God’s Existence, Truth of Prophecy and Prayer as a Religious Experience to Muḥammad Iqbāl

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ABSTRACT

If we want to study Muhammad Iqbāl’s Islamic thought, we have to study his book: (Reconstruction of Religious Thoughts in Islam) before reading any book about him, as we cannot ignore this book on this subject, because the researcher cannot reach the depth of his thought and philosophy without studying this book. Iqbāl has philosophized in the statement of these complex topics that are related to “the science and spiritual experiences”, the perception of the existence of God, the reality and habit, the human self, the compulsory provision and the choice, the spirit of Islamic civilization, and meaning of the prayer as a religious experience. Iqbāl’s character in this book appears, as an Islamic poet, thinker and philosopher, in which Iqbāl wants to develop a new Islamic science of speech. It should be noted that Muḥammad Iqbāl addressed these topics with a careful research and deep study in the light of the teachings of Islam and modern philosophy, and opened the doors of thinking about Islam to his contemporary thinkers and scholars and those who came after them. Iqbāl by his mentality and being influenced by the philosophical approach tends to the synthesis of this method of mental analysis, but because of his religious tendency, he also tends to correct the steps of thought itself by highlighting the Qur’anic view on the content of the mental experience to follow in its footsteps towards the truth, using the descriptive analytical approach that is always fit in the treatment of such topics.

Keywords: renewing Islamic thinking; proving God’s existence by the reason; prophecy; Qur’anic view; religious experience.

INTRODUCTION

The book: Reconstruction of Religious Thoughts in Islam

The topics of Muhammad Iqbāl’s book: “Reconstruction of religious thoughts in Islam” are as follows: (1) Knowledge and Religious Experience (2) Philosophical Evaluation of Religious Experience (3) The concept of God and meaning of the prayer (4) The human self: Its freedom and immortality (5) Spirit of Islamic Culture (6) Ijtihad: The principle of movement in Islam (7) Is Religion Possible?

There is no doubt that the attempts of theologian philosophers were not convinced to solve the problem of divinity or to prove God’s existence with the mental proof, and regardless of the ideas that the heavenly religions brought about God, the human mind is still determined to address this issue and make a decisive decision to prove or deny God’s existence. Thus, the philosophers differed on this subject, some of them show the despair at the ability of the mind to perceive something beyond its capacity, and some of them see what inspires the confidence in the ability of the mind, as it seeks seriously towards the mind, some of them are convinced to the denial, and rest in the despair and believe in the existence of matter; but the three have not reached a proof formulation that eliminates this disagreement and shows a final result.

Iqbāl therefore wanted to address this issue seriously, and when he analysed the way inference of God’s existence among these philosophers, it became clear to him that every evidence was flawed or incomplete, and needed a lot of criticism, and when Iqbāl revealed the weakness of the three philosophical evidences: Cosmic evidence, the evidence of target, and the existential evidence, he declared in the chapter three of his book (philosophical proof of the emergence of the religious experience) that the human situation in this world is based on the Ratios and that the man’s thought and existence together are one in the end. (1)

Iqbāl analysed this experience to reveal its Ratios, both in its objective content or in the way of its interpretation of the phenomena that it perceives, and at all levels: The material, life and reason, and then ends up saying that it is only a partial act in understanding the cosmic phenomena, and that it is far from realizing the whole truth, and this fact sought by another experience that is bold, decisive and comprehensive, which is the mystical or religious experience that leads its owner to an absolute and a direct awareness of the truth. Although it is also subject to the interpretation and the selection.

In a deep and accurate analysis, Iqbāl discusses the mental experience in its attempt to perceive the reality of life, whether at its abstract philosophical level or at its experimental scientific level, perhaps, because it’s a way to understand the truth or the principle of spiritual life of thought and feeling or in terms of recognizing the principle of having a creative God with the reins of the universe in his hand.
The principle of life is either pure mater or pure spirit or the result of both as we find these three perceptions in Greece’s philosophical thought, whether in Plato’s ideal position, in the position of Demetrius or in the mathematical position of the Pythagoreans.

When we reach the age of Descartes find that he develops philosophical thinking about looking at matter, but decides that he has to believe that there is an essence to a thought that is all different from the material.

Science is independent to the philosophy and makes remarkable progress in discovering the laws of nature, so the philosophical perception of the matter and life takes a new direction that tends to be considered purely a physiological material function, and the man is considered merely a machine of the nature.

This position, which does not considers the life more than a matter evolved in the form of different doctrines unified as the interpretation and principle. The most famous of them is (the dialectic materialism). The dialectic materialism considers the material world to be the only world that actually exists, and the spirit is only the product of the brain. The material continues to evolve, and because of this development, the assets arise more complex, but this doctrine nevertheless recognizes the existence of a subjective movement of material that explains the manifestations of thought and will. (2) When Iqbal discusses all these perceptions, he notes:

A. We do not understand -in the field of naturalism-, we are only aware of the apparent qualities and we do not understand the reality of the matter. The amount we have learned about it is mere interpretation. There is something physical and there is our sense of it. The most of that we feel or understand it is nothing but personal conditions characterized by the observer himself, such as the colours and sounds. Accordingly, we do not have that alleged contact with the material, which makes our knowledge of the nature a mixture of judgment, suspicion and superficial knowledge. (3)

The theories of science appeared, first and foremost was Einstein’s theory of relativity that had shaken that scientific certainty that we had before about the meaning of matter, time and space. The bottom line is that our awareness of the meaning of space and time is not as obvious and objective as we imagine, so that the scientific experience with its alleged strength and objectivity is only a limited relative knowledge.

B. No doubt that denial of the spiritual life and then denial of the emotional life shows the denial of the truth, which is all the knowledge. Feeling is the principle of spiritual life, which is not pure material or pure spirit, but the interpretation of automated life does not explain many aspects of creative living matter, such as the phenomenon of self-sufficiency and automatic maintenance, and the material-inspired abolitionist, which means a comprehensive briefing on the characteristics of interacting organs in every living body, which has not yet been achieved for the science itself. It is possible to recognize the health of natural sciences and the ability of the experimental mind to discover the laws in which the material moves. So it may be therefore predicted, but the ability of the experimental mind in this limited field does not mean that its ability can be to fit each field. There is material, there is emotional life and there is thought. These are all manifestations of the universe and a field of consideration and research. We should not forget that what we call science is not one consistent view of the truth.

It is a set of partial looks at the truth, fragmented from a holistic experience that does not appear to be consistent with each other, the natural sciences look at the matter, the life and the reason, but if we ask how the mutual relationship between the matter, life and mind is manifested in parts of the different sciences that have been researched, and we find that each of them is unable to answer our question alone as a satisfactory answer. In fact, the different natural sciences, are like many burrows decrease on the dead’s natural body, each goes with a piece of it, and the nature in terms of the subject of science is something in which workmanship has largely worked, a workmanship that arose from the selection process for which science must submit nature to it in order to achieve mastery and scrutiny. Therefore, the religion -seeking the truth as an integral, as the whole cannot be separated- was therefore, not afraid of any partial view of the truth. (4)

C. A closer look at the analysis of the emotional life reveals the following observation:

A conscious or poetic soul has two forces: The workforce and the cognitive force. The workforce is that recognizes the external objects in their spatial bias and temporal order. It feels that everything in its time is different to the other thing, as well as where it is situated. In this case, the conscious self of the external subjects transcends itself by some way, feeling its existence through its sense of successive partial assets. In this case, the sense of self to the time is a feeling of continuity into a straight line that goes beyond the past, lives the present and faces the future, but this feeling - which we do constantly without interruption - obscures us or disrupts another possibility. It is a dive into our depths, through self-introspective meditation, which allows us to feel our existence in an indivisible and infinite time. It is an experience that is only available to those who can break up from the poet’s outer prison and engage in external science. (5)

We understand the meaning of the time through different emotional situations in the outside world, but this sense of the time fades through the second emotional state. This leads to result that the divine creation and the time go hand in hand, and that the divine destiny means the commitment between the phenomena of accidents and their perception in the man. There is no sense of destiny in this meaning, and this is the interpretation of the holy verse: "We created everything as much as its quantity" and we have only ordered once as a sight. (6) Destiny is not a force inspired from outside the same things, it is the power of things in itself. It has successively emerged for the mental or the sensory perception while, looking at the Creator, it is only one complete achievement, and in this sense the permanency and the continuum of the creation both are the essence of life, the reality of life is a constant movement in non-repetition but in originality and creativity, (7) and this is indicated in the verse: "Has not that you not seen that God merges the night into the day and merges the day into the night and the sun and the moon all going on indefinitely". (8) "He (God) enters the night in the day and the day in the night". (9) The interpretation of these and the other verses leads to the fact that the ultimate truth of the world is a constant permanency in which the thought and sense of existence overlap and the purpose is to combine everyone in an integrated unit. (10)

"We cannot understand this unity, but through the realization of the same of existence surrounding everything, which is the first fountain of every individual or partial life, and for every individual or partial thought". (11) From the extensive discussion of the dilemmas facing
the philosophical analysis of these subjects, based on the disparagement of the divine self from all the requirements of limited intellectual analysis, Iqbal recognizes that the conception of life as an iconic system is not right which may lead us to consider the divine self as a hostage to this system, or a place of change and development imposed by the nature of permanence and continuity. The end of the whole philosophy is to just stand to this limit in the perception of the truth, as it is separated from the divine self. As for the religion, it aims to communicate the truth directly. Indeed, Muhammad insists on highlighting the possibility of discovering the whole truth of this world by the religious experience and highlighting the fact that Islam insisted on considering the experience as an approach to discovering both partial and total truth.

Iqbal responds to Kant (12), who said that it is not possible to know beyond the nature, considering that the pure mind cannot perceive the thing in itself, because it is out of experience, "that the wisdom of this only works if we assume that every experience is impossible except the normal experience". (13)

Iqbal once again asserts that only religious experience leads to the realization of truth, not reason, but this Sufi experience remains individual, and can’t be passed on to the others. If it is true that its importance will not be accepted by the common people, because of the impossibility of transferring the Sufi experience to the others, except the owner of this Sufi experience, confirms its importance and its departure from the limits of the mind itself. (14)

If we wanted to scrutinize, we would say that the experience that leads to this discovery is not a conceivable mentality, but a vital fact, a tendency arising from an internal biological transformation that cannot be captured in the context of logical arguments. (15)

It seems that the realization of the truth by visualizing the total meanings falls in a serious way to realize the truth, the science does not care if the electron in which it says that it is real or not. Perhaps it is only a symbol or a custom. Religion, in its essence, is the only serious way to seek the truth. (16)

It remains to be asked, isn’t Sufi experience obsessive, nervous emotion, or some kind of mysterious anomaly?

Iqbal does not respond to these questions, but merely says that if a mystical experience of communication beyond the nature is possible, we must face this possibility in courage. (17) Iqbal goes further, and decides that if the physiological disorder, mental obsession or nervous emotion can have impressive results in transforming the movement of history as it happened to the Prophet of Islam, it is of course important, and he intends to reveal, of course, the contradiction of the claim that prophecy is a form of obsession. (18) Modern psychology has not yet been able to analyze the religious experience to know the nature of religion. Ibn Khalidun tried before this era to analyze this experience, as modern Western philosophers and psychologists did such as Lip tens (19), Young (20), William James (21) and Sir William Hamilton. (22)

Iqbal supports Young as he agrees that the basic nature of the religion does not fall within the scope of analytical psychology, because the religion is an art in the face of psychology research and its approaches. Psychological research is possible only in the emotional and symbolic phenomena, not in the nature of religion itself (23), but Iqbal disagrees with his findings. From the fact that the religion in Young’s eyes is just a well-intentioned biological measure used to establish some moral boundaries about the human society in order to protect the social construction from the self-instincts, and this is the secret that it was built on this modern psychology so that Christianity has finished fulfilling its biological mission, and that it is impossible for a modern man to realize its original meaning. (24)

Iqbal then confirms the failure of psychology to understand the role of the religious experience in its attempt to reach the truth. If psychology is able to play a real role for the human life, it must establish an independent approach to its research, which will be more appropriate for our time.

Iqbal continues to confirm the weakness of the mind and its failure to realize the divine truth, because its perception is conditioned by its relative nature. The divine truth is communicated only when it will be investigated by a profound experience that brings about a psychological transformation that cannot be captured in the nets of logical sayings.

In fact, the religion, in the eyes of Muhammad Iqbal, is more keen than the science to reach what is the right in the end, and to scrutinize the realization of the right, which is done through the experience, in the religion and science both, but we should differentiate between the experience stops at the behaviour of accidents, which can be observed by the ordinary means, as in the science, and the experience stops at the core of truth for extraordinary means as in Sufi experience, and in order to make Muslim’s thought prepared for this experience, he should find his perfection in the case of reason, which is called by the religion (the prayer). (25)

In his second and sixth lectures, Iqbal tried to make the religious experience a real reason to communicate with the whole truth, and to refute all the doubts and the objections levelled at it, and Iqbal also tried elsewhere to show how Islam organized the relationship between the man and that absolute truth (God), by the prayer. (26)

**MEANING OF DIVINITY AND TRUTH OF PRAYER TO IQBAL**

Iqbal considers that the prayer is the area of religious experience available to every Muslim and is obliged to organize his relationship with God, but this prayer varies in its value and fruit with varying the awareness achieved in the field of communication with God, the prayer of the Prophet is a mostly creative prayer, i.e. it follows a psychological trend to create a moral world in which the Prophet experiences the results of his revelation. This prayer, which aims at the knowledge, is like meditation, yet the prayer at its highest level increases much more than the abstract meditation, it is a normal vital act in which our character suddenly discovers its place in the existence or in the greatest part of the life. (27)

Iqbal then explains how Islam built it into a special psychological state that combines between the self-proving and denial. It is therefore noted that the true purpose of prayer is achieved only when the prayer is performed in a group. Islam therefore has bounded most of its worships with a social nature, particularly the prayer. (28)

Iqbal tried to give (the prayer) a moral strength that makes it a psychological instinct, because it is based on irresistible tendencies towards the (absolute), although some of us tried to ignore these tendencies, therefore, William James said that he believes that the people will remain (praying) until the end of time, unless their mental nature changes. (29)
Iqbal adds in this context that the prayer is an experience towards the knowledge or towards confronting the whole truth, if the believer practices it in a way of deep faith. Qur’an confirms that it is a vital act in which the believer communicates with his Lord: “We have made for every nation a method of worship, which was followed by them, and it does not dispute you in the matter, and pray to your Lord that you are on a straight guidance.” (30)

**TRUTH OF THE PROPHECY TO IQBAL**

History confirms the prophecy since the 9th century BC to the 6th century based on Israeli manuscripts regarding the Israeli prophetic movement, and based on the documents of history itself, with regard to the mission of Christ ‘Isa bin Maryam and Muhammad bin Abdullah.

Those prophets and messengers rushed with irresistible force to address their nations with some decisive orders that had a severe impact on the movement of history, and some of them even changed the face of history. This is the particular point that was insisted by Muhammad Iqbal as an evidence of the sincerity of prophecy. (31)

Iqbal faced the phenomenon of prophecy - as well as some speakers, philosophers and intellectuals - because it is an essential element of the Islamic faith, but Iqbal could not dive into its analysis, whiter, when he was researching the religious experience and when he addressed this subject in his fifth lecture entitled: (Spirit of Islamic Culture) (32), even he chose to analyse its historical, social and cultural implications after putting it within the framework of the higher religious experience, which does not differ in this description from the Sufi experience as he said defining it that it is as a form of Sufi awareness (33), in which the Prophet uses what he has achieved during his inspiration in order to guide the forces of life to a new direction, and the Prophet’s desire is to see his religious exercise turns into a living world power, and to test them only to test these living forces establish by the Prophet within the framework of human civilization. (35) Iqbal therefore did not try to establish a proof of the phenomenon of prophecy, but went from the beginning to decide this fact that the prophecy is measured by the historical measure, i.e. in the light of the historical movement that emerged from it, which is a kind of the human heroism manifested in its creative living forces, and finally the cultural world that emerged from its looks and perceptions.

Iqbal then addressed the subject of revelation and explained its nature as the link between God and the Prophet. According to Iqbal, the revelation is a general phenomenon of the existence, and the biological and physiological phenomena in the world of animal and plant derive their direction from the inspiration, which directs the whole life in its creative direction, and the Qur’an itself uses the revelation for different worlds. (36) Thus, Iqbal considers the prophecy a natural phenomenon dictated by the evolutionary stages of humanity. The humanity has known two great phases in its history:

1. A phase in which the humanity relied on its spiritual powers represented in revelation.

2. A phase in which the humanity relied on its organized mental powers and deleted that previous phase.

Muhammad the messenger of Islam is a link of contact between the two phases or the two worlds, the world of, and the world of reason, so the prophet is from the world of nature in term of the source of his message, which is the revelation, and He is from the world of reason in term of the content of his message. Here, Iqbal means the content of the message of Islam and the Qur'anic text, which is intended to be an explicit call to the use of reason, and to consider the universe, so that it is considered an existing religious obligation. (37)

Thus, Iqbal states that the prophecy in Islam reaches to its final perfection in recognizing the need to abolish the prophecy itself, which involves its deep awareness of the impossibility of existence remaining dependent forever on the reins of its leadership, and that in order for the perfection of his own knowledge, the man wants to be left to eventually rely on his own means. As Qur’an Addresses the mind, urging it to experience all the time and insisting on looking at the universe and identifying the news of the first formers from the sources of human knowledge, it’s all a different picture of the idea of the end of prophecy. (38)

In the introduction to his fifth lecture entitled: (Spirit of Islamic Culture), Iqbal explained that the prophecy is measured by the historical measure, and when we go back to that measure, we find him not noticing with great admiration that cultural movement that was born out of the spirit of Islam only, as he did a detailed analysis of its nature. He explained that it was based on the same principles that were principles of modern science, believing that the human knowledge should be directed to the soul, to the nature and to the history, and its approach should be personal testing, experience, observation and inference. Iqbal explained that the spirit of Islamic culture came in conflict with the spirit of Greek philosophy, because the latter believed in the stability and stillness of cosmic realities, while the Islamic spirit believed in the principles of development and change as a sign of the existence of an absolute divine truth, and by going along with this spirit the Muslim scholars have made radical corrections in the field of logic, astronomy, mathematics and the natural sciences. It dealt with the heritage of Greek culture with refinement and revision, and because of the experimental scientific tendency, which is the fruit of the Islamic spirit, some great minds emerged, rising with the message of science, research, and creative philosophical thinking, we mention here some of them such as: Al-Jähiz (39), Ibn Maskawaih (40), Al-Bayrūnî (41), Al-Khwārizmî (42), Ibn Khaldūn (43), Ibn Rushd (44). The modern European renaissance has been benefited by what these and the others have left behind, particularly in the field of science and mathematics. An Italian scientist Dominici writes: “The place of Arab science is the first place of importance in the history of sciences, because this science is the link between ancient civilization and the new world”. "If we do not study that Arab science and do not understand it, we will find an inexplicable void, which cannot be explained easily between ancient civilizations and our modern civilisations". He then mentioned a number of senior Muslim athletes, including Abu fadl tabraizi (Died: 922 AD), Abu Ja’far bin Al-Dūya al-Misri (Died: 912 AD), Abu ’Abbas al-Farghani and Muhammad bin Jābir al-Ṭabarî (Died: 929 AD). (45)

Muhammad Iqbal then reviews some examples of the thinking of Muslim scholars, whose lines on the perception of the universe combine, and that the moving perception based on its consideration of a changing phenomenon, in both fields: The field of nature and the field of soul, and confirms that the principles of historical criticism have found their roots in the Qur’an, and that they were brought up by scholars in the modern age, so that historical sense sprang with a strange growth that made the Islamic world possible, because of the emergence of great historians, scientists, investigators and senior modernists involved in all sciences such as al-Ṭabarî for an example. (46)
Muhammad Iqbal did not forget to mention the great difference between the spirit of Islamic culture and the spirit of Greek philosophy and to make us to stand to the places of calling by the Qur’an itself to observe and experience and overcome natural phenomena beyond the facts, when the Qur’an is proclaimed that the end goes to your Lord, (47) that indicates to the deepest thought mentioned in the Qur’an, namely that the end of knowledge is not to control the astronomy movement and the system of matter, but it is the revelation of the infinite spiritual world that surrounds everything. Here is the secret of the great difference between the propensity of Greek culture and the propensity of Islamic culture. The first is looking for the proportionality, and the second is looking for the infinity. The ideal to the first is the beauty. The ideal to the second is God. (48)

Iqbal has mentioned many examples in this regard to confirm that Islam has achieved a mental revolution over Greek thought, which has governed for centuries in the history of all humanity. This is only because Islam is a religion that has corrected the line of human thought and moved it from one field to another. In the end, this confirms the sincerity of the message of Islam and that it is inspired by God. (49)

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the attempts of theologian philosophers were not convinced to solve the problem of divinity or to prove God’s existence with the mental proof, and regardless of the ideas that the heavenly religions brought about God, the human mind is still determined to address this issue and make a decisive decision to prove or deny God’s existence. Thus, the philosophers differed on this subject, some of them show the despair at the ability of the mind to perceive something beyond its capacity, and some of them see what inspires the confidence in the ability of the mind, as it seeks seriously towards the mind, some of them are convinced to the denial, and rest in the despair and believe in the existence of matter, but the three have not reached a proof formulation that eliminates this disagreement and shows a final result.

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From the extensive discussion of the dilemmas facing the philosophical analysis of these subjects, based on the disparagement of the divine self from all the requirements of limited intellectual analysis, Iqbal recognizes that the conception of life as an iconic system is not right which may lead us to consider the divine self as a hostage to this system, or a place of change and development imposed by the nature of permanence and continuity. The end of the whole philosophy is to just stand to this limit in the perception of the truth, as it is separated from the divine self. As for the religion, it aims to communicate the truth directly.

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REFERENCE


[4] Ibid. P: 52


[7] Muhammad Iqbal, as an Islamic Thinker p. 63


[14] Ibid. P: 211

[15] Ibid. P: 212

[16] Ibid. P: 212


[18] We do not agree with this view because the prophecy is different to from Sufi experience. If that were the case, every Sophie would be a prophet.


[21] An American philosopher and great psychologist (died 1910), has important works in philosophy and psychology, taking English citizenship.

[22] An orientalist and a great English scholar, born in Egypt, he was a member of the Arab Scientific Complex in Damascus and the Cairo Complex.

[23] Reconstruction of religious thoughts in Islam. P: 219

[24] Ibid. P: 219-220


[26] Ibid. P: 75

[27] Ibid. P: 104-105

[28] Ibid. P: 106-107

[29] Ibid. P: 104


[31] Muhammad Iqbal as an Islamic thinker. P: 69


[33] This view seems to be incompatible with Islam, because it is only a choice from God, so we do not agree with that view.

[34] Reconstruction of religious thoughts in Islam. P: 142

[35] Ibid. P: 142.

[36] As God Almighty says: "May your Lord inspire the bees to take houses from the mountains and from the trees and from what they are nesting. There are some other verses that support this view, including "And inspired in every sky of its command". Surat: Fuṣṣilat, verse 12, including; "Then it will tell the story that your Lord inspired it", including; "We inspired to your mother what is inspired", Surat Ṭāhā, verse 38.

[38] Reconstruction of religious thoughts in Islam. p. 144


[40] He is ’Abu ’Ali Khūzān, a philosopher, writer, historian and chemist who served the minister Ibn Al’Amid in the Court of Bani Buwailh (died: 1030 AD/ 421 AH).
'Abu al-Raiḥūn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bairūnī (362-440) is an encyclopaedic scientist, mathematician, astronomer, and historian. He was one of the most famous Muslim astronomers and mathematicians. He left many works in the astronomy and history.

'Abdullah Muḥammad b. Mūsa al-Khawarizmī, who died in 232 AH. An athlete, an astronomer, and a geographer, who lived in the era of al-Ma'mūn al-'Abbāsī. He wrote a book in the mathematics, which was the first book in the history of mathematics, and is the founder of Algebra.


'Abu al-Walīd Muḥammad b. Ḥamd b. Rushd al-Qurṭabī (514-595) was one of the masters of thought in Islam, was a jurist, a hardworking, a doctor, and a philosopher of Islam. He left many valuable works, including: the book: "Bidāyat Al-Mujtahid", "Faṣl Al-Maqūl", the disclosure of the methods of evidence, and Tahāf Al-Falāṣifah".

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He is ʻAbu Jaʻfar Muḥammad b. Jaʿr b. Yazīd al-Ṭabari. A great Islamic scientist and a senior Islamic historian who died in 310 AH.

Surat al-Najm Verse: 42.

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