabri observes that, unlike the other *madhāhib,* the Ḥanbalīs expressed the views of the men and women on the streets of Baghdād, "le petit people Sunnite de Baghdād."[1196] From the time of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal himself until well into the twelfth century, Ḥanbalism alone claimed the loyalty of the Baghdādī masses. And as George Makdisi non-rhetorically asked, "Who are the masses, if not orthodox?"[1197] The Muʿtazilī polemicist al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 869), in a treatise written probably in or around 846, bemoaned the fact that Ibn Ḥanbal and his followers (whom Jāḥiẓ called *Nābita*[1198]) had on their side "the masses, the pious recluse, the jurists, and the ḥadīth people,"[1199] all of whom complied with Ibn Ḥanbal and his doctrine of anthropomorphism and determinism.[1200] According to Ḥanbal b. Isḥāq (d. 273/866), Ibn Ḥanbal's cousin, the latter's trial brought a crowd so large the markets had to close.[1201]

Oxford University Press, 1973) 155-168; idem, "The Significance of the Sunnī Schools of Law in Religious History," *IJMES* 10 (1979) 7 [art.=1-8]; idem, "Remarks," 79.

[1195] Joel L. Kramer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age,* Second Revised Edition (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992) 60; Ephrat, *A Learned Society,* 4. According to Marshall Hodgson, "After the reign of al-Mutawakkil, later in the ninth century, the more extreme representatives of this (traditionalist) approach, who called themselves Hanbalis…tended to have it their own way in the streets of Baghdad and to a lesser degree elsewhere." *Venture of Islam* 392. See also Goldziher, "They had the advantage, not only of the protection of the authorit(ies), but also the approval of the masses (Sie hatte dabei den Vorteil, nicht nur des Schutzes der Obrigkeit, sondern auch des Beifalls der Massen sicher zu sein.). Goldziher, "Zur Geschichte der ḥanbalitischen Bewegungen," 5; Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallāj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam,* trns Herbert Mason, 4 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982) 1: 241, 247.

[1196] S. Sabri, *Mouvements Populaires A Baghdad a l'epoque 'Abbaside ix-xi Siecles* (Paris, 1981), 101.

[1197] "Hanbalite Islam," 226.

[1198] Ch. Pellat notes, "For al-Djahiz, the term applies essentially to the Hanbalis." *EI²* 7:843, s.v. Nabita. See also idem, "La 'nabita'de Djahiz," 308.

[1199] Al- Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb fī khalq al-Qurʾān, apud* al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasaʾil al-Jāḥiẓ,* 4 vols., ed. ʿAbd al-Salam Muhammad Harun (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanji, 1964-1979), 3:297.

[1200] Ibid., 3:300; al-Jāḥiẓ, *Risāla fī al-Nābita, apud* al-Jahiz, *Rasāʾil al-Jāḥiẓ,* 2:20

[1201] Ḥanbal b. Isḥāq, *Dhikr miḥnat al-imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal* (Cairo, 1977), 67.

Ḥanbalī dominance continued in Baghdād after the Imām's death.[1202] As early as 908 the Ḥanbalī leader al-Barbahārī (d. 941) was recognized as leader of the majority Sunnī population of Baghdād. In the struggle to overthrow the reportedly pro-Shīʿa caliphate of al-Muqtadir in 908, Ibn al-Muʿtazz (d. 908) appealed for support to the Sunnī sensibilities of the people of Baghdād by proclaiming "Oh people, support (lit. pray for) your Sunnī, Barbahārian caliph (*Yā maʿshar al-ʿāmma uḏʿū li-khalīfatikum al-sunnī al-Barbahārī*)."[1203] Ibn al-Athīr explains this by noting that al-Barbahārī was leader of the Ḥanābila and the broader Sunnī populace (*muqaddam al-ḥanābila wa 'l-sunna min al-ʿāmma*).[1204] As Ira M. Lapidus observed:

> the (Ḥanbalī) scholars mobilized popular support. Throughout the ninth and tenth centuries, Hanbali preachers raised popular demonstrations for or against caliphal policy. The Hanbalis emerged as a vociferous popular party determined to enforce their own religious views. They organized groups of vigilantes, who attacked their opponents, and suppressed such immoral activities as wine drinking and prostitution.[1205]

The geographer Muqaddasī, writing around 988, observed that the majority of Baghdād was Ḥanbalī Sunnī,[1206] an observation made a century later by the Seljuk vizier Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 1092). The latter, in a letter responding to the Shāfiʿī jurists Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī (d.1083) who initially wrote to the vizier complaining about the Ḥanābila, noted: *al-ghālib hunāka wa huwa madhhab al-imām Abī ʿAbd Allāh Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal*, "The predominant *madhhab* here is that of Imām Abū Allāh Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal."[1207]

[1202] On the Baghdādī Ḥanābila see Ephrat, *A Learned Society*; Michael Cook, *Commanding the Right and Forbidding the Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Chapter Six; Mughni, "Ḥanbalī Movements in Baghdād"; Laoust, "Le Hanbalisme sous le califat de Bagdad."

[1203] Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil fī al-taʾrīkh* 7 vols. (Cairo: Idārat al-Ṭibāʾah al-Munīrīyah, 1929/30), 6: 121f,

[1204] Ibid.

[1205] *A History of Islamic Societies* (2nd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 136.

[1206] Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm* (ed. M.J. de Goeje; Leiden, 1906), 126.

[1207] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī tārikh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam* 6 vols. [=vols. V-X, yrs. 257-574/870-1197], Hyderbad, 1358/1940) 8: 312; French trans. in Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl et la resurgence*, 365. For the Ḥanbalī movement elsewhere see Gary Leiser, "Ḥanbalism in Egypt Before the Mamlûks," *Studia Islamica* 54 (1981); John Voll, "The Non-Wahhābī Ḥanbalīs of Eighteenth Century Syria," *Der Islam* 49 (1972): 276-291; Joseph Drory, "Ḥanbalīs or the Nablus Region in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," *Asian and African Studies* 22 (1988): 93-103; Daniella Talmon Heller, "The Shaykh and the Community: Popular Hanbalite Islam in 12th-13th Century Jabal Nablus and Jabal Qasūn," *SI* 79 (1994): 103-120.

The mid-tenth/mid-eleventh century has been dubbed the "Shī'ī Century." Several regimes throughout the fragmented Islamic world – the Fāṭimids in North Africa, the Hamdanids in Mosul and Aleppo, the Qaramita in Bahrain and the Būyids in Iraq and Iran – were Shī'ī in one sense or another. The political stability promoted by the Būyids in Baghdād and their active sponsorship of learning encouraged humanism and a "surge in intellectual energy."[1208] This climate proved conducive to the advancement of both Mu'tazilism and Ash'arism. A traditionalist Sunnī "restoration," "recentering," or "revival" would be spearheaded, according to George Makdisi, by the Baghdādī Ḥanābila, not the Ash'arī-friendly Niẓām al-Mulk, Saljūk Persian Prime Minister and founder of famed Niẓāmīya college.[1209] The Ḥanbalī efforts culminated with the edicts of Caliph al-Qādir in 1017-1018 and 1029, essentially making Ḥanbalism the official position.[1210]

Makdisi argued that the Ḥanābila were the legitimists of the caliphate, capable of prodding the caliph to act.[1211] This indeed seems true for the 10th - 12th centuries. Abū Sa'd b. al-Baqqāl's statement in 1048 appears to be more than just Ḥanbalī pomposity: "the caliphate is like an egg, while the Ḥanābila are its shell; when the egg is broken, the yoke will be destroyed. The caliphate is like a tent, and the Ḥanābila its ropes; whenever the ropes fall apart, the tent will tumble down."[1212] When Mu'izz al-Dawla entered Baghdād in 945, approximately 30, 000 Ḥanbalīs reportedly gathered in support of the caliph Mustakfī. His successor, al-Muṭī', who was enthroned by Mu'izz al-Dawla, tried to appease the Ḥanābila with a large sum offering for the building of a *qubba* over Ibn Ḥanbal's tomb.[1213] When the caliph al-Mustaḍi' (r.1170-1180) tried to strengthen his

---

[1208] Kraemer, *Humanism.*

[1209] See especially Makdisi, "Sunnī Revival"; idem, "Remarks," ; idem, "Ash'ari and the Ash'arites." For a critical look at the scholarly notion of a "Sunnī Revival" see surther Berkey, *Formation*, Chapter 20; Bulliet, *Islam*, 126-27, 146ff.

[1210] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 8:289; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XII.7.22-23, 26; Makdisi, *Ibn 'Aqīl et la résurgence*, 301; idem, *Ibn 'Aqīl*, 8-20; idem, "Sunnī Revival," 172; Kraemer, *Humanism*, 61; Laoust, *Ibn Baṭṭa*, xcvi-xcvii.

[1211] Makdisi, "Sunni Revival," 164f.

[1212] Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, 2:190.

[1213] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 6:344.

precarious position by re-establishing ties with the Sunnī Baghdādī masses, he did so through strategic use of the Ḥanābila.[1214] This policy apparently paid off in 1173-4 when the populace rose up, evidently inspired in some way by the preaching of Ibn al-Jawzī, and forced al-Mustaḍi''s political foe, the Turkish general Qaymaz, to flee Baghdad. To show his appreciation, al-Mustaḍi' patronized Ḥanbalī preachers, constructed and endowed religious institutions for their use, and redecorated the shrine standing over Ibn Ḥanbal's tomb.[1215]

7.3.3. Defenders of the Faith

The popular and, thus, political influence of the Baghdādī Ḥanābila transformed the school from an 'ecclesia pressa' to an 'ecclesia militans,' to use Ignaz Goldziher's terms.[1216] They would become the militant guardians – storm troopers, it might have seemed at times – of Sunnism as they were still in a position to define it. Henri Laoust described the Ḥanābila under the Būyids as a "politico-religious opposition movement."[1217] Ḥanbalī energies in the 10th and 11th centuries were expended in two primary ways: commanding the good and opposing the heretics.[1218] In clear contrast to Ibn Ḥanbal's preferably non-confrontational,[1219] civil,[1220] nonviolent,[1221] and apolitical[1222] execution of the command to "command the right and forbid the wrong, al-

[1214] So argues Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ*, 32. Michael Cook is not convinced of this reading, however. See *Commanding*, 126 n. 90.

[1215] Ibid., 33; Laoust, "Le Hanbalisme sous le califat de Bagdad," 113.

[1216] Goldziher, "Patton's *Aḥmed ibn Ḥanbal and the Miḥna*," 158.

[1217] Laoust , "Ḥanābila," 159; idem, "Le Hanbalisme sous le Califat de Baghdad," 85ff.

[1218] See H. Laoust, " Les agitations religieuses à Baghdā aux IVe et Ve siècles de l'Hégire," in Richards, *Islamic Civilation 950-1150*, 169-185.

[1219] If, while carrying out this duty, the offender heeds not the admonition, after two or three times the admonisher should leave. Cook, *Commanding*, 99.

[1220] Ibn Ḥanbal preferred that one carry out the duty against an offender with civility (*rifq*), not rudeness (*ghilza*). Cook, *Commanding*, 96.

[1221] Ibid, 98.

[1222] When his uncle Isḥāq b. Ḥanbal urged him to take advantage of his involuntary presence at al-Mutawakkil's (r. 847-61) court by commanding and forbidding the caliph, Ibn Ḥanbal refused. Cook, *Commanding*, 101.

amr bi'l-maʿrūf wa nahy ʿan al-munkar,"[1223] the muscular, politically boisterous, and confrontational Ḥanābila under al-Barbahārī carried out the command with what seems like reckless abandon. "Commanding the good" now entailed looting shops, attacking singing girls and wine sellers, raiding homes in search of wine and musical instruments, and interrogating men and women seen walking together in the street.[1224]   The authorities responded by arresting Ḥanbalī's and prohibiting the gathering of any two. In a *fatwā* issued against them in 935 by the Mālikī grand qadi, ʿUmar Hammādī, under pressure from the pro-Shīʿī caliph al-Rāḍī and vizier Ibn Muqla, the Ḥanābila are threatened with "fire and sword" if they continued with their public disorder. Al-Barbahārī himself died in hiding from the authorities in 941.[1225]

In forbidding the wrong (i.e. the heretics) the Ḥanābila targeted the Shīʿa, the Muʿtazila and the Ashʿarīya. These mobilizations often turned into deadly riots, particularly against the Shīʿa. In 929 the Ḥanbalīs rioted against a group wanting to interpret Sura 17:79 ("…maybe your Lord will raise you to an exalted place") metaphorically, instead of how it is "supposed" to be read, as an indication that God will sit the Prophet on his throne next to him. Many people were killed.[1226] In the month of Jumāda 'l-Ākhira 935 the police chief, Badr al-Kharshānī attempted to seize al-Barbahārī who escaped. As a protest, the Ḥanābila set on fire the Kharkh Quarter, Baghdād's Shīʿī stronghold.[1227] In Jumāda 'l-Ūlā 959, riots broke out resulting in many deaths and the burning of Bāb al-Ṭāq, another Shīʿī quarter.   And in 974, in response to the Shīʿī commemoration of ʿĀshūrā, the Ḥanbalī-lead Sunnis paraded a woman around on camel, ʿĀ'isha-like, accompanied by two men representing Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr; the

---

[1223] Michael Cook, in his magisterial study of the command and its function in Islamic thought, has provided the most detailed look at the command in Ḥanablī thought: *Commanding the Right and Forbidding the Wrong in Islamic Thought.*

[1224] Cook, *Commanding*, 116ff.

[1225] *EI²* 1:1040 s.v. al-Barbahārī by H. Laoust

[1226] On the riots cited here see Mughni, "Ḥanbalī Movements," Chapter 3; Laoust, " Les agitations religieuses à Baghdād."

[1227] Mughni, "Ḥanbalī Movements," 162.

three shouted, "We fight against 'Alī." A riot broke out, killing many, and the Karkh Quarter was again burned down.[1228]

These anecdotes can be multiplied, endlessly it seems. As Michael Cook noted in a slightly different context, "there could hardly be a more poignant contrast" to Ibn Ḥanbal's quietism.[1229] Between the ninth and tenth centuries, Ḥanbalism had undergone a significant change. But this could hardly be due to an evolution from "a sectarian ghetto into the mainstream of Muslim life," as Cook speculates.[1230] As we saw, (proto)-Ḥanbalism never existed in a 'sectarian ghetto' in Baghdād. It was a popular movement commanding the allegiance of the broad masses of Baghdādī (proto-)Sunnis from its inception.[1231] More plausible is Cook's suggestion that the political weakness of the 'Abbāsid caliphat in the face of the Būyids and Seljuks resulted in a great lost of respect on the Ḥanbalīs part toward the government, while on the other hand that same government made its dependence of the Ḥanbalīs for political strength clear. It is not hard to see how the Ḥanbalīs could grow more arrogant, more boisterous, and more fearless in the face of the government.[1232] Add to this the fact that the Būyids were Shī'ī, which ever their persuasion, and thus gave support and confidence (even arrogance) to the local Shī'a, a situation well-nigh certain to trigger that Ḥanbalī steadfastness that under the political circumstances can transmute into aggression.

7.3.4. *Al-Ru'ya* and the Sunnī 'Aqīda

The Sunnism that the Ḥanābila so vigilantly, and often violently, guarded included the affirmation of Muḥammad's vision of God. Traditionalist manuals of the 9th - 11th

---

[1228] Ibid., 171.

[1229] Cook, *Commanding*, 117.

[1230] Ibid., 141.

[1231] According to Marshall Hodgson, "After the reign of al-Mutawakkil, later in the nineth century, the more extreme representatives of this (traditionalist) approach, who called themselves Hanbalis...tended to have it their own way in the streets of Baghdad and to a lesser degree elsewhere." *Venture of Islam* 392. See also Goldziher, "They had the advantage, not only of the protection of the authorit(ies), but also the approval of the masses (Sie hatte dabei den Vorteil, nicht nur des Schutzes der Obrigkeit, sondern auch des Beifalls der Massen sicher zu sein.). Goldziher, "Zur Geschichte der ḥanbalitischen Bewegungen," 5; Massignon, *Passion of al-Hallāj*, 1: 241, 247;

[1232] Cook, *Commanding*, 122f.

236

centuries frequently included sections affirming the Vision.[1233] Al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 995), considered the greatest tradionalists of his time, concluded his important work, **Kitāb al-Ru'ya** ("Book Treating *Visio Dei*"), with a chapter treating "the ḥadīth reports about the Prophet's (ṣ) seeing his Lord, Blessed and Most High, in this world," a chapter consisting of some 60 reports.[1234] The prominent Hanbalī leaders, following Ibn Ḥanbal's example, included Muḥammad's vision of God in their creed: al-Barbarharī (d. 941),[1235] Ibn Baṭṭa (d. 997),[1236] Ibn Ḥāmid (d. 1012),[1237] and al-Qāḍī Abū Ya'lā (d. 1065).[1238] As we saw above with the reported exchange between the *muḥaddith* Abū Qurra and the Shī'ī Imām 'Alī al-Riḍā,[1239] the Baghdādī Sunnism of the period was characterized, and caricaturized, by its affirmation of Muḥammad's vision of God. It was not just the Hanbalī 'ulamā' who affirmed the Vision. The Shāfi'ite *muḥaddith* Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Khuzayma (d. 924), called the chief of the Khurasani traditionalists, concluded his 33 page, typically tradionalist discussion/defense of the Prophet's Vision affirming that "the

---

[1233] 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dārimī (d. 869), *al-Sunan* 1:606 [*bāb fī ru'yat al-rabb ta'ālā fī 'l-nawm* ("Section treating seeing the Lord Most High while asleep"). This section includes two reports: the *ḥadīth aḥsan ṣūra* on the authority of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Ā'ish (#2149) and a ḥadīth on the authority of Ibn Sīrīn declaring that whoever sees his Lord in his sleep will enter Paradise (#2150)]; Ibn Abī Āṣim (d. 900), *al-Sunna*, 1:306ff [*bāb dhikri min ru'yat al-nabī* (ṣ) *rabbihi ta'ālā* ("Section mentioning the Prophet's (ṣ) vision of his Lord Most High")]; Ibn Khuzayma (d. 924), *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 197ff [*bāb dhikri al-akhbār al-ma'thūrati fī ithbāt ru'yat al-nabī* (ṣ) *khāliqihi al-'Azīz al-'Alīm...*("Section mentioning the transmitted reports regarding the affirmation of the Prophet's (ṣ) vision of his Creator, the Powerful, the All-knowing...")]; al-Ājurrī (d. 971), *al-Sharī'a*, 2:314ff [*bāb dhikri mā khaṣṣa Allāh 'Azza wa Jalla bihi 'l- nabī* (ṣ) *min al-ru'ya lirabbihi 'Azza wa Jalla* ("Section mentioning that by which God, May He be Exalted and Great, distinguished the Prophet (ṣ): the Vision of his Lord, May He be Exalted and Great")]; al-Lālakā'ī (d. 418/1027), *Sharh*, 2:512ff [*siyāq mā rawiya 'an al- nabī* (ṣ) *anhu qad ra'ā rabbahu* ("Sequence of reports about the Prophet (ṣ) that he indeed saw his Lord")].

[1234] Pages 308-359.

[1235] *Sharḥ kitāb al-sunna, apud* Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt*.

[1236] *Al-Ibāna*, ed. trns by Henry Laoust *La Profession de foi d'Ibn Baṭṭa* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1958), 104. 'Ubayd Allāh b. Baṭṭa was "the outstanding Hanbalī ideologist of the period" and his *al-Ibāna* "a definitive statement of contemporary Hanbalī ideology (Kraemer, *Humanism*, 63)." See also Laoust, *Ibn Baṭṭa*, Introduction, xlii-xlvii.

[1237] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Daf'u Shubah al-tashbīh*, 151. Abū 'Abd Allāh b. Ḥāmid al-Warrāq, "the imām of the Hanābila" stood "at the head of the mainstream of fifth/eleventh century Hanbalite scholarship (Makdisi, "Muslim Institutions of Learning," 26-7)."

[1238] *Kitāb al-Mu'tammad fī uṣūl al-dīn*, 84ff. On him see below.

[1239] See above.

mandate of the way of knowledge and jurisprudence is acceptance" of Muḥammad's vision of God.[1240]

Some of the main representatives of tenth-century Sunnī *Kalām* likewise affirmed the Vision. Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 944) cited the Vision in his **Kitāb al-tawḥīd**, though he deanthropomorphised it.[1241] Al-Ashʿarī (d. 935), whose traditionalism was too diluted by his indulgence in *kalām* to be accepted by the traditionalists,[1242] yet took a position on the issue which was in complete agreement with that of the conservative *ahl al-ḥadīth*: Ibn ʿAbbās's affirmation is preferred over ʿĀ'isha's denial. Al-Ashʿarī advances as proof of the Mother of the Faithful's error a theophanic interpretation of *sūrat al-Najm* as well as *ḥadīth al-shābb*.[1243]

7.3.4.1. Sunnism's Youthful Deity

The main representatives of tenth-century traditionalist Sunnism and Sunnī *Kalām*, with all of the well-known acrimony between the two groups, agreed on this point: Muḥammad saw his Lord. To be sure, there were differences across and within the groups over how the Vision was understood, whether as a dream-vision (vision of the heart) or as a waking-vision. But whichever choice one opted for, the general sentiment among these "affirmers" was that it was a real visual encounter.[1244] Traditionalist Sunnism was specifically associated with and self-identified with Muḥammad's reported encounter with the divine *shābb*. Ibn Ḥanbal and other ninth-century traditionalists made affirming this Vision a criterion of faith and thus the movement they represented was frequently characterized/caricaturized by belief in this youthful deity.[1245] This association

---

[1240]Ibn Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 227.

[1241] Al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 80.

[1242] R. M. Frank, "Elements in the Development of the Teaching of Al-Ashʿarī," *Mus* 104 (1991): 170ff. [art.=141-190].

[1243] Al- Ashʿarī cites the report from Umm al-Ṭufayl, "I heard one day the Messenger of Allah say that he had seen his Lord, during his sleep, under the most beautiful form, a young man with long hair (*muwaffar*)..." See Ibn Fūrak *Mujarrad maqālāt al-Ashʿarī*, 86ff. Daniel Gimaret, *La Doctrine d'Al-Ashʿarī* (Paris: Patrimoines, 1990), 342ff.

[1244] See below.

[1245] See above.

continued throughout the 10th and 11th centuries. The rescript of the Shīʿa friendly Caliph al-Rāḍī issued in 935 against the Baghdādī Ḥanbalīs condemns them for anthropomorphist views based on *ḥadīth al-shābb*.

> You claim that your ugly and disgusting faces are in the image of the Lord of the worlds and that your vile appearance is in His image; you talk of His feet and fingers and legs and gilded shoes and curly hair, and going up to heaven and coming down to the world—may God be raised above what wrongdoers and unbelievers say about Him.[1246]

The "curly hair," *jaʿd*, and gilded shoes are clearly those of the youthful deity found in the various *aḥādīth al-shābb*. This polemical (Shīʿī) association of Baghdādī Sunnism with the youthful deity is encountered again in the polemic of the Imāmī al-Ḥillī (d. 1325) against the *ḥashwīya* and other *mushabbiha* ("likeners"/anthropomorphists). He claimed that "some of them (*al-ḥashwīya*) believe that God descends every Thursday night in the form of a beardless youth, beautiful of face, on a camel, until some of them in Baghdād place fodder on the roof of their house every Thursday night (hoping) that God will descend on His camel on that roof."[1247] Al-Ḥillī goes on to relate another rather scandalous narrative about a sheikh of the *ḥashwīya* in Baghdād who passes a *naffāṭ* (lowly tar thrower) "who had with him a young, beardless boy, handsome of form, with curly hair just as they describe their Lord." The narrative continues:

> The sheikh stared at [the boy]. The *naffāṭ* thought of him [that night] and came to him and said: "Yā sheikh! I noticed you staring at this young boy so I have come to you with him. If you have an intention with him, you are the judge." The sheikh got angry at him and said: "Rather, I stared at him because I believe that Allāh descends in [that form] so I thought he was God." The *naffāṭ* said: "I am in *naffāṭa* better than you in your asceticism with this talk."[1248]

The Muʿtazilī al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1025) noted that, still in the 11th century the common people inclined towards anthropomorphism (*qulūb al-ʿāmma lā tasbiqu illā ilā mā taṣawwiruhu*) based on *ḥadīth al-shābb*.[1249] While we may be tempted to dismiss these tales as

---

[1246] ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī'l-taʾrīk* (ed. C. J. Thornberg; Leiden: Brill, 1851-1876), 8:229ff.

[1247] Al-Ḥillī, *Minhāj al-karama, apud* Ibn Taymīya, *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawīya* (Cairo,1964), 2:506.

[1248] Al-Ḥillī, *Minhāj al-karama, apud* Ibn Taymīya, *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawīya*, 2: 507.

[1249] Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-iʿtizāl wa-ṭabaqāt al-Muʿtazila* (ed. Fuʾād Sayyid; Tunis, 1393/1974), 149.

Shīʿī/Muʿtazilī propaganda, Sunnism's courtship with the divine *shābb* is confirmed from Sunnī sources.

7.3.4.2. The Affair of al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā

Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. al-Farrāʾ (990-1066), better known as al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā, was undoubtedly 'the major leader and prime mover of the Hanbalite movement' in his day and clearly a leading influence on Ḥanbalism/Sunnism for a good part of the eleventh century.[1250] As recognized imām of the Baghdādī Ḥanābila al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā was well respected by the pro-Sunnī caliphs al Qādir (r. 991-1031) and al-Qāʾim (r. 1031-1075). The latter beseeched him repeatedly to be chief judge (*qāḍī*) of the caliphal palace, a post Abū Yaʿlā reluctantly assumed. Abū Yaʿlā the theologian is said to have had a recognizable influence on the Caliph al-Qāʾim, a claim supported by the Caliph's handling of the 'affair of al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā.'

The 'affair of al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā' can be said to have begun with the publication of his now lost ***Ibtāl al-taʾwīlāt li-akhbār al-ṣifāt*** ("The Invalidation of the Metaphorical Interpretations of the Reports on the Divine Attributes") circa 1040. The outcry from the local Shāfiʿī-Ashʿarī's who condemned the book as "pure anthropomorphism" reached the Caliph who requested the writing from Abū Yaʿlā. After reading it himself the Caliph returned the book with an endorsing "thank you."[1251] Shortly thereafter the Caliph summoned the city's ʿulamāʾ and witness notaries to his palace where he proclaimed the traditionalist Qadirī Creed (*Iʿtiqād Qādirī*), the doctrinal proclamation of his father. The gathered notables had to sign the proclamation.[1252] The Qadirī Creed proclaimed by Caliph al-Qāʾim is apparently an epitome of the several edicts promulgated by his father, Caliph al-Qādir, between 1017 and 1029.[1253] This creed has been likened to the creeds of

---

[1250] On al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā see *EI²* 3:765-766 s.v. Ibn al-Farrāʾ by H. Laoust; Wadi Z. Haddad, "Al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā Ibn al-Farrāʾ: His Life, Works and Religious Thought. Muslim Jurisconsult and Theologian, Died in Baghdad in 458/1066" (Ph.D diss. Harvard University, 1969); Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl et la résurgence*, 232-234.

[1251] Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:197; Haddad, "Al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā," 86-7; idem, *Kitāb al-Muʿtammad fī Uṣūl ad-Dīn*, 25.

[1252] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī tāʾrīkh al-mulūk waʾl-umma* (ed. Krenkow; Haydarabād: Dāʾirat al-Maʿrif, 1357/1938-1359-/1940) 8:109-11; Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:197.

[1253] On these edicts see Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl*, 8-9.

the two Ḥanbalī leaders contemporary with the two caliphs, Ibn Baṭṭa (d. 997) and al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā (d. 1065).[1254] Makdisi thus called it a traditionalist-Ḥanbalī profession of faith,[1255] its proclaimation making Ḥanbalism "the 'official credo' of the state."[1256]

The gathering in 1040 called by Caliph al-Qāʾim likely had the purpose of putting an end to the controversy over Abū Yaʿlā's book on the Divine Attributes.[1257] Part of the proclamation reads: "Only those Attributes should be ascribed to Him which He has Himself ascribed or his Prophet has ascribed to Him. Further, each Attribute He or the Prophet have ascribed to Him is a real attribute (*ṣifa ḥaqīqiyya*), not metaphorical (*lā majāziyya*)."[1258] Wadi Haddad's suggestion that the proclamation of Caliph al-Qāʾim was a "vindication of Abū Yaʿlā's doctrine and an exoneration of him,"[1259] has support from the Arabic sources. According to Ibn Abī Yaʿlā the ascetic shaykh Ibn al-Qazwīnī (d. 1050) looked at Abū Yaʿlā after the signing of the proclamation and said, "Just as your soul desired."[1260] The Qāḍī responded: "Praise be to God for his graciousness in manifesting the truth."[1261] Ibn al-Qazwīnī then said to the Qāḍī: "I shall not be satisfied until I go to the Manṣūr Mosque[1262] and dictate the reports of the Divine Attributes." The ascetic shaykh fulfilled his word and went to mosque each Friday dictating *akhbār al-ṣifāt* in support of Abū Yaʿlā.[1263]

[1254] According to Laoust, *Ibn Baṭṭa*, xcvi, xcvii the principles of the Qādirī Creed were essentially identical with those of Ibn Baṭṭa. Haddad (*Kitāb al-Muʿtammad*, 26), on the other hand, identifies the Creed as "the doctrine of Abū Yaʿlā." The Qāḍī's son, Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, already identified the Creed with the essence of his father's creed. *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:197-8.

[1255] Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl et la résurgence*, 308.

[1256] Kraemer, *Humanism*, 63 ; Khālid Yaḥyā Blankinshp, « Introduction », in ʿAbd al-Raḥman Ibn al-Jawzī, **The Attributes of God**, Translated by ʿAbdullāh bin Ḥamīd ʿAlī (Bristol, England : Amal Press, 2006) xiv.

[1257] Haddad, "Al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā," 87.

[1258] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 8:110-11.

[1259] Haddad, "Al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā," 87.

[1260] Accepting Haddad's reading of the Arabic *kamā fī nafsika*. Haddad, "Al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā," 90.

[1261] Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:198.

[1262] The main Sunnī cathedral mosque in West Baghdād.

[1263] Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:198; Haddad, "Al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā," 90.

What was the Qāḍī's doctrine of the *Ṣifāt* that was made part of the 'official credo of the state'? Ibn Taymīya (d. 1328) provides one of the few excerpts from Abū Yaʿlā's lost ***Ibtāl*** in his ***Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil al-kubrā***. The Qāḍī declares:

> The traditions (concerning the Divine Attributes) cannot be rejected, nor can one be preoccupied with their metaphorical interpretation. They must be taken literally (*ʿalā ẓāhirihā*) and that they are the Attributes of God. They are not to be likened to the same attributes in creation.[1264]

What are some of these *Ṣifāt* that must be taken literally? In his critique of Ḥanbalī anthropomorphism - a critique that often targeted Abū Yaʿlā himself – Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1201) quotes the Qāḍī from an unidentified work that Merlin Swartz's believes is likely the ***Ibtāl***.[1265] In one of those quotes the Qāḍī identifies some of these Divine Attributes:

> Terms such as 'young man' (*shābb*), 'beardless' (*amrad*), 'short, curly' (*jaʿad wa qaṭaṭ*), 'moths' (*firāsh*)[1266] 'sandals' (*maʿlān*)[1267] and 'crown' (*tāj*)[1268] have all been established as designations that apply to God, although we do not claim to know their precise meaning [when used for this purpose].[1269]

All of these "established" Attributes come from Vision reports, specifically *aḥādīth al-shābb* or reports of the Divine Youth. In his ***Kitāb al-Muʿtamad fī uṣūl al-Dīn*** Abū Yaʿlā affirms that Muḥammad saw God with his eyes during his Nocturnal Journey and with his heart (i.e. in a dream-vision) on some other occasion.[1270] The most beautiful form, *ṣūra*, seen by Muḥammad in his vision was God's real form, though a form unlike

---

[1264] Ibn Taymīya, *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil al-kubrā* (Cairo: al-Sharafiyya, 1905) 1:145.

[1265] *A Medieval Critique*, 136.

[1266] From the *ḥadīth al shābb* on the authority of Umm Ṭufayl reading *farāsh min dhahab*, 'moths of gold' over the youthful god's face rather than *firāsh min dhahab*, "veil of gold."

[1267] The youthful God of *ḥadīth al shābb* on the authority of Umm Ṭufayl wears sandals of gold.

[1268] According to *aḥādīth al-ruʾya* on the authority of Muʿadh b. ʿAfrāʾ and Ibn ʿAbbās Muḥammad saw his Lord wearing a crown. See Ibn Fūrak, *Mushkil*, 387; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Laʾālīʾ*, 30.

[1269] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb Akhbār al-Ṣifāt*, 49 (Eng. 183).

[1270] Al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā, *Kitāb al-Muʿtamad fī uṣūl al-Dīn*, 151.

forms.[1271] The Qāḍī cites the *ḥadīth al shabb* on the authority of Umm al-Ṭufayl as proof that God can be seen in a dream-vision.

Wadi Haddad has argued that al-Qā'im's proclamation of the Qādirī Creed and his support of Abū Ya'lā in this controversy "reveal the creedal position of the Caliph".[1272] Christopher Melchert and Steven Judd have both likewise argued that the doctrinal tendency a particular Caliph promoted can be discerned by examining the tendencies of the men he appointed to be judges (*qāḍīs*).[1273] The official support given to tradionalist Sunnism (Ḥanbalism) by the two caliphs al-Qādir and al-Qā'im in general and the latter's support for al-Qāḍī Abū Ya'lā in particular suggests therefore that both popular Sunnism and state-sponsored Sunnism during the later part of the tenth and much of the eleventh century was a Sunnism that affirmed that the Prophet saw God, and he saw him in the most beautiful form of a young man.[1274]

7.4. 'Ā'isha's Denial and Sunnism's Affirmation

Sunnism between the nineth-eleventh centuries, generally speaking, affirmed Muḥammad's vision of God. This is not to suggest that thereafter the Vision dropped out of the Sunnī profession of faith. Al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111) in the twelth century begrudgingly conceded that, in spite of his objections, "most 'ulamā' are of the opinion that he saw Him"[1275] and al-Nawawī (d. 1277) in the thirteenth century could still claim as well that "the preferred view (*al-rājiḥ*) with most of the 'ulamā' is that the Messenger of God saw his Lord with the eyes of his head on the Night of Isrā'."[1276] This begs the question: how

---

[1271] Ibid., 58.

[1272] Haddad, "Al-Qāḍī Abū Ya'lā," 90.

[1273] Christopher Melchert, "Religious Policies of the Caliphs from al-Mutawakkil to al-Muqtadir, A.H. 232-295/A.D. 847-908," *Islamic Law and Society* 3 (1996): 316-42; Steven Clark Judd, "The Third Fitna: Orthodoxy, Heresy and Coercion in Late Umayyad History" (Ph.D diss. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1997).

[1274] The *aḥsan ṣūra* or 'most beautiful form' is explicitly identified as the form of the young man, *shabb*, in the reports on the authority of Umm al-Ṭufayl and Anas b. Mālik. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-mawḍū'at*, 181; al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-Ru'ya*, 356-7 # 285.

[1275] *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* 4:268

[1276] Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2:11.

could the Vision have become such an important, even at times defining, aspect of the Sunnī *'aqīda* in the face of the vehement denial from one of the pillars of Sunnism and the 'Beloved of Muḥammad'?[1277] Traditionalist treatment of 'Ā'isha's denial varied. 'Uthmān b. Saʿīd al-Dārimī (d. 895) did "totally reject"[1278] the *ḥadīth al-shābb* from Ibn 'Abbās because it is opposed by the reports Abū Darr ("Light! How could I have seen Him?") and 'Ā'isha,[1279] but his "total rejection" was of a physical vision only. Muḥammad did see God in a most beautiful form in his (Muḥammad's) sleep.[1280] On the other hand, Ibn Taymīya claimed that the "people of knowledge" reject as lies this narration from 'Ā'isha along with a similar report claiming that her father Abū Bakr likewise asked the Prophet and he said "I saw Him." The only one to have asked the Prophet if he had seen God, Ibn Taymīya claims, was Abū Dharr.[1281] Like al-Dārimī before him Ibn Taymīya denied that the Prophet saw God during the *Miʿrāj* with his eyes. He did, however, see God later in Medina in a dream-vision.[1282]

Generally speaking the traditionalists did not go as far as Ibn Taymīya in rejecting the 'Ā'isha-report as a lie. They did, however, marginalize it,[1283] despite the fact that al-Bukhārī has 'Ā'isha pronounce the 'orthodox' position.[1284] The Mother of the Faithful was generally dismissed in favor of Ibn 'Abbās on this issue. 'Abd al-Razzāq b. Ḥammām

---

[1277] Aisha Geissinger, "The Exegetical Traditions of 'Ā'isha: Notes on their Impact and Significance," *JQS* 6 (2004): 1-20 attributes this marginalization of 'Ā'isha's denial to a "number of complex reasons" including mystical and theological concerns, the dynamics of interfaith polemic, popular sentiment, and gender issues (12-13).

[1278] Al-Dārimī, *Naqḍ*, 2: 726.

[1279] Al-Dārimī, *Naqḍ*, 2:726; idem, *al-Radd*, 53.

[1280] Al-Dārimī, *Naqḍ*, 2:738, quoting the *ḥadīth aḥsan ṣūra* on the authority of Thawbān. To those *mutakallimūn* (speculative theologians) who tried to de-anthropomorphicize the report by various interpretations such as the "most beautiful form" refers to a created form used by God to communicate to his Prophet, or even the form of an angel in which God inheres, al-Dārimī pronounces: "Woe to you! It is not possible that this is Jibrīl, or Mīkā'l, or Isrāfīl; it is not possible that this (form) is other than Allāh." *Naqḍ*, 2:237.

[1281] Ibn Taymīya, *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawīya*, 2: 511.

[1282] Ibn Taymīya, *Risāla fī ruʾyat al-nabī rabbahu*, MS 13895, Maktabat al-Asad al-Waṭaniyya, Damascus, fol. 7 v: "This ḥadīth (*aḥsan ṣūra*) and those like it are all a dream vision that took place in Medina after the Ascension. As for the known reports of the Ascension, nothing in them contains anything that mentions a certified vision of him." See also Ibn Qayyīm al-Jawzīya, *Zād al-maʿād*, 3:28-29.

[1283] Geissinger, "Exegetical Traditions of 'Ā'isha," 12.

[1284] Ibid.; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, tafsīr, #378.

(d. 826) mentioned the ḥadīth of 'Ā'isha's denial to Ma'mar b. Rāshid (d. 770), the famous Yemenite *muḥaddith*, who said, "'Ā'isha is not with us more knowledgeable (in this matter) than Ibn 'Abbās."[1285] Al-Marrūdhī reported concerning Ibn Ḥanbal:

> I said to Aḥmad: "Some say that 'Ā'isha said 'Whoever claims that Muḥammad saw his Lord lies greatly against God!' How should we respond?" (Aḥmad) said: "With the words of the Prophet, 'I saw my Lord.' His words are greater than hers."[1286]

Here 'Ā'isha is not just juxtaposed – to her detriment – to the Interpreter of the Qur'ān Ibn 'Abbās. Her words are set in direct conflict with those of the Prophet himself. The way Al-Marrūdhī posed the question to Ibn Ḥanbal may suggest doubt regarding the authenticity of the report: not "'Ā'isha said so and so" but *Some say* that 'Ā'isha said so and so." Al-Ash'arī rejected 'Ā'isha's denial in favor of Ibn 'Abbās's and Umm al-Ṭufayl's affirmation.[1287] So too did Ibn Khuzayma, who wrote regarding 'Ā'isha's vehement denial:

> This statement, I reckon 'Ā'isha uttered it during a moment of anger… It is not proper in articulation that a speaker, male or female, says: "Ibn 'Abbās, Abū Dhar, Anas b. Mālik, and a group from among the people made great against their Lord lies." But in anger one utters expressions that are not as comely and beautiful as other (utterances). The most that can be said is that 'Ā'isha, Abū Dhar, Ibn 'Abbās and Anas b. Mālik disagreed: Did the Prophet see his Lord? 'Ā'isha said he did not, while Abū Dhar and Ibn 'Abbās said he did see his Lord…. 'Ā'isha did not report from the Prophet (s) that he informed her that he did not see his Lord, May He be Exalted and Great. She simply recited His words, "Visions comprehend Him not" and "It is not for man that Allah speaks to him except (through) revelation." (But) from the contemplation of these two verses and in accordance with attainment of the "Right," it is known that there is not in either of the two verses that which merits charging one who said that Muḥammad saw his Lord with lying against Allah…. We say just as Ma'mar b. Rāshid said when the disagreement of 'Ā'isha and Ibn 'Abbās was mentioned: "In this matter 'Ā'isha is not with us more knowledgeable than Ibn 'Abbās." We say: 'Ā'isha is the truthful, daughter of the truthful, the beloved of Allah's beloved; a scholar and jurist. Likewise Ibn 'Abbās is the cousin of the Prophet who supplicated to Allah for him that He bestows wisdom and knowledge (on Ibn 'Abbās). For this reason he is named the Qur'ān's Interpreter.[1288] Al-Fārūq used to ask him about some of the meanings of the Qur'ān (verses) and yielded to him even if

---

[1285] 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, 2:252; Ibn Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 229.

[1286] Al-Khallāl, *Kitāb al-Sunna, apud* Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 8:608-9; Andrea, *Dei Person*, 75 (who quotes Abū Manṣūr al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Sunna, apud* al-Qasṭallānī, *al-Mawāhid al-ladunnīyya bi 'l-minah al-Muḥammadīyya*).

[1287] Ibn Fūrak *Mujarrad maqālāt al-Ash'arī*, 342.

[1288] Lit: "This meaning is from the supplication while he is named the Qur'an's Interpreter."

others disagreed with him who were older than he and more senior in companionship to the Prophet. When the two disagree, it is inconceivable that one says Ibn 'Abbās made great against Allah lies (simply) because he affirmed something which 'Ā'isha denied... the Tribe of Hāshim, collectively, contradict 'Ā'isha (m) in this matter and they, all of them, used to affirm that the Prophet (ṣ) saw his Lord twice. The agreement of the Tribe of Hāshim is...more appropriate than 'Ā'isha's isolated statement. Companions who are known did not follow her, nor did any woman from the wives/women of the Prophet, nor any of the female Successors.[1289]

I quote Ibn Khuzayma at length because these comments from such a staunch Sunnī and 'chief of the traditionalists' regarding such an important early figure for Sunnism seem rather remarkable. Again, the affirmation of Ibn 'Abbās, Abū Dhar, Anas b. Mālik and the Tribe of Hāshim collectively is preferred to 'Ā'isha's isolated and rather emotional denial and her inappropriate charge against those with whom she disagrees. 'Ā'isha's denial, Ibn Khuzayma claims, is not based on a denial relayed to her from the Prophet; it is based on her own incorrect interpretation of certain relevant passages from the Qur'ān. Her *tafsīr* can not impeach that of *Turjumān al-Qur'ān* himself, Ibn 'Abbās; at least not here since his *tafsīr* is supported by a prophetic statement. We learn from al-Nawawī that this sentiment was still alive in the twelfth century.

> (Ibn 'Abbās and others) affirm (the Vision) only due to the narrations (*bi 'l-samāʿ*) from the Messenger of God. This is from that (type of knowledge) which to doubt it is improper. 'Ā'isha (r) did not deny the Vision with a transmission from the Messenger of God; if she had such a transmission she would have mentioned it. (Instead she relied on the apparent meaning of [the qur'ānic passages]. Other Companions disagree with her.[1290]

The popularity of this sentiment must be the answer to the question posed above: the Vision became an important aspect of Sunnī doctrine despite 'Ā'isha's vehement denial because 'Ā'isha's qualifications in the matter were subordinated to those of Ibn 'Abbās. Certainly her years as 'Favorite Wife' of Muḥammad privileged 'Ā'isha's insight and qualified her as an important witness to and, thus, source of tradition. But she doesn't here transmit an explicit denial from the Prophet, it is argued. Rather, she does *tafsīr*. But

---

[1289] Ibn Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 225ff.

[1290] Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2:11 (=Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 8:607).

'Ā'isha the *mufassira* could not rival the *Turjumān al-Qur'ān*, at least not on this issue.[1291]

7.5. *Ru'ya bi 'l-qalb* and Traditionalist Sunnism

For Sunnī commentators like al-Qurṭubī (d. 1272), M. Chodkiewicz tells us, "La question…n'est pas de savoir *si* le Prophèt a vu Dieu mais de savior *comment* il L'a vu: *bi-l-baṣar aw bi-l-'ayn qalbihi?*"[1292] No consensus developed on this issue. Al-Nawawī claimed that the "preponderant view" with "most of the 'ulamā'" is that the Prophet saw God with his eyes during his Night Journey. This was the position of Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ (d. 1149)[1293] and al-Qāḍī Abū Ya'lā (d. 1065),[1294] and the mystic Sheik of Shirāz Ibn Khafīf (d. 982) affirmed the same.[1295] On the other hand al-Lālakā'ī (d. 1027),[1296] al-Māturīdī (d. 944),[1297] al-Ash'arī (d. 935),[1298] al-Dārimī (d. 895),[1299] and others affirmed a *ru'ya bi 'l-qalb*. Van Ess suggests that the Sunnī affirmation of a 'vision of the heart' resulted from a growing anti-anthropomorphist sentiment.[1300] With this affirmation, van Ess claims, "die Vision wurde damit zu einer bloßen Vorstellung reduziert."[1301] Daniel Gimaret too treats the "Vision of the heart" as a "metaphorical" seeing.[1302] The sources support these claims but with qualification.

[1291] This was not the case on all issues, of course. On the 'Ā'isha-Ibn 'Abbās exegetical rivalry see Geissinger, "Exegetical Traditions of 'Ā'isha," 8ff; Harris Birkland, *The Lord Guideth: Studies on Primitive Islam* (Oslo: I Kommisjon Hos H. Aschehoug & Co. [W. Nygaard], 1956) 58-67.

[1292] "It is not a question to know *if* the Prophet saw God but to know *how* did he see Him: with the eyes of his head or the eyes of his heart." "La vision de Dieu selon Ibn 'Arabī," 160.

[1293] *Al-Shifa,* 101.

[1294] *Kitāb al-Mu'tamad,* 151.

[1295] Abū l-Ḥasan-i. Daylamī, *Sīrat-i. shaykh-i. kabīr Abū 'Abd Allāh Ibn-i. Khafīf Shirāzī* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i. Bābak, 1984), 296.

[1296] *Sharḥ,* 2:512f.

[1297] *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd,* 80.

[1298] Ibn Fūrak *Mujarrad maqālāt al-Ash'arī,* 342ff.

[1299] *Naqḍ,* 2:738.

[1300] Van Ess, "Vision and Ascension," 54; idem, "Le *MI'RĀǦ* et la Vision de Dieu," 40-1.

[1301] "the Vision was thereby reduced to a bare idea." Van Ess, *TG* 4:390.

[1302] *EI²* 8:644 s.v. Ru'yat Allāh.

The metaphorical reading of "vision of the heart" as 'knowledge' was characteristic of the Mu'tazilī anti-anthropomorphist theology[1303] and this school may have originated the reading.[1304] Al-Ash'arī, the Mu'tazilī-turned-Sunnī *mutakallim*, acknowledged this 'cognitive' sense of vision of the heart in his debate with his former colleagues over the meaning of *sūrat al-An'ām* [6]: 103.[1305] But Al-Ash'arī tells us that the Prophet really saw God in a dream-vision, as narrated in the reports from Umm al-Ṭufayl and Ibn 'Abbās. This was a true vision (*ru'ya ḥaqīqa*) not a dream delusion (*takhayyul*).[1306] It is this vision of the heart as 'true dream-vision' that traditionalist Sunnism affirmed for Muḥammad,[1307] not the metaphorical, cognitive *ru'ya bi 'l-qalb*. And as van Ess would admit regarding the Sunnī perspective on *ru'ya bi 'l-baṣir* vs. *ru'ya bi 'l-qalb*: "Aber vermutlich betonen wir den Unterschied schärfer, als man dies damals tat."[1308] When asked concerning this matter, Ibn Ḥanbal responded: "Yes, he saw Him in reality (*rā'hu ḥaqq*ᵃⁿ), for the visions of the prophets are real."[1309] "My eyes sleep" the Prophet is given to say, "but my heart does not sleep."[1310] The heart, we recall, is the locus of comprehension and thus of true vision.[1311] Consequently "That which the Prophet sees in his sleep and while awake, it is

---

[1303] Tuft, "Ru'ya Controversy," 94, 168; Subhan, "Mu'tazilite View on Beatific Vision," 423; Albert N. Nader, *Le system philosophique des Mu'tazila (Premiers Penseurs de l'Islam)* (Beirut: Les Letters Orientales, 1956) 115. Van Ess, *Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 31 notes regarding this school: "The doctrines they hated most were anthropomorphism and predestination."

[1304]Tuft, "Ru'ya Controversy," 168, 94 suggested that the intuitive sense of *ru'yat al-qalb* and even the expression itself was innovated by the Mu'tazilī Abū Hudhayl (d. 840 ?) who said for example: "We shall see God with our minds eye, i.e. we shall know Him through our hearts." Al-Ash'arī, *Maqalāt*, 1:157, 216.

[1305] *Al-Ibāna*, 63-65. See also Tuft's discussion, "Origins and Development," 91-92.

[1306] Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad maqālāt al-Ash'arī*, 86.

[1307] On dream visions as visions of the heart see Taftazānī, *Sharḥ al-Aqā'id al-Nasafiyya*, 135; Qārī al-Harawī, *Sharḥ Kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1995) 216; Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Bājūrī, *Tuḥfat al-murīd 'alā Jawharat al-tawḥīd* (Būlaq: al-Maṭba'ah al-'Āmirah, 1864) 118; van Ess, *Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 62; idem, "Vision and Ascension," 59; *EQ* 2:324 s.v. God and His Attributes by S.S. Lane.

[1308] *TG* 4:391: "But presumably we emphasize a sharper difference than they did at the time."

[1309] Ibn Qayyīm al-Jawzīya, *Zād al-ma'ād*, 3:29.

[1310] Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*, 1:197.

[1311] See above.

truth."[1312] This includes the vision of God.[1313] Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ claimed that there was no difference of opinion regarding the vision of God in the sleep. It occurs and it is true, because Satan cannot take the form of God.[1314]

For others, the Prophet wasn't necessarily asleep during the Vision but his heart was temporarily equipped with sight, making his vision of God just as real as a physical vision. As Abū 'l- Ḥāsan al-Wāḥidī (d. 1075) stated:

'He (Muḥammad) saw his Lord with his heart' is a sound vision (*ru'ya ṣaḥīḥa*) and it is that Allāh Most High placed [Muḥammad's] eyes in his heart or created for his heart eyes so that [his seeing] his Lord is sound just as he saw with his eyes.[1315]

Al-Ḍaḥḥāk reported from Ibn 'Abbās that Muḥammad said, "I looked at Him with my heart until I was sure that He was present and that I really saw Him."[1316] Though the heart was the instrument of the vision, Muḥammad "really saw Him." The point of all this is the reality of the vision, despite its having occurred in a dream-vision or in any case without the instrumentality of the Prophet's eyes; otherwise the popular tradition of Muḥammad's superiority over Abraham and Moses by virtue of the Vision would lose all force.[1317] This is consistent with the ANE/biblical tradition of dream theophanies.

[1312] Ibn 'Abī 'Āṣim, *al-Sunna*, 1:325, #473. See also Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīra* (183 Eng.): "I heard that the Apostle used to say: 'My eyes sleep while my heart is awake.' Only God knows how revelation came and he saw what he saw. But whether he was asleep or awake, it was all true and actually happened."

[1313] See Kinberg, "Literal Dreams," 286 n. 18. According to a ḥadīth found in Muslim (*Ṣaḥīḥ*, # 4200) "Those of you with the truest dreams will be those who are most truthful in speech." Thus the Prophet's dream visions, even of God, are most truthful. See above n. 859. See also Ibn Taymiyya's comments: "A Believer may see his Lord in a dream, in various forms according to his faith and belief. If his faith is correct he can only see Him in a beautiful form and if his faith is lacking, this will be reflected in the way he sees Him. Seeing Allah in a dream is not like seeing Him in reality. It may have different interpretations and meanings referring to something in reality...Whoever sees Allah in a dream sees Him in a form that correspomds to his own state. If he is righteous, he will see Him in a beautiful form, which is why the Prophet of Allah (s) saw Him in the most beautiful form." *Al-Fatāwa*, 3:390, 5:251. The complete righteous of the Prophet would therefore guarentee the truthfulness of the dream-theophany.

[1314] Quote from al-Bājūrī, *Tuḥfat al-murīd*, 118.

[1315] Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2:12; Qārī al-Harawī, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, 9:626. See also al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 17:92: "Allāh Most High placed his eyes in his heart so that he saw his Lord, Most High, and Allāh made that a (true) vision."

[1316] See above.

[1317] On the popularity of this tradition see Geissinger, "Exegetical Traditions of 'Ā'isha," 12.

The anthropomorphist implications of a physical vision does indeed seem to be what compelled the choice of a *ru'ya bi 'l-qalb* for some, particularly later traditionists. 'Alī al-Mutaqqī (d. 1567) said regarding the *ḥadīth al shābb* on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, "It is tolerable as a dream-vision,"[1318] a sentiment expressed earlier by al-Dhahabī (d. 1374) who said of this report "The vision is a dream vision if it is sound."[1319]

An equally strong motivation, however, was the desire to harmonize the conflicting positions of Ibn 'Abbāss and 'Ā'isha. The mutual exclusivity of the positions of two important Companions on such an important theological issue – the nature of the divine, in short – did violence to the Sunnī dogma of the collective probity of the Ṣaḥāba. This dogma is the Sunnī answer to the Shī'ī dogma of the collective apostasy of the Companions who failed to recognize 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib's caliphate.[1320] Both dogmas are attempts by the respective communities to come to terms historiographically with the traumatizing intra-Ṣaḥāba conflicts of the first thirty post-prophetic years of the *umma*, which revolved around the question of succession to Muḥammad.[1321] While the dogma of the collective probity of the Companions fails to identify the right and wrong parties at the battles of the Camel and at Ṣiffīn, it does affirm that all of the Companions are honest witnesses of the Prophet and reliable transmitters. Such a dogma makes it necessary, or so it would seem, to reconcile major opposing doctrinal positions among them. Ibn Ḥajar (d. 1448) therefore argued:

> (The Prophet) did not see Him with his eyes. He saw Him with his heart. On this basis it is possible to reconcile between the affirmation of Ibn 'Abbās and the denial of 'Ā'isha in that her denial is a denial of a physical vision (*ru'yat al-baṣar*) and the affirmation (of Ibn 'Abbās) is an affirmation of a dream-vision (*ru'yat al-qalb*).[1322]

[1318] *Kanz al-ummāl*, 58 #1153.

[1319] *Mizān al-i'tidāl*, 1:594.

[1320] See especially Scott C. Lucas, *Constructive Critics, Ḥadīth Literature, and the Articulation of Sunnī Islam. The Legacy of the Generation of Ibn Saʿd, Ibn Maʿīn, and Ibn Ḥanbal* (Leiden: Brill, 2004) Chapter Six.

[1321] Wilfred Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[1322] *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 8:608.

Such reconciling tendencies were not rare and it was often Ibn 'Abbās and 'Ā'isha who, after first being made the representatives of opposing traditions, then had their traditions reconciled.[1323]

7.6. Concluding Remarks

The list of those on record explicitly affirming the Vision or transmitting *ahādīth al-ru'ya* is a *Who's Who* among the (Proto-)Sunnī's. Makhūl al-Shāmī (d. 730-35), Sa'īd b. al-Musayyib of Medina (d. 713), 'Āmir b. Sharāhīl al-Sha'bī (d. 721-8) of Kūfa and al-Hasan of Basra (d. 728) were considered the four leading scholars of that time.[1324] At least three of these reported the Vision: Makhūl,[1325] al-Sha'bī,[1326] and al-Hasan al-Basrī.[1327] On this illustrious list is also: 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 713), Abū Salīh b. Sālih (d. 720),[1328] al-Zuhrī (d. 742), 'Abd al-Mālik b. 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Jurayj (d. 767),[1329] Ibn Ishāq (d. 767), Ma'mar b. Rāshid (d. 770), al-'Awzā'ī (d. 773), Shu'ba b. al-Hajjāj (d. 776),[1330] Hammād b. Salama (d. 784),[1331] Sharīk b. 'Abd Allāh (d. 797),[1332] Sufyān b. 'Uyayna (d. 813),[1333] 'Abd

---

[1323] See especially Bireland, *The Lord Guideth*, 56ff; Geissinger, "The Exegetical Traditions of 'Ā'isha," 13.

[1324] See Nabia Abbot, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri II: Qur'anic Commentary and Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967) 241.

[1325] Al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī* 4:69; Ibn Abī 'Āsim, *Al-Sunna*, 1: 326; al-Dāraqutnī, *Kitāb al-Ru'ya*, 319 #235; 322 # 237.

[1326] 'Abd Allāh, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 1: 286, # 548; Ibn Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-tawhīd*, 199; Ibn Abī 'Āsim, *Al-Sunna*, 1:307; al-Dāraqutnī, *Kitāb al-Ru'ya*, 307.

[1327] See above.

[1328] He is the famous Egyptian *muhaddith* who transmitted the *hadīth al shābb* of Umm al Tufayl. See above.

[1329] 'Abd Allāh, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 2: 495; Al-Lālikā'ī, *Sharh usūl* 2:518; al-Suyūtī, *al-La'ālī'*, 30.

[1330] Ibn Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-tawhīd*, 199.

[1331] 'Abd Allāh b. Mubārik said of him: "I entered Basra and didn't see one the likes of Hammād b. Salama in the ways of the ancients, *masālik al-uwal*" (Ibn 'Adī, *al-Kāmil*, 2:673). Ahmad b. Hanbal said of him also : "Hammad is a great (*jalil*) Imām and he is the Mufti of the people of Basra" (al-Suyūtī, *al-La'ālī'*, 31) and Sufyān al-Thawrī said: "There is not in Basra other than Hammād b. Salama" (Ibn 'Adī, *al-Kāmil*, 2:671).

[1332] Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Asma' wa al-Sifāt*, 2: 356; Ibn Kuzayma, *Kitāb al-tawhīd*, 210.

[1333] 'Abd Allāh, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 1:346, #748; Ibn Kuzayma, *Kitāb al-tawhīd*, 200-202; al-Dāraqutnī, *Kitāb al-Ru'ya*, 308.

Allāh b. Wahb (d. 813),[1334] 'Abd al-Razzāq b. Ḥammām (d. 826),[1335] 'Affān b. Muslim (d. 835),[1336] Nu'aym b. Ḥammād (d. 843), 'Alī b. al-Madīnī (d. 848),[1337] Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn (d. 848),[1338] Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 855), Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī (d. 878),[1339] Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā (d. 880),[1340] Ibn Khuzayma (d. 924) and al-Ash'arī (d. 935), just to name a few. These are some of the biggest names of early Sunnism. This very partial list nevertheless clearly indicates that Muḥammad's reported visual encounter with Allāh played an important role in the early articulation of Sunnism. It was, to use Andrae's words, *theologische Lehre*. It remained so in the 10th-12th centuries as Sunnism and Shī'ism became clearly defined and within the former traditionalist Sunnism was distinguished from Ash'arism (and other speculative theological schools, e.g. Māturīdism). As George Makdisi has made the case, 'orthodox' Sunnism during this period was represented by the former (traditionalist Sunnism), not the latter (Ash'arism); and the traditionalist Sunnī *'aqīda* of this period included the affirmation of Muḥammad's vision.

[1334] He is the famous *muḥaddith* who introduced traditions into Egypt. He transmitted the *ḥadīth al shabb* of Umm al Ṭufayl. See al-Suyūṭī, *al-La'ālī*, 29.

[1335] 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, 2:252; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad¹* 1:368; Ibn Kuzayma, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 229; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* 7:450.

[1336] He was the colleague and teacher of Ibn Hanbal for ten years and was reportedly the first to be tried during the *miḥna*. See al-Khāṭib al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rīkh Baghdād* 12: 273. He transmitted *ḥadīth al-shabb*. See above.

[1337] Al-Lālikā'ī, *Sharḥ uṣūl* 2:510.

[1338] Al-Marzubānī, *Kitāb nūr al-qabas al-mukhtaṣar* 1: 48; al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-Ru'ya*. 269 # 168.

[1339] The famous traditionalist of Rayy whom al-Dhahabī honored with the sobriquet 'Ḥāfiẓ of the Age.' See Lucas, *Constructive Critics*, 78.

[1340] The leading Khurāsānī scholar, called *amīr al-mu'minīn fī' l-ḥadīth* "Commander of the Faithful with regard ḥadīth. On him see Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, 155. On his transmission of *ḥadīth al-ru'ya* see Ibn Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 198, 217.

Chapter VIII:

Transcendent Anthropomorphism, Visio Dei *and the Writing of Islamic Theological History*

"Belief that God possessed a visibly perceivable (though not earthly) body...is reflected in early Islamic sources." *EQ* s.v. Face of God.

8.1. The Problem of Anthropomorphism in Islamic Historiography

Elliot Wolfson has observed that "the problem of God's visibility is invariably linked to the question of God's corporeality, which, in turn, is bound up with the matter of human likeness to God...The problem surrounding the claim of visionary experience invariably touches upon the larger philosophical-theological problem of God's having a visible form or body."[1341] In Islam as well, the question of God's visibility was raised in the context of the larger question of anthropomorphism. James Pavlin has argued that the "major theological controversies in Islam...revolve(d) around the nature of God and His Attributes"[1342] and according to Richard C. Martin "The problems of anthropomorphism and corporealism lay at the heart of the disputes about God in Islamic theology."[1343] The theological problem has always in some way been related to the scriptural representations of God.[1344] As Duncan Black MacDonald observed: "The (Qur'ānic) descriptions are at first sight a strange combination of anthropomorphism and

---

[1341] *Through a Speculum,* 20-1, 23.

[1342] "Sunni *Kalām* and theological controversies," in Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (edd.), *History of Islamic Philosophy,* 2 vols. (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), 1: 105.

[1343] *EQ* 1: 106 s.v. Anthropomorphism by Richard C. Martin

[1344] Van Ess, *TG* 4:374: „der Anthropomorphisms im Islam durchwegabgeleiteten Charakter trägt, insofern er nicht einen genuinen Versuch darstellt, Gott mit menschlichen Kalegorien zu erflassen, sondern immer schon als theologisches Problem sich aus einem Text ergibt, entweder aus einem Ḥadīṯ oder aus der koranischen Offenbarung selber." But cf. ibid., 4:416.

metaphysics…With only a little ingenuity in one-sidedness an absolutely anthropomorphic deity could be put together, or a practically pantheistic, or a coldly and aloofly rationalistic (deity)."[1345] The Sunna, as Daniel Gimaret noted, "ne se borne pas à reprendre ceux, encore relativement vagues et abstraits, du Coran, elle les amplifie, les précise, les concretize."[1346] A qur'ānic hand becomes a palm with five fingers and fingertips in the Sunna, etc.[1347] How is this imagery to be understood? Literally? Metaphorically? This question at times occupied center stage in the theological debate. The real issue, of course, was the authority of scripture.[1348] The Western reading of this debate has been marred by the fact that most of the early Orientalists and later Islamicists hailed from faith communities that had already struggled with the same questions and decided, in the name of philosophic rationalism and ethical monotheism, that the anthropomorphisms of their scriptures were simple metaphors. When these presuppositions were brought to the study of Islam, Western scholars assumed that the anthropomorphisms meant the same in the Muslim scriptures that they did in their own.[1349] They weren't disappointed either to find that medieval Muslim authors whose works served as their sources shared some of their conclusions and thus confirmed some of their presuppositions. Consequently, Western histories of Islamic theology, particularly treating this very important debate, has been less than accurate and less than adequate.

[1345] *EI¹* 1:303, 306 s.v. Allāh by D.B. Macdonald.

[1346] Gimaret, *Dieu à l'image*, 14.

[1347] For references and discussion see ibid. 189-227

[1348] *EQ* 1: 106 s.v. Anthropomorphism by Richard C. Martin; van Ess, *TG* 4: 376ff.

[1349] A good example being the discussion by J.M.S. Baljon, "Qur'anic Anthropomorphisms," *Islamic Studies* 27 (1988): 119-127. MacDonald said also regarding the qur'ānic anthropomorphism: "we are not to regard (them) as due to an anthropomorphic theology but rather as the still plastic metaphor of a poet. To speak technically, we have here only *madjāz*; *tadjsīm* and *tashbīh* lay with the future exegetes (*EI¹* 1:302 s.v. Allāh)." And more recently van Ess, "The Ḳur'ān is by intension strongly transcendentalist; it does not, however, avoid anthropological language as a symbolic reference to God's actions and qualities…But all the passages involved had a primarily metaphorical meaning (*EI²* 10:342 s.v. Tashbīh wa-Tanzīh)." See also Rcai Dogan, "Metaphorical Expressions in the Prophet Muhammad's Hadith," in *Metaphor, Canon, and Community: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Approaches* (New York: P. Lang, 1999): 162-179; Baljon, "Qur'anic Anthropomorphisms"; Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, 1. 2:35.

Studies treating Islamic anthropomorphism are relatively few.[1350] Nor do Western scholars agree on the place of anthropomorphism in the history of Islamic thought. Helmut Ritter argued that a morphic diety was for Islamic orthodoxy "ein greuel."[1351] According to Gardet, "The 'orthodox' schools...practiced *tanzīh*, i.e., they denied God any resemblance to anything; He is neither body nor substance (*djawhar*, in the sense of bounded substance), nor accidents, nor is He localized, etc."[1352] More recently, Binyamin Abrahamov, one of the few scholars today writing at any length on the subject, noted that "the anthropomorphists...were a minority among Muslim scholars."[1353] W. Montgomery Watt too claimed that, "At an earlier period the main body of Muslims came to regard the Mushabbiha (anthropomorphists)...as unorthodox."[1354] But at an even earlier, I guess "pre-orthodox" stage, Watt suggests that "crude anthropomorphism" was a "widespread" trend.[1355] Such a suggestion was made already by Tritton,[1356]

[1350] *EQ* 1: 103-107 s.v. Anthropomorphism by Richard C. Martin;, *EQ* 2:316-331 s.v. God and His Attributes by Gerhard Böwering; Van Ess, *TG* particularly vol. 4; idem, "Tashbīh wa-Tanzīh," *EI²* 10: 341-344; idem. "The Youthful God: Anthropomorphism in Early Islam"; Daniel Gimaret, *Dieu à l'image de l'homme: les anthropomorphismes de la sunna et leur interprétation par les théologiens*; Claude Gilliot, "Muqātil, Grand Exégete, Traditionniste Et Théologien Maudit," *JA* 179 (1991): 39-84; *EI¹* 4:685-687 s.v. Tashbīh by R. Strothmann; Allard, Michel. *Le probl°eme des attributs divins dans la doctrine d'al-As'ar͵i et de ses premiers grands disciples* (Beyrouth, Impr. catholique; 1965); Ritter, *Das Meer Der Seele*, 445-503 (=Ritter, *The Ocean of the Soul*, 448-519); Kees Wagtendonk, "Images in Islam: Discussion of a Paradox" in Dirk van Der Plas (ed.), *Effigies Dei* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987) 112-129; Baljon, "Qur'anic Anthropomorphisms"; W. Montgomery Watt, "Some Muslim Discussions of Anthropomorphism" and "Created in His Image: A Study in Islamic Theology," in his *Early Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 86-93, 94-100; and Binyamin Abrahamov, *Anthropomorphism and Interpretation of the Qur'ān in the Theology of Al-Qasīm Ibn Ibrahim*; idem, *Al-Kāsim b. Ibrāhīm on the Proof of God's Existence*, 25ff; Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology* , 1.2:27-47.

[1351] Ritter, *Das Meer Der Seele*, 439 (=*The Ocean of the Soul*, 453, their translated as "abomination.")

[1352] *EI²* 1:410f. s.v. Allāh by Gardet.

[1353] Binyamin Abrahamov, "The *Bi-la Kayfa* Doctrine And It's Foundations In Islamic Theology," *Arabica*, 42 (1995): 369.

[1354] *EI²* 1:333 s.v. 'Akīda by W.M. Watt.

[1355] Watt, "Created in His Image," 96ff.

[1356] He notes: "From earliest Islam there had been a strong preference...to take these descriptions literally. It was said that God, when he grows angry, grows heavier and the throne groans under his weight like a camel saddle. Others explained that it was the throne that grew heavier, not God." A.S. Tritton, *Revelation And Reason In Islam*, (London: George Allen & Anura Ltd., 1957), 21. See also idem, *Muslim Theology*, 48; "...these men (anthropomorphists) did not form a school, indeed many of them belonged to the Shi'a; and it is a mistake to say...that they were a reaction against the Mu'tazila. They are one of the many facets of early Islam, one of the attempts to give a reasoned statement of the faith."

Moore,[1357] and Wensinck.[1358] Goldziher attributed this "crude anthropomorphism" to

the orthodox itself,[1359] while Martin suggests that "in the emerging orthodoxy of the late

Umayyad period anthropomorphic conceptions of God must have been well

established."[1360] Shiblī Nu'mānī tried to rectify these seemingly contradictory

observations by positing a quite detailed evolutionary development, worth quoting in full:

> In the first stage (of the development of Islamic theology) God is held to be corporeal,
> seated on the Throne, possessing hands, feet and face. God set His hand on the shoulder
> of Muhammad and the Prophet felt that it was cold. In the second stage God is still held
> to be corporeal, having hands and face and legs, but all these are not like ours. In the
> third stage God is conceived to have neither body, hands nor face. Such words in the
> Qur'ān have not the real meaning at all but are metaphorical and allegorical. God is
> Hearer, Seer, and Knower but all these attributes are in addition to His quiddity (*māhiya*).
> In the fourth stage God's attributes are neither identical with His essence nor alien to it (*lā
> 'ayn wa lā ghayr*). In the fifth stage God's essence is absolutely simple. In it there is no sort
> of multiplicity whatever. His essence is Knowing, Seeing, Hearing, Powerful, etc. In the
> sixth and last stage God is conceived of as Absolute Existence, i.e., His existence is His
> very quiddity. This takes the form of the Oneness of Existence (*Waḥdat ul Wujūd*), where
> we arrive at the point where philosophy and Sufism meet. It must not be supposed that
> these stages represent a chronological order in which the later superseded the earlier.
> Representatives of the different points of view were contemporaneous and still are.[1361]

With all of its complexity and detail, Josef van Ess, who has paid the most attention to

the issue, finds such a schema too simplistic.[1362] He admits that, at an early stage

---

[1357] George Moore, *History of Religion* (New York: Charles Schribners & Sons, 1947), 419: "The common
idea of God was crudely anthropomorphic. Taking the words of the Koran in their natural sense, men
imagined God sitting upon a throne in heaven, a being with hands and feet, eyes and ears; a body,
therefore, and some doctors of repute did not hesitate to say a body of flesh and blood."

[1358] Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 106.: "In reality such 'extremes' as the Djabrites, Sifatites and
anthropomorphists were not sects at all, but the remnants of early orthodoxy, who were branded as sects
because the new orthodoxy took a different turn from theirs."

[1359] Goldziher *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, 92: "Orthodoxy would not agree to any but a literal
understanding of the anthropomorphic and anthropopathic expressions of the Qur'an and the traditional
texts. God sees, hears, is moved to anger; He smiles, sits and stands; He even has hands, feet, ears. Such
matters, to which there are frequent references in the Qur'an and other texts, must be understood
according to the letter. The Hanbalite school in particular fought for this crude conception of God, which
they consider *sunna.*."

[1360] *EQ* 1:5 s.v. Anthropomorphism by Richard C. Martin.

[1361] Shiblī Nu'mānī, *'Ilm al-Kalām*, quoted in Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, 13.

[1362] Van Ess, "The Youthful God: Anthropomorphism in Early Islam," 2: "It would be too simple to
pretend that Islam started with anthropomorphism and then gradually grew to adulthood and progressed to
a more sublime concept of God: this would not do justice to the complexity of the development. Islam, in its

"(a)nthropomorphism was not a heresy…and it was not sectarian: it was part of Muslim 'orthodoxy,'"[1363] but this 'orthodox' anthropomorphism will not survive the "onslaught of the Mu'tazilīs."[1364] Even though the latter would end their career early and as heretics, their notion of *tanzīh* shaped Islamic theology till today, and so ultimately won, at least on that point.[1365] In the meantime, 'orthodox Sunnism' had to 'readjust its fronts.' According to van Ess, the latter too would adopt this God "der anders ist, nicht menschenähnlich."[1366]

8.1.1. Classical Muslim Authors on Anthropomorphism

Western accounts of Islamic anthropomorphism are largely dependent on the classical Muslim doxographers, particularly Shahrastānī (1086-1153). In his ***Kitāb al-Milal wa 'l-Nihal***, Shahrastānī noted that the community's division into a myriad of sects was based on four fundamental issues, the first of which was the question of the Attributes (*Sifāt*) or the nature of God.[1367] According to Shahrastānī the *Salaf* or 'pious ancestors' affirmed the Attributes and were thus called *Sifatīya*. "All of them followed the literal meaning of the Qur'ān and *sunna*."[1368] Later, Shahrastānī changed his position as to the manner in which the early Muslims understood the Attributes.

> Some later thinkers went beyond what the early leaders had said, maintaining that the
> Attributes must be understood literally and explained just as they had been revealed,

---

first generations, expanded with unprecedented speed and thus inherited many different spiritual traditions. Anthropomorphism, then, only formed one alternative among others."

[1363] Ibid., 5.

[1364] *EI²* 10:343 s.v. Tashbīh wa-Tanzīh by Josef van Ess.

[1365] As van Ess observes regarding the Mu'tazila: "their theology in this respect shaped Islamic identity until today." *EI²* 10:343 s.v. Tashbīh wa-Tanzīh; idem, *Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 75. D.B. Macdonald (*EI¹* 1:306, s.v. Allāh) therefore did not fully grasp the situation on the ground when he wrote: "With only a little ingenuity in one-sidedness an absolutely anthropomorphic deity could be put together, or a practically pantheistic, or a coldly and aloofly rationalistc (deity). The only impossibility, as the Mu'tazilites found in the end, was a *fainéant God*, a stripped, abstract idea."

[1366] Van Ess, , *TG* 4:417.

[1367] Muḥammad Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-Milal wa 'l-Nihal*, translated by A. K. Kazi and J. G. Flynn in *Muslim Sects and Divisions* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1984), 11.

[1368] Ibid., 26.

without any attempt to interpret them or hesitation in accepting them literally. These fell into pure anthropomorphism, which was contrary to what the early leaders believed.[1369]

We note that Shahrastānī previously affirmed in the Introduction that "the Orthodox were called *Ṣifatīya*...All of them followed the literal meaning of the Qur'ān and Sunna." The *Ṣifatīya* are here divided into three groups, the Ash'arites, the *Mushabbiha* (Likeners or Anthropomorphist) and the Karrāmiyya.[1370] The *mushabbiha* or Anthropomorphists are not orthodox, but a "group of [excessive] Shī'ites *(jamāʿa min al-shīʿa al-ghāliya)*...and a group of (crass) Traditionalists *(jamāʿa min aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth al-ḥashwiyya)*".

> According to them God has a form and possesses limbs and parts which are either spiritual or physical. It is possible for him to move from place to place, to descend and ascend, to be stationary and to be firmly seated.[1371]

Shahrastānī dismisses these anthropomorhisms as "lies" invented and added to the religion. Thus, Shahrastānī is equivocal. It is not clear from his account whether the *Salaf* understood the *Ṣifāt al-Akhbār* (Qur'ān or ḥadīth reports on the Attributes) literally or otherwise. He says specifically though of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Dāwūd b. 'Alī al Isfahānī, Muqatīl b. Sulaymān, and other "orthodox leaders" that they "took a safe path," refusing to interpret the verses and denying God any resemblance to created beings.[1372]

Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406), in his ***Muqaddimah***[1373] likewise attempted to account for the anthropomorphism of the early Muslims. Like Shahrastānī before him, Ibn Khaldun cleared the *Salaf* of such heresies, attributing them instead to "a few innovators."

> The early Muslims gave preference to the evidence for God's freedom (from human attributes), because it was simple and clear. They knew anthropomorphism is absurd....But there were a few innovators in their time who occupied themselves with the ambiguous verses and delved into anthropomorphism. One group operated with the plain meaning of the relevant verses. They assumed anthropomorphism for God's essence, in that they believed that He has hands, feet, and a face. Thus they adopted a

---

[1369] Ibid., 78.

[1370] On the Karrāmiyya see *EI¹* 4:773-774 s.v. Karrāmiyya by D.S. Margoliouth; *EI²* 4:667-669 s.v. Karrāmiyya by C.E. Bosworth; idem, "The Rise of the Karrāmiyya in Khurasan," *MW* 50 (1960): 5-14.

[1371] Shahrastani, 89.

[1372] Ibid, 88.

[1373] Translated by Franz Rosenthal (New York:Pantheon Books, 1958) 3:46ff.

clear anthropomorphism and were in opposition to the verses stating that God is devoid (of human attributes)…(The anthropomorphists) then tried to escape from the anthropomorphic abomination by stating that (God has) "a body unlike (ordinary human) bodies…

Another group turned to anthropomorphism with regards to the attributes of God. They assumed direction, sitting, descending, voice, letter (sound), and similar things (for God). Their stated opinions imply anthropomorphism. Like the former group they took refuge in statements such as: "A voice unlike voice"; "a direction unlike directions"; "descending unlike descending." By that, they meant: "(not as those things are used) in connection with (human) bodies." [1374]

Both Shahrastānī and Ibn Khaldūn describe these early "anthropomorphists" as "innovators", few in number, and outside the makeup of the main, orthodox body of Muslims. It is undoubtedly such accounts that lie behind Western characterizations of anthropomorphism as "a grave sin in dogma" [1375] and the "anthropomorphists" as having early been confined to the margins of the faith. W.M. Watt therefore very minimally and superficially treats anthropomorphism in his ***The Formative Period of Islamic Thought***. But this raises a methodological question: to what extent can such late accounts be relied upon to tell the story of theological development during the formative period? Both of our classical authors were Ashʿarīs whose aversion towards anthropomorphism is well known. We suggest that, while not totally uninformative, these classical accounts must be read in concert with earlier sources, even non-Ashʿarī sources. When this is done, a different picture of Islam's early courtship with anthropomorphism emerges.

Aziz Al-Azmeh, in his "Orthodoxy and Hanbalite Fideism," noted that "Islam, still indeterminate in the first century, might under different conditions have developed into an anthropomorphism."[1376] Our study of sources attesting to a tradition of theophany and *Visio Dei* in Islam suggests that Islam at one time did 'develop into an anthropomorphism.' When Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, whose dogmatic creed will become the Shibboleth of Sunnī orthodoxy for centuries, mandated belief in the literal meaning of *ḥadīth al shābb* – a dogmatic position that itself will characterize traditionalist Sunnism –

[1374] Ibid., 46-47.

[1375]*EI¹* 4:685f s.v. Tashbīh by R. Strothmann.

[1376]A. Al-Azmeh, "Orthodoxy and Hanbalite Fideism," *Arabica* 35 (1988): 263 [art.=253-266].

Islam, at least traditionalist Sunnī Islam, was "an anthropomorphism." Al-Azmeh correctly observes:

> When asked whether one may transmit a *ḥadīṯ* authenticated by no less than Qatāda after 'Ikrima after Ibn 'Abbās, which related of the Prophet his statement that he saw God in the shape of a young man, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal readily declared that one may, given the authority of the transmission. Can we agree with the Ḥanbalite position that such a statement has no anthropomorphic intension when it is not subjected to an allegorical interpretation...It is not reasonable to make a statement whose lexical sense is anthropomorphic, yet interdict both allegory and anthropomorphism...It comes (then) as no surprise to us that, given the interdiction of allegory and insistence on literalness, streetcorner religiosity purveyed an anthropomorphic Allah.[1377]

We have shown that such views were not confined to the streetcorner: the learned theologian al-Qāḍī Abū Ya'lā proves this point as does his support by the Caliph. Van Ess's observation that "unrestricted anthropomorphism" did not survive the "onslaught of the Mu'tazilīs" is to be rejected also. As we demonstrated previously, the outcome of the Mu'tazilī supported *Miḥna* was the concretizing and centering of anthropomorphism within the proto-Sunnī and Sunnī creed.[1378] This orthodox Sunnī anthropomorphism will be sustained throughout the Formative Period, as evidenced by the various Ḥanbalī and non-Ḥanbalī traditionalist Sunnī creeds that affirmed Muḥammad's visual encounter with Allāh.

8.2. Islamic Anthropomorphism?

The inability on the part of scholars to properly assess the significance of anthropomorphism for the development of Islamic theology is partly the problem of semantics. What does a Western author mean when s/he uses the term "anthropomorphism" in an Islamic context? What did a particular classical Arabic author mean by his use of the term *tashbīh*, most often translated as "anthropomorphism"? Both terms are equivocal and can be used in different, even contradictory contexts (at least the Arabic term). It is this author's opinion that both terms have been used too imprecisely, and as such have had little value in descriptions of

---

[1377] Ibid., 264-265.

[1378] Williams, "Aspects of the Creed," 452-54.

260

theological trends in early Islam. It is primarily this imprecise use of language that has precluded an accurate assessment of Islamic anthropomorphism, thus rendering insufficient current accounts of Islamic theological history.

'Anthropomorphism,' from the Greek *anthrōpos* ("human being") and *morphē* ("form"), generally denotes ascription of human characteristics to a non-human divinity, but particularly and literally means ascribing a human form to God.[1379] Greek philosophers such as Xenophanes (fifth cent. B.C.E.), when criticizing the much too human Homeric deities, initially used the term and its derivatives contemptuously.[1380] This connotation of contempt remains effective even today. Implied in the term is a sense of "false" ascription of human characteristics or form to a "non-human," indeed "non-material, spiritual" entity.[1381] The problem with this term in this context is that it more often than not is made to bear the burden of signifying all ascriptions of human likeness to God. Thus, human emotions, thoughts, and actions, properly *anthropopathism* and *anthropopoiesis*, are subsumed under the designation anthropomorphism. The net effect of this subsumption is that discussion of the alleged "form" of God, the main point of the term 'anthropo*morphism*,' is often de-emphasized.[1382] By reducing the discussion to anthropopoiesis and anthropopathisms, i.e. ascription of human "ways and feelings" to God, the whole discussion of anthropomorphism proper is derailed: certainly the scriptures could not have *really* meant to depict God "as a disarmingly familiar figure who acts in ways that often seem improbable for a divinity if not outrightly inappropriate."[1383] As James Barr observed, rationalistic thought takes offense to such descriptions of God as jealous, disgusted, regretful, etc., and in pointing out the metaphoric value of such statements, the real significance of the anthropomorphisms proper, which are now

---

[1379] *ER* 1:316f s.v. Anthropomorphism by R.J.Z. Werblowsky.

[1380] Ibid.

[1381] Ibid. 1: 317.

[1382] Barr, "Theophany and Anthropomorphism," 31.

[1383] Stern, "*Imitatio Hominis*," 151.

261

"lumped in" with these anthropopathisms but whose context often requires a different hermeneutic, is obscured.[1384]

This same obscuration is operative in Western treatment of the Arabic *tashbīh* - even more so. The verbal form *sh-b-h* means literally "to liken (s.o. or .s.t. to s.o/t. else)," thus *shibh* "similar to," *shabah* "likeness, resemblance," and *tashbīh* "assimilation/making similar." This term is not used in the Qur'ān except once, in reference to the death of Jesus (4:157). Now, Muslim theologians of all eras and persuasions were unanimous in regarding *tashbīh*, that is to say, "likening God to creation," as condemnable. The problem is, in many cases *tashbīh* does not mean, and *must not* be translated as, "anthropomorphism"; some of Islam's, we would say "crudest" anthropomorphists, have been as adamant against *tashbīh* as the anti-anthropomorphists "transcendentalists," (*munazzihūn*).[1385] In fact, taking the history of Islamic discourse on the issue into consideration, it is desirable that scholars discontinue the ready translation of *tashbīh* by anthropomorphism, as such a practice inhibits our understanding of the nuances involved in the discussion.

At the heart of this semantic issue is the nature and degree of the "likeness" posited or prohibited: absolute likeness vs. only relative likeness. Ibn Taymīyya argued that the term *tashbīh* can denote a proper degree of likeness between Creator and created (i.e. relative likeness), and it can also denote an improper degree of similarity (absolute likeness) whose disallowance is mandatory.[1386] This nuance is most clearly articulated by the Ḥanafī *qāḍī* Ibn Abī al 'Izz (d. 1390) in his *Sharh al-'aqīda al-Ṭaḥāwīya*. Ibn Abī al 'Izz begins by noting that the term *tashbīh* had become with the people "rather vague (*lafz mujmal*)."[1387] He too suggests that there is an improper *tashbīh* prohibited by the Qur'ān wherein an identity is posited between Creator and created, and a proper or allowable *tashbīh* wherein only a general or limited correspondence is posited. Whoever

---

[1384] Barr, "Theophany and Anthropomorphism," 31.

[1385] See below.

[1386] Ibn Taymīyya *Dar' ta'āruḍ al-'aql wa al-naql*, 10 vols. (ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim; Riyāḍ, 1979) 1:115f, 248f. See also Sherman Jackson's discussion, "Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial in Damascus," *JSS* 39 (1994): 51ff [art.=41-84].

[1387] Ibn Abī al 'Izz, *Sharh*, 1:57 (=*Commentary*, 23).

denies the latter is as guilty as he who affirms the former: "It is clear...that the Creator and the created are similar in some respects and differ in others (*ittifāquhumā min wajhi wa ikhtilāfuhumā min wajh*). And whoever denies what is common between them is a negator and is surely mistaken. On the other hand, whoever makes them homogeneous (*mutamāthilayn*) is a *mushabbih* and is equally mistaken. And Allah knows best. That is because, even though they are called by the same name, they are not *identical (mā ittafaqā fīhi*)."[1388] Ibn Abī al 'Izz demonstrates this correspondence by citing qur'ānic verses wherein man is called by the names of God (e.g. 30:19, *ḥayy*; 51:28, *'alīm*, ect.). He argues that these are not mere homonyms, such as *mushtarī* (which means both buyer and the planet Jupiter), similar in name only; the attributes of God and man share a common element denoted by the term.[1389] They differ in that God's are attributes of perfection (*Ṣifāt al-Kamāl*), whereas man's comprise imperfections.[1390]

It is necessary to explore this argument deeper because it is in this author's opinion crucial to understanding the whole "anthropomorphism" debate. For, though the above arguments come from later scholars, the sources strongly suggest that the same logic was employed by the early traditionalist Sunnī scholars as well. As noted above, *tashbīh* is not used in the Qur'an in reference to God. Instead, the pivotal verse wherein God's otherness is most forcefully and (it would seem) clearly articulated, *sūrat al-Shūrā* [42]:11 (*Laysa kamithlihi shay'*), uses a different root *m-th-l*, "to be like, compare," *mithl* "similar, image" *tamthīl* "assimilation, likening." This verse is said to reject "all anthropomorphism." [1391] However, a review of the exegetical history of this verse reveals that in fact this verse was first employed by advocates of anthropomorphism.[1392] It was

---

[1388] Ibn Abī al 'Izz, *Sharh*, 1:62 (=*Commentary*, 27).

[1389] Ibn Abī al 'Izz, *Sharh*, 1:63 (=*Commentary*, 28).

[1390] Ibn Abī al 'Izz, *Sharh*, 1:93ff (=*Commentary*, 44ff). The definite article used with God's attributes is probably germane here, e.g. *Al-'Amīn* (God) vs. *'amīn* (the Prophet).

[1391] Abdoldjavad Falaturi, "How Can a Muslim Experience God, Given Islam's Radical Monotheism," in Annemarie Schimmel and Abdoldjavad Falaturi (edd.), *We Believe In One God: The Experience of God in Christianity and Islam* (New York: Seabury Press), 78.

[1392] Van Ess, *TG* 4:378; Gilliot, "Muqatīl," 57. According to Ahmad b. Hanbal, in his *Ar-Radd*, 96, Jahm b. Safwan (d. 746) was the first to use this verse in an anti-anthropomorphist manner.

still in their service in Ibn al-Jawzī's time.[1393] This seems quite amazing. What is it about *Laysa kamithlihi shay'* that lent itself to the exegetical needs of reputed anthropomorphists?

The answer to this riddle lies in the grammar of the verse, which could be read in two ways. Syntactically, the *ka* could be read as a syndetic relative cause (*sila*) added for emphasis, in which case the reading would be something like, "There (really) is nothing like Him." If the *ka* is taken as a non-expletive, however, it would then read, "There is nothing like (*ka*) His likeness (*mithlihi*)." As Ibn al-Jawzī noted, "taken literally (*ẓāhir*) these words indicate that God has a *mithl*, which is like nothing and like which there is nothing."[1394] Ibn al-Jawzī cites this verse as one of the proof-texts of the so-called anthropomorphists. They obviously took the *mithl* here anthropomorphically. But how so? The *mithl* of Q 42:11 was probably understood in these circles as a reference to God's form, *ṣūra*, which term is a synonym of *mithāl*.[1395] His *mithl*, 'likeness,' Ibn al-'Arabī claims, is Adam, the Perfect Man (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*).[1396] Adam was made "according to the *ṣūra/mithāl* (form/image) of God" according to a prophetic tradition[1397] and he appeared to Muḥammad in an *aḥsan ṣūra* according to other reports.[1398] God's *aḥsan ṣūra*, most beautiful form was exegetically associated with Adam's *aḥsan taqwīm*, "most beautiful stature" (95:4) and both with God's *ṣūra* according to which Adam was made.[1399] Adam's "most beautiful stature" and God's "most beautiful form" are therefore identical, at least in those circles so inclined. These exegetes might even have solicited the aid of *sūrat al-Naḥl* 60: *lillāhi 'l-mathal al-'alā*.[1400] God's "highest likeness (*al-mathal al-a'lā*)" here could

---

[1393] *Kitāb Akhbār al-Ṣifāt*, 29 (Arabic), 148 (English).

[1394] Ibid.

[1395] Lane, *Arabic~Lexicon*, s.v. صورة.

[1396] On Ibn al-'Arabī's '*al-Insān al-Kāmil*' see John T. Little, "*Al- Insān al-Kāmil*: The Perfect Man According to Ibn al-'Arabī," *MW* 77 (1987): 43-54.

[1397]Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ, al-jannat wa ṣifat na'īmihā wa ahlihā*, #6809; Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad¹*, 2:315; idem, *Musnad²*, 13:504, # 8170.

[1398] See above.

[1399] Ibn Hanbal, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 59 quoted above.

[1400] For a discussion of this verse and its relation to 42:11 see Ibn Abī al 'Izz, *Sharḥ*, 1:63 (=*Commentary*, 44)

conceivably be identified with His incomparable *mithl* of Q 42:11, and then with His anthropoid *ṣūra.*

Others have taken the *ka* as an expletive and read "There is nothing like Him." Even so, the verse was not necessarily understood in such a way as to preclude an anthropomorphist theology. Understanding this verse to prohibit only absolute likeness, but allow for relative likeness between Creator and creature, allowed one to both disavow *tamthīl/tashbīh* and affirm an anthropoid form for God.[1401] The qur'ānic context in fact seems to indicate that a denial of anthropomorphism was not what the verse necessarily intended. "And the blind and the seeing are not alike (*mā yastawī* 35:19)." The verbal root used here, *s-w-y*, denotes "equality, sameness, to be equivalent." The man who can see (presumably the truth of revelation) is contrasted with the man who cannot. It is certainly not to be inferred that one of the men is embodied while the other is not. The difference, that which constitutes their "unlikeness" or "otherness," lies elsewhere. Likewise, 33:32 "O wives of the Prophet, you are not like (*ka*) any other women." Whether or not the difference lies in the other women's lower order of merit, as Goldziher thought, it is clear that there is no polemic here against anthropomorphism.[1402]

Harry Wolfson argued that the early, "pre-Mutazilite" Muslims applied the legal principle of analogy (*qiyas*) to this theological argument, allowing partial similarity between man and God while rejecting a complete or total identity.

> The explanation that naturally suggested itself to them (the early Muslims) was that the likeness which is implied in the anthropomorphic verses in the Koran is not to be taken to mean a complete likeness in every respect but that the likeness which is explicitly prohibited in the Koran is to be taken to mean a complete likeness in every respect…in their attribution to God these terms are only in some respect like the same terms when attributed to men; in all other respects there is no likeness between them. It is noted, however, that they do not try to explain in what respect they are unlike (*sic*). They are quite satisfied with the simple assertion that the likeness implied is not a likeness in every respect.[1403]

[1401] Van Ess, *TG* 4:378: „Sie alle zweifelten wohl nicht daran, daß sie den Koran auf ihrer Seite hatten. Das *laisa ka-miṯlihi šai'* (Sure 42:11), das man ihnen spatter immer wieder entgegenhielt, brauchte sie nicht zu schrecken; dieser Schranke war schon mit der Festellung einer relativen Verschiedenheit Gott von seiner Schöpfung und den ‚Dingen' Genüge getan. "

[1402] Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, 93.

[1403] Harry A. Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Kalam* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976) 14-15.

8.3. Transcendent Anthropomorphism

A denial of *tamthīl* or *tashbīh* (or *siwan, ka, kuf*) is therefore not necessarily a denial of anthropomorphism, God in the form of a man. The same expression ('there is none like him') was used for anthropomorphic deities prior to the qur'ānic revelation. It was found already in ancient Egyptian temple inscriptions of the Ptolemaic period.[1404] In this context, it meant neither that nothing was similar to God in any way nor did it presuppose monotheism. It meant simply that there is no other god like that god. Likewise, Second Isaiah's theologically important dictum, "To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with me" (40:18-20)," is no rejection of anthropomorphism[1405]; rather it "is meant to show the inferiority of man-made idols," and this in the specific sense of immovability and unshakeability.[1406] Indeed, the very same formulas used to describe Yahweh's incomparability ("Who is like [*mî kᵉ*]; "there is none like ['*ên kᵉ*]"") is similarly used to describe the incomparability of men and Israel: "Who is like (*mî kᵉ*) the wise man? (Eccles. 8:1)"; "There is none like him (Saul) among all the people (I Sam. 10:24)."[1407] For Israel the dictum of Second Isaiah was not a rejection of anthropomorphism but an affirmation of the paradox of *transcendent anthropomorphism*. As Robert Dentan in ***The Knowledge of God in Ancient Israel*** puts it:

> The particular paradox of belief in an anthropomorphic deity who is nevertheless utterly different from man is related to other paradoxes, and especially to the familiar one which declares that God is both transcendent and immanent, a paradox of which Israel was fully aware. She knew...that God was both like man, and yet entirely different from him.[1408]

This paradox was recognized in Muslim circles as well. Regarding the Islamic dictum Van Ess observed, "The statement (Q 42:11) did not decide the question whether

---

[1404]Ederhard Otto, *Gott und Mensch nach den ägyptischen Tempelinschriften der griechich-römischen Zeit* (Heidelberg, 1964) 11ff.

[1405] On anthropomorphisms in Second Isaiah see J. Kenneth Eakins, "Anthropomorphisms in Isaiah 40-55," *Hebrew Studies* 20-21 (1979-1980): 47-50.

[1406] Paul Trudinger, " 'To Whom Then Will You Liken God?' (A Note on the Interpretation of Isaiah XL 18-20)," *VT* 17 (1967):220, 224.

[1407] See C.J. Labuschagne's study, *The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament* (POS 5; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966).

[1408] (New York: The Seabury Press, 1968) 152.

dissimilarity between God and man was absolute or relative…Why should not the intention of the Quranic verse not be satisfied when God is merely considered to be different, perhaps by his dimensions, or by the matter He is composed of, or by the consistency of the matter?"[1409] Van Ess is not being rhetorical here. Islam's most notorious anthropomorphists, Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 767) and Dāwūd al Jawāribī, said of their flesh and blood deity, "Nothing is like Him nor is He like anything else."[1410] How is He different? "*bi-qudra*," ("in power") said Muqatīl.[1411] Or, as Abū Tammām's "Nābita" believed, *huwa shay' lā ka 'l-ashyā' min jihat al-qidam* ("He is a being unlike beings in respect of sempiternity.")[1412] These early Muslim exegetes thus saw no problem harmonizing their anthropomorphism with the qur'anic affirmation that there is none like Him. They coined the early formula, *jism lā ka 'l-ajsām*, "a body unlike bodies."[1413] Muqātil b. Sulaymān said:

> God is a body in the form of a man, with flesh, blood, hair and bones. He has limbs and members, including a hand, a foot, a head, and eyes, and He is solid. Nonetheless, He does not resemble anything else, nor does anything resemble Him.[1414]

Later Muslim theologians interpreted this verse in a similar fashion. Muḥammad b. Sa'dun, better known as Abū Amir al-Qurahī (d. 1130), famous Andalusian theologian, said:

> The heretics cite in evidence the Qur'an verse 'Nothing is like Him,' but the meaning of this verse is only that nothing compared to God in His divinity. In form, however, God is like you and me.[1415]

[1409] Van Ess, "The Youthful God," 3.

[1410] Al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, ed. Helmut Ritter (Istanbul, 1929-33), 209.

[1411] Muqatīl b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, 4 vols. (ed. Mahmud Sahata; Cairo: al-Hay'a, 1980-88), 3:465.

[1412] Wilferd Madelung and Paul Walker, *An Ismaili Heresiography: The "Bāb al-Shayṭān" from Abū Tammām's* Kitāb al-shajara (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 63 (Arabic).

[1413] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 3 vols., trans. by Franz Rosenthal (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), 3:45ff.; Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Kalam* 5ff.

[1414] Al-Ash'ari, *Maqalat al-*Islamiyyin, 152f. On Muqatīl see further Claude Gilliot, "La Théologie Musilmane en Asie Centrale et au Khorasan," *Arabica* 49 (2002): 138-140 [art.=135-203]; idem, "Muqatīl"; Isaiah Goldfeld, "Muqatīl Ibn Sulaymān," in Jacob Mansour (ed.), *Arabic and Islamic Studies* Vol. II (Ramat: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1978); *EI²* 7: 711-12 s.v. Al-Muḳātīl B. Sulaimān by M. Plessner

[1415] Cited by Goldziher, *Introduction*, 93.

Maimonidees, in his ***Moreh Nebukim*** (w. ca. 1190), makes reference to "people," presumably Muslims according to Harry A. Wolfson[1416] who "came to believe that God has the form (*ṣūrah*) of man, that is to say, man's figure and shape…maintaining that, if they did not conceive of God as a body possessed of a face and a hand similar to their own figure and shape, they would reduce Him to non-existence. However, He is, in their opinion, the greatest and most splendid (of bodies) and also His matter is not flesh and blood."[1417] We can in fact identify patricians of such a tradition. One hails from 10th century Khurasan, Ibn Khuzayma (d. 924), the most prominent Shāfiʿī in Nishapur at the time. In his ***Kitāb al-tawḥīd wa-ithbāt ṣifāt al-Rabb*** the "chief of the traditionalists (*raʾs al-muḥaddithīn*)" takes up the charge that the traditionalists were "likeners (*mushabbiha*)" because they affirmed the literal meaning of the *Ṣifāt al-Akhbār*. Discussing their affirmation that God truly has a face (*wajh*), against the "ignorant Jahmiyya" who claim that God's face in the Qurʾān is really His essence (*dhāt*), Ibn Khuzayma writes:

His face is that which He described with splendor (*jalāl*) and venerability (*ikrām*) in His statement, "The face of your Lord remains, possessor of Splendor, Venerability." (God) denied that it perishes (*nafy ʿanhu al-halāk*) when His creatures perish. Our Lord is exalted above anything from His essential attributes (*min ṣifāt dhātihi*) perishing…God has affirmed for Himself a Splendid and Venerable face, which He declares is eternal and non-perishable. We and all scholars of our *madhhab* from the Hijaz, the Tihama, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt affirm for God (the) face, which He has affirmed for Himself. We profess it with our tongues and believe it in our hearts, without likening (*qhayr an nashabbiha*) His face to one from His creatures. May our Lord be exalted above our likening Him to His creatures…Listen now, O you who understand what we mentioned regarding the manner of speaking common among the Arabs (*jins al-lugha al-sāʾira bayn al-ʿarab*): Do you apply the name *mushabbiha* to the people of narrations and followers of the Sunna? We and all our scholars in all our lands say that the one we worship has a face…And we say that the face of our Lord (radiates) a brilliant, radiant light (*al-nūr wa al-ḍiyāʾ wa-bahāʾ*) which, if His veil is removed the glory of His face will scorch everything that sees it. His eyes are veiled from the people of this world who will never see Him during this life…The face of our Lord is eternal …

Now God has decreed for human faces destruction and denied them splendor and venerability. They are not attributed the light, brilliance or splendor (*al-nūr wa al-ḍiyāʾ wa-bahāʾ*) that He described His face with. Eyes in this world may catch human faces without the latter scorching so much as a single hair…Human faces are rooted in time (*muḥdatha*) and created…Every human face perishes…Oh you possessors of reason (*dhawā al-ḥijaⁿ*), could it ever really occur to any one with sense and who knows Arabic and knows what

---

[1416] *Philosophy of the Kalam*, 102-3.

[1417] *Moreh*, I, I, p. 14, 11.5-II, translated by Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Kalam*, 102-103.

tashbīh (means) that this (transient and dull human) face is like that (splendidly brilliant face of God)?[1418]

Ibn Khuzayma here adamantly argues for God's possession of a true face, but one dangerously radiant and non-perishable, in contrast to man's perishable and dull face: transcendent anthropomorphism. He asks, in short, 'Can one who acknowledges these differences be charged with *tashbīh*?' Certainly not according to the language of the Arabs! We have again both the affirmation of anthropomorphism and this disavowal of *tashbīh*.

This tradition of disavowing *tashbīh* while concomitantly affirming for God an anthropoid form was not confined to the margins of Islam's theological thought. The evidence suggests that it was the common position among the traditionalists and (proto-) Sunnis. We cite for example the oft-quoted statement by the traditionalist Nu'aym b. Ḥammād (d. 843) from Marv: "Whoever makes *tashbīh* of God to His creation has committed *kufr*. And whoever denies what God has described Himself with has also committed *kufr*. Indeed, all that God has described Himself with, or what His messenger has described Him with, there is no *tashbīh* in it at all."[1419] Now according to al-Suyūṭī Nu'aym was one of the eminent Imāms (*al-a'imma al-a'lām*) of his day and a martyr of the *Miḥna*.[1420] He was known, and by some criticized, for his transmission of what is undoubtedly the most unabashedly anthropomorphist report of Umm al-Ṭufayl wherein God is said to have appeared to Muḥammad in the form of a young man with long hair, green garment and gold sandals.[1421] Nu'aym had a reputation of being a "fervent defender" of the "most vigorous form of Sunni doctrine."[1422] It is thus unlikely he applied the Mu'tazilī method of *ta'wīl* to it. In light of this, how does one understand his above declaration that "all that God has described Himself with, or what His messenger has described Him with, there is no *tashbīh* in it at all"? We could probably answer this question by examining a colleague of Nu'aym, the "patron saint of the traditionalists" Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.

[1418] Ibid., 10f, 22f.

[1419] On Nu'aym b. Ḥammād see above.

[1420] Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-La'ālī*, 29.

[1421] See above.

[1422] *EI²* 7:87 s.v. Nu'aym b. Ḥammād by Ch. Pellat.

We have elsewhere demonstrated that Ibn Ḥanbal quite unequivocally was an anthropomorphist in the strict sense: he was adamant about God's anthropoid form.[1423] To deny it is *kufr*.[1424] The same description of God as a young man with curly hair Ibn Ḥanbal put in his creed: accepting these descriptions literally (*'alā ẓāhirihi*) is incumbent upon all Muslims.[1425] Ibn Ḥanbal was, if you will, "a true blue" anthropomorphist. Yet, he disavowed *tashbīh* in no uncertain terms. When asked about the statements of the *mushabbiha*, Ibn Hanbal is said to have replied: "He who says 'sight like my sight, hand like my hand, foot like my foot, then he likens God to His creation, and this limits Him, and this is evil speech which I do not like."[1426] It is also reported that he was asked: "Our Lord is not similar to anything from His creation (and) one does not compare Him to anything from His creation?" to which he replied: "Yes, there is none like Him (*Na'm. Laysa kamithlihi shay'in*)."[1427]

According to Ibn Ḥanbal Q 42:11 was from among the *mutashābihāt* or ambiguous verses thereby requiring explanation,[1428] and a proper explanation did not preclude an anthropoid deity. It was, says Ibn Ḥanbal, Jahm b. Safwān (d. 746) who first used this verse in an anti-anthropomorphist manner.[1429] But Creator and creature do differ. How so? In a telling remark, Ibn Ḥanbal accuses the radically anti-anthropomorphist Jahmiyya of *tashbīh* for likening God to man by denying that His speech was eternal.

> You have, by this assertion, likened Allah to His creatures for, according to your belief, there was a time when He did not speak. So are the sons of men, who could not speak until He created speech for them. This is *kufr* and *tashbīh* together. Far be it from Allah! We say the opposite: Allah was always the speaker when He wished. We do not maintain that He was without speech until He created it; nor do we say that He was without

---

[1423] Williams, "Aspects of the Creed."

[1424] Ibn Hanbal declared, "He who says that Allah created Adam according to the form of Adam (as opposed to God's form), he is a Jahmi (disbeliever)." Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt*, I:309.

[1425] Ibn Hanbal, *'Aqīda III*, *apud* Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Tabaqat*, I:246; idem, *'Aqīda V*, *apud* Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Tabaqat*, I:312

[1426] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar' al-ta'arud* 1:256.

[1427] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar' al-ta'arud* I:256.

[1428] Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Radd* 20.

[1429] To support his doctrine of God as "an invisible spirit." Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Radd*, 20.

knowledge until He created it; nor do we say that He was without power, light or might until He created them for Himself.[1430]

Contrary to God's creatures, which had to wait for him to create their speech, God was never without this ability. While both God and man speak with a real voice,[1431] God had his speech from eternity. Most significant is the accusation against the Jahmiyya of *tashbīh*. The Mu'tazilite Abū 'l-Husain al-Khaiyāt, in his ***Kitāb al intiṣār***, even labeled Jahm b. Ṣafwān "the *imām* of the *mushabbiha*."[1432] His sin was apparently that he likened God's knowledge of things to man's by his claim that God knows things only after those things come into existence. There is no way one could translate *tashbīh* here as "anthropomorphism." As Gimaret points out, "that which characterizes the Gahmiyya is fundamentally...their anti-anthropomorphism."[1433] Jahm could not tolerate the embodied God of his traditionalist contemporaries.[1434] None would thus accuse him of *anthropomorphism*; "assimilation," maybe, "anthropomorphism (*stricto sensu*)," impossible. This highlights the point we have been making: the term *tashbīh* is vague and nuanced enough as to preclude any ready translation as "anthropomorphism." One could not only disavow *tashbīh* while affirming an anthropoid form for God, as with Muqatil and Ibn Ḥanbal, but one could also disavow the latter and still be guilty of the former, as with Jahm.

[1430] Ibn Hanbal, *Radd*, 36f.

[1431] 'Abd Allah b. Ahmad said: "I asked my father about a people who say: 'When Allah spoke to Musa he didn't speak with a voice.' And my father said: 'Rather, your Lord indeed spoke with a voice. Theses *hadīth* we report them as they came." He says also: "My father said (from Ibn Mas'ūd): 'When Allah spoke a voice is heard like the dragging of iron chains on stones.' My father said: 'This the Jahmiyya deny." 'Abd Allah, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, I:280 #533, #534.

[1432] *Le Livre du triomphe* (ed. H. S. Nyberg; Cairo 1925) 133.

[1433] Gimaret, *Dieu à l'image* 28. On the Jahmiyya see further Gilliot, "La Théologie Musilmane," 137-138; Muhammad Tahir Mallick, "The Traditionists and the Jahmiyya," *Hamdard Islamicus* 3 (1980):31-45; Abdus Subhan, "Al-Jahm bin Sawan and His Philosophy," *IC* 11 (1937): 221-227.

[1434]Wilfred Madelung ("The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran" in his *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* [London: Variorum Reprints, 1985], V:505f) noted that the Jahmiyya assertion of a created Qur'ān "constituted an attack on the anthropomorphic...God of traditionalist Sunnism" and "the insistence of the traditionalists that God truly speaks is part of their general defense of an anthropomorphic and personal concept of God."

In light of this, how are we to understand Strothmann's claim that "Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal has become the great orthodox authority against *tashbīh*."[1435] Is Strothmann claiming Ibn Ḥanbal as an authority against (totally) *assimilating* God to man, which the Imām indeed seems to have been; or as an authority against *anthropomorphism*, believing God to have an anthropoid form, however unlike that of man's? The latter claim, which seems to be Strothmann's intent, is untenable in light of our review of the sources testifying to Ibn Ḥanbal's creed. Strothmann was probably following the lead of Henri Laoust whose article on the Imām in ***Encyclopedia of Islam*** [First Edition] he cites. There, the danger of an uncritical rendering of *tashbīh* is clear. Laoust noted: "Ibn Ḥanbal…rejects the negative theology (*ta'ṭīl*) of the D̲j̲ahmiyya and their allegorizing exegesis (*ta'wīl*) of the Ḳur'ān and of tradition, and no less emphatically rejects the anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*) of the Mus̲h̲abbiha, amongst whom he includes…the D̲j̲ahmiyya as unconscious anthropomorphists."[1436] We should clearly see here the inappropriateness of conflating *tashbīh* and anthropomorphism. Ibn Ḥanbal affirmed the latter (i.e. anthropomorphism), but rejected the former (*tashbīh*); and he accused the Jahmiyya of the former (*tashbīh*), but not the latter (anthropomorphism).[1437]

It is because of this uncritical and inappropriate conflation of anthropomorphism and *tashbīh* that an accurate account of Islam's theological struggle over the issue of God's attributes has yet to be written. This is not to say that *tashbīh* never has the meaning of anthropomorphism in the sources. It certainly does. But this has to be determined by the context.[1438] A more critical reading of Islam's theological history would make plain the tenuousness of Watt's claim that "At an earlier period the main body of Muslims came to

---

[1435] *EI¹* 4:686 s.v. Tas̲h̲bīh by R. Strothmann.

[1436] *EI¹* 1:275 s.v. Aḥmad B. Ḥanbal by Henri Laoust.

[1437] He in fact accuses Jahm of introducing into Islam the doctrine of God as "an invisible spirit." Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Radd*, 20.

[1438] For example, al-Baghdādī (*Uṣūl al-dīn*, 74, l. 14-p. 75) clearly has anthropomorphism in mind when he criticizes the *mushabbihūn*: (The *mushabbihūn*) said: 'We likened Him to man's image because of His saying, may He be exalted: "surely We created man in the most beautiful creation (95:4)".' They said: 'The most beautiful creation is a creation in the image of God.' Also they brought forth as proof the saying of the prophet, may god bless him and give him peace: 'God created man in His (own?) image.' And they brought as a proof for His having organs His saying: 'The face of your Lord does last (55:27)' and 'I created by my hands (38:75).' And (it is said) in a tradition: 'the Omnipotent put His foot in fire.' And they related: 'The believer's heart is between two of God's fingers.'

regard the Mushabbiha (anthropomorphists)…as unorthodox."[1439] *Tashbīh* unquestionably was regarded as 'unorthodox', but this by anthropomorphists as well as others. The evidence indicates that anthropomorphist theologies played a much more significant role in the development of the Islamic creed than Watt's near exclusion of them from consideration in his ***The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*** would suggest. An adequate history of Islamic theological development must take these theologies more seriously.

A most fitting way to conclude our discussion of anthropomorphism, *visio Dei*, and traditionalist Sunnism is with a ḥadīth reported by al-Suyūṭī in his ***al-Laʿālīʿ al-maṣnūʿa fī al-aḥādīth al-mawḍuʿa***.[1440] The ḥadīth is narrated by Abū Saʿādāt, a student of the Ḥanbalī al-Tabarānī (d. 971). It is transmitted via ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad from his father, Ibn Ḥanbal and is a *Hadīth Qudsī* traced back to the Prophet via ʿIkrima < Ibn ʿAbbās. We are told that Allāh descends every Friday night to the lower world (*dār al-dunyā*) with sixty thousand angels and sits on a throne of light. Before him is a blackboard made of rubies on which is written the names of those members of the Prophet's community who "affirm the Vision (*al-Ruʾya*), the Manner [of it; *al-Kayfiya*] and the [Divine] Form (*al-Ṣūra*)." Allāh is proud of these pious affirmers before the angels and says: "These are My servants who do not deny Me. They keep the Sunna of My prophet and don't fear the critic's censure (*lawmat lāʾim*) regarding Allāh. I affirm to you, O angels, by My might and glory I will admit them into Paradise with no reckoning (*ḥasāb*)." Here Allāh himself is made to say specifically that Sunnism is defined by the affirmation of his anthropomorphic theophany. There is no doubt that, at least for the Ḥanbalī's transmitting this report, *al-Ruʾya* here includes both the believers' Beatific Vision in Paradise as well as Muḥammad's *visio Dei* in this world. Those who affirm anthropomorphic theophany despite the criticism of the (no doubt) *mutakallimūn* are guaranteed unobstructed entry into Paradise. This report is clearly a later fabrication: traditionalist Sunnīs and their theological adversaries are already entangled in dispute. Nevertheless, it has value as a traditionalist self-definition of its own *ʿaqīda*. This ḥadīth

---

[1439] *EI²* 1:333 s.v. ʿAkīda by W.M. Watt.

[1440] 1:26-27.

succinctly makes the point we have argued in Chapter VII, but even more so: central to the traditionalist Sunnī *'aqīda* is Allāh's anthropomorphic theophany.

Chapter IX:

Conclusion

We have argued in this dissertation that:

1.] Neither the Hebrew Bible nor the Qur'ān unambiguously present the Divine as invisible and (therefore) non-theophanous. In the case of the HB, God is most certainly neither. The God of Israel appears to individuals and (occasionally) groups as a divine *anthropos*, either in glory (the *kābôd*-theophany), *incogniti* (the *mal'āk*-theophany), or veiled behind a dark cloud (the pillar of cloud-theophany). Yahweh is unseen, not because he is invisible, but because it is dangerous for mortals in their impurity to look on him in his holiness, a holiness manifest morphically as a dangerously radiant divine body. Passages such as Exod. 33:18-23 and Deut. 4:12 are not affirmations of divine invisibility, but qualifications on divine visibility. Sinful man standing in the (visual) vicinity of God's radiant holiness will be consumed and die. To protect Israel from this natural consequence of the theophanic encounter Yahweh veils his luminosity in a dark cloud, out of which he speaks, or a mortal 'appearing' human form (*mal'āk*).

2.] The biblical prophetic call narrative is a subset of the theophany narrative, and as such involves an initial theophany. At least two prophetic-call types are clearly distinguished in the HB: one involving an encounter with God enthroned in his luminous glory (Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1), often amidst his divine council (Isaiah 6 and 40); the other involving God *incogniti*, unassuming and therefore unrecognized (Exodus 3; Judges 6), sometimes seeming like a mortal human himself (Judges 6). While it is not easy to form-critically place the calls of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1) and Samuel (1 Samuel 3), both involved a theophany.

3.] The qur'ānic/Islamic affirmation of prophetic/revelatory continuity with biblical tradition suggests, *a priori*, that Islam possesses a tradition of theophany and *visio Dei* not unlike that of the Bible's. Though currently Islamic and (Western) Islamicist tradition

275

generally deny this, a closer look at the relevant qur'ānic passages in the light of the biblical and ANE subtexts suggests that Allāh in the Qur'ān, like Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible, is visible and theophanous. Rather than affirming divine invisibility the Qur'ān, like the HB, qualifies divine visibility. Seeing God is fatal because his *jalāl* or luminous majesty is powerful enough to level mountains (Q 7:143). Moses and Israel, like the mountain, are presented as victims of the theophanic encounter (7:143; 2:55-56; 4:153). God thus does not speak to man except from behind a protective veil (42:50). While seeing the veiled God is possible, this mediated seeing (*ru'ya*) does not allow for *idrāk* or the full perception/comprehension of God (6:103).

4.] Allāh in the Qur'ān is theophanous. Both Moses and Muḥammad experienced theophanies (7:143; 53:1-18; 81:23). While Moses fell dumbstruck, a victim of the theophanic encounter, Muḥammad's "eyes swerved not, nor did they exceed the limit (53:17)." This seems to be the qur'ānic basis of the later claim of Muḥammad's superiority over Abraham and Moses on account of his visual experience of God. Q 7:143 and 53:1-18 are therefore actual accounts of theophanies, however much the prophetic responses differed.

5.] Consistent with the biblical call-tradition the qur'ānic allusions suggest that Muḥammad's call involved a throne-theophany, like the Hebrew prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel, not an angelophany. The canonical traditional account of Muḥammad's call describing his inaugural encounter with the angel Jibrīl is clearly secondary, inspired in part by the increasing scandalization of the anthropomorphism implied in the idea of divine visibility.

6.] A defining aspect of the traditionalist Sunnī *'aqīda* or creed for the first four centuries (9th-12th C.E.) was the affirmation of Muḥammad's visual encounter with God. According to the ḥadīth literature 19 + Companions of Muḥammad reported the latter's Vision. The only unambiguous denial is that attributed to 'Ā'isha, wife of the Prophet. The force of this denial is somewhat lost, however, due to the fact that affirmations are also attributed to her. Traditionalist Sunnism for the most part marginalized 'Ā'isha's vehement denial, privileging instead the affirmation of Ibn 'Abbās. Important pillars of (proto-)Sunnism, such as al-Ḥasan al- Baṣrī (d. 728), Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 855), al-Ash'arī (d. 935) and al-Qāḍī Abū Ya'lā (d. 1066) affirmed the Vision; the latter three explicitly

affirming Muḥammad's vision of the youthful deity. Indeed, belief in this youthful, anthropomorphic epiphany characterized the traditionalist Sunnism of the Ḥanābila, the main representatives of Sunnī orthodoxy from the ninth through the twelfth centuries. In effect, Islam, at least traditionalist Sunnism, was during this period "an anthropomorphism," to use al-Azmeh's terminology.

In 1967 historian of religion-turned-Islamicist Charles Adams lamented the fact that, on his reading, Islam is "extraordinarily, one may say perversely, impervious" to history-of-religions analysis.[1441] According to Adams, "the mainstream of Islamic tradition," by which he means traditionalist Sunnism, is povertous in mythological expression. While Ṣūfism and Shī'ism enjoy a 'richness of symbolic expression,' the juridical-theology of Sunnism is "markedly rationalistic in self-expression and determinedly iconoclastic."[1442] This is certainly true of modern articulations of Islam, but our study has shown that the juridical-theology of classical traditionalist Sunnism was quite rich in mythological expression and this expression is consistent with the biblical and ANE mythic tradition. The discovery of this lost tradition of theophany and *visio Dei* in Islam and its rich mythological content evinces an Islam that is squarely within the tradition of 'Oriental monotheism,' that Semitic monotheism anchored in the ANE mythic tradition.[1443] This study therefore offers more optimistic prospects for a history-of-religions analysis of Islam.

[1441] Charles J. Adams, "The History of Religions and the Study of Islam," in Joseph M. Kitagawa, Mircea Eliade and Charles Long (edd.), *The History of Religions: Essays on the Problem of Understanding* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1967) 177-193.

[1442] Ibid., 182-183.

[1443] On Israelite/biblical tradition and ANE myth see Howard Schwartz, *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), lxiii; Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (New York: Oxford, 2003).

Bibliography

Primary Arabic Sources:

'Abd Allāh b. 'Abī. *Al-Kāmil fī ḍu'afā' al-rijāl*. 7 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1984. 2:670-681, 6:2344.

'Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad. *Kitāb al-Sunna*. Edited by Muḥammad b. Sa'īd b. Salīm al-Qahtanī. 2 vols. Damman: Dār Ibn al-Qayyīm, 1986.

'Abd al-Rahīm, Muḥammad. *Tafsīr al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī*. Cairo: Dār al-Hadīth, 1992.

'Abd al-Rahmān b. 'Alī b. al-Dayba'. *Tamyīz al-ṭayyib min al-khabīth fīmā yadwara 'alā alsinat al-nās min al-ḥadīth*. Egypt: Maktabat wa-Matba'at Muhammad 'Alī Ṣubayḥ, 1963.

'Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ḥimyarī. *al-Muṣannaf*, 12 vols. Johannesburg, South Africa: al-Majlis al-'Ilmī; Beirut: tawzī' al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1983.

Idem. *Tafsīr 'Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ṣan'ānī*. 3 vols. Edited by Mahūd Muḥammad 'Abduh. Beirut: Mansūrāt Muḥammad 'Alī Bayḍūn, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1999.

Abū Bakr b. Fūrak. *Mushkil al-ḥadīth wa-bayānuh*. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Hadītha, 1979?

Idem. *Mujarrad maqālāt al-Ash'arī*. Edited by Daniel Gimaret. Beirut: 1987.

Abū l-Ḥasan-i. Daylamī. *Sīrat-i. shaykh-i. kabīr Abū 'Abd Allāh Ibn-i. Khafīf Shirāzī*. Tehran: Intishārāt-i. Bābak, 1984.

Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī. *A'lām al-nubuwwa*. Edited by Salah al-Sawy. Tehran, 1977.

Abū al-Ma'ālī al-Musharraf b. Murajjā. *Kitāb Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis wa-al-Khalīl wa-Faḍā'il al-Shām*. Editor O. Livne-Kafri. Shfaram, 1995.

Abū Ya'lā al-Mawṣilī. *Musnad Abī Ya'lā al-Mawṣilī*. Edited by Husayn Salim Asad. Damascus: Dār al-Ma'mūn lil-Turāth, 1984-.

Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Al-Radd 'ala 'l-Zanādiqa wa 'l-Jahmīya*. Cairo, 1393 H.

Idem. *Musnad*. 6 vols. Cairo, 1313 H).

Idem. *Musnad*. 30 vols. Edited by Shu'ayb al-Arnā'ut. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1993.

Idem. *Musnad*. Edited by Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir. Egypt: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1949-.

Al-'Ajurī, Abū Bakr. *Al-Sharī'a*. Edited by Muhamma Hāmid al-Fiqī. Cairo: 1950.

'Alā' al-Dīn al-Muttaqī al-Hindī. *Kanz al-'ummāl fī sanan al-aqwāl wa 'l-afʿāl.* 18 vols. Haydar Abād al-Dakan: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniya, 1945.

Al-Ālūsī. *Rūḥ al-ma'ānī fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm wa 'l-sabʿ al-mathānī.* 30 vols. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1980.

Al-Ash'arī. *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn.* Edited by Helmut Ritter. Istanbul, 1929-33.

Idem. *al-Ibāna 'an uṣūl al-diyāna.* Translated by Walter Klein in *The Elucidation of Islām's Foundation.* New Haven: American Oriental Series, 1940.

Al-Baghawī, al-Ḥusayn b. Mas'ūd. *Tafsīr al-Baghawī.* ? vols. Multān: Idārat Tālīfāt Ashrafīyah, 1988? 4: 69-70 (ad *Sūrat al-Ṣad*), 4:244-250 (ad *Sūrat al-Najm*).

Al-Bājūrī, Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad. *Tuḥfat al-murīd 'alā Jawharat al-tawḥīd.* Būlaq: al-Ma'ba'ah al-'Āmirah, 1864.

Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-asrāf.* Edited by Muḥammad Hamīdullah. Cairo, 1959.

Al-Barbarharī. *Sharḥ kitāb al-sunna, apud* Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila.* Edited by Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fīqī. 2 vols. Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sunna al-Muḥammadīya, 1952. 2:18-43.

Al-Bayḍāwī. *Anwār al-Tanzīl w'Asrār al-Ta'wīl.* Cairo, 1353 AH.

Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Asma' wa al-Ṣifāt,* 2 vols. Edited by 'Abd Allah b. Muhammad al-Hashidi. Jidda: Maktaba al-Suwādī, 1993.

Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ.* Translated by Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khān. Beirut: Dār al- 'Arabia, 1985.

Al-Dāraquṭnī, 'Alī b. 'Umar. *Kitāb al-ru'ya.* Edited by Ibrāhīm Muḥammad al-'Alī and Aḥmad Fakhrī al-Rifā'ī. Zarqā' (Jordan). 1411/1990.

Al-Dārimī, 'Abd Allah b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān. *Sunan al-Dāramī.* 2 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2000.

Al-Dārimī, 'Uthmān b. Sa'īd. *Naqḍ al-Imām Abī Sa'īd 'Uthmān b. Sa'īd 'alā al-Marīsī al-Jahmī al-'anīd.* 2 vols. Riyāḍ: al-Mamlaka al-'Arabīya al-Sa'ūdīya: Maktaba al-Rushd: Sharikat al-Riyāḍ, 1998.

Idem. *al-Radd 'alā l-Jahmiyya.* Cairo, 1985.

Al-Dhahabī. *Mīzān al-i'tidāl fī naqd al-rijāl.* ? vols. Cairo: 'Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1963-. 1:590-594 (s.v. Ḥammād b. Salamma), 3:473-475 (s.v. Muḥammad b. Isḥāq), 4: 267-270 (s.v. Na'īm b. Ḥāmmad).

Idem. *Tartīb al-mawḍūʿāt*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīya, 1994.

Idem. *al-Siyar*. 19 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1996. 8: 430-

Idem. *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-ʿIlal al-mutanāhīya li-Ibn al-Jawzī*. Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd : Sharikat al-Riyāḍ, 1998.

Al-Faḍl b. Shādhān. *Al-Īḍāḥ*. Tihrān, 1972.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*. ?vols. Edited by ʿAbd Raḥmān Muḥammad. Egypt: Maṭbaʿa Bahīya al-Miṣrīya, 1934-62? 28:276-294 (ad *Sūrat al-Najm*)

Al-Farāhīdī, Rabīʿ b. Ḥabīb. *Al-Jāmīʿ Ṣaḥīḥ*. 4 vols. Cairo, n.d.

al-Ghazzālī, *Miskāt al-Anwār*. Translated by W.H.T. Gairdner in *al-Ghazzālī's Miskāt al-Anwār ("The Niche for Light")*. London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1924.

Idem. *Fayṣal al-Tafriqa*. Translated by Sherman A. Jackson in, *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam. Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī's* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002]

Ibn ʿAbbās, ʿAbd Allāh. *al-Isrāʾ wa al-Miʿrāj*. Beirut, 1983.

Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim. *Al-Sunna*. 2 vols. Riyāḍ: Dār al-Ṣumayʿī, 1998. 1:306-328.

Idem. *Al-Āḥād wa al-mathānī*. Riyāḍ, 1991.

Ibn Abī al-Ḥaddid. *Sharḥ nahj al-balāghah*. Cairo: ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1959-. 3:223-238.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm: musnadan ʿan Rasūl Allāh wa-al-ʿaḥābah wa-al-tābiʿīn* (ed. Asʿad Muḥammad al-Ṭayyib; Makkah al-Mukarramah, al-Mamlakah al-ʿArabīyah al-Saʿūdīyah; al-Riyāḍ: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1997)

Ibn Abī al ʿIzz. *Sharḥ al-ʿaqīda al-Ṭaḥāwīya*. 2 vols. Edited by ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin. Beirut, 1408/1987. Translated by Muhammad ʿAbdul-Haqq Ansari in *Commentary on the Creed of aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī by Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz*. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 2000.

Ibn Abī Shaybah. *Al-Kitāb al-muṣannaf fī al-aḥādīth wa-al-āthār*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīya, 1989.

Ibn Abī Yaʿlā. *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*. Edited by Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fīqī. 2 vols. Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Sunna al-Muḥammadīya, 1952.

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī. *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*. Ṭihrān: Maktabat al-Būzarjumahrī Muṣṭafavī, 1955.

Ibn Baṭṭa. *al-Ibāna*. Edited and translated by Henry Laoust in *La Profession de foi d'Ibn Baṭṭa*. Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1958.

Ibn al-Faqīh. *Kitāb al-Buldān*, Editor M.J. de Goeje. Leiden, 1855.

Ibn Fāris, Aḥmad. *Magāyīs al-luġa*. 6 vols. Edited by A.M. Harūn. Cairo, 1969-1972.

Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqalānī. *Kitāb Tahdhīb "al-Tahdhīb."* 12 vols. Ḥaydrābād al-Dakan: Maṭbaʿat Majlis Dāʾirat al-Māʿarif al-Niẓāmīya, 1907-1909.

Idem. *Fatḥ al-Bārī bi-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīya, 1989.

Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī. *Al-Fatāwā al-ḥadīthīya*. Egypt: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1970. 147-149.

Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrat rasūl Allāh*, trans. A. Guillaume in *The Life of Muhammad* (Lahore, Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 1967),

Ibn al-Jawzī. *Kitāb al-mawḍūʿāt min al-aḥadīth al-marfūʿāt*. Riyāḍ: Maktaba Adwāʾ al-Salaf, 1997. 1:162-182.

Idem. *Daf Shubah al-tashbīh bi-akaff al-tanzīh*. ʿAmmān: Dār al-Imām Nawawī, 1991

Idem. *Kitāb Akhbār al-Ṣifāt*. Edited and Translated by Merlin Swartz in *A Medieval Critique of Anthropomorphism: Ibn al-Jawzī's* Kitab Akhbār aṣ-Ṣifāt, *a Citical Edition of the Arabic Text with Translation, Introduction and Notes*. Leiden: Brill, 2002.

Idem. *Tablīs Iblīs*. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1995.

Idem. *al-Muntaẓam fī tārikh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam* 6 vols. Hyderbad, 1358/1940.

Ibn Kathīr. *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm*. 8 vols. Riyāḍ: al-Mamlakah al-ʿArabīyah al-Saʿūdīyah: Dār Ṭibah, 1997-.

Idem. *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Abridged Translation under the supervision of Shaykh Safiur-Rahman al-Mubarakpuri. ? vols. Riyadh: Darussalam, 2000.

Idem. *Al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*. 14 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1985.

Ibn Khaldun. *The Muqaddimah*. 3 vols. Translated by Franz Rosenthal. New York: Pantheon Books, 1958.

Ibn Khuzayma. *Kitāb al-tawḥīd wa-ithbāt ṣifāt al-Rabb*. Edited by Muḥammad Khalīl Harrās. Cairo: 1968.

Ibn Qayyīm al-Jawzīya. *Zād al-maʿād fī hady khayr al-ʿibād*. 6 vols. Beirut, Lebanon:

Manshūrāt Muḥammad 'Alī Bayḍūn, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1998. 3:25-30.

Ibn Qutayba. *Kitāb ta'wīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth.* Translated into French by Gérard Lecomte in *Le Traité des Divergences du Ḥadīt d'Ibn Qutayba.* Damas: Institut Français de Damas, 1962.

Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Khabīr,* Eng. Trans. by S. Moinul Haq and H.K. Ghazanfar (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1967).

Ibn Taymīya. *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawīya* .Cairo,1964.

Idem. *Al-Qawl al-Aḥmad fī bayān ghalāt man ghaliṭa 'alā al-Imām Aḥmad.* Riyāḍ: Dār al-'Āṣimah, 1998.

Idem. *Dar' ta'āruḍ al-'aql wa 'l-naql.* 10 vols. Edited by Muḥammad Rashād Sālim. Riyāḍ: 1979.

Idem. *Majmū'at al-rasā'il al-kubrā.* Cairo: al-Sharafiyya, 1905.

'Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr. *Al-Kāmil fī'l-ta'rīk.* Edited by C. J. Thornberg. Leiden: Brill, 1851-1876.

Al-Jāḥiẓ. *Rasā'il al-Jāḥiẓ.* 4 vols. Edited by 'Abd al-Salam Muḥammad Harūn. Cairo: Maktabāt al-Khanjī, 1964-1979.

Khaldūn Aḥdab. *Zawā'id Tārīkh Baghdād 'ala al-kutub al-sittah.* ? vols. Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1996. 6:251-253, 8: 37-40.

Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī. *Ta' rīkh Baghdād.* 14 vols. Cairo, 1931.

Al-Kulaynī, Muhammad b. Ya'qūb. *Al-Kāfī fī 'Ilm al-dīn.* 8 vols. Edited by 'Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī. Ṭihrān, 1955-. 1:95-109.

Al-Lālikā'ī. *Sharḥ uṣūl i'tiqād ahl l-sunna wa l-jamā'a.* 2 vols. Riyāḍ, 1985. 2:512-523.

Al-Mubārakfūrī. *Tuḥfa al-aḥwadhī bi sharḥ jāmi' al-Tirmidhī,* 10 vols. Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1979. 9:99-108, 165-174.

Al-Māturīdī, Abū Manṣūr. *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd.* Edited by Fathalla Kholeif. Beirut: Dar El-Machreq Éditeurs, 1970.

Muhammad Bāqir b. Muhammad Taqī al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār.* ? vols. Ṭihrān: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 196?-1970. 3: 304-.

Muḥammad b. 'Imrān al-Marzubānī. *Kitāb nūr al-qabas al-mukhtaṣar.* Fīsbādin: Dār al-Nashr Frāntis Shitāyinir, 1964-.

Muḥammad al-Qurṭubī. *Al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*. Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīya, 1967.

Al-Muqaddasī. *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*. Edited by M.J. de Goeje. Leiden, 1906.

Muqatīl b. Sulaymān. *Tafsīr*, 4 vols. Edited by Mahmud Sahata. Cairo: al-Hay'a, 1980-88.

Muslim. *Ṣaḥīḥ* [English]. New Delhi: Kitāb Bhavan, 1994.

Al-Nasāʾī. *Sunan Kubra*. 6 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīya, 1991.

Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 11 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1994. 2:6-20.

Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī. *Kitāb majmaʿ al-baḥrayn fī zawāʾid al-muʿjamayn*. Riyāḍ: Maktabāt al-Rushd, 1992. 366-374.

Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār. *Faḍl al-iʿtizāl*. Edited by Fuʾād Sayyid. Tunis, 1974.

al-Qadī Abū Yaʿlā, *Kitāb al-Muʿtammad fī uṣūl al-dīn*. Edited by Wadi Z.Haddad. Beirut: Dar El-Machreq Éditeurs, 1974.

Qārī al-Harawī. *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*. ? vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1992. 9:619-637.

Idem. *Kitāb jamʿ al-wasāʾil fī sharḥ al-shamāʾil*. Istānbūl: Maʿbaʿat Shaykh Yaḥyá, 1874.

Idem. *Sharḥ Kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīyah, 1995.

Al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm. *Kitāb al-Mustarshid*. Edited and translated by Binyamin Abrahamov in *Anthropomorphism and Interpretation of the Qurʾān in the Theology of Al- Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996.

Idem. *Kitāb al-Dalīl al-Kabīr*. Edited and translated by Binyamin Abrahamov in *Al-Kāsim B. Ibrāhīm on the Proof of God's Existence*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990.

al-Qāsimī, Jamāl al-Dīn. *Tafsīr al-Qāsimī al-musammā maḥāsin al-taʾwīl*. Cairo: Dār Aḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabīya, 1957-60. 15:5553-5570 (ad *Sūrat al-Najm*)

al-Shahrastani, M. *Kitab al-Milal wa ʾl-Nihal*. Translated by A. K. Kazi and J. G. Flynn in *Muslim Sects and Divisions*. London: Kegan Paul International, 1984.

Al-Suyūṭī. *Tafsīr al-Durr al-manthūr fī al-tafsīr al-māthūr*. ? vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1983. 7:201-206 (ad *Sūrat al-Ṣad*), 7:640-652 (ad *Sūrat al-Najm*)

Idem. *al-Laʿālīʿ al-maṣnūʿa fī al-aḥādīth al-mawḍuʿa*. Egypt: al-Maktaba al-Tijārīya al-Kubrā, 196?

Idem. *al-Khaṣā'iṣ al-kubrā aw kifāyat al-ṭālib al-labīb fī khaṣā'iṣ al-ḥabīb.* Edited by Muḥammad Khalīl Harrās. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, 1967.

Al-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Muʿjam al-kabīr.* Baghdād: al-Dār al-ʿArabīyah lil-Ṭibāʿah, 1978.

Idem. *Al-Muʿjam al-kabīr.* Cairo: Maktaba Ibn Taymīyya, n.d.

Al-Tabarī. *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān.* Egypt: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1954-1968. 27:40-58 (ad *Surat al-Najm*).

Idem. *The History of al-Ṭabarī.* Translated by W. Montgomery Watt and M. V. McDonald. New York: State University of New York Press, 1988.   .

Al-Ṭabarsī. *Majmaʿ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān.* Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1986. 9: 258-268 (ad *Surat al-Najm*).

Al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn. *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān.* ? vols. Beirut: s.n., 1970-. 19: 25-37 (ad *Surat al-Najm*).

Al-Taftāzānī, *A Commentary of the Creed of Islam: Saʾd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī on the Creed of Najm al- Dīn al-Nasafī.* Translated by Earl Edgar Elder. New York: Columbia University Press, 1950.

Al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ al-Saḥīḥ, apud* al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuḥfa al-aḥwadhī bi sharḥ jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī,* 10 vols. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1979), 9: 166f.

Wajdī, Muḥammad Farīd. *Al-Qurʾān al-Mufassar.* Cairo, 1903.

al-Wāsiṭī. *Faḍāʾil Bayt al-Muqqadas.* Editor I. Hasson. Jerusalem 1978

Al-Zamakhsharī, Muḥammad b. ʿUmar. *al-Kashshāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl wa-ʿuyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-taʾwīl.* ? vols. Riyad: Maktabat al-ʿUbaykān, 1998. 5:633-641 (ad *Surat al-Najm*).

Secondary Sources:

Aalders, G. CH. "The Theophanies in the Old Testament." *Free University Quarterly* 8 (1962): 3-15.

Abd-Allāh, Umar F. "The Perceptible and the Unseen: The Qurʾanic Conception of Man's Relationship to God and Realities Beyond Human Perception." In Spencer J. Palmer (ed.), *Mormons & Muslims: Spiritual Foundations and Modern Manifestations.* Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 2002. 153-204.

Abdel Haleem, M.A.S., "Grammatical Shift for Rhetorical Purposes: 'iltifat' and Related Features in the Qurʾan." *BSOAS* 55 (1992): 407-432.

Abdul Hakim, Khalifa. *Islamic Ideology*. Pakistan: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1993.

Abrahamov, Binyamin. "The *Bi-la Kayfa* Doctrine And It's Foundations In Islamic Theology." *Arabica*, 42 (1995): 365-379.

Idem. *Anthropomorphism and Interpretation of the Qur'ān in the Theology of Al- Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996.

Idem. *Al-Kāsim B. Ibrāhīm on the Proof of God's Existence*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990.

Idem. " 'Abbāb ibn Sulaymān on God's Transcendence, Some Notes." *Der Islam* 71 (1994): 109-120.

Idem. "Fabr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the Knowability of God's Essence and Attributes." *Arabica* 49 (2002): 204-230.

Abu Bakar, Ibrahim. "The Qur'ān and the Beatific Vision in Muslim Rationalist and Traditionalist Theologies." *Hamdard Islamicus* 27 (2004): 55-61.

Accad, M. "Corruption and/or Misinterpretation of the Bible: The Story of the Islâmic Usage of *Tahrīf*." *Theological Review* 24 (2003): 67-97.

Adams, Charles J. "Qur'ān: The Text and Its History." *ER* 11:156-176.

Adams, Edward. "The 'Coming of God' Tradition and its Influence on New Testament Parousia Texts." In Charlotte Hempel and Judith M. Lieu (edd.), *Biblical Traditions in Transmission: Essays in Honour of Michael A. Knibb*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006. 1-19.

Ahmed, Ziauddin. "A Survey of the Development of Theology in Islam." *IS* 11 (1972): 93-111.

Akao, J.O. "Yahweh and the Mal'ak in the Early Traditions of Israel." *Irish Biblical Studies* 12 (April, 1990): 73-85.

Idem. "Biblical Call Narratives: An Investigation onto the Underlying Structures." *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 8D (1993): 1-11.

Idem. "The Burning Bush: An Investigation of the Form and Meaning in Exodus 3 and 4." Ph.D dissertation, Glasgow University, 1985.

Allard, Michel. *Le probl°eme des attributs divins dans la doctrine d'al-As'ar,i et de ses premiers grands disciples*. Beyrouth, Impr. catholique; 1965

Alsup, John E. *The Post-Resurrection Appearance Stories of the Gospel Tradition. A history-of-tradition analysis With Text-Synopsis*. Sturrgart: Calwer Verlag, 1975.

Idem. "Theophany in the NT," *IDBSup*, 898-900.

Altmann, A. "The Ladder of Ascension." In *Studies in Mysticism and Religion presented to Gershom G. Scholem on his Seventieth Birthday by Pupils, Colleagues and Friends.* Jeruslem: Magnes Press, 1967. 1-33.

Anawati, Georges C. "Attributes of God: Islamic Concepts." In *ER* 1:513-519.

Anawati, G.-C. and Louis Gardet. *Mystique Musulmane.* Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1976.

Andrae, Tor. "Die legenden von der berufung Muḥammeds," *Le Monde Oriental* 6 (1912): 5-18

Idem. *Die person Muhammeds in lehre und glauben seiner gemeinde.* Stockholm: P.A. Vorstedt og söner, 1918.

Idem. "Muḥammad's Doctrine of Revelation." *MW* 23 (1933): 252-71.

Idem. *Mohammed: The Man and His Faith.* New York :Harpers & Row Publishers, 1936.

Arbel, Daphna. *Beholders of Divine Secrets: Mysticism and Myth in the Hekhalot and Merkavah Literature.* Albany, NY.: State University of New York Press, 2003.

Archer, John Clark. *Mystical Elements in Mohammed.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1924.

Arkoun, Mohammed. "The Notion of Revelation: From *Ahl al-Kitāb* to the Societies of the Book." *Die Welt des Islams* 28 (1988): 62-89.

Armstrong, Karen. *A History of God: the 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.* New York: A.A. Knopf, 1993.

'Athamina, Khalil. "Al-Qasas: Its Emergence, Religious Origin and Its Socio-Political Impact on Early Muslim Society." *SI* 76 (1992): 53-74.

Attridge, Harold W. "The Philosophic Critique of Religion under the Early Empire." *ANW* 16 (1980): 45-78.

Al-Azmeh, A. "Orthodoxy and Hanbalite Fideism." *Arabica* 35 (1988): 253-266

Ayoub, Mahmoud M. *The Qur'ān and its Interpreters.* 2 vols. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984.

Baker, Dwight. "Islam and the Judaeo-Christian Tradition: The Significance of Qur'anic and Biblical Parelles (sic)." *Bangalore Theological Forum* 14 (1982): 44-68.

Baljon, J.M.S. "Qur'anic Anthropomorphisms." *Islamic Studies* 27 (1988): 119-127.

Idem. " 'To Seek the Face of God' in Koran and Ḥadîth." *Acta Orientalia* 21 (1953): 254-266.

Balogun, Ismail A.B. "Relation between God and His Creation: Revelation and Authority in Islam." In Hans Koechler (ed.), *The Concept of Monotheism in Islam and Christianity. Papers of the International Symposion organized in Rome, Italy, 17-19 November 1981, under the patronage of H. R. H. Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan by the International Progress Organization*. Vienna, Austria: Wilhelm Brau, 1982: 71-85.

Baltzer, Klaus. "Considerations Regarding the Office and Calling of the Prophet," *HTR* 61 (1968): 567-581.

Idem. *Biographie der Propheten*. Neukirchen-Vluyn; Neukirchen Verlag, 1975.

Bamford, Christi Dianne. "Seeing God in the Hebrew Bible: The Name, the Glory, and the Messenger," unpublished Masters thesis, University of Georgia, Athens, 2001

Bar, Shaul. *A Letter That Has Not Been Read: Dreams in the Hebrew Bible*. Monographs of the Hebrew Union College 25; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2001.

Idem. 'Dreams in the Bible.' PhD dissertation. New York University, 1987.

Bar-Ilan, Meir. "The Hand of God: A Chapter in Rabbinic Anthropomorphism," in Gabrielle Sed-Rajna (ed.), *Rashi 1040-1990 Hommage à Ephraïm E. Urbach: Congrès européen des Études juives* (Paris: Patrimoines, 1993) 321-335.

Barnes, Michel René. "The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity: Mt. 5:8 in Augustine's Trinitarian Theology of 400," *Modern Theology* 19 (2003): 329-355.

Barr, James. "Theophany and Anthropomorphism in the OT," *VTSup* 7 (1960): 31-38.

Idem. "The Symbolism of Names in the Old Testament." *BJRL* 52 (1969): 11-29.

Baudissin, W.W.Graf. " 'Gott schauen' in der attestamentlichen Religion," *ARW* 18 (1915): 173-239.

Bayhom-Daou, Tanima. "The Second-Century Šī'ite Ġulāt: Were They Gnostic?" *JAIS* 5 (2003): 13-61.

Bell, Richard. "Muhammad's Visions," *MW* 24 (1934): 145-154.

Idem. "Mohammed's Call," *MW* 24 (1934), 13-19.

Idem. "Muhammad and Previous Messengers." *MW* 24 (1934): 330-340.

Idem. "Muhammad's Knowledge of the Old Testament." In C.J.M. Meir (ed.), *Presentation Volume to William Barron Stevenson*. Glasgow: Glasgow University Oriental Society, 1945. 1-20.

Idem. *A Commentary on the Qur'ān.* 2 vols. Manchester: University of Manchester, 1991.

Idem. *Introduction to the Qur'ān.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1953.

Idem. *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment.* London, 1926.

Bencheikh, Jamel Eddine. *Le Voyage Nocturne de Mahomet.* Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1988.

Idem. "Miʿrādj: In Arabic Literature." *EI²* 7:100-103.

Berg, Herbert. *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins.* Leiden: Brill, 2003.

Berge, Kåre. *Reading Sources in a Text. Coherence and Literary Criticism in the Call of Moses.* Sankt Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1997.

Berkey, Jonathan P. *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Berkovits, Eliezer. "The Paradox of the Encounter," in idem, *God, Man and History in Jewish Interpretation* (New York: Jonathan David, 1959): 31-39.

Berquist, J.L. "Prophetic Legitimation in Jeremiah." *VT* 39 (1989): 129-139.

Bevan, A.A. "Mohammaded's Ascension to Heavean," in *Studien zur Semitischen Philologie und Religionsgeschichte Julius Wellhausen zum 70. Geburtstag.* Giessen: Vormals J. Ricker, 1914. 51-61.

Beyerlin, Walter. *Origins and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Traditions.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965.

Bianchi, Ugo. "Origen's Treatment of the Soul and the Debate Over Metensomatosis." *Origeniana quarta* (1985): 270-280.

Billings, Rachel M. "The Problem of the Divine Presence: Source-Critical Suggestions for the Analysis of Exodus XXXIII 12-23." *VT* 54 (2004): 427-444.

Birkland, Harris. *The Legend of the Opening of Muhammad's Breast.* Oslo: I Kommisjon Hos Jacob Dybwad, 1955.

Birnbaum, Ellen. "What Does Philo Mean by 'Seeing God'? Some Methodological Considerations." *SBL Seminar Papers* 34 (1995): 535-552.

Blachère, Régis. *Le Coran: Traduction selon un Essai de Reclassement des Sourates.* 3 vols. Paris, 1947-.

Black, Matthew. "The Throne-Theophany Prophetic Commission and the 'Son of Man'," in Robert Hamerton-Kelly and Robin Scroggs (edd.), *Jews, Greeks and Christians: religious cultures in late antiquity: essays in honor of William David Davies.* Leiden: Brill, 1976. 57-73.

Blanc, Cécile. "Dieu est *pneuma*. Le sens de cette expression d'après Origène." *StPtr* 16 (1985): 224-227.

Block, Daniel I. *The Book of Ezekiel.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997.

Idem. "Text and Emotion: A Study of the 'Corruptions' in Ezekiel's Inaugural Vision (Ezekiel 1:4-28)." *CBQ* 50 (1988): 418-442.

Blum, E. *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte.* WMANT 57; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984.

Bockmuehl, Markus. "'The Form of God' (Phil. 2:6): Variation on a Theme of Jewish Mysticism." *JTS* 48 (1997): 1-23.

Booij, Th."Hagar's Words in Genesis XVI 13B." *VT* 30 (1980): 1-7.

Bostock, D.G. "Quality and Corporeity in Origen." *Origeniana secunda* (1980): 323-337.

Böwering, Gerhard. "From the Word of God to the Vision of God: Muḥammad's Heavenly Journey in Classical Ṣūfī Qur'ān Commentary," in Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi (ed.). *Le Voyage Initiatique en Terre D'Islam* Louvain-Paris: Peeters, 1991. 206f

Idem. "Mi'rāj," *ER* 9:552-556.

Idem. "God and His Attributes." *EQ* 2:316-33.

Bowersock, G.W. "Hellenism and Islam." In idem, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity.* Jerome Lectures 18; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990: 71-82

Bowker, J.W. " 'Merkabah' Visions and the Visions of Paul." *JSS* 16 (1971): 157-173.

Boyarin, Daniel. "The Eye in the Torah: Ocular Desire in Midrashic Hermeneutic," *Critical Inquiry* 16 (Spring 1990): 532-550.

Boyd, W.J. Peter. "The Mystery of God and Revelation." *SJT* 13 (1960): 178-182.

Brichto, Herbert Chanan. "The Worship of the Golden Calf: A Literary Analysis of a Fable on Idolatry." *HUCA* 54 (1983): 1-44.

Brinner, William. M. "Prophets and Prophecy in the Islamic and Jewish Traditions." In William M. Brinner and Stephen D. Ricks (edd.), *Studies in Islamic and Judaic Traditions II: Papers Presented at the Institute for Islamic-Judaic Studies. Center for Judaic Studies, University of Denver.* Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989.

Brisman, Leslie. "On the Divine Presence in Exodus." In Harold Bloom (ed.), *Exodus.* New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987:105-122.

Britt, Brian, "Prophetic Concealment in a Biblical Type Scene," *CBQ* 64 (2002): 37-58.

Brock, Sebastion. "Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition." In *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter.* Eichstätter Beiträge 4; Regensburg, 1982: 11-37.

Brueggemann, W. "The Crises and Promise of Presence in Israel." In P.D. Miller (ed.), *Old Testament Theology: Essays on Structure, Theme and Text.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992: 150-83.

Bulliet, Richard W. *Islam: The View From the Edge.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

Bultmann, Rudolf. *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting.* 1956, reprint; New York: New American Library, 1974.

Burkert, Walter. *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis: Eastern Contexts of Greek Culture.* Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Idem. *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age.* Cambridge and London, 1992.

Burton, John. *An Introduction to the Ḥadīth.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 1994.

Bus, Martin J. "An Anthropological Perspective Upon Prophetic Call Narratives." *Semeia* 21 (1981): 9-30.

Busse, Heribert. "Jerusalem in the Story of Muhammad's Night Journey and Ascension," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 14 (1991): 1-40.

Calder, Norman. "The Limits of Islamic Orthodoxy." In Farhad Daftery (ed.). *Intellectual Traditions in Islam.* London: I.B. Tauris Publishers and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2001: 66-85.

Cameron, Averil. "The Eastern Provinces in the 7th Century A.D. Hellenism and the Emergence of Islam," in S. Said (ed.) *Hellenismos: Quelques jalons pour une histoire de l'identité grecque: actes du Colloque de Strasbourg, 25-27 octobre 1989*. Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1991: 287-313.

Carasik, Michael. "To See a Sound: A Deuteronomic Rereading of Exodus 20:15." *Prooftexts* 19 (1999): 257-76.

Carrol, Robert P. "Strange Fire: Abstract of Presence Absent in the Text Meditations on Exodus 3." *JSOT* 61 (1994): 39-58.

Idem. "The Aniconic God and the Cult of Images," *Studia Theologica* 31 (1977): 51-64.

Idem. "Blindsight and the Vision Thing: Blindness and Insight in the Book of Isaiah." In Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans (edd.), *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah. Studies of an Interpretative Tradition.* Leiden: Brill, 1997: 79-93

Casey, Robert P. "Clement of Alexandria and the Beginnings of Christian Platonism." *HTR* 18 (1925): 39-101.

Cassin, E. *La Splendeur Divine*. Paris and the Hague: Mouton, 1968.

Cassuto, U. *The Documentary Hypothesis*. Translated from the Hebrew by Israel Abrahams. Jerusalem: Magnus Press, 1961.

Idem. *A Commentary of the Book of Exodus*. Jerusalem, 1967.

Chaumont, É. et al (edd.), *Autour du Regard. Mélanges Gimaret.* Paris: Peeters, 2003.

Cherbonnier, Edmond LaB. "The Logic of Biblical Anthropomorphism." *HTR* 55 (1962): 187-206.

Idem. "In Defense of Anthropomorphism." *Reflections on Mormonism: Judaeo-Christian Parallels. Papers delivered at the Religious Studies Center symposium, Brigham Young University, March 10-11, 1978*. Provo, Utah: The Center, 1978. 155-173.

Chernus, Ira. "Visions of God in Merkabah Mysticism," *JSJ* 13 (1982): 123-146.

Cheyne, T.K.and J. Sutherland Black (edd.), *Encyclopædia Biblica: A Critical Dictionary of the Literary, Political and Religious History, the Archæology, Geography and Natural History of the Bible* (London: Adam and Charles Black, MCMIII) 4:5033-5036 s.v. "Theophany."

Childs, Brevard S. *The Book of Exodus. A Critical, Theological Commentary*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974.

Chodkiewicz, M. "La vision de Dieu selon Ibn 'Arabī." In É. Chaumont et al (edd.), *Autour du Regard. Mélanges Gimaret.* Paris: Peeters, 2003 : 160-172.

Clay, Jenny. "Demas and Aude: The Nature of Divine Transformation in Homer." *Hermes* 102 (1974): 129-36.

Clines, David J.A. "Yahweh and the God of Christian Theology." *Theology* 83 (1980): 323-330.

Idem. "The Image of God in Man." *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 53-103.

Cohen, Chaim. "The Basic Meaning of the Term ערפל 'Darkness'." *Hebrew Studies* 36 (1995): 7-12.

Cohen, Samuel. *The Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy in Pre-Kabbalistic Jewish Mysticism.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983.

Idem. *The Shi'ur Qomah: Texts and Recensions.* Tübingen, 1985.

Colby, Frederick Stephen. "Constructing an Islamic Ascension Narrative: The Interplay of Official and Popular Culture in Pseudo-Ibn 'Abbas." Ph.D. Dissertation. Duke University, 2002.

Coogan, Michael David. "Canaanite Origins and Lineage: Reflections on the Religion of Ancient Israel." In Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (edd.), Ancient *Israelite religion: essays in honor of Frank Moore Cross.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987: 115-124

Cook, Michael. *Early Muslim Dogma: A Source-Critical Study.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Idem. *Muhammad.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Cornelius, Forrest Charles. "The Theological Significance of Darkness in the Old Testament." Ph.D. dissertation. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1990.

Couturier, Guy. "La Vision du Conseil Divin: étude d'une forme commune au prophétisme et à l'apocalyptique." *Science et Esprit* 36 (1984): 5-43.

Crenshaw J.L. "Amos and the Theophanic Tradition," *ZAW* 80 (1968): 203-215.

Crollius, Ary A. Roest. *Thus Were They Hearing: The Word In The Experience of Revelation in Qur'ān and Hindu Scriptures.* Roma: Università Gregoriana Editrice, 1974.

Cross, Jr. Frank. M. *Caananite Myth and Hebrew Epic.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973.

Idem. "The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah." *JNES* 12 (1953): 274-277.

Culianu, Ioan Petru. *Psychanodia I: A Survey of the Evidence Concerning the Ascension of the Soul and its Relevance.* Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983.

Cunchillos, Jesus-Luis. "Étude philologique de *mal'āk:* Perspectives sur le *mal'āk* de la divinité dans la biblical hebraïque." *Congress Volume, Vienna 1980* (VTSup 32; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981) 31-51.

Idem, "La 'ika, mal'āk et mᶜlā'kâh en sémitique nord-occidental." *Rivista di studi fenici* 10 (1982): 153-60.

Curtis, Edward M. "The Theological Basis for the Prohibition of Images in the Old Testament." *JETS* 28 (September 1985): 277-288.

van Daalen, Aleida G. "The Place Where YHWH Showed Himself to Moses: A Study of the Composition of Exodus 3." In Martin Kessler (ed.), *Voices From Amsterdam. A Modern Tradition of Reading Biblical Narrative.* Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994: 133-144

Dalley, Stephanie. "The God Salmu and the Winged Disk," *Iraq* 48 (1986): 85-101.

Daum, Werner. *Ursemitische Religion.* Stuttgart; Berlin; Köln; Mainz: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1985.

Davies, G. Henton. "Theophany." *IDB* 4:619.

Davis, Dale Ralph. "Rebellion, Presence, and Covenant: A Study in Exodus 32-34." *WTJ* 44 (1982): 71-87.

Day, John. "Ugarit and the Bible: Do They Presuppose the Same Canaanite Mythology and Religion?" In George J. Brooke, Adrian H.W. Curtis and John F. Healey (edd.), *Ugarit and the Bible: proceedings of the International Symposium on Ugarit and the Bible, Manchester, September 1992.* Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1994: 35-52.

Dearman, Andrew. "Theophany, Anthropomorphism, and the *Imago Dei*: Some Observations about the Incarnation in the Light of the Old Testament." *In* Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall and Gerald O'Collins (edd.). *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). 31-46.

De Conick, April D. *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996).

Idem. "The *Dialogue of the Savior* and the Mystical Sayings of Jesus." *VC* 50 (1996): 178-199.

Idem. " 'Blessed Are Those Who Have Not See' (Jn 20:29): Johannine Dramatization of an Early Christian Discourse." In John D. Turner and Anne McGuire (edd.), *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years. Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration*. Leiden: Brill, 1997: 381-398.

De Conick, April D. and Jarl Fossum. "Stripped before God: A New Interpretation of Logion 37 in the Gospel of Thomas." *VC* 45 (1991): 123-150.

van Diest, John W. "A Study of the Theophanies of the Old Testment." MA thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1966.

Dentan, Robert. *The Knowledge of God in Ancient Israel*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1968.

Deutsch, Nathaniel. *Guardians of the Gate: Angelic Vice Regency in Late Antiquity*. Leiden: Brill, 1999.

Dietrich, B.C. "Divine Epiphanies in Homer," *Numen* 30 (1983): 53-79

Dillon, John. "*ASÔMATOS*: Nuances of Incorporeality in Philo." In *Philon d'Alexandrie et le langage de la philosophie. Actes du colloque international organize par le Centre d'etudes sur la philosophie hellenistiqu*. Brepols, 1998: 99-110.

Dohmen, Christoph. " »Nicht« sieht mich der Mensch und lebt« (Ex 33, 20): Aspekte der Gottesschau im Alten Testament." *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 13 (1998): 31-51.

Draper, Jonathan A. "Practising the Presence of God in John: Ritual Use Scripture and the *EIDOS THEOU* in John 5:37." In idem (ed.), *Orality, Literacy, and Colonialism in Antiquity*. Semeia Studies 47; Leiden: Brill and Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2004: 155-170.

Driver, G.R. "Isaiah 6:1 'his train filled the temple'." In Hans Goedicke (ed.). *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1971. 87-96.

Dudley, A. "Old Testament Anthropomorphism." *Milla wa-Milla* 13 (1973): 15-19.

Durham, John. *Exodus*. Waco, TX: World Books, 1987.

Eakins, J. Kenneth, "Anthropomorphisms in Isaiah 40-55," *Hebrew Studies* 20-21 (1979-1980): 47-50.

Eaton, J.H. "Some Misunderstood Hebrew Words for God's Self-Revelation." *The Bible Translator* 25 (July 1974): 331-338.

Edelman, Diana Vikander (ed.). *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996.

Eichrodt, Walter. *Theology of the Old Testament.* 2 Vol. Philadelphia: The Westminister Press, 1961.

Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard. *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1994.

Eisenstadt, Michael. "Xenophanes' Proposed Reform of Greek Religion." *Hermes* 102 (1974): 142-150.

Elior, Rachel. "The Concept of God in Hekhalot Literature." *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6:1-2 (1987): 13-58 (Hebrew. Translated by Dena Ordan in Joseph Dan [ed.] *Binah: Studies in Jewish Thought.* New York: Praeger, 1989. 97-120.

Eslinger, Lyle. "The Infinite in a Finite Organical Perception (Isaiah VI 1-5)." *VT* 45 (1995): 145-173.

van Ess, Josef. *The Flowering of Muslim Theology.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Idem. *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra.* 6. vols. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992. 4:387-395.

Idem. "Le *MI'RĀǦ* et la Vision de Dieu dans les Premières Spéculations Théologiques en Islam," in Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi (ed.). *Le Voyage Initiatique en Terre D'Islam* Louvain-Paris: Peeters, 1991. 27-56

Idem. "Vision and Ascension: *Sūrat al-Najm* and its relationship with Muhammad's *mi'rāj*," *Journal of Qur'ānic Studies* 1.1 (1999): 47-62.

Idem. "Muhammad's Ascension to Heaven and the Beginning of Islamic Theology." Unpublished lecture, 1998, University of Michigan.

Idem. "The Youthful God: Anthropomorphism in Early Islam." The University Lecture in Religion at Arizona State University, March 3, 1988 (Tempe: Arizona State University, 1988).

Idem. "'Abd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock. An Analysis of Some Texts," in Julian Raby and Jeremy Johns (edd.). *Bayt al-Maqdis, 'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Idem. "Muhammad and the Qur'an: Prophecy and Revelation." In Hans Küng (ed.), *Christianity and the World Religions: Paths of Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.* Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, INC>, 1986. 5-18.

Idem. "Verbal Inspiration? Language and revelation in classical Islamic theology." In Sefan Wild (ed.), *The Qur'an as Text.* Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996. 177-194.

296

Idem. "Ta<u>sh</u>bīh wa-Tanzīh." *EI²* 10: 341-344.

Idem. "Scauen und Sehen als ontologisches Problem in der frühen islamischen Theologie." In É. Chaumont et al (edd.), *Autour du Regard. Mélanges Gimaret.* Paris: Peeters, 2003 :1-13.

Everson, A. Joseph. "Ezekiel and the Glory of the Lord Tradition." In Daniel Durken (ed.), *Sin, Salvation, and the Spirit,* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1979): 163-176.

Ewald, H. *Die Propheten des Alten Bundes* I. Stuttgart, 1840.

Fahd, T. "Nubuwwa." *EI²* 8:93-97.

Falatūri, Abdoldjavad. "How can a Muslim Experience God, Given Islam's Radical Monotheism," in Annemarie Schimmel and Abdoldjavad Falatūri (edd.), *We Believe in One God: The Experience of God in Christianity and Islam* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979).
Farrell, Shannon-Elizabeth. "Seing the Father (Jn 6:46, 14:9)." *Science et Esprit* 44 (1992): 1-24, 159-183, 307-329.

Fascher, Erich. "Deus Invisibilis: Eine Studie Zur Biblischen Gottesvorstellung," *Marburger theologische Studien* 1 [1931]:41-77.

Faur, José. *Golden Doves with Silver Dots: Semiotics and Textuality in Rabbinic Tradition.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

Finkelstein, "The Oldest Midrash: Pre-Rabbinic Ideals and Teachings in the Passover Haggadah," *HTR* 31 (1938): 291-317.

Firestone, Reuven. "Comparative Studies in Bible and Qur'ān: A Fresh Look at Genesis 22 in Light of Sura 37." In Benjamin H. Hary, John L. Hayes and Fred Astren. *Judaism and Islam Boundaries, Communication and Interaction: Essays in Honor of William M. Brinner.* Leiden. Brill, 2000. 169-184.

Idem. "The Qur'ān and the Bible: Some Modern Studies of Their Relationship." In John C. Reeves (ed.), *Bible and Qur'ān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality.* Leiden: Brill, 2004.

Idem. *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis.* Albany: SUNY, 1990.

Idem. "Abraham's Journey to Mecca in Islamic Exegesis: A Form-Critical Study of a Tradition." *SI* 76 (1992): 5-24.

Fohrer, George. *History of Israelite Religion.* New York: Abingdon Press, 1972.

Idem. "Die Gattung der Berichte über symbolische Handlungen der Propheten," *ZAW* 54 (1952): 101-20.

Ford, J. Massingberd. "The Epithet 'Man' for God." *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 38 (1971): 72-76.

Forrest, Robert W.E. "Theophany in Job and the Bhagavad Gītā," *Journal of Studies in the Bhagavadgita* 2 (1982): 25-43.

Fossum, Jarl. *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origins of Gnosticism.* Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1985.

Idem. "Jewish-Christian Christology and Jewish Mysticism," *VC* 37 (1983): 26-287.

Idem., "The Apostle Concept In the Qur'ān and Pre-Islamic Near Eastern Literature." In Mustansir Mir and Jarl E. Fossum (edd.), *Literary Heritage of Classical Islam. Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of James A. Bellamy.* Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1993. 149-167.

Idem, "The Magharians: A Pre-Christian Jewish Sect and its Significance for the Study of Gnosticism and Christianity," *Henoch* 9 (1987): 303-343.

Fowler, Sam Whittemore. "The Visual Anthropomorphic Revelation of God." PhD. Dissertation. Dallas Theological Seminary, 1978.

Fox, Robin Lane. "Seeing the Gods," and "Visions and Prophecy," in idem, *Pagans and Christians.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1987. 102-67, 375-418.

Frank, Richard M. "Elements of the Development of the Teaching of al-Ashʿarī." *Le Muséon* 104 (1991): 141-180.

Idem. "The Neoplatonism of Ğahm Ibn Ṣafwān." *Le Muséon* 78 (1965): 395-424;

Idem. "The Divine Attributes According to the Teaching of Abu l-Hudhayl al-ʿAllaf." *Le Muséon* 82 (1969): 451-506.

Frankel, David. "Two Priestly Conceptions of Guidance in the Wilderness." *JSOT* 81 (1998): 31-37.

Fretheim, Terence E. *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984. 79-106.

Friedlaender, Israel. "The Heterodoxies of the Shiites in the Presentation of Ibn Hazm." *JAOS* 28 (1907):1-80; 29 (1908): 1-183.

Friedman, Richard Elliot. "The Biblical Expression *Mastîr Pānîm*," *Hebrew Annual Review* 1 (1977): 139-147.

Idem. "The Hiding of the Face: An Essay on the Literary Unity of Biblical Narrative," in Jacob Neusner, Baruch A. Levine, and Ernest S. Frerichs (edd.), *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987): 207-222.

Idem. *The Hidden Face of God*. San Francisco, HarperSanFrancisco, 1995.

Friedmann, Yohanan. "Finality of Prophethood in Sunnī Islām." *JSAI* 7 (1986): 177-215.

Idem. *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadī Religious Thought and Medieval Background*. Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1989.

Fritsch, Charles T. "A Study of the Greek Translation of the Hebrew Verbs 'To See' with Deity as Subject or Object," *Eretz-Israel* 16 (1982): 51-56.

Fück, Johann. "Spuren des Zindīqtums in der islamischen Tradition," in *Arabishe Kultur und Islam im Mittelater*. Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger Weimar, 1981. 267-271.

Garber, S. David. "Symbolism of Heavenly Robes in the New Testament in Comparison with Gnostic Thought." Ph.D dissertation, Princeton University, 1974.

Gardet, Louis. "Allāh," in *EI²* 1:406-417.

Gardet, Louis and M.-M. Anawati. *Introduction a la Théologie Musulmane: Essai de Théologie Comparée*. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1948.

Gaudeul, Jean-Marie and Robert Casper. "Textes de la tradition musulmane concernant le Tahrīf (falsification) des Ecriptures." *Islamochristiana* 6 (1980): 61-104.

Geiger, Abraham. *Judaism and Islam*. Madras, 1933.

Geller, Stephen. "The God of the Covenant." In Barbara Nevling Porter (ed.), *One God or Many? Concepts of Divinity in the Ancient World*. Transactions of the Casco Bay Assyriological Institute. 1997. 273-319.

Idem. "Fiery Wisdom: Logos and Lexis in Deuteronomy 4." *Prooftexts* 14 (1994): 103-139.

Idem. "Blood Cult: Toward a Literary Theology of the Priestly Work of the Pentateuch." *Prooftexts* 12 (1992): 97-124.

Geoffroy, E. "Tadjallī," in *EI²* 10:60 (Fascicules 163-164).

Gieschen, Charles A. *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence*. Leiden: Brill, 1998.

Gilliot, Claude. "Muqātil, Grand Exégete, Traditionniste Et Théologien Maudit." *Journal Asiatique* 179 (1991): 39-84.

Idem. "La Théologie Musulmane en Asie Centrale et Au Khorasan." *Arabica* 49 (2002): 135-203.

Gimaret, Daniel. *Dieu à l'image de l'homme: les anthropomorphismes de la sunna et leur interprétation par les théologiens.* Paris: Cerf, 1997.

Idem. "Au Cœur du *MIʿRĀǦ*, un Hadith Interpolé," in Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi (ed.). *Le Voyage Initiatique en Terre D'Islam* Louvain-Paris: Peeters, 1991. 67-82.

Idem. "Ruʾyat Allāh," *EI²* 8:649.

Idem. *La Doctrine d'Al-Ashʿarī.* Paris: Patrimoines, 1990.

Glaser, Ida. "Qurʾanic Challenges for Genesis." *JSOT* 75 (1997): 3-19.

Glasson, T. Francis, "Theophany and Parousia," *NTS* 34 (1988): 259-270.

Glazov, Gregory Yuri. *The Bridling of the Tongue and the Opening of the Mouth in Biblical Prophecy.* JSOTSup 311; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.

Gnuse, Robert C. "A Reconsideration of the Form-Critical Structure in I Samuel 3: An Ancient Near Eastern Dream Theophany," *ZAW* 94 (1982): 379-390.

Idem. *The Dream Theophany of Samuel: Its Structure in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Dreams and its Theological Significance.* Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1984.

Idem. "Dreams in the Night – scholarly mirage or theophanic formula?: The dream report as a motif of the so-called elohist tradition." *BZ* 39 (1995): 28-53.

Goeje, M.J. de. "Die Berufung Mohammed." *Nöldecke Festschrift.* Geissen: A. Topelmann, 1906. Translated by S. Khuda Bakhsh as, "Mohamed's Call to Prophetsip." *The Modern Review* 15 (February, 1914): 146-148.
Goitein, "S.D. Muhammad's Inspiration by Judaism." *JJS* 9 (1958): 149-162.

Goldfeld, Isaiah. "The Illiterate Prophet (*Nabī Ummī*): An inquiry into the development of a dogma in Islamic Tradition." *Der Islam* 57 (1980): 58-67.

Goldziher, I. *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law.* Translated by Andras and Ruth Hamori. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Idem. "The Attitude of Orthodox Islam Toward the 'Ancient Sciences." In Merlin L. Swartz (ed.), *Studies on Islam.* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981: 185-215

Golitzin, Alexander. "The Demons Suggest an Illusion of God's Glory in a Form." *Studia Monastica*, 44 (2002): 13-43

Idem. "The Vision of God and the Form of Glory: More Reflections on the Anthropomorphite Controversy of AD 399." In John Behr, Andrew Louth and Dimitri Conomos (edd.). *Abba: The Tradition of Orthodoxy in the West: Festschrift for Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia*. Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003) 273-297.

Good, Edwin M. *In Turns of Tempest: A Reading of Job with a Translation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990.

Görke, Andreas and Gregor Schoeler. "Reconstructing the Earliest *sīra* Text: the Hiǧra in the Corpus of ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr." *Der Islam* 82 (2005): 209-220.

Goshen-Gottstein, Alon. "The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature," *HTR* 87 (1994): 171-195.

Idem. "Four Entered Paradise Revisited." *HTR* 88 [1995]: 69-133

Golitzin, Alexander. "The Demons Suggest an Illusion of God's Glory in a Form." *Studia Monastica* 44 (2002): 13-43.

Idem. "The Vision of God and the Form of Glory: More Reflections on the Anthropomorphite Controversy of AD 399." In John Behr, Andrew Louth and Dimitri Conomos (edd.), *Abba: The Tradition of Orthodoxy in the West: Festschrift for Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia*. Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003: 273-297.

Gordon, Cyrus H. "The Daughters of Baal and Allah," *MW* 33 (1943): 50-51

Gordon, Robert. "From Mari to Moses: Prophecy at Mari and in Ancient Israel." In Heather A. McKay and David J.A. Clines (edd.), *Of Prophets' Visions and the Wisdom of Sages: Essays in Honour of R. Norman Whybray on his Seventieth Birthday*. JSOTSup 162; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993: 63-79

Gottstein, Alon Goshen. "The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature." *HTR* 87 (1994): 171-195.

Goulder, Michael. "Vision and Knowledge." *JSNT* 56 (1994): 53-71.

Graham, William A. *Divine word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam. A Reconsideration of the Sources, with Special Reference to the Divine Saying or* Ḥadîth Qudsî. The Hague: Mouton, 1977.

Idem. "Transcendence in Islam." In Edwin Dowdy (ed.), *Ways of Transcendence; Insights From Major Religions and Modern Thought.* Bedford Park, South Australia: Australian Association 1982. 7-23.

Green, Arthur. "The Children in Egypt and the Theophany at the Sea." *Judaism* 24 (1975): 446-456.

Greene, John T. *The Role of the Messenger and Message in the Ancient Near East. Oral and Written Communication in the Ancient Near East and in the Hebrew Scriptures: Communicators and Communiques in Context* (BJS 169; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

Greenberg, Moshe. *Ezekiel 1-20.* The Anchor Bible; Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1983. 52f

Idem. "Ezekiel's Vision: Literary and Iconographic Aspects." In H. Tadmor and M. Weinfeld (ed.). *History, Historiography and Interpretation.* Jerusalem and Leiden: The Image Press, the Hebrew University and E.J. Brill, 1983): 159-168.

Greenfield, Jonas c. "Ba'al's Throne and Isa. 6:1." In A. Caquot, S. Légasse and M. Tardieu (edd.). *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l'honneur de M. Mathias Delcor.* AOAT 215; Kevalaer: Verlag Butzon und Bercker; Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlaq, 1985. 193-198.

Greenstein, Edward L. "The God of Israel and the Gods of Canaan: how Different Were They?" *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, July 29-August 5, 1997. Division A:* The Bible and Its World. Jeruslame: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1999. 47-58.

Griffin, Carl W. and David L. Paulsen. "Augustine and the Corporeality of God." *HTR* 95 (2002): 97-118.

Griffith, Sidney H. "The Gospel, the Qur'ān, and the Presentation of Jesus in al-Ya'qūbī's *Ta'rīkh.*" In John C. Reeves (ed.), *Bible and Qur'ān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality.* Leiden: Brill, 2004.

von Grunbaum, Gustave E. "Islam and Hellenism," in idem, *Islam and Medieval Hellenism: Social and Cultural Perspectives.* Edited by Dunning S. Wilson. London: Variorum Reprints, 1976: 21-27

Guillaume, Alfred. "Where was al-Masŷid al-Aqṣà?" *al-Andalus* 18 (1953): 323-336.

Gunkel, Herman. *Genesis: Translated and Interpreted.* Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997.

Günther, Sebastian. "Muḥammad, the Illiterate Prophet: An Islamic Creed in the Qur'an and Qur'anic Exegesis." *JQS* 4 (2002): 1-26.

Ha, John. *Genesis 15: A Theological Compendium of Pentateuchal History*. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989.

Habel, Norman C. "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," *ZAW* 77 (1965): 297-323.

Idem. *The Book of Job: A Commentary*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985.

Haddad, Gibril Fouad. "Appendix 3: The Vision of Allah in the World and the Hereafter." In al-Bayhaqi, *Allah's Names and Attributes (al-Asma' wa al-Sifat), Excerpts*, trans. Dr. Gibril Fouad Haddad. Islamic Doctrines and Beliefs Vol. 4; Damascus, 1998.

Haddad, Robert M. "Iconoclasts and *Mu'tazila*: The Politics of Anthropomorphism." *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 27 (Summer – Fall 1982): 287-305.

Hafemann, Scott J. *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel. The Letter/Spirit Contreast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1995.

Hagelia, Hallvard. *Numbering the Stars: A Phraseological Analysis of Genesis 15* (ConBOT, 39; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1994)

Hagner, Donald A. "The Vision of God in Philo and John: A Comparative Study." *JETS* 14 (1971): 81-93.

Hakim, Khalifa Abdul. *Islamic Ideology*. Pakistan: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1993.

Hallam, A. Dudley. "Old Testament Anthropomorphism." *Milla wa-Milla* 13 (1973): 14-19.

Hallaq, Wael. *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Halperin, David. *The Faces of the Chariot. Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1988.

Idem. "Hekhalot and Mi'rāj: Observations on the Heavenly Journey in Judaism and Islam." In John J. Collins and Michael Fishbane (edd.), *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995. 269-288.

Idem. "Ibn Ṣayyād Traditions and the Legend of al-Dajjāl." *JAOS* 96 (1976): 213-225.

Idem. "The Hidden Made Manifest: Muslim Traditions and 'Latent Content' of Biblical and Rabbinic Stories." In David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman and Avi Hurvitz (edd.), *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1995. 581-594.

Hämeen-Anttila, Jaakko. "Qur. 53:19, the prophetic experience and the 'Santanic Verses' – a reconsideration." *Acta Orientalia* 1997: 24-34.

Idem. "Arabian Prophecy." In Martti Nissinen (ed.), *Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context: Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000.115-146.

Hamilton, V. *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

Hamori, Esther J. " 'When Gods Were Men': Biblical Theophany and Anthropomorphic Realism," Ph.D. dissertation. New York University, 2004.

Handy, Lowell K. *Among the Host of Heaven: The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1994.

Idem. "The Authorization of Divine Power and the Guilt of God in the Book of Job: Useful Ugaritic Parallels," *JSOT* 60 (1993): 107-18.

Idem. "Dissenting Deities or Obedient Angels: Divine Hierarchies in Ugarit and the Bible," *Biblical Research* 35 (1990): 18-35.

Hanif, N. "Revelation." *Encyclopedia of the Holy Quran*. 4 vols. Delhi: Global Vision Publishing house, 2000. 1229-37.

Hannah, Darrell D. *Michael and Christ: Michael Traditions and Angel Christology in Early Christianity*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2/109; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999.

Hanson, Anthony. "The Treatment in the LXX of the Theme of Seeing God." *In* Brooke and Lindars (edd.), *Septuagint, Scrolls, and Cognate Writings. Papers Presented to the International Symposium on the Septuagint and its Relations to the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992. 557-568.

Hanson, John S. "Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity," *ANRW* II, 23.2 (1980): 1395-1427.

Harrop, G. Gerald. "'But Now Mine Eye Seeth Thee'," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 12 (1966): 80-84.

Hasel, Gerhard F. "The Meaning of the Animal Rite in Genesis 15." *JSOT* 19 (1981): 61-78.

Hauge, Martin Ravndal. *The Descent from the Mountain: Narrative Patterns in Exodus 19-40*. JSOTSup 323; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.

Hawting, G.R. *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Idem. "John Wansbrough, Islam, and monotheism," *MTSR* 9 (1997), special issue, *Islamic Origins Reconsidered: John Wansbrough and the Study of Early Islam*, ed. Herbert Berg. 23-38.

Heinisch, P. *Theology of the Old Testament.* Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1950.

Heiser, Michael S. "The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2004

Heller, Bernhard. "The Relation of the Aggada to Islamic Legends." *MW* 24 (1934): 281-286.

Hemple, Johannes. "Die Grenzen des Anthropomorphismus Jahwes im Alten Testament." *ZAW* 16 (1939): 75-85.

Henderson, John B. *The Construction of Orthodoxy and Heresy.* New York: State University of New York Press, 1998.

Hennessey, Lawrence R. "A Philosophical Issue in Origen's Eschatology: The Three Senses of Incorporeality." *Origeniana quinta* (1989): 372-380.

Henton Davies, G. "Theophany," *IDB* 4:619-620.

Herbert, Arthur S. *Genesis 12-50: Abraham and his Heirs.* London: SCM Press Ltd, 1962.

Hiebert, Theodore. "Theophany in the OT," *ABD* 6:505-511.

Hirschberg, J.W. "The Sources of Moslem Traditions concerning Jerusalem." In *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 17 (1951-52): 314-350.

Hirth, V. *Gottes Botten im Alten Testament.* Theologische Arbeiten 32; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1975.

Hodgson, Marshall G.S. *The Venture of Islam.* 3 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

Holladay, William L. *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1-25.* Edited by Paul D. Hanson. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1986.18-46.

Horovitz, J. "Muhammeds Himmelfahrt," *Der Islam* 9 (1919): 159-183.

Idem. "The Growth of the Mohammed Legend." *MW* 10 (1920): 49-58.

Horst, Friedrich. "Die Visionschilderungen der alttestamentlichen Propheten." *Evangelische Theologie* 20 (1960): 193-205.

Hourani, George. "The Qur'ān's Doctrine of Prophecy." In Roger M. Savory and Dionisius A. Agius (edd.), *Logos Islamikos: Studia Islamica in Honorem Georgii Michaelis Wickens*. Toronto, Can.: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984. 175-181.

House, Paul R. "Isaiah's Call and its Context in Isaiah 1-6." *Criswell Theological Review* 6 (1993) 207-222.

Houtman, Cornelis. *Exodus*. 3 vols. Leuven: Peeters, 2000.

Hubbard, Benjamin J. "Commissioning Stories in Luke-Acts: A Study of Their Antecedents, Form and Content." *Semeia* 8 (1977): 103-126.

Idem, *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning: An Exegesis of Matthew 28: 16-20*. SBL Dissertation Series 19; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974.

Hughes, Aaron. "The stranger at the sea: Mythopoesis in the Qur'ân and early tafsîr," *Studies in Religion* 32 (2003): 261-279.

Hughes, Paul Edward. "Seeing Hagar Seeing God. *Leitwort* and Petite Narrative in Genesis 16:1-16." *Didaskalia* 8 (Spring 1997): 43-59.

Hunter, J.H. "The Literary Composition on Theophany Passages in the Hebrew Psalms." *JNSL* 15 (1989): 97-107.

Idem, "Theophany in the Psalms: A Study of Selected Theophany Passages." Ph.D. dissertation, Stellenbosch, 1987.

Hurowitz, Victor (Avigdor). "Isaiah's Impure Lips and Their Purification in the Light of Akkadian Sources." *HUCA* 60 (1990): 39-89.

Hurvitz, Nimrod. "Miḥna as Self-Defense." *SI* 92 (2001): 93-111.

Idem. *The Formation of Ḥanbalism: piety into power*. London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002.

Husser, Jean-Marie *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.

Ibn Warraq. *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad*. Amherst, NY: 2000.

Ibrahim, Mohammed Zakyi. "Communication Models in the Holy Qur'ān: God-Human Interaction." M.A. Thesis, McGill University, Montreal, Can., 1997.

Irvin, Dorthy. "The Joseph and Moses stories as narrative in the light of ancient Near Eastern narrative. J: The traditional episode of sending the saviour." In John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller (edd.), *Israelite and Judean History*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977: 200-209.

Idem. *Mytharion: The Comparison of Tales from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East.* AOAT 32; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1978.

Irwin, William H. "The Course of the Dialogue between Moses and Yhwh in Exodus 33:12-17." *CBQ* 59 (1997): 629-36.

Izutsu, Toshihiko. *God and Man in the Koran. Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung.* Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1964. 133-193.

Jackson, Sherman A. *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam. Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī's Fayṣal al-Tafriqa.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Idem. *Islamic Law and the State: the Constitutional Jurisprudence of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī.* Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1996.

Jaeger, Werner. *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers. The Gifford Lectures, 1936.* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1947.

Jay, Martin. "The Rise of Hermeneutics and the Crisis of Ocularcentrism." *Poetics Today* 9 (1988): 307-326.

Jeffery, Arthur. "The Qur'ān as Scripture." *MW* 40 (1950): 41-55,106-134, 185-206, 257-275.

Idem. "Had Muhammad a Scripture Teacher?" In George Livingston Robinson (ed.), *From the Pyramids to Paul.* New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1935: 95-118.

Jeremias, J. *Theophanie. Die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung ...*

Idem. "Theophany in the OT," *IDBSup*, 896-898.

Johnson, Aubrey R. "Aspects of the Use of the Term PNYM in the Old Testament." In Johann Fück (ed.), *Festschrift Otto Eissfeldt.* Halle: Niemeyer, 1947: 155-59.

Judd, Steven Clark. "The Third Fitna: Orthodoxy, Heresy and Coercion in Late Umayyad History." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan. 1997.

Juncker, Günther H. "Jesus and the Angel of the Lord: An Old Testament Paradigm for New Testament Christology." Ph.D diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2001.

Kasher, Rimmon. "Anthropomorphism, Holiness and Cult: A New Look at Ezekiel 40-48." *ZAW* 110 (1998): 192-208.

Keel, O. *Jahwe-Vision un Siegelkunst. Eine neue Deutung der Majestätsschilderungen in Jes 6, Ez 1 und Sach 4*. SBS 84/85. Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1977.

Killian, Rudolf. "Die Prophetischen Berufungberichte," *Theologie im Wandel. Festschrift zum 150 jährigen Bestehen der Katholisch-Theologischen Fakultät an der Universität Tübingen, 1817-1967* (München: Wewel, 1967): 356-376.

Kim, Jung Hoon. *The Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline Corpus*. London and New York: T&T Clark International, 2004.

Kim, Seyoon. *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1981: 137-267.

Kinberg, Leah. "Literal Dreams and Prophetic *Hadīts* in classical Islam – a comparison of two ways of legitimation." *Der Islam* 70 [1993]: 279-300.

Kingsbury, Edwin C. "The Theophany *Topos* and the Mountain of God," *JBL* 86 (1967): 205-210.

Idem. "The Prophets and the Council of Yahweh," *JBL* 83 (1964): 279-286.

Kirk, Kenneth E. *The Vision of God: The Christian Doctrine of the Summun Bonum. The Bampton Lectures for 1928*. Cambridge: James Clarke, 1977.

Kister, M.J. " 'Al-Tahannuth': An Inquiry into the Meaning of a Term." *BSOAS* 31 (1968): 223-236.

Knierim, Rolf. "The Vocation of Isaiah." *VT* 18 (1968): 47-68.

Knight, G.A.F. "Theophany," *ISBE* 4:827-831.

Knohl, Israel. "Two Aspects of the 'Tent of Meeting'." *In* Mordechai Cogan, Barry L. Eichler and Jeffrey H. Tigay (Edd.), *Tehillah le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1997. 73-79.

Idem. *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

Knysh, Alexander. "'Orthodoxy' and 'Heresy' in Medieval Islam: An Essay in Reassessment." *MW* 83 [1993]: 48-67.

Kominiak, Benedict. *The Theophanies of the Old Testament in the Writings of St. Justin* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1948).

Korpel, Marjo Christina Annette. *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine*. Münster: UGARIT-Verlag, 1990.

Korteweg ,Th. "The Reality of the Invisible: Some Remarks on St. John XIV 8 and Greek Philosophic Tradition." M.J. Vermaseren (ed.), *Studies in Hellenistic Religions* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979) 50-102.

Kronholm, Tryggve. "Dependence and Prophetic Originality in the Koran." *Orientalia Suecana* 31-32 (1982-1983): 47-70.

Kugel, James L. *The God of Old: Inside the Lost World of the Bible*. New York: The Free Press, 2003.5-70.

Kuhn, H.G. *Sifre zu Numeri Tannaitische Midrashim*. Stuttgart, 1959.

Küng, Hans. "Muhammad and the Qur'an: Prophecy and Revelation: A Christian Response." In idem. (ed.), *Christianity and the World Religions: Paths of Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, INC., 1986. 19-36.

Kuntz, J. Kenneth. *The Self-revelation of God* (Philadelphia: Westmonster Press, 1967).

Kutsch, Ernst. "Gideons Berufung und Altarbau Jdc 6, 11-24." *ThLZ* 81 (1956): 75-84.

Kutsko John F. "Ezekiel's Anthropology and Its Ethical Implications." In Margaret S. Odell and Joihn T. Strong [edd.], *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000.

Kvanvig, Helge S. "Throne Visions and Monsters." *ZAW* 117 (2005): 249-272.

de Lacey, D.R. "Jesus as Mediator." *JSNT* 29 (1987): 101-121.

Laine, James W. *Visions of God: Narrative of Theophany in the Mah□bh□rata*. Vienna, 1989.

Lambert, W.G. "Ancient Mesopotamian Gods: Superstition, Philosophy, Theology." *RHR* 204 (1990): 115-30

Landy, Francis. "Strategies of Concentration and Diffusion in Isaiah 6," *Biblical Interpretation* 7 (1999): 58-86.

Idem. "Vision and Voice in Isaiah." *JSOT* 88 (2000): 19-36.

Lang, Bernhard. *The Hebrew God: Portrait of an Ancient Deity*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2002.

Laoust, Henry. "Les Premières Professions de foi Hanbalites." In *Mélanges Louis Massignon*, PIFD, 3 ; Damas: Institut Francais De Damas, 1957:12ff.

Lauterbach, Jacob Z. "A significant Controversy Between the Sadducees and the Pharisees." *HUCA* 4 (1927): 173-205.

Lazarus-Yafeh, Hava. "*Taḥrīf* and Thirteen Torah Scrolls." *JSAI* 19 (1995): 81-88.

Idem. "Tawrāt." *EI²* 10:393-395.

Idem. "Taḥrīf." *EI²* 10:111-112.

van der Leeuw, Gerardus. *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.

Lewis, Theodore J. "Divine Images and Aniconism in Ancient Israel." *JAOS* 118 (1998): 36-53.

Levenson, Jon D. "The Jerusalem Temple in Devotional and Visionary Experience." In Arthur Green (ed.), *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible Through the Middle Ages*. New York: Crossroad, 1986: 32-61.

Lewy, Hildegard. "Origin and Significance of the *Mâgên Dâwîd*: A Comparative Study of the Ancient Religions of Jerusalem and Mecca," *Archiv Orientalni* 18 (1950) 330-365

L'Heureux, Conrad E. "Searching for the origins of God." In Baruch Halpern (ed.), *Traditions in transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981: 33-57.

Lichtenstadter, Ilse. "Origin and Interpretation of Some Qur'ānic Symbols." *Studi Orientalistic in Onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida* 2 (1956): 58-80.

Idem. "Origin and Interpretation of Some Koranic Symbols." In George Makdisi (ed.), *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A.R. Gibb*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965: 426-36.

Lichtenstein, Murray. "Dream-Theophany and the E Document," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern society of Columbia University* 1-2 (1969): 45-54.

Lieb, Michael. *The Visionary Mode: Biblical Prophecy, Hermeneutics, and Cultural Change*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. 1991.

Lindblom, Johannes. *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1962)

Idem. "Theophanies in Holy Places in Hebrew Religion," *HUCA* 32 (1961): 91-106.

Lipton, Diana. *Revisions of the Night: Politics and Promises in the Patriarchal Dreams of Genesis.* JSOTSup 288; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.

Loewenstamm, Samuel E. "The Covenant between the pieces. A traditio-historical Investigation." In idem, *Comparative Studies in Biblical and Ancient Oriental Literatures.* Neukirchener Verlag: Verlag Butzon; Bercker Kevelaer: Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1980: 273-80.

Idem. "The Trembling of Nature during the Theophany." In idem, *Comparative Studies in Biblical and Ancient Oriental Literatures.* Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1980: 172-89.

Lohfink, Gerhard. *The Conversion of St. Paul: Narrative and History in Acts,* ed. and trans. Bruce J. Malina. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1975: 61-73.

Idem, „Eine alttestamentliche Darstellungsform für Gotteserscheinungen in den Damaskusberichten (Apg. 9; 22; 26)." *Biblische Zeitschrift* 4 (1965): 246-257.

Lohman, Theodor. "Sure 96 und die Berufung Muhammeds," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung* 14 (1968): 248-302, 416-469.

Long, Burke O. "Prophetic Call Traditions and Reports of Visions," *ZAW* 84 (1972): 494-500.

Idem. "Reports of Visions Among the Prophets," *JBL* 95 (1976): 353-365.

Idem. "Prophetic Authority as Social Reality." In G.W. Coats and B.O. Long (edd.), *Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament Religion and Theology.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977: 3-20.

Lory, Pierre. "La Vision de Dieu dans l'Onirocritique Musulmane Médiévale." In Todd Lawson (ed.). *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought. Essays in Honour of Hermann Landolt.* London: I.B. Tauris, 2006: 353-363.

Lundbom, Jack. R. "Jeremiah 15,15-21 and the Call of Jeremiah." *SJOT* 9 (1995): 143-155.

Idem. "Rhetorical Structures in Jeremiah 1." *ZAW* 193-210.

Lust, Johan. "Elijah and the theophany on Mount Horeb," in J. Coppens (ed.), *La notion biblique de Dieu. Le Dieu de la Bible et le Dieu des philosophes.* BETL 41: Leuven: University Press and Uitgeverij Peeters, 1985. 91-99

MacDonald, D.B. "Allāh," in *EI¹* 1:302-311.

MacDonald, Dennis Ronald. *There is no Male and Female: The Fate of a Dominical Saying in Paul and Gnosticism.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

Macdonald, Nathan. *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of Monotheism*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003.

Madelung, W. "The Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran." in idem, *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1985. V:505

Madelung, Wilferd and Paul Walker. *An Ismaili Heresiography: The "Bāb al-Shaytān" from Abū Tammām's* Kitāb al-shajara. Leiden: Brill, 1998.

Madigan, Daniel A. *The Qur'ān's Self –Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Magonet, Jonathan. "The Structure of Isaiah 6," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, August 4-12, 1985* Division A: *The Period of the Bible*, 91-97.

Idem. "The Bush that Never Burnt (Narrative Techniques in Exodus 3 and 6)." *Heythrop* 16 (1975): 304-311.

Makdisi, George. "Ash'ari and the Ash'arites in Islamic Religious History." *Studia Islamica* 17 (1962): 37-80 and 18 (1963): 19-39.

Idem. "Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad." *BSOAS* 24 (1961): 1-56.

Idem. "The Sunnī Revival." In D.S. Richards (ed.), *Islamic Civilization, 950-1150*. Oxford: CASSIRER, 1973: 155-168

Idem. "Ḥanbalite Islam." In Merlin Swartz (ed.) *Studies on Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Idem. "Remarks on Traditionalism in Islamic Religious History." In Carl Leiden (ed.). *The Conflict of Traditionalism and Modernism in the Muslim Middle East*. Austin, Texas: University Texas, 1966: 77-86.

Idem. *Ibn 'Aqīl: Religion and Culture in Classical Islam*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997.

Idem. "*Ṭabaqāt*-Biography: Law and Orthodoxy in Classical Islam." *IS* 32 [1993]: 371-96.

Malamat, Abraham. "The Secret Council and Prophetic Involvement." In R. Liwak and S. Wagner (edd.), *Prophetie und geschichtliche Wirklichkeit im alten Israel. Festschrift fur Siegfried Herrmann zum 65. Geburtstag*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1991: 231-35

Mallick, Muhammad Tahir. "The Traditionists and the Jahmiyya." *Hamdard Islamicus* 3 (1980): 31-45.

Malul, Meir. "כפי (Ex 33,22) and בחפני (Prov 30, 4): Hand or Skirt?" *ZAW* 109 (1997): 356-68.

Maly, Eugen H. " '...The Highest Heavens Cannot Contain You...' (2Kngs 8,27): Immanence and Transcendence in the Deuteronomist," in A Finkel and L. Frizzel (edd.), *Standing Before God: Studies on Prayer in Scriptures and in Tradition with Essays in Honor of John M. Oesterreicher* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1981)

Mandell S. and D.N. Freedman. *The Relationship between Herodotus'* History *and Primary History*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993.

Mann, Thomas W. *Divine Presence and Guidance in Israelite Traditions: The Typology of Exaltation*. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1977.

Idem. "The Pillar of Cloud in the Reed Sea Narrative." *JBL* 90 (1971): 15-30.

Martin, Richard C. "Anthropomorphism." In *EQ* 1:103-107.

Massignon, Louis. *The Passion of al-Hallāj*. Translated by Herbert Mason. 4 vols. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982.

Idem. *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane*. Paris: J. Vran, 1954.

Matthews, Victor H. "Theophanies Cultic and Cosmic: 'Prepare to Meet Thy God!'" in Avrahm Gileadi (ed.), *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988) 307-317.

Maudūdi, S. Abul A'lā. *The Meaning of the Qur'ān*. ? vols. Translated by 'Abdul 'Aziz Kamāl. Lahor, Pakistan: Islamic Publications [Pvt.] LTD., 1986. 15:293f

Mauser, Ulrich. "God in Human Form." *Ex Auditu* 16 (2000): 81-100.

Idem. "Image of God and Incarnation." *Interpretation* 24 (1970): 336-356.

McAlpine, T.H. *Sleep, Divine and Human in the Old Testament*. JSOTSup 38; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987.

McAuliffe, Jane Dammen. "The Qur'ānic Context of Muslim Biblical Scholarship." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 7(1996): 141-158.

McCarthy, Carmel. *Tiqqune Sopherim and Other Theological Corrections in the Masoretic Text of theOld Testament*. OBO 36; Friburg [Schweiz]: Universitätsverlaq and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1981.

McConville, J. Gordon. "God's 'Name' and God's 'Glory'." *Tyndale Bulletin* 30 (1979): 149-163.

McNicol, Allan J. "The Heavenly Sanctuary in Judaism: A Model for Tracing the Origin of an Apocalypse." *JRS* 13 (1987): 66-94.

Meier, Samuel A. *The Messenger in the Ancient Semitic World.* HSM 45; Atltanta: Sholars Press, 1988.

Melchert, Christopher. "Sectaries in the Six Books: Evidence for the Exclusion from the Sunni Community." *MW* 82 (1992): 287-295.

Idem. "The Adversaries of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal." *Arabica* 44 (1997): 235ff.

Idem. "Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and the Qur'an." *JQS* 6 (2004): 22-34.

Idem. "The *Musnad* of Ahmad ibn Hanbal: How It Was Composed and What Distinguishes It from the Six Books." *Der Islam* 82 (2005): 32-51.

Idem. *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th-10th Centuries C.E.* Leiden: Brill, 1997.

Mendenhall, George E. *The Tenth Generation: The Origins of the Biblical Tradition.* Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973.

Merkur, Dan. "Muhammad and his Mi'raj." In idem, *Gnosis: An Esoteric Tradition of Mystical Visions and Unions.* Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1993. 181-198.

Idem. "Prophetic Initiation in Israel and Judah." In L. Bryce Boyer and Simon A. Grolnick (edd.), *The Psychoanalytic Study of Society*, Volume 12, *Essays in honor of George Devereux.* Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, 1989) 37-67.

Mettinger, Tryggve N.D. "The Elusive Essence: YHWH, El and Baal and the Distinctiveness of Israelite Faith." In E. Blum et al. (edd.), *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte.* Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990. 393-417.

Idem. "The Study of the Gottesbild-Problems and Suggestions." *Svensk exegetisk arsbok* 54 (1989): 135-145.

Idem. *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies.* CWK Gleerup, 1982.

Idem. "YHWH SABAOTH-The Heavenly King and the Cherubim Throne." In Tomoo Ishida (ed.), *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays: Papers Read at the International Symposium for Biblical Studies, Tokyo, 5-7 December, 1979.* Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1982. 108-138.

Idem. *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1995).

Idem. "Aniconism-A West Semitic Context for the Israelite Phenomenon?" In Walter Dietrich and Martin A. Klopfenstein (edd.), *Ein Gott allein? JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte.* OBO 139; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht; Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1994.

idem, "The Veto on Images and the Aniconic God in Ancient Israel." In Haralds Biezais (ed.), *Religious symbols their functions: Based on Papers at the Symposium on Religious Symbols and their Functions held at Åbo on the 28th-30th of August 1978.* Stockholm/Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1979: 15-29.

Meyer, Marvin W. "The Light and the Voice on the Damascus Road." *Foundations & Facets Forum* 2 (1986): 27-35.

Michaeli, Frank. *Dieu a l'Image de l'Homme. Etude de la notion anthropomorphique de Dieu dans l'Ancien Testament.* Neuchâtel-Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1950.
Michaelis, W. "οράω," *TDNT* 5:315-382.

Miller, Fred. "Prophecy in Judaism and Islam." *IS* 17 (1978): 27-44.

Miller, J. Maxwell. "In the 'Image' and 'Likeness' of God." *JBL* 91 (1972): 289-304.

Miller, Patrick D. "Divine Council and the Prophetic Call to War," *VT* 18 (1938): 100-107.

Idem. "Cosmology and World Order in the Old Testament: The Divine Council as Cosmic-Political Symbol," *HBT* 9 (1987): 53-78.

Miller, Robert D. "The Form-Critical Problem of Moses' Call." *Proceedings EGL & MWBS* 15 (1995): 113-119.

Mir, Mustansir. "Theophany." *EQ* 5:275-276.

Moberly, R.W.L. " 'Holy, Holy, Holy': Isaiah's Vision of God." In *Holiness: Past and Present* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2003) 122-140.

Idem. *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32-34.* JSOTSup 22; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983.

Momen, Moojan. *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

Mondi, Robert. "Greek Mythic Thought in the Light of the Ancient Near East." In Lowell Edmunds (ed.) *Approaches to Greek Myth.* Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990. 141-98.

Monson, John. "The New 'Ain Dara Temple: Closest Solomonic Parallel." *BAR* 26 (2000): 20-35.

Moore, Stephen D. *God's Gym: Divine Male Bodies of the Bible*. New York and London: Routledge, 1996.

Idem. "Gigantic God: Yahweh's Body." *JSOT* 70 (1996): 87-115.

Idem. "The Beatific Vision as a Posing Exhibition: Revelation's Hypermasculine Diety." *JSNT* 60 (1995): 27-55.

Morgenstern, J. "Biblical Theophanies," *ZA* 25 (1911): 139-193, 28 (1913-14): 15-60.

Idem. *The Fire Upon the Altar*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, Inc, 1963.

Morray-Jones, C.R.A. "Paradise Revisted (2 Cor. 12:1-12): The Jewish Mystical Backgound of Paul's Apostolate." *HTR* 86 (1993): 177-217, 265-92.

Idem. "The Body of Glory: The *Shi'ur Qomah* in Judaism, Gnosticism and the Epistle to the Ephesians." Forthcoming in Christopher Rowland and C.R.A. Morray-Jones (edd.), *The Mystery of God: Jewish Mystical Traditions in the New Testament*. CRINT 3; Assen and Minneapolis: Van Gorcum/Fortress.

Mourad, Suleiman Ali. *Early Islam Between Myth and History: Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110H/728 CE) and the Formation of His Legacy in Classical Islamic Scholarship*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006.

Mughni, S. "Ḥanbalī Movements in Baghdād from Abū Muḥammad al-Barbahārī (d. 329/941) to Abū Jaʿfar al-Hāshimī (d. 470/1077)." Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1990.

Muilenburg, James. "The Speech of Theophany." *Harvard Divinity School Bulletin* 28 (1964): 35-47.

Idem. "The Intercession of the Covenant Mediator (Exodus 33:1α, 12-17." In Peter R. Ackroyd and Barnabas Lindars (edd.), *Words and Meanings: Essays Presented to David winton Thomas on his reirement from the Regius Professorship of Hebrew in the University of Cambridge, 1968*. Cambridge: University Press, 1968.

Müller, H.-P. "Die kultische Darstellung der Theophanie," *VT* 14 (1964): 183-191.

Murata, Sachiko and William C. Chittick. *The Vision of Islam*. New York: Paragon House, 1994.
Mussies, Gerard. "Indentification and Self-Indentification of Gods in Classical and Hellenistic Times." R. Van Den Broek and T. Baarda and J. Mansfeld (edd.), *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988): 1-18.

Nagel, Timan. *The History of Islamic Theology, From Muhammad to the Present*. Translated by Thomas Thornton. Princeton, N.J.: Marcus Wiener Publishers, 2000.

Idem. "Theology and the Qur'ān." *EQ* 5: 256-275.

Netton, Ian Richard. *Allāh Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology*. London, New York: Routledge, 1989.

Neusner, Jacob. *The Incarnation of God: The Character of Divinity in Formative Judaism*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988.

Idem. "Conversation in Nauvoo about the Corporality of God," *BYU Studies* 36 (1996-97): 7-30.

Neuwirth, Angelika. "From the Sacred Mosque to the Remote Temple: Sūrat al-Isrā' between Text and Commentary." In Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Barry D. Walfish and Joseph W. Goering (edd.), *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. 376-407.

Idem. "The Spiritual Meaning of Jerusalem in Islam." In Nitza Rosovsky (ed.), *City of the Great King: Jerusalem from David to the Present*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996. 93-116.

Idem. "Qur'an and History - Disputed Relationship: Some Reflections on Qur'anic history and History in the Qur'an." *JQS* 5 (2003): 1-18.

Idem. *Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren*. Berlin and New York: Walter De Gruyter, 1981.

Newby, G.D. *The Making of the Last Prophet: A Reconstruction of the Earliest Biography of Muhammad*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989.

Newman, Carey C. *Paul's Glory-Christology: Tradition and Rhetoric*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992.

Newsom, Carol A. "Angels" in *ABD* 1:249.
Nicholson, E.W. "The Interpretation of Exodus XXIV 9-11." *VT* 24 (1974): 77-97.

Idem. "The Antiquity of the tradition in Exodus XXIV 9-11." *VT* 25 (1975): 69-79.

Niditch, Susan. *The Symbolic Vision in Biblical Tradition*. HSM 30; Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983.

Niehaus, Jeffery J. *God at Sinai: Covenant & Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House. 1995.

Nielsen, F.A.J. *The Tragedy in History: Herodotus and the Deuteronomistic History*. JSOTSup, 251; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.

Nisan, Mordechai, "Notes on a Possible Jewish Sources for Muhammad's 'Night Journey'." *Arabica* 47 (2000): 274-277

Nissinen, Martti. "Prophets and the Divine Council." In Ulrich Hübner and Ernst Axel Knauf (edd.). *Kein Land für sich allein: Studien zum Kulturkontakt in Kanaan, Israel/Palästina und Ebirnari für Manfred Weippert zum 65. Geburtstag.* Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002. 4-19.

Nöldeke, Theodore. *Sketches From Eastern History.* London; A. Edinburgh, and C. Black, 1892.

Nöldeke, Theodor et al. *Geschichte des Qorāns.* 2nd rev. ed.; vols. 1 and 2 revised by Friedrich Schwally; vol. 3 by G. Bergsträsser and O. Pretzl. Leipzig: Dieterichische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1909-26.

North, Robert S.J. "Separated Spiritual Substances in the Old Testament," *CBQ* 29 (1967): 113-143.

Idem. "Angel-Prophet or Satan-Prophet?" *ZAW* 82 (1970): 31-67.

Noth, Martin. *Exodus: A Commentary.* Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962.

Nötocher, F. *'Das Angesicht Gottes schauen' nach biblischer und babylonischer Auffassung.* Würzburg, 1924.

Obermann, Julian. "Koran and Agada: The Events at Mount Sinai." *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 58 (1941): 23-48.

Idem. "Islamic Origins: A Study in Background and Foundation." In Nabih Amin Faris (ed.), *The Arab Heritage.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944.

Idem. "Political Theology in Early Islam, Hasan Baṣrī's Treatise on Qadar." *JAOS* 55 (1935): 138-162.

Odell, Margaret S. "Ezekiel Saw What He Said He Saw: Genres, Forms, and the Vision of Ezekiel 1." In Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi (edd.), *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century.* Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003: 162-76.

Oeming, Manfred. "Gottes Offenbarung »von hinten« Zu einem wenig beachteten Aspekt des alttestamentlichen Offenbarungsverständnisses." In Friedholm Krüger (ed.), *Gottes Offenbarung in der Welt: Horst Georg Pöhlmann zum 65. Geburtstag* (Gütersloh, Germany: Kaiser, 1998: 292-304.

Ohman, H.M. "Some Remarks on the Use of the Term 'Theophany' in the Study of the Old Testament," in Riemer Faber (ed.), *Unity in Diversity: Studies Presented to Prof. Dr. Jelle*

Faber on the Occasion of his Retirement (Canada: Senate of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, 1989): 1-12.

Oldenburg, Ult. "Above the Stars of El: El in Ancient South Arabic Religion" *ZAW* 82 (1970): 187-208

del Olmo Lete, Gregorio. *La vocacion del liber en el antiquo Israel: Morfologia de los relatos biblicos de vocacion*. Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia, 1973.

Olson, Brooke Elise. "Heavenly Journeys, Earthly Concerns: The Legacy of the *Mi'raj* in the Formation of Islam." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2002.

Opeloye, Muhib O. "Confluence and Conflict in the Qur'ānic and Biblical Accounts of the Life of Prophet Mūsā," *Islamochristiana* 16 (1990): 25-41.

Oppenheim, A.Leo. "The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East. With a Translation of an Assyrian Dream-Book," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*. n.s. 46 (1956): 179-373.

Idem. *Ancient Mesopotamia*. Chicago: University Press, 1964.

Idem. "Akadian *pul(u)ḫ(t)u* and *melammû*." *JAOS* 63 (1943): 31-34.

Idem, "Mantic Dreams in the Ancient Near East." In G.E. von Grunebaum and R. Callois (edd.). Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966: 341-350.

Orlov, Andrei A. "Ex 33 on God's Face: A Lesson from the Enochic Tradition." SBL 2000 Seminar Papers. 130-147.

Osborn, Eric. "Iranaeus on God-Argument and Parody," *StPtr* 36 (2001): 270-281.

O'Shaughnessy, Thomas J. "God's Throne and the Biblical Symbolism of the Qur'ān." *Numen* 20 (1973): 202-221.

Ostler, Blacke Thomas. "The Throne-Theophany and the Prophetic Commission in 1 Nephi: A Form Critical Analysis," *BYU Studies* 26 (1986):67-87.

Otzen, Benedikt. "Heavenly Visions in Early Judaism: Origin and Function." In W. Boyd Barrick and John R. Spencer (edd.), *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G.W. Ahlström*. JSOTSup 31; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984: 198-215.

Palacios, Miguel Asin. *Islam and the Divine Comedy*. Translated by Harold Sutherland. London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1968.

Paret, Rudi. *Mohammed und der Koran*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1957.

319

Park, Hyondo. "Muḥammad's Call Revisited: A Critical Approach to Muslim Tradition." M.A. Thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 1996.

Parunak, H. Van Dyke. "The Literary Architecture of Ezekiel's *Mar'ōt 'Ĕlōhîm*." *JBL* 99 (1980): 61-74.

Patrick, Dale. *The Rhetoric of Revelation in the Hebrew Bible: Overtures to Biblical Theology*. Augsburg: Fortress Publishers, 1999.

Paulsen, David L. "Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses," *HTR* 83 (1990): 105-116;

Idem. "Reply to Kim Paffenroth's Comment," *HTR* 86 (1993): 235-39.

Idem. "The Doctrine of Divine Embodiment: Restoration, Judeo-Christian, and Philosophical Perspectives." *BYU Studies* 35 (1995-96): 7-94.

Pavlin, John. "Sunni *kalām* and theological controversies." In Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (edd.). *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 2 vols. London, New York: Routledge, 1996. 1:105-117.

Payne, J. Barton. *The Theology of the Older Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962.

Pax, Elpidius. *Epiphaneia: Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Beitrg zur biblischen Theogie*. Munich: Karl Zink Verlag, 1955.

Pease, Arthur Stanely. "Some Aspects of Invisibility." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 53 (1942): 1-36.

Peters, F.E. *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994.
Idem. "The Quest of the Historical Muhammad." *IJMES* 23 (1991): 291-315.

Idem. *The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, Islam*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Idem. "The Origins of Islamic Platonism: The School Tradition." In Parviz Morewedge (ed.). *Islamic Philosophical Theology*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979. 14-45.

Idem. "Hellenism and the Near East." *Biblical Archaeologist* (Winter 1983): 33-39.

Idem. *Allah's Commonwealth. A History of Islam in the Near East 600-1200 A.D.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973.

Peterson Daniel C. and Stephen D. Ricks. "The Throne Theophany/Prophetic Call of Muḥammad." In Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Perry, and Andrew Hedges (edd.), *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson.* Provo, Utah: The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies at Brigham Young University, 2000: 323-337.

Phinney, D. Nathan. "The Prophetic Objection in Ezekiel IV 14 and its Relation to Ezekiel's Call." *VT* 55 (2005): 75-87.

Plessner, Martin. "Muḥammad's Clandestine 'Umra in the Ḏu 'l-Qaʿda 8 H. and Sūra 17, 1," *Rivista Degli Studi Orientali* 32 (1957): 525-30.

Polak, Frank. "Theophany and Mediator: The Unfolding of a Theme in the Book of Exodus," in W. H. Schmidt (ed.), *Studies in the Book of Exodus: redaction, reception, interpretation* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996) 113-147.

Polley, Max E. "Hebrew Prophecy within the Council of Yahweh, Examined in its Ancient Near Eastern Setting." In Carl D. Evans, William W. Hallo, John B. White (edd.). *Scripture in context: essays on the comparative method.* Pittsburg: Pickwick Press, 1980. 141-156.

Pope, Marvin H. and Jeffrey H. Tigay. "A Description of Baal." *UF* 3 (1971): 117-129.

Porter, J.R. "Muhammad's Journey to Heaven," *Numen* 21 (1974): 64-80.

Preuss, Horst Dietrich. *Old Testament Theology.* Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991.

Pritchard, James B. *The Ancient Near East in Pictures, Relating to the Old Testament.* Princeton: Princeton university Press, 1954.

Al-Qāḍī, Wadād. "The Religious Foundation of Late Umayyad Ideology and Practice." In Manuela Marín and Mercedes García-Arenal (edd.), *Saber religioso y poder pol ítico en el Islam: actas del simposio internacional, Granada, 15-18 octubre 1991.* Madrid: Agencia Española de Cooperaci on Internacional, 1994. 231-274.

Quispel, Gilles. "Ezekiel 1:26 in Jewish Mysticism," *VC* 34 (1980): 1-13.

von Rad, Gerhard. *Old Testament Theology.* 2 vols. Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd. 1965. 2:50-69.

Idem. *Studies in Deuteronomy.* Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953.

Rahbar, Daud. "Relation of Muslim Theology to the Qur'ān," *MW* 51 (1961): 44-49.

Rahman, Fazlur. "Prophethood and Revelation." In idem, *Major Themes of the Qur'ān*. Minneapolis and Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980. Chapter Five.

Idem. "The Qur'ānic Concept of God, the Universe and Man," *IS* 6(1967): 1-19.

Reventlow, Henning Graf. *Liturgie und prophetisches Ich bei Jeremia*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1963.

Reeves, John C. *Bible and Qur'ān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

Idem. "Toward a Rapprochement between Bible and Qur'ān," *Religious Studies News-SBL Edition* 2.9 (December 2001) at http://www.sbl-site.org/Newsletter/12_2001/ReevesFull.htm.

Rendtorff, Rolf. "The Concept or Revelation," in *Revelation as History*. Edited by Wolfhart Pannenberg, in association with Rolf Rendtorff, Trutz Rendtorff, & Ulrich Wilkens. Translated from the German by David Granskou. 25-53.

Renehan, R. "On the Greek Origins of the Concepts Incorporeality and Immateriality." *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 21 (1980): 105-138.

Richter, Wolfgang. *Die sogenannten vorprophetischen Berufungsberichte: Eine literaturwissenschaftliche Studie zu 1 Sam 9, 1-10, 16, Ex 3f. und Ri 6, 11b-17*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970.

Idem. *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Richterbuch* Bonn: Peter Hanstein Verlag GmbH., 1963.

Ridderbos, J. *Deuteronomy*. Bible Students Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.

Ridderbos, N.H. "Die Theophanie in Ps. L 1-6." *OTS* 15 (1969): 213-26.

Ringgren, Helmer. *Israelite Religion*. London: SPCK, 1966.

Rippin, Andrew (ed.). *Blackwell Companion to the Qur'ān*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2006.

Idem. "The Qur'ān as Literature: Perils, Pitfalls and Prospects." *BBSMES* 10 (1983): 38-47.

Idem. "Interpreting the Bible through the Qur'ān." In G. Hawting and A. Shareef (edd.), *Approaches to the Qur'ān*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993: 249-59.

Rist, J.M. *Plotinus: The Road to Reality*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1967.
Ritter, Helmut. "Philologica II," *Der Islam* 17 (1928): 209ff.

Idem. *Das Meer Der Seele*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955 (= *The Ocean of the Soul: Man, the World and God in the Stories of Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār*. Translated and Edited John O'Kane and Bernd Radtke. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003.

Robbins, Vernon K. and Gordon D. Newby. "The Relation of the Qur'ān and the Bible." In John C. Reeves (ed.), *Bible and Qur'ān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

Roberts, J. J. M. "Divine Freedom and Cultic Manipulation in Israel and Mesopotamia," in idem, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Collected Essays*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2002: 72-85.

Robinson, Bernard P. "Moses at the Burning Bush." *JSOT* 75 (1997) 107-122.

Robinson, Chase F. "Reconstructing Early Islam: Truth and Consequences." In Herbert Berg (ed.), *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*. Leiden: Brill, 2003: 102-134.

Robinson, H.W. "The Council of Yahweh," *JTS* 45 (1944): 151-157.

Idem. "Hebrew Psychology." In Arthur S. Peake (ed.), *The People and the Book: Essays on the Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925.

Rofé, Alexander. "Israelite Belief in Angels in the Pre-Exilic Period as Evidenced by Biblical Traditions." Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, 1969.

Rose, H.J. "Divine Disguises." *HTR* 49 (1956): 62-72.

Ross, James F. "The Prophet as Yahweh's Messenger." In Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson (edd.), *Israel's prophetic heritage; essays in honor of James Muilenburg*. New York, Harper [1962]. 98-107.

Roux, Georges. *Ancient Iraq*. Third Edition. London and New York: Penguin Books, 1992.

Rowland, Christopher. *The Open Heaven: a Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and E arly Christianity*. London : SPCK, 1982.

Idem. "The Visions of God in Apocalyptic Literature," *JSJ* 10 (1979): 137-154.

Rubin, Uri. "The Shrouded Messenger: On the Interpretation of *al-muzzammil* and *al-muddaththir*." *JSAI* 16 (1993): 96-107.

Idem. "*Iqra' Bi-smi Rabbika...!* Some Notes on the Interpretation of *Sūrat al-'Alaq* (vs. 1-5)." *IOS* 13 (1993): 213-230.

Idem. *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims. A Textual Analysis*. Princeton, New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 1995.

Idem. "Prophets and Prophethood." *EQ* 4: 294ff.

Sabourin, Leopold. "The Biblical Cloud: Terminology and Traditions." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 4 (1974): 290-312.

Saeed, Abdullah. "Rethinking 'Revelation' as a Precondition for Reinterpreting the Qur'an: A Qur'anic Perspective." *JQS* 1 (1999): 93-114.

Idem. "The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scriptures." *MW* 92 (2002): 419-436.

Savran, George W. "Theophany as Type Scene," *Prooftexts* 23 (2003): 119-149.

Idem. *Encountering the Divine: Theophany in Biblical Narrative.* London and New York: T&T Clark International, 2005.

Schafer, Peter, Margarete Schlüter and Hans Georg von Mutius (edd.). *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur.* Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1981.

Schibli, Hermann S. "Origen, Didymus, and the Vehicle of the Soul." *Origeniana quinta* (1989): 381-391.

Schimmel, Annemarie. *And Muhammad is His Messenger.* Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985. 159-175.

Schmid, Herbert, "Gottesbild, Gottesschau und Theophanie," *Judaica* 1 (1967): 241-254.

Schmidt, Brian B. "The Aniconic Tradition: On Reading Images and Viewing Texts." In Diana Vikander Edelman (ed.), *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996.

Schmidt N.F. and P.J. Nel. "Theophany as type-scene in the Hebrew Bible," *Journal for Semitics* 11 (2002): 256-281.

Schoedel, William R. "Enclosing, Not Enclosed: The Early Christian Doctrine of God." In W.R. Schoedel and R.L. Wilcken (edd.), *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Tradition. In Honerem R.M. Grant.* Théologie historique 54; Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1979: 75-86.

Schoeler, G. "Foundations for a New Biography of Muhammad: the Production and Evaluation of the Corpus of Traditions according to 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr." In Herbert Berg (ed.), *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins.* Leiden, 2003: 21-28.

Idem. *Charakter und Authentie der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds.* Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996.

Schoors, A. "A Tiqqun Soperim in Genesis XVI 13B?" *VT* 32 (1982): 494-495.

Scott, J.M. "The Triumph of God in 2 Cor 2.14: Additional Evidence of Merkabah Mysticism in Paul." *NTS* 42 (1996): 260-281.

Schrieke, B. "Die Himmelsreise Muhammeds," *Der Islam* 6 (1915-16): 1-30.

Schrieke, B. and J. Horovitz, "Mi'rādj: In Islamic exegesis and in the popular and mystical tradition of the Arab world," *EI²* 7:97.

Schwartz, Baruch J. "The Priestly Account of the Theophany and Lawgiving at Sinai." *In* Michael A. Fox et al. (edd.), *Texts, Temples and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran.* Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1996.103-134.

Idem. "What Really Happened at Mount Sinai? Four Biblical Answers to One Question." *BR* 13 (October 1997): 21-30, 46.

Seal, Morris S. *Muslim Theology: A Study of Origins with Reference to the Church Fathers.* London: Luzac and Company Limited, 1964.

Idem. *Qur'an and Bible: Studies in Interpretation and Dialogue.* London: Croom Helm, 1984: 71-77.

Seebass, H."Zum Text von Gen. XVI 13B," *VT* 21 (1971): 254-256.

Segal, Alan F. "Paul and the Beginning of Jewish Mysticism." In John J. Collins and Michael Fishbane (edd.) *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys.* New York: State University of New York Press, 1995: 95-122.

Idem, *Paul the Convert. The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee.* New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1990: 35-71.

Idem. "The Risen Christ and the Angelic Mediator Figures in Light of Qumran." In James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls.* New York: Doubleday, 1992: 302-328

Segal, Peretz. "The Divine Verdict of Leviticus X 3." *VT* 29 (1989): 91-95.

Seitz, Christopher R. "The Divine Council: Temporal Transition and the New Prophecy in the Book of Isaiah." *JBL* 109 (1990): 229-247.

Sell, E. "Inspiration (Muslim)." *ERE* 7:354-357.

Sellheim, Rudolf, "Muhammeds Erstes Offenbarungserlebnis: Zum Problem müdlicher und schriftlicher Überlieferung im 1./7. und 2./8. Jahrhundert." *JSAI* 10 (1987): 1-16.

Sells, Michael. "Ascension." *EQ* 1:176-180.

Idem. *Approaching the Qur'ān: The Early Revelations*. Ashland, Oregon: White Cloud Press, 1999.

Seow, C.L. "Face פנים" *DDD* 322-25.

Sfar, Mondher. *Le Coran, la Bible et l'Orient ancient*. Paris: Cassini, 1997.

Sharp, Carolyn J. "Dancing Across the Seams: The Interplay of Public and Private Theophany." *Church Divinity* (1991-1992): 12-21.

Sherif, Faruq. *A Guide to the contents of the Qur'ān*. Reading: Garnet Publishing, Ltd., 1995.

Siddiqi, Muzammil H. "God: A Muslim View." In John Hick and Edmund S. Meltzer (edd.), *Three Faiths – One God: A Jewish, Christian, Muslim Encounter*. Hampshire: Macmillan, 1989. 63-75.

Simon, Uriel. *Reading Prophetic Narratives*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997.

Singh, Nagendra Kr. *Unseen God*. Chitli Qabar, Delhi: Adam Publisher & Distributors, 1997.

Sirat, C. "Un midraš juif en habit musulman: La Vision de Moïse sur le mont Sinaï." *RHR* 168 (1965): 15-28.

Sister, M."Die Typen der prophetischen Visionen in der Bibel." *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 78 (1934): 399-430.

Slivniak, Dmitri. "Our God(s) is One: Biblical אלהים and the Indeterminacy of Meaning." *SJOT* 19 (2005): 5-23.

Smith, Henry Preserved Smith. *The Bible and Islam: The Influence of the Old and New Testaments on the Religion of Mohammed*. New York: Scribner's Sons, 1897. 166-198.

Smith, Mark, S. " 'Seeing God' in the Psalms: The Background to the Beatific Vision in the Hebrew Bible," *CBQ* 50 (1988): 171-183.

Idem. "Remembering God: Collective Memory in Israelite Religion," *CBQ* 64 (2002): 631-651.

Idem. "Divine Form and Size in Ugaritic and Pre-Exilic Israelite Religion." *ZAW* 100 (1988): 424-427.

Idem. *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*. Second Edition. Grand Rapids, MI.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, and Dearborn, MI: Dove Booksellers, 2002.

Idem. *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Smith, Morton. "The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East." *JBL* 71 (1952): 135-47. Reprinted in Frederick E. Greenspahn (ed.), *Essential Papers on Israel and the Ancient Near East*. New York and London: New York University Press, 1991. 4965.

Smith, Paul Allen. "An Investigation of the Relationship of Theophanies to God's Concealment By Clouds in the Old Testament." Ph.D. dissertation. New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1994.

Sommer, Benjamin D. "Conflicting Constructions of Divine Presence in the Priestly Tabernacle." *Biblical Interpretation* 9 (2001): 41-63.

Stanton, H. U. Weitbrecht. *The Teaching of the Qur'ān*. London: Central Board of Missions and Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1919.

Staton, Jr., Cecil P. " 'And Yahweh Appeared...' A Study of the Motifs of 'Seeing Dos' and of 'God's Appearing' in Old Testament Narratives." Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1988.

Stern, David. "*Imitatio Hominis*: Anthropomorphism and the Character(s) of God in Rabbinic Literature." *Prooftexts* 12 (1992): 1-

Devin J. Stewart. *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy: Twelver Shiite Responses to the Sunni Legal System*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998.

Strawn, Brent A. "To See/Not See God: A Biblical-Theological Cutting on The Knowability of God." *Koinonia* 7 (1995): 157-180.

Streck, M. *Assurbanipal und die letzen assyrischen Könige*. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1916.

Strothmann, R. "Tashbīh." In *EI¹*, 4:685-687.

Stroumsa, Gedaliahu. "The Incorporeality of God: Context and Implications of Origen's Position." *Religion* 13 (1983): 345-358.

Stroumsa, Sarah. "The Signs of Prophecy: The Emergence and Early Development of a Theme in Arabic Theological Literature." *HTR* 78 (1985): 101-14.

Idem. "Voiles et Mirors: Visions surnaturelles en théologie Judéo-Arabe médiévale." In É. Chaumont, et al (edd.), *Autour du Regard. Mélanges Gimaret*. Paris: Peeters, 2003. 77-96.

327

Subhan, Abdus. "Muʿtazilite View on Beatific Vision," *Islamic Culture* 15:4 (1941): 422-428.

Idem. "Al-Jahm bin Sawan and His Philosophy." *Islamic Culture* 11 (1937): 221-227

Subtelny, Maria E. "The Tale of the Four Sages who Entered the *Pardes*: A Talmudic Enigma from a Persian Perspective." *JSQ* 11 (2004): 3-58.

Idem. "Le motif du trône et les rapports entre mystique islamique et mystigue juive." In Mohammad Ali Amir–Moezzi, Christian Jambet, and Pierre Lory (edd.), *Henry Corbin: Philosophies et sagesses des religions du Livre.* Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences Religieuses, 126; Brepols, 2005 : 195–212.

Surty, Muhammad Ibrahim H.I. "The Conception of God In Muslim Tradition." *Islamic Quarterly* 37 (1993): 124-140.

Schwarz, M. "The Letter Al-Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī." *Oriens* 20 (1967): 15-30.

Sweetman, J. Windrow. *Islam and Christian Theology*. 3 Parts, 4 vols. London: Lutterworth Press, 1947. I.2:220-223.

Talmon, Shemaryahu. "Textual Criticism: The Ancient Versions." In A.D.H. Mayes (ed.), *Text in Context: Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000: 141-170.

Idem. "Revelation in biblical Times." *Hebrew Studies* 26 (1985): 53-70.

Taylor, J. G. *Yahweh and the Sun: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sun Worship in Ancient Israel.* JSOTSup 111; Sheffield Academic Press, 1993.

Teixidor, Javier. *The Pagan God: Popular Religion in the Greco-Roman Near East.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977.

Tengström, Sven. "Les visions prophétigues du trône de Dieu et leur arrière-plan dans l'Ancien Testament." In Marc Philonenko (ed.). *Le Trône de Dieu.* Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck). 1993. 28-99.

Terrien, Samuel. *The Elusive Presence: Towards a New Biblical Theology*. San Francisco, 1978.

Teske, S.J., Roland J. "The Aim of Augustine's Proof That God truly Is." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 26 (1986): 253-268.

Idem. "St. Augustine and the Vision of God." In Joseph C. Schnaubelt, Frederick van Fleteren, and Joesph Reino (edd.), *Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue (Collectanea Augustiniana).* New York: Peter Lang Pub Inc, 1994: 287-308.

Thompson, Marianne Meye. " 'God's Voice You Have Never Heard, God's Form You Have Never Seen':The Characterization of God in the Gospel of John." *Semeia* 63 (1993): 177-204.

Thompson, Thomas L. "How Yahweh Became God: Exodus 3 and 6 and the Heart of the Pentateuch," *JSOT* 68 (1995): 57-74.

Idem. "The Intellectual Matrix of Early Biblical Narrative: Inclusive Monotheism in Persian Period Palestine." In Diana Vikander Edelman (ed.), *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996: 107-24.

Tidwell, N.L.A. *"WĀ'ŌMAR* (Zech 3:5) and the Genre of Zechariah's Fourth Vision." *JBL* 94 (1975): 343-55.

Toorn, Karel van der (ed.), *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Anicent Near East*. CBET, 21; Leuven: Peeters, 1997.

Idem. "God (1) אלהים," in Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, Pieter W. van der Horst (edd.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*. Second Edition; Leiden; Boston: Brill; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999: 352-365.

Torczyner, H. "The Firmament and the Clouds: Rāqîᵃ' and Shehāqîm." *StTh* 1 (1948): 188-96.

Torrey, Charles C. *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*. New York: Bloch, 1933.

Tottoli, Robert. *Biblical Prophets in the Qur'ān and Muslim Literature*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2002.

Tournay, Raymond Jacques. *Seeing and Hearing God with the Psalms: The Prophetic Liturgy of the Second Temple in Jerusalem*. Translated by J. Edward Crowley. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991.

Tov, Emanuel. *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press and Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1992.

Idem, "Textual Criticism (OT)," *ABD* 6:393-412.

Tritton, A.S. *Muslim Theology*. London: Luzac & Company LTD., 1947.

Idem. *Revelation And Reason In Islam*. London: George Allen & Anura Ltd., 1957.

Trudinger, Paul. " 'Two Whom Then Will you Liken God?' (A Note on the Interpretation of Isaiah XL 18-20)." *VT* 17 (1967): 220-225.

Tsevat, Matitiahu. "Hagar and the Birth of Ishmael." In idem, *The Meaning of the Book of Job and Other Biblical Studies: Essays on the Literature and Religion of the Hebrew Bible*. New York: Ktav Pub. House; Dallas: Institute for Jewish Studies, 1980: 53-76.

Tucker, William F. "Bayān b. Samʿān and the Bayāniyya: Shīʿite Extremists of Umayyad Iraq," *MW* 45 (1975): 241-53.

Idem. "Rebels and Gnostics: Muġīra b. Saʿīd and the Muġīriyya." *Arabica* 22 (1975): 33-47.

Tuft, Anthony Keith. "The Origins and Development of the Controversy over Ru'ya in Medieval Islam and its Relation to Contemporary Visual Theory." PhD Thesis, unpublished, University of California, Los Angeles, 1979

Idem. "The *Ru'ya* Controversy and the Interpretation of Qur'ān Verse VII (*Al-A'raf*):143," *Hamdard Islamicus* 7 (1983), 3-41.

Uehlinger, Christoph. "Israelite Aniconism in Context." *Bib* 77 (1996): 543-45.

Uffenheimer Binyamin, "Biblical Theology and Monotheistic Myth," *Immanuel* 14 (Spring 1982): 7-25.

Idem. "Myth and Reality in Ancient Israel," in S.N. Eisenstadt (ed.), *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986) 135-168.

Idem. *Early Prophecy in Israel*. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1999.

Ulrich, Eugene. "Qumran and the Canon of the Old Testament." In *The Biblical Canon*. Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2003. 57-80.

Idem. "The Text of the Hebrew Scripture at the Time of Hillel and Jesus." In A. Lemaire (ed.), *Congress Volume Basel 2001*. Leiden: Brill, 2002. 85-108.

Idem. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999.

Vajda, Georges. "Le Problème de la Vision de Dieu (*Ru'ya*) d'après quelques auteurs šīʿites duodécimains," in *Le Shīʿisme Imânite. Colloque de Strasbourg (6-9 mai 1968)*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970.

Idem. "Le Problèm de la Vision de Dieu D'Après Yūsuf al-Baṣīr." In S.M. Stern, Albert Hourani, and Vivian Brown (edd.), *Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition. Essays presented by his friends and pupils to Richard Walzer on his seventieth birthday*. Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1972. 473-489.

Van Seters, J. *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983.

Idem. *The Life of Moses. The Yahwist as Historia in Exodus-Numbers*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994.

Idem. "The Primeval Histories of Greece and Israel Compared." *ZAW* 100 (1988): 1-22.

Vander Kam, J. "The Theophany of Enoch I 3b-7, 9," *VT* 23 (1973): 129-150.

Vernant, Jean-Pierre. "Dim Body, Dazzling Body." In Michel Feher, Ramona Naddaff and Nadia Tazi (edd.), *Fragments for a History of the Human Body: Part One*. New York: Zone, 1989: 19-47

Versnel, H.S. "What Did Ancient Man See when He saw a God? Some Reflections on Greco-Roman Epiphany." In Dirk van der Plas (ed.), *Effigies Dei: Essays on the History of Religions*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987: 43-55.
Vieweger, Dieter. *Die Spezifik der Berufungsberichte Jeremias und Ezechiels im Umfeld ähnlicher Einheiten des Alten Testaments*. Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1986.

Vincent, Jean Marcel, "Aspekte der Begegnung mit Gott im Alten Testament: Die Erfahrung der göttlichen Gegenwart im Schauen Gottes." *RB* 103 (1996): 5-39.

Vitestam, Gösta. " 'Arsh and kursī. An Essay on the Throne Traditions in Islam." In Egon Keck, Svend Søndergaard, Ellen Wulff (edd.), *Living Waters: Scandinavian orientalistic studies presented to Frede Løkkegaard on his seventy-fifth birthday, January 27th 1990*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1990) 369-378.

Vogels, W. "Les récits de vocation des prophètes." *Nouvelle Revue Theologique* 95:1 (1973): 3-24.

Wagtendonk, Kees. "Images in Islam: Discussion of a Paradox." In Dirk van Der Plas (ed.), *Effigies Dei*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987. 112-129

Idem. *Fasting in the Koran*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968.

Waldman, R. "New Approaches to 'Biblical' Materials in the Qur'ān." *MW* 75 (1985): 1-16.

Wansbrough, John. *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Idem. *Qur'anic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Wasserstrom, Steve. "The Moving Finger Writes: Mughīra b. Saʿīd's Islamic Gnosis and the Myths of its Rejection." *HR* 25 (1985): 1-29.

Watt, W. Montgomery. *Muhammad at Mecca*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953. 39-49.

Idem. *Islamic Revelation in the Modern World*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1969.

Idem. "The Nature of Muhammad's Prophethood." *The Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* 8 (1987): 77-84.

Idem. *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998.

Idem. "Some Muslim Discussions of Anthropomorphism," in idem, *Early Islam: Collected Articles*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990. 86-93.

Idem. "Created in His Image: A Study in Islamic Theology," idem, *Early Islam: Collected Articles*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990. 94-100.

Idem. "ʿAkīda," in *EI²*. 1:332-336.

Idem. *Islamic Creeds, A Selection*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994.

Idem. *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1962.

Watt, W. Montgomery and Alford T. Welch. *Der Islam: I Mohammed und die Frühzeit – Islamisches Recht – Religiöses Leben* 2 vols. Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1980.

Weinfeld, Moshe. *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972.

Idem. "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient near East." *JAOS* 90 (1970): 184-203.

Weiser, Artur. "Zur Frage nach den Beziehungen der Psalmen zum Kult: Die Darstellung der Theophanie in den Psalmen und im Festkult." In W. Baumgartner et al (edd.) *Festschrift Alfred Bertholet zum 80. Geburtstag*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1950: 513-31.

Idem. *Psalms: A Commentary*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962.

Welch, Alford T. "Muhammad's Understanding of Himself: The Koranic Data," in *Islam's Understanding of Itself*. Malibu, Calif.: Undena Publications, 1982. XX.

Wenham, G.J. "The Symbolism of the Animal Rite in Genesis 15: A Response to G.F. Hasel, JSOT 19 (1981) 61-78." *JSOT* 22 (1982): 134-37.

Wensinck, A.J. "The Refused Dignity." In T.W. Arnold and Reynold A. Nicholson (edd.), *A Volume of Oriental Studies, Presented to Edward G. Browne*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922. 491-499.

Idem. "Muḥammad and the Prophets." In Uri Rubin (ed.), *The Life of the Muḥammad*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, XXXX. Translation of "Muhammad und die Propheten," *Acta Orientalia* 2 (Oslo, 1924) 168-198 by Melanie Richter-Bernburg.

Idem. *The Muslim Creed*. New Delhi: Oriental Reprint, 1932, 1979.

Idem. "The Ideas of Western Semites Concerning the Navel of the Earth." *Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenshapen te Amsterdam*. Afdeeling Letterkunde, n.s. 17.1. (1916).

Idem. "The Ocean in the Literature of Western Semites." *Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenshapen te Amsterdam*. Afdeeling Letterkunde, n.s. 19.2. (1918).

Idem. "Tree and Bird as Cosmological Symbols in Western Asia." *Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenshapen te Amsterdam*. Afdeeling Letterkunde, n.s. 22 (1921).

Wensinck, A.J. and Andrew Rippin. "Waḥy." *EI²* 11:53-56.

Werblowsky, R.J. Zwi. "Anthropomorphism." In *ER¹* 1:318-19.

Wesselius, Jan-Wim. "Discontinuity, Congruence and the Making of the Hebrew Bible," *SJOT* 13 (1999): 24-77.

Idem, *The Origin of the History of Israel: Herotus' Histories as Blueprint for the First Books of the Bible*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002.

Wessels, Anton. "The Experience of the Prophet Mohammed." In Jerald D. Gort et al (edd.), *On Sharing Religious Experience: Possibilities of Interfaith Mutuality*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992. 228-244.

Wessner, Mark D. "Toward a Literary Understanding of Moses and the Lord 'Face to Face' (פנים-אל-פנים) in Exodus 33:7-11." *Restoration Quarterly* 44 (2002):109-116.

Westermann, Claus. *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, LTD, 1981.

Idem. *God's Angels Need No Wings*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.

Idem. *Genesis 12-36: A Continrntal Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

Wheeler, Brannon. " 'This is the Torah That God Sent Down to Moses': Some Early Islamic Views of the Qur'ān and Other Revealed Books." In Vassilios Christides and Theodore Papadopoullos (edd.), *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Graeco-Oriental*

and African Studies Nicosia 30 April – 5 May 1996. Nicosia: Bureau of the History of Cyprus, 2000: 571-604.

White, Hugh C. "The Divine Oath in Genesis." *JBL* 92 (1973): 166-179.

Whybray, R.N. *The Heavenly Counsellor in Isaiah xl 13-14: A Study of the sources of the Theology of Deutero-Isaiah*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.

Widengren, Geo. *Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, and his Ascension*. Uppasala and Wiesbaden, 1955.

Idem. *The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book*. Uppsala and Leipzig, 1950.

Idem. "Holy Book and Holy Tradition in Islam." In F.F. Bruce and E.G. Rupp (edd.), *Holy Book and Holy Tradition: International Colloquium Held in the Faculty of Theology, University of Manchester*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968. 210-236.

Idem. *The Great Vohu Manah and the Apostle of God: Studies in Iranian and Manichaean Religion*. Uppsala: A.-B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1945.

Widmer, Michael. *Moses, God, and the Dynamics of Intercessory Prayer. A Study of Exodus 32-34 and Numbers 13-14*. Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe 8; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004.

Wild, Stefan. "'We Have Sent Down to Thee the Book With Truth...' Spatial and temporal implications of the Qur'ānic concepts of *nuzūl, tanzīl*, and *'inzāl*," in idem (ed.), *The Qur'an as Text*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996. 137-153.

Wildberger, Hans. *Isaiah 1-12. A Commentary*. Translated by Thomas H. Trapp. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

Williams, Wesley. "Aspects of the Creed of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal: A Study of Anthropomorphism is Early Islamic Discourse." *IJMES* 34 (2002): 441-463.

Willis, Timothy M. "Yahweh's Elders (Isa 24,23): Senior Officials of the Divine Court," *ZAW* 103 (1991): 375-85.

Wilson, Ian. *Out of the Midst of the Fire: Divine Presence in Deuteronomy*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995.

Windsor, Gwyneth. "Theophany: Traditions of the Old Testament," *Theology* 75 (1972): 411-416.

Wisnovsky, Robet. "Heavenly Book." In *EQ* 2:412-414.

Wolfson, Elliot R. *Through a Speculum that Shines. Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Idem. "Judaism and Incarnation: The Imaginal Body of God," in Tikva Frymer-Kensky et al (edd.), *Christianity in Jewish Terms*. Boulder, CO.: Westview, 2000. 239-254.

Wolfson, Harry A. *Philosophy of the Kalam*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976.

Idem. "Maimonides on the Unity and Incorporeality of God." *JQR* 56 (1965): 112-136.

Wyatt, Nicholas. "Degrees of Divinity: Some mythical and ritual aspects of West Semitic kingship." *UF* 31 (1999): 853-87.

Idem. "David's Census and the Tripartite Theory." *VT* 40 (1990): 352-60.

Idem. "Near Eastern Echoes of Āryan Tradition." *Studi e Materiali Di Storia Delle Religioni* 55 (1989): 5-29.

Yamauchi, Edwin M. "Anthropomorphism in Hellenism and in Judaism." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 127 (1970): 212-222.

Idem. "Anthropomorphism in Ancient Religions." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 125 (1968): 29-44.

Young, Frances M. "The God of the Greeks and the Nature of Religious Language." In William R. Schoedel and Robert L. Wilekn (eds.), *Early Christian literature and the classical intellectual tradition. In Honorem Robert M. Grant*. Theologie historique 53; Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1979: 45-74

Zaki, Yaqub. "The Qur'an and Revelation." In Dan Cohn-Sherbok (ed.), *Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991. 41-54.

idem, "The Concept of Revelation in Islam." In Henry Thompson (ed.), *Unity in Diversity: Essays in Religion*. Barrytown, NY: The Seminary, 1984. 59-71

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. *Religion and Politics Under the Early 'Abbāsids*. Leiden: Brill, 1997.

Zimmerli, Walther. *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezeliel, Chapters 1-24*. Translated by Ronald E. Clements. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979. 97-110.

Idem. "Visionary experience in Jeremiah." In Richard Coggins, Anthony Phillips and Michael Knibb (edd.). *Israel's Prophetic Tradition: Essays in Honour of Peter R. Ackroyd*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1982. 95-118.

Idem. "I am Yahweh," in idem, *I am Yahweh*. Edited by Walter Brueggemann and translated by Douglas W. Scott. Atlanta: John Knox, 1982: 1-28.

Zwemer, Samuel M. "The Allah of Islam and the God of Jesus Christ." *Theology Today* 3 (1946): 64-77

Zwettler, Michael. "A Mantic Manifesto: The Sūra of 'The Poets' and the Qur'ānic Foundations of Prophetic Authority." In James L. Kugel (ed.), *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990. 75-119.

Idem. "The Poet and the Prophet: Towards understanding the evolution of a narrative." *JSAI* 5 (1984): 313-387.

Idem. *The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1978.