Between *History* and *Tafsīr*: Notes on al-Ṭabarī's Methodological Strategies

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The present article seeks to contribute to a more detailed understanding of how concepts of genre affected the material that was included by Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) in his historical and exegetical works.* The initial section of al-Ṭabarī's *History*, which was made public in 294/906–907,[1] covers the period from the creation of time itself to the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad. Interspersed with reports on Persian and Arab kings, the *History* therefore includes a large amount of material dealing with the Israelites and with other aspects of Biblical history. This material was potentially of similar relevance to al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of the Qur'an, published (in the form of public lectures) some twenty years earlier, from 270/883–884 onwards.[2] Many episodes from early history are indeed reflected both in the *Tafsīr* and in the preliminary volumes of al-Ṭabarī's *History*.

Numerous areas of overlap between the two sources are remarked upon by Franz Rosenthal in his annotated translation of the first part of the *History*. Sometimes the material overlap recorded by Rosenthal is straightforward. The footnotes to 'The Pen', 'The Divine Throne', 'The Days of the Week', 'The Six-Day Work of Creation', and 'Night and Day—Sun and Moon', all contain references to precise duplicate passages, some of them relatively lengthy,[3] that are also provided in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*. The same situation occurs in the footnotes to 'The Story of Iblīs' and various subsections of the Adam narrative.[4] 'Cain and Abel', again, contains material which is reproduced, in its entirety, in the *Tafsīr*,[5] as do the ᶜAbd al-Ḥārith narratives (concerning the deaths of Adam and Eve's first-born children),[6] and the matter of the covenant made with Adam's progeny.[7]

In other places, Rosenthal's footnotes demonstrate very minor textual differences between what would otherwise appear to be parallel traditions. This is evident,

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for example, in statements such as Rosenthal's 'The quotation of the tradition in *Tafsīr*, XXIX, 11, replaces him [Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb] with a certain Muḥammad b. ᶜAbdallāh al-Ṭūsī who also appears unidentifiable';[8] 'In *Tafsīr*, I, 153 (*ad* Qur. 2:29), al-Muthannā takes his [ᶜAlī b. Dāwūd's] place in the *isnād*, but ᶜAlī b. Dāwūd appears in *Tafsīr*, XXX, 29 (*ad* Qur. 79:29–32)';[9] or '*Tafsīr*, XII, 4 (*ad* Qur. 11:7) contains a version of the tradition whose *isnād* omits the first two links mentioned above'.[10] Sometimes the differences are a little larger. At one point Rosenthal remarks, 'The last two sentences do not appear in the quotation of this tradition in *Tafsīr*, XII, 4';[11] at another, he comments that '*Tafsīr*, I, 170, has two slightly different traditions with different *isnād*s which seem to have been combined here'.[12]

Elsewhere, however, the disparity between the two sources would appear to be less easily qualifiable. Rosenthal observes, 'In *Tafsīr*, XXIX, 11f, the tradition quoted here does not seem to have been accorded the prominence it has here.'[13] With regard to *ᶜaynin ḥamiʾatin* (Q. 18:86), Rosenthal states that the *History* defines *ḥamiʾa* solely as 'black clay', while the *Tafsīr* admits the alternative reading of *ḥāmiya*, 'hot'.[14] At the discussion of Noah's oven 'that boiled with the punishment in India', Rosenthal highlights the fact that, in the *Tafsīr*, 'Ṭabarī refers rather unenthusiastically to this interpretation', yet reproduces it without comment in the *History*.[15]

It is evident that, while there are areas of overlap between the two sources, this in no way suggests a general rule of transparent duplication. The precise nature of the disparity, in two works of different genres and foci, has yet to be defined. Peter Heath made a broad attempt to describe the methodological differences between the two sources as part of his 1989 article 'Creative Hermeneutics: A Comparative Analysis of Three Islamic Approaches'. This focusses on the Creation of Adam as treated by al-Ṭabarī (in both his *History* and the *Tafsīr*), in the *Miᶜrāj-nāma* of Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), and in the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* of Ibn al-ᶜArabī (d. 638/1240).[16] Of al-Ṭabarī's *History* and *Tafsīr*, Heath states that:[17]

> Although comparison indicates essential methodological similarities, they belong to different genres—exegesis and history—and therefore naturally reveal methodological divergences.

He posits the following guidelines for assessing the two sources. Al-Ṭabarī approaches his *Tafsīr* from a philological angle, analysing each word from a grammatical, a semantic, and/or a historical perspective, for which latter criterion material is selected for inclusion on the guiding principles of scholarly soundness and theological acceptability. The guiding impulse for the *History* is 'temporal narrative' and, accordingly, the majority of the grammatical and semantic material is put to one side. Meanwhile supplementary material, drawn from 'the immense exegetic and historiographical traditions which had accrued by his time',[18] is included by al-Ṭabarī

in his *History* in order to construct a coherent, and connected, historical narrative. Heath terms this 'the drive towards particularistic detail'.[19]

A preliminary investigation suggests, however, that while all of this is entirely true in general terms, the minor differences between the two sources are both less predictable than these broad parameters, and more intriguing. In his introduction to the *Tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī himself gives the following general description of his own methodology:[20]

> As for us, in setting forth its interpretation and clarifying its meanings and significations, we shall, God willing, compose a comprehensive book, which will incorporate everything which people need to know about this Book, and which will surpass all other books on this subject. In all of this we shall state whatever consensus has come down to us where there has been agreement concerning the Book of God, as well as disagreement where this has occurred, establishing the reasoning of each of the schools of thought among them, and finally indicating in the most succinct and brief manner possible that which seems to us to be correct.

In the introduction to his *History*, where his declared focus is on the history of kings, al-Ṭabarī's initial stated methodology is remarkably similar: again there is an attempt at comprehensiveness ('whatever information has reached us') but again this is alongside a stated aim to keep verbosity to a minimum ('an exhaustive treatment … makes books too long'):[21]

> In this book of mine, I shall mention whatever information has reached us about kings throughout the ages from when our Lord began the creation of His creation to its annihilation … Every one of them whom I shall mention in this book of mine will be mentioned in conjunction with his time but (only) summaries of the events in his day and age will be added, since an exhaustive treatment is not possible in a lifetime and makes books too long. This will be combined with references to the length of their natural life and the time of their death.

Al-Ṭabarī does not therefore provide any explicit elucidation of what a focus on the history of kings as opposed to a focus on the Qur'anic text entails.

In areas where al-Ṭabarī's subject matter spans both sources such a question does seem especially pertinent, and this is an issue that struck Mohammad Hassan Khalil in his 2008 article, 'A Closer Look at al-Ṭabarī's Accounts of the Khaybar Spoils, or the Intersection of Law, Historiography, and Exegesis', where he comments:[22]

> we find an apparent discrepancy of sorts in the reports by the same author, and we find this discrepancy simply by crossing genre lines.

Khalil, who was consciously building on Marco Schöller's 2000 study of parallel reports on the division of the al-Khaybar spoils in Muḥammad b. al-Sāʾib al-Kalbī's (d. 146/763) *Sīra* and *Tafsīr*, observes that while extant reports from al-Kalbī's *Sīra* have the booty going either to all the combatants, or to all the Muslims present, al-Kalbī's *Tafsīr* explicitly specifies the recipients of the booty as being the poor among the *muhājirūn*. As Schöller pointed out, this would appear to be in deliberate concordance with the phrasing of Q. 59:8 (*The poor emigrants who were driven from their homes and possessions, who seek God's favour and approval, those who help God and His messenger—these are the ones who are true*).[23] Meanwhile the *muhājirūn* themselves are named by al-Kalbī in his *Tafsīr* as those who were present at al-Ḥudaybiyya *or* those who returned from Ethiopia. The latter detail is not however carried forward into Ibn Hishām's recension of al-Kalbī's *Sīra*. Schöller concluded from this that there exists a broader tension between the legally 'orthodox' versions that are provided in *Sīra* reports, and the 'unorthodox' traditions that are present in early *Tafsīr*. Mohammad Hassan Khalil then extends this methodological enquiry into the later works of al-Ṭabarī and finds, again, that the detail of a required presence at al-Ḥudaybiyya is provided only in the historical account, presumably—he argues—for legal reasons. Here, then, a declared focus on history as opposed to *tafsīr* results in stricter parameters of legal precision.

In the following, an attempt will be made to expose al-Ṭabarī's editorial techniques with detailed reference to the parallel versions of the story of Adam and the Fall provided in the *History* and the *Tafsīr*.[24] The bulk of the cited anecdotes in the most immediately relevant section pertaining to the Fall of Adam within al-Ṭabarī's *History* consist solely of material that is duplicated in al-Ṭabarī's commentary on *But Satan made them slip* in Q. 2:36.[25] The duplicated material is not presented in the same order across the two sources, but the extent of overlap between the *History* and the *Tafsīr* is immediately striking. By contrast, however, the following material in the *History* displays very little overlap with the *Tafsīr*.

Section One of this article will, accordingly, focus on the section of the *History* dedicated to the Fall, exploring al-Ṭabarī's rationale for omitting elements of his exegesis of Q. 2:36 (*But Satan made them slip*) from his *History*, and assessing the impact of the different ordering of the material across the two genres. It will also draw upon the example of the preceding Creation of Eve, which similarly consists of rearranged exegetical material. Section Two will compare the repentance narratives, where there is limited overlap between the *History* and al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of Q. 2:37 (*Then Adam received some words from his Lord and He accepted his repentance*). The repentance narratives additionally include material that appears not to be cited in the *Tafsīr*, with some interspersed reports from al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of Q. 2:127 (*As Abraham and Ishmael built up the foundations of the House*), Q. 7:22 (*He lured them with lies. Their nakedness became exposed to them when they had eaten*

from the tree: they began to put together leaves from the garden to cover themselves), and Q. 20:117 (*Do not let him drive you out of the Garden and make you miserable*). Section Three will look at similarities and differences between the two genres solely in terms of al-Ṭabarī's editorial comments, where al-Ṭabarī's own digest of the material he cites is provided. Finally, Section Four will investigate the extent to which al-Ṭabarī's exegeses of the various relevant Qur'anic pericopes can be argued to each exhibit their own internal coherence, and the impact this has on the way material is selected for transfer into the *History*.

1. The Fall Section of the *History*

The account of the Fall of Adam in al-Ṭabarī's *History* is composed of material that is also cited in his commentary on *But Satan made them slip* in Q. 2:36, with some interspersed narratives from his commentary on *Get out, all of you! You are each other's enemy* in Q. 2:36, and *He said, 'All of you get out! You are each other's enemy'* in Q. 7:24. As can be seen from Table 1, of the reports—eighteen in total—provided in al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of *But Satan made them slip* (Q. 2:36), ten are reproduced verbatim in the *History*. After a short editorial interpolation, al-Ṭabarī then concludes his historical account of the Fall of Adam with three further reports, two of which also occur in his treatment of *Get out, all of you! You are each other's enemy* (again, Q. 2:36), and the last of which can similarly be found in his commentary on *He said, 'All of you get out! You are each other's enemy'* (Q. 7:24). Report is abbreviated to rpt in the table below and throughout.

Table 1: Showing the Transfer of Exegetical Material into the Historical Account of the Fall of Adam

AUTHORIAL INTRODUCTION: God tests Adam, and then afflicts him for his disobedience; Adam goes from a life of plenty to one of toil. God forbids Adam and his wife the fruit of one tree. *al-shayṭān* makes eating of that tree, and defying God, seem attractive to them. They eat and their nudity appears.[26]		
History rpt 1	*Tafsīr* rpt 6/18 for *But Satan made them slip* (Q. 2:36)	Iblīs needs the snake's help to get past the guards but has to leave the snake to gain Adam's attention; his goal is to expose their nudity, and he offers them kingship or immortality; Adam refuses to eat but Eve first concedes then persuades Adam, revealing their nudity.
History rpt 2	*Tafsīr* rpt 13/18 for *But Satan made them slip* (Q. 2:36)	All creatures bar the snake refuse to help Iblīs, and God removes the snake's clothes and legs as punishment.

History rpt 3	*Tafsīr* rpt 4/18 for *But Satan made them slip* (Q. 2:36)	God forbids Adam and his wife the tree of eternal life, Iblīs enters via the snake, takes from the tree, and offers it to Eve; she eats then offers it to Adam, who also eats; their nudity becomes apparent, Adam hides himself in a tree, God realises what has occurred and curses the earth, Eve, and the snake.
History rpt 4	*Tafsīr* rpt 15/18 for *But Satan made them slip* (Q. 2:36)	Adam and Eve are forbidden that one tree, *al-shayṭān* enters the snake, addresses Eve, and whispers to Adam; Eve bites the tree and it bleeds; their coverings fall away, they use leaves; God asks Adam why he paid heed to *al-shayṭān* and ate, and Adam blames Eve, Eve the snake, the snake Iblīs; God refers to Iblīs' cursed status, then curses Eve and the snake.
History rpt 5	*Tafsīr* rpt 7/18 for *But Satan made them slip* (Q. 2:36)	*al-shayṭān* enters as a legged creature, possibly a camel, which becomes a snake when it is cursed.
History rpt 6	*Tafsīr* rpt 8/18 for *But Satan made them slip* (Q. 2:36)	Some camels used to be *jinn*; Adam and Eve are forbidden the tree, *al-shayṭān* addresses Eve with Q. 7:20, Eve eats of the tree and commands Adam to do the same; the tree causes them to defecate, forbidden in Paradise, so Adam is evicted.
History rpt 7	*Tafsīr* rpt 9/18 for *But Satan made them slip* (Q. 2:36)	*al-shayṭān* overhears Adam wishing Paradise could be eternal.
History rpt 8	*Tafsīr* rpt 10/18 for *But Satan made them slip* (Q. 2:36)	*al-shayṭān* bemoans their mortality and claims that the tree will give them immortality, eternal rule, or turn them into angels.
History rpt 9	*Tafsīr* rpt 11/18 for *But Satan made them slip* (Q. 2:36)	*al-shayṭān* entices Eve to the tree, and she refuses to concede to Adam's desires until he too approaches the tree and eats of it; they both eat and their nudity becomes apparent; Adam flees, God discovers what has happened, Adam blames Eve, God curses Eve.
History rpt 10	*Tafsīr* rpt 12/18 for *But Satan made them slip* (Q. 2:36)	Eve gives Adam wine to drink in order for him to eat of the tree.

The rationale for why reports numbers 1–3, 5, 14, and 16–18 from al-Ṭabarī's commentary on *But Satan made them slip* in Q. 2:36 should not have been transferred into the context of the *History* is relatively easy to comprehend (and fully in accordance with Heath's preliminary analysis). As is demonstrated in Table 2 below, the first three traditions deal primarily with variant readings. Al-Ṭabarī explains the predominant reading of *azallahumā* for 'made them slip', stresses the extent of Iblīs' involvement, and rejects the reading *azālahumā*; Ibn ᶜAbbās defines *azallahumā*; al-Ṭabarī explains his rejection of *azālahumā*. These would therefore, arguably, be out of place within a historical framework. Report number 5, on the authority of Ibn ᶜAbbās, is a duplicate of the preceding report on the authority of Wahb b. Munabbih; again, one would expect the commentary to be the more inclusive, more authority- than content-driven of the two genres in this area. Report number 14, on the authority of Ibn Isḥāq and the People of the Torah (the snake addressed Adam rather than Eve) could feasibly be argued to be of marginal importance.

Table 2: Showing al-Ṭabarī's Commentary on *But Satan made them slip* in Q. 2:36

Utilised in Historical Account	Omitted from Historical Account
	AL-ṬABARĪ: predominant reading of *azallahumā*, stresses the extent of Iblīs' involvement; rejects the reading *azālahumā.*
	IBN ᶜABBĀS: defines *azallahumā*.
	AL-ṬABARĪ: explains his rejection of *azālahumā*.
WAHB B. MUNABBIH: God forbids Adam and Eve the tree, Iblīs enters via the snake, takes from the tree, and offers it to Eve. She eats then offers it to Adam. Their nudity appears, Adam hides himself in a tree, God realises what has occurred and curses the earth, Eve and the snake.	
	IBN ᶜABBĀS: is said to cite a similar anecdote.
ABŪ MĀLIK, IBN ᶜABBĀS, IBN MASᶜŪD, OTHER COMPANIONS: Iblīs needs the snake's help to get past the guards but has to leave the snake to gain Adam's attention. His goal is to expose their nudity, and he offers them kingship or immortality. Adam refuses to eat but Eve concedes then persuades Adam to, revealing their nudity.	

Utilised in Historical Account	Omitted from Historical Account
MUḤADDITH: *al-shayṭān* enters as a legged creature which becomes a snake when it is cursed.	
ABŪ'L-ᶜĀLIYA: some camels used to be *jinn*. Adam and Eve are forbidden the tree, *al-shayṭān* addresses Eve with Q. 7:20, Eve eats of the tree and commands Adam to do the same. The tree causes them to defecate, forbidden in Paradise, so Adam is evicted.	
IBN ISḤĀQ, PEOPLE OF KNOWLEDGE: *al-shayṭān* overhears Adam wishing Paradise could be eternal.	
IBN ISḤĀQ: *al-shayṭān* bemoans their mortality and claims that the tree will give them immortality, eternal rule, or turn them into angels.	
IBN ZAYD: *al-shayṭān* entices Eve to the tree, and she refuses to concede to Adam's desires until he too approaches the tree and eats of it; they both eat and their nudity becomes apparent; Adam flees, God discovers what has happened, Adam blames Eve, God curses Eve.	
SAᶜĪD B. AL-MUSAYYAB: Eve gives Adam wine to drink in order for him to eat of the tree.	
IBN ᶜABBĀS: all creatures bar the snake refuse to help Iblīs, and God removes the snake's clothes and legs in punishment.	
	IBN ISḤĀQ, PEOPLE OF THE TORAH: Rather it was Adam the snake addressed.

Utilised in Historical Account	Omitted from Historical Account
MUḤAMMAD B. QAYS: Adam and Eve are forbidden that one tree, *al-shayṭān* enters the snake, addresses Eve and whispers to Adam. Eve bites the tree and it bleeds; their coverings fall away, they use leaves; God asks Adam why he ate, he blames Eve, Eve the snake, the snake Iblīs; God refers to Iblīs' cursed status, then curses Eve and the snake.	
	AL-ṬABARI: Iblīs has to have delivered his speech to Adam and Eve himself, either openly or otherwise, thus Ibn ᶜAbbās' narrative seems plausible in this aspect. His and Wahb's description of Iblīs' means of entry into Paradise is however possible but not provable.
	IBN ISḤĀQ (thus also IBN ᶜABBĀS AND THE PEOPLE OF THE TORAH): *al-shayṭān* gains access with the powers God gave him to tempt mankind, as per Q. 2:36, Q. 7:27, and Q. 114:1–2, also the *ḥadīth* placing Iblīs in man's veins. Ibn Isḥāq cites Q. 7:13 and Q. 20:120, explaining that Iblīs addresses Adam and Eve unbeknownst to them, and they then repent.
	AL-ṬABARI: the Qur'anic material suggests rather that Iblīs addresses Adam and Eve directly.

Moving on, report number 16 explains that Iblīs has to have delivered his speech to Adam and Eve himself, either openly or otherwise. Thus, while Ibn ᶜAbbās' narrative (al-Ṭabarī is presumably referring here to report number 6, see Table 2 above) seems plausible in this aspect, his and Wahb's description of Iblīs' means of entry into Paradise is possible but not provable. This is an authorial interpolation one would fully expect to be individual to each work. The last report cited in this subsection, meanwhile (on the authority of Ibn Isḥāq, Ibn ᶜAbbās and the People of the Torah, and suggesting that Iblīs gains access by means of the powers God gave him to tempt mankind rather than through any physical means), is a largely theological argument and one which, moreover, al-Ṭabarī disputes in the following authorial statement in the *Tafsīr*. The reasoning behind why each of these reports from

al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of the Qur'anic phrase *But Satan made them slip* might have been considered unsuitable for the new context of the *History* is accordingly quite transparent.

Al-Ṭabarī's choice of a mere two anecdotes from the available material supplied in his exegesis of Q. 2:36, *Get out, all of you! You are each other's enemy*, is also easily justifiable on grounds of concision. As can be seen in Table 3, al-Ṭabarī provides in his *History* representations of the widest position—that those cursed, the 'enemies', are Adam, Eve, Iblīs and the snake—and discards reports that represent the various permutations of this position (which add the mention of progeny, or fail to mention Eve, the snake, or both Eve and the snake).

Table 3: Showing al-Ṭabarī's Commentary on *Get out, all of you! You are each other's enemy* in Q. 2:36

Utilised in Historical Account	Omitted from Historical Account
	AL-ṬABARI: this makes it clear that it was God who did the actual casting down, and also that Adam, Eve, and Iblīs were cast down at the same time, after Adam and Eve's sin, as caused by *al-shayṭān.*
ABŪ ṢĀLIḤ: cast down were Adam, Eve, Iblīs, and the snake.	
	AL-SUDDĪ: the snake is cursed, and Adam, Eve, Iblīs, and the snake are cast down.
	MUJĀHID: Adam, Iblīs, and the snake.
	MUJĀHID: Adam, Iblīs, the snake, and their progeny are each other's enemies.
	MUJĀHID: the enemies are Adam and his progeny, and Iblīs and his progeny.
	ABŪ'L-ᶜĀLIYA: the enemies are Iblīs and Adam.
	IBN ᶜABBĀS: all four are enemies: Adam, Eve, Iblīs, and the snake.
IBN ᶜABBĀS: the enemies are Adam, Eve, Iblīs, and the snake.	
	IBN ZAYD: the two of them and their progeny.

Utilised in Historical Account	Omitted from Historical Account
	AL-ṬABARI: Iblīs is jealous of Adam and his progeny, and is too arrogant to bow down when God asks him to (Q. 7:12); the believers despise Iblīs because of his disbelief and rebellion; the enmity between mankind and the snake has already been mentioned. A *ḥadīth* is cited (in two versions) in this regard, also another.

Similarly, the single anecdote carried over into the historical accounts from al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of the corresponding passage in Q. 7:24 (*All of you get out! You are each other's enemy*) seems the most appropriate choice out of the available material: the other two accounts are an editorial comment, and a brief report from Abū Ṣāliḥ specifying merely who the addressees are in this context.

Table 4: Showing al-Ṭabarī's Commentary on Q. 7:24 *He said, 'All of you get out! You are each other's enemy'*

Utilised in Historical Account	Omitted from Historical Account
	AL-ṬABARI: Here God explains what He did with Iblīs and his descendants, Adam and his descendants, and the snake. He is addressing Adam, Eve, Iblīs, and the snake, who were cast down as enemies to one another.
AL-SUDDĪ: God cursed the snake, cut off its legs, left it to walk on its belly, made it take its sustenance in the dirt, and cast Adam, Eve, Iblīs, and the snake down to earth.	
	ABŪ ṢĀLIḤ: the verse addresses Adam, Eve, and the snake.

An interesting foil to this model of textual overlap is provided in the account of the Creation of Eve that immediately precedes the Fall of Adam in al-Ṭabarī's *History*. This again is solely made up of exegetical material: three (adjacent) reports from al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of *Adam, live with your wife in this garden* (Q. 2:35), followed by three (adjacent) reports from al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of *and from it created its mate* (Q. 4:1). Thus the Creation of Eve subsection in the *History* opens with report number

4 (of eight) from al-Ṭabarī's elucidation of *Adam, live with your wife in this garden* (Q. 2:35) in the *Commentary*. On the authority of Ibn ᶜAbbās, Ibn Masᶜūd, and other Companions, the reader is informed that Iblīs was evicted from Paradise, and Adam installed therein. In order to salve Adam's loneliness, God creates Eve from his rib, while he sleeps. Upon awakening, Adam questions her on her identity and purpose. The angels then ask Adam to tell them her name. The composite account concludes with the citation of the first half of Q. 2:35.[27] Al-Ṭabarī follows this with report number 5 (of eight) from the same section of his *Tafsīr*, a *ḥadīth* cited on the authority of Ibn Isḥāq. After God has finished censuring Iblīs and evicting him from Paradise, He teaches Adam the names of all things; this *ḥadīth* concludes with the citation of Q. 2:33–32 [sic].[28] The last report to be utilised, meanwhile, from al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of *Adam, live with your wife in this garden* (Q. 2:35), is another composite report, this time on the authority of the People of the Book, Ibn ᶜAbbās, and others (number 6 of eight). God casts slumber on Adam, and creates Eve from his rib while he sleeps. When Adam awakens, he sees her by his side and declares, 'My flesh, my blood, my wife'; God addresses him with the words of Q. 2:35.[29]

This exegetical subsection is followed by three reports drawn from the material provided by al-Ṭabarī in elucidation of *and from it created its mate* (Q. 4:1). Report number 2 (of seven) on the authority of Mujāhid informs the reader that Eve is created from Adam's rib while he sleeps. When he awakens, he names her *aththā*, this being the Nabatean word for 'woman'.[30] Surprisingly, al-Ṭabarī then provides an alternative *isnād* for this *ḥadīth*, as per report 3 (of seven) in his *Tafsīr*: al-Muthannā—Abū Ḥudhayfa—Shibl—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid, as opposed to Muḥammad b. ᶜAmr—Abū ᶜĀṣim—ᶜĪsā—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid.[31] The final report of this section of the *History*, identical to report 4 (of seven) in the *Tafsīr*, glosses *and from it created its mate* as meaning that Eve was created from one of Adam's ribs. This is presented as a *ḥadīth* on the authority of Qatāda.[32]

The 'missing' material here consists, for the Q. 2:35 section, of reports to do with the timing of Iblīs' eviction from Paradise (an authorial introduction, and two reports, on the authority of Abū Mālik, Ibn ᶜAbbās, Ibn Masᶜūd, and other unnamed companions, and Ibn Isḥāq), and some lexicographical comments (an authorial discussion of the terms *zawj* and *zawja*). The text of report number 3 is duplicated in report number 5. For the Q. 4:1 section there is again some duplication: the omitted reports number 5 and number 6, in elucidation of *and from it created its mate* (Q. 4:1), echo the included reports numbers 4 and 6 of al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of *Adam, live with your wife in this garden* (Q. 2:35). Report number 7, meanwhile—that Eve was formed of Adam—is arguably superfluous information in the light of the accounts al-Ṭabarī has already included in the *History*. There is therefore a comfortable rationale behind what al-Ṭabarī chose to exclude from reproduction in his historical account of the Creation of Eve.

Table 5: Showing the Transfer of Exegetical Material into the Historical Account of the Creation of Eve

History	*Tafsīr*	
	al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of *Adam, live with your wife in this garden* (Q. 2:35)	
	Tafsīr rpt 1	al-Ṭabari: Iblīs was evicted from Paradise for his refusal to bow down, and Adam was installed therein prior to Iblīs' being cast down to earth. Q. 2:25–26. Iblīs caused them to slip in their obedience to God after he was cursed. The sequence of events is as follows: he became arrogant after Adam was infused with breath; he refused to bow down on that account; he was then cursed.
	Tafsīr rpt 2	Composite Companions: Iblīs swore to lead Adam, his seed, and his wife astray, all except the sincere servants among them. This occurred after his being cursed and expelled from Paradise, but prior to his being cast down to earth.
	Tafsīr rpt 3	Ibn Isḥāq: After God has finished censuring Iblīs and evicting him from Paradise, He teaches Adam the names of all things; this *ḥadīth* concludes with the citation of Q. 2:33–32 [sic].
History rpt 1	*Tafsīr* rpt 4	Composite Companions: Iblīs was evicted from Paradise, and Adam installed therein. In order to salve Adam's loneliness, God creates Eve from his rib, while he sleeps. Upon awakening, Adam questions her on her identity and purpose. The angels then ask Adam to tell them her name. *We said, 'Adam, live with your wife in this garden. Both of you eat freely there as you will.'*
History rpt 2	*Tafsīr* rpt 5	Ibn Isḥāq: After God has finished censuring Iblīs and evicting him from Paradise, He teaches Adam the names of all things; this *ḥadīth* concludes with the citation of Q. 2:33–32 [sic].
History rpt 3	*Tafsīr* rpt 6	People of the Book; Companions including Ibn ʿAbbās: God casts slumber on Adam, and creates Eve from his rib while he sleeps. When Adam awakens, he sees her by his side and declares, 'My flesh, my blood, my wife'; God addresses him with the words of Q. 2:35.
	Tafsīr rpt 7	al-Ṭabarī: on whether it is more correct to say *zawj* or *zawja* for a female partner.
	al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of *and from it created its mate* (Q. 4:1)	
	Tafsīr rpt 1	al-Ṭabarī: God created a pair from a single soul. By *mate* is intended 'partner' or 'wife', that is 'Eve'.

History rpt 4	*Tafsīr* rpt 2	MUJĀHID: Eve is created from Adam's rib while he sleeps. When he awakens, he names her *aththā*, this being the Nabatean word for 'woman'.
History rpt 5	*Tafsīr* rpt 3	MUJĀHID: an alternative *isnād* for the preceding *ḥadīth*.
History rpt 6	*Tafsīr* rpt 4	QATĀDA: Eve was created from one of Adam's ribs.
	Tafsīr rpt 5	AL-SUDDĪ: Adam was installed in Paradise. In order to salve his loneliness, God creates Eve from his rib, while he sleeps. Upon awakening, Adam questions her on her identity and purpose.
	Tafsīr rpt 6	PEOPLE OF THE BOOK; COMPANIONS INCLUDING IBN ᶜABBĀS: God casts slumber on Adam, and creates Eve from his rib while he sleeps. When Adam awakens, he sees her by his side and declares, 'My flesh, my blood, my wife.'
	Tafsīr rpt 7	AL-SUDDĪ: Eve was formed of Adam.

It is relatively unsurprising to see elements of al-Ṭabarī's exegetical work reproduced in their entirety in his *History*. That al-Ṭabarī authored his works in a methodical way is evident from biographical anecdotes cited by Yāqūt. One passage makes reference to al-Ṭabarī collecting piles of relevant books, which he would move from one side of his house to the other as he consulted them, in order to avoid the danger of inadvertently missing a volume out as he conducted his research.[33] Another account describes how al-Ṭabarī asked the bookseller Abū'l-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn b. Ḥubaysh to collect for him works on analogical reasoning. The scholarly volume these were designed for was never written, but the 30 or so reference works were returned to the bookseller shortly before al-Ṭabarī's death with the author's red markings on their pages, presumably highlighting the passages al-Ṭabarī intended to reproduce in his own compilation on this subject.[34]

It does not seem counterintuitive moreover that short sections should have been copied across by al-Ṭabarī from the *Tafsīr* into the *History* in the same order, and with no sign of any further editing; this could even be taken to explain the presence of an alternative *isnād* for one of his *ḥadīth* reports in the historical account, despite the fact that duplicate information there would usually appear to be kept to a minimum. Further rationalisation is required, however, in instances where the ordering of the *Tafsīr* is altered in the *History*, for no apparent reason other than genre. This does not

occur in the Creation of Eve, but is an obvious feature of al-Ṭabarī's historical Fall material.

For example, al-Ṭabarī commences his historical material on Adam and the Fall not with the *Commentary*'s opening report for Q. 2:36 (report number 4 on the authority of Wahb b. Munabbih), but with report number 6, on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās, Ibn Masʿūd and other Companions of the Prophet. This can be argued to make editorial sense on a number of levels. In contrast to his treatment of the material in the context of his Qur'an commentary, the historical account, by dint of its genre, presents a relatively self-contained narrative segment. As such the initial report accrues much more prominence within the surrounding narrative, and is required to serve as an introduction to the subject matter in a way not necessary for the commentary on Q. 2:36, preceded as it is by the much broader commentary on Q. 2:35 (which includes references to the Fall not reproduced in the anecdotes relating to the creation of Eve which also occur in the immediately preceding section of the *History*). As can be seen from Table 6 overleaf, report number 6, which ceases its narrative line at the exposure of Adam and Eve's nudity, is arguably a better opening narrative than report number 4, which carries the narrative right through to the cursing of the earth, Eve, and the snake. Report number 6 draws upon several of the pertinent Qur'anic passages (thus Q. 2:35, Q. 20:120, Q. 7:21, and Q. 20:121, in that order) in order to weave its narrative, while report number 4 provides only narrative expansion, with no direct citation of Qur'anic material. The composite Companions account accordingly represents a more authoritative initial anecdote for the subject of the Fall within the context of the *History*; its placement within the context of the *Tafsīr* is of lesser importance through the simple fact of its being less exposed there, surrounded by Qur'anic material and within a genre with a clear Qur'anic focus.[35]

With the reordering of subsequent exegetical material within the context of the *History*—reports 13, 14, 15, 7–12, for *But Satan made them slip* (Q. 2:36) followed by isolated reports from the exegesis of Q. 2:36 and Q. 7:24—it would appear that al-Ṭabarī might therein be moulding an account with a clear emphasis on Iblīs as the driving force in the progression of the narrative. Leaving to one side al-Ṭabarī's authorial voice (which, as will become evident below, obscures this issue), Iblīs is the primary or secondary focus of nine out of the ten reports cited in the first part of the historical account, and is mentioned in all three of the reports in the second part of the narrative (after al-Ṭabarī's authorial interpolation). It is moreover possible to draw a conceptual line through the cited accounts such that al-Ṭabarī explains first what prompted Iblīs to try to expose Adam and Eve's nudity, then discusses why Iblīs turned to the snake for help. Next, the reader is informed of how Iblīs took the form of a camel, what angle he chose in order to approach Adam, the mechanics of his seduction of Adam, and, finally, the repercussions of these events. The central

Table 6: Comparing the Opening Reports for the Historical and Exegetical Accounts	
Abū Mālik, Ibn ʿAbbās, Ibn Masʿūd, other Companions	**Wahb b. Munabbih**
When God says to Adam: *'Adam, live with your wife in this garden and both of you eat freely there as you will, but do not go near this tree, or you will both become wrongdoers'* (Q. 2:35), Iblīs wants to enter Paradise but cannot get past the guard. The snake comes to him, he asks her to place him in her mouth. All occurs as God wishes, and, once past the guard, he leaves her mouth in order to say *'Adam, shall I show you the tree of immortality and a kingdom that never decays?* (Q. 20:120), a tree that, if you eat of it, will make you a king like God, or make both of you immortal?' And he swears to them, *'I am giving you sincere advice'* (Q. 7:21). He wanted to expose their nudity, of which he had knowledge from reading the books of the angels, and of which Adam was unaware. They were clothed in a nail-like substance. Adam refuses to eat, but Eve comes forward and eats. She tells Adam that this has caused her no harm, and he does the same. *They became conscious of their nakedness and began to cover themselves with leaves from the garden* (Q. 20:121).	When God places Adam and Eve in Paradise to live, He forbids Adam the tree. The tree had many branches, and the angels used to eat of it in order to be immortal. God had forbidden Adam and Eve from eating its fruits. Iblīs enters the snake, gets into Paradise, and takes from the tree. He offers the fruit to Eve, pointing out to her how fragrant, tasty, and attractive it is. She eats then offers it to Adam, repeating Iblīs' words. Their nudity appears, Adam hides himself in a tree, God calls out to him, 'Where are you, Adam?' Adam explains that he is ashamed, and God curses the earth (turning its fruits to thorns), Eve (with difficult pregnancies and births), and the snake (with having to slither in the dirt, and with the enmity of man).

'narrative' section in the corresponding context of the *Tafsīr* (where longer reports, as opposed to grammatical or minor particularistic details, are provided), moves from explanations of how Iblīs entered the Garden, to the approach Iblīs chooses for his seduction of Adam, straight to the repercussions of these events. The 'narrative' section of the *Tafsīr*, therefore, presents a less detailed elucidation of Iblīs' actions than is presented in the *History*. This serves to shift the emphasis away from Iblīs. It is also worth noting that the placing of report number 13 as a postscript to the main body of the commentary on Q. 2:36, as opposed to its being situated in the introductory reports of the historical account, modifies its role from authoritative, introductory explanation to detailed, multi-vocal qualification. It can be argued then, that while both sources make equal sense, each work exhibits its own, distinct construct, and

there is a subtle change in focus between the two genres. It can also be seen how the simple repositioning of a report, far from being a minor detail, can serve to shift its impact within the wider context of an account.

2. Repentance Narratives

A different model is provided again, in the repentance narrative in the *History* and in al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of Q. 2:37, where the reader is told of Adam's actions in repenting of the events that led to the Fall. The repentance narratives in the *History* again show some overlap with the *Tafsīr* accounts. Reports numbers 4, 7, 8, and 17 from al-Ṭabarī's commentary on *Then Adam received some words from his Lord and He accepted his repentance* in Q. 2:37 are duplicated in the *History*. In this instance the ordering of accounts is relatively sequential across the two sources.

As is illustrated in Table 7 overleaf, the exegetical material that is utilised in the *History* consists of a report on the authority of Ibn ᶜAbbās, in which Adam questions God regarding the details of his creation, the nature of His mercy, and the possibility of his returning to Paradise; God confirms all the points Adam raises.[36] This is followed in the *History* by exegetical report number 7 of 23 (on the authority of Qatāda): Adam questions God regarding the possibility of his returning to Paradise; God agrees, in principle, to this request.[37] Report number 8 of 23 is also included in the *History*: al-Ḥasan's statement that the *kalimāt* are Adam and Eve's words in Q. 7:23.[38] The final report from the *tafsīr* of *Then Adam received some words from his Lord and He accepted his repentance* (Q. 2:37) to be reproduced in the *History* is report number 17 of 23: Mujāhid's corroborating declaration that the *kalimāt* are, indeed, Adam and Eve's words in Q. 7:23.[39]

Much of the specialist semantic and duplicate material that al-Ṭabarī includes in his *tafsīr* of *Then Adam received some words from his Lord and He accepted his repentance* (Q. 2:37) is omitted from the historical repentance section. Thus report number 3, absent from the historical account, deals with readings, while reports numbers 2 (on the authority of Ibn Zayd), 6 (on the authority of Ibn ᶜAbbās), 9 (on the authority of Abū'l-ᶜĀliya), 19 (on the authority of Mujāhid), 21 (on the authority of Qatāda), and 22 (on the authority of Ibn Zayd), simply duplicate included material. These reports explain that the *kalimāt* are Adam and Eve's words in Q. 7:23 and/or that God agrees to return Adam to Paradise if he repents. There is no real need, therefore, for al-Ṭabarī to cite them in his *History* in addition to reports numbers 7, 8, and 17.

Table 7: Showing the Transfer of Material from Q. 2:37	
Utilised in Historical Account	**Omitted from Historical Account**
	AL-ṬABARĪ: God gives Adam words of repentance and accepts them from him.
	IBN ZAYD: *al-kalimāt* are the words of Q. 7:23.
	AL-ṬABARĪ: discounts the feasibility of the suggested reading *kalimātun* and *Adama*.
IBN ᶜABBĀS: Adam questions God regarding the details of his creation, his having been established in Paradise, the nature of His mercy, and the possibility of his returning to Paradise; God confirms all the points Adam raises.	
	IBN ᶜABBĀS: reference to a different *isnād* for the same account.
	IBN ᶜABBĀS: When Adam disobeys God, he asks about the outcome, were he to repent and perform good deeds. God agrees to the future return of Adam to Paradise.
QATĀDA: Adam asks about the outcome, were he to repent and perform good deeds. God agrees to the future return of Adam to Paradise in that instance.	
AL-ḤASAN: *al-kalimāt* are the words of Q. 7:23.	
	ABŪ'L-ᶜĀLIYA: God agrees to return Adam to Paradise if he repents, or *al-kalimāt* are the words of Q. 7:23.
	AL-SUDDĪ: Adam questions God regarding the details of his creation and the nature of His mercy; he asks whether his sin was foreordained; God agrees to return Adam to Paradise if he repents, and God forgives Adam with the words of Q. 20:122.
	ᶜUBAYD B. ᶜUMAYR: Adam asks whether his sin was foreordained, and asks, on these grounds, to be forgiven.

Utilised in Historical Account	Omitted from Historical Account
	ᶜUBAYD B. ᶜUMAYR: reference to a different *isnād* for the same account.
	ᶜUBAYD B. ᶜUMAYR: reference to a different *isnād* for the same account.
	ᶜUBAYD B. ᶜUMAYR: reference to a different *isnād* for the same account.
	ᶜUBAYD B. ᶜUMAYR: reference to a different *isnād* for the same account.
	ᶜABD AL-RAḤMĀN B. YAZĪD B. MUᶜĀWIYA: Adam praises God and asks forgiveness of Him.
MUJĀHID: *al-kalimāt* are the words of Q. 7:23.	
	MUJĀHID: Adam praises God, admits his sin, and asks forgiveness, in three slightly different ways.
	MUJĀHID: *al-kalimāt* are the words of Q. 7:23.
	MUJĀHID: Adam asks God if He will forgive him if he repents.
	QATĀDA: *al-kalimāt* are the words of Q. 7:23.
	IBN ZAYD: *al-kalimāt* are the words of Q. 7:23.
	AL-ṬABARĪ: God bestows words of repentance upon Adam, who uses them to ask forgiveness for his sin; God forgives him. The Qur'an would seem to indicate that these words were those reported in Q. 7:23. All sinners can make use of these words, for instance the disbelievers of Q. 2:28.

Indeed, it seems initially perplexing that al-Ṭabarī should opt to include both Mujāhid's and al-Ḥasan's duplicate statements that the *kalimāt* are Adam and Eve's words in Q. 7:23. In his exegesis of Q. 7:23, al-Ṭabarī provides five such declarations,

and it is only two of them that are carried into the context of the *History*. What is notable about report number 8, however—the first of these declarations—is that it is cited on the authority of 'al-Ḥasan', with no *isnād*. This led Franz Rosenthal, in his footnotes to the translation of al-Ṭabarī's *History*, to suggest that this might refer to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.[40] It seems evident, certainly, that this is not a *ḥadīth*. Thus al-Ṭabarī would appear to provide in his *History* the opinion of 'al-Ḥasan', alongside the first of his cited *ḥadīth* in support of this.

There are three points of especial interest here. Firstly, it seems notable that the opinion of 'al-Ḥasan' should have been of such supplementary significance that al-Ṭabarī chose to include it in his *History*. Another point of note is that the reordering of exegetical information in the *History* places the opinion of 'al-Ḥasan' adjacent to what then becomes a supporting statement on the authority of Mujāhid. This is not the case in the *Tafsīr*. Also worth remarking upon, however, is the fact that of the four *ḥadīth* cited in support of al-Ḥasan's opinion in the *Tafsīr*, the one al-Ṭabarī selected for reproduction in the *History* is the first of those provided in the *Tafsīr*. While it is possible that al-Ṭabarī might favour an *isnād* that traces back to Mujāhid via al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm—Abū Ghassān—Abū Zuhayr—Aḥmad b. Isḥāq al-Ahwāzī—Abū Aḥmad—Sufyān and Qays—Khaṣīf, rather than via Ibn Wakīᶜ—Wakīᶜ—al-Naḍr b. ᶜArabī, his favouring of this *isnād* seems more likely to intimate that presentation order in the *Tafsīr* possesses significance: it is the first *ḥadīth* report selected for citation in his *Tafsīr* that al-Ṭabarī chooses to reproduce in his *History*.[41] Similarly, the *History* includes report number 4 (on the authority of Ibn ᶜAbbās via Saᶜīd b. Jubayr—al-Minhāl b. ᶜUmrū—Ibn Abī Layla—Qays—Ibn ᶜAṭiyya) and excludes report number 5—in content simply a duplicate of report number 4—on the authority of Ibn ᶜAbbās via Saᶜīd b. Jubayr—ᶜĀṣim b. Kulayb—Qays b. al-Rabīᶜ—Muḥammad b. Muṣᶜab. Al-Ṭabarī opts for the citation of Qatāda's declaration that God agrees to return Adam to Paradise if he repents, rather than the very similar report on the authority of Ibn ᶜAbbās; Qatāda's report is physically next to al-Ḥasan's unique corroborating opinion for the fact of the *kalimāt* being the words of Q. 7:23. All three of these examples would appear to suggest the presence of red marks, made by al-Ṭabarī in the margins of his *Tafsīr* work, rather than a genre-oriented preference for one authority, or one set of *isnād*s, over another, although the latter explanation should not of course be ruled out.

The omission of other exegetical material from the *History* is not so straightforward to rationalise. Reports numbers 16, 18, and 20, detailing alternative words of repentance, could have been included in the *History* without duplicating material in existing reports. Reports numbers 10 through to 15 raise the matter of whether or not the sin was foreordained (*shayʾ katabtahu ᶜalayya*). It can be argued, however, that al-Ṭabarī expressly states that the sin *was* foreordained in his opening statement to the

historical narrative. Here, therefore, a blanket editorial statement has plausibly been inserted in order to replace the ambiguity of a wider selection of multivocal *ḥadīth*, as is provided in the *Tafsīr*.

Of yet greater significance, however, is the fact that, once the matter of the Fall has been concluded but before al-Ṭabarī provides allusions to Adam's repentance and the *words* Adam received from his Lord, he introduces and discusses a number of issues: the generic importance of Friday in Adam's life, the specific Friday on which Adam was cast down to earth, the place to which Adam and Eve were cast down, the fact of Adam's size being reduced once he was on earth, Adam's introduction to the pilgrimage rites, and the things Adam took with him from Paradise to earth, or God later sent down for him to make use of (including the Sacred House). Thus, while the two repentance narratives may well exhibit overlap, the intervening narrative in the *History* substantially separates its account of the Fall from its presentation of Adam's words of repentance, events that occur consecutively in the Qur'an, and hence also to a large extent in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*. The narrative gap that is created between these two events by placing the repentance material in a separate, and relatively distant, section of the narrative in al-Ṭabarī's *History* cannot be glossed over.

Table 8: Material provided in al-Ṭabarī's History of Adam after the dedicated Fall section	
SUBSECTION 1	the generic importance of Friday in Adam's life
SUBSECTION 2	the specific Friday on which Adam was cast down to earth
SUBSECTION 3	the place to which Adam and Eve were cast down
SUBSECTION 4	the fact of Adam's size being reduced once he was on earth
SUBSECTION 5	Adam's introduction to the pilgrimage rites
SUBSECTION 6	the things Adam took with him from Paradise to earth, or the things God later sent down for him to make use of (including the Sacred House)
SUBSECTION 7	Adam's repentance and the 'words' Adam received from his Lord
SUBSECTION 8	Adam and Eve are taught how to fashion clothes for themselves
SUBSECTION 9	the primordial covenant with Adam's progeny
SUBSECTION 10	Cain and Abel

Thus, for instance, in the context of reports on Adam's stature (reduced after his being cast down to earth), there is a cluster of two anecdotes, both of which can be read as showing God's support for Adam's change in living conditions prior to his stated repentance: a report also cited in his commentary on *As Abraham and Ishmael built up*

the foundations of the House in Q. 2:127 (God gives Adam the House to compensate for his loss of the companionship of the angels in prayer),[42] and the following anecdote, not evident in the *Commentary* (Adam complains to God of the contrast between his life in Paradise and his life on earth; God blames this change of circumstances on his disobedience; He teaches Adam to dress himself and Eve, and instructs him in pilgrimage).[43] In the following subsection, discussing the things Adam took from Paradise, there are again a number of reports which exhibit divine or angelic support for Adam during his transition to life on earth. An account from Ibn ᶜAbbās (the angels are told to allow Adam to take anything he wishes with him as he leaves Paradise),[44] an account from al-Ashᶜarī (God Himself provides Adam with fruits and the knowledge to make things),[45] and an anonymous account (God provides Adam with 30 different kinds of fruit).[46] It can be seen how 'acceptance' of the Fall is demonstrated, even prior to Adam's stated repentance, and this ties in with al-Ṭabarī's initial stated view that this event was preordained by God, 'This was to afflict them and have God's judgement on them and their progeny come to pass': the reader's awareness that God is in control of ensuing events is heightened by cited examples in which God prepares Adam for the impact of the Fall, and, similarly, the initial statement explains the presence of these examples in the narrative.

These manifestations of God's generosity are, however, qualified by the reader's knowledge that Adam was cast down to a life of toil, and that this was the 'misery' he was promised in Q. 20:117 (*so We said, 'Adam, this is your enemy, yours and your wife's: do not let him drive you out of the garden and make you miserable'*). Al-Ṭabarī supplies an anonymous account (God sends grains of wheat to Adam via Gabriel, who instructs him on how to turn them into bread),[47] followed by report number 5/13 from his commentary on the first half of Q. 7:22, *He lured them with lies. Their nakedness became exposed to them when they had eaten from the tree: they began to put together leaves from the garden to cover themselves.* In this report, Adam and Eve eat of the tree, their nudity becomes apparent, they attempt to cover themselves, Adam flees; God realises what has happened and Adam protests that he had not realised someone could swear falsely in God's name; God casts them down to a life of toil where Adam learns to work iron and plough.[48] Al-Ṭabarī also provides an account which is similarly cited in the commentary on Q. 20:117 (a red ox was cast down from Paradise for Adam to use while he sweated, ploughing—this was his *misery*),[49] and an authorial interpolation (had Gabriel simply given Adam food to eat, he would not have undergone the promised *misery*).[50] Nonetheless, the effect of this qualification is in turn softened by our awareness that the fruits Adam is provided with, or permitted to take, in the preceding narrative sub-cluster, are in many ways simply a gift of 'food to eat'. In this way the above reports form a compromise between the harsh reality of an agricultural existence and the narrative

impression that is being created throughout these pages of the *History* of a supportive Deity.

Next al-Ṭabarī informs the reader, in his own words, that Adam felt lonely now that he could no longer hear the inhabitants of heaven and the angels.[51] An account from Wahb has God telling Adam about His House and the generations that shall worship Him there and in mosques,[52] and al-Ṭabarī recaps with a description of the sacred House on the authority of Abān, also provided in al-Ṭabarī's commentary on Q. 2:127.[53] The narrative is thus moving on to the future community of Muslims, with Adam very much the father of mankind rather than God's individual creation in his own isolated bubble of the initial Paradise period. This glimpse of the future remains, however, an example of an extraordinarily comforting gift**,** as indeed can also be seen in al-Ṭabarī's interpretation of the later part of Q. 2:38, *But when guidance comes from Me, as it certainly will*, as being addressed to Adam, Eve, and Iblīs, reassuring them about the fate of their believing progeny. There remains nonetheless a major difference: the Qur'an (and thus the *Tafsīr*) then moves on to address the Children of Israel;[54] the *History* continues with material pertaining to Adam.

For it is at this point of the historical narrative that the repentance cluster detailed above is located, and these anecdotes are followed by another narrative sub-cluster, pertaining to the Black Stone, which includes a number of reports. On the authority of Ibn ᶜAbbās, the reader is told that the Black Stone descends from Paradise with Adam, Adam and Eve mourn what they have lost for 200 years, do not eat or drink for 40 days, and Adam does not approach Eve for 100 years.[55] Another report on the authority of Ibn ᶜAbbās explains that Adam used the Stone to wipe his tears, which flowed for the 2,000 years between him leaving Paradise and returning there.[56] A final anecdote shows God sending an angel to teach Adam and Eve how to dress themselves in animal skins (al-Ṭabarī's own words, with the qualifying anonymous opinion that it was only their children who dressed themselves this way also given voice).[57] This leads the narrative line into the covenant Adam's progeny swore with their Lord,[58] and the matter of Cain and Abel,[59] thus concluding matters pertaining to the Fall.

The intervening material in the *History* would therefore appear to separate God's acceptance of Adam's changed situation from his words of repentance, which are in this context centred upon a promised physical return to Paradise, not a return to God's favour. Only the *Commentary* provides repentance narratives in which it is his sin that Adam is bewailing. Al-Ṭabarī's introduction to his exegesis of both Q. 7:23 and Q. 20:122 states, respectively, that Adam and Eve say to God 'We harmed our souls by disobeying you' and later 'If You do not forgive us, we will be doomed', and, in the second account, that God chose Adam after he *defied* Him, guiding him to

repentance, and granting him *the return* to pleasing Him and obedience. Here there is, therefore, another discernible difference between the two sources: in the *History* clear examples are given in which Adam pleases God, is obedient to Him, and is indeed indulged by Him, prior to his repentance. It is interesting to revisit the 'omitted' material from the commentary on Q. 2:37 (that Adam praises God and asks forgiveness of Him; that Adam praises God, admits his sin, and asks forgiveness, in three slightly different ways; and that Adam asks God if He will forgive him if he repents) in this light. It is also worth noting that, although al-Ṭabarī is careful to stress that the gifts and information related to ploughing, at least, *are* part of Adam's promised 'misery', the reader's understanding of a close relationship between God and prophet, maintained over a long period prior to his actual repentance, never falters. Al-Ṭabarī's opening statement in the Fall section, that matters were preordained by God, adds its own nuance to this understanding.

There is moreover an increasing incursion of the external world into Adam's life as the historical narrative progresses: first, explanations of how generic customs related to bread-making, tool-making et cetera, came about; then descriptions of distant future acts of worship; then Adam's words of repentance and references to his many years of regret; their (or their children's) clothing habits, the covenant Adam's progeny made with their Lord, and the matter of Cain and Abel. Adam's repentance within the midst of this becomes a matter very much of this world, with his return to Paradise no different to that of the future return to Paradise of all observant souls. His model of repentance provides an archetype that can be utilised by other sinners more than it describes an event in the history of the Fall: it is equated with life on earth rather than with Adam's initial special circumstances.

The closest corresponding material in the *Tafsīr* is provided in al-Ṭabarī's editorial comment on his exegesis of Q. 2:37, where a connection to later society is expressly stated. The reader is told that all sinners can make use of Adam's words of repentance as supplied in Q. 7:23:[60]

> By this statement from God about Adam, about his saying [the words] He had presented to him, and that he said them repenting to Him of his error, He lets all those addressed by His Book know how to repent to Him of their sins. He advises those He addresses with His words *How do you disbelieve in God, seeing you were dead and He gave you life* (Q. 2:28) of the place of repentance for the unbelief in God that they are upon, and that their salvation from the errancy they persist in is as the salvation of their forefather Adam from his error, while He [also] reminds them of the blessings which came before to them by which He singled out their forefather, Adam, and others among their forefathers.

It is also worth recalling Angelika Neuwirth's assessment of the Qur'anic creation material as a whole in this context:[61]

> The cosmogonic accounts … are significant not as the beginning of a most dramatic sequence of events leading from creation to redemption, but insofar as they are founding stories of the never-changing pattern of divine-human interaction.

This could tentatively be taken as an indication that al-Ṭabarī's own reading of the situation (that Adam's words of repentance can and should be used by all sinners), expressed in an authorial postscript within his *Commentary*, was taken as a guiding principle in his later construction of a historical narrative, with all the added flexibility such a genre entails, and prompted the creation of a physical gap between material pertaining to Adam's Fall and reports related to his repentance. The added emphasis, however, on repentance not from a slip but from actual disbelief, is entirely absent from the historical account. Rather, al-Ṭabarī states, on the authority of Ibn ᶜAbbās, that 'I [God] shall respond to you [Adam] and all your children who are obedient to Me'.[62] By closing his historical account of Adam's repentance for the Fall with details of the primordial covenant, and the resultant division of mankind into the *companions of the right* ('Enter Paradise by means of My mercy') and the *companions of the left* ('Enter the Fire! I do not care'),[63] al-Ṭabarī reinforces a prevailing impression that in the *History* the focus remains on the believing community of this world.

3. Editorial Comments

While al-Ṭabarī's authorial voice should be seen as a complement to his cited narratives rather than a stand-alone unit (he himself declares that there is no need for him personally to restate information given in his cited sources, in this case the matter of the enmity between mankind and the snake in Q. 2:36), he opens and closes each textual sub-unit with a personal statement in summation of, or comment on, the cited material. In many ways, therefore, this material can serve to epitomise what al-Ṭabarī considered to have been of importance in the ensuing or preceding narrative, and accordingly casts light on what strategies he may have employed, in both the *Tafsīr* and in the *Tārīkh*, in the selection and presentation of his material.

Various techniques are of immediate interest. First, the accounts in the *Commentary* are all introduced with reference to Iblīs/*al-shayṭān*, who remains more central to al-Ṭabarī's authorial remarks in the *Tafsīr* than in the *History*. Thus for all three Qur'anic pericopes, al-Ṭabarī mentions Iblīs/*al-shayṭān* in his opening comments. For his commentary on Q. 2:35, al-Ṭabarī first refers *Adam, live with your wife in this garden* back to Iblīs having been evicted from Paradise (but not all the way to earth)

prior to Adam being placed there to live, and tells us that Iblīs was cursed when he refused to bow down to Adam, shortly after the latter was infused with breath. The commentary on Q. 7:19, *but you and your wife, Adam, live in the Garden*, etc., opens with al-Ṭabarī's initial statement that God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden after He had evicted Iblīs. Meanwhile al-Ṭabarī commences his commentary on Q. 20:120, which after all opens with *But Satan whispered to Adam*, by explaining to his readers that *al-shayṭān* approaches Adam and asks him whether he wishes to be shown a tree that will make him immortal or give him an everlasting kingdom. Iblīs/*al-shayṭān* only occurs in the authorial comments for the *History* inasmuch as he makes eating of the tree, and defying God, seem attractive to Adam and Eve,[64] and, later, he is cast down with Adam, Eve, and the snake;[65] this information is not presented, in either authorial interpolation in the *History*, as the focus of al-Ṭabarī's two statements.

Al-Ṭabarī also makes repeated editorial mention, in his *Commentary*, of Iblīs' refusal to bow down to Adam when he is originally created. Thus his exegesis of Q. 2:35 already cited, but also his closing comments for *Get out, all of you! You are each other's enemy* in Q. 2:36, and his introduction to Q. 7:22, *Did I not forbid you to approach that tree? Did I not warn you that Satan was your sworn enemy?*: this simply does not occur in the editorial comments for the *History*. Iblīs' active role in causing Adam and Eve's downfall is likewise stated repeatedly by al-Ṭabarī in his *Commentary*. To give just one illustration, al-Ṭabarī explains in his *tafsīr* of Q. 2:36 that *al-shayṭān* removes Adam and Eve from their situation of plenty and pleasure; the *History* provides the more neutral statement that Adam goes from a life of plenty to one of toil.[66] If one adds to this the fact that, as previously mentioned, the preordained nature of events leading to the Fall is stated by al-Ṭabarī in his own words only in the *History*,[67] this could provisionally be seen to balance Iblīs/*al-shayṭān*'s more prominent role in the *Commentary*: when s/he is told that Iblīs refuses to bow down to Adam, a clock starts ticking in the reader's mind; in the absence of this clock, al-Ṭabarī gives the bald statement that events were preordained. Again, this is symptomatic of the more prolonged narrative form that is the *History*: in the Qur'anic pericopes at suras 2 and 7, the fact of Iblīs refusing to bow down and his tempting of Adam and Eve come right next to one another,[68] in the *History* al-Ṭabarī interpolates God's teaching Adam the names between his main descriptions of these two events,[69] with only a cursory reference back to the banishment of Iblīs before the story line moves on.[70] To compensate for the absence in one narrative line, the reader is told that events were preordained.

Another aspect that comes to the fore when one looks solely at al-Ṭabarī's authorial voice in the *History*, is the correspondingly more prominent role apparently given to God as a 'character' in the events that transpire. Thus for example God afflicts Adam after he defies God, despite all he has been given, and Adam goes from a life of plenty

to one of toil; God forbids Adam and Eve the fruit of one tree so that His decree can be carried out on them and their seed; *al-shayṭān* makes eating of that tree, and defying God, seem attractive to them; they eat and their nudity appears. When Adam and Eve slip, meanwhile, God evicts them from Paradise, and casts them down, along with Iblīs and the snake, to earth, as enemies one to the other. In the intervening material, the reader is told that it is God who creates Adam, evicts him from Paradise, casts him down, accepts his repentance, and lets him die, all on a Friday, God who provides him with fruits of Paradise and teaches him to bake bread, and God who sends Adam to the Sacred House after he complains of loneliness. And, after the repentance, it is God who brings forth Adam's progeny and has them testify as per Q. 7:172.

In the *Commentary*, God again appears as a character within al-Ṭabarī's authorial statements. He identifies the forbidden tree to Adam and Eve in al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of Q. 2:35, where He is the true actor behind *And removed them from the state they were in* and *Get out, all of you!* He gives Adam words of repentance and forgives him in al-Ṭabarī's treatment of Q. 2:37. He places Adam and Eve in the Garden and bars them from approaching one tree lest they disobey His command in the comments on Q. 7:19. He conceals their nudity with reference to Q. 7:22, explains what He did with the four protagonists in the exegesis of Q. 7:24, is disobeyed at Iblīs' expense regarding Q. 20:121, chooses Adam once again in the authorial comments for Q. 20:122, and finally tells the protagonists of their fate, once more, with reference to Q. 20:123. God's role in the cohering comments of the *Tafsīr*, however, is shared with Iblīs/*al-shayṭān*, and God is just one aspect of the total material provided. Thus the reader is told that Iblīs has to have delivered his speech to Adam and Eve in person, either openly or otherwise, not through his customary presence in man's very veins. Iblīs removes Adam and Eve from their situation of plenty and pleasure, or rather God does this because of Iblīs. It is Iblīs who causes Adam and Eve's sin because he is jealous of Adam and his progeny. It is after God has evicted Iblīs that He places Adam and Eve in the Garden. There, *al-shayṭān* whispers lies to expose Adam and Eve's nudity, and removes the covering they previously enjoyed. God calls out to Adam and Eve, 'Did I not tell you Iblīs was your sworn enemy?', reminding them that his enmity became apparent when he refused to bow down to Adam. Then, *al-shayṭān* approaches Adam and asks him whether he wishes to be shown a tree that will make him immortal or give him an everlasting Kingdom. But nowhere is this phenomenon more evident than when the reader of the *Commentary* is told that Adam and Eve eat of the forbidden tree, obeying Iblīs and disobeying God, and placing each protagonist, on this occasion, on opposing sides of the self-same axis.

When sole focus is placed upon al-Ṭabarī's authorial voice, therefore, God becomes a more immediate player in the events that take place in what one would presume to be the more 'secular' of the two sources, while Iblīs, or maybe the subtleties of the

dynamic of the Fall narrative, takes more of a back seat. Yet, as was observed in Section (1) above, if one looks solely at the cited material, Iblīs remains the primary or secondary focus of nine out of the ten reports cited in the first part of the historical account, and is mentioned in all three of the reports in the second part of this section. This highlights the contrast between the authorial material in the two works, but it also raises questions regarding al-Ṭabarī's choice of his commentary on Q. 2:36 for the bulk of his later historical narrative, and the corresponding omission of material in elucidation of the other two Qur'anic pericopes.

4. Internal Coherence within the *Tafsīr*

It has been seen that al-Ṭabarī draws upon various areas of his *Tafsīr*—both those that deal directly with the Fall pericopes and those seemingly quite unrelated—in order to construct his historiographical narrative. What remains to be established is whether each of the directly relevant sections of the *Tafsīr* exhibits an internal logic or characterisation specific to the individual suras, such that we are speaking not of one narrative line within the *Commentary*, but of three: al-Ṭabarī's commentary on *Sūrat al-Baqara*, the commentary on *al-Aʿrāf*, and the commentary on *Ṭā Hā*. An attempt to characterise the Qur'anic Iblīs pericopes according to their suras has been made by Whitney Bodman, who states with reference to Q. 7 and Q. 2 that:[71]

> in Sūrat al-Aʿrāf, the Iblīs story sets a foundation for a lengthy garden story in which al-Shayṭān and his malice are the focal points, in Sūrat al-Baqarah, neither Iblīs nor al-Shayṭān is the focal point. The reader's attention is directed not to the presence of evil characters and tempters, but to the vulnerability of humanity. The subject at hand is human character.

For the narrative in Q. 20, meanwhile, his analysis is that:[72]

> This version emphasizes … the willingness of God to choose and then sustain the weak.

In al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* accounts, while there is an *almost* comprehensive presentation of motifs relevant to the Fall and repentance narratives in the commentary on *Sūrat al-Baqara*, there are notable omissions from this inclusivity. Thus, for example, unique to his commentary on *Sūrat al-Aʿrāf* is al-Ṭabarī's repetition of a statement of Qatāda's to the effect that Iblīs, in his attempt to persuade Adam to eat of the tree, refers to his possession of superior and prior knowledge; the editorial suggestion that Adam obeys Iblīs in his disobedience to God (echoed, as has already been demonstrated, in the historical narrative) occurs only in al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of this sura, as does the statement that Adam had free choice in what he had been forbidden (Ibn ʿAbbās). The commentary on *Sūrat al-Aʿrāf* draws an explicit contrast (via Qatāda) between Iblīs' request for respite and Adam's plea for repentance.

That Adam is cursed with the struggle for survival, and has to be taught how to work iron and cultivate the soil (both of which motifs are included in the historical narrative under the category of 'Things God later sent down for him to make use of'), are only mentioned with reference to *Sūrat al-Aʿrāf*.

Unique to the commentary on *Sūrat Ṭā Hā*, meanwhile, is the suggestion that Adam's repentance is accomplished not through words, at least not specifically, but through deeds. The reader is told in al-Ṭabarī's editorial to Q. 20:122:

> His Lord chose him after his rebellion, and bestowed upon him the return to what would please Him, and the [opportunity to] perform deeds in obedience of Him. That is the repentance He granted him.

Indeed, the exegesis of the Fall pericope in *Sūrat Ṭā Hā* is very brief and, accordingly, dominated by al-Ṭabarī's editorial comments, with only four cited accounts, three of which are on the authority of al-Suddī. It is also worth noting that the only players in al-Ṭabarī's *Ṭā Hā* exegesis are God, Adam, Eve, and Iblīs/*al-shayṭān*. A summary of the information provided is as follows: Iblīs had read of their private parts in the books of the angels and he approaches Adam, offering immortality or eternal kingship. First Eve and then Adam eat of the tree, obeying Iblīs and disobeying their Lord, and their garments of nail are rent, revealing the nudity beneath. They envelop themselves with fig leaves. God chooses Adam and bestows upon him the return to pleasing Him. Adam and Eve are cast down to earth as enemies to Iblīs and his seed.

The exegesis of *Sūrat al-Aʿrāf* provides additional clusters of narrative detail, and introduces the snake to the dynamic, though notably only as the tempter of Eve, not as the carrier of Iblīs. The story in al-Ṭabarī's commentary on this passage can be epitomised as follows: Iblīs/*al-shayṭān*,[73] secure in his claim to superior knowledge, beguiles Adam with offers of eternal life or angelic status. That these ends are against God's wishes is made clear in al-Ṭabarī's citation of Qur'anic material. Adam obeys Iblīs and disobeys God, but the very act of eating he blames on Eve, who blames the snake, who blames Iblīs; Adam had free choice in his actions. Their nudity, which had either been concealed by a veil of light, or by a nail-like covering, appears, and they cover themselves in fig leaves. Adam flees through the Garden until he is caught by a tree, which refuses his command to release him. Adam confesses his embarrassment to God, and repents using the words of Q. 7:23 or an expanded version thereof. He asks what might happen if he repents and asks forgiveness. Iblīs, in contrast, asks for respite. Iblīs, the snake, Adam, and Eve are cast down as enemies to one another. The snake is cursed with losing its legs, moving about on its belly, eating in the dirt and having its head crushed by all who see it; Eve is cursed with menstruation, and difficulties during pregnancy and birth; Adam is cursed with the struggle for survival. He is taught to work iron and cultivate the soil; earth is to be man's resting place, during life and after death.

As can be seen from Table 9, a large number of the narrative blocks that are connected to the Fall story are therefore unique to al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of *Sūrat al-Baqara*: that Iblīs overheard Adam wishing that the Garden were eternal, that the keepers bar his entry into Paradise, that he takes the form of the snake, promises it his protection in return, must leave the snake in order to be heard, that he praises the tree and cries about Adam and Eve's mortality in order to convince them to eat. It is only in al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of *al-Baqara* that alternative strategies are supplied for the seduction of Adam (he is bribed to eat in return for sexual favours, or he must be made drunk on wine before he will eat), and the suggestion that the tree causes them to defecate is also only given in this part of the *Tafsīr*. All of these motifs are carried into the historical account.

Table 9: Showing the Presence of Key Motifs across all Four Accounts

Key motifs	**Q. 2**	**Q. 7**	**Q. 20**	**History**
Iblīs read about their private parts in a book.	Q. 2	—	Q. 20	Fall
Iblīs hears Adam say he wishes it were eternal.	Q. 2	—	—	Fall
The keepers bar Iblīs' entry into the Garden.	Q. 2	—	—	Fall
The other animals refuse to help.	Q. 2	—	—	Fall
Iblīs takes the form of the snake.	Q. 2	—	—	Fall
Iblīs promises the snake protection.	Q. 2	—	—	Fall
Iblīs must leave the snake to be heard.	Q. 2	—	—	Fall
Iblīs offers kingship.	Q. 2	—	Q. 20	Fall
Iblīs offers immortality.	Q. 2	Q. 7	Q. 20	Fall
Iblīs offers angelic status.	Q. 2	Q. 7	—	Fall
Iblīs claims he has superior and prior knowledge.	—	Q. 7	—	—
Iblīs claims God hates the idea of them being angels or immortals.	Q. 2	(Q. 7)[74]	—	(Fall)
Iblīs praises the tree.	Q. 2	—	—	Fall
Iblīs cries about their mortality.	Q. 2	—	—	Fall
Adam first refuses.	Q. 2	—	Q. 20	Fall
Iblīs persuades Eve to eat.	Q. 2	—	Q. 20	Fall
The snake commands Eve to eat.	Q. 2	Q. 7	—	Fall
Iblīs commands the snake.	Q. 2	Q. 7	—	Fall
Satan runs in man's blood.	Q. 2	—	—	—

Key motifs	**Q. 2**	**Q. 7**	**Q. 20**	**History**
Iblīs makes Eve desirable and she bribes Adam to eat.	Q. 2	—	—	Fall
Eve persuades Adam to eat because it did her no harm.	Q. 2	—	Q. 20	Fall
Eve makes Adam drunk so that he eats.	Q. 2	—	—	Fall
Eve commands/tells Adam to eat.	Q. 2	Q. 7	—	Fall
Adam obeys Iblīs.	—	Q. 7	—	Things
Adam disobeys God.	—	Q. 7	Q. 20	Fall; Things
Their nudity appears.	—	Q. 7	Q. 20	Fall; Things
It had been concealed by a veil of light.	—	Q. 7	—	—
It had been concealed by a nail-like covering.	—	Q. 7	Q. 20	Fall; Things
They defecate.	Q. 2	—	—	Fall
Adam flees and is caught by a tree.	no tree	Q. 7	—	Things
Adam is shy of God.	Q. 2	Q. 7	—	Fall; Things
Adam repents and is forgiven.	—	—	Q. 20	—
Adam repents with Q. 7:23.	—	Q. 7	—	Things
Adam repents with an expanded version of Q. 7:23.	—	Q. 7	—	—
Adam repents with words of praise.	Q. 2	—	—	—
Adam repents through deeds.	—	—	Q. 20	—
Adam asks about his creation.	Q. 2	—	—	Things
Adam asks what might happen if he repents.	Q. 2	Q. 7	—	Things
Adam had free choice.	—	Q. 7	—	—
The sin was foreordained.	Q. 2	—	—	(Fall?)[75]
All can use these words of repentance.	Q. 2	—	—	—
Iblīs asks for respite.	—	Q. 7	—	—
The enemies are Iblīs vs Adam and Eve.	Q. 2	—	Q. 20	—

Key motifs	Q. 2	Q. 7	Q. 20	History
The enemies are Iblīs, the snake, Adam, and Eve.	Q. 2	Q. 7	—	Fall
The snake is the cursed with the loss of its legs, having to slither on its belly, and a crushed head.	Q. 2	Q. 7	—	Fall
The snake eats in the dirt.	Q. 2	Q. 7	—	Fall
The snake is stripped bare.	Q. 2	—	—	Fall
Eve is cursed with menstruation.	Q. 2	Q. 7	—	Fall
Eve is cursed with traumatic pregnancies and births.	Q. 2	Q. 7	—	Fall
Eve is cursed with silliness.	Q. 2	—	—	Fall
Adam is cursed with the struggle for survival.	—	Q. 7	—	Things
Adam is taught to work iron and cultivate the soil.	—	Q. 7	—	Things
The earth is cursed.	Q. 2	—	—	Fall
The resting place is for life and for death.	Q. 2	Q. 7	—	—

It is extremely interesting to note that the motifs that are *absent* from the historical account tend to be motifs that are unique to one particular exegetical account. Thus specific to the exegesis of *Sūrat al-Aʿrāf* are the details that Iblīs claims he has superior and prior knowledge, and that Adam should follow his advice on that account; that their nudity had been concealed not by a nail-like covering but by a veil of light; that where Adam asks for repentance, Iblīs asks for respite. All of these narrative motifs are both unique to al-Ṭabarī's treatment of *al-Aʿrāf*, and absent from the historical account. It is only in the exegesis of *Ṭā Hā* that the reader is informed that Adam repents through deeds. Again, this is not reflected in the *History*. The fact that Satan runs in man's very blood, and the suggestion that all can use the words of repentance supplied by God to Adam, are stated in al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of *al-Baqara* but missing from both the other exegetical accounts. These details are similarly omitted from al-Ṭabarī's *History*.

Conclusions

To conclude, a high degree of copying does appear to have taken place between the *Tafsīr* and the *History* with specific reference to the Fall of Adam. This is evident insofar as al-Ṭabarī explains the historical facts of the Fall with anecdotes 4, 6–13, and 15 out of the 18 anecdotes provided in his commentary on *But Satan made them slip* in Q. 2:36, and anecdotes numbers 7–12 are reproduced in the same order across the two works. To describe the creation of Eve, meanwhile, al-Ṭabarī utilises reports

numbers 4–6 from his commentary on *Adam, live with your wife in this garden* in Q. 2:35, along with reports numbers 2–4 from his commentary on *and from it created its mate* in Q. 4:1. The historical section on Adam's repentance reproduces reports numbers 4, 7–8, and 13 from al-Ṭabarī's commentary on *Then Adam received some words from his Lord and He accepted his repentance* in Q. 2:37. Al-Ṭabarī moreover includes further scattered material from his commentary on Q. 2:127 and Q. 20:117 within the cited anecdotes that surround the Fall and Repentance narratives. This strongly suggests that the *Commentary* was physically open in front of al-Ṭabarī when the *History* was being compiled; that the *Tafsīr* was finished prior to the *History* is of course attested in the biographical literature.[76] Any differences that can be perceived between the two works must consequently be deliberate ones, in which material was consciously edited in order to suit its new environment in the *History*.

The genre differences between al-Ṭabarī's *History* and his *Commentary* would appear to affect not only the material that is selected for inclusion, but also the ensuing narrative line, the ordering of material, the time line that is created between events, the meaning and significance of these events, and the general characterisation of the main protagonists. In its material pertaining to the Fall of Adam, the *History* contains, as one might expect, no information on variant readings or the specifically grammatical or lexicographical aspects of discussing the Qur'anic text, there is significantly less duplicate material, and al-Ṭabarī does not include reports he expressly disagrees with.[77] Consequently perhaps, the *History* would appear to provide a more focussed directional line, with less variant explanations. There is a certain amount of reordering of material, with more Qur'an-centric accounts possibly being given more prominence to reflect their more exposed placing with the context of the *History*, and, feasibly, some authorities being given priority over others. Narrative résumés tend towards the centre of the historical account, while in the *Tafsīr* they, for the most part, flank the elucidations of minor details. The repositioning of reports can alter their function and role in the surrounding material.

The confines of the convention of following the Qur'anic text line by line in the *Tafsīr*, meanwhile, result in the *History* and the *Tafsīr* working on different time-lines with reference to when events take place within the presented narrative. This flexibility in where material can be placed in the context of the *History* enables al-Ṭabarī to shape how the meaning and significance of certain events therein comes across. There is an example of this in God's 'acceptance' of the Fall, expressed through gifts, indulgences, and anticipation of His servant's needs, prior to His receiving Adam's words of repentance, and in the placing of the repentance narratives firmly in the context of this world, and maybe therefore our own hopes of a return to the next. A comparison of al-Ṭabarī's authorial voice across the two works, meanwhile, suggests a greater role for Iblīs, or the subtleties of the Fall dynamic, within the *Commentary*. The *History* reflects, within its editorial comments, a more

bilateral God/servant dynamic. This should however be balanced against the expanded sense of Iblīs as a driving force that is created by dint of the reordering of exegetical material within the *History*.

Equally intriguing is the suggestion that al-Ṭabarī deliberately constructs a separate narrative for each of his exegetical accounts, and that, aside from the specialist grammatical and linguistic information, it is the motifs which remain unique to each of the exegetical accounts within the context of the *Tafsīr* that are not carried into the *History*. The exceptions to this pattern are the extra narrative details pertaining to Iblīs' temptation supplied in al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of Q. 2:36 and accordingly reflected in the *History*, where Q. 2:36 forms the basis for al-Ṭabarī's historical Fall account, and the narrative trope of Adam fleeing through the Garden and being caught by a tree, unique to al-Ṭabarī's exegesis of Q. 7:22, and included, via the citation of a report attributed to Ibn ᶜAbbās, in the *History*. The reader is left with a very strong impression of deliberate authorship.

Further incursions into later sections of the *History*, and into the relative histories and commentaries of the other medieval scholars to have authored both genres of work, the eleventh-century al-Thaᶜlabī[78] and the fourteenth-century Ibn Kathīr,[79] should serve to clarify the situation further. The apparent narrowing of al-Ṭabarī's theological eye as he moved in the construction of his parallel Fall accounts from the genre of *tafsīr* to that of history, coupled with the widening of his contextual net (with all the repercussions this entails for the resultant narrative), is certainly a compelling starting point for discussion, and the significance of the narrative and theological differences which would appear to exist between al-Ṭabarī's various exegetical accounts remains to be explored.

NOTES

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1 See Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 133, citing Yāqūt, *Irshād: al-arīb ilā maᶜrifat al-adīb (Muᶜjam al-udabāᵓ)*. For more information on al-Ṭabarī's *History* see especially Gilliot, 'Récit, mythe et histoire chez Tabari'; El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics in Early Islamic History*; Leder, 'The Literary Use of the *Khabar*'; Khalil, 'A Closer Look at al-Ṭabarī's Accounts of the Khaybar Spoils'; Kheskh, 'How to Frame History'; Martensson, *Tabari* and 'Discourse and Historical Analysis'; Osman, 'Oral vs. Written Transmission'; Rosenthal, 'General Introduction' in *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, pp. 5–147; Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography*.

2 See Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, pp. 106 and 107 (again, citing the *Irshād*). For more information on al-Ṭabarī's *Commentary*, see especially Berg, 'Ṭabarī's exegesis of the Qur'anic Term *al-Kitāb*'; Calder, 'Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr'; Cooper, *The Commentary*

on the Qur'an by al-Ṭabarī; Gilliot, 'Mythe, récit, histoire du salut', 'Éxège et sémantique institutionnelle dans le commentaire de Tabari', and *Exégèse, langue et théologie*; Heath, 'Creative Hermeneutics'; Mårtensson, *Tabari* and '"The Persuasive Proof"'; Mahmoud, 'The Creation Story in "Sūrat al-Baqara"'; McAuliffe, 'Qur'anic Hermeneutics'; Pregill, 'Isrāʾīliyyāt, Myth and Pseudepigraphy'.

3 Indeed, regarding the 'smudge' in the moon, Rosenthal comments: 'All the following traditions appear in the same order in *Tafsīr* XV, 38 (*ad* Qur. 17:12).' See Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 244, n. 477, with reference to the material from pp. 244–247.

4 With reference to the material from pp. 251–252, 'The Ingratitude of the Enemy of God for His Lord's Favor, His Overbearance Toward God, and His Claiming Divine Lordship', Rosenthal remarks: 'The entire section consists of material from *Tafsīr* XVII, 13 (*ad* Qur. 2:34).' See Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 252, n. 520. Another extended stretch of overlap is suggested by Rosenthal with reference to 'Adam is Taught All the Names', pp. 266–268: 'All the following traditions are included in *Tafsīr* I, 170f (*ad* Qur. 2:31)'. See Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 266, n. 629.

5 It is interesting to note that the same poem is cited in both sources with reference to the death of Abel. See Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 316, n. 901.

6 See the footnotes to Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, pp. 320–322.

7 See the footnotes to Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 330.

8 Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, pp. 198–199, n. 226.

9 Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 214, n. 333.

10 Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 227, n. 404.

11 Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p 208, n. 294.

12 Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 267, n. 636.

13 Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 198, n. 225.

14 Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 234, n. 442.

15 Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 297, n. 807.

16 Heath also looks, briefly, at the material supplied in Thackston's translation of al-Kisāʾī's *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*. See Heath, 'Creative Hermeneutics', pp. 188–189.

17 Heath, 'Creative Hermeneutics', p. 181.

18 Heath, 'Creative Hermeneutics', p. 188.

19 Heath, 'Creative Hermeneutics', p. 188.

20 Cooper, *The Commentary on the Qur'an by al-Ṭabarī*, p. 9.

21 Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, pp. 168–169.

22 Khalil, 'A Closer Look at al-Ṭabarī's Accounts of the Khaybar Spoils', p. 16.

23 Schöller, 'Sīra and Tafsīr'.

24 For the Fall in general see, for example, Schöck, *Adam im Islam*; Mahmoud, 'Qiṣṣat al-khalq wa'l-ʿisyān'; Neuwirth, 'Negotiating Justice', Parts I and II; Spellberg, 'Writing the Unwritten Life of the Islamic Eve'. For the role of Iblīs in particular see Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption*; Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblīs* and 'Stalking Iblīs'; Butler, 'Reading Satan'.

25 All passages from the Qur'an are taken from Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an*.

26 That, within both al-Ṭabarī's *History* and his *Tafsīr*, the terms Iblīs and *al-shayṭān* can be utilised, apparently quite interchangeably, in the same episode suggests that *al-shayṭān* was most probably here understood as a descriptive, and not a character independent of Iblīs. For Iblīs and Satan as distinct entities, see Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblīs*, pp. 3–4 *et passim*.

27 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, vol. 1, p. 69 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 273). All following references to *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk* are also to vol. 1.

28 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 69 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 273). Al-Ṭabarī would appear to cite this twice in his *Tafsīr*: once before report number four, and once after it.

29 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, pp. 69–70 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, pp. 273–274).

30 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 70 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 274). Rosenthal queries the text's use of *thāʾ* here, pointing out that the Aramaic in fact has a *tāʾ* sound in the middle of its word for 'woman'.

31 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 70 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 274).

32 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 70 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 274).

33 See Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, pp. 51–52, citing Yāqūt, *Irshād: al-arīb ilā maʿrifat al-adīb (Muʿjam al-udabāʾ)*.

34 See Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 120, citing Yāqūt, *Irshād: al-arīb ilā maʿrifat al-adīb (Muʿjam al-udabāʾ)*.

35 There is also an argument that the attribution of an anecdote to various of the Companions of the Prophet conveys upon it an aura of 'veracity' (thus Pregill, 'Isrāʾīliyyāt, Myth and Pseudepigraphy', p. 271); again, this would serve a clear purpose in the opening lines of the historical account.

36 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 85 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 302).

37 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 85 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 302).

38 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 85 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 302).

39 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 85 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 303).

40 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 85 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 302, n. 829). Other authorities are of course cited without *isnād*s, but these would seem to occur only in composite accounts.

41 The other *ḥadīth* reports included in the *Tafsīr* account but omitted from the *History* are attributed to Ibn Zayd and Qatāda.

42 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 80 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 293).

43 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, pp. 80–81 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, pp. 293–294).

44 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, pp. 81–82 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 296).

45 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 82 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 297).

46 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 83 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 298).

47 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 83 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 298).

48 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 83 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 299), on the authority of Ibn ᶜAbbās.

49 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 83 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, pp. 299–300), on the authority of Saᶜīd.

50 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 84 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 300).

51 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 84 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, pp. 300–301).

52 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 84 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 301).

53 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, pp. 84–85 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, pp. 301–302).

54 Thus Q. 2:40f.

55 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 79 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 291). Presumably, if we are permitted to view the narrative as a more or less cohesive whole, Ibn ᶜAbbās means not that Adam and Eve mourned and fasted in isolation of one another, but that the earlier Ibn ᶜAbbās anecdote telling of how Adam immediately went in search of Eve when he fell to earth still stands, but no sexual intimacy took place for a hundred years. The later Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) certainly cites a report in which this is expressly stated, quoting a (queried) *ḥadīth* with reference to Q. 2:36. For more information on Ibn Kathīr see the references in n. 79 overleaf.

56 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 85 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 303).

57 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, pp. 85–86 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, pp. 303–304).

58 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, pp. 86–87 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, pp. 304–307).

59 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, pp. 88–92 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, pp. 307–317).

60 Translation taken from Cooper, *The Commentary on the Qur'an by al-Ṭabarī*, p. 265.

61 Neuwirth, 'Negotiating Justice', Part II, p. 16. See however Klar, 'Through the Lens of the Adam Narrative', for a refinement of this assessment of the Qur'anic material.

62 al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 81 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 294).

63 al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 87 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 307), on the authority of al-Suddī; cf. the similar narrative in al-Ṭabarī's *tafsīr* of Q. 7:172, on the authority of Ibn ᶜAbbās.

64 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 71 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 275).

65 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 74 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, *Vol. I*, p. 281).

66 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 71 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, *Vol. I*, p. 275).

67 In the *Commentary* this is represented by report no. 14 (Qatāda) for Q. 2:35, the affliction that was foreordained for man was foreordained for Adam, report no. 10 (al-Suddī) and reports no. 11–15 (ᶜUbayd b. ᶜUmayr) for Q. 2:37, in both of which narratives Adam asks God whether his sin was foreordained.

68 Thus Iblīs' refusal to bow down occurs at Q. 2:34, immediately prior to the Fall pericope at Q. 2:35–38, and at Q. 7:11–18, immediately preceding the Fall pericope at Q. 7:19–25.

69 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, pp. 66–69 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, pp. 266–272).

70 Authorial interpolation. See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 69 (Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 272).

71 Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblīs*, p. 234.

72 Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblīs*, p. 238.

73 Here again al-Ṭabarī would appear to use both terms interchangeably. This is particularly evident in his using 'Iblīs' to gloss the Qur'anic text's *al-shayṭān* at Q. 7:22.

74 This is suggested in the cited words of Q. 7:20 itself, but not repeated in the commentary on this verse.

75 Implicit in the statement: 'This was to afflict them and have God's judgement on them (*qaḍāᵓu'llāhi fīhumā*) and their progeny come to pass.' See Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 275; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 71.

76 Rosenthal dates publication (in the form of public lectures) of the *Tafsīr* from 270/883(4); the relevant section of the History was made public in 294/906(7). See Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 106 and p. 107 (citing the *Irshād*) and p. 133 (again, citing the *Irshād*).

77 Although al-Ṭabarī does for instance dispute the likely veracity of one element of an anonymous anecdote (see al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, p. 83, and its denial at p. 84; Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. I*, p. 298 and p. 300), he does not, as we see evidenced in the *Commentary*, provide countless opinions on the type of tree forbidden by God, only then to state that such speculation should be discouraged. See al-Ṭabarī's commentary on Q. 2:35.

78 Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Thaᶜlabī (d. 427/1035). For more information on al-Thaᶜlabī's major works see the following dedicated monographs, Klar, *Interpreting al-Thaᶜlabī's Tales of the Prophets*; Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsīr Tradition*; Wiesmüller, *Die vom Koran Getöteten*; and the bibliographies therein.

79 Ismāᶜīl Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373). For more information on Ibn Kathīr see ᶜAbd al-ᶜĀl, *Ibn Kathīr wa-manhajuhu fī'l-Tafsīr*; Calder, '*Tafsīr* from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr'; Laoust, 'Ibn Kaṯīr Historien' and 'Ibn Kathīr'; McAuliffe, 'Qur'ānic Hermeneutics: The Views of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr' and *Qur'anic Christians*; Mirza, 'Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373)', 'Ishmael as Abraham's Sacrifice', and 'Was Ibn Kathīr the Spokesperson for Ibn Taymiyya?'; Nadwi, *al-Imām Ibn Kathīr*; Ohlander, 'Ibn Kathīr'; Saleh, 'Preliminary Remarks on the Historiography of *tafsīr* in Arabic' and 'Ibn Taymiyya and the Rise of Radical Hermeneutics'.

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- No heavy restrictions to the style or format of the post, but it should best reflect the content and topic discussed.

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- Links to external blogs and websites that are related to the author, subject matter and to EUP publishing fields are encouraged, e.g.to related blog posts

6. Submit your post

Submit to ruth.allison@eup.ed.ac.uk

If you'd like to be a regular contributor, then we can set you up as an author so you can create, edit, publish, and delete your *own* posts, as well as upload files and images.

7. Republishing/repurposing

Posts may be re-used and re-purposed on other websites and blogs, but a minimum 2 week waiting period is suggested, and an acknowledgement and link to the original post on the EUP blog is requested.

8. Items to accompany post

- A short biography (ideally 25 words or less, but up to 40 words)
- A photo/headshot image of the author(s) if possible.
- Any relevant, thematic images or accompanying media (podcasts, video, graphics and photographs), provided copyright and permission to republish has been obtained.
- Files should be high resolution and a maximum of 1GB
- Permitted file types: *jpg, jpeg, png, gif, pdf, doc, ppt, odt, pptx, docx, pps, ppsx, xls, xlsx, key, mp3, m4a, wav, ogg, zip, ogv, mp4, m4v, mov, wmv, avi, mpg, 3gp, 3g2*.