

4.2 The Prophet

140619 NÜBÜVVET

Only a prophet could have brought the Quran – this was clear to the Arabs from the very first. What exactly prophethood was remained to be defined. The Quran left no doubt that the prophet was only a human.¹ At the same time, however, he had been chosen, not only as the bearer of the revelation but also as the leader of his community. People tried to imagine how he had been chosen: this is where the legend of the opening of the breast belongs.² Still, it did not clarify his position compared to the other prophets who had gone before him; they, too, had all been chosen. A hadith allows us to observe how the idea that there must not be any ‘ranking’ was pitched – in keeping with the prophet’s wishes: even Jonah, the least glorious of the prophets, that is,³ should not be placed beneath him.⁴ This was inspired by sura 2:136 *lā nufarriqu bayna aḥadin minhum*, a general expression repeated on a gravestone of the year 228/843.⁵

All the same, this modesty never stood a genuine chance as Muḥammad’s special position was at the same time proof of his community being the chosen one.⁶ We have seen the two linked in the motif of Muḥammad’s intercession during the Last Judgment.⁷ He carries the ‘banner of praise’ (*liwā’ al-ḥamd*) in his hand,⁸ while Adam and ‘all the others’ (*man dūnahū*) gather under it. The other prophets have to look out for themselves; even Abraham, from whom Islam got the name *millat Ibrāhīm*, after all,⁹ now has to admit that he lied three times ‘in Islam’.¹⁰ Muḥammad, on the other hand, was sometimes imagined sitting next to God on the throne during the *shafā’a*,¹¹ exalted

1 Cf. in detail Welch in: Hovannisian/Vryonis (eds.), *Islam’s Understanding of Itself* 22ff.

2 See p. 432f. and 439 above.

3 In the Quran God says to Muḥammad: ‘Be not as the man of the fish’ (sura 68:48), for Jonah’s actions were ‘blameworthy’ (sura 37:142). In general see St. Schreiner, *Muhammads Rezeption der biblischen Jona-Erzählung* in: *Judaica* 34/1978/149ff.

4 Cf. the hadith in text XXII 254.10a, and the instances in the commentary. A hadith of similar substance may be found *ibid.* 10 c.

5 RCEA I 230f. no. 292; cf. also 233f. no. 296.

6 Whether Friedmann (in: *JSAI* 7/1986/178f. = *Prophecy Continuous* 51f.) is correct in diagnosing an underdeveloped sense of identity in the hadiths mentioned remains to be researched further. Of course sura 2:253 had already said: ‘Some we have preferred above others (among the early prophets)’.

7 P. 605ff. above.

8 Cf. Text XXII 254, 10b.

9 Sura 2:130, and the parallels listed by Paret, *Kommentar* 31.

10 Cf. the version of the *shafā’a* hadith in Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* 2IV 187, 5 and –4ff.; in more detail p. 664 below.

11 See p. 450f. above.

Basra.⁴ His theory reached Jubbā'ī via Shaḥḥām.⁵ Jubbā'ī added a lot of evidence, but we do not know whether this went back to Abū l-Hudhayl. If God expressed something specific without a caveat in a generic way, it would be rather like speaking to an Arab in the language of black people, we read there,⁶ or: he would encourage humans to remain ignorant.⁷ One must be prepared for the possibility that certain verses were abrogated (*mansūkh*) without the abrogating verse being known⁸ etc. We may as well end here, as it does not lead us anywhere. Naẓẓām rejected Abū l-Hudhayl's standpoint entirely, but it is improbable that it was his criticism that had spurred Abū l-Hudhayl to come up with these arguments, as we have no record of any texts in which the debate could have been conducted. We do, however, hear that Abū Hāshim followed Naẓẓām;⁹ it would seem that in the time between him and his father the issue became a purely scholastic and theoretical argument.

3.2.1.3.3.2 The Truth of the Prophetic Tradition

In Abū l-Hudhayl's view hadith was real. He was probably familiar with Ṭayālisī's *Musnad*; Ṭayālisī had lived in Basra and died in 203/818 or 203/819.¹ 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī (d. 211/827), too, was considerably older. The prophetic miracles that became more and more important in the debate with the Christians could only be proved by means of the tradition,² as the Quran had given a different image of Muḥammad. Consequently Abū l-Hudhayl did not fight the *muḥaddithūn* as Ḍirār had done; rather, as we have seen, he transmitted hadith himself.³ If, however, this was done not merely for edification but for theological argument, he demanded stringent standards. Just like his predecessors he saw a hadith as a *khabar*, a statement, and the truth criterion must consider when we are able to believe reports or statements we cannot verify rationally. He saw it as numerical – later hadith theory would use the word *tawātur* – but

4 See p. 208 above. The anonymous Murji'ite doctrine is closer to Abū l-Hudhayl (*Maq.* 145, 3ff.).

5 Cf. Text 171, f, and 172, a.

6 Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, *Mu'tamad* 361, 3f.

7 Ibid. 360, 23f.

8 Ibid. 361, 7f. This does not tell us anything about Abū l-Hudhayl's or Jubbā'ī's views on the individual variations of *naskh* (see vol. I 39ff. above), as it only discusses in the context of *naskh al-tilāwa*, or *naskh al-tilāwa dūna l-ḥukm* that the abrogated verse might be unknown.

9 Ibid. 360, 7ff.; cf. p. 422f. below.

1 GAS 1/97f.

2 Text 175, a; also *Mughnī* xv 257 (although the text only discusses 'Abbād b. Sulaymān). Cf. p. 27 above.

3 See p. 234 above.