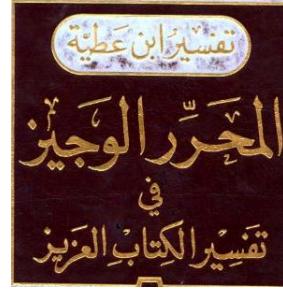


Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah al-Andalūsī (d. 541H) on the Earth

In his tafsīr, *al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz*, Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah (d. 541H) said:

“Regarding the Exalted’s saying, *bisāṭan* (an expanse/carpet): its apparent meaning is that the earth is a flat expanse and not a sphere. Belief in either view is not in itself harmful to religion—unless, there is a flawed (corrupt) view built on the view of sphericity. As for the belief that it is a flat expanse, this is the apparent meaning of the Book of Allāh the Exalted and entails no flaw whatsoever. Ibn Mujahid cited the waters of the ocean surrounding the inhabited world as evidence for the correctness of this view, arguing that if the earth were spherical, the water would not remain settled upon it.”¹



وقوله تعالى: ﴿بِسَاطًا﴾ يقتضي
ظاهره أن الأرض بسيطة وغير كروية،
واعتقاد أحد الأمرين غير قادح في
الشرع بنفسه اللهم إلا أن يتركب على
القول بالكروية نظر فاسد، وأما اعتقاد
كونها بسيطة فهو ظاهر كتاب الله
تعالى، وهو الذي لا يلحق عنه فساد
البتة، واستدل ابن مجاهد على صحة
ذلك بماء البحر المحيط بالمعمور
فقال: لو كانت الأرض كروية لما
استقر الماء عليها. و«السُّبُل»:
الطُّرُق، و«الفجأج»: الواسعة.

¹ *Al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz Fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-‘Azīz* (Dār Ibn Ḥazm), p. 1903. In the globe earth, the force of gravity from the centre of the earth, a pulling force (Newtonian gravity) was previously used to explain why things fall to the ground. However, that was unsatisfactory as it was too mystical and has been replaced with Einstein’s view of gravity (a property of the geometry of curved space-time).