# Intraquranic Hermeneutics:

## Theories and Methods in *Tafsīr* of the Qur'ān through the Qur'ān

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# Abstract

Islamic hermeneutical works commonly state that "the Qurʾān explains itself", and scholars inside and outside the tradition have tended to note and/or adopt this intratextual approach to interpretation. Most famously articulated by Ibn Taymiyya, the principle remains in need of interrogation and elaboration. More broadly, the study of Quranic hermeneutics (*uṣūl al-tafsīr*) is receiving fresh attention both in Western academia and in Muslim confessional scholarship. This study is designed to contribute to these developments and the wider concerns of Tafsīr Studies.

The research examines the extent to which the process of "*tafsīr* of the Qurʾān through the Qurʾān" (TQQ) has been elaborated in theory and how it has manifested in exegetical practice. The latter is achieved through an extensive case study which compares the approaches and conclusions of a range of exegetes, particularly those whose projects were based solely or primarily upon TQQ. Following these descriptive chapters, the remainder of the thesis works towards a constructive account of TQQ of benefit to any interpreter of the Qurʾān, drawn mainly from *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* literature. The theoretical underpinnings of the endeavour are explored in the light of four "principles", along with classical theories (such as contextual revelation, abrogation) which could present a challenge to the very possibility of intraquranic exegesis. The final chapter draws upon broader genres of literature on the Qurʾān which shed light on TQQ processes and practices.

Throughout these explorations of theory, method and practical application, a number of core issues and tensions come to light – such as objectivity vs. subjectivity, reductionism vs. pluralism, and the relative authority and value of this form of exegesis in the broader field of *tafsīr*.

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"Whoever does not thank people, does not thank God."

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*Sohaib.*

# Contents

# Figures

# Introduction

## 0.1 − Anatomy of a Concept and Approach

The idea that the Qurʾān "explains itself", and that one of the approaches to interpret its verses and investigate its meanings is to compare its passages internally, is well known. However, it is among those well-known things that have been taken for granted to a considerable extent and remain in need of interrogation and elaboration. Books on Muslim exegesis, especially those written from a normative perspective, tend to mention the principle with brief examples before moving onto other principles according to a familiar sequence – as Chapter 1 of this thesis will show and explain. Intuitively, reading the scripture holistically and contextually seems reasonable and compelling.

The study of Quranic hermeneutics (*uṣūl al-tafsīr*)[1] is receiving fresh attention both in Western academia and in Muslim scholarship; as such, this study is designed as a timely intervention into two fields developing in parallel. It is grounded in both contexts and transcends the 'insider/outsider' dichotomy which is increasingly being eroded in global academia.[2] In recent times, both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars have made significant contributions to studying the Qurʾān as a literary artefact, thereby placing emphasis upon understanding its meanings and purpose, as well as its structure and stylistic features.[3] Carl Ernst's popular text on *How to Read the Qurʾān*

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[1] I have opted to use "exegesis" to describe the practice of *tafsīr*, and "hermeneutics" for its underlying theories and methods, usually described in Arabic as *uṣūl* (principles), as also in *uṣūl al-fiqh* (sometimes called legal hermeneutics). Of course, Western hermeneutics has moved on considerably from its origins in Bible interpretation, and the field is sometimes known in Arabic as *taʾwīliyyāt*. Therefore, my use of the term recalls its earlier applications and points towards the possibility of generalising the insights of *uṣūl al-tafsīr* to enrich understanding of interpretation in language and life. Whether and how that could be achieved is a question I have not attempted to address.

[2] In some ways, the distinctions can be useful between etic and emic vantage points, between critical and confessional/normative positions, between descriptive and prescriptive accounts, and between academic and guild contexts of study. My own research blends various aspects but aims towards a "constructive" approach which aids in "active" study of the Qurʾān and its exegesis in living communities of research and practice. As Elliot Bazzano argues, "normativity" is by no means restricted to Muslim scholarship (see 'Normative Readings of the Qur'an: From the Premodern Middle East to the Modern West'). See also Karen Bauer's reflections in 'The Current State of Qurʾānic Studies', pp. 37–41.

[3] Articles in Boullata (ed.), *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qurʾān* are indicative of this trend. Chapter 1 below contains a discussion of the Egyptian "literary school" of exegesis, albeit limited to its use of intraquranic citations. See also El-Awa, *Textual Relations in the Qur'an: Relevance, Coherence and*

and Garry Wills' recent title *What the Qur'an Meant* illustrate the fact that interpreting the Qurʾān is not merely a confessional practice. As long as exegesis remains a living activity and concern, there will be debates over which theories and methods produce the most authentic and fruitful understandings of the text.[4]

Building on the foundations of traditional Muslim scholarship, this research examines the extent to which the process of **"*tafsīr* of the Qurʾān through the Qurʾān" (TQQ)**[5] has been elaborated upon in theory in hermeneutical literature, and how it has manifested in exegetical practice. After further focus upon classical and modern theories which have a bearing on the possibility and practice of intraquranic exegesis, this thesis draws upon broader genres of literature on the Qurʾān which could inform the development of an integrated methodology. The following is an outline of the chapters and the key research question for each:

- **Chapter 1:** How have Muslim scholars theorised about intraquranic methods of exegesis, and what value and role have they afforded this approach in the broader scheme of hermeneutics?

- **Chapter 2:** How have exegetes who gave importance to *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* employed Quranic citations in practice, and what can be inferred about their hermeneutical approaches?

- **Chapter 3:** What theories are relevant to this exegetical practice, either because they are necessary assumptions underpinning TQQ and making it possible, or because they present a challenge to its validity and value?

- **Chapter 4:** How can resources in scholastic literature on the Qurʾān beyond the immediate genre of *tafsīr* and its *uṣūl* be employed in further theoretical and methodological development of intraquranic hermeneutics?[6]

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*Structure*, where the communicative aspect is given primacy (in a text intended for guidance) over aesthetics (pp. 35–37).

[4] While my own focus is on *uṣūl* with clear roots in Islamic tradition, other interpretive trends may be seen as alternative *uṣūl*, whether based on Biblical, Rabbinical and Late Antique intertextuality; or Syriac etymology; or various modern ideologies.

[5] In Arabic, *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*. I have adopted the term "intraquranic" as an effective shorthand, as well as the abbreviation TQQ. The term "intratextuality" is used by a number of scholars in the same straightforward way I use it in this thesis. Unlike Neuwirth, I am not restricting this concern to diachronic reading, through which the progression of theological arguments can be traced (see 'Neither of the East nor of the West' in Neuwirth, *Scripture, Poetry, and the Making of a Community*, pp. 42–43).

[6] Gregor Schwarb observes: "a proper appreciation of the hermeneutical principles underlying scriptural exegesis must look beyond the *tafsīr* genre" ('Capturing the Meanings of God's Speech,' p. 114).

In this way, the first half concerns how TQQ has been theorised and practised, and the final two chapters look at underlying "principles" and "methods", respectively, organised in novel categories. The thesis is, therefore, both descriptive and constructive.

# 0.2 – Tafsīr Studies in West and East

## 0.2.1 – The Western Academy

The study of this genre was said in 1989 to be in its "infancy".[7] More than a decade later, Jacques Waardenburg was able to ask: "Are there Hermeneutic Principles in Islam?" (His answer: yes, but not yet "explicit and elaborated rationally").[8] At the present time, Tafsīr Studies is still finding its place as a distinct field from Quranic Studies. It would certainly be premature to speak of Uṣūl al-Tafsīr Studies, but this thesis is a contribution to understanding this aspect of the field. In order to outline the main concerns of Tafsīr Studies today, I shall refer to three recent compilations.

The first of these is *Tafsir: Interpreting the Qur'an*, edited by Mustafa Shah, a compilation in four volumes of earlier papers from various sources (2013). The first volume concerns historical development of exegesis and studies of its earliest works. In his paper on 'Qurʾānic Exegesis in Medieval Islam and Modern Orientalism' (originally from 2006), Bruce Fudge describes the lack of attention to *tafsīr* in its own right as "an unremarked lacuna in scholarship", and explores reasons behind this.[9] The second volume is particularly pertinent to my study, in that it considers "procedural and conceptual exegetical devices", covering such concepts as *muḥkam/mutashābih*, *nāsikh/mansūkh* and *asbāb al-nuzūl*, along with studies of Islamic hermeneutical treatises and exegetical introductions. Contributions by Isaiah Goldfeld and Gregor Schwarb consider overlaps with Jewish exegetical traditions, with the latter

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[7] Heath, 'Creative Hermeneutics,' p. 173.

[8] Waardenburg, *Islam: Historical, Social and Political Perspectives*, p. 127. He mentions the "first rule of *tafsīr*" which is the intraquranic principle, and notes that linkages between verses made by the exegetes often appear "highly arbitrary" (ibid, p. 115). He further advocates an "open scholarly view" of the Qurʾān and underlines "the need for further study of the rules underlying Muslim ways of understanding" (ibid, pp. 129–130).

[9] Fudge, 'Qurʾānic Exegesis in Medieval Islam and Modern Orientalism,' p. 115 (I am not citing from the Shah volume). Fudge's observation concerning the discord between Ḥājjī Khalīfa's laudatory description of the field of *tafsīr* as "the noblest of sciences" and his remarks on its actual pitiful state (ibid, pp. 123–124), foreshadow the inconsistency I have noted between claims of TQQ as the "best method" and the realities of its theory and practice.

highlighting the particular importance of *uṣūl al-fiqh* in collecting "methodological metadiscourses".[10] The third volume studies a range of commentaries, and the fourth focuses on particular themes in classical and modern exegesis.

The second compilation to consider is edited by Andreas Görke and Johanna Pink and entitled *Tafsīr and Islamic Intellectual History: Exploring the Boundaries of a Genre* (2015)[11]. In considering the "permeation" of *tafsīr* into other genres such as *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*, this volume highlights, indirectly, the fact that materials for interpreting the Qurʾān may productively be extracted from a range of sources beyond the obvious – an approach which forms part of the purpose of Chapter 4 of this thesis. The editors state that earlier Western studies tended to treat *tafsīr* "merely as an auxiliary science" rather than a genre worth studying as a window onto Muslim scholarship and tradition. They describe the emerging studies which parallel shifts in Islamic Studies generally, from "the near-exclusive focus on origins and on the 'Golden Age'" to consider exegetes and commentaries of other periods.[12]

The slightly earlier publication edited by Karen Bauer – *Aims, Methods and Contexts of Qurʾanic Exegesis* (2013) – while focusing on the period between the second/eighth and ninth/fifteenth centuries, draws attention to some of the key questions for the study of the genre and its underlying principles and methods. In her own chapter, Bauer notes how some exegetical introductions give the impression that *tafsīr* is a "catch-all genre" which incorporates multiple aspects of the study of the Qurʾān.[13] Her introduction underlines that the exegetes saw their own task as to "uncover and explain" the meanings of scripture; while it can certainly be asked – as much of the whole volume does – to what extent they were also "creating" meaning,[14] my own concern in this thesis is to examine the methods by which the exegetes sought after that objective meaning and the inherent pitfalls on the way. Another significant chapter for my study is by Stephen Burge, who examines the relationship between *Al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* – the Quranic sciences compendium by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī

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[10] Schwarb, 'Capturing,' p. 113.

[11] This and the following were both published by Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London.

[12] Gorke and Pink (eds.), pp. 1–2.

[13] Bauer, 'Justifying the Genre: A Study of Introductions to Classical Works of *Tafsīr*' in Bauer (ed.), p. 50; the point is in reference to Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī.

[14] Bauer (ed.), p. 1.

– and the exegetical works of the same author. Noting that the eighty "modes" (*anwāʿ*, effectively chapters) of this work have been categorised by some modern scholars into thirteen, or even five groups,[15] he points out that any exegete would need to draw from multiple modes depending on relevance to the verses at hand.[16] In Chapter 1 below, I have identified the chapters and sections of *Al-Itqān* pertinent to intraquranic analysis.

This brief overview of three recent compilations in Tafsīr Studies demonstrates that, while the field is still being defined, theoretical and methodological aspects – and corresponding genres in Muslim scholarship – have already been recognised as relevant. However, these genres – namely *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* and its subset of *uṣūl al-tafsīr* – have naturally received less sustained attention than the *tafsīr* genre itself. Therefore, one of the key contributions of this study will be to shed further light on the key works in Quranic sciences and hermeneutics, also drawing attention to the porous boundaries of these genres.

## 0.2.2 – Developments in the Muslim World

Recent publications and conferences in countries such as Morocco and Saudi Arabia have drawn attention to underdevelopment in *uṣūl al-tafsīr* and presented steps towards remedying this situation. Mawlāy Ḥammād's book *ʿIlm Uṣūl al-Tafsīr: Muḥāwala fī l-Bināʾ*[17] proceeds from "the assumption that [this field] has an independent existence in every sense" and yet it remains "in pressing need of sustained efforts to clarify its aspects, define it and develop it" in accordance with its acknowledged importance in service of the Qurʾān.[18] Among the contemporary scholars he cites is his mentor al-Shāhid al-Būshīkhī (1945–), who argues that the project should proceed along three stages:

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[15] Burge, 'Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, the *Muʿawwidhatān* and the Modes of Exegesis' in Bauer (ed.), p. 279 – describing the categorisations by Krawulsky and Wansborough, respectively. See also McAuliffe's 'Exegetical Sciences' in Rippin (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Qurʾān*, p. 417, in which she describes *Al-Itqān* and its predecessor *Al-Burhān* (by Zarkashī) as "*summas*". I have referred extensively to these two classical works for the interpretive principles scattered throughout, especially the intraquranic aspects.

[16] As Ṭayyār states in reference to Ibn Taymiyya's idealised scheme (see in Chapter 1), "Anyone who engages in the task of exegesis knows that the various methods will intermingle, and there is no *tafsīr* which is ordered in this way" (in *Al-Jāmiʿ fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr wa Manāhij al-Mufassirīn*, 1/467).

[17] The subtitle means "An attempt at construction". The book was published in association with the Moroccan research institute MUBDIʿ: see 4.2.3 below. Along with Markaz Tafsīr, they are active in advancing normative Tafsīr Studies.

[18] Ḥammād, *ʿIlm Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, p. 15.

1. Produce reliable scholarly editions of *tafsīr* works, noting historical developments.[19]

2. Extract methodological principles from the practice of the exegetes, as well as the theoretical points scattered in various works.

3. Construct an integrated theory (which he called *ʿilm bayān al-Qurʾān*) based on categorisation, analysis, evaluation and updating of the aforementioned.[20]

The concern over this "lacuna" goes back centuries, and the state of *tafsīr* and its *uṣūl* is often lamented in contrast with other fields in Islamic scholarship, especially *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*.[21] In his book *Al-Iksīr fī ʿIlm al-Tafsīr*, Najm al-Dīn Sulaymān al-Ṭūfi (d. 716/1316) described how rules in these fields were developed to sort between authentic and unreliable reports, and between valid and invalid opinions; he argued that a similar methodology (*qānūn*) is required in *tafsīr*, and scholars should not be afraid of originality.[22] In the early twentieth century, Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī lamented the historical preoccupation of Islamic hermeneutics with juristic concerns as opposed to developing a methodology applicable to all fields.[23]

Markaz Tafsīr is a new centre in Riyadh which has established a research unit for *uṣūl al-tafsīr*; two recent publications have provided an interesting snapshot of the field to date. The first, *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr fī l-Muʾallafāt* (2015), studies works belonging explicitly to the genre, both classical and modern: the researchers conclude that there is a lack of clarity surrounding the field's conceptualisation (*mafhūm*), subject matter (*mawḍūʿ*) and sources of derivation (*istimdād*). They also note a disconnect between

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[19] This point reflects that there is serious work required to be done to the *tafsīr* corpus itself, in addition to extracting methodological principles. When setting out to translate the first volume of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *The Great Exegesis* (Islamic Texts Society, 2018), I was dismayed to realise that there is no critical edition of a work of this importance.

[20] Ḥammād, *ʿIlm Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, p. 19.

[21] Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī related from some teachers the following assessment of the relative state of various Islamic sciences: "There are three classes of science: that which has matured (*naḍaja*) but not reached its peak (*iḥtaraqa*), namely *uṣūl* and *naḥw*; that which has neither matured nor reached its peak, namely *bayān* and *tafsīr*; and that which has matured and reached its peak, namely *fiqh* and *ḥadīth*" (See Sabt, *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr*, 1/6). The two aspects of this metaphor (literally: cooking and scorching) refer to development of the branches of the science, and its issues being analysed extensively such as to leave virtually nothing further to investigate.

[22] Ṭūfi, *Al-Iksīr*, pp. 41 and 56.

[23] *Al-Takmīl fī Uṣūl al-Taʾwīl* in Iṣlāḥī (ed.), *Rasāʾil al-Imām al-Farāhī*, pp. 212–214. For more quotes and a brief history, see Rakītū, *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr*, pp. 35–46.

the theoretical and applied genres, in that the insights of the *mufassirūn* can hardly be found in the *uṣūl* works.[24] The second publication, *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr fī Ārāʾ al-Mutakhaṣṣiṣīn* (2016), is based on a survey of Muslim professors in the field and includes a bibliography of *uṣūl* and *qawāʿid* works (see 1.1 below). This reiterates the perception that existing works are in need of extensive critique and updating.[25] My survey of works in Chapter 1 will test these conclusions with respect to one specific area of *tafsīr* and its *uṣūl*.

# 0.3 – Methodology

The nature of this study has required that I draw on a wide range of sources and utilise them to various ends. As such, I have explained specific methods at the beginning of chapters, and often within sections. Here I draw attention to a few overarching aspects. Although I seldom speak in this thesis as a would-be *mufassir*, my assumptions about the craft of *tafsīr* are nevertheless pertinent to my framing of this study and analysis of the exegetes' output. Moreover, though my goal is to present an account which is relevant to interpreters with different beliefs about the provenance of the Qurʾān, my study is based – in the first place – upon the traditional framework as found in the *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* literature, broadly conceived. These two issues require some elaboration.

## 0.3.1 – Hermeneutical Assumptions

Whereas there exist any number of propositions concerning the origins of the Quranic text, my starting point from a *tafsīr* perspective is to view it as comprising a communication which was (and is) intended to be understood and to have an effect.[26] If that is so, how does the need for *tafsīr* arise at all? It is a function of a gap – e.g. linguistic, contextual – between speaker and listener. As far as the Qurʾān itself is

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[24] Sulaymān et al, *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr fī l-Muʾallafāt*, p. 11. The research for this work was completed by Master's students in Al-Azhar and Cairo Universities. See p. 112 for a summary of the problems in definition. The section on intraquranic *tafsīr* (p. 179 ff.) outlines the common topics addressed by the *uṣūl* works, and then breaks down the "types of TQQ" they describe, ranked by popularity.

[25] Sulaymān et al, *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr fī Ārāʾ al-Mutakhaṣṣiṣīn*, pp. 88–90. Respondents tended to agree on the importance of Ibn Taymiyya's *Muqaddima* along with the recent contributions of Musāʿid al-Ṭayyār, a leading figure in Markaz Tafsīr. They also tended to emphasise the significance of Zarkashī and Suyūṭī in the *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* genre, along with the introduction to Ṭabarī's exegesis. Among Ṭayyār's works are commentaries upon Ṭabarī, Ibn Taymiyya and Suyūṭī.

[26] See 3.3 below for what I have termed the Principle of Interpretability.

concerned, the only appearance of the word *tafsīr* in its pages (Q 25:33) is to describe divine responses to contentions directed at the Prophet. On this basis, I consider it appropriate to use this term similarly for human answers to well-meaning questions: hence the exegete's task is to attain clarity by resolving questions which he or she either receives or conceives.

Numerous views have been advanced classically concerning the definition of *tafsīr* and its distinction, if any, from *taʾwīl*.[27] It is of little use to insist on definitions which do not reflect the practices of the *mufassirūn*, whose output reflects a wide range of concerns and analytical methods applied to and around the text. However, refining an *uṣūl*-based approach calls on us to consider how these multifarious materials are best conceived and categorised. My own preference, at this point in time, is to see the content of *tafsīr* works as consisting of three stages of analysis: pre-text, text, and post-text. **Pre-text** exegesis is the effort to situate a verse in its societal and textual contexts, thus identifying its background and reference. **Text** exegesis is linguistic analysis of words and structures, which may well occur before or alongside the pre-text analysis. **Post-text** exegesis, which depends on the previous two stages, seeks after implications, rulings and guidance derived from the text once understood in context. Whereas some scholars would consider this beyond the domain of *tafsīr* (and class it otherwise as *istinbāṭ* and/or *tadabbur*[28]), it may also be considered the very purpose of *tafsīr* and thus rightly included in works of exegesis.

Returning to the concept of communication, the next question is how the Qurʾān is to be received by readers coming long after the event of revelation. Based on what I have outlined above, *tafsīr* would not end with the first generation, though they may be privileged in answering certain types of question. Nevertheless, new and different questions will be asked as time and societies progress. This entails that *tafsīr*

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[27] See for example Zurqānī, *Manāhil al-ʿIrfān*, 2/383. The view he attributes to Māturīdī, if it is taken from his exegesis, is not accurately conveyed. In Māturīdī's scheme (see *Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān*, 1/3–4), claims about the original meaning and linguistic interpretation of the verse fall under *tafsīr* and require a higher standard of proof because they are attributing a particular intent to God. *Taʾwīl*, on the other hand, refers to what I have termed "post-text": rulings and implications derived from the text. It seems evident that the latter, too, contains a type of claim about divine intent.

[28] *Istinbāṭ* is the process of deducing rulings (legal or otherwise) from the text. *Tadabbur*, often translated as "reflection", can refer to the various parts of the exegetical process (as used by some of the authors discussed below), or to reflection on the reality and message of the Qurʾān. Both believers and unbelievers are exhorted in the following verses to do *tadabbur*: Q 38:29, 4:82 and 47:24. Recent years have seen a proliferation of books, projects and organisations aiming to promote *tadabbur* among Muslim populations.

is an ongoing activity rather than something settled in the distant past. There should be no objection to renewal (*tajdīd*) even in the methods of exegesis insofar as such novel readings do not impute to the earliest Muslims a fundamental inability to decipher the Qurʾān.[29] However, even for believers who assume the eternal relevance of the Quranic message, a nuanced approach is required when establishing links and comparisons between present day concerns and the "socio-historical context"[30] of the scripture.

While the Qurʾān speaks to a wide audience and seems to assume their ability to understand it, practical experience shows that people in general are in need of clarification and that understanding can progress from basic to deeper levels. This is where the specialist craft of the *mufassir* comes in: attempting to speak for God concerning God's speech, bridging the aforementioned "gap" and eleborating on meanings and implications. Interpretation is a skill in which some people specialise to a greater extent and thereby attain to authority. Nevertheless, *tafsīr* remains in the domain of human fallibility. A good interpretation is one which is plausible as reflecting the communicative intention behind the speech, irrespective of whether it constitutes, in reality, the "one true meaning". Indeed, one can reasonably believe that the Speaker has embedded layers of (complementary) meanings within those words – and may even have intended for people to reach different conclusions in their search for the Qurʾān's guidance.

This brings us to the basic impulse underpinning this research project, namely the search for methodological order behind the exegetical choices of each author, and even across the board. Unless it is to be surrendered to individualism, *tafsīr* must admit of some principles which guide the *mufassir* to interpretations which are plausibly "true". The same principles may be used to weigh up opinions and adjudicate between interpreters and their conclusions and methods. At the beginning of the project, I was driven by the notion of a "process" which could be applied as a series of analytical

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[29] The Saudi professor Ḥātim al-ʿAwnī makes a traditionalist case for "renewal" in *Takwīn Malakat al-Tafsīr*, pp. 13–51. This short work is unusual in encouraging keen students to develop "the mindset of an exegete" –bolder than the call to individual *tadabbur*. ʿAwnī classes TQQ alongside use of the Sunna and opinions of the *Salaf* among "*al-tafsīr bi-l-manqūl*" but recommends for students to use these sources to check the results of a prior attempt to determine meaning solely on the basis of language (ibid, p. 87), after surveying the broad and proximate context of the verse to be studied (ibid, pp. 70–74). In his section on TQQ, he recommends gathering relevant verses and noting preliminary ideas about their relationships and implications before consulting the specialist works of exegesis, etc. (ibid, pp. 91–96).

[30] This point is made by Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qurʾān*, pp. 116–125.

steps and considerations: why can such not be found in books of *uṣūl al-tafsīr*, ready for implementation? I have since come to see the desideratum as more complex than a linear process, yet still subject to the kind of systematisation which can empower the exegete to take all relevant factors into consideration. Moreover, though I began with a sense that TQQ was one source or step in a process, I have come to appreciate that it is both multifaceted and connected within a wider *tafsīr* system which I hope to explore further in future. The individual exegetes, therefore, may be seen as giving more weight to specific parts of that system, such as transmitted opinions (*maʾthūr*), or *sūra* structure and flow (*naẓm*). It may prove to be the case that approaches to interpreting the Qurʾān are not all commensurable, in that they stem from differing theologies and commitments; yet I see potential in bringing different approaches 'face to face', even if that is only achieved in this thesis to a limited extent.

Just as there are different approaches to *tafsīr*, there are different things which could be intended by "intraquranic" exegesis. At some points, I have used a broader concept which includes any explanation of a verse with reference to the Qurʾān itself, even if that be the surrounding verses or alternative readings of the same verse. I had considered organising this thesis around the proximity principle, starting from immediate co-text and extending to verses found anywhere in the Quranic corpus.[31] In a significant sense, TQQ is always an appeal to context. However, my primary focus is upon interactions between separate pieces of text, i.e. independent verses which may be in the same or separate *sūras*. The case study in Chapter 2 reflects this emphasis clearly with its focus on the exegetes' citations of verses in the course of explaining Sūrat al-Anʿām. Though the proximate and wider Quranic context are both justifiably described as TQQ, it is also justifiable to study these two aspects of contextual reading separately; I have opted to discuss both while giving greater attention to the latter.

## 0.3.2 – Sources and Treatment

The descriptive aspect of the study has focused on Islamic (mostly Sunnī) sources, both classical and modern: in that respect, I have assumed a reality and continuity in the efforts of Muslims to explain the Qurʾān and develop methodology to guide and evaluate *tafsīr*. It should be self-evident that the oldest and richest scholarly traditions surrounding the Qurʾān are worthy of continued attention; it is also

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[31] See the summary of "levels of text relations" in 4.4.3 below.

reasonable to propose solutions to "lacunae" observed by scholars operating within a traditional framework, and for those solutions to be made consonant with that tradition. In practice, this can be manifested in the suggestion that a certain classical scholar *could* have argued a little differently than he did in fact, and that modern-day exegetes operating within that scholar's paradigm can adapt those ideas and conclusions without having to abandon all his methods and convictions. The utility of this approach should be clear, given that over a billion people today belong to a faith community in which the Qurʾān is no mere historical artifact and for whom meanings and interpretations are far more than a matter of academic interest. Despite the disconnect which may exist between various Muslims populations on one hand, and both the scripture and the scholarly class on the other, I suggest that it is more effective for any future interpretive enterprises to be constructed on deep-rooted and recognisable foundations.

Nevertheless, this is not a pious project or one in which traditional assumptions are adopted uncritically. The various sources are considered for their inherent analytical value, then subjected to further analysis which draws from different aspects of my own training. I have sought to benefit from every academic insight I could find, whether 'confessional' or 'critical'. Building on the assumption that *uṣūl al-tafsīr* is an active field which is, as yet, poorly defined and underdeveloped, I have exerted effort to refer to the most up-to-date research from the Muslim world – highlighting insights and offering critique – thus being part of bridging a gap between cultures of scholarship.[32] In so doing, I have attempted to strike a balance between being charitable and critical: the former aspect could be compared with someone who gives first right to speak to his elders and seniors; yet if what they have to say does not answer newly arising questions, then we have every right to provide additions or alternatives. The reader will find that one of my regular complaints is that an author has been inconsistent with his own stated aims, assumptions or conclusions.[33]

One may suppose that the focus on *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* literature limits the scope of this study unnecessarily, especially considering that Muslim exegetical activity has taken place in a variety of disciplines. Aside from the fact that there is a great deal of

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[32] Saleh makes a pointed criticism of "haughty indifference" towards Arabic secondary literature, which is commonly presumed to lack analytical rigour ('Preliminary Remarks on the Historiography of *tafsīr* in Arabic,' p. 17). By the same token, one may observe an under-appreciation in the Arab world of the most recent insights by Western scholars, even (or especially) Western Muslims.

[33] Rather than discrediting the authors – who are nevertheless human and fallible – a 'creative conflict' mentality (see 4.3.2 below) can pave the way to improving on their contributions.

material under this broad genre, much of which remains largely unexplored in studies of this type, the main response to this concern can be found in the above-quoted descriptions of *tafsīr* as a "catch-all" genre and the likes of *al-Burhān* and *al-Itqān* as "summas" of classical Quranic sciences. Not only do these works gather the discussions of linguists, theologians, traditionists, jurists and the like, but their authors *were* linguists, theologians, traditionists and jurists. That being so, I am confident that the selected approach allows for the best insights to be gleaned from the breadth of Islamic scholarship pertaining to the Qurʾān. Nevertheless, certain discussions below (e.g. theories in Chapter 3) draw from major scholars outside the realm of exegesis, and I have directed particular attention to the field of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (see 4.1), which itself has a noted relationship with *ʿilm al-kalām*.

Naturally, the goal of breadth in the topics and genres consulted has come at the expense of depth in any of those specific areas. I could have opted to study one exegete, or tackle intraquranic lexicology alone, for example. However, it was the lack of connectivity and cohesion between these topics, scattered in a variety of books and debates, which motivated me to approach *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* comprehensively and holistically. I hope the reader will find that I have remained focused on the purpose of including the various topics, providing enough detail to establish the relevance of each theory, method, person or book to the central concern of this thesis.

For translation of the Qurʾān, I have generally used Abdel Haleem's *The Qur'an: A New Translation*. When citing other translations, I have indicated this in a footnote or included the name in the reference bracket.

## 0.3.3 – Original Contributions

The significance of the questions addressed by this study is a function of the importance of reading the Qurʾān – as scripture or as a historical document – according to principles which maximise understanding and help the student of the Qurʾān to avoid implausible and untenable interpretations. Apart from the conclusions which I present throughout and at the end of this thesis, there are a number of points in my methodology which set it apart from studies preceding it, both in academia and

confessional scholarship.[34] In some cases, it is the extent to which these features are present, or the combination of the various features, which is original.

- Analysing one approach across a wide range of sources, rather than studying various methods of a single exegete, for example.

- Attention to theoretical works in Islamic hermeneutics, which are under-studied, connecting these to a variety of discussions.

- A sustained case study which includes several exegetes who have not been studied in detail before, and certainly not in such a comparative style. This also represents a new form of *sūra* study, centred on intraquranic connections from the perspective of the exegetes.

- Drawing on wider genres – especially individual disciplines within *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* – and demonstrating their utility for interpretation. Some of these genres have hardly been studied, especially in English.

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[34] See 1.4 below regarding recent works on intraquranic methods and *uṣūl al-tafsīr* more broadly.

# Chapter 1

# The *Uṣūl* Literature

## 1.0 – Introduction

This chapter assesses the theoretical and methodological approaches of Muslim scholarship to *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, i.e. exegesis of the Qurʾān using the Qurʾān (TQQ), with reference to the hermeneutical (*uṣūl al-tafsīr*) literature. In order to achieve the most complete picture, I am employing a broad definition and have included at least three distinct genres in the sections below, spanning classical and modern periods. The fourth section looks at recent studies of TQQ within a confessional Muslim context, to summarise where the field has reached at the present time. Therefore, unlike the recent survey publication *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr fī l-Muʾallafāt* (Markaz Tafsīr, Riyadh), I have not restricted my focus to works incorporating this key term in their title; the researchers identified only four pre-modern works meeting this criterion, then a large spike in publications in the last decade with considerable overlap in content.[1] As noted in the introduction, contemporary specialists consider the term *uṣūl al-tafsīr* to be poorly defined and its parameters only vaguely delineated. The various usages include, as Mawlāy Ḥammād summarises them: the primary sources (*maṣādir*) referred to by an exegete; axioms (*qawāʿid*) which ought to be observed; and benefits (*fawāʾid*) to be borne in mind.[2] I have, therefore, considered *uṣūl* and *qawāʿid* works to be the same genre in effect, even though the latter – especially more recent works – may be structured more clearly according to axioms.

Beyond the specificity of the genre as defined by that title, the term occupying the next level of relevance is *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*, i.e. Quranic sciences. Indeed, Mustafa Shah[3] translates the term as "Qurʾānic hermeneutics" and cites the astonishment of the author of *Al-Burhān*[4] that such a comprehensive work had not been compiled

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[1] Sulaymān et al, *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr fī l-Muʾallafāt*, pp. 161, 299. See also the bibliography in *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr fī Ārāʾ al-Mutakhaṣṣiṣīn*, p. 95 ff.

[2] Ḥammād, *ʿIlm Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, pp. 46–52. The author illustrates the latter usage with reference to Dihlawī's *al-Fawz al-Kabīr*; the edition I am using has "*nikāt*" (p. 10). Both terms denote salient points and subtleties which are less systematic than axioms.

[3] Shah, *Tafsir*, 1/51.

[4] Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān*, p. 26.

previously, as with the case of *ḥadīth* sciences. However, a survey of the forty-seven chapters of this work (labelled by the author as *anwāʿ*, "types") and others in the *ʿulūm* literature shows that it encompasses various concerns – such as the history of the Qurʾān and some of its non-linguistic features – that do not serve exegesis. As such, I take the view that *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* is in fact broader than *uṣūl al-tafsīr*.[5] My initial focus is upon chapters dealing with methods of exegesis and prerequisites of the exegete. However, many other chapters pertain to exegesis in one way or another, and those relevant to TQQ will form part of subsequent discussions.

The third type of work is based on inference from exegetical works – the premise of Chapter 2 of this study. The *uṣūl* (i.e. sources and methods) employed by a particular exegete can be taken either from his own account of it, usually within an introduction, or from statements and application within the exegesis itself. This can be observed in works addressing *manāhij al-mufassirīn*, including those which constitute historiography of *tafsīr*. I have not drawn from these secondary works unless, as in the case of Dhahabī's *Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn*, they include a distinct focus upon exegetical theory. However, I did include exegetes' introductions as part of the theoretical literature. As such, I examined the introductions of Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1075)[6], al-Ḥakīm al-Jishumī (d. 494/1101)[7], al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 502/1108), ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq Ibn ʿAṭiyya (d. 541/1146) and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273) and found that none made any direct reference to this approach to exegesis. I did find relevant passages in the introductions of Muqātil b. Sulaymān and Ibn Juzayy al-Kalbī, which I discuss below.[8]

Another genre not included at this point is *uṣūl al-fiqh* – legal methodology which includes study of texts and their implications and interactions – despite its noted overlap with *uṣūl al-tafsīr*, explored in Chapter 4 particularly. Moreover, since my aim is to trace the theoretical and methodological treatment of TQQ in Islamic scholarship,

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[5] See ʿAkk, *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr wa Qawāʿiduh*, p. 42 and Ḥaqqī, *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān min khilāl Muqaddimāt al-Tafāsīr*, 1/54.

[6] See Saleh's edition of the introduction to *Al-Basīṭ* in Bauer (ed.), *Aims, Methods and Contexts*, pp. 67–100. Wāḥidī's emphasis in this introduction is on lexicology and grammar.

[7] See Mourad's edition in Bauer (ed.), pp. 101–137. This introduction contains an early mention of *naẓm*, referring to the arrangement of *āyāt* and *suwar*.

[8] See section 1.3. Ḥaqqī's *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān min khilāl Muqaddimāt al-Tafāsīr* provides useful summaries of many. See also Bauer, 'Justifying the Genre' in Bauer (ed.), pp. 39–65.

I have not paid great attention to scattered statements in *tafsīr* works to the effect that passages of the Qurʾān explain each other.[9] The fact that the practice of TQQ was present in early exegesis is also not the concern of this chapter, but will become very clear in Chapter 2, with examples from Muqātil and Ṭabarī especially.[10]

# 1.1 – Principles (*Uṣul*) and Axioms (*Qawāʿid*)

My survey of early *uṣūl* and *ʿulūm* works included al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī's (d. 243/857) *Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī's (d. 597/1201) *Funūn al-Afnān* and Sulaymān al-Ṭūfī's aforementioned *Al-Iksīr fī Qawāʿid ʿIlm al-Tafsīr*. The earliest source I found to address the topic of intraquranic exegesis directly is the treatise by **Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya** (d. 728/1328) known as *Muqaddima fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*. This is commonly cited as the earliest known expression of the principle; more broadly, Walid Saleh has described Ibn Taymiyya's treatise as the first discrete presentation of a "systematically articulated prescriptive theory" for *tafsīr*, which goes some way to explaining its abiding influence upon the genre.[11] The following short passage constitutes its treatment of TQQ, which has been reproduced (sometimes verbatim) in numerous subsequent works, most significantly the exegesis of his student, Ismāʿīl Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373)[12]:

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[9] In this connection, brief remarks are found in the commentaries of Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1143): "The most correct meanings are those denoted by the Qurʾān [itself]" and Rāzī (d. 604/1210): "The verses of the Qurʾān explain each other" – see Muṭayrī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, pp. 53–55 for these as well as some post-Taymiyyan quotes. For an earlier attestation of this idea attributed to Saʿīd b. Jubayr (d. 95/714), see Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 9/7065, explaining the term *mutashābih* in Q 39:23.

[10] See Muṭayrī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, pp. 94–100 for examples from the early generations. See also Ghazāla, *Uṣul al-Tafsīr ʿinda Ibn ʿAbbās*, pp. 93–99, and Nawfal, *Mujāhid al-Mufassir wa-l-Tafsīr*, pp. 371–373. On Zamakhsharī's application of the TQQ principle, see Lane, *A Traditional Muʿtazilite Commentary*, pp. 118–121, in which he illustrates how an exegete may select explanatory verses to suit the point he wishes to make (the links being occasionally "arbitrary" and the application "careless"). On Rāzī, see Kafrawi, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Methodology*, pp. 73–79; the author describes this approach, somewhat anachronistically, as *tafsīr mawḍūʿī*.

[11] Saleh, 'Ibn Taymiyya and the Rise of Radical Hermeneutics', p. 125. The treatise's title was provided by its eventual publisher, Jamāl al-Shaṭṭī, in 1936. Saleh argues that it had been "inconsequential" before finding its relevant audience "on the eve of modernity" ('Historiography', p. 10). This is in contrast to Mir's portrayal of the treatise as "a representative work in the field" (*Coherence in the Qurʾān*, p. 28). The impact of this treatise on twentieth century works has been documented in Sulaymān et al, *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr fī l-Muʾallafāt* (see p. 121 ff.).

[12] See *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 1/26, in which a lengthy passage from the *Muqaddima* is reproduced without attribution. Ḥaqqī (*ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, 2/45) suggests that this was in line with common practice, especially if the source was direct and clear enough for the intended readership. Roy Curtis makes the intriguing suggestion that Ibn Taymiyya's treatise was written for Ibn Kathīr, making him the very questioner (*qāʾil*) alluded to in the beginning of the excerpt (Curtis, *Authentic Interpretation of Classical Islamic*

"If one should ask concerning the best methods (*aḥsan ṭuruq*) of exegesis, then the answer is that the most correct (*aṣaḥḥ*) method is for the Qurʾān to be explained using the Qurʾān; what is left unclear[13] in one place has been explained in another, and what has been made brief in one place has been expanded in another. If you do not find such, then make recourse to the Sunna, for it explains and clarifies the Qurʾān…"[14]

Ibn Taymiyya is thus explicit in granting TQQ prime position among methods of *tafsīr*. However, as Saleh notes, the lack of examples renders the rule "ineffectual and vague".[15] Regarding the ordered scheme of exegesis outlined here, I shall discuss below what may be intended by that; however, it should be noted that Saleh considers the "novelty" of placing TQQ first to be overshadowed by the treatise's greater project which gives the whole stage to explanations received from the Prophet and earliest generations.[16] In the context of the next step, i.e. exegesis from the Sunna, Ibn Taymiyya quotes Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) as saying that "Everything that God's Messenger ruled came from what he understood from the Qurʾān".[17] This claim is interesting in the light of some scholars' characterisation of TQQ as "the prophetic method", discussed further in Chapter 3. While Ibn Taymiyya's own theoretical emphasis is clearly upon the use of *ḥadīths* for exegesis rather than the Qurʾān itself, Ibn Kathīr – inheritor of his teacher's "radical hermeneutics" – did incorporate TQQ into his exegesis.[18] As for Suyūṭī's later work *Al-Durr al-Manthūr fī*

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*Texts*, pp. 193–194). He further suggests that Ibn Kathīr left the source unstated "for fear of stirring up" Ibn Taymiyya's critics (ibid, p. 76), though this is in tension with Curtis' interpretation of this citation as a "religio-political statement" of alignment with Ibn Taymiyya (ibid, p. 253).

[13] I have adopted this translation for "*mā ujmila*" in preference to Saleh's "elliptical" and McAuliffe's "summarily expressed"; these may have been influenced by the common distinction between *ijmāl* and *tafṣīl*, i.e. summary and detail. My rendering takes account of the diverse types or causes of *ijmāl* enumerated by Zarkashī (*Al-Burhān*, pp. 359–361) and expanded by Shinqīṭī (see 1.3 below). Suyūṭī defined the *mujmal* as "*mā lam tattaḍiḥ dalālatuh*" (*Al-Itqān*, 4/1426). See Chapters 3 and 4 below.

[14] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, p. 93. Translation is mine; see also McAuliffe, 'Ibn Taymiyya: Treatise on the Principles of Tafsīr'.

[15] Saleh, 'Ibn Taymiyya,' p. 145. Curtis (*Authentic Interpretation*, p. 265) attributes the brevity to the intended scholarly audience of the treatise. Medoff (*Ijtihad and Renewal in Qurʾanic Hermeneutics*, p. 33) describes this as an "afterthought", though "prethought" might be more apt!

[16] Indeed, he shows that the first two steps are made to amount to little ('Ibn Taymiyya', pp. 149–50). The passage can also be read as describing the whole sequence of steps as the "most correct method". As Curtis observes, the description contains an implicit recognition of the "fallibility" of this method (*Authentic* Interpretation, p. 199), in that one may need to look beyond.

[17] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, p. 93. The author does not cite the source of Shāfiʿī's statement; the editors of *Al-Itqān* (6/2274) say that a similar wording is found his *Al-Risāla* (see p. 32), but that is quite different (cf. pp. 91–93. Suyūṭī appended a small explanation to Ibn Taymiyya's citation of Q 4:105, to the effect that Muḥammad was to judge based on what God showed him "in other verses" (*Al-Itqān*, 6/2274).

[18] Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn*, 1/212. Saleh argues that Ibn Kathīr's adoption of "radical hermeneutics" was incomplete ('Ibn Taymiyya', p. 153); an alternative would be to say that his work is one demonstration of the theory in action, while still retaining the features of a full exegesis. See also

*l-Tafsīr bi-l-Maʾthūr*, this sidestepped intraquranic exegesis entirely, except for narrations from early authorities which incorporated it; this fact is contrary to later definitions of *maʾthūr* exegesis.[19]

Passing over some major works in the Quranic sciences which are discussed below, the next major work which is explicitly labelled as belonging to the genre of *uṣūl* is *Al-Fawz al-Kabīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr* by **Shāh Walī-Allāh Dihlawī** (d. 1176/1762), which presents some issues and opinions of relevance to an exegete. As well as a point concerning *ijmāl* and *tafṣīl* in different verses, he underlines the role of individual reasoning in ascertaining the meanings of particular words: the process depends not only on the Arabic lexicon and corpus, but also on the context of each Quranic usage.[20] However, beyond this, there is little elaboration or focus upon the intraquranic method in Dihlawī's work.

The next major contribution to TQQ theory was made by **Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī** (d. 1930). The collection of his exegesis of various passages was published under his chosen title of *Niẓām al-Qurʾān wa Taʾwīl al-Furqān bi-l-Furqān*, which alludes to his two key exegetical principles: Quranic structural coherence, and intraquranic interpretation.[21] In his hermeneutical treatise *Al-Takmīl fī Uṣūl al-Taʾwīl*, Farāhī critiques classical approaches to the Qurʾān and affirms the definitive (*qaṭʿī*) nature of the text and its meanings[22], as opposed to all "external" evidences including

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Mirza, 'Was Ibn Kathīr the 'Spokesperson' for Ibn Taymiyya?' – he argues that this work was "less a product of his relationship with Ibn Taymiyya than a result of the larger struggle in the history of Islamic theology and hermeneutics between traditionalism and rationalism" (p. 11).

[19] The same applies to the recent encyclopaedia in twenty-four volumes, *Mawsūʿat al-Tafsīr al-Maʾthūr*, a project overseen by Musāʿid al-Ṭayyār. The introduction (1/108) is explicit in attributing the "error" of including the Qurʾān among narrative sources to Zurqānī and Dhahabī (see below). *Al-Durr al-Manthūr* was based on Suyūṭī's earlier work *Turjumān al-Qurʾān* after removing the *isnāds* (see editor's introduction to *Al-Durr*, 1/7). While Saleh speaks of Suyūṭī's "alliance to Ibn Taymiyya's radical hermeneutical paradigm" ('Historiography,' p. 24; see also p. 32), this is undermined by Suyūṭī's mention of another planned exegesis entitled *Majmaʿ al-Baḥrayn wa Maṭlaʿ al-Badrayn*, which he described as encompassing many aspects of traditional exegesis, and for which *Al-Itqān* was to serve as introduction (*Al-Durr*, 1/6). See Shabir Ally, *The Culmination of Tradition-Based Tafsīr*, pp. 60–61. Ally argues that Suyūṭī used *Al-Durr* to challenge some of the approaches expressed by Ibn Taymiyya and implemented by Ibn Kathīr (ibid, pp. 7–10).

[20] Dihlawī, *Al-Fawz al-Kabīr*, pp. 99–101.

[21] For this explanation, see the editor's introduction to Farāhī's *Mufradāt al-Qurʾān*, p. 28. See also *Exordium to Coherence in the Quran*, pp. 13–30; under the second principle (*tafsīr al-āyāt bi-l-āyāt*), Farāhī cites the passage discussed previously from Suyūṭī (based on Ibn Taymiyya) and criticises the exegetes' use of weak and contradictory *ḥadīth* reports.

[22] In *Rasāʾil al-Imām al-Farāhī*, pp. 214, 225, 234. *Al-Takmīl* has been published in this volume along with the author's *Dalāʾil al-Niẓām*, *Asālīb al-Qurʾān* and miscellaneous notes.

*ḥadīth*.[23] As such, a single passage can have only one correct interpretation, and that can be derived by applying a sound method based on structural coherence.[24] The following quote illustrates his approach to TQQ as an established discipline in the *tafsīr* tradition:

> The scholars have said long ago that parts of the Qurʾān explain other parts, because that is very obvious: the Qurʾān mentions things in a variety of ways, sometimes brief and at other times in detail; what is left out in one place is mentioned in another. Indeed, the Qurʾān has affirmed this attribute within it in various places, so it is a firmly-established principle. However, the principle has seldom been applied, which is because the methods of deriving meanings are limitless. Hence one verse may contain a meaning which constitutes evidence for a meaning in another verse; or the juxtaposition of two verses or sentences may bring to light a somewhat concealed meaning. Therefore, if we should clarify these ways through which meaning is derived (*ṭuruq al-dalālāt*), that would facilitate the application of this principle.[25]

The remainder of his short treatise consists of various *ṭuruq* and *uṣūl* which suffer from some poor organisation and gaps as the author died before completing it. In these sections, there are further elaborations of TQQ as in the above quote, in which he defines the role of "parallels" (*naẓāʾir*) with examples[26], along with the role of context in solving *ijmāl*.[27] The following list, appended to *Al-Takmīl* by the editor from Farāhī's notes[28], provides a useful summary of his methodology:

a. The Qurʾān, being divine speech, does not contradict itself, so it should be interpreted in that light.
b. The Qurʾān is explicit that its equivocal (*mutashābih*) texts should be referred to the univocal (*muḥkam*), so whatever is established with certainty is made a definitive basis.[29]
c. We derive our principles (*uṣūl*) from reason and the Qurʾān – this is the supreme principle.
d. We do not diverge from the apparent meanings (*ẓāhir*) of the Qurʾān based on weak evidence; rather, the apparent meaning is considered a proof.
e. Where there are multiple possibilities, we opt for the best and most suited to the structure (*niẓām*) and central theme (*ʿamūd* [lit: pillar]).

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[23] See Mir, *Coherence*, p. 29.

[24] *Rasāʾil*, pp. 229–230.

[25] *Rasāʾil*, p. 242. This is one aim of Chapter 4 below, including its section on "comparative methods".

[26] *Rasāʾil*, pp. 263–265 and 268–269.

[27] *Rasāʾil*, p. 266.

[28] *Rasāʾil*, p. 225.

[29] Cf. his definitions of these terms in his exegesis of Q 3:7 (*Niẓām al-Qurʾān*, 1/344).

While studying works of Farāhī such as *Al-Takmīl* and his exegesis itself, it is both evident and disappointing that they were published without being completed by the author. However, the mantle of his hermeneutical school was taken on by **Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī** (d. 1997) who compiled a complete Urdu exegesis entitled *Tadabbur-i-Qurʾān*[30], which he prefaced with a detailed introduction expounding and adapting his teacher's methodology. Dividing his sources of exegesis into internal and external, the former is said to consist of: (a) Quranic Arabic as conveyed in pre-Islamic poetry;[31] (b) "coherence" (*naẓm*), upon which he elaborates;[32] (c) explaining the Qurʾān through the Qurʾān.[33] Adducing Quranic evidence for the latter, Iṣlāḥī cites Q 39:23 concerning the book's arrangement and style of repetition, as well as the concept of *taṣrīf* (see e.g. Q 17:41, 89 for this term) i.e. variation as opposed to vain repetition. According to Iṣlāḥī, "A subject rehearsed frequently in the Qurʾān is, in each case, placed in a different background and context. In each case, the textual sequence, bearings and circumstance are different, conveying a unique sense in its particular textual environment."[34] Concerning questions of vocabulary and style, he states that his commentary depends primarily upon the Qurʾān, being "the most reliable authority on the linguistic, literary and grammatical features surrounding its text," adding that "all eminent scholars, past and present, admit this".[35]

Coming back to the Taymiyyan strand, **Khalid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿAkk**'s (d. 1999) *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr wa Qawāʿiduh* reproduces Ibn Taymiyya's scheme without attribution, together with the claim of *ijmāʿ* (consensus).[36] He then says (like Dhahabī,

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[30] Partial translations are available online at www.tadabbur-i-quran.org; see also Khan, *Understanding the Qurʾān*, pp. 31–69. Two volumes (until the end of Q 3) were published by the Islamic Book Trust as *Pondering Over the Qurʾān*, before the death of the translator, Mohammad Saleem Kayani, in 2016.

[31] Iṣlāḥī, *Pondering Over the Qurʾān Vol. 1*, p. 25.

[32] *Pondering*, 1/29. As with Farāhī's "*niẓām*", I am reproducing the translation for *naẓm* provided by Kayani and others, notably Mustansir Mir in his *Coherence in the Qurʾān*. See 4.4.3 below re: usages and translations of these terms.

[33] *Pondering*, 1/41.

[34] *Pondering*, 1/41. I describe this approach as "pluralist", in contrast to "reductionist" conflation of passages which are verbally similar.

[35] *Pondering*, 1/42. A recent work which I was unable to include in this study is Subḥānī's *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Taḥbīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, which is based on Farāhian ideas and argues for the *naẓm* approach while critiquing more mainstream methods and assumptions. His chapter on cross-referential TQQ includes critiques of its "superficial" treatment in the theoretical works as well as *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān* by Shinqīṭī (pp. 107–117). Another central point of his chapter is the defence of the whole Qurʾān as *qaṭʿī al-dalāla*, i.e. definitive in its denotation of meanings (ibid, pp. 122–134).

[36] ʿAkk, *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr wa Qawāʿiduh*, p. 79.

see below) that an exegete must look carefully and analytically to gather and compare all verses upon a theme; if he does not do so, then he would be guilty of interpreting according to his opinion (*raʾy*).[37] Elsewhere, he notes that the Prophet himself explained the Qurʾān through the Qurʾān, making TQQ "the most worthy method of *tafsīr*".[38] A later section seems to depend even more upon Dhahabī's presentation and examples[39], except that on the matter of multiple readings (*qirāʾāt*), the author refers the reader to *Al-Kashf* by Makkī b. Abī Ṭālib al-Qaysī (d. 437/1045) and thus limits the focus to canonical readings. Although ʿAkk does not distinguish clearly between *uṣūl* and *qawāʿid*, his treatment of the latter shows clear influence of *uṣūl al-fiqh* categories.[40]

# 1.2 − Quranic Sciences (*ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*)

The first significant text for consideration is *Al-Burhān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* by **Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī** (d. 794/1392), which, though preceded by other Quranic compendia, was a marked step forward in collecting and analysing the various topics.[41] In his Chapter 41 concerning *Tafsīr* and *Taʾwīl*[42], he includes an enquiry (*masʾala*) concerning the "best methods of exegesis", which is quoted from Ibn Taymiyya with a vague attribution ("*qīla*"). As such, his direct account of TQQ does not go beyond the brevity noted previously. It is interesting to compare this section with his preceding account of the four main sources (*maʾākhidh*) available to the exegete, which begins with Prophetic *ḥadīth*s, followed by statements of Companions, recourse to language, then the exertion of scholarly opinion.[43] TQQ is conspicuously absent from this

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[37] "Interpreting by opinion" has been condemned in sayings attributed to the Prophet and early authorities. For discussion of these traditions and their reception, see Birkeland, 'Old Muslim Opposition Against Interpretation of the Koran'.

[38] *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, p. 33 note 1. This idea ("*al-nahj al-nabawī*") is also promoted by Qaraḍāwī, *Kayfa Nataʿāmal maʿ al-Qurʾān*, p. 221.

[39] *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, pp. 115−116.

[40] See *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, p. 265 ff.

[41] See Shah (ed.), *Tafsir*, Introduction 1/51−52. See also Ḥaqqī, *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, 1/147−164 for discussion of claims regarding the first work in *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*, which the author concludes to be Muḥāsibī's *Fahm al-Qurʾān*.

[42] Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān*, pp. 331−362. I used a single-volume edition, which is unusual for this work.

[43] *Al-Burhān*, pp. 335−339.

account, which may lead us to question Zarkashī's own commitment to the idea as expressed in those terms.[44]

On the other hand, there are indications scattered in the chapter which amount to a description of TQQ, even though the author does not make that link explicit. I summarise these as follows:

a. How clarification (*bayān*) may be found via co-text, whether preceding or following.[45]

b. How such can be found in a separate passage altogether. The author first discusses the word *ẓulm* in Q 6:82 and 31:13, then provides numerous other examples.[46] Likewise, how ambiguity in an expression can be eliminated with reference to other verses (with several examples).[47] There are further examples at the end of the chapter.[48]

c. Gathering relevant verses to complete an account, e.g. in inheritance.[49]

d. Comparing passages lest their interpretations contradict.[50]

e. The importance of context, such that Q 44:49 is understood as debasement, even though its wording indicates praise. Zarkashī describes context as "among the greatest indicators of the speaker's intent".[51] Elsewhere, he describes the role of context in defining Quranic vocabulary, as demonstrated particularly by al-Rāghib.[52]

The next work to consider is the seminal *Al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* by **Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī** (d. 911/1505), which in fact adds very little to the account of TQQ. He adopted materials from the aforementioned chapter of the *Burhān* along with its introduction and distributed those discussions into Chapters 77-79 of the *Itqān*.[53] There

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[44] The same observation is made by Oztürk, '*Kur'an'ın Kur'an'la Tefsiri: Bir Mahiyet Soruşturması*', p. 4; I am grateful to Dr Nimet Seker for this reference.

[45] *Al-Burhān*, pp. 348–349. See 3.4.1 below.

[46] *Al-Burhān*, pp. 348, 350–353. See 4.1.1 below.

[47] *Al-Burhān*, pp. 353–354.

[48] *Al-Burhān*, p. 362.

[49] *Al-Burhān*, pp. 354–355.

[50] *Al-Burhān*, pp. 356–357.

[51] *Al-Burhān*, p. 355.

[52] *Al-Burhān*, p. 343. See Chapter 4 for brief points on lexicography and the role of context, as in the *Mufradāt* of al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī.

[53] Ḥaydar, *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān bayna l-Burhān wa-l-Itqān*, p. 293.

is a lengthy quotation from Ibn Taymiyya's *Muqaddima* in Chapter 78: *Maʿrifat Shurūṭ al-Mufassir wa Ādābih* (Prerequisites and Proper Conduct of the Exegete). However, the very opening of this chapter attributes Ibn Taymiyya's brief account of TQQ opaquely to "the *ʿulamā*"", perhaps implying a broad acceptance of this exegetical hierarchy. Furthermore, Suyūṭī bolsters the literal sense of the schema by rewording it and inserting the word *awwalan*: "Whoever seeks to perform *tafsīr* of the Mighty Book should seek it *first* from the Qurʾān".[54]

Due to the reference to *ijmāl* in the quotation from Ibn Taymiyya, Suyūṭī then mentions a relevant work by Ibn al-Jawzī[55] as well as his own chapter (46) on the *Mujmal*, which is based on the same chapter from *Al-Burhān* (41) cited above. Another aspect of Suyūṭī's presentation of *tafsīr* methodology is his account of the exegete's qualifications as found in Chapter 78. The list of fifteen sciences[56] includes some which are relevant to TQQ – namely knowledge of multiple readings (*qirāʾāt*), the textual categories from *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and the phenomenon of abrogation (*naskh*) – but it is interesting that while one of the requirements is to memorise the *ḥadith* reports pertaining to *tafsīr*, memorisation of the entire Qurʾān – or even a reasonable portion – is not stipulated, even though this is evidently necessary for an exegete to consider the Qurʾān fully before turning to other sources.

Although Suyūṭī only refers his readers to one chapter of relevance to TQQ, a survey of the eighty chapters of the *Itqān* reveals numerous other pertinent discussions.[57] The following list gives a brief explanation of the relevance of each of these topics, which goes some way to demonstrate the distillation of *uṣūl al-tafsīr* from *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*.

▪ 22-27: *Qirāʾāt* (readings).[58] Inasmuch as Muslim scholarship has reached consensus on a definition of the Qurʾān which encompasses ten canonical readings, any explanatory interplay between these readings – i.e. variations which affect

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[54] *Al-Itqān*, 6/2274.

[55] The editors of *Al-Ziyāda wa-l-Iḥsān* (7/410, note 3) have identified this as *Taysīr al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, which is apparently unpublished.

[56] *Al-Itqān*, 6/2294−2297. The list can be found similarly structured in Kāfiyajī, *Al-Taysīr fī Qawāʿd ʿIlm al-Tafsīr*, pp. 50−51, as well as scattered in other sources including Rāghib's *tafsīr* introduction and Zarkashī's *Burhān*.

[57] I have sufficed here with chapters from the *Itqān* because it has incorporated (with adjustments) the topics of the *Burhān*.

[58] See 2.5 and 4.3.3 below.

meaning – would constitute TQQ. This applies to the later exegetical practice of harmonising the variant readings of a single verse as far as possible with a pluralist or reductionist strategy. It can also apply to the early process of arguing (*iḥtijāj*) for a particular reading with reference to parallels (*naẓāʾir*) in the rest of the Qurʾān.

- 39: *Wujūh wa Naẓāʾir* (polysemy).[59] When a particular word appears in multiple contexts in the Qurʾān, it may have more than one meaning. Any linkage or contrast with a word's meaning at another juncture is a form of TQQ, as is the process of determining the meaning of a particular occurrence from its immediate context. This chapter also describes the phenomenon often known as *kulliyyāt*, which provides a shorthand for identifying the meaning of a particular term on the basis of generalisations and exceptions.

- 40: *Adawāt* (grammatical instruments). The rules pertaining to their usage and meanings are derived, at least in part, from their usages in the Qurʾān: hence this chapter is related to the concepts of *wujūh/naẓāʾir* and *kulliyyāt* described above.

- 42: *Qawāʿid* (axioms). This chapter, too, includes material along the lines of *wujūh/naẓāʾir* and *kulliyyāt*.

- 43: *Muḥkam wa Mutashābih* (univocal vs. equivocal).[60] This chapter discusses the need to interpret certain verses in light of others which are clearer and thus 'primary', as alluded to in Q 3:7.

- 45: *ʿĀmm wa Khāṣṣ* (universal vs. particular).[61] These are textual categories in *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and one verse is frequently said to particularise (*takhṣīṣ*) the ruling expressed in another.

- 46: *Mujmal wa Mubayyan* (unclear vs. clarified). The concept of *ijmāl* has already been mentioned and will be further discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

- 47: *Nāsikh wa Mansūkh* (abrogating vs. abrogated).[62] If some verses of the Qurʾān are considered to abrogate others which remain between its covers, then knowledge of this type of textual interaction is essential. In essence, it means that some verses are 'interpreted' to be void in effect.

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[59] See under 4.2.2. Chapters 39, 40 and 42 of *Al-Itqān* are included in my annotated translation of *The Perfect Guide Vol. 2* (Garnet, forthcoming).

[60] See 3.3.1.

[61] See 4.1.2.

[62] See 2.4 and 3.2.2.

- 48: *Mūhim al-Ikhtilāf* (seeming contradictions).[63] Resolving the tension between various verses is undoubtedly a form of TQQ, particularly when the understanding of each verse is affected by awareness of the other.

- 49: *Muṭlaq wa Muqayyad* (unqualified vs. qualified).[64] This is an *uṣūl al-fiqh* category like those in Chapters 45 and 46 above.

- 62: *Munāsabāt* (coherence/consonance). This studies the contextual flow between *sūras* as well as between verses within one *sūra*. The conviction that a following verse or passage is related and relevant to what precedes it may well affect how each is interpreted. As such, context-based exegesis may always be classed as TQQ.[65]

- 63: *Āyāt Mushtabihāt* (near-parallels).[66] Beyond identifying narratives and expressions repeated with slight variations in various *sūras*, this chapter alludes to how each version is appropriate to its local context. When a comparative approach is taken, this phenomenon resembles that in Chapter 48 above.

It may be said that the first broad-based *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* work to take a fresh approach after the *Itqān* was *Manāhil al-ʿIrfān* by **Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm al-Zurqānī** (d. 1948), a key author in the Egyptian-Azharite approach to Quranic studies. According to Saleh, this work was the first to use *al-tafsīr bi-l-maʾthūr* "as an analytical descriptive term", thereby sealing the dominance of Ibn Taymiyya's hermeneutical paradigm in modern times.[67] Zurqānī defines this type of *tafsīr* as "that which appears in the Qurʾān, Sunna or the statements of Companions by way of clarification of God's intended meaning in His book". He then provides several examples of each kind, and states that the method underlying TQQ is pondering (*tadabbur*) upon the Qurʾān. After providing examples of *tafsīr* from the Sunna, Zurqānī says: "Both of these types are undoubtedly authoritative (*lā shakka fī qabūlih*). In the former case [i.e. TQQ], this is because God knows better than anyone else what

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[63] See 2.3.6 and 4.3.2.

[64] See 4.1.3.

[65] See 4.4.

[66] See 4.3.1. This term is more commonly given as "*mutashābihāt*".

[67] Saleh, 'Historiography,' pp. 34–35. Zurqānī attributed this phrase to unidentified predecessors ("*baʿḍuhum*"), stating that they divided exegesis into three types: *bi-l-riwāya/bi-l-maʾthūr, bi-l-dirāya/bi-l-raʾy*, and *bi-l-ishāra*, i.e. mystical allusions (*Manāhil al-ʿIrfān*, 2/387). Re: the latter, see 4.4.1 below.

He means, and the most truthful speech is God's book."[68] I shall discuss this claim and supporting arguments below. However, the author appears to forget this most authoritative method (or both of them) when enumerating the three categories of "praiseworthy *tafsīr*", namely (a) explanations of the Companions and Followers; (b) exegeses depending solely upon authentic narrations from them; (c) exegeses which combine narrations with sound opinions derived from reason, most common in the modern era.[69]

Following in the Azharite trend, the historiography by **Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī** (d. 1977) entitled *Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn* took the ideas of *Manāhil al-ʿIrfān* and made them even more in line with Ibn Taymiyya, as Saleh argues.[70] Dhahabī presents TQQ in the context of sources (*maṣādir*) relied upon by the Companions in their interpretations, namely the Qurʾān, the Prophet, their reasoning, and the People of the Book.[71] Elaborating on the first, he starts by pointing out that the style of the Qurʾān includes scattered verses which explain or expand upon each other, or restrict and qualify each other. As such, the indispensable first step taken by an exegete is to gather and compare all verses upon a theme, before moving onto other stages of *tafsīr*. The author justifies this with a general statement in the spirit of Zurqānī's above: "The speaker is most knowledgeable of the meanings of his speech".[72] He then provides examples from each of the types listed, namely *mūjaz* (concise references), *mujmal*, *muṭlaq* and *ʿāmm* – the latter three being categories in *uṣūl al-fiqh*. It is noteworthy in the case of interpreting unqualified (*muṭlaq*) texts in the light of the qualified that he refers to the opinion of "most Shāfiʿī scholars" who fully accept this manoeuvre, because there is a well-known disagreement between the juristic schools on the issue.[73]

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[68] *Manāhil al-ʿIrfān*, 2/387–388.

[69] *Manāhil al-ʿIrfān*, 2/404.

[70] Saleh, 'Historiography,' p. 35. I have chosen to discuss this work at this point because of its relationship to Zurqānī's.

[71] In so doing, he has conflated the historical discussion with one on methods, as though TQQ was the earliest method historically. The same occurs elsewhere, such as the work of the same title by Faḍl ʿAbbās (*Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn*, 1/123). In his introduction, ʿAbbās underlines the seminal nature of Dhahabī's book and some of the criticisms it has received (ibid, 1/17–25).

[72] Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn*, 1/37. Another influential Azharite, Ibrāhīm Khalīfa (d. 2013) added to these reasons: that the Qurʾān is the primary epistemic source in Islam, so that should apply similarly to exegesis; that the Qurʾān instructs its readers to refer to it, e.g. in Q 4:59; and that a rational person would not prefer a lesser source over a greater one (*Al-Dakhīl fī l-Tafsīr*, pp. 24–25).

[73] *Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn*, 1/37-39. See 4.1.3 below.

Such debates within *uṣūl al-fiqh* would naturally impact upon any attempt to develop a generalised hermeneutics on its basis.

Dhahabī then speaks briefly about reconciling verses which appear to conflict, such as the various accounts of the material from which Adam was created. Finally, he discusses the use of *qirāʾāt*, but all the examples he provides are of non-canonical recitations and therefore not considered Qurʾān by Muslim consensus; as such, their inclusion in the discussion of TQQ is erroneous.[74] This is underlined by his conclusion that such alternative words and additional phrases were written by the Companions alongside the Qurʾān by way of *tafsīr*, and later confused for narrations of recitation.[75] He does not discuss the role of canonical (i.e. *mutawātir*) recitations. As Zurqānī before him, Dhahabī presents TQQ as the first type of "*al-tafsīr al-maʾthūr*"[76] and goes on to say that such exegesis – along with that based on authentic Sunna – ought to be "universally accepted, because such cannot be affected by weakness or doubt."[77] This is in stark contrast to his earlier description of TQQ as a specialist activity: "It is not an automated process devoid of the need for thought; rather, it is an action built upon a large measure of reflection and reasoning."[78]

*Mabāḥith fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* by **Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ** (d. 1986) has a sub-chapter entitled: "Parts of the Qurʾān Explain Each Other", a feature which Ṣāliḥ says is integral to Quranic stylistics and reflects the scripture's "precision and comprehensiveness". The aspects he discusses – *manṭūq/mafhūm*, *ʿāmm/khāṣṣ*, *mujmal/mubayyan*, *naṣṣ/ẓāhir* – come from *uṣūl al-fiqh*, but the author insists that they are not the preserve of the *uṣūl* or the *kalām* scholars but may be studied from a

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[74] See Khalīfa, *Dirāsāt fī Manāhij al-Mufassirīn*, pp. 58–61. It should be noted that some important books in the Azharī curriculum do not reach publishers and the public; I acquired them in my time as an undergraduate student in the Faculty of Theology.

[75] *Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn*, 1/40. This is in reference to additions conflicting with the ʿUthmānic recension. Suyūṭī describes these as being like the *mudraj* (insertion) in *ḥadīth* terminology (*Al-Itqān*, 2/506–508).

[76] *Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn*, 1/137. The subtle difference between their terminologies ("narrated exegesis" vs. "exegesis by narrations") could be put to use, but the authors have used them synonymously.

[77] *Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn*, 1/140.

[78] *Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn*, 1/40. Muḥammad Abū Zahra noted that while Ibn Taymiyya forbade exegesis using opinion (*raʾy*), his first stage of exegesis (i.e. TQQ) "most certainly is a type of *raʾy* and *ijtihād*" (*Al-Muʿjiza al-Kubrā*, p. 598). Abū Zahra himself placed Prophetic *ḥadīth* at the top of his hierarchy (ibid, p. 586).

linguistic and literary perspective.[79] As for the work by **Mannāʿ al-Qaṭṭān** (d. 1999) by the same title, he counts "starting first with the Qurʾān" as one of the conditions of an exegete,[80] and goes on to insist that *al-tafsīr bi-l-maʾthūr* is the only type acceptable.[81]

# 1.3 − Exegetes' Introductions

One of the routes to understand the methodology of a particular exegete is to consult the introduction to his work, where present. As noted above, hermeneutical remarks may also be scattered throughout the work. Alongside these, or in their absence, methodologies may be deduced from their actual practice, and such studies are often published under the rubric of *manāhij al-mufassirīn* − as single-exegete studies or historiographical works. However, it is not common to find works which trace the usage of one method in a variety of *tafsīrs*, which is the approach of the case study in Chapter 2. Some of the works studied there are included here; however, I have not included those which lack substantial introductions or − as in the case of Ṭabarī − do not include intraquranic exegesis among the introductory topics.

An early discussion of features of the Qurʾān relevant to TQQ is found in the introduction to the *Tafsīr* of Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767), although there is no account of the processes applied to these contents:

> In the Qurʾān there is… equivocal (*mutashābih*) and univocal (*muḥkam*); explicated (*mufassar*) and vague (*mubham*); implicit (*iḍmār*) and explicit (*tamām*); otiose (*ṣilāt*) parts of speech[82]; abrogating (*nāsikh*) and abrogated (*mansūkh*); that which is brought forward (*taqdīm*) or delayed (*taʾkhīr*); polysemes (*ashbāh*) with many aspects of meaning (*wujūh*); and a response [to a question etc., found] in another *sūra*.[83]

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[79] Ṣāliḥ, *Mabāḥith fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, pp. 299−300. Not all the juristic categories he mentions under this heading are directly relevant to TQQ.

[80] Qaṭṭān, *Mabāḥith fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, p. 301. His wording appears to be Ibn Taymiyya's via Suyūṭī.

[81] Qaṭṭān, *Mabāḥith*, p. 320.

[82] Goldfeld takes this to mean "connection between [nonsequential] sentences", and his interpretation varies from mine in several other ways ('Development of Theory,' pp. 23−26). He numbers the rules provided here as thirty-two, stating that Muqātil adopted twenty of these from Jewish precepts. He compares the notion of "*jawāb fī sūratin ukhrā*" (which he translates: "continuation in different chapter") with Rabbi Eliʾezer's "complementation of Tora verse by other Biblical verse" (p. 26; see also p. 8). I suggest the concept of *jawāb* is more evocative of the Quranic verse 25:33, which, in its context, implies that responses to the unbelievers may be scattered in the scripture, and thus even separated from the citation of their questions and challenges.

[83] *Tafsīr Muqātil*, 1/22.

It was noted previously that Ibn Kathīr incorporated a significant portion from Ibn Taymiyya's *Muqaddima* into his own exegetical introduction, including the description of TQQ as "best". A comparable passage from an Andalusian contemporary of Ibn Taymiyya is found in the introduction to *Al-Tas-hīl li-ʿUlūm al-Tanzīl* by **Ibn Juzayy al-Kalbī** (d. 741/1357). He describes the process by which some earlier exegetical opinions are made preponderant over others (*tarjīḥ*)[84], placing at the head of this list:

> To explain parts of the Qurʾān with reference to others: hence, if one juncture indicates the intended meaning at another, we interpret it accordingly and take the corresponding opinion as preponderant over others.[85]

However, the author does not state that there is any sense of priority in how the list is ordered. The sixth item is for an interpretation to be supported by the preceding and following co-text. He also alludes to the rules governing the *uṣūl al-fiqh* categories outlined previously, stating that preference is given to opinions which retain the universality (*ʿumūm*) and unqualified nature (*iṭlāq*) of texts unless there is evidence to the contrary.[86] Ibn Juzayy also provides a list of twelve sciences pertinent to *tafsīr*, which predates the list of fifteen qualifications presented by Suyūṭī. In this list, he includes: the multiple readings, insofar as they add to meaning; knowledge of abrogation, on which he elaborates later; and *uṣūl al-fiqh*.[87]

Another significant introduction is provided by **Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqāʿī** (d. 885/1480) to his unique work *Naẓm al-Durar*, which focuses on the contextual flow and relevance (*munāsabāt*) between phrases, verses and *sūras*.[88] As noted previously, the appeal to co-textual cues is, *prima facie*, a way of using the Qurʾān to interpret the Qurʾān; however, it is less clear as a form of TQQ when the exegete's reasoning remains implicit. Rather, the process is often reduced to justifying the juxtaposition of

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[84] Some recent works have focused on these processes, adding another sub-genre to *uṣūl al-tafsīr*. One such study has shown that Rāzī used the TQQ principle extensively when adjudicating between exegetical opinions (Rūmī, *Dirāsāt fī Qawāʿid al-Tarjīḥ*, pp. 314–370).

[85] *Al-Tas-hīl li-ʿUlūm al-Tanzīl*, p. 10.

[86] *Al-Tas-hīl*, p. 11.

[87] *Al-Tas-hīl*, pp. 7–8. See Schwarb, 'Capturing,' pp. 115–117.

[88] I did not include Biqāʿī in the case study of Chapter 2 because he does not use cross-references extensively: see Khan, *Understanding the Qurʾān*, p. 158.

meanings in the sequence of verses.[89] Biqāʿī makes reference to the critique which was levelled against this process by ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām (d. 660/1262):[90]

> The science of *munāsaba* is a fine one, but the prerequisite for connectedness of speech is that it occur in a single structure with its beginning connected with the end. If it occurs in a variety of [contextual] causes, then there is no presumption of one item being consonant with another. Thus whoever seeks to connect the two has taken on a task which cannot be fulfilled except with flimsy [hypotheses] which ought to be avoided in reference to any fine speech, let alone the very finest. The Qurʾān was revealed over a period of twenty-odd years with various rulings (*aḥkām*) and [in response to] a variety of causes (*asbāb*), and such cannot then be connected together.

Having cited this via *Al-Burhān*, Biqāʿī then reproduces a quote from Zarkashī's teacher, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Manfalūṭī (d. 774/1372) to the effect that: although verses were revealed in response to various events, they were placed in order according to divine wisdom (*ḥikma*, *tawqīf*), in accordance with their prior structure in the Concealed Writ (*al-kitāb al-maknūn*).[91]

The following authors are exegetes of the twentieth century. The first, **Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shinqīṭī** (d. 1972 CE), took TQQ as his explicit methodology without proposing a novel theory. In his introduction to *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, he cites "the scholarly consensus" that TQQ is the best form of exegesis and echoes Zurqānī by stating: "None better knows the meaning of the book of God than God."[92] The following is summarised and rearranged from Shinqīṭī's detailed account of the types of *ijmāl* for which the Quranic *bayān* is presented in his book; the list appears to be a description after the fact of his exegesis, but could provide a basis to develop aspects of methodology:[93]

a. Solving homonymy (*ishtirāk*) of nouns, verbs or particles; appealing to the dominant Quranic usage to understand a word in a specific verse; or explaining a word by a clearer one elsewhere. Explaining a term with reference to a

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[89] This criticism applies more to the likes of Rāzī than Biqāʿī, for whom the connections have a greater bearing on understanding the intent of each verse. Farāhī made a distinction between the concept of *tanāsub* and the broader theory of *naẓm*: see Mir, *Coherence*, pp. 32–33.

[90] *Naẓm al-Durar*, 1/6. The exegete Shawkānī later made a similar critique with specific reference to Biqāʿī: see Abdul-Raof, *Consonance in the Qurʾān*, p. 28.

[91] See Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān*, p. 42. The term "*al-kitāb al-maknūn*" alludes to Q 56:78; see Chapter 3 for discussion of this and related verses.

[92] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, p. 6.

[93] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, pp. 7–15.

question and answer occurring elsewhere; or ruling out a word's apparent meaning due to context or other verses.

b. Solving vagueness (*ibhām*) in nouns, particles and relative clauses; or ambiguity (*iḥtimāl*) in pronoun referents, which is common.

c. Elaborating modality (*kayfiyya*) of an event mentioned briefly in one place; or identifying a cause, place, time, or unstated object etc. (*sabab, mafʿūl, ẓarf makān/zamān, mutaʿalliq*). Gathering different wisdoms mentioned for one thing; or descriptions of a single thing. A command, prohibition or condition is mentioned in one place, and the outcome of it elsewhere; or something is predicted and then its occurrence is recorded.

d. Explicit cross-references (*iḥāla*); a verse refers subtly to arguments detailed elsewhere; or specific instances are provided of a general statement elsewhere.

e. Negating an interpretation with reference to an indication (*qarīna*) within the verse. Appealing to foundational texts to adopt a stance concerning God's attributes.

Shinqīṭī also discusses his method of dealing with multiple interpretations based upon the Qurʾān: he selects the strongest (*tarjīḥ*) with reference to the Sunna and other factors.[94] He does not cite Ibn Taymiyya's hierarchy, but provides a subtler account of his own method: "If a verse has an explanation from the Qurʾān which is not fully satisfactory, then I supplement the explanation with the Sunna, i.e. to clarify the [Quranic] explanation."[95] Unlike Farāhī, he is willing to accept that multiple interpretations are equally correct if all are attested by the Qurʾān and there is no way of deciding between them.[96] This demonstrates the subjectivity in the TQQ exegete's role, in contrast to the "God knows best" trope.

**Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī** (d. 1981), author of *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*,[97] is the only Shīʿite scholar I have included in this analysis and the case study. In his introduction, he refers to a later theoretical discussion based around Q 3:7, which is in fact more detailed – I shall refer here to both. Ṭabāṭabāʾī critiques the prevalent styles of Qurʾān commentary passing for *tafsīr* – including the works of the *ḥadīth*

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[94] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, 12.

[95] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, 15.

[96] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, 13.

[97] See Medoff, *Ijtihad and Renewal*, p. 20 ff. regarding Ṭabāṭabāʾī's theories, and pp. 34–36 for the place of *Al-Mīzān* in the trajectory of Shīʿite exegesis.

scholars, jurists, theologians, philosophers and mystics.[98] Since the Qurʾān describes itself as "a clarification (*tibyān*) of all things" (16:89)[99], he argues, it is necessarily the best resource for its own explication. To strengthen this point, Ṭabāṭabāʾī repurposes the *maʾthūr/raʾy* dichotomy in a subtle fashion. First, he claims that all or most exegesis narrated from the Prophet and the Shīʿite *imāms* was of the intraquranic type,[100] describing this as "the oldest inherited (*maʾthūr*) approach".[101] Later, he provides a definition for *tafsīr bi-l-raʾy* which encompasses everything that departs from the apparent sense (*ẓāhir*) of the Qurʾān by drawing on external sources. After discussing the various narrations from Prophet Muḥammad prohibiting the use of *raʾy* in interpreting the Qurʾān, Ṭabāṭabāʾī concludes:

> What has been forbidden is only autonomy (*istiqlāl*) in Quranic exegesis and exegetical self-reliance (*iʿtimād al-mufassir ʿalā nafsih*) without referring to something else. It follows that it is incumbent (*wājib*) to seek aid from and refer to another. This "other" must either be the Book or the Sunna; if we say it is the Sunna then this contradicts the Qurʾān and the Sunna themselves which command us to refer to [the Qurʾān] and take it as the standard for evaluating reports (*akhbār*). For reference and aid in *tafsīr* the only remaining possibility is the Qurʾān itself.[102]

As Medoff explains, there is greater elaboration of his preferred method – described as *tadabbur* and *istinṭāq* (allowing the text to speak) – in a separate Persian treatise entitled *Qurʾān dar Islām*.[103] For the former term, Ṭabāṭabāʾī concludes from Q 4:82 – "Do they not contemplate (*tadabbur*) the Qurʾān? Had it been from [someone] other than Allah, they would have surely found much discrepancy in it"[104] – that the reader of the Qurʾān is mandated to study verses in succession and observe the complementarity of its meanings (and hence intratextual clarity). As for the concept of *istinṭāq al-Qurʾān*, this is derived from a saying attributed to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib to the

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[98] *Al-Mīzān*, 1/8–10.

[99] Ali Quli Qara'i translation. The author gathers more verses upon this meaning in his discussion of Q 3:7 – see *Al-Mīzān* 3/37–79 for his thorough study of its concepts.

[100] *Al-Mīzān*, 1/14–15. Ṭabāṭabāʾī also insists that the opinions of fallible Companions of the Prophet are both contradictory and unauthoritative in principle (ibid, p. 16).

[101] *Al-Mīzān*, 1/17, and see Medoff, p. 49.

[102] *Al-Mīzān*, 3/87–89. The translation is adapted from Medoff, pp. 41–42.

[103] See Medoff, p. 22.

[104] See Medoff, p. 23; see also 3.2 below for further discussion of this verse, given here in the Qara'i translation.

effect that: "Its one part speaks for another (*yanṭiqu baʿḍuhu bi-baʿḍ*) and one part testifies (*yashhadu*) to another."[105]

The Egyptian professor ʿĀʾisha ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (known as Bint al-Shāṭiʾ, d. 1998) is known as the first *mufassira*, i.e. female author of Quranic exegesis. Like her Indian contemporary Iṣlāḥī, she was explicit in acknowledging a debt to her own teacher, her husband Amīn al-Khūlī, founder of the literary school (*al-madrasa al-adabiyya*) of exegesis. Her development of Khūlī's methodology is best reflected in the two volumes in which she expounded on fourteen short *sūras* of the Qurʾān.[106] As is the case with Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Bint al-Shāṭiʾ employs some original terminology in describing her approach to TQQ, while also opining that earlier exegetes failed to act upon the famous dictum: "the Qurʾān explains itself".[107] A methodological outline is provided in the introduction to the fifth edition of Volume 1;[108] I present those points in summary here with reference to points made elsewhere in her introductions to the volumes and their editions.

1. Thematic analysis (*al-tanāwul al-mawḍūʿī*) which starts with gathering verses containing the word or expression under study. These Quranic usages are then studied both in their "local context of *āya* and *sūra*" and "the broad context of the whole Qurʾān".[109] A key word which appears several times in Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's introductions is *istiqrāʾ*, implying a comprehensive survey of relevant verses.[110]

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[105] Medoff, p. 24.

[106] Volume 1 of *Al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī li-l-Qurʾān al-Karīm* (first published 1962) includes Q 93, 94, 99, 100, 79, 90 and 102 (in that order). Volume 2 (1968) includes Q 96, 68, 103, 92, 89, 104 and 107. The term *bayānī* reflects, in my view, an aim concomitant in Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's project with investigation of the meanings, namely to highlight the miraculous perfection of Quranic expressions. The term *tafsīr bayānī* has been adopted in this sense by other writers such as Fāḍil al-Sāmarrāʾī in a recent four-volume work. The term *adabī*, on the other hand, gives an impression of locating study of the Qurʾān within broader study of literature: as I mentioned in the Introduction, this is a growing trend in Western Quranic Studies.

[107] *Al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī Vol. 1*. p. 18, intro to 1st edn.

[108] *Al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī Vol. 1*, pp. 10–11.

[109] *Al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī Vol. 1*. p. 11. She further states that this departs from the standard procedure in which exegetes "study *sūra* by *sūra*, taking each word or verse in isolation from its broad context" (ibid, p. 17). This implies that earlier exegetes paid no heed to broader usages, which is an overstatement. Unlike the Farāhian school, Bint al-Shāṭiʾ does not argue for thematic unity at *sūra* level (except short *sūras* as in her commentary: see ibid, p. 18). Instead, each *sūra* is seen in the literary school (as expressed by Muṣṭafā Nāṣif) to comprise themes which run through the Qurʾān: see Būzī, *Mafhūm al-Taqwā*, p. 35.

[110] Cf. Naguib, 'Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's Approach,' p. 61, where the term is read similarly to Ṭabāṭabāʾī's *istinṭāq*.

2.  The sequence and social circumstances of revelation are studied in order to appreciate the context, described as "what surrounds the text" (*mā ḥawl al-naṣṣ*). The *asbāb* literature is part of this examination.[111]

3.  To determine the denotations of individual words and the manner of their usage, reference is made both to general Arabic lexicons and to the Quranic corpus which represents its own lexicon (*muʿjam alfāẓih*) and guide to style (*uslūb*).[112] The Qurʾān may narrower the semantic range of a particular word compared to the speech of the Arabs, or it may add nuances not found in other literature.[113]

4.  To appreciation the subtleties of its phraseology (*asrār al-taʿbīr*), appeal is made to the "text and spirit" of the Qurʾān as a whole.[114]

A central concern for Bint al-Shāṭiʾ is to give full authority to the Quranic text and adjudicate (*iḥtikām*) the grammatical, exegetical and juristic opinions of the scholars in light of this authority.[115]

Finally, a major exegete of the modern era to whom I make frequent reference despite not being among the TQQ-focused commentaries;[116] the relevance here is that **Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn ʿĀshūr** (d. 1973) sounds a note of caution concerning this approach. In the second of his ten introductions to *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, Ibn ʿĀshūr discusses the branches of knowledge upon which *tafsīr* depends. From this he is explicit in excluding the phenomenon of some verses explaining others (categories from *uṣūl al-fiqh*), because "that is [merely] an example of interpreting parts of a

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[111] See Naguib, 'Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's Approach,' pp. 46–48 regarding the historicism inherent to the literary school and its roots in Muḥammad ʿAbduh's ideas on the transformative effects of the Qurʾān.

[112] These expressions are in *Al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī Vol. 1*. p. 17.

[113] *Al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī Vol. 2*, p. 8.

[114] *Al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī Vol. 1*, p. 11. The method could be applied to determine the connotations of words for their first hearers, which would have been affected by how the Qurʾān had used these words in prior revelations. This chronological aspect is missing from her reductionist argument based on observing that the form *naʿīm* is used in the Qurʾān exclusively for delights of the Hereafter: the majority of her fifteen references (ibid, pp. 214–215) are from later revelations, as she accepts that Sūrat al-Takāthur was the sixteenth to be revealed (ibid, p. 195). See also Naguib, 'Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's Approach,' pp. 54–55.

[115] See Naguib, 'Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's Approach,' pp. 59–60.

[116] Ibn ʿĀshūr's exegesis is highly praised by contemporary *ʿulamāʾ* of different persuasions; it is seen as a modern work in classical style and bolstered by the personal authority of the writer as *imām* of the Zaytūna of Tunisia. My interest in him is as a critical traditionalist, like Maḥmud al-Ālūsī in the previous century. The work has a particularly linguistic (or *bayānī*) focus with extensive reference to classical scholars. It was published between 1956 and 1970 (see Nafi, 'Ṭāhir ibn ʿĀshūr,' p. 17) and the absence of Rashīd Riḍā and Sayyid Quṭb among his sources has been noted with surprise by one researcher (Abū Ḥassān, *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr* 1/152–160).

discourse in the light of others".[117] Referring to a quote from Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī (d. 377/987) to the effect that the Qurʾān is a single unit in which a question (etc.) and its answer may appear separately[118], he remarks:

> These words should not be taken as absolute: there may be some Quranic verses which can be interpreted in the light of others, while some may be independent of others; for it is not necessarily the case that the meaning intended by a particular verse is [likewise] intended in all its parallels (naẓāʾir), let alone those which [only] have a similar theme.[119]

This quotation raises a core methodological question for TQQ: how is a link between a pair of verses established and justified? Contrary to the context-scepticism exhibited by Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām, Ibn ʿĀshūr seems to be making the point that the meaning of each verse may be better determined by its local co-text, among other factors. The issue may be framed as a critique of a simplistic, reductionist approach to TQQ by which all similar verses are assumed to be saying the same. It may equally be argued that each verse is intended to deliver additional meanings: hence a pluralist approach to meaning is required.

## 1.4 – Recent Studies

The remaining works I shall discuss could certainly have been placed in the *uṣūl al-tafsīr* category, but I have opted to treat them separately not only because they are the most recent to be published in the field, but because they reflect contemporary efforts to consolidate earlier materials from within the broader Quranic studies field and beyond; and to critique and improve on the standard presentations of issues in *tafsīr* including our topic of intraquranic methods.

A clear example of extracting relevant materials from a broader range of works is *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr* by **Khālid al-Sabt**, which collects and reformulates principles found in over two hundred works, of which only forty-seven were in the genre of *tafsīr*

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[117] *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 1/27. ʿAdnān Zarzūr argues in a similar vein that TQQ represents a stage prior to exegesis which he terms "*al-bayān al-Qurʾānī*" (*ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān wa Iʿjāzuh*, p. 338).

[118] See Ibn Hishām, *Mughnī l-Labīb ʿan Kutub al-Aʿārīb*, p. 207. The quote pertains to one explanation for "*Lā uqsimu*" (Q 75:1); the example given is Q 15:6, which is "answered" by Q 68:2. Cf. the term *jawāb* used by Muqātil, and the related points under (c) in the summary of Shinqīṭī's account of Quranic *bayān*, above. See also 3.1 below.

[119] *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 1/27. Pluralistic and reductionist approaches are explored in Chapter 4.

and Quranic sciences.[120] This work also represents a modern effort to distinguish between *uṣūl* and *qawāʿid*, at least in terms of presentation. In his discussion of TQQ, Sabt notes that not every interpretation stemming from this method is definitely correct, "because it [involves] reasoning (*ijtihad*) on the part of the exegete, who may be wrong or right. The method is correct in principle, but he could err in the application." However, he considers such an interpretation to be certainly true if it came from the Prophet or a Companion (without contrary opinions being known), or if it is a matter of consensus.[121] It is remarkable that no *qawāʿid* were actually provided in this section, but the relevance of numerous rules scattered throughout the book – especially those dealt with in *uṣūl al-fiqh* – is evident. Here are some examples, taken from different chapters and thus addressing various aspects in no particular order:

- *Multiplicity of [canonical] readings is equivalent to multiplicity of verses.*[122]
- *A statement is considered universal unless there is evidence to particularise it.*[123]
- *If there are two competing qualifiers for an unqualified expression and it is possible for one to be preponderant over the other, the expression must be qualified using the preponderant one.*[124]
- *Context is a guide to clarifying the unclear, specifying possibilities, ruling out unintended meanings, specifying the universal, qualifying the unqualified and [indicating] plurality of denotation.*[125]
- *It is obligatory to act upon the univocal texts and to believe in the equivocal.*[126]
- *It is not permitted to give a vague text the ruling from an explicated text by means of analogy.*[127]
- *Contradiction between a negative statement and an affirmative statement only exists if they are equal in terms of the statement itself, the subject, their circumstances, time and place, and whether literal or figurative meanings are intended.*[128]

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[120] *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr*, 1/7–9.

[121] *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr*, 1/127. See 3.4.1 below.

[122] *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr*, 1/102.

[123] *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr*, 2/140.

[124] *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr*, 2/168.

[125] *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr*, 2/201.

[126] *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr*, 2/212.

[127] *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr*, 2/240.

[128] *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr*, 2/256.

- *There is no variation in wordings except [to indicate] variation in meanings.*[129]

- *Abrogation is not established without conclusive evidence.*[130]

As previously with my approach to *Al-Burhān* and *Al-Itqān*, I have exercised my own judgment in deciding on the relevance of these topics. In so doing, I am influenced by contemporary researchers who have elaborated on the categories within, or contributing to, *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*. However, it should be kept in mind that this expansion in scope may not match the attitude of TQQ exegetes towards, for example, the canonical readings – comparison between theories and practices is made in the next chapter.

Before looking at hermeneutical works which have studied TQQ in particular, I shall make reference to two which fall within the broader efforts to define *uṣūl al-tafsīr* more clearly and construct its elements, including TQQ as a "source" (*maṣdar*) of exegesis.[131] The first of these is **Mawlāy ʿUmar b. Ḥammād**'s *ʿIlm Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, which repeats many of the same statements about the superiority of TQQ before presenting various facets (*awjuh*) of this method. For the most part, these follow the categories presented by Dhahabī and others.[132] Another such work, albeit designed for use as a textbook, is *Al-Taḥrīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr* by **Musāʿid al-Ṭayyār**, which demonstrates his intent to engage critically with categories found in typical works. In the first place, Ṭayyār defines TQQ as "clarification of the meaning of one verse by another", thereby excluding other types of relationships between verses which fall short of *bayān*.[133] Hence he outlines three types (*anwāʿ*) of TQQ[134] and two ways in which verses are linked to each other in the exegetical process[135]. He goes on to describe ways in which an exegete may benefit from the Qurʾān as a source of *tafsīr*[136], then examples of ways that exegetes used the Qurʾān beyond *tafsīr*, such as gathering

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[129] *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr*, 2/265.

[130] *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr*, 2/292.

[131] These two figures represent the trends in Morocco and Saudi Arabia which I mentioned in the Introduction. Ḥammād and Ṭayyār are leading figures in MUBDIʿ and Markaz Tafsīr, respectively.

[132] *ʿIlm Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, pp. 72–77. The author goes on to discuss the role of multiple readings (*qirāʾāt*) and Quranic orthography (*rasm*), though the relevance of the latter is unclear.

[133] *Al-Taḥrīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, p. 42. This narrow definition of *tafsīr* also excludes much of the content of traditional works, including what I have described in the Introduction as 'post-text' analysis.

[134] *Al-Taḥrīr*, pp. 44–45.

[135] *Al-Taḥrīr*, pp. 49–50.

[136] *Al-Taḥrīr*, pp. 51–52.

parallels with no explanatory purpose.[137] In Chapter 3, I discuss Ṭayyār's contribution to the question of TQQ's relative authority (ḥujjiyya), as well as various aspects of TQQ theory which he has taken for granted along with other authors.

As well as these works encompassing Quranic hermeneutics generally, I have come across two doctoral projects which have tackled TQQ directly. Both are titled *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*; the first, by **Muḥsin al-Muṭayrī** (King Saud University), is subtitled *Taʾṣīl wa Taqwīm*, indicating that the author intends both to provide theoretical grounding for the approach, and to evaluate the exegesis which exists of this type. The author addresses background questions such as the history and authority of TQQ before outlining some principles (ḍawābiṭ) for various aspects of this approach, namely context, language and qirāʾāt.[138] In addition, he has outlined the significance of *kulliyyāt*, *wujūh/naẓāʾir*, resolving apparent conflicts, and thematic exegesis.[139] While this book contains valuable materials pertaining to TQQ, its primary focus is upon refuting "innovators" in their use of the method – this demonstrates that TQQ is not as objective as some have hoped.[140] The other, which bears greater similarity to my own research aims, was done by **Muḥammad Qajawī** at Muhammad V University in 2001. It was published in 2015 with the subtitle: *Dirāsa Tārīkhiyya wa Naẓariyya*[141] – this reflects the author's aim to trace the development of TQQ in the earliest exegesis, then use this to address aspects of theory affecting the practice.[142] His basic assumptions are shared with the other authors discussed above, including acceptance of the "consensus" that TQQ is the "best method". Noting that materials of direct relevance to TQQ are to be found scattered in various genres of Quranic studies,

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[137] *Al-Taḥrīr*, pp. 51–55. See also Muṭayrī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, pp. 34–39 concerning broad and narrow definitions of TQQ, and pp. 49–51 for the distinction between *istidlāl* and *istishhād*.

[138] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, p. 173 ff. His preceding discussions of *āthār* and *qarāʾin* do not form part of method per se.

[139] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, pp. 40–49. I have not mentioned all the author's categories, as he conflates various things in this discussion.

[140] See *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, p. 14 note 2, and pp. 141–143; the author discusses "errors" from p. 321 ff. Walid Saleh's observations on orthodoxy vs. philology are pertinent here ('Hermeneutics: al-Thaʿlabī' in Rippin (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion*, pp. 325–326).

[141] Qajawī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* (Al-Rābiṭa al-Muḥammadiyya, 2015). I became aware of this work early in my doctoral research, but extensive efforts to acquire it were in vain. I am basing my comments upon the author's synopsis of his own doctoral project, as posted online (http://majles.alukah.net/t11677).

[142] He proposes a third stage of study, which is to gather all the TQQ references in *muṣḥaf* order, excluding non-TQQ material. My research for Chapter 2 (see the Appendix especially) may be taken as a step towards achieving such a goal.

or in separate chapters of the *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* compendia, Qajawī proposes to gather these discussions into a cohesive account.[143] Although I have not seen the results of his project, my own contribution to this goal is found in Chapter 4 below.

# 1.5 – Analysis

## 1.5.1 – General Observations

Studying the texts presented above confirms that statements about the under-development of *uṣūl al-tafsīr* as a methodology are basically accurate, particularly those concerning TQQ itself.[144] In order to develop an account with sufficient detail, it was necessary to draw on a variety of hermeneutical genres, and the numbers of works available in each was noticeably limited. It is evident that the topics selected, and their structure of presentation, vary widely in these works; it is understandable that some have compared this situation unfavourably with that of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, in which chapter headings and relevant discussions are fairly standard.

Those who did use terms like *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* generally did not elaborate beyond a few examples. The larger compendia of *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* contain many discussions of direct relevance to TQQ, but the authors did not make these aspects of relevance explicit. Recent academic works have attempted to gather some of these threads. The most notable advance in theorising around TQQ was made by Farāhī's *niẓām/naẓm* school, which has yet to receive its due attention in broader Muslim scholarship; hence more recent works have gone back to the simple hierarchy proposed by Ibn Taymiyya. Other than brief remarks by some of the exegetes, his was the first explicit account of TQQ, and his description of it as the "best method" was extremely influential: a point to which we return shortly, and at various points in this study.

Another trend, at least since Zurqānī and subsequent Azharite discourse, has been to categorise TQQ as a form of exegesis "by narration", which is undoubtedly a misleading description, and one which has been noted to confuse between "the way the Qurʾān has reached us, i.e. narration (*athar*)" and "the way we reach the

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[143] See also Muṭayrī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, pp. 106–110.

[144] See Ḥammād, *ʿIlm Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, p. 71, and Ṭayyār in *Al-Jāmiʿ*, 1/474. Muṭayrī states that TQQ exegetes engaged in "*tamthīl* rather than *taʾṣīl*" (*Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, p. 19), but it would be more apt to describe their activity as *taṭbīq* before *tanẓīr* (i.e. implementation before theory).

explanation of each verse of the Qurʾān, which is *raʾy* and *ijtihād*".[145] This could have been a major factor inhibiting further methodological development: it was as though the work was already done, or – as one contemporary author put it – "transmitted from God" (*manqūl ʿan Allāh*)![146] Another consequence is that even such elaboration as provided by Shinqīṭī on the forms of *bayān* has conflated between what the Qurʾān 'does' – in some sense – and what the *mufassir* must do in order to connect one verse to another and interpret each in the other's light. None of the hermeneuts has clarified the proportion of verses of the Qurʾān which can – or should – be supplied with supporting or contrasting verses. Instead, there are 'broad' and 'narrow' approaches to TQQ which will become evident in the next chapter.

## 1.5.2 – Questioning the Consensus

As I have shown, Ibn Taymiyya's statement that TQQ is the best method became the word of "the scholars" and then of "consensus", even "*ijmāʿ* of *salaf* and *khalaf*".[147] This claim of consensus is, in my estimation, little more than an assertion based on the apparent lack of an opposing view. Suyūṭī's chosen wording at the beginning of *Al-Itqān* Chapter 78 may have contributed to a sense of finality on the matter; but there are also a number of observations which can call this into question:

1. The apparent lack of explicit statements in support of TQQ's superiority, or otherwise, prior to Ibn Taymiyya. Certainly he did not provide any citations in this regard.

2. Zarkashī reproduced Ibn Taymiyya's scheme in his *Burhān* without explicit endorsement, and after an alternative scheme which left out TQQ. Similar is true of Zurqānī's *Manāhil*. Some writers on *uṣūl al-tafsīr* after Ibn Taymiyya notably did not adopt his scheme, e.g. Dihlawī. Those who did, generally did not elaborate – perhaps deeming his brief account sufficient.

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[145] Ṭayyār in *Al-Jāmiʿ*, 1/471. Other writers have also expressed concern at locating TQQ in *tafsīr bi-l-maʾthūr* while stopping short of disputing the categorisation itself. Some point out that *tafsīr* should be attributed to the *mufassir*, which is never God or the Qurʾān in and of itself (see Khaṭīb, *Miftāḥ al-Tafsīr*, p. 335). Faḍl ʿAbbās does not mention the Qurʾān as a source of *maʾthūr* exegesis, but proposes to include classical Arabic lexicons in the genre (*Itqān al-Burhān*, 1/195).

[146] Suhayl, *Al-Mufassir*, p. 191. Similar appears in Abū Shahba, *Al-Isrāʾīliyyāt wa-l-Mawḍūʿāt fī Kutub al-Tafsīr*, p. 43, but his examples are all of explicit cross-references (see 3.4.1 below).

[147] See Ḥammād, *ʿIlm Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, pp. 68 and 70 for this and other quotes of modern scholars.

3. I have not seen any list of the exegete's qualifications that has included Qurʾān memorisation, except for one obscure attribution in a modern work.[148] This indicates that priority was being given in theory to sciences external to the Qurʾān.

4. On a practical level, it appears necessary to refer to other considerations – whether source-materials such as ḥadīth, or theological principles – in guiding the choice of "explanatory" verses, since mere linguistic resemblance would not be sufficient.

5. Very few exegeses have made TQQ a prominent part of their methodology (stated or implicit). Before the twentieth century, as far as I have ascertained, the only works noted to contain a significant TQQ element are that of Ibn Kathīr and one attributed to al-Amīr al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 1182/1768).[149] Even Ibn Taymiyya's own exegetical writings do not seem to recognise the primacy of TQQ.[150]

It seems, therefore, that TQQ has not received the attention and application that would be expected for a method universally accepted as "best". Could it be that the exegetes did not agree with this claim on a practical level? Despite not providing extensive arguments for his contentions, Ibn Taymiyya made it difficult to disagree when he provided an apparent mirror image to his scheme in the form of the ḥadīth of Muʿādh.[151] According to Saleh, this citation was designed to recast tafsīr using the

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[148] Aḥmad Suhayl (Al-Mufassir, pp. 371–372) states that "the scholars" (no citations) have stipulated for the exegete engaging in TQQ that he be "knowledgeable in the entire Qurʾān" – which need not entail memorisation.

[149] Ḥammād, ʿIlm Uṣūl al-Tafsīr, pp. 82–85; the author makes mention of lost works by Ibn al-Jawzī (mentioned in note 80 above) and Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd (or an earlier scholar), but these have been lost. See also Muṭayrī, Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān p. 40 and note 3; and Ṭayyār, Al-Taḥrīr, p. 50. Another of the works Ṭayyār claims to be rich in TQQ content is that of Muqātil; this was one reason for selecting it for the case study in Chapter 2.

[150] See Saleh, 'Ibn Taymiyya,' p. 155 note 5, and Ṭayyār in Al-Jāmiʿ, 1/467. This is not to say that he did not employ the method: Bazzano suggests that Ibn Taymiyya's writings are richer in intraquranic arguments than many exegetes ('Ibn Taymiyya, Radical Polymath, Part 2', pp. 120, 123). There is a need for further comparison of Ibn Taymiyya's exegetical writings in the collection known as Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā (volumes 13-18 of 37) and his theoretical Muqaddima; further material is found in the Majmūʿ with the description "Muqaddimat al-Tafsīr" (13/7–176). See Hindī, Ikhtiyārāt Ibn Taymiyya, 1/41 ff. for an overview of principles from these sources, and Mirza, 'Ibn Taymiyya as Exegete' for questions of chronology.

[151] The report is considered weak by ḥadīth authorities. See Al-Jāmiʿ, 1/451 (inc. footnote) and 1/463, in which an appeal on behalf of the report – or Ibn Taymiyya's claim that it has "a good chain" – is made to scholars' acceptance and narration of this report in the light of its agreement with established principles of the religion. Curtis argues unconvincingly that Ibn Kathīr felt the need to support this ḥadīth with a Quranic verse, namely Q 49:1 which forbids believers from putting themselves (hence their

established hierarchy in *fiqh*, thereby making his theory "almost impossible to unseat as long as one also upholds the rules of the Sunni juristic practices".[152] This may explain why later scholars did not oppose his hierarchical presentation explicitly, even when the practicalities of exegesis – or their personal preferences and priorities – led them to adopt a methodology which was not primarily intraquranic.

Among the various arguments presented for TQQ, the most useful point to the nature of the Qurʾān as a corpus, whereas the worst conceal the interpreter's agency behind the creed that "God knows best what He means". Even so, considering TQQ the best method is one thing, whereas stating that it is to be exhausted "first" is another.[153] This, too, is derived from Ibn Taymiyya, who wrote of resorting to the Sunna when the explanation cannot be found in the Qurʾān (*fa-in aʿyāka dhālika* – and then paralleled with *fa-in lam tajid* from Muʿādh's narrative). Noticing the potential implication that one may therefore suffice with the Qurʾān for its own explanation, modern Salafī commentators have argued that the order is in fact intended as: (a) order of authority, in line with the generally recognised primacy of the Qurʾān over other sources of legislation etc., or (b) a pedagogical device to outline the various sources.[154] Although these explanations stretch Ibn Taymiyya's wording rather far, it remains difficult to conclude that he was genuinely advocating that exegetes consider these sources in turn.[155] One possibility which I have not seen mentioned by these commentators is that he was only referring in this context to the most definitive cases of TQQ, such as when the Qurʾān makes an explicit reference to other verses.[156]

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opinions) before God and the Messenger (*Authentic Interpretation*, p. 268; cf. *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 1/27 and 6/425).

[152] Saleh, 'Ibn Taymiyya,' pp. 145–146. He also notes the anomaly of the mention of *ijtihād* in the Muʿādh narrative while Ibn Taymiyya was not promoting the use of *ijtihād* in exegesis. Curtis (*Authentic Interpretation*, pp. 225–227) suggests that Ibn Taymiyya invoked it in part as a counterweight to its use by Ḥanafite scholars in support of their extensive use of *qiyās*.

[153] As Mahmoud Ayoub put it: "Thus whenever a verse, phrase or word of the Qur'an may be elucidated by another, no recourse to any other source is necessary" (*The Qur'an and its Interpreters*, p. 22).

[154] See *Al-Jāmiʿ*, 1/457–8, 463–5 and 467; and 2.7 and 3.4.3 below re: 'Quranism'.

[155] Another evident problem with this is that one might thus be expected to abandon an authentic, explicit prophetic narration due to a Quranic meaning which may only be implicit (here the distinction between *qatʿī* and *zannī* denotations would be relevant). Without engaging critically with Ibn Taymiyya's hierarchy, Muṭayrī has included a chapter in which it is stipulated that TQQ "must not conflict with Prophetic exegesis" (*Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, p. 115 ff.).

[156] See Chapter 3 under the Principles of Unity (3.1.3) and Authority (3.4.1).

### 1.5.3 – Conclusions and Questions Arising

Islamic hermeneutical literature has explicitly acknowledged the role of intraquranic exegesis at least since the seminal treatise of Ibn Taymiyya. However, the ambiguity accompanying its prime position in his schema, and the lack of details concerning its use, meant that TQQ could continue to be neglected in practical terms even as his words echoed through the great works of *ʿulūm* and *uṣūl*. Relevant materials continued to gather in the Quranic compendia, but their role in TQQ – let alone methodology in employing them for this purpose – remained generally unstated. However, the potential role of *uṣūl al-fiqh* has been increasingly acknowledged.

I have shown that claims of consensus regarding the superiority of TQQ over other exegetical methods are exaggerated, and that its frequent categorisation under "*maʾthūr* exegesis" is highly problematic. The subjectivity of TQQ processes must not be neglected; yet there may be something to be said for the claim that a properly formed intraquranic methodology – such as Farāhī proposed with his emphasis on structure and coherence – could be used to rule out "weak" opinions which have found their way into books of exegesis.

The theoretical assumptions and underpinnings of the enterprise and very possibility of TQQ remain to be explored, with statements of the authors cited above providing a helpful starting point for our discussion in Chapter 3. Before that, it is pertinent to examine the ways in which TQQ was applied by those exegetes who gave it particular focus, in order to consider what methodological principles and practical issues can be inferred from their works.

# Chapter 2
# Case Study: TQQ of Sūrat al-Anʿām

## 2.0 – Introduction

### 2.0.1 – Aims and *Sūra* Choice

The first chapter explored the treatment of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* in the Islamic hermeneutical literature, highlighting how this approach to exegesis is conceptualised and categorised. This chapter turns to the exegetical literature with two broad aims: (a) to analyse the practical methods adopted by the TQQ-focused exegetes; and (b) to further the theoretical treatment by way of inference. Although the materials represent the exegetes' reception of the verses under study, we are particularly interested in what their explanations and arguments reveal about the theory and practice of TQQ. To this end, I have selected a group of exegetes to form the core of my case study (hereafter 'the Group') and conducted a thorough study of their intraquranic citations over the span of an entire *sūra*, namely al-Anʿām (Q 6). The result is an original style of *sūra* study, in which the specific methods comprising TQQ are the common thread running through my thematic and comparative analysis.[1] Of course, not all citations provided by exegetes are from the Qurʾān, and not all intraquranic exegesis (if broadly defined) consists of citations; the area of study here is the overlap between TQQ and exegetical citations.

The selection of this section of the Qurʾān was partly motivated by the existence of two famous reports from the "authentic" collections which show Prophet Muḥammad explaining its verses (*viz.* 59 and 82) with reference to others in the Qurʾān – see 2.6 below. The selection is both lengthy and bounded: the former (al-Anʿām being slightly longer than one thirtieth-part of the Qurʾān) to allow for sufficiently rich and varied data; and the latter to note any patterns in intra-*sūra* exegesis, which can provide data for discussions of *sūra* unity.

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[1] Cf. Sinai, 'Reading Sūrat al-Anʿām with Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā and Sayyid Quṭb' which studies the introductions to the *sūra*; and Neuwirth's structural study which I summarise in 2.8 below.

The *sūra* is generally classed as Meccan, even as a single-occasion revelation, though some authorities have argued for some of its verses being added later.[2] The fact that this *sūra* is thought to be the fifty-fifth to be revealed[3] means that it is almost precisely in the middle of that sequence; hence explanatory citations are situated both in earlier and later passages. However, since this study focuses on the exegetes' engagement with the *sūra*, my attention to chronology here is only as extensive as theirs. The exegetes took a mostly synchronic approach to Quranic passages which can be cited evidentially: whether they should be classed as *prior* context or *subsequent* clarification is beside the point for them.[4] The reader will also find me taking a synchronic approach to the exegetical texts, in that my central concern is the range and function of citations – and diversity thereof – rather than the progression of this approach and method over time.

## 2.0.2 – Exegetes

As mentioned previously, there are only a few works of complete exegesis which have been explicit in their adoption of TQQ as a core method, while a few others have been noted to be rich in intraquranic explanations and citations. By focusing on these categories, I have aggregated the intraquranic citations and discussions pertaining to each verse of al-Anʿām, in a way that can fairly represent the extent to which TQQ was used in *tafsīr* works as a whole despite the dominance of modern texts. There are two categories within the Group itself – that is, works whose every intraquranic citation was documented across the span of the *sūra*; then there are two types of supplementary source to which I have made extensive reference.

### (a) Main Group

The Group consists, first, of self-defined TQQ works, whether TQQ-only or TQQ-primary. These are all late works, namely: *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-Kalām al-*

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[2] Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 8/5. See Sinai, 'Reading Sūrat al-Anʿām,' pp. 139–143, 149.

[3] Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 7/121–123.

[4] In contrast, Nicolai Sinai analyses the Quranic text without the *mufassirs'* lens in order to focus on exegesis performed, as it were, by the Qurʾān itself (see 3.1.3 below): this is inevitably restricted to subsequent passages. These, in turn, are of two types: "interpretively motivated secondary expansion and revision" within a single *sūra*, and "interpretive backreferencing" in separate *sūras* – see Sinai, 'Two Types of Inner-Qurʾānic Interpretation' p. 254.

*Raḥmān* ("Exegesis of the Qurʾān Through the Speech of the Lord of Mercy") by Thanāʾ-Allāh Amritsarī[5], and the far better-known *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān fī Īḍāḥ al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* ("Lights of Clarity: Elucidating the Qurʾān through the Qurʾān") by Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shinqīṭī. Both of these express their purpose in the very title; Amritsarī provides little insight into his approach in his introduction, unlike Shinqīṭī.[6] Both exegetes were influenced by Salafī theology, but Amritsarī initially included Māturīdī opinions in his work for which he was chastised by fellow *Ahl-i-Ḥadīth* scholars in India and Saudi Arabia.[7] In the beginning of the exegesis, he reproduces an extensive passage from Dihlawī's *Al-Fawz al-Kabīr* outlining problems with over-reliance upon revelatory contexts (the *asbāb* literature) – I summarise this content in Chapter 3.

Belonging to a similar time-period are Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī and Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, representing the *naẓm* ("coherence") school of India. The former did not leave behind a full commentary on al-Anʿām, but his personal notes in Arabic have been published under the title *Taʿlīqāt fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*.[8] His student's complete Urdu exegesis, *Tadabbur-i-Qurʾan*, builds on Farāhī's methodology with extensive

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[5] His Arabic-language exegesis was originally published in India in 1902. Among the recommendations of the work included in the prefaces is one by Shibli Nomani (d. 1914) who stated that the TQQ method adopted "is not found, to my knowledge, in any other work" (Amritsarī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 24). A leading *Ahl-i-Ḥadīth* scholar and writer, Amritsarī also debated representatives of various religions and movements including the *Ahl-i-Qurʾān* group. See Qasmi, 'Islamic Universalism: The 'Amritsarī' Version of Ahl al-Qurʾān,' pp. 171–173, 175–176.

[6] See 1.3 above on Shinqīṭī's introduction. Regarding his theological background and apparent shift after moving to Riyadh, see ʿAbbās, *Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn*, 3/85–86. It should be noted that the unfinished portion of the *Aḍwāʾ* (from Q 59 onwards) was written after Shinqīṭī's death by his student, ʿAṭiyya Sālim (*Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, publisher's note p. 3). The edition I used (Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2011) is unusual in being in a single, condensed volume, to which two further works by Shinqīṭī (*Dafʿ Īhām al-Iḍṭirāb* and *Manʿ Jawāz al-Majāz*) are appended.

[7] This is described in a foreword by Ṣafī al-Raḥmān Mubārakpurī in the Saudi edition upon which I have relied (Dār al-Salām, 2002, pp. 17–21). By way of example, his "controversial" explanation of Q 7:54 has been replaced by a two-page-long footnote reproducing the views of Ibn Taymiyya and "the way of the *Salaf*", apparently penned by Amritsarī himself (ibid, pp. 228–229). For more details and context see Riexinger, 'A Conflict Among the Ahl-i Ḥadīth in British India,' pp. 502–513.

[8] These have been compiled in two volumes; the first covers until the end of Sūrat al-Nūr (Q 24). The publication could provide for rich study, including comparison with the author's completed commentaries on specific *sūras* as found in *Niẓām al-Qurʾān*. We are informed in the preface to the *Taʿlīqāt* (pp. 4–6) that most of this content was copied from notes Farāhī kept in several *muṣḥafs* which were kept by Iṣlāḥī after his mentor's death. Naturally, such cannot be assumed as the author's final opinion. He often provides cross-references, but the purpose of citation is not always discernible. Additional content was included by the editor from some of Farāhī's completed works.

original insights.[9] As described previously, the *naẓm* approach is based upon the primacy of "internal" evidence, hence the importance of intraquranic relationships; after the immediate context, this applies to citations from other *sūras*. As noted, these two aspects are reflected in the title of Farāhī's exegesis, *Niẓām al-Qurʾān wa Taʾwīl al-Furqān bi-l-Furqān*. It is important to note that both exegetes considered Sūrat al-Anʿām to be the first in a "group" of four *sūras* (Q 6-9), with Iṣlāḥī adding that it is "paired" with Q7, Sūrat al-Aʿrāf. The unifying theme (*ʿamūd*) is "Islam as the religion of Abraham", with al-Anʿām serving the role of "invitation" to the unbelieving Quraysh, before the others which represent "warning", "preparation" and "war", in succession.[10]

The last of the TQQ-primary members of the Group is *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāʾī, who defined his exegetical project as "enabling the Qurʾān to speak for itself (*istinṭāq al-Qurʾān*)".[11] This is particularly in his sections labelled "*bayān*" (explanation), which are far more extensive than his "*riwāya*" sections which address narrations from earlier authorities and exegetes, especially from the *Ahl al-Bayt* and Shīʿa tradition. There are also occasional thematic studies (drawing from across the Qurʾān) of individual terms and concepts which arise while studying the verses sequentially. Being the only Shīʿī work in the Group, the inclusion of *Al-Mīzān* allows for comparison of the results of TQQ across sectarian lines; in practice, I found only a few notable differences attributable to sectarian doctrines, while divergence of opinion was frequent between the Sunnīs themselves.

In order to capture something of earlier TQQ practice, I incorporated two of the earliest exegeses into the Group: those of Muqātil b. Sulaymān and Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī. The former is deemed to be the earliest complete *tafsīr* work extant.[12] Ṭayyār's observation that it is rich in TQQ content has not been borne out by my case study,

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[9] I relied upon the original Urdu, as there is no translation yet for this *sūra*. For the relationship between *Tadabbur* and Farāhī's exegesis, see Mir, *Coherence*, pp. 43–45.

[10] Mir, pp. 76, 85–88. This idea assumes divinely-mandated order between *sūras*.

[11] See Medoff, *Ijtihad and Renewal*, 20 ff.; and 1.3 above.

[12] Sinai notes the work's novelty in demonstrating some "awareness of intra-textual relations of coherence" and "recurrent lexical peculiarities" in the Quranic corpus – see Sinai, 'The Qurʾanic Commentary of Muqātil b. Sulaymān and the Evolution of Early *Tafsīr* Literature', in Görke and Pink (eds.), p. 131.

however.[13] The choice of Ṭabarī was to draw not only on his own TQQ explanations, but also on the various early authorities whom he cites with his chain of narration.[14] Although both have incorporated other hermeneutical methods, there are instances of TQQ explanations advanced or quoted by these authors which do not appear in subsequent TQQ-focused works. One might have expected later exegetes to gather citations from earlier works, but they seem to have preferred independent reflection for the most part. In any case, this fact invites further exploration of *tafsīr* works from early and later periods in search of individual TQQ-based opinions and original insights.

It is noteworthy that Ṭabarī's work was praised by Ibn Taymiyya as "among the worthiest and most valued transmitted exegeses"[15] even though it does not give special prominence to intraquranic explanations, as the latter's typology of "best methods" may be expected to dictate.[16] In order to see a version of the Taymiyyan paradigm in practice, I incorporated Ibn Kathīr into the Group: the introduction to his exegesis, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, incorporated his teacher's theory verbatim. It is obvious that his work is rich with parallel verses, which are given a prominent place in his commentary. However, it is not the case that he implemented the described procedure literally, i.e. to exhaust the Qurʾān as a resource before turning to the Sunna. Rather, reports from the Prophet and first three generations were more dominant in shaping Ibn Kathīr's conclusions, as with Ṭabarī, whose work he engages with regularly and critically.

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[13] Ṭayyār, *Al-Taḥrīr*, p. 50. It should be noted that Muqātil has a work on Quranic polysemy, *Al-Wujūh wa-l-Naẓāʾir* – see 4.2.2 for related discussion.

[14] Ṭabarī cites TQQ opinions in this *sūra* most frequently from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd (five times), followed by ʿAbd-Allāh b. ʿAbbās (three), al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim, Mujāhid b. Jabr and al-Suddī (twice each), and one each from ʿAṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ, al-Rabīʿ b. Anas and ʿAbd-Allāh b. ʿAmr. There are plentiful studies of Ṭabarī's exegetical methodology, particularly in the Arabic language. A recent work has studied it in terms of his methods of supporting his interpretations and evaluating existing opinions; the researcher concludes that Ṭabarī cites the Qurʾān to this end 124 times in his whole work, accounting for 1.1% of evidential manoevres (including reasoning): see Zahrānī, *Al-Istidlāl fī l-Tafsīr*, pp. 115–117 (and pp. 185–211 for details).

[15] *Muqaddima*, p. 90. Ibn Taymiyya counts Ṭabarī's to be among "*al-tafāsīr al-maʾthūra*", which is most likely to be a forerunner of the later classification into *maʾthūr* vs. *raʾy* exegesis. However, his description is of Ṭabarī's narration from the *Salaf*, and so there is no reason to suppose that Ibn Taymiyya counted TQQ to be a form of *maʾthūr* exegesis as categorised by some later scholars.

[16] As noted previously, the same can be said of Ibn Taymiyya's own collected commentaries. The snippets pertaining to al-Anʿām were not substantial enough to include in the study (*Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā*, 14/273–279).

Here follows a brief description of each work in terms of style/structure and method of citation. Muqātil adopted an in-line commentary style. Ṭabarī's commentary is far more extensive, and TQQ citations can be found in his own portions as well as his listed narrations. Ibn Kathīr generally quotes parallels at the beginning of his explanation of each verse, as well as evidentiary citations in the course of his explanation. Amritsarī also adopted the in-line style, citing Quranic parallels or evidences frequently. Shinqīṭī takes a verse-by-verse approach, though not comprehensive (he explains only forty-nine verses of al-Anʿām's hundred and sixty-five), with more elaboration on certain points, especially juristic issues – even if TQQ does not feature in those discussions. Farāhī's *Taʿlīqāt* frequently contain citations of other verses using a quotation or number reference (a system not common before the modern era, and still not employed frequently in published Arabic texts). The same applies to Iṣlāḥī's commentary; I concerned myself with these explicit citations/references, as the use of context is outside the central scope of this chapter. Finally, Ṭabāṭabāʾī in his *Bayān* sections employs a more discursive style, similar to Ibn Kathīr but with a greater proportion of intraquranic citations. I took his thematic discussions into account, wherever these were not too extensive.

## (b) Supplements

In addition to the eight just mentioned, I consulted a further seven commentaries for the whole of al-Anʿām, along with various other supplemental resources. Two of these belong to self-professed 'Quranists' (or similar descriptors) who reject *ḥadīth* as a source of exegesis and law, allowing only for language, reason and science as external resources to interpret the scripture – these are the English translation-commentaries by Shabbir Ahmed[17] and Edip Yüksel et al[18]. In 3.4.3 below, I discuss some of the Quranist thinkers who influenced these authors.

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[17] The open source translation led by Shabbir Ahmed, an American medical doctor, is entitled *The Qur'an as it Explains Itself*: the version I acquired online is labelled as the sixth edition. It is primarily a translation and includes Quranic cross-references to support its interpretations. In the introduction, Ahmed defines his approach as "focusing on the language of Makkah in which the Qur'an was revealed" and "making use of 'Tasreef', that is, how the Qur'an repeats its verses in a variety of ways to clearly explain itself" (Preface, vi.).

[18] Edip Yüksel, Layth Saleh al-Shaiban and Martha Schulte-Nafeh, *The Qurʾān: A Reformist Translation*. The first two worked on the translation, but the commentary (including cross-references) belongs to Yüksel (see 3.4.3 below).

Two further sources are by authors whose stances are close to the Quranists' in some respects. Before his death in 2016, the Iraqi scholar Ṭāhā al-ʿAlwānī had released one commentary from an intended series of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, which happens to be of Sūrat al-Anʿām. Its sparsity of Quranic citations, together with tangents of tenuous relevance to the verse under discussion[19], make this work, in my assessment, an example of using the claimed objectivity of TQQ as a cover to advance the author's personal theories about religion.[20] Another recent commentary is *Al-Bayān* by Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, a Pakistani intellectual who studied under Iṣlāḥī and is now perhaps the leading proponent of his *naẓm* school.[21] I consulted this for further understanding of the perspectives of Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī.

Finally, there were resources which I drew upon to supplement the data and discussions in specific areas addressed below. For Quranic parallels, I looked through Rudi Paret's *Konkordanz*, A.J. Droge's *New Annotated Translation* and Maria Dakake's notes on al-Anʿām in *The Study Quran*[22]; hence the presentation has taken into account the latest Western scholarship. For specific verses and issues, I have referred to general *tafsīr* works as well as specific sub-genres – such as *naskh*, *qirāʾāt*, *mutashābihāt* – as will become apparent, and further developed in Chapters 3 and 4 of this study.

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[19] See, for example, his treatment of *amn* under 6:82 (mentioned below in 2.6.2).

[20] Cf. Muṭayrī's assessment (*Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, pp. 59–61) of ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Khaṭīb's *Al-Tafsīr al-Qurʾānī li-l-Qurʾān* and Abū Zayd al-Damanhūrī's *Al-Hidāya wa-l-ʿIrfān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*. ʿAlwānī's detailed perspective on Sunna can be found in ʿAlwānī, *Ishkāliyyat al-Taʿāmul maʿa l-Sunna* (IIIT, 2014). Similar points are raised in the introduction to his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Anʿām*, which he concludes by saying: "The Qurʾān itself suffices [the reader] from the *tafāsīr*, many of which are corrupted with *isrāʾīliyyāt* and narrations which are inauthentic in terms of chain and text. They have gone outside the authentic, connected reports in which the Messenger (peace be upon him) outlined the Islamically accepted method of exegesis, which is *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*" (*Tafsīr Sūrat al-Anʿām*, p. 34). I address the issue of *ḥadīths* and "Prophetic method" in 3.4.2 below.

[21] The full Urdu commentary is available on the author's website. His office kindly shared an advance PDF copy of the English translation of the al-Anʿām commentary, previously published in the Monthly Renaissance journal. The author's theories on Qurʾān-primacy, and the wide distinction between Sunna and *ḥadīth*, have led many to accuse Ghamidi of *ḥadīth*-denial, a label he rejects. See *Islam: A Comprehensive Introduction*, pp. 39–46 and 61–69 for his views.

[22] This volume by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (editor-in-chief), Caner Dagli, Maria Dakake, Joseph Lumbard (general editors) and Mohammed Rustom (assistant editor) is a major contribution which presents and synthesises many traditional, and some modern, works of exegesis. However, it has faced criticism from some Muslims for displaying a pluralistic bias concerning other religions, stemming from the philosophy known as Perennialism. In my survey of this *sūra*, I identified several such junctures; I also draw attention to several other issues below for attention in subsequent editions or similar projects.

# 2.1 – Parallels (*Naẓāʾir*)

## 2.1.1 – Purposes and Usages

A cursory examination of the books in this Group would reveal a high proportion of citations of verses deemed to be similar – whether in wording, meaning, theme, or due to the presence of a common feature – to the verses being studied in the course of the *sūra*. Sometimes, as in Muqātil[23], this is described as the verse's *naẓīr* (i.e. its like, counterpart); I have adopted the English term 'parallel'. Ibn Kathīr's usual expression is "*ka-mā qāla taʿālā* (as [God] – exalted be He – said)", equating the parallel(s) with the present verse without making explicit how they are similar.

This gives rise to the question of the purpose of these parallels being cited, and whether this is, in itself, to be deemed *tafsīr*.[24] If *tafsīr* aims at clarifying the text under study, then what is achieved by citing a text which is similar or even identical? In my view, there are several purposes which may lie behind the exegete's use of parallels. First, the parallel may have a clearer wording, so it does serve as clarification. Second, it may contain additional or complementary details which increase understanding of the verse at hand. Third: even if the parallel is identical in wording, it may be instructive to look at its context in order to derive further understanding of the phrases as they appear throughout the Qurʾān. Fourth, the *mufassir* may intend for the reader to consult his explanation of those parallels; I found that Iṣlāḥī and Ṭabāṭabāʾī were most frequent in referring the reader back to earlier discussions (i.e. in *sūras* Q 1-5), and occasionally to later ones (which may indeed have been written earlier).

## 2.1.2 – Nature and Results of Survey

I have made a distinction between simple parallels, on the one hand, and evidentiary citations, on the other. With the latter, the exegete has clearly used the citation to establish a point. When the cited verse is similar in its wording or meaning, then there is an obvious overlap with the phenomenon of parallels[25]; this is often to

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[23] On occasion, Muqātil also connects some verses in terms of *sabab*, saying "*fīhi/fīhim nazalat…*" (i.e. the other verse was revealed concerning the same person/situation).

[24] Points here are expanded in 4.2.1 below.

[25] In my aggregated citation table (see Appendix), I have considered such overlaps to be evidentiary, and reserved the designation of "parallel" for those which serve no other explicit function.

demonstrate that an interpretation which the author is advancing is present elsewhere in the Qurʾān, perhaps in a clearer expression. This may be described as *istishhād* or *istiʾnās* – the appropriateness of this procedure depends on the obscurity of the interpretation. As for the mere citation of parallels (as frequently in Ibn Kathīr), I suggest that this be interpreted as an early form of concordance work, which was intended as a resource for the interested reader and researcher.

<u>Aggregated Citations Table</u>

After performing a qualitative analysis of the TQQ commentaries on each verse of al-Anʿām, I compiled a table which aggregates these cross-references to allow for a more quantitative overview.[26] I have referred to the verses (though often only a fragment is intended) with [*sūra*:verse] numerical reference. Although the citations may be categorised in a number of different ways, I have opted to make the table as simple as possible by creating columns for pure parallels, as compared to evidentiary citations (which may also contain parallels, albeit used by the exegete to support a conclusion). Where necessary, I have broken the verses down into constituent phrases: if quoted in transliterated Arabic, it was the specific wording which was being paralleled or discussed with Quranic citations as evidence; if in English, the focus was more upon the meaning.

Within the confines of this table, I have used some formatting to indicate further details about the citations. An <u>underline</u> means that the reference is to a verse within al-Anʿām, and this allows for some observations to be made about the *sūra* structure, or how these exegetes perceived its internal links. Such internal references have been placed first, followed by other citations in *muṣḥaf*-order. The proximity of these cross-references elevates them to being context, especially if it is granted that the *sūra* is a semantic unity with deliberate thematic coherence.[27]

A **bold** reference means that it was cited here by more than one exegete: this can suggest the relative importance of a cross-reference. However, the collection of this data has brought to light a surprisingly low proportion of repeat citations, even

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[26] Since it spans seventeen pages, I have placed this table in the Appendix for the benefit of researchers.

[27] See 3.1.3 and 4.4.3 below.

between works that would be expected to correspond due to intellectual lineage.[28] One explanation is that a certain verse may have many parallels, and when each exegete selected one or a few from these possibilities, these overlapped minimally or not at all. A broader conclusion that can be drawn from this lack of consistency in citations (both in the Parallels and Evidence columns) is that TQQ did not develop its own citation corpus in the way that scholarly works frequently link specific *ḥadīths* or poetic citations with verses of the Qurʾān.[29]

*Figure 1 - Sample of Aggregated Citations Table (see Appendix)*

| Verse | Phrase | Parallels | Evidence | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | al-nūr (singular) | | 153, 16:48 | |
| | yaʿdilūna | | 2:165, 26:98 (150, 27:60) / 23:74 (4:135) | |
| 2 | The two uses of *ajal* | | 2:28, 63:11 / 7:187, 31:34, 79:42-44 / 60 (39:42, 40:67) / 10:49, 13:38-39, 16:96 | |
| 3 | heavens and earth | | 43:84 / 25:6 / 67:16-17, 20:5 / 7:7, 57:4, 58:7 | Various readings of syntax |
| 4 | | (10, 12:105, 15:81, 26:5, 36:46, 54:2) | | |
| 5 | | 13:17, 42:24, 61:8-9 / 37:176-177 | 19, 66, 104-106, 17:105 | |
| 6 | Destruction of stronger communities | 7:95, 34:45 (19:74, 30:9, 35:44, 40:21/82, 43:8, 46:26, 50:36) | | |
| | Replacement with new generation | (5:54, 7:169, 23:31/42, 28:45) | | 133 was not noted. |
| 7 | | 25, 111, 7:132, 10:96-97/101, 15:14-15, 52:44 | 4:153, 17:93 | |
| 8 | Demands for angel | 17:94, 64:6 | 25:7 / 17:92, 38:67-70, 41:13, 81:19-21 | |
| | quḍiya l-amr | 15:8, 25:22 | | |
| 9 | | 50, 3:164, 16:43 17:95, 36:30 | 43:60 | |
| 10 | | | 29:40 etc. | |
| 11 | | (3:137, 7:84/86, 10:39/73, 28:58 etc.) | | |
| 12 | mercy | | 54, 21:107 | |
| | la-yajmaʿannakum | 4:87 | 54, 12:35 | Ṭabarī cites for grammar |
| | disbelief/loss | | 31 | |
| 13 | | | (26) | Re: ellipsis |
| | divine knowledge | | 59-62 | |
| 14 | fāṭir | 39:64 | 67:3, 42:5 | |
| | God feeds, is not fed | 26:79, 35:15, 51:56-58, 112:2 | | Droge suggests 22:37 relevant; hence 136 too. Dakake links to argument in 5:75. |
| | First to submit | (163, 39:12) | | |
| 15 | | (10:15, 11:63, 39:13) | 48:1 (naskh) / 39:65 | |
| 16 | | 3:185 | | |
| 17 | | 10:107, 23:88-89, 35:2 | | |
| 18 | | 61 | | 'Alwānī compares vv. 14-18 to Abraham's stance in 26:70-89. Yuksel cites 53:42-62 as elaboration. |
| 19 | witness | 4:166, 63:1 | 57 | |
| | reach of warning | 29:50, 35:23 | 7:158, 11:17, 25:1, 34:28 / 2:143, 9:122 | |
| | lā ashhad | 150 | | Final phrase obviously similar to Abraham's statement (78 – noted by Paret, Droge, Dakake). |
| 20 | | 114, 2:146, 10:94 | 5:83 | |
| | pronoun him/it | | 19 / 7:157, 26:197, 48:29 | |
| 21 | man aẓlam | 137-140, 10:17 (93, 144, 157) | | |
| | not prosper | | 2:95, 22:9, 39:26 | |
| 22 | | 28:62 | | |
| 23 | | 40:73-74 | | |
| 24 | lying | | | |
| | abandonment | | 4:42, 38:64 | |

I have used round brackets when including parallels (and, occasionally, evidentiary citations) from the supplemental sources such as Paret and Dakake. When no citations are provided by the Group, such additions indicate that there were

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[28] The most obvious lineage is between Farāhī–Iṣlāḥī, but it is not always the case that their citations coincide. Another thread is Ṭabarī–Ibn Kathīr–Shinqīṭī: in practice, the greatest correspondence was between the latter two. In some cases, Shinqīṭī reproduces Ibn Kathīr's citations without attribution (as under 6:88), but he occasionally critiques those citations (e.g. under 6:130).

[29] For *ḥadīths*, this can be observed in the *Tafsīr* chapters of the *ḥadīth* compendia, and later in the development of Suyūṭī's *Al-Durr al-Manthūr* and the recent *Mawsūʿat al-Tafsīr al-Maʾthūr*. This is in addition to works on *asbāb al-nuzūl* particularly.

possibilities which they overlooked or left on purpose. However, it is certainly not the case that these supplemental resources – despite being later, and sometimes having far superior technology at their disposal – incorporated all the citations provided by the Group, even in the Parallels column.

A slash (/) indicates that groups of citations are being used in different ways.[30] This is more frequent in the Evidence column; it indicates that there are different opinions, each supported by Quranic evidence. This calls into question the notion of TQQ's objectivity and potential to end disagreements; this point will be seen more clearly in the following section.

## General Observations

A number of observations and conclusions have already been mentioned. Another reality which has become clear from the aggregated table is the relative proportions of pure parallels and evidential citations. My initial impression was that the former would far outweigh the latter, however – taking into account my methodology of classifying the citation as evidentiary whenever feasible – the table displays a fairly even distribution between the two columns.

Although the Evidence column is of more obvious interest in the study of *tafsīr*, there are numerous ways in which the Parallels data can provide a resource for research questions, especially if it is further supplemented from other exegetical works, concordances and even modern text corpus technology. Whereas these exegetes cited the verses on the basis of their similarity, it is equally possible to focus on the divergent phrasing in these 'parallels'. This is the basis for the comparative approach and genre known as *mutashābihāt al-Qurʾān*[31]; the idea of a *mutashābih* (resembling, near-parallel) verse is essentially the same as that of the *naẓīr*, but the emphasis is instead upon the differences in wording and their appropriateness to context. My point is that collecting parallels and cross-references may be taken as a first step to investigate the relationship between the verses and their meanings.

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[30] The slash is also used between multiple cited verses in a single *sūra*.

[31] See 4.3.1 below, especially Figure 6 which aggregates Ibn al-Zubayr's citations from al-Anʿām, providing a markedly different list under the relevant verses. The issue is addressed minimally in the present chapter in terms of "tensions": see 2.3.6.

A final point which I have explored minimally is the question of chronology. While categorising all these citations into earlier (most of the Meccan corpus) and later (the Medinan) would have been an unwieldy process, it is clear that reference is being made in both directions. A verse may be explained either with reference to an earlier principle, or to a later revelation which is relevant to it. Whereas most of these citations treat the Qurʾān synchronically, there are some which demand more attention to chronology. The clearest example here is the Quranic cross-reference which appears in this *sūra*: "Why should you not eat such animals when God **has already fully explained what He has forbidden you**…?" (6:119)[32] Ṭabarī takes this to be a reference to the list of prohibited items in Sūrat al-Māʾida (5:3)[33]; Shinqīṭī points out that this popular view among exegetes is mistaken because al-Māʾida is a later revelation. However, his own citation of 6:145 (a verse appearing later in al-Anʿām itself)[34] raises its own chronological questions which he does not address. Another solution is offered by Ṭabāṭabāʾī, who refers to a passage in Sūrat al-Naḥl, which he states was an earlier Meccan revelation: "He has forbidden you only these things: carrion, blood, pig's meat, and animals over which any name other than God's has been invoked. But if anyone is forced by hunger, neither desiring it nor exceeding their immediate need, God is forgiving and merciful" (16:115).[35]

## 2.2 – Evidentiary Citations

In the aggregated table, the Evidence column incorporates citations by the Group which are anything other than a simple parallel. This accounts for a number of

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[32] I indicate the verse under study, or the relevant phrase from it, using **bold** text to distinguish this from explanatory citations. While Abdel Haleem's translation is my default, I use Ali Quli Qaraʾi's wherever that better fits the literal sense or the intended sense of the exegete.

[33] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3321.

[34] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, p. 254. Amritsarī (*Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 208) cites the same.

[35] Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Al-Mīzan*, 7/343; Iṣlāḥī says similar, pointing also within al-Anʿām (*Tadabbur*, 3/154). However, this creates another problem because 16:118 (shortly after the verse cited in al-Naḥl) makes explicit reference to a prohibition upon the Jews which "We recounted to you earlier" – and commentators generally link this back to al-Anʿām (6:146). Ṭabāṭabāʾī seems to accept this identification in his commentary on al-Naḥl, stating that al-Anʿām was "unproblematically" revealed before al-Naḥl (*Al-Mīzan*, 12/366). Ibn ʿĀshūr argues that al-Naḥl was revealed in various stages, and that 16:118 came after al-Anʿām, such that it could indeed refer back to it (*Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 14/93). Ālūsī mentions some alternative interpretations of the clause "*min qabl*" in 16:118 (see *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 14/333).

different types of citation, some of which are treated under separate headings below. An exegete may cite a verse because it functions as elaboration or clarification of the verse under study. Two or more verses may be concerned with a shared subject matter – and may even have aspects of tension or contradiction – in which case it is necessary to gather them in order to discuss that subject comprehensively; I have classed such citations as thematic and addressed them in the next section.

In this section, I focus on the use of Quranic citations to explain or argue for an interpretation of the verse at hand. This is *istidlāl*, i.e. using the citation as *dalīl* (evidence); that evidence may be the mere existence of an expression or meaning elsewhere in the Qurʾān, as described previously (evidentiary parallels). It may be used to explain the meaning of a word by appeal to other usages. More generally, we are interested in how the exegete draws upon Quranic citations to support an argument he makes as part of his *tafsīr*. Further aspects of this will become clearer in subsequent sections.

As well as demonstrating some of the various ways in which citations are used as evidence, another key aim at this point is to highlight the frequent divergence of opinions between the exegetes employing TQQ, stemming from the following realities: (a) the possibility of a single citation having a variety of interpretations and implications; (b) reference being made to different verses, each supporting a different interpretation of the verse under examination; and/or (c) the influence of non-TQQ evidences and exegetical opinion upon the preferences or predilections of each *mufassir*.

## 2.2.1 – Explaining Words and References

"Praise belongs to God who created the heavens and the earth and made darkness and light; **yet the disbelievers set up equals to their Lord**!" (6:1) Thus, per Abdel Haleem's translation, Sūrat al-Anʿām commences. However, the term translated here as "they set up equals" (*yaʿdilūn*, from root ʿ-d-l) has two distinct and plausible meanings, such that Shinqīṭī cites this in the introduction to *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān* as an example of *bayān* (elucidation) through "giving preponderance to one meaning of a homonym (*mushtarak*).[36] His own preference is for this meaning of "equivalence", for

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[36] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, p. 7.

which he cites two verses: "Even so, there are some who choose to worship others besides God as rivals (*andād*) to Him, loving them with the love due to God" (2:165) and "When we made you equal (*nusawwīkum*) with the Lord of the Worlds" (26:98).[37] Importantly, neither of these contains the same key word or root; but they demonstrate the existence of this meaning in other verses.

On the other hand, Amritsarī argues for the meaning of "going astray", citing: "And those who do not believe in the Hereafter turn away (*nākibūn*) from that path." (23:74).[38] This is based on a slightly different, indeed more straightforward, reading of the syntax.[39] However, again, the citation does not contain the same word. It does not appear that citing parallels was an effective strategy to support either opinion, although more pertinent citations (containing the same root word) were, in fact, available to the exegetes: 6:150 and 27:60 for the former, and 4:135 for the latter.[40] An argument from the immediate context and purpose of the entire verse would, perhaps, be more convincing.[41]

The following verse has two occurrences of the word *ajal*, which has various possible meanings; therefore, the exegetes provide citations in order to remove the vagueness (*ibhām*) of the respective occurrences. "He is the one who created you from clay and **specified a term [for you] and another fixed time** (*ajal musammā*), known only to Him" (6:2). Ṭabarī narrates from Ḍaḥḥāk that the first denotes death, citing 63:11, "God does not reprieve a soul when its turn (*ajal*) comes"; for his own part, he appeals to the context of the preceding verse to argue that the first *ajal* is the end of this worldly existence (or the lives of all creatures), while the second is the resurrection, citing 2:28 for this combined meaning.[42] Ibn Kathīr seems to prefer the

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[37] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, p. 243. Indeed, this is almost a matter of consensus among translators.

[38] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 185.

[39] Cf. 6:150, where only the first reading is possible: "*bi-rabbihim yaʿdilūn*". It is surprising that this was not cited, although the existence of a parallel is not conclusive in itself.

[40] I found these with Paret (*Konkordanz*, p. 134) and linked them to their respective interpretations. The underlined reference is to make clearer that the citation is also from Sūrat al-Anʿām: I suggest that this strengthens the first view considerably, as it is more obvious that the later use of the word echoes the first verse. As for 4:135, its support for the second view depends on adopting a particular interpretation of the phrase *an taʿdilū* (see Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 6/335).

[41] Thus argues Ālūsī (*Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 8/24-25), who points out that this strategy, too, allows for different conclusions.

[42] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3129.

view (as in the translation above) that the former denotes each person's death and the latter the Hereafter, citing both 7:187 and 79:42-44 to support the signification by the word *ʿindahu* that none knows its coming but He.[43] However, he also cites a view attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās and Mujāhid to the effect that the former is the age of this worldly existence, and the latter each person's final age, saying that this could be supported by 6:60 which contains the same expression *ajal musammā*: "It is He who calls your souls back by night, knowing what you have done by day, then raises you up again in the daytime until your fixed term is fulfilled."[44]

Ṭabāṭabāʾī, in contrast, argues that both refer to death: the former vaguely to indicate a person's expected life-span, and the latter specified and fixed.[45] For this, he cites 13:38-39, which is among the "preeminent verses" of his philosophy: "There is a written [schedule] for every term (*ajal*): Allah effaces and confirms whatever He wishes and with Him is the Mother Book"[46] – where the first *ajal* of 6:2 corresponds to effacement (*maḥw*) and confirmation (*ithbāt*), and the second to the Mother Book (*umm al-kitāb*).[47]

Another significant function of *tafsīr* upon which opinions sometimes diverge is to identify referents of pronouns. One such complexity in this *sūra* is in the verse: "Do not drive away those who call upon their Lord morning and evening, seeking nothing but His Face. **You are in no way accountable for them, nor they for you**; if you drove the believers [lit. "drove them"] away, you would become one of the evildoers." (6:52). Abdel Haleem's translation reflects the view that the ones referred to by the phrase about lack of mutual accountability are a separate group from the

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[43] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/161. Amritsarī agrees and cites 31:34 to this effect (*Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 185). Iṣlāḥī adopts the same view, adding that there is a third meaning of *ajal (musammā)* in the Qurʾān, namely the time of destruction of a nation (7:34) (*Tadabbur*, 3/18).

[44] Paret also cites to this effect 39:42 and 40:67 (*Konkordanz*, p. 134).

[45] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/8–11.

[46] I used Ali Quli Qaraʾi's translation in order to reflect the author's intent. "Mother" may be rendered instead as "source" – see 3.1.2 and 3.31 below for other usages. On Ṭabāṭabāʾī's "preeminent verses" (*al-āyāt al-ghurar*), refer to Medoff, *Ijtihād and Renewal*, p. 95 ff.

[47] A related enquiry is the meaning of "the hour" (*al-sāʿa*) in: "Lost indeed are those who deny the meeting with their Lord until, when the Hour suddenly arrives, they say, 'Alas for us that we disregarded this!'" (6:31). The term is frequently used for the Day of Judgement, but the term "suddenly" (*baghtatan*) led Amritsarī (referring also to 6:93) to explain it in terms of death, which is unknown to each person (31:34) – *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 190. ʿAlwānī uses "suddenly" (also in 7:187, 43:66) to argue, contrary to common belief based on *ḥadīth* reports, that there are no major signs of the Day of Judgement (*Tafsīr Sūrat al-Anʿām*, p. 66).

believers, namely the unbelieving chieftains of Mecca who demanded that Muḥammad shun his low-status followers in order to be taken seriously.[48] This interpretation is advanced by Farāhī, who cites as a parallel: "The righteous are not in any way held accountable for the wrongdoers; their only duty is to remind them, so that they may be mindful of God" ([6:69](#)). Thus the meaning is that the Prophet is not blamed for their rejection, and – since they do not carry his burden of propagating the faith – he should not waste his time on them, neglecting the believers.[49] On the other hand, most of the Group took the reference to be to the believers, which is the more obvious reading of the pronouns. Ibn Kathīr explains this by citing Noah's reply to a similar demand: "What knowledge do I have of what they used to do? It is for my Lord alone to bring them to account…" (26:112-113) – thus the meaning is that Muḥammad is not accountable for anything his followers may have done before joining him.[50]

## 2.2.2 – Grammar and Syntax

This is another area in which certain verses can be interpreted in various ways, with evidence or parallels to support each opinion. Verse 3 is a fitting example, such that Shinqīṭī mentioned it in his introduction as a case of "equally acceptable opinions".[51] This bears resemblance to the concept of *mushtarak* mentioned above in the context of lexical items. In the Abdel Haleem translation: "**He is God in the heavens and on earth, He knows your secrets and what you reveal, and He knows what you do**" ([6:3](#)). This is one possible rendering among three summarised by Ibn Kathīr, who supported this interpretation – which compares the name *Allāh* with the term *ilāh*, denoting an object of worship – by citing: "It is He who is God [*ilāhun*: literally "a god"] in heaven and God on earth…" (43:84).[52] Thus the verse speaks not of God's location or direction, but of His authority and right to be worshipped in every part of creation.

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[48] Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an*, p. 83 footnote *b*.

[49] Farāhī, *Taʿlīqāt*, 1/184.

[50] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/179. Amritsarī cites parallels, and Ṭabāṭabāʾī does likewise along with several explanations, based on the same interpretation of the pronouns.

[51] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, p. 3. However, he considers the first of these opinions to be most evident, further citing 53:23 and 10:66 to clarify the meaning of 43:84.

[52] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/161. Also Iṣlāḥī and Ṭabāṭabāʾī.

The above reading, which effectively places a full stop after "and on earth", is shared by all translators I consulted. However, there are two other plausible readings of the sentence structure, which would also affect the reciter's point of pause (*waqf wa ibtidāʾ*).[53] The second could be translated as: "He is God. **He knows what you conceal or reveal in the heavens and on earth**", which is attested by 25:6: "Say, 'It was sent down by Him who knows the secrets of the heavens and earth. He is all forgiving, all merciful.'"[54]

The third is Ṭabarī's view[55] that "**He is God in the heavens**" is the first sentence, attested by such references as: "Are you sure that He who is in Heaven will not make the earth swallow you up with a violent shudder?" (67:16)[56] – and others which indicate God's elevation etc., the interpretation of which is a famous point of theological debate. This is followed by a separate clause: "**And He knows what you conceal or reveal on earth**" – perhaps the clearest parallel for this is: "It was He who created the heavens and earth in six Days and then established Himself on the throne. He knows what enters the earth and what comes out of it…" (57:4).[57]

A more intricate example is the divergence over the phrase *ʿalā lladhī aḥsana* in verse 154. Ibn Kathīr outlines three interpretations (arising from three senses of the preposition *ʿalā*):[58]

a.  It means that the Torah was bestowed in perfect fulfilment "<u>upon</u> the one who did good", meaning Moses. This is supported by verses which describe goodness coming to those who pass divine tests (2:124 re: Abraham, 32:24 re: the Israelites, and 55:60 as a universal principle).

b.  Also regarding Moses, "<u>for</u> the good that he did". This uses a different sense of the particle *ʿalā*, which is familiar nonetheless. In contrast, this

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[53] See Osman, 'Human Intervention in Divine Speech: *waqf* Rules and the Redaction of the Qur'anic Text'. This example demonstrates the limitations of translation and the disconnect between translators and exegetes.

[54] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān,* p. 244.

[55] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān,* 4/3132.

[56] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān,* p. 244. See Saleh, 'Rereading al-Ṭabarī,' pp. 191−192.

[57] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān,* p. 243.

[58] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm,* 3/282.

usage of *alladhī* is unusual, and therefore supplied with 9:69 (*ka-lladhī khāḍū*) as a supporting grammatical parallel.

c. That this favour to Moses was "<u>over</u> those (believers/prophets) who did good", which requires interpreting *alladhī* and its relative clause as though plural. This meaning of superiority is supported by 7:144 – "He said, 'Moses, I have raised you above other people by [giving you] My messages and speaking to you" – but (as Ibn Kathīr states) qualified by verses concerning the even higher status of both Muḥammad and Abraham.[59]

Regarding the last of these opinions, namely that the singular relative pronoun *alladhī* here denotes a plural, Ṭabarī cites the grammar of 103:2-3 (*al-insān*) in support of this possibility.[60] Ṭabāṭabāʾī also takes it to denote a plural (or genus) but interprets it similarly to (a) above: "upon those [Israelites] who did good", citing 2:58.[61]

## 2.2.3 – Modifying the Apparent Sense

A common interpretive manoeuvre is for the apparent sense (*ẓāhir*) of a verse to be negated or modified with reference to another Quranic evidence. One example of this (rather, a set of three examples) pertains to the apparent prohibitions directed, using the second person singular pronoun, to the Prophet: "**Do not be one of the idolaters**" (6:14)[62]; "**Do not be one of the ignorant**" (6:35-Qaraʾi); and "**Do not be one of those who doubt**" (6:114). In each of these, Amritsarī states that the prohibition is in the sense of demanding "continued compliance" (*istimrār*); he has pointed this out because the most obvious sense of a prohibition is that the addressee is either committing that wrong at present or is prone to committing it in future. Here, Amritsarī sees a conflict with the doctrine of prophetic infallibility (*ʿiṣma*) and related principles.

In the first case, he points to 3:101, "How can you [*pl.*] disbelieve when God's revelations are being recited to you and His Messenger is living among you?" – the

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[59] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/282.

[60] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3404.

[61] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/395.

[62] Picking up on a point not noted by any of the Group, Paret (*Konkordanz*, p. 136) links this to the frequent refrain that Abraham was never a polytheist (including 6:79 and 161).

argument being that if the very presence of the Messenger is supposed to negate disbelief, it is inconceivable that the Messenger would disbelieve.[63] In the second case, Amritsarī points out that the Prophet could not be ignorant, as other verses (such as 68:2-4) preclude this.[64] However, a different sense of "ignorance" itself could be intended, as Farāhī suggests, citing a later verse to clarify the context and intent: "We have made some of them a test for others, to make the disbelievers say, 'Is it these men that God has favoured among us?' Does God not know best who are the grateful ones?" (6:53). Hence the meaning is "ignorance of [divine] justice and differentiation between the grateful and ungrateful".[65] In the third case, Amritsarī cites 12:108 to argue that Muḥammad could never doubt, since his path is defined by clear proof (baṣīra).[66]

One kind of modification is known as particularisation (takhṣīṣ) – this is an example of a juristic (uṣūl al-fiqh) method, in which an apparently universal statement is modified to exclude certain members, or, in other words, to limit the extension of that statement to a subset.[67] One such statement is the denial that the People of the Book will enter the faith, as understood from: "**Those to whom We have given the Scripture know [it/him] as well as they know their own sons. Those who have lost their souls will not believe**." (6:20)[68] There is agreement that this knowledge and recognition does not hold for every Jew and Christian. Amritsarī identifies them as the people of knowledge, citing 34:6 regarding the Qurʾān.[69] As for the denial that any of these knowledgeable people would enter Islam, this undergoes its own takhṣīṣ by

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[63] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-Kalām al-Raḥmān*, p. 188. A similar issue arises with another verse in al-Anʿām speaking of the Prophets: "If they had associated (law ashrakū) [other gods with Him], all their deeds would have come to nothing" (6:88). The specific conditional particle here is less problematic than in the parallel in 39:65 which uses in (generally denoting a possibility in the future). Ibn Kathīr argues that neither of these conditional statements implies that it could occur in reality, citing as support 21:17, 39:4 (each with law) and 43:81 (with in) – *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/215.

[64] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-Kalām al-Raḥmān*, p. 192.

[65] *Taʿlīqāt*, 1/182.

[66] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-Kalām al-Raḥmān*, p. 208.

[67] See 4.1.2 below. Further examples feature in the remainder of this chapter.

[68] As noted by Muqātil and later exegetes, the first part of this verse is paralleled by 6:114 and 10:94 (also 2:146 with exact wording) – *Tafsīr Muqātil*, 1/340. It may be said that 6:20 serves as clarification of 10:94. Iṣlāḥī argues that the pronoun in yaʿrifūnahu (hence "it") refers to the Qurʾān, citing the context in 6:19 (*Tadabbur*, 3/32). Ṭabāṭabāʾī, on the other hand, considers it to refer to Muḥammad (hence "him"), citing 7:157 and 48:29 regarding scriptural prophecies of his coming (*Al-Mīzān*, 7/42). He also cites 26:197, which is similarly ambiguous.

[69] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-Kalām al-Raḥmān*, p. 208.

means of the following verses: "Those to whom We gave the Scripture before believe in it" (28:52) – this indicates that some do confess faith; "When they listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears because they recognise the Truth [in it]. They say, 'Our Lord, we believe, so count us amongst the witnesses.'" (5:83) – which indicates, as Iṣlāḥī argues, that the ones to believe are the sincere and righteous ones.[70]

## 2.2.4 – Sectarian/Theological Differences

Since one of the key aims of this section is to demonstrate the diversity that can exist between TQQ exegeses, I will conclude with two further examples of clarifying words and expressions, each of which contains an aspect of divergence between Sunnī and Shīʿī perspectives. There are further examples of sectarian divergence in the rest of the chapter, sometimes between the Group and other exegetes (such as those belonging to the Muʿtazilites).

After extolling the Prophets, verse 89 says: "They are the ones whom We gave the Book, the judgement and prophethood. So if these disbelieve in them, **We have certainly entrusted them to a people who will never disbelieve in them**" (6:89-Qaraʾi). Amritsarī states that the people (*qawm*) here are the Anṣār, citing 59:9 for their virtues. Sunnī exegeses in general advance a variety of opinions[71], but Ṭabāṭabāʾī's conclusion is markedly Shīʿī. He argues that they must be a class of infallibles (*ahl al-ʿiṣma*), referring to the leaders of the Prophetic household; however, he concedes that the meaning may be extended (using 16:99) to elite believers.[72] He points out that other classes of believers may have amongst them hypocrites or eventual renegades, and if the verse were referring to any of those, the exceptions to the rule would have been made explicit per the norm in the Qurʾān (he cites 3:86-89, 4:145-146, 48:29[73] and 95:4-6 in this regard). He dismisses the view that it refers to

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[70] His point extends, of course, to sincere and righteous Jews, even though 5:83 concerns Christians (see *Tadabbur*, 3/32, 125).

[71] See Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 8/294.

[72] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/265.

[73] There is no exception here, but the allusion must be to the word *minhum* near the end of the verse (misplaced in the printed edition of *Al-Mīzān*, 7/266), which Ṭabāṭabāʾī reads as denoting partitivity (*tabʿīd*). The other examples are positive exceptions to the negative, making them somewhat different from 6:89.

the Persians, which is based on linking this verse to 4:133 which has been thus explained; however, he cites a report from ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib[74] which equates the referents of this verse to another *qawm*: "O you who have faith! Should any of you desert his religion, Allah will soon bring a people whom He loves and who love Him" (5:54-Qara'i).[75]

Another verse which Ṭabāṭabāʾī interprets in accordance with Imāmī doctrine is: "**This indeed is my straight path (*ṣirāṭ*), so follow it, and do not follow [other] ways (*subul*), for they will separate you from His way (*sabīl*)**" (6:153-Qara'i). First, it should be noted that he argues that the clearest sense is that "my path" is expressed in the voice of the Prophet, rather than meaning "God's path" as it is most commonly understood. He cites 1:6-7 ("The path (*ṣirāṭ*) of those You have blessed…") as an example of the path being attributed to those who walk upon it.[76] Concerning the meaning of these different paths, he cites a narration from Muḥammad al-Bāqir[77] to the effect that the Prophetic household are the singular *sabīl*, whereas those who oppose them have taken the plural *subul*. Ṭabāṭabāʾī then performs a TQQ manoeuvre to support this meaning, citing the following two verses: "Say, 'I do not ask you any reward for it except love of [my] relatives'" (42:23-Qara'i); "Say, 'I do not ask you any reward for it, except that anyone who wishes should take the way (*sabīl*) to his Lord'" (25:57-Qara'i). The result of juxtaposing these verses, each of which defines the sole request of the Prophet to the people, is that the *sabīl* is equivalent to the *mawadda fi-l-qurbā* mentioned in 42:23; the meaning of this expression is contested, but the quoted translation (with its gloss of "my") reflects the Shīʿī understanding that it pertains to the *Ahl al-Bayt*.[78] He has thus constructed an intraquranic argument for the Shīʿī doctrine of following the path of the Prophet's descendants, albeit one which depends upon particular interpretations of the constituent verses.[79]

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[74] In his narration study: *Al-Mīzān*, 7/274.

[75] See also Q 47:38 and its exegeses.

[76] He could also have cited 12:108, "Say, 'This is my way (*sabīl*)…'" to support this meaning.

[77] In his narration study: *Al-Mīzān*, 7/398.

[78] Compare with Abdel Haleem: "I ask no reward from you for this, only the affection due to kin"; see Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 24/268 ff.

[79] This point has implications for the authority of the TQQ argument: since the indications (*dalāla*) in the premises are speculative (*ẓannī*), the conclusion cannot be assumed to be definitive (*qaṭʿī*).

# 2.3 − Thematic Exegesis

In this chapter, I am using the term "thematic exegesis" to encompass a range of techniques employed by the exegetes to investigate queries and elaborate on topics with reference to the entire Qurʾān. These correspond to both the thematic and comparative methods in Chapter 4, where modern theories and developments are discussed. This section builds on the preceding components, namely parallels and evidentiary citations. However, the thematic approach goes beyond merely identifying parallels or proving a point concerning one verse under study: it places this verse into a broader account of the Qurʾān's positions on a particular issue, or approach to a subject. The idea is that certain verses cannot be understood properly in isolation, but instead need to be located in their Qurʾān-wide context, as well as the context of their respective *sūras*. As such, the examples here include some which involve a running thread (such as a kind of imagery, or a theological concern) throughout the *sūra*. In all the examples, there are other passages which – according to the exegetes quoted – are required in order to complete the picture. At the end of this section, I include examples of verses of al-Anʿām which seem to be contradicted by other passages, and how the exegetes sought to harmonise these to maintain thematic coherence.

## 2.3.1 – Quranic Terminology

To begin, we shall examine thematic approaches to understanding how the Qurʾān uses certain words, particularly when these carry various meanings in different contexts: the phenomenon known as polysemy or *al-wujūh wa-l-naẓāʾir* (discussed in Chapter 4). In section 2.21 above, exegetes used intraquranic citation(s) to clarify the meaning of a word which was obscure or ambiguous. The procedure here is related, except that the words being studied are used more frequently in the Qurʾān and require more extensive comparison.

The first example pertains to "words" (*kalima/āt*) along with "writing/book" (*kataba/kitāb*), as these terms appear repeatedly in al-Anʿām and in the whole Qurʾān with a variety of meanings and referents.[80] To avoid begging the question, I have restored the operative word to Arabic in the following translations.

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[80] See Abdussalam, *Concordance of Qurʾānic Polysemy*, pp. 351−354 and 361−363.

"Other messengers were disbelieved before you, and they bore their rejection and persecution steadfastly until Our aid arrived – **no one can alter God's *kalimāt***" (6:34). Ibn Kathīr explains the *kalimāt* of God here as His decrees and promises, citing 37:171-173 and 58:21 as examples.[81] Ṭabāṭabāʾī cites the same, along with a list of verses on God's words/promises being true (10:55, 33:4, 38:84, 39:20). Referring again to 13:39 (see above on the two types of *ajal*), he specifies that these *kalimāt* are other than those which God alters Himself.[82] For Farāhī, the best explanatory term is the *sunna* (established way) of God, as he cites parallels in 17:77 and 35:43.[83]

"**The *kalima*** [or *kalimāt*][84] **of your Lord is complete in its truth and justice. No one can change His *kalimāt*…**" (6:115). Ṭabāṭabāʾī takes the *kalima* (singular) to refer to the particular decree/promise to send Muḥammad as a messenger, explaining its *tamām*[85] as fulfilment of Abraham's prayer (2:129), scriptural portents (6:20, 6:114, 7:157), and the movement of history (42:13, 61:8-9). To support this meaning of *kalima*, he provides other examples. "If it had not been for a *kalima* from your Lord" (10:19), he argues, refers to the prior decree/promise in 2:36, "On earth you will have a place to stay and livelihood for a time".[86]

Although Ṭabarī considers the first *kalima* to refer to the Qurʾān, he explains "No one can change His *kalimāt*" similarly as divine decree.[87] Amritsarī takes a slightly different approach, explaining the latter as divine knowledge (*maʿlūmāt*) and ability (*maqdūrāt*), citing, respectively: "They do not comprehend any of His

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[81] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/171.

[82] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/64.

[83] *Taʿlīqāt*, 1/181.

[84] The singular reading belongs to the four Kūfans and Yaʿqūb. The other five Readers have it in the plural (Khārūf, *Al-Muyassar*, p. 142).

[85] I noted earlier the pluralist leanings of *The Study Quran*, and this juncture provides the first such example. Under 6:154, Dakake cites Ṭabarī to the effect that 6:115 refers to the Qurʾān – hence she argues that the descriptions of *tamām* and *tafṣīl* are shared between the two scriptures (see also "*hudan wa raḥma*" in 6:157), indicating that "the Torah remains a valid source of guidance" (*Study Quran*, p. 399, citing also 5:43-45).

[86] *Al-Mīzān* 7/339. Likewise, he argues that 10:96 alludes to 3:85/11:119; and 7:137 to 28:5. He also explains Jesus being *kalima* in 3:45 with reference to the word of decree ("Be") in 3:59.

[87] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3318. His example is of the decree in 48:15, in which "God's words (*kalām*)" are expressed in 9:82.

knowledge except what He wills" (2:255) and "He is the Supreme Master (al-qāhir) over His creatures" (6:18).[88]

Turning to usages of *kitāb*, the first is: "Say, 'To whom belongs all that is in the heavens and earth?' Say, 'To God. **He has taken it [*kataba*, written] upon Himself to be merciful**…" (6:12). Ṭabāṭabāʾī cites another divine attribute of action being "written", namely 58:21 concerning support for His messengers.[89]

"All the creatures that crawl on the earth and those that fly with their wings are communities like yourselves. **We have missed nothing out of the *kitāb*** – in the end they will be gathered to their Lord" (6:38). Farāhī and Amritsarī explain the *kitāb* here in terms of divine knowledge, citing 6:59 (see below).[90] Ibn Kathīr cites 11:6 and 29:60 as parallels to the effect that God knows all creatures and provides for them; Ṭabāṭabāʾī cites 11:56 and 17:20 for this meaning.[91] However, Iṣlāḥī appeals to wider context to suggest that the *kitāb* is the Qurʾān, and Ṭabāṭabāʾī cites in support of this meaning: "We have sent the *kitāb* down to you explaining everything, and as guidance and mercy and good news to those who devote themselves to God" (16:89).[92]

"He has the keys (*mafātiḥ*) to the unseen: no one knows them but He. He knows all that is in the land and sea. **No leaf falls without His knowledge, nor is there a single grain in the darkness of the earth, or anything, fresh or withered, that is not [written] in a clear *kitāb*"** (6:59). Ṭabāṭabāʾī cites the parallel usages for this register of divine knowledge in 10:61, 20:52, 57:22 and 34:3.[93] He contrasts the *kitāb* with the *mafātiḥ* – which he interprets as "storehouses" (*khazāʾin*)[94] – in that the *kitāb* "that only the purified can touch" (56:78-79) is, nonetheless, accessible to other than

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[88] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-Kalām al-Raḥmān*, p. 208. Since this means that whatever is known to Him pre-eternally must come to pass and none can avert His ability to implement His will, the meaning amounts to the same.

[89] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/28. He also cites 51:23, which is unclear. See also: Madigan, *The Qurʾan's Self-Image*, 108 ff.

[90] *Taʿlīqāt*, 1/182; *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-Kalām al-Raḥmān*, p. 192.

[91] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/174; *Al-Mīzān*, 7/83.

[92] *Tadabbur*, 3/49; *Al-Mīzān*, 7/83.

[93] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/129.

[94] This links the verse to another of his "preeminent verses", namely 15:21. The meaning "keys" is also attested (see 2.6.1 below).

God, and secondary to the *mafātiḥ*.[95] This divine register, although it contains records of changing events and realities, is unchanging in itself (13:39, 50:4, 85:22).[96]

"**Those are the ones to whom We gave the *kitāb*, wisdom, and prophethood**" (6:89) – Ṭabāṭabāʾī explains the *kitāb* as revealed writings, and *ḥukm* as the judgement to be performed thereby (as in 2:213, 4:105 and 5:44/48, which mention both terms or similar; also 21:78, 38:26 and possibly 26:83).[97]

As has become evident from the preceding word study, the most thorough exegete from our Group in terms of thematic study is Ṭabāṭabāʾī, who connects verses not only to one another, but also to the philosophical understanding linked to his "foundational verses" such as 13:39, 15:21 and 16:96. Another noteworthy example is his approach to explaining the *wajh* ("face") of God, as mentioned in 6:52.[98] Ṭabāṭabāʾī discusses the implications of this term in detail, including to argue that all those things which the righteous are described as seeking, such as His bounty and mercy (5:2/35, 17:28) are included in the *wajh* by virtue of this verse and its parallels (2:272, 30:38-39, 76:9). Another interesting part of his discussion is his use of 55:27 and 28:88 which say that (only) the *wajh* will remain, along with 16:96 which says that what is "with (*ʿinda*) God" will remain, to argue that all those things "with God" (as in 3:169, 7:206, 15:21, 21:19) are included in the *wajh* and remain eternally with Him.

### 2.3.2 – Quranic Positions

Here, I discuss how the exegetes examined thematic questions arising from specific verses of al-Anʿām. I have selected five theological examples, which I shall present in brief.

First, the question of seeing God: "**No vision can take Him in, but He takes in all vision. He is the All Subtle, the All Aware**" (6:103). Ṭabarī discusses the two views concerning the negation of *idrāk* of God: does it negate vision (*ruʾya*) altogether, or merely the encompassing vision (*iḥāṭa*)? In support of the latter, he cites (via various

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[95] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/131.

[96] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/130.

[97] This is followed by a more detailed treatment of each term in *Al-Mīzān*, 7/260-264.

[98] Dakake (*Study Quran*, p. 358) alludes to a more literal interpretation based upon *ḥadīth* reports about beholding God in Paradise; see the discussion below on seeing God (based on 6:103).

authorities) 10:90, 20:77 and 26:61 for the meaning of *idrāk*.[99] He and Ibn Kathīr compare the "non-encompassing vision" with "non-encompassing knowledge", as implied in 2:255 ("they do not comprehend any of His knowledge (*lā yuḥīṭūna bi-shayʾin min ʿilmih*) except what He wills") and 20:110 ("He knows what is before and behind them, though they do not comprehend Him (*lā yuḥīṭūna bihī ʿilman*)").[100]

Other verses are brought to support the beatific vision: "On that Day there will be radiant faces, looking (*nāẓira*) towards their Lord" (75:22-23), and the contrary implication of this description of the unbelievers: "On that Day they will be screened off (*maḥjūbūn*) from their Lord" (83:15).[101] Shinqīṭī also refers to the "*ziyāda*" (increase) mentioned in 10:26 – or rather its interpretation in the light of *ḥadīth*.[102] All of these pertain to the Hereafter, hence the possibility of specifying the negation to this life: Amritsarī cites the verse in which Moses is told "You shall not see Me" (7:143)[103], which he takes also to refer only to this worldly existence and earthly eyes.[104] The same can be argued concerning the narration from ʿĀʾisha in which she denied that the Prophet ever saw God, citing 6:103 along with: "It is not granted to any mortal that God should speak to him except through revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger to reveal by His command what He will" (42:51).[105]

Second, the nature of Abraham's dialogue with his people, in which he said of various heavenly phenomena, "**This is my Lord**" (6:76-78). Ibn Kathīr argues that Abraham never believed that any of the heavenly phenomena were truly his *rabb*, but said so for argument's sake ("as *munāẓir*, not *nāẓir*"). He cites verses praising Abraham's monotheism, even from youth; he had earlier debated his people over idolatry: "Long ago We bestowed right judgement on Abraham and We knew him

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[99] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3293.

[100] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/226.

[101] Ibid.

[102] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, p. 253. Similarly the "*mazīd*" of Q 50:35, which I did not find cited here.

[103] I have used the Qara'i translation which uses "not", in place of Abdel Haleem's "never", because the extent of this negation into the future is the very point of dispute, including on a linguistic level.

[104] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-Kalām al-Raḥmān*, p. 205.

[105] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/227. Muʿtazilites such as Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (see *Mutashābih al-Qurʾān*, p. 255) denied the beatific vision. A contemporary sect upon this opinion is the Ibāḍīs: the Mufti of Oman, Aḥmad b. Ḥamad al-Khalīlī, defends this position in *Al-Ḥaqq al-Dāmigh*, pp. 29–99. See also Oztürk, 'Kurʾanʾın Kurʾanʾla Tefsiri', pp. 8–10.

well. He said to his father (*ab*)[106] and his people, 'What are these images to which you are so devoted?'" (21:51-52). He further cites 30:30 and 7:172 with the concept of *fiṭra* (taken to imply an innate inclination to monotheism) to say that if such applies to common people, it must be more so for Abraham.[107] Shinqīṭī further draws from context, in that it seems that the preceding verse refers also to a prior stage: "In this way We showed[108] Abraham [God's] mighty dominion over the heavens and the earth, so that he might be a firm believer." (6:75). Abraham addresses the people, saying, "How can you argue with me about God when He has [already] guided me (*qad hadāni*)?" (6:80), and this event is subsequently described as "the argument (*ḥujja*) We gave to Abraham against his people" (6:83).[109]

Ṭabāṭabā'ī accepts this as a plausible reading but seems to prefer the view that Abraham was exploring the possibility of a secondary *rabb* (i.e. controller of affairs) alongside Allāh. He adduces evidence from the tone of Abraham's discourse, including the use of the masculine demonstrative (*hādhā*) for the sun (which is grammatically feminine, as Abraham is quoted as acknowledging in 2:258, a later incident).[110] He affirms that Abraham knew Allāh (19:43-47), but explains 21:51

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[106] This "father", of course, is mentioned just prior in 6:74, along with the name "Āzar": this figure is a point of contention due to the stance of the Shīʿa and many Sunnīs that the direct ancestors of Muḥammad could not have been unbelievers. Ṭabāṭabā'ī (*Al-Mīzān*, 7/170) constructs a thematic case for Āzar not being the biological father of Abraham, as the term *ab* can be used in a variety of metaphorical senses (e.g. 2:133, 12:38). He adduces evidence from the supplication made in 14:41 (using the term *wālid*, which is exclusive to biological parents; cf. 26:86), in conjunction with 60:4 with its explanation. His argument is that Abraham had already disavowed Āzar by the time he prayed for forgiveness for his *wālidayn* at the end of his own life (14:41), so these must refer to different people. Dakake (p. 368) suggests that this opinion resolves the apparent conflict with the Quranic imperative to maintain ties even with disbelieving parents (31:15); being in the words of Luqmān, it suggests timeless wisdom. For a novel perspective on the appropriateness of the name Āzar as an Arabic "translation" of Terah/Térach, see Abū Siʿda, *Min Iʿjāz al-Qurʾān fī Aʿjamī al-Qurʾān*, 1/297–305.

[107] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/209. Dakake notes that Abraham used a rhetorical "I am sick" in 37:88-89 (*Study Quran*, p. 369).

[108] It should be noted that the verb *nurī* (here "showed") is imperfect.

[109] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, p. 251. Iṣlāḥī's argument for this interpretation appeals to the theme of the entire *sūra* and the purpose of this passage as the climax of the argument being presented to Quraysh (see Mir, *Coherence*, p. 112). As such, it would be a matter of certainty for him.

[110] For this intricate argument, see Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Al-Mīzān*, 7/163–165, where he also engages in a thematic study of Abraham's use of pronouns in reference to idols, studying 21:63-67 and 26:70-73. Regarding Abraham's objection to "those who/that set (*al-āfilīn*)", Ṭabāṭabā'ī notes its sound plural and draws on his thematic study to explain the sense as: "I would not even respect rational beings that disappeared, let alone non-rational ones" (ibid, 7/184).

differently from Ibn Kathīr et al: Abraham had been given the essentials of monotheism, but God would continue to guide him into the fullness of truth.

Third, the universality of the Quranic message. "**This Qurʾān was revealed for me to warn you [people] and everyone it reaches**" (6:19) – here the *indhār* (warning) is taken as representing the Prophetic mission – Ṭabāṭabāʾī cites 29:50 and 35:23 to this effect.[111] A list of other references to universal mission is provided: "Say [Muḥammad], 'People, I am the Messenger of God to you all'" (7:158), "We have sent you only to bring good news and warning to all people" (34:28) "Exalted is He who has sent the Differentiator down to His servant so that it may be a warning to all people (*li-l-ʿālamīn*)" (25:1), and "Those groups that deny its truth are promised the Fire" (11:17).[112]

Farāhī offers another interpretation of this verse, in which the phrase "everyone it reaches" is conjoined not to the object, but to the subject: that is, whoever receives the Qurʾān must also warn with it.[113] This sense of responsibility to convey the warning is also found in 9:122; Iṣlāḥī links this also to the concept of "witness" in 2:143.[114]

There are two verses of al-Anʿām which may be taken as contrary to the universality interpretation, however. "This is a blessed Scripture that We have sent down to confirm what came before it and **for you to warn the Mother of Cities and all around it**" (6:92) – Ṭabāṭabāʾī[115] mentions a narration indicating that this verse only referred to Mecca's immediate environs (thus making it like 26:214, "Warn your nearest kinsfolk"). To counterbalance this idea, he cites some of the aforementioned verses, along with the immediate context of verse 90: "Say, 'I ask no reward for it from you: it is a lesson for all people (*li-l-ʿālamīn*).'" Another verse seems to limit the warning to a specific type of listener: "And warn with it those who realise (*yakhāfūn*) that they will be gathered to their Lord" (6:51). Ṭabāṭabāʾī's explanation is that it means *especially* this category.[116] As to their identity, one possibility is that they are

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[111] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/40.

[112] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, p. 246.

[113] *Taʿlīqāt*, 1/179. Comparison could be made with the meaning and grammar of 12:108, in which *man* is conjoined to the explicit pronoun *ana*.

[114] *Tadabbur*, 3/31.

[115] In his narration study: *Al-Mīzān*, 7/315.

[116] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/99.

the humble devotees described in the following verse; Ibn Kathīr cites 23:57 and 13:21 regarding the people of *khawf* and *khashya* (fear and reverence of God, which makes them readier to heed the warnings).[117]

Fourth, the accountability of animals and birds. "All the creatures…**in the end they will be gathered to their Lord**" (6:38) – the exegetes debated the sense of this "gathering" (*ḥashr*): does it denote the death of these creatures, or their resurrection? The latter implies that animals will be held accountable. Ṭabarī prefers to adhere to the straightforward sense of the word, citing 38:19 as another such usage.[118] For the sense of resurrection, Ibn Kathīr cites "When wild beasts are herded together" (81:5)[119]; Ṭabāṭabāʾī discusses the question at length, citing several verses as *prima facie* support for accountability of animals, including: "If God took people to task for the evil they do, He would not leave one living creature on earth" (16:61).[120] The idea that divine justice extends to all perpetrators is supported by a narration from Abū Hurayra which maintains that, on Judgement Day, wrongs will be set right between animals, which will then be turned to dust[121]; a connection is thus made to 78:40, "On the Day…when the disbeliever will say, 'If only I were dust!'" – which is cited as part of this narration. For ʿAlwānī, the verse is to be taken as a reminder that humans have been honoured over other creatures (17:70), but that neglecting our specific role and covenant makes us lower than those creatures (8:22) which will, ultimately, be excused.[122]

Fifth, the sending of messengers (*rusul*) among the jinns, which may be understood from: "**Company of jinn and mankind! Did messengers not come from among you (*minkum*)** to recite My revelations to you and warn that you would meet this Day?" (6:130). Ṭabarī outlines both stances, with those who denied this stating that although *minkum* here addresses both jinns and humans, the point pertains

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[117] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/179.

[118] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3175.

[119] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/174.

[120] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/77.

[121] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3175.

[122] *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Anʿām*, p. 68: he alludes to the aforementioned *ḥadīth*. Concerning the term *umma* appearing earlier in this verse, Dakake states that it "usually denotes a specific religious community" in the Qurʾān (as in 3:110, 10:47). She suggests, based on 10:47, that each *umma* of animals must have received a messenger (cf. Rāzī's refutation of this claim by "reincarnationists" – *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 6/412). According to Dakake, this has implications for ethical treatment of animals (*Study Quran*, p. 352).

specifically to the latter. To support this, they cited 55:22 (in which pearls and coral are said to emerge from "both" seas, whereas in reality this applies to saltwater only)[123] and 35:12 (as the "adornments" are from saltwater only) – the latter narrated from Ibn Jurayj.[124] Ibn Kathīr further supports the negating view by citing 4:163-165, 29:27 (re: Abrahamic legacy, in that jinns are not from his progeny), 25:20 and 12:109.[125]

Amritsarī seems to accept the messengership of jinns to other jinns, citing the universality of "Every community has been sent a warner (*nadhīr*)" (35:24).[126] Shinqīṭī outlines a median view[127] to the effect that "messengers" here simply means secondary "warners", citing: "When We dispatched toward you a team of jinn listening to the Qurʾān, when they were in its presence, they said, 'Be silent!' When it was finished, they went back to their people as warners (*mundhirīn*)" (46:29-Qara'i) – in other words, they act as messengers on behalf of the human messengers, not appointed by God directly.

### 2.3.3 – Quranic Imagery

The verses of this *sūra* employ a variety of images for guidance in contrast to misguidance, and for belief in contrast to unbelief, as found throughout the Qurʾān. I have chosen to examine this theme as an example of imagery. The exegetes of the Group did, to one extent or another, connect these junctures to each other and explain them alongside their Quranic parallels – I have taken this thematic approach much further. The images in question are: light vs. darkness, seeing vs. blindness, hearing vs. deafness (and muteness)[128], and life vs. death. I shall outline the verses in al-Anʿām and the comments upon them, then summarise the images and their Quranic parallels.

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[123] Cf. Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an*, pp. 173–174, where it is noted that pearls do emerge from freshwater. (NB: these sometimes occur naturally, but are generally cultured.) Shinqīṭī (*Aḍwāʾ*, p. 255) criticises strongly the use of 55:22 as by Ibn Kathīr and others, since it contradicts the explicit statement in 35:12 that the "adornments" (which, he says, refers to pearls and coral) are extracted "from each (*min kullin*)" of the two seas. Instead, he appeals to the plurals in 71:16 (*fīhinna*, though the sun and moon only occupy one heaven) and 91:14 (*kadhdhabū*, *ʿaqarū*, whereas there was only one perpetrator, per 54:29).

[124] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3347.

[125] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/255.

[126] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 211.

[127] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, p. 255.

[128] I have not discussed muteness here because its connotations are different. It does feature in several of the parallels cited, and Amritsarī mentions 16:76 specifically for this aspect.

"Praise belongs to God who created the heavens and the earth and **made darkness (*al-ẓulumāt*) and light**…" (6:1) – the apparent reference is to the physical phenomena, although some commentators noted the metaphorical usage, and compared the plural *ẓulumāt* and singular *nūr* to the single true path (*ṣirāṭ/sabīl*) and multiple false ways (*subul*) in verse 153.[129] Ibn Kathīr refers back to this opening when discussing "He makes the dawn break..." (6:96) as well as under verse 122, which is clearly metaphorical.[130] This indicates an appreciation on his part of thematic connections in the *sūra*.

"Only **those who can hear** will respond; as for **the dead**, God will raise them up, and to Him they will all be returned." (6:36) – Ṭabarī indicates that the meaning is to hear/listen intently and effectively, contrasting this with the image in 2:171.[131] Ṭabāṭabāʾī contrasts the perception of the unbelievers in this life with that in the next, citing: "If only you could see the wrongdoers hang their heads before their Lord: 'Our Lord, now that we have seen and heard, send us back'" (32:12).[132] As for the term "dead", Shinqīṭī cites both 6:122 and 35:22 to argue that it means "the unbelievers", not its literal meaning.[133]

"Those who reject Our signs are **deaf, dumb, and in total darkness**…" (6:39) – Ṭabāṭabāʾī suggests that the "deaf" and "dumb" here are, respectively, ignorant

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[129] See Ālūsī (*Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 8/18; also 1/67, 1/470). Ibn Kathīr argues (*Tafsīr*, 3/159) that *nūr* is singular due to its superiority to darkness, citing singular *yamīn* in 16:48; however, under 6:153 (*sabīl/subul*), he cites 2:257 which also speaks of metaphorical *ẓulumāt/nūr* along with a singular *walī* (divine patron) for the believers and multiple *awliyāʾ* (misguiding allies) for the unbelievers (ibid, 3/281). This singular-plural pairing of light/darkness is a constant in the Qurʾān (see the concept of *ʿādāt* in 4.2.2 below), including in contexts of guidance vs. misguidance, at seven junctures. Dakake, for her part, accepts that this implies the singularity of ultimate truth compared to multiple falsehoods; but she argues for "degrees of light" corresponding to multiple truths in the created order (*Study Quran*, p. 341)!

[130] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/220, 245.

[131] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3171.

[132] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/68. Contrast this with 17:72 and 20:124, which describe the unbelievers being raised "blind".

[133] This is despite his rejection of *majāz*, especially in the Qurʾān, as outlined in his treatise *Manʿ Jawāz al-Majāz* (appended to some editions of *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*). Ibrāhīm al-Maṭʿanī has documented numerous cases in which Shinqīṭī has deviated from this theoretical position in his exegesis, while generally eschewing the technical term itself (*Al-Majāz fī l-Lugha wa-l-Qurʾān al-Karīm*, 2/345–357). Shinqīṭī gathers a number of verses on this theme: in his commentary of 35:22, he cites 27:80. Under the latter verse (*Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, pp. 1354–1355), he has a detailed discussion of this imagery (also found in 36:70). Shinqīṭī highlights the roles of context and contrast in deriving these meanings, and bases his conclusions on a "comprehensive survey" (*istiqrāʾ*) of the Qurʾan. He provides further parallels for these verses in terms of their purpose, namely to console the Prophet, e.g. 16:37, 5:41, 28:56, 10:100 (and 30:52-53, which is almost identical to 27:80-81).

followers and deceptive leaders[134], citing two other verses in this *sūra* which depict these actors. The leaders: "tell others not to listen [to the Quran], while they themselves keep away from it" (6:26) and the masses say: "'Why has no sign been sent down to him from his Lord?' Say, 'God certainly has the power to send down a sign,' though most of them do not know" (6:37). This is unlike the situation in 2:18, in which all these traits belong to the hypocrites; whereas the open unbelievers are intended in 2:7.[135]

"Certainly insights (*baṣāʾir*) have come to you from your Lord. So whoever sees, it is to the benefit of his own soul, and whoever remains blind, it is to its detriment…" (6:104-Qara'i) – Ṭabarī narrates from Ibn Zayd that the term *baṣāʾir*[136] refers to clear proofs which are perceived by the heart, not the eyes, as indicated by: "Have these people [of Mecca] not travelled through the land with hearts to understand and ears to hear? It is not people's eyes that are blind, but their hearts within their breasts." (22:46).[137] This invites a broadening of the thematic study to incorporate other dimensions of Quranic epistemology.

"Is a **dead person** brought back to life by Us, and given **light with which to walk** among people, comparable to someone trapped in **deep darkness** who cannot escape?..." (6:122). Amritsarī takes the reference to be to the Prophet receiving the guiding light of the Qurʾān (42:52), and, by extension to the believers who convey his message (12:108).[138] Iṣlāḥī agrees on the light being the Qurʾān, based on the preceding context (6:114-119); however, he takes the former lifelessness to refer to unbelief, thereby excluding the Prophet. Drawing again from the preceding verses, he explains the darknesses (*ẓulumāt*) in two ways. First, as doubts: "They follow nothing but speculation (*ẓann*); they are merely guessing" (6:116); second, as desires: "But many lead others astray by their desires (*ahwāʾ*), without any true knowledge"

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[134] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/86. Hence "[variously] deaf and dumb, [both] in total darkness".

[135] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/86.

[136] The word occurs five times in the Qurʾān: Muqātil (*Tafsīr*, 1/363) cites 7:203. It also describes Moses' miracles (17:102) and the Torah (28:43).

[137] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3298.

[138] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 209. The latter verse includes the word *baṣīra*, which is the singular of *baṣāʾir* as in 6:104.

(6:119).[139] Ṭabāṭabāʾī argues that elite believers possess life and perception distinct from others, even beyond the metaphorical level. For life, he cites 16:97 as well as 58:22, which speaks of believers receiving a *rūḥ* (interpreted as life-spirit) from God – this meaning may be imparted similarly to 42:52, which describes the Qurʾān as *rūḥ*. For perception, he cites 7:179, describing the ineffectual faculties of unbelievers. He takes the "light" here to be knowledge which stems from faith and guidance.[140]

After this study of the verses, their concepts and interconnections, I have summarised the citations provided by the Group into the following table, which could certainly be expanded with more references. It indicates the range of passages in which these individual images for belief and unbelief occur, and how they are combined or conflated in various places.

*Figure 2 - Aggregated Citations for the Four Images*

| Single image | Light/darkness | 2:257, 6:1, 24:40 |
|---|---|---|
| | Seeing/blindness | 6:104, 12:108, 13:19, 17:15 |
| | Hearing/deafness | |
| | Life/death | 16:96, (58:22) |
| Two images combined | Light/darkness + Seeing/blindness | (Overlap self-evident) |
| | Light/darkness + Hearing/deafness | 6:39 |
| | Light/darkness + Life/death | 6:122, 42:52 |
| | Seeing/blindness + Hearing/deafness | 2:7, 2:171, 7:179, 11:24, 22:46 |
| | Hearing/deafness + Life/death | 6:36, 35:22 |

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[139] *Tadabbur*, 3/159.

[140] *Al-Mīzān* 7/349. Dakake (*Study Quran*, p. 386) notes the parallel of "light by which to walk" in 57:28.

| Three images combined | Light/darkness + Seeing/blindness + Hearing/deafness | 2:17-18 |
|---|---|---|
| | Seeing/blindness + Hearing/deafness + Life/death | 27:80-81 |
| Four images combined | | 35:19-22 |

## 2.3.4 – Quranic Arguments

Another aspect of the Quranic discourse which can be studied thematically is the content, styles and methods of argumentation it employs to convince its audiences or deflect their critiques.[141] Here I outline an example running through al-Anʿām of people expecting or demanding a "sign" or "book", or for an angel to descend upon them.[142] After quoting those verses, we shall see how the exegetes linked these to concepts and passages elsewhere in the Qurʾān.

**Angel:** "Even if We had sent down to you a **book inscribed on parchment**, and they had touched it with their own hands, the disbelievers would still say, 'This is nothing but blatant sorcery.' They say, '**Why was no angel sent down to him**?' But had We sent down an angel, their judgement would have come at once with no respite given. Indeed, if We had sent an angel as messenger, We would still have sent him in the form of a man, so increasing their confusion." (6:7-9) "Say, 'I do not have the treasures of God, nor do I know the unseen, **nor do I tell you that I am an angel**. I only follow what is revealed to me...'" (6:50) "Are they waiting **for the very angels to come to them**, or your Lord Himself, or maybe **some of His signs**? But on the Day some of your Lord's signs come, no soul will profit…" (6:158).

**Sign:** "If you find rejection by the disbelievers so hard to bear, then seek a tunnel into the ground or a ladder into the sky, if you can, and **bring them a sign**: God could bring them all to guidance if it were His will, so do not join the ignorant." (6:35)

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[141] See for example: Gwynne, *Logic, Rhetoric and Legal Reasoning in the Qurʾān*, and Almaʿī, *Manāhij al-Jadal fī l-Qurʾān al-Karīm*. Farāhī wrote *Ḥujaj al-Qurʾān* as a critique of Greek logic and philosophy.

[142] Dakake (*Study Quran*, p. 352) notes a thread throughout this *sūra* regarding the futility of miracles for stubborn folk, adding verses 4, 25 and 46 to those listed here.

"They also say, '**Why has no sign been sent down to him from his Lord**?' Say, 'God certainly has the power to send down a sign,' though most of them do not know:" (6:37) "They swear by God with their most solemn oaths that **if a miraculous sign came to them** they would believe in it. Say [Prophet], 'Signs are in the power of God alone.' What will make you [believers] realize that even if a sign came to them they still would not believe?" (6:109) "And **when a sign comes to them**, they say, 'We will not believe until we are given the like of what was given to Allah's apostles.' Allah knows best where to place His apostleship!" (6:124-Qara'i)

The Group of exegetes are mostly in agreement concerning how to contextualise the demands expressed or refuted in these verses. One passage from Sūrat al-Isrāʾ is quoted repeatedly, which mentions all three aspects: "They say, 'We will not believe for you [Muhammad] until you make a spring gush out of the ground for us… [and other **miracles**]; or bring God and the **angels** before us face to face; or have a house made of gold; or ascend into the sky – even then, we will not believe in your ascension until you send a real **book** down for us to read.' Say, 'Glory be to my Lord! Am I anything but a mortal, a messenger?' […] Say, 'If there were angels walking about on earth, feeling at home, We would have sent them an **angel** from Heaven as a messenger' (17:90-95). This passage mentions angels twice, the first in a way comparable to 6:158 (discussed below), and the second is part of a discourse about the rationale behind human beings being sent as messengers. Critics of Muḥammad are objecting to the very fact that he is not an angel, and in other verses they are demanding that an angel be sent to accompany him – the purpose elaborated in 25:7, "to help him with his warnings".[143] Ṭabāṭabāʾī advances a second possibility: that they were calling for the angel to bring the punishment warned of by the Prophet (41:14); he points out that they had already been informed that an angel was involved in revelation (e.g. 81:19 etc.).[144]

The arguments made in response to these contentions are of three types: **first**, that a human being is most suited to the task of inviting fellow humans (e.g. 3:164 and

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[143] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3135. Shinqīṭī used this example in his introduction as "*bayān* of the purpose of a demand" (*Aḍwāʾ*, p. 10).

[144] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/19.

16:43).[145] **Second**: hence, as expressed in 6:9, the angel would have to be in human form to be approachable, and this would not remove the scepticism.[146] **Third**: if it were to come in angelic form, this would be among the class of miraculous events which preclude genuine free choice in belief and would herald the end of this life of testing. The phrase *quḍiya l-amr* ("the matter would be settled") appears first in this context (6:8) and subsequently in the context of calling for judgement to be hastened (6:58). Ibn Kathīr makes a link to 15:7-8 and 25:21-22, both of which indicate that the sending of angels heralds the end-times and will be bad news for the rejecters. The "coming of the Lord and angels" is paralleled[147] by 2:210, 16:33 and 89:22; as for "one/some of His *āyāt*" (6:158), Ṭabāṭabāʾī explains these variously as an overwhelming sign which precludes genuine choice (27:82 and 32:28-29; he explains the latter with reference to *fatḥ* in 7:89 and 14:15), or the punishment itself (40:84-85).[148]

The related demands are for *kitāb* (book or writing) and the broader category of *āya* (sign/miracle). For the former, both 17:93 (see above) and 4:153 (which refers to People of the Book) were linked to by the Group.[149] Ṭabāṭabāʾī additionally suggests that the parchment (*qirṭāṣ*) was to demonstrate a source for the revelation external to the Prophet, even though the angel was indeed external (26:192-194).[150] Regarding miracles, Amritsarī points out that the Meccans had already witnessed the splitting of the moon (54:1-2); hence the reference here must be to a specific sign of their choosing.[151] However, in 6:35 (see also 13:38)[152], it is emphasised that this is not the

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[145] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/163; Amritsarī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 187.

[146] Ṭabāṭabāʾī cites 43:60 as a potential support for this denoting transformation, whereas "most verses" suggest that it is only a matter of appearance (*Al-Mīzān*, 7/24). Dakake cites 19:17 as an example of an angel appearing in human form (*Study Quran*, p. 343).

[147] Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 3/208. Shinqīṭī (*Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, intro p. 11) gives this as an example of fleshing out details ("*dhikr al-mutaʿalliq*").

[148] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/400. He also underlines, by citing 10:47-53 and 8:33, that God intends to grant respite until the allotted time of judgement.

[149] Paret (*Konkordanz*, p. 135) adds 74:52. Ālūsī (*Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 8/45–46) links 6:7 to a *sabab* report pertaining to the demand made by several polytheists and does not cite these Quranic references. For ʿAlwānī (*Tafsīr Sūrat al-Anʿām*, p. 52), the verse is connected to the objection to the Qurʾān being revealed piecemeal (25:32; Dakake adds 28:48); Ibn ʿĀshūr (*Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 7/122) discusses the possibility that this *sūra* was revealed in one piece by way of response to this objection. However, Ālūsī considers the reports on which this hypothesis is based to be highly questionable (*Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 8/6–7).

[150] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/19.

[151] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 192 and repeatedly.

[152] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 192.

prerogative of the Prophet; the rhetorical instruction to "seek a tunnel into the ground or a ladder into the sky" is compared by Farāhī[153] to that directed at his enemies in 22:15. Similar to the argument concerning angels, Ibn Kathīr cites 26:4 for the "little-known" wisdom of not sending miracles, namely that it would result in forced belief; he adds 17:59, which speaks of the obstinacy of former peoples in the face of miracles.[154] Thus the argument is that the idolaters of Mecca would do the same if given what they asked (see 7:132, 10:96-97/101, 15:14-15, 52:44).[155] Indeed, as 6:124 indicates, they would not stop short of demanding the mission and leadership of the messengers.[156] Instead, the Qurʾān with its miraculous and guiding *āyāt* ought to be their focus: "They say, 'Why have no miracles been sent to him by his Lord?' Say, 'Miracles lie in God's hands; I am simply here to warn you plainly.' Do they not think it is enough that We have sent down to you the Scripture that is recited to them?" (29:50-51).[157]

## 2.3.5 – Quranic Worldview

The preceding discussion on miracles touched upon the issue of free human choice in belief, as opposed to divine coercion – whether in terms of predestination or through sending such overwhelming proofs as would preclude choice. My study of Sūrat al-Anʿām made clear that the theme of free will and predestination is a thread running through it, both in the actual text and in the citations employed by the exegetes as parallels or counter-balances. Just as the concepts of choice and determinism are in tension[158], so too are the various statements in the Qurʾān, which must be treated holistically if any conclusions are to be drawn about a single Quranic worldview in this regard.

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[153] *Taʿlīqāt*, 1/182.

[154] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/173.

[155] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, p. 244.

[156] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/352.

[157] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, p. 247.

[158] For this theological debate, see Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 82 ff, and Gätje, *The Qurʾan and its Exegesis*, pp. 218–227.

As can be seen in Figure 3 below, there are occasionally pairs of verses which balance each other in terms of emphasis on human and divine will (see verses 35-36[159] and 148-149). The balance may be found within a single verse, as Farāhī argues concerning 6:125: it is "those who do not have faith" who are constricted and defiled as a result of their unbelief. In this, he appeals to the *muḥkam* (i.e. foundational verses and concepts) of the Qurʾān.[160] Such a theological question is a key test for the theory of *muḥkam* vs. *mutashābih* verses (see 3.3.1 below), as the distinction may be subjective. In any case, the Group of exegetes did cite certain verses with more frequency (e.g. 61:5), thus treating them as clearer and hence suitable to explain the more problematic expressions. It should be noted also that a single expression may be interpreted in different ways and cited to various ends: hence my categorisations in the table below should be understood as approximate.

The verses of this *sūra* include repeated references to God's power to guide or misguide. It is repeatedly said that "If God had willed" then all would have been guided, or the wrongdoers would not have done wrong. An affirmative statement is made in 6:107, "Had Allah wished they would not have ascribed partners [to Him]" – then refuted when used as an argument by the idolaters in 6:148: "Had Allah wished we would not have ascribed any partner [to Him]".[161] A narration from Ibn ʿAbbās[162] explains the latter as a claim that God accepted their *shirk*, whereas the preceding verse is comparable to other statements to the effect that God could have guided them all if He so wished. Amritsarī argues that although their statement is true in itself, the argument is flawed: he cites 39:7 to indicate that God's will (*mashīʾa*) does not entail His satisfaction (*riḍā*).[163]

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[159] Dakake takes the expression "Had God willed, He would have gathered them all to guidance" (*Study Quran* translation) to imply two contrary realities: those who "refuse all such guidance" and those "guided by other religious paths" (hence *hudā* without *jamʿ*! For the latter, she cites 5:48 and others (*Study Quran*, p. 351).

[160] *Taʿlīqāt*, 1/198. I would suggest that, rather than appealing to other verses considered *muḥkam*, the inherent tension between the two realities should be appreciated: after all, the two have been juxtaposed in a single verse and this implies a deliberate paradox rather than something to explain away with firm theological positions (for or against human volition).

[161] Both from Qaraʾi translation.

[162] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3392.

[163] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 215.

Another issue addressed by the exegetes is the attribution of misguidance to God, expressed in various terms including *tazyīn* (beautification, i.e. of evil), as in 6:108. Elsewhere (e.g. 6:43), it is ascribed to Satan. Ṭabāṭabāʾī's approach is to explain this *tazyīn* in the broadest sense, i.e. God-given appetites and inclinations (alluding to 20:50), which seek after material or intellectual pleasures; he divides the intellectual (*ladhdha fikriyya*) into positive kinds, which are ascribed to God (49:7), and negative, which are ascribed to Satan (15:39, 16:63).[164] Related to this is the theological debate on divine creation of human acts (*khalq afʿāl al-ʿibād*), which is raised by 6:102, **"Creator of all things"**. Again, Ṭabāṭabāʾī engages this in more detail than others, citing parallels (13:16, 39:62 and 40:62) as well as balancing verses (20:50, 25:2, 87:3) which allude to natural causality built into creation.[165] He goes on to argue that purely evil deeds should be excluded from the universality of this verse and its parallels, citing 41:46 and 7:28 (implying that God does not create *ẓulm* or *faḥshāʾ*). However, referring to 32:7, he states that all God's creative acts (disregarding their relative attribution to their actors) are characterised by goodness and beauty: as such, he does not accept that there is any limitation to the verse's extension.[166]

After this overview, I present the following table which summarises the verses drawn upon by the Group in their thematic treatment of this issue under individual verses. The intent is to highlight the verses of al-Anʿām which they saw as requiring elaboration or balance through other citations. For the citations from other *sūras*, I have indicated the relevance, wherever appropriate or necessary, with a summary or quotation. Throughout the table, I have used the Ali Quli Qara'i translation.

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[164] *Al-Mīzān* 7/326. ʿAlwānī (*Tafsīr Sūrat al-Anʿām*, p. 109) suggests that the ascription to God here better suits the purpose of promoting tolerance: since the people's misguidance is ultimately part of God's plan, there is no reason to curse them.

[165] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/304.

[166] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/305–307.

*Figure 3 - Citations Emphasising Choice vs. Fate*

| | | Verses in al-Anʿām | Parallels in the Qurʾān |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Choice** | | ▪ "Were We to send down an angel, the matter would surely be decided, and then they would not be granted any respite" (6:8) <br> ▪ "Only those who listen will respond" (6:36) <br> ▪ "We transform their hearts and their visions as they did not believe in it the first time, and We leave them bewildered in their rebellion" (6:110) <br> ▪ "So that toward it may incline the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter, and so that they may be pleased with it and commit what they commit" (6:113) <br> ▪ "The polytheists will say, 'Had Allah wished we would not have ascribed any partner [to Him], nor our fathers, nor would we have forbidden anything.'" [they are rebuked for this statement without evidence] (6:148) <br> ▪ "That is how We make the wrongdoers one another's friends because of what they used to earn" (6:129) <br> ▪ "The day when some of your Lord's signs do come, faith shall not benefit any soul that had not believed beforehand" (6:158) | - 2:26 – "He leads no one astray thereby except the transgressors" <br> - 2:256 – no compulsion; truth made clear <br> - 4:40 – no injustice <br> - 5:48 – life as a test <br> - 7:176 <br> - 13:27 – guides those who repent <br> - 17:18-20 <br> - 26:4 "If We wish We will send down to them a sign from the sky before which their heads will remain bowed in humility" [implying that they are presently free to decide] <br> - 37:161-163 <br> - 39:7 – God is not pleased (*riḍā*) with unbelief <br> - 42:13 – guides those who repent <br> - 42:20 – consequences of striving <br> - 51:9 <br> - 53:39 – consequences of striving <br> - 61:5 "So when they swerved, Allah made their hearts swerve" <br> - 68:35-36 <br> - 76:3 – life as a test <br> - 83:14 "Their hearts have been sullied by what they have been earning" <br> - 92:5-7 – consequences of striving |
| **Fate** | | ▪ "We have cast veils on their hearts lest they should understand it, and a deafness into their ears; and though they should see every sign, they will not believe in it" (6:25) <br> ▪ "Had Allah wished, He would have brought them together on guidance" (6:35) <br> ▪ "Allah leads astray whomever He wishes, and whomever He wishes He puts him on a straight path" (6:39) <br> ▪ "That is Allah's guidance: with it He guides whomever He wishes of His servants" (6:88) | - 2:7 <br> - 7:179 – created for Hell <br> - 8:23 "Had Allah known any good in them, surely He would have made them hear" <br> - 10:99 "And had your Lord wished, all those who are on earth would have believed" <br> - 11:118-119 <br> - 17:82 "We send down in the Qurʾān that which is a cure and mercy for the faithful; and it increases the wrongdoers only in loss" |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | ▪ "That is Allah, your Lord, there is no god except Him, the creator of all things" (6:102)<br>▪ "…[so that they] say, 'You have received instruction,' and so that We may make it clear for a people who have knowledge" (6:105)<br>▪ "Had Allah wished they would not have ascribed partners" (6:107)<br>▪ "That is how to every people We have made their conduct seem decorous" (6:108)<br>▪ "Had your Lord wished, they would not have done it. So leave them with what they fabricate" (6:112, 6:137)<br>▪ "Thus have We installed in every town its major criminals that they may plot therein" (6:123)<br>▪ "Whomever Allah desires to guide, He opens his breast to Islam, and whomever He desires to lead astray, He makes his breast narrow and straitened as if he were climbing to a height. Thus does Allah lay [spiritual] defilement on those who do not have faith" (6:125)<br>▪ "Say, 'To Allah belongs the conclusive argument. Had He wished, He would have surely guided you all.'" (6:149) | - 21:23 "He is not questioned concerning what He does, but they are questioned"<br>- 22:53<br>- 32:13 "Had We wished We would have given every soul its guidance, but My word became due [against the defiant]: 'Surely I will fill hell with all the [guilty] jinn and humans'"<br>- 41:44<br>- 49:7 – faith etc. placed in heart by God<br>- 74:31<br>- 76:29-30 "But you do not wish unless it is wished by Allah"<br>- 81:27-29 |

## 2.3.6 – Resolving Tensions

I argued previously that those exegetes who listed parallels generally concentrated on similarities, rather than exploring the differences between these verses and what might explain them. There are examples of this comparative approach, and especially of the effort to reconcile verses which appear to contradict. Before looking at the apparent contradictions, there is one famous example of a *mutashābih* pair, which provides a window onto the tension between the two approaches of reductionism and pluralism in interpretation.

In al-Anʿām: "Do not kill your children out of poverty (*min imlāq*) – We will provide for you and for them" (6:151)[167]; and in al-Isrāʾ: "Do not kill your children for fear of poverty (*khashyata imlāq*) – We shall provide for them and for you – killing them is a great sin" (17:31). The first difference which draws attention is between the expressions *min imlāq* and *khashyata imlāq*: should they be explained in terms of each other? Muqātil apparently did this, glossing *min imlāq* with *khashyata l-faqr*.[168] The other difference is between the order of the pronouns "you" (parents) and "them" (children). Ibn Kathīr explains the second difference with reference to the first, pointing out that in 6:151, poverty is a reality; as such, provision for the parents is given priority in mention, as though the children will be a source of provision. The poverty in 17:31 is, as yet, only feared: so provision for the children was mentioned first, followed by the continuation of the parents' provision.[169]

Regarding contradictions, Ṭabarī narrates that Ibn ʿAbbās was asked about these verses: "They will only say, 'By God, our Lord, we have not set up partners beside Him!' **See how they lie against themselves** and how those they invented have deserted them." (6:23-24), compared to others which negate the possibility of lying: "They will not be able to hide anything from God" (4:42). Ibn ʿAbbās replied that the former occurs prior to their mouths being sealed (at which point the limbs will testify in truth).[170] Ṭabāṭabāʾī raises the same question with reference to this verse and the false oaths of the hypocrites[171] in 58:18; his response is that these are simply futile utterances of falsehood, which have become part of their nature (4:42, 38:64): they neither expect nor manage to deceive anyone on that day.[172]

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[167] I adjusted this from Abdel Haleem's "in fear of poverty", which itself must be a synthesis, consistent with the wording in both verses.

[168] *Tafsīr Muqātil*, 1/378. See also Amritsarī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 215 ("*min khawf al-faqr*"). Neither cited 17:31 here.

[169] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/275. See Ibn al-Zubayr's *Milāk al-Taʾwīl* (1/479) and its source-book *Durrat al-Tanzīl* (p. 102), in which al-Khaṭīb al-Iskāfī (d. 420/1029) advances this same argument. These sources are further explored further under 4.3.

[170] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3152.

[171] Ibn Kathīr denies the possibility that 6:23 pertains to hypocrites, contrary to a report from Ibn ʿAbbās (see *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/167). His reasoning is that the hypocrites did not exist in Mecca, when al-Anʿām was revealed. However, under 6:28, he suggests that the hypocrites may be intended, citing 29:11 as another Meccan verse which mentions hypocrites explicitly (ibid, 3/169)!

[172] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/52.

The next example concerns a phrase occurring twice in the *sūra*: "Say, 'I have been commanded to be **the first of those who** submit (*awwala man aslama*)" (6:14).[173] "He has no partner, and this [creed] I have been commanded [to follow], and **I am the first of those who submit (*awwalu l-muslimīn*)**" (6:163). This is obviously in tension with all the references to the *islām* of previous prophets and peoples. Ibn Kathīr's solution is to qualify this "first" as pertaining to the present nation.[174] Ṭabāṭabāʾī disagrees with this approach, arguing that the sense of "first" is in degree, not chronology.[175]

A final example pertains to a juristic question, as well as to chronology of revelation. "Say, '**In all that has been revealed to me, I find nothing forbidden for people to eat, except for carrion, flowing blood, pig's meat – it is loathsome – or a sinful offering** over which any name other than God's has been invoked'" (6:145). Shinqīṭī[176] has an extensive discussion of the implications of this verse, which – along with 16:115 (later Meccan)[177] and 2:173 (Medinan) – appears to limit prohibited foods to four categories, whereas others prohibit specific items (like wine in 5:90) or the category of evil things (*khabāʾith*, 7:157). His essential point is that the limitation to four held true until later prohibitions were revealed.[178] Farāhī takes a different approach and explains this with appeal to context (Iṣlāḥī specifies 6:138-139)[179] as referring to the true laws inherited from Abraham, which were followed by the temporary banning of some foods for the Israelites (6:146).[180] This would explain the wording here – "nothing else in all that has been revealed to me" – being especially limiting, since it pertains to Abrahamic guidance while rejecting the claims of the

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[173] Qaraʾi translation. Paret cites 39:12 for this phrase (*Konkordanz*, p. 136). Dakake cites 7:143 (mistakenly printed as 153) and 26:51, with similar statements from Moses and the sorcerers, respectively (and not both from Moses, as she states): *Study Qurʾan*, p. 345.

[174] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾan al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/294. He cites the following references to earlier *islām* and monotheism: 2:130-132, 5:44/111, 10:72/84-86, 12:101, 21:25.

[175] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/408.

[176] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, pp. 268–279.

[177] He advances two pieces of evidence that Sūrat al-Naḥl came later than al-Anʿām: 16:118 refers back to 6:146; and the prophecy in 6:148 was described as fulfilled in 16:35 (cf. note 34 above).

[178] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, p. 270.

[179] *Tadabbur*, 3/191.

[180] *Taʿlīqāt*, 1/201.

idolaters. He extends this explanation to the list of commandments in 6:151-153: these, too, hark back to Abraham, as indicated by the mention of the Torah afterward (6:154), followed by the Qurʾān (6:155).[181]

# 2.4 – Abrogation

In the works surveyed, the following ten verses (or verse-fragments) of Sūrat al-Anʿām are described by one or more exegetes as having been abrogated by another verse of the Qurʾān: 15, 66, 69, 70, 106, 107, 121, 141, 152, 159.[182] Of these, half were said to be abrogated by the so-called "Sword Verse" of Sūrat al-Tawba and will be discussed together below. Since *naskh* pertains, by definition, to "rulings", the other examples are mostly in the juristic domain – but not exclusively.

It is evident that claims of abrogation within this *sūra* are found more frequently with the early sources as represented by Muqātil and Ṭabarī. In some cases, this is treated as a matter of transmission from early authorities, and at other times argued on the basis of meaning and chronology. There is no case of agreement on any of the verses being abrogated. Although the Group under study all affirm[183] the

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[181] *Taʿlīqāt*, 1/204. Cf. Neuwirth's reading which equates it to Moses' Decalogue (as earlier expounded and adapted in Q 17:22-39), such that the following verse (6:154) represents the rest of the scripture "then" being given to Moses ('A Discovery of Evil in the Qur'an?' in *Scripture, Poetry and the Making of a Community*, p. 266). She classifies this passage as "Early Medinan". Ghamidi takes the list of four on face value as the only prohibited "edibles", i.e. things ordinarily considered as food by people (*Al-Bayān*, p. 16).

[182] Ibn al-Jawzī (*Nawāsikh al-Qurʾān*, p. 423 ff.) lists eighteen claimed abrogated verses in this *sūra*, of which thirteen are said to be abrogated by the "Sword Verse". Of these, he argues against abrogation in most cases; sometimes he leaves his own judgment unstated (though it is implied that he considers them non-abrogated, too); and in the case of 6:68, he seems to be the one advancing the suggestion (which would, however, be overturned by the same arguments he used against the others). The remaining five verses are as listed here, except that he mentions 6:145 in place of 6:152; he does not consider any of these five to be abrogated. Ibn al-Jawzī's list in Sūrat al-Anʿām contains more verses than listed by Qatāda (1), Naḥḥās (5), Makkī (8), Karmī (12), Ibn al-Bārizī (13), Ibn Ḥazm (14), Fayrūzabādī (14) and Ibn Salāma (15) – see the editor's note in Sakhāwī, *Jamāl al-Qurrāʾ*, 2/296.

[183] To ascertain this, I looked initially at their commentaries upon 2:106, as none touched on the issue in their introductions (if present). The comments of Muqātil (see also 16:101, which he links to 13:39) and Amritsarī are characteristically brief: the latter glosses *āya* as *ḥukm*, i.e. it is the ruling which is replaced. Ṭabarī underlines this point and explains that declaratives (*akhbār*) can neither abrogate nor be abrogated. Ibn Kathīr includes a brief *uṣūlī* definition. In the case of Shinqīṭī, the discussion of *naskh* (and of 2:106) occurs under 16:101, where he emphasises that abrogation can only be established by means of a text in Qurʾān or *Sunna*, not by reason, consensus or analogy. Ṭabāṭabāʾī makes a distinction between the phenomenon of *naskh* on one hand, and those of *takhṣīṣ*, *taqyīd* and *tabyīn* on the other. Iṣlāḥī affirms the abrogation of some verses by others, in which case both are still found in the Quranic text; he notes that his discussion draws upon the research of Farāhī.

principle of *naskh* and the existence of abrogated verses in the Qurʾān, it seems that the later (and more TQQ-oriented) exegetes took a minimalist approach in this regard. Most remained silent on the issue when discussing these identified verses, implying that they saw no particular merit in the claim of abrogation; indeed, there are several instances of critique of this claim, most notably from Ṭabāṭabāʾī. In cases where the claim of abrogation arose from an apparent tension or contradiction, these exegetes may have seen no such tension to resolve, or they preferred to use such opportunities to explain more fully and reconcile the meanings. Here I address general cases before looking at claims surrounding the Sword Verse.

## 2.4.1 – General Cases

### (a) Fear versus Forgiveness

In 6:15, the Prophet is instructed to "Say: I fear the punishment of a dreadful Day if I disobey my Lord". Muqātil[184] states that this verse was abrogated by the opening of Sūrat al-Fatḥ, in which the Prophet is assured that God will "forgive you your past and future sins" (48:2). The Shīʿite commentary of Kāshānī (d. 776/1375) attributes similar to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq: "God's Messenger would not cease [repeating] 'I fear the punishment of a dreadful Day if I disobey my Lord'[185] until Sūrat al-Fatḥ was revealed, after which he did not return to that."[186] The tension here is between the implication that the Prophet needed to fear the consequences of his actions, and the subsequent promise – as Q 48 is considered a Medinan revelation – that any and all misdeeds would be forgiven. The earlier verse could be interpreted as containing a "ruling" that the Prophet ought to have this fear, or (as the quote from Jaʿfar implies) that he should repeat these words; however, the latter goes against the context of debate with the polytheists.

In his dedicated book on abrogation, Ibn al-Jawzī[187] refers to this claim by "some exegetes" who preceded him but rejects it on the basis that both are declarative

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[184] *Tafsīr Muqātil*, p. 339.

[185] The same wording appears in 39:13 and 10:15. Paret (*Konkordanz*, p. 136) cites these along with 11:63 (see below for its potential significance).

[186] Kāshānī, *Al-Ṣāfī fī Tafsīr Kalām Allāh al-Wāfī* (accessed at www.altafsir.com, 1/9/2017). Ṭabāṭabāʾī does not discuss this or any *riwāyas* connected to this verse.

[187] *Nawāsikh*, p. 423.

sentences (*khabar*) which are not subject to abrogation – he discounts the possibility of an implied ruling. He compares this verse to 39:65 with its similar conditional using particle *in* – "If you ascribe a partner to God…" – as though to demonstrate that the hypothetical punishment would not be cancelled altogether, even if the disobedience upon which it is predicated is ruled out by the Prophet's infallibility or the promise of forgiveness in 48:2.

Amritsarī also cites 39:65 to argue that there is a principle being underlined here, namely that the Prophet is liable to be held to account like any other human being.[188] This is in tension with his insistence (based on 3:110, noted above in 2.2.3) that it is inconceivable that the Prophet could commit *kufr* – hence the prohibition just prior – "Do not be one of the idolaters (*mushrikīn*)" (6:14) – is for "continued compliance". His essential point may be supported by saying that the "disobedience" (*ʿiṣyān*) in 6:15 is a substituted expression for that *shirk,* in which case there would be consistency in terms of the Prophet being subject to commands, prohibitions and their corresponding rewards and punishments.[189] If the verse is taken in this way, rather than an expression of actual fear, then the revelation of 48:2 would not negate its contents. Moreover, 39:65 (and more so 4:48/116) indicates that *shirk* itself will not be forgiven (even, hypothetically, from Prophets), which presumably would exclude such from the promise in 48:2.

Addressing the apparent tension which, presumably, led to the claim of abrogation, the wider exegetical tradition offers some solutions. Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī[190], a contemporary of Ṭabarī, notes that people had questioned how the Prophet could fear punishment even though he had been informed (whether in 48:2 or otherwise) that all his prior and future misdeeds had been forgiven; he cites an answer to the effect that the forgiveness is predicated upon that state of fear. As noted by a commentator upon his *Taʾwīlāt*[191], this does not preclude divine fore-knowledge that there is nothing to fear. Indeed, the state of fear (*khawf* and similar) may be seen in a

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[188] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 188.

[189] This can be understood from Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 7/160.

[190] *Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān*, 5/24.

[191] *Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān*, 5/24 note 3. I presume this to refer to Abū l-Muʿīn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114), via his student ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Samarqandī (d. 539/1145). See the introduction to *Taʾwīlāt*, 1/57.

broader Quranic context as a positive trait which the Prophet should not be without; and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā notes that there is nothing to negate fear which is born of reverence (*ijlāl wa taʿẓīm*).[192]

Another strategy regarding this verse is to take the fear, rather than the punishment, as the effective apodosis of the conditional "If I disobey my Lord", hence: only if disobedience were possible for the Prophet would there be a punishment for him to fear.[193] For Ālūsī, the statement should be understood in terms of its argumentative value, namely to imply that the polytheistic listeners are more worthy of this fear.[194] He further negates the tension between fear and infallibility by alluding to the Ashʿarite doctrine of God's absolute volition and freedom from obligation.[195]

<u>(b) Pardon versus Burden</u>

6:68-69: "When you [*sing.*] come across people who speak with scorn about Our revelations, turn away from them until they move on to another topic; if Satan should make you forget, then, when you have remembered, do not sit with those who are doing wrong. / The righteous are not in any way held accountable for the wrongdoers; their only duty is to remind them, so that they may be mindful of God."

Muqātil states that 4:140 abrogated the second of these verses, although his explanation does not indicate any tension between the two passages.[196] Indeed 4:140, classified as Medinan, appears to reference this earlier ruling: "As He has already revealed to you [*pl.*] in the Scripture, if you hear people denying and ridiculing God's revelation, do not sit with them unless they start to talk of other things, or else you yourselves will be like them…". An explanation can be found in Ṭabarī's narration

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[192] *Tafsīr al-Manār*, 7/287.

[193] See Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 8/78.

[194] Ālūsī, 8/77. This view could be supported by comparison with 11:63, which contains a form of argumentation comparable to "Pascal's wager".

[195] Ālūsī, 8/77. The Ibāḍī commentator Aṭfayyish (d. 1914) argues, on the contrary, that there should be no fear in the presence of an unfailing promise (citing 50:29 to this effect). He responds to a tradition cited by Ālūsī – "O Moses, do not feel secure from My plot until you have traversed the *Ṣirāṭ* [or: entered the Garden]" – by interpreting it as an instruction to "Act with caution and humility as though you were someone who does not know himself to be infallible" (*Taysīr al-Tafsīr*, accessed at www.altafsir.com, September 2017).

[196] *Tafsīr Muqātil*, 1/352.

from Ibn Jurayj[197] which says that this verse indicates that if the believers do sit with the mockers, they will not be held accountable for their mocking ("The righteous are not in any way held accountable")[198]; thus the abrogating phrase, as Ibn Kathīr clarifies, is: "You yourselves will be like them", i.e. equal in sin.[199]

However, the preferred explanation of Ibn Kathīr and the rest of the Group is that 6:69 absolves the believers of negligence towards the unbelievers upon turning away from their mocking: hence the ruling of "being like them" (4:140) applies only to those who "sit after remembering" (6:68). Ṭabāṭabāʾī argues against abrogation by saying that if 4:140 were to abrogate 69, then 69 would have abrogated 68 – assuming that it grants permission after prohibition, and that the ruling expressed to the Prophet in the singular extends to all believers[200] – but this is untenable due to their concurrent revelation.[201] Ibn ʿAṭiyya (d. 546/1147) points out that the later verse makes explicit reference to the earlier one in a way which reinforces the original meaning, rather than replacing it.[202]

## (c) Meat of Jews and Christians

On the ruling expressed in 6:121, "Do not eat any [meat] over which God's name has not been pronounced": Ṭabarī narrates from ʿAṭāʾ that this pertains to animals slaughtered to false deities – as opposed to carrion (*mayta*), or animals slaughtered without pronouncing the divine name (*matrūk al-tasmiya*). This opinion is based on the juxtaposition of this verse and 6:118 preceding, on the assumption that that command ("Eat any [animal] over which God's name has been pronounced") and this prohibition are non-identical in import.[203] Ibn Kathīr notes that this meaning is

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[197] Muṣṭafā Zayd critiques this and similar reports in terms of its chain of narration: see Zayd, *Al-Naskh*, 1/466.

[198] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3219.

[199] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/197.

[200] This would remove the apparent problem of Satan being said to cause the Prophet to forget (see Dakake, p. 365, who cites 22:52 in support of this possibility). See Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 8/227−228 and 17/368 ff. for this issue. In contrast, Farāhī takes the *shayṭān* of 22:52 to be human and *jinn* enemies of the Prophets – as in 6:112 and 121 – and interprets the verse as describing the Qurʾān's abrogation of corrupted scriptures (see *Niẓām al-Qurʾān*, 1/427−434).

[201] In Ṭabāṭabāʾī's narration study: *Al-Mīzān*, 7/158.

[202] *Al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz*, p. 631.

[203] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3329.

made explicit in 6:145 (as does Amritsarī, noting the ruling of *fisq* in both[204]); whereas the opposing view (that *matrūk al-tasmiya* is likewise prohibited) is based partly on 5:4 – "…So eat what they catch for you, but [first] pronounce God's name over it" – and accords to the apparent wording of this verse.[205]

Here the question arises regarding the permission to eat "the food of those given the Scripture" in 5:5, a Medinan verse said by ʿIkrima and al-Ḥasan to have abrogated this verse and expressed an exception (*nasakha wa istathnā*). After citing their opinion, Ṭabarī argues that the later verse pertains to a distinct ruling: "In this verse (6:121) God only prohibited for us carrion and that which is slaughtered to false deities, whereas the meat (*dhabāʾiḥ*) of the People of the Book is acceptably slaughtered (*dhakiyya*) whether they pronounce [God's name] or not, on account of being people of monotheism and observant of rulings in divine scriptures."[206]

Ibn Kathīr concurs with Ṭabarī's conclusion and notes that those who claimed *naskh* intended *takhṣīṣ* (particularisation).[207] It seems that Ṭabarī's view is that neither *naskh* nor *takhṣīṣ* has occurred, due to the divergence of topics. According to Ṭabāṭabāʾī, the only modification to the ruling – if any – is to remove the (unstated) requirement of the slaughterer being Muslim: hence there is no contradiction between the verses that needs to be resolved via *naskh*.[208]

### (d) Proto-*Zakāt* versus *Zakāt*

6:141 describes agricultural produce and instructs believers to "Give its due (*ḥaqq*) on the day of harvest". Shinqīṭī summarises the interpretations before engaging in a juristic discussion[209]: one view considers it to be a separate obligation which was either retained upon legislation of *zakāt*, or abrogated (in which case it may be

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[204] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 209.

[205] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/239–240. Māturīdī argues that the category here is being described distinctly from those made explicit in other verses, i.e. carrion and animals dedicated to false deities (*Taʾwīlāt*, 5/197). Edip Yüksel argues (*A Reformist Translation*, p. 134, with reference to 6:145 and 22:37) that the prohibition is solely of animals sacrificed by polytheists who deliberately avoided mention of God's name.

[206] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3331.

[207] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/242. This is a recurrent issue: see under 3.2.2.

[208] In his narration study: *Al-Mīzān*, 7/346.

[209] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, p. 255 ff. He cites this (introduction, p. 15) as an example of the Sunna being required to complete the explication.

downgraded to a recommendation).[210] Ṭabarī opts for the view of abrogation: the abrogating verses are assumed to be all those which obligated *zakāt* – with its technical meaning – in Medina.[211]

The other view equates this due with obligatory *zakāt*, the rulings of which were expounded further in the Sunna – this is the preferred view of Ibn Kathīr, who comments: "It is problematic to call this *naskh*, because this was originally an obligation and then its quantities were defined thereafter. This is said to have been in the second year after migration."[212] He also does not specify the replacing verses, but Shinqīṭī does cite 2:267 – "Give charitably from the good things you have acquired and that We have produced for you from the earth" – as entailing that this *ḥaqq* is subsumed in the assets subject to *zakāt* (i.e. the *niṣāb*).[213]

## (e) *Ashudd* versus *Nikāḥ*

The injunction in 6:152 – "Stay well away from the property of orphans, except with the best [intentions], until they come of age (*ashudd*)" – has been compared to 4:6, which enjoins: "Test orphans until they reach marriageable age (*nikāḥ*); then, if you find they have sound judgement, hand over their property to them". As Shinqīṭī explains, the term *ashudd* has a number of meanings including the onset of puberty, or thirty, forty, fifty or sixty years.[214] Ṭabarī narrates from Suddī the opinion that *ashudd* denotes thirty years, but that this was followed (i.e. abrogated) by the age of *nikāḥ* (puberty) as revealed in 4:6. However, Ṭabarī himself considers the two terms equivalent (as do Shinqīṭī and Ṭabāṭabāʾī), and explains that the latter elaborates on the former: the orphans must be tested for sound judgement once they have reached the age known as *ashudd/nikāḥ*.[215]

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[210] In his chapter critiquing *naskh* claims, Khūʾī affirms the Imāmī Shīʿite view that this was, and remains, a separate, recommended payment (*Prolegomenon*, pp. 238–240).

[211] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3372.

[212] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/263. See also: See Zayd, *Al-Naskh*, 2/246–256; and Qaraḍāwī, *Fiqh al-Zakah*, 1/177.

[213] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, p. 256.

[214] See the introduction to *Aḍwāʾ*, p. 8. He cites this as an example of vagueness (*ibhām*) being resolved through the clearer word in 4:6.

[215] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3399.

### 2.4.2 – The Sword Verse

The term "*Āyat al-Sayf*" is used in many works of exegesis to refer to one of several possible verses in Sūrat al-Tawba (Q 9) which is taken to mandate unending warfare against unbelieving peoples, and to abrogate all previous verses which expressed sentiments of tolerance and coexistence. This concept has faced critique in previous centuries and recent times, as I shall discuss below. In the Group, only two exegetes (Muqātil and Ṭabarī, both early) made claims of abrogation by this "Sword Verse", whereas most were silent on the matter. There are also instances of the exegetes disputing the abrogation of some of these verses – even one of the exegetes who appealed to the very phenomenon in other verses.

The following verses or verse-fragments were stated by Muqātil to have been abrogated by the Sword Verse:[216] "…Say: I am not a keeper (*wakīl*) over you." (6:66); "If it had been God's will, they would not have associated partners [with Him], but We have not made you their guardian (*ḥafīẓ*), nor are you their keeper (*wakīl*)" (6:107); "As for those who have divided their religion and broken up into factions, you [Prophet] have nothing to do with them (*lasta minhum fī shayʾin*)…" (6:159). The assumption is that each of these verses contains an implicit instruction not to engage in conflict with the unbelievers, but that this was lifted by the legislation of responsive warfare and then the mandate of continued offensive campaigns. For Ṭabarī, the verse in question is 9:5, "When the forbidden months are over, wherever you encounter the idolaters, kill them, seize them, besiege them, wait for them at every lookout post…".[217]

It is noteworthy that Ṭabarī does not agree with the three verses identified by Muqātil as abrogated; indeed, in the case of 6:159, he actually disputes the claim (which he narrates from Suddī) on the basis that a declarative statement is not such as can be abrogated; moreover, there is no contradiction between this verse and 9:5 and no evidence to suggest it was abrogated. This is a statement addressed to the Prophet

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[216] I could not identify which verse Muqātil takes this to be, as there is no mention of this name under verses 5, 29, 36 or 41 of Sūrat al-Tawba, which are commonly identified in this connection (Qaraḍāwī, *Fiqh al-Jihād*, 1/287).

[217] Zayd (*Al-Naskh*, 2/6–7) argues that the *mushrikīn* mentioned in this verse were the specific polytheists who had been in conflict with Muḥammad, as the verse's context indicates. See also Ghazālī, *Naḥw Tafsīr Mawḍūʿī*, pp. 141–143.

freeing him from blame, not a prohibition of fighting.[218] The matter will be judged ultimately by God, as Ibn Kathīr[219] points out by citing 22:17 as a parallel for "Their case rests with God…" in this verse. Amritsarī cites 59:14 to explain why the Prophet need not concern himself with the people of schisms, who are too divided to pose a genuine threat.[220] Without appealing to abrogation, Iṣlāḥī argues that the disavowal implied here is made explicit in Sūrat Barāʾa (aka al-Tawba, Q 9, the end of this "group" of *suras* in Iṣlāḥī's structural theory).[221]

Points made about 6:159 can be extended likewise to the others claimed by Muqātil to be abrogated, particularly that they are declaratives and it is hardly convincing that the Prophet was subsequently appointed as *wakīl* and *ḥafīẓ* with the commencement of fighting. For 6:66, some exegetes provided parallels, thus supporting the meaning rather than cancelling it. Ibn Kathīr links it to 18:29, which provides worldly choice with other-worldly consequences[222]; Amritsarī cites 2:119, which emphasises that the Prophet "will not be asked" concerning their fate.[223] Similar applies to 6:107, as Ibn Kathīr[224] cites 88:21-22, 13:40 and 42:48 (by allusion) to support its meaning, i.e. that the Prophet's sole duty is to convey the message; Amritsarī cites 26:3 regarding the Prophet's anxiousness for their guidance.[225] Ṭabāṭabāʾī[226] goes further to argue explicitly that verse 66 could not be abrogated, because the verse immediately following contains an implicit threat: "Every prophecy has its fixed time to be fulfilled: you will come to realise this" (6:67). This appeal to context thus represents another tool employed by those exegetes who seek to minimise the application of abrogation theory.[227]

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[218] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3422. See also: Zayd, *Al-Naskh*, 1/468.

[219] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/290.

[220] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 218.

[221] *Tadabbur*, 3/209.

[222] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/196.

[223] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 198.

[224] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/230.

[225] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 206.

[226] In his narration study: *Al-Mīzān*, 7/157.

[227] See also Zayd, *Al-Naskh*, 2/29, in which the author refutes the abrogation of the latter two phrases by appealing to the opening phrase – "If it had been God's will, they would not have associated partners"

The two verses identified by Ṭabarī as abrogated by 9:5 are more explicit in instructing the Prophet to "turn away" or "leave alone" his opponents: "Leave (*dhar*) those who take their religion for a mere game and distraction…" (6:70); "…And turn away (*aʿriḍ*) from the polytheists" (6:106). He narrates the abrogation of the former from Qatāda; the latter is narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās with the addition that wordings "of this kind" (*wa naḥwuh*), i.e. advocating tolerance of the polytheists, were all abrogated by "Wherever you encounter the idolaters, kill them" (9:5).[228]

Although the remainder of the Group did not comment on these additional claims of abrogation,[229] it is evident that similar points of reconciliation can be made between the meanings of these verses and the call to continuous warfare understood (not by all, as we shall see) to be in 9:5 or other putative "sword verses". Ṭabarī himself narrates from Mujāhid that 6:70 is paralleled by 74:11 in conveying a threat concerning the torment awaiting in the Hereafter.[230] Similar can be said concerning 6:106, which Amritsarī links to the virtue of patience exhorted in 31:17.

In Chapter 3, I discuss critiques directed at the theory of abrogation (*naskh*), or certain varieties of it. Pertinent to the above discussion is that criticism has long been levelled at its excessive application, particularly the Sword Verse.[231] ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī (d. 643/1245) noted that as many as one hundred and twenty-four verses had been declared – without sound evidence – as abrogated due to this verse.[232] He states that "The only thing which would be abrogated by the verse of fighting (*āyat al-qitāl*) is prohibition of fighting"[233], and that this does not extend to verses which were intended to boost the morale of the Prophet and believers by advocating patience. He further decries the practice of declaring abrogation on mere

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– which designates the context as one of faith and ultimate judgement, rather than worldly disputation and conflict.

[228] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3303. Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī decries the tendency to cancel out such "ethical directives" and "the moral dimension of the Islamic personality" (*Fiqh al-Jihād*, 1/326).

[229] Shinqīṭī counts 6:106 as abrogated in *Dafʿ Īhām al-Iḍtirāb* (p. 132) but does not mention that in *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*. See 4.3.2 below concerning this separate treatise.

[230] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3219. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Nawāsikh*, p. 426. Citation of parallels appears to oppose claims of abrogation, unless the exegete wishes to state that all these parallel verses are abrogated.

[231] A thorough contextual study of 9:5 is in Abdel Haleem, *Exploring the Qurʾan: Context and Impact*.

[232] *Jamāl al-Qurrāʾ*, 2/705. Zayd places this total at one hundred and forty (*Al-Naskh*, 2/10).

[233] *Jamāl al-Qurrāʾ*, 2/705. He also uses the term "*āyat al-sayf*".

supposition (ẓann), pointing out that the divergence of opinions over which verses are abrogated or abrogating is a sign that certain knowledge has not obtained in such cases.[234]

According to Sakhāwī, narrations from the likes of Ibn ʿAbbās, as cited above, should not be taken at face value, as the speakers did not intend *naskh* in its technical sense of "replacing the ruling of an existing locution (*khiṭāb*) by means of a subsequent locution", but instead as a general term in reference to changing circumstances. He denies that the earlier statements, such as in this *sūra*, should be interpreted as prohibition of fighting, because the Prophet was not in any position to fight at that stage. By way of analogy, he states: "A poor person is told to be patient with his poverty, but when he becomes rich, he is obliged to pay *zakāt*; yet this does not entail any contradiction between the obligation of *zakāt* and [the need for] patience, such that abrogation is said to occur."[235] This concept was later explained by Zarkashī as representing the "delayed" (*munsaʾ*)[236] category in Q 2:106, rather than the "abrogated" (*mansūkh*): the distinction being that the latter entails permanent cancellation of the earlier ruling, whereas the former allows for return to that earlier ruling if circumstances dictate. In his recent work *Fiqh al-Jihād*, Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī criticises this conceptualisation as applied to the Sword Verse by asking: "Is it reasonable for us to say to people: we are holding back from fighting you at present on account of our weakness, but as soon as we become strong we are obligated to attack you in your heartlands until you submit?"[237]

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[234] *Jamāl al-Qurrāʾ*, 2/705.

[235] *Jamāl al-Qurrāʾ*, 2/706.

[236] Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān*, pp. 280–281. The passive participle *munsaʾ* is being used here to correspond to the meaning of the canonical reading of the verse (Ibn Kathīr al-Makkī and Abū ʿAmr al-Baṣrī) with "*aw nansaʾhā*" with *hamza*. This comes from the root *nasʾ* meaning "postpone", in contrast to the majority reading "*aw nunsihā*" which derives from *nisyān* (or more specifically *insāʾ*) which is either "to cause to forget" or "to abandon/instruct to abandon" (Fārisī, *Al-Ḥujja*, 1/391–402).

[237] *Fiqh al-Jihād*, 1/332. See Amin, *Reclaiming Jihad*, pp. 98–101 for the Qutbian distinction between "transitional" and "final" texts, based on the classical claims of abrogation. See also Iṣlāḥī's critique of this view of "delay", which he describes as "complete rejection" of *naskh* within Islamic law: *Pondering Over the Qurʾān Vol. 1*, pp. 328–329.

# 2.5 − Canonical Readings (*Qirāʾāt*)

## 2.5.1 − General Observations

Although *tafsīr* theorists, especially later writers, have included the use of variant Quranic readings among forms and methods of TQQ, it is evident that the TQQ-focused exegetes of the Group did not lend it the weight that would be expected if they agreed with this.[238] In the corpus of variant readings classed as *mutawātir* or canonical, I identified close to fifty variations that impact tangibly upon the meaning, many of which would be significant enough to change the translation.[239] Some have a subtle impact on meaning, such as verb form variations (e.g. *nazzala/anzala*, *fataḥa/fattaḥa*). Some change the addressee or referent, such as in *wa li-yundhira* (6:92, Shuʿba–ʿĀsim) which ascribes the role of warning to the Qurʾān rather than the Prophet. Some appear to require an alternative orthography, such as *wa la-dāru l-ākhirati* (6:32, Ibn ʿĀmir; Levantine) and *anjaytanā* (6:63, all but the Kūfans).[240]

As they preceded the canonisation process which began with Ibn Mujāhid's *Kitāb al-Sabʿa* and culminated Ibn al-Jazarī's *Al-Nashr fī l-Qirāʾāt al-ʿAshr*,[241] the early exegetes Muqātil and Ṭabarī were not bound to affirm all the variants which were to become canonical; there are examples of Ṭabarī preferring some over others, and he rejected one reading within this *sūra* in reproachful terms (6:137, Ibn ʿĀmir).[242] He is by far the most consistent in mentioning and discussing variants, including those which were later deemed *shādhdh* or non-canonical. For the other exegetes, there is no clear

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[238] In the *sūra* surveyed, Ṭabāṭabāʾī discusses the impact of these readings in five places. Ibn Kathīr has two discussions (as does Muqātil), and Shinqīṭī only one. There is no mention of them in Amritsarī, Farāhī (i.e. his *Taʿlīqāt*) or Iṣlāḥī.

[239] I went through Khārūf's *Al-Muyassar* and excluded matters of mere pronunciation (e.g. *ʿalayhim/ʿalayhum*), variant dialects (e.g. *ghadāh/ghudwa*, *thamar/thumur*) and grammatical/stylistic variations such as gender (e.g. *tawaffat-hu/tawaffāhu*). Overall, variations which affect meaning are the minority.

[240] This corresponds with narrations recorded in Abū Dāwud al-Sijistānī's *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif* (see pp. 260, 273). Also Dānī, *Al-Muqniʿ*, pp. 576–577.

[241] See Nasser, *Transmission*, pp. 39–65 (including an overview of Ṭabarī's attitude to *qirāʾāt*) and discussion in 4.3.3 below.

[242] This is one of the most controversial variants, but later scholars came to its defence. See Khalīl, *Difāʿ al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī*, pp. 54–85. A less famous example is in 6:109, in which Ṭabarī takes the words "What would make you realise" to be addressed to the believers, stating that if they were directed at the unbelievers, the final words would be *lā tuʾminūna*; he belittles that reading as belonging to "a few Meccans", whereas it is now canonised in the readings of Ibn ʿĀmir (Levant) and Ḥamza (Iraq) − *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3307.

pattern concerning which variants each chose to mention. In terms of their approach to dealing with those readings, there are instances of reductionism (i.e. variants being explained in terms of each other), and others of pluralism (i.e. meanings treated as complementary). I will present the Group's treatment of *qirāʾāt* in al-Anʿām in two different ways. First, I summarise in table form Ṭabarī's interpretation and assessment of seven variant junctures.[243] This is followed by separate examples in which the exegetes – including Ṭabarī – used Quranic citations in the process of explaining (*tawjīh*) and supporting (*iḥtijāj*) the readings they saw fit to discuss.

## 2.5.2 – Early Treatment

In this table, I cite the 'standard'[244] reading along with a variant which impacts upon meaning; I translate each accordingly.

*Figure 4 – Ṭabarī's Approach to Selected Variant Readings*

| **23:** *wa-llāhi rabbinā* <br> *wa-llāhi rabbanā* | "By Allāh our Lord" <br> "By Allāh, O our Lord" | Prefers the latter because it is more appropriate as a response[245] |
|---|---|---|
| **55:** *wa li-tastabīna sabīlu l-mujrimīn*[246] <br> *wa li-tastabīna sabīla l-mujrimīn* | "So that the way of the criminals may become clear" | Prefers the standard reading because its meaning is broader[247] |

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[243] This is an arbitrary selection of variants which give rise to interesting effects in interpretation and even translation. I reuse this selection in 4.3.3 below, drawing from a range of *tawjīh* works. Two facts should be borne in mind: Ṭabarī, though part of the Group, is not a TQQ exegete; and his discussion of *qirāʾāt* is not restricted to canonical readings as in this selection.

[244] I am referring here to the sub-reading of Ḥafṣ-ʿĀṣim, although it is clearly anachronistic to call it "standard", a practice in some modern books. However, the term is justified here because it is the base reading of most of the Group, and it has been treated as the norm throughout this chapter. The question of which reading each exegete treated as default requires careful examination, made more difficult by printed editions which assume that this was Ḥafṣ-ʿĀṣim and adjust citations accordingly. It has been suggested that Ḥafṣ-ʿĀṣim was not specifically known to Ṭabarī; I have found prima facie support for this claim by looking at junctures in which Ḥafṣ-ʿĀṣim differs from all other readings. In 30:22, for example, Ṭabarī explains the reading "*li-l-ʿālamīn* (for the worlds)" and does not mention the Ḥafṣ-ʿĀṣim variant (now more widespread throughout the world) as "*li-l-ʿālimīn* (for people who know)" – see *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 8/6516.

[245] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3151.

[246] Another reading with *yastabīna* is less significant in that it is a question of the masculine/feminine usage of the word *sabīl*.

[247] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3197.

| | "So that you [Prophet] will recognise clearly the way of the criminals" | |
|---|---|---|
| **74**: *li-abīhi āzara* <br> *li-abīhi āzaru* | "Abraham said to his father Āzar" <br> "Abraham said to his father, 'O Āzar'" | Prefers the first because it is the "majority reading" |
| **83**: *narfaʿu darajātin man nashāʾ* <br> *narfaʿu darajāti man nashāʾ* | "We raise in ranks whomever We will" <br> "We raise the ranks of whomever We will" | Says both are acceptable and amount to the same meaning[248] |
| **96**: *wa jaʿala l-layla sakanan* <br> *wa jāʿilu l-layli sakanan* | "and He made the night a repose" <br> "and Maker of the night as a repose" | Says they are equally acceptable and equivalent in meaning[249] |
| **119**: *la-yuḍillūna bi-ahwāʾihim* <br><br> *la-yaḍillūna bi-ahwāʾihim* | "they mislead [others] through their desires" <br> "they go astray because of their desires" | Prefers the first because it suits the context, particularly <u>6:116</u>[250] |
| **159**: *farraqū dīnahum* <br> *fāraqū dīnahum* | "Those who divided their religion" <br> "Those who left their religion" | Prefers the first but says that they amount to the same meaning[251] |

## 2.5.3 – Quranic Citations to Explain Readings

The following examples combine two forms of TQQ. In the first place, they involve explaining Quranic readings – each of which is treated as a parallel verse – in terms of each other. Principles and techniques used elsewhere in TQQ are applied according to relevance. In addition, other parallels are cited in order to support the meanings of individual readings.[252]

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[248] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3251.

[249] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3275.

[250] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3322.

[251] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3419.

[252] See Baḥlūz, *Al-Naẓīr wa Dawruhū fī Tawjīh al-Qirāʾāt al-Qurʾāniyya*, p. 99 ff.

There is a subtle grammatical difference between the subjunctive and indicative readings of the verbs in: "They will say, 'If only we could be sent back (*nuraddu*), we would not reject (*lā nukadhdhiba/u*) the revelations of our Lord, but be (*nakūna/u*) among the believers.'" (6:27). Because the subjunctive reading entails a non-declarative sentence, Ṭabāṭabāʾī cites 32:12 and 35:37 to demonstrate that the idolaters were making an implicit promise in this verse not to reject the message again; hence their description as "liars" in the next verse makes sense.[253] This problem does not present itself in the majority reading with both in the indicative (*nukadhdhibu*, *nakūnu*), as the statement can thus be interpreted as declarative and subject to being called "lies".[254]

There are two canonical readings in 6:57: *yaquṣṣu l-ḥaqq* and *yaqḍi l-ḥaqq* – which may be translated, respectively, as "He declares the truth" and "He decrees the truth".[255] Ṭabarī narrates that 12:3 was cited by Ibn ʿAbbās to support the former in meaning; however, Ṭabarī himself prefers the latter, appealing to the immediate context.[256] Ṭabāṭabāʾī states that they are equivalent in meaning as long as *qaṣṣ* is interpreted in the sense of *faṣl* (at the end of the verse).[257]

"Who was it who sent down the Scripture, which Moses brought as a light and a guide to people, which **you/they** made into separate sheets, showing some but hiding many?" (6:91) – the three latter verbs were recited both in the second person (*tajʿalūn*, *tubdūn*, *tukhfūn*) and in the third person (*yajʿalūn* etc.).[258] Ṭabāṭabāʾī argues that all

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[253] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/53. He states that he is using the subjunctive reading (Ḥafṣ and Ḥamza, also Yaʿqūb). Most read both in the indicative, and Ibn ʿĀmir read the first indicative, the second subjunctive.

[254] See Al-Qaysī, *Al-Kashf*, 2/7–8. Translating the various *qirāʾāt* is a sensitive process which requires careful attention to grammar and the explanations of the exegetes. Dakake (*Study Quran*, p. 348) misconstrues Ṭabarī's explanations, rendering this verse (apparently on the indicative reading, though she does not make it clear) as: "Would that we were sent back! Then we would not deny…but we would be among the believers!" (which is indistinguishable from her translation of the alternative reading); whereas Ṭabarī's gloss should yield: "Would that we were sent back! And we do not deny… and we are believers", which is their lie. However, this reading may also be interpreted to mean the same as the subjunctive one.

[255] All the translations I consulted used some variation on declaring, relating or telling, thus corresponding to the reading of Nāfiʿ, Ibn Kathīr, ʿĀṣim and Abū Jaʿfar, rather than that of the other six Readers. NB: in the context of *qirāʾāt*, Ibn Kathīr is the Meccan reciter (d. 120/738), not the later exegete.

[256] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3198.

[257] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/119. He cites 28:11 with the meaning of *qatʿ* and *faṣl*, but it is unclear how this sense is supported there (cf. his commentary on 28:11). See also Bāzmul, *Al-Qirāʾāt*, 2/545–546.

[258] Ibn Kathīr and Abū ʿAmr recited these in the third person.

the pronouns in this verse address and refer to the Jews.[259] In response to the objection that revelation is a tenet of Jewish belief, he cites 4:51 and 3:65-67 for parallels, i.e. surprising pronouncements emanating from obstinacy. For other mentions of the People of the Book in Meccan revelations, he cites 29:46, 16:118 and unspecified junctures of Sūrat al-Aʿrāf (while alluding to the possibility that this verse is Medinan).[260]

"This is how We explain Our revelations in various ways – though they will say, [*darasta/dārasta/darasat*] – to make them clear for those who know" (6:105). The first two readings quoted refer to the charge that Muḥammad had a human teacher; Ibn Kathīr cites 25:4-5 and 74:24-25 as parallels.[261] Shinqīṭī adds 16:103 and explains the third reading to mean: "lest they say that they [i.e. the revelatory *āyāt*] have come to an end".[262]

A final example is *qiyaman* and *qayyiman* in: "Say, 'My Lord has guided me to a straight path, an **upright** religion, the faith of Abraham" (6:161). Ṭabarī accepts both these readings, but for additional usages of the latter he cites 9:36 and 98:5.[263]

# 2.6 − *Ḥadīths* and Prophetic TQQ

I stated above that one of the reasons for selecting Sūrat al-Anʿām is that it contains the only two verses which were explained by Prophet Muḥammad with reference to other verses, according to reports classed as authentic by traditional *ḥadīth* scholarship.[264] Both of these link to verses in Sūrat Luqmān (Q 31). Here I address their treatment by the Group and draw upon other *tafsīr* works to help examine the

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[259] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/280.

[260] M. Rashīd Riḍā (*Tafsīr al-Manār*, 7/535) hypothesises that the verse was recited with the third person in Mecca and continued to be so in Medina until the second-person reading was revealed in response to an act of concealment by its Jews. Ṭabāṭabāʾī responds to this directly (*Al-Mīzān*, 7/283).

[261] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/228.

[262] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, p. 253 (he ascribes this to Qurṭubī). See Bāzmūl, *Al-Qirāʾāt*, 2/548−551.

[263] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3426. See Ḥabash, *Al-Qirāʾāt al-Mutawātira*, pp. 210−211.

[264] My focus is upon *marfūʿ* reports (traced back to the Prophet) which constitute TQQ (especially those graded as *ṣaḥīḥ* or *ḥasan*, though I would have discussed any cited for TQQ purposes by the Group). I have not considered the broader usage of *ḥadīths* in these exegetical works, as it would be clearly outside the scope of my study.

implications of these reports and TQQ linkages; this will impact upon the discussion of the authority of TQQ as "Prophetic method", in Chapter 3.

## 2.6.1 – Keys of the Unseen

The first report is in Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* collection, in *Kitāb al-Tafsīr* ("Book of Exegesis") under Q 6:59: "The keys to the unseen (*mafātiḥ al-ghayb*) are five: 'Knowledge of the Hour belongs to God; it is He who sends down the relieving rain and He who knows what is hidden in the womb. No soul knows what it will reap tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it will die; it is God who is all knowing and all aware'"[265] (Q 31:34). This or similar narrations are referenced by Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr and Shinqīṭī. However, there is no mention of the report or of 31:34 in the other commentaries of the Group.[266] Iṣlāḥī equates the *mafātiḥ* to the *maqālīd* (keys) of 42:12.[267] Ṭabāṭabāʾī allows for this possibility but argues that its meaning as *khazāʾin* (storehouses) is better supported, as in 6:50, 15:21, 38:9, 52:37 and 63:7.[268]

Looking at the linkage itself, we may question how clear-cut this report is as an example of Prophetic TQQ. There is nothing about 6:59 which requires clarification (unlike the following example), and the reference to that verse is implicit at best.[269] In the absence of the *ḥadīth*, a link between the two verses would not be evident; it may, therefore, be taken as an encouragement to find thematic connections in the Qurʾān.

Indeed, the concept of the "unseen" is inherently mysterious. As Ālūsī suggests, the verse is more meaningful if understood in its broadest sense (*istighrāq*). As such, the five aspects of *ghayb* enumerated in 31:34 may have been cited by way of example, not exhaustively.[270] Similarly, Ṭabāṭabāʾī argues that the universal sense of the verse should be maintained, which is to say that the number "five" expressed is not intended to be exhaustive (i.e. the number has no *mafhūm*, contrary implication).

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[265] In Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 8/205; see also 8/543.

[266] I.e. Muqātil, Amritsarī, Iṣlāḥī. Farāhī's *Taʿlīqāt* do not include 6:59. Ṭabāṭabāʾī does discuss it in a separate section from his *bayān* of the verse, as described below.

[267] *Tadabbur*, 3/68.

[268] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/127.

[269] This raises a broader question of how *ḥadīth*s are categorised by the *muḥaddithūn* as relevant to *tafsīr* and linked to specific verses.

[270] Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 8/203.

He further argues that these five represent essentially the same category of the unseen – namely foreknowledge of events – whereas *al-ghayb* is a much broader concept, as the verse itself indicates.[271]

## 2.6.2 – *Ẓulm* and *Shirk*

The second example is very famous and narrated in various wordings, the following being that of *Kitāb al-Īmān* ("Book of Faith") of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* collection[272]: "Upon the revelation of 'Those who believe and do not mix their belief with wrongdoing' [*wa lam yalbisū īmānahum bi-ẓulm* – 6:82], the companions of the Messenger of God found it onerous and said: Which of us does not wrong himself? So the Messenger of God said: It is not as you suppose; rather, it is as Luqmān said to his son: 'O my son, do not associate partners (*shirk*) with God: verily, *shirk* is a tremendous *ẓulm*'." (31:13) – this is cited in various narrations by Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, Shinqīṭī and Ṭabāṭabāʾī.[273]

Whereas many took the meaning given by the *ḥadīth* as binding, Ṭabāṭabāʾī argues that the universality of the word *ẓulm* should not be restricted to the meaning of *shirk* in all contexts. Appealing to the verse's internal contrast between *īmān* and *ẓulm*, he explains the latter as whatever impacts negatively upon the former. Thus in the context of the story, the meaning is *shirk*, and those who avoid it are "secure" from eternal punishment; but that is only one application of the concept, and the one expressed in the *ḥadīth*.[274] He explains that various levels of faith have corresponding types of *ẓulm*, such as major sins (4:31), or lesser sins.[275]

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[271] *Al-Mīzān* 7/153. He uses the expression "*ʿalā taqdīr ṣiḥḥatihā*", which implies that he is unconvinced of the report's authenticity.

[272] In Nawawī, *Al-Minhāj Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj*, 2/323.

[273] Amritsarī cites 31:13 but not the report. Iṣlāḥī states that the meaning is *shirk*, but cites neither the report, nor the verse! ʿAlwānī (*Tafsīr Sūrat al-Anʿām*, pp. 89–93) departs from the context and direct meaning of the verse to elaborate on broader concepts of *amn* (security) on a societal level, and likewise *ẓulm* as a multifarious concept. Despite arguing in his introduction that all or most Prophetic clarifications were based on intraquranic considerations, he does not mention this *ḥadīth* or link the verse to 31:13.

[274] Ṭabāṭabāʾī discusses this report in his *bayān* section (*Al-Mīzān*, 7/210) while critiquing a quotation from M. Rashīd Riḍā, then again alongside other traditions – including Shīʿī reports – in his narration study (ibid, 7/217 ff.). It is not clear from his explanation how the Prophet's clarification would have functioned as solace to his companions (i.e. those who were confused and raised the query).

[275] *Al-Mīzān*, 7/208.

The focus in the immediate discussion has been how the exegetes, especially those who took *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* as their primary approach, dealt with this report which is its best-known example. Whereas most adopted it in a straightforward fashion, we have seen that Ṭabāṭabāʾī limited its applicability to the verse and its term *ẓulm*. Before him, the Muʿtazilite exegete Zamakhsharī maintained that lesser sins (*maʿāṣī* amounting to *fisq*) are indeed intended by this verse, a view which elicited criticism from later exegetes due to its disregard for the *ḥadīth*.[276] In Chapter 3, we return to this report to examine a distinct question: does it genuinely constitute an example of Prophetic TQQ, and what does this entail for the importance and relative authority of this method? There are also questions of chronology (between al-Anʿām and Luqmān) which we shall consider at that point.

# 2.7 – Quranism

## 2.7.1 – Description

Quranism is the tendency to restrict scriptural authority to the Qurʾān itself, denying the place afforded to the Prophetic Sunna (as conveyed by *ḥadīth* narrations) by mainstream Sunnī and Shīʿī Islam. Those who self-identify as Quranists[277] assert that the Qurʾān is not only sufficient as guidance, but also clear enough to reasoning minds: as such, there is no justification for relying upon external narrations and the only reference to be made is intratextual, based upon the language of any passage, its surrounding context, and other parts of the same book. I suggest that Quranism should be understood as the extreme end of a spectrum of which the opposite end may be

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[276] *Al-Kashshāf*, p. 335, and see Shawkānī's rebuke (*Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, 2/190). More charitably, Abū Ḥayyān suggests that Zamakhsharī may not have considered this particular report to be authentic (*Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, 4/176), while Ālūsī points out that he would not accept an *āḥād* narration which conflicts with a decisive proof (*Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 8/276). However, some other commentators opted to address Zamakhsharī's reasoning, namely that the word *labs* (i.e. mixing) precludes the reference being to *shirk*, because belief and *shirk* cannot coexist: Ālūsī cites 12:106 to refute this, as well as pointing out that the verse need not be a point of contention between the sects since it does not explicitly mention (eternal) punishment (ibid, 8/277).

[277] The proponents of this view are generally known in Arabic as *Qurʾāniyyūn*, but there is no direct equivalent used for 'Quranism'. The phenomenon is also known as *inkār al-ḥadīth*. Labels used by the various groups themselves include 'Qurʾān Only" and "Submitters".

termed Traditionism, especially the "radical hermeneutics" of the Taymiyyan trend.[278] However, between the two, there has always been a range of approaches and emphases in the balance between the Quranic text and the narrations purporting to situate and explain it. Farāhī's school, for example, exhibits a cautious approach to the *asbāb* literature and other *ḥadīth* reports which explain individual verses in a way which conflicts with their understanding of the *sūra*'s structure and arguments.

The exegetical works studied here include several which defined themselves as Qurʾān-primary or Qurʾān-only, in the weaker sense of being devoted to *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*. As for the stronger sense of Qurʾān-only exegesis, none of the works I found for the purpose exhibited the detail or expansiveness to make it on a par with the rest of the Group.[279] The works I did survey include two translations which incorporate commentary and cross-references, namely *The Qur'an As It Explains Itself* by Shabbir Ahmed, and *The Qurʾān: A Reformist Translation* by Edip Yüksel.[280] A pertinent observation at this point is the scarcity of substantial Quranist commentaries, which is surprising considering the emphasis they place upon the centrality of the Qurʾān. An explanation can be found in Yüksel et al declaring in their introduction that they "explicitly reject the right of the clergy to determine the likely meaning of

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[278] See Saleh, 'Historiography,' p. 24. I have already noted in Chapter 1 my disagreement with Saleh's proposition that Suyūṭī had signed up fully to Ibn Taymiyya's *ḥadīth*-exclusivist approach. Stephen Burge builds on this theory in his study of Suyūṭī's methodology in *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, but he alludes in his conclusion to the possibility of reading it instead as "a supplement to other exegeses… a means by which someone reading an exegesis in the Sunnī core can easily see the relevant *aḥādīth* related to a particular exegesis" (Burge, 'Scattered Pearls,' p. 271). I cannot see a basis to assume that Suyūṭī considered *Al-Durr* as a full *tafsīr* work: even the title is ambiguous in that regard. Moreover, I see Suyūṭī's broader exegetical oeuvre along with *Al-Itqān* – which is full of linguistic tools etc. to interpret the Qurʾān – as evidence for my position rather than that of Saleh and Burge. Suyūṭī does not comment on every verse (or complete verse) in this commentary: in Sūrat al-Anʿām, for example, there are reports related to 116 verse-fragments, representing a smaller number of verses (*Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 6/5 ff.). To demonstrate *Al-Durr*'s utility as a thematic resource: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Shawkānī praises it in the introduction to his own exegesis, stating that he intends to build on it and combine "*riwāya* and *dirāya*" (*Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, 1/71).

[279] I accept that this is a subjective judgement and that the precise boundaries of what constitutes a "work of *tafsīr*" are a matter of ongoing debate, as demonstrated by discussions in Görke and Pink (eds.).

[280] Regarding Yüksel, a Kurdish-Turkish-American writer influenced by Rashad Khalifa (d. 1990; his own translation is not substantial enough for this study) see Musa, *Hadīth as Scripture*, p. 100. A figure who influenced Ahmed – and whose *Exposition of the Holy Qur'an* (Lahore: Tolu-e-Islam Trust, 2010, translated from Urdu) would have been included if I had encountered it earlier – is Ghulam Ahmad Parwez (d. 1985), who is discussed extensively in Brown, *Rethinking Tradition* and Baljon, *Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation*.

disputed passages"[281]; if this applies to "clergy" by virtue of their training, the very endeavour of explaining the Qurʾān must surely be problematic from this standpoint. Indeed, the editors go on to insist, uncontroversially, that their annotations "do not constitute a source or authority" comparable to divine scripture. However, the next sentence suggests that theirs is "the best available English translation and the most accurate in its rendering the meaning of the scripture."[282] Similar claims to objectivity and superiority are found with Ahmed, who states in his preface: "The work, although close to translation, is more of an understanding from within the Qur'an itself."[283]

## 2.7.2 – Evaluation

In principle, one may expect Qurʾān-primary and even Qurʾān-only analysis to yield interesting results, i.e. interpretations not found elsewhere. Although there are some examples of this provided below, my overall conclusion is that the Quranist commentators were less sophisticated in their TQQ analysis than others in the group, especially Farāhī and Ṭabāṭabāʾī. Arguably, their conviction that the Qurʾān does not require explanation has prevented this movement from developing advanced hermeneutical theories and techniques. Instead, emphasis is placed on asserting their departure from the tradition, and, at times, demonstrating modernist credentials. Rather than shedding the bias they decry in mainstream exegesis, they have made *ḥadīth* rejection a primary focus and read that concern into numerous passages of the Qurʾān, often stretching plausibility and paying little heed to context. An example of this can be seen in a 2006 letter from the Egyptian Quranist activist Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Manṣūr[284] to the erstwhile Rector of Al-Azhar University, in which he comments on several verses of al-Anʿām. He takes the Satanic inspiration of 6:112 to refer to the invention and misattribution of *ḥadīths*, and the following verse to those who believe them and create discord thereby. Then the Qurʾān is declared to be the only mediator

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[281] Yüksel et al, *The Qurʾān: A Reformist Translation*, p. 11.

[282] *A Reformist Translation*, p. 11.

[283] Ahmed, *The Qur'an as it Explains Itself*, vi.

[284] Manṣūr was an associate of Khalifa until the latter claimed prophethood. See Musa, *Ḥadīth as Scripture*, p. 103. The letter appears on his website: www.ahl-alquran.com/arabic/printpage.php?doc_type=1&doc_id=12

(114) because it is perfect, unchanging (115)[285] and the only source of certainty –unlike *ḥadīths* which generally do not rise above the level of speculation (*ẓann*) (116). This interpretation, with which Yüksel concurs[286], removes the passage from its context – a dialogue with the Prophet's disbelieving opponents – to a commentary on actions by Muslims which had not yet occurred.

Similarly, Yüksel prefaces his translation of 6:19 with the heading "Muḥammad was Given Only the Quran"[287], and cites verses oft-quoted by Quranists (6:112-115, 7:2-3, 9:31, 16:89, 17:46, 42:21, 45:6) to support the claim that taking religious authority from other than the Qurʾān amounts to polytheism. Although he does not specify the "followers of *hadith* and *sunna*" as the referents of this verse or the following verses (22-24), it may be inferred that he deems them to be included; he is explicit regarding 6:25, which he takes to foretell the rejection of his group's "19 miracle".[288] Yüksel goes on to describe those who invent religious prohibitions such as in dietary laws, "attributing them to God *through his messenger*" [emphasis mine] as "modern *mushriks*" (polytheists).[289] Surprisingly, he did not take the *kitāb* in 6:38, "We did not leave anything out of the book" (Yüksel's translation) to refer primarily to the Qurʾān, though he affirmed this as a secondary meaning (also citing 16:89).[290]

I shall now present some examples of unusual opinions advanced by the Quranists. Shabbir Ahmed renders the term *ẓālimūn* in 6:47 as "oppressors of the masses" who "violate human rights", linking this to 11:117, which he translates: "Your Lord never destroys a community unjustly (for their wrong beliefs alone) as long as its

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[285] This verse was discussed under 2.3.1 above. The Quranist commentators have taken *kalima* here to refer to the Qurʾān, a view which has a precedent in Ṭabarī. Ahmed uses this verse in his Introduction (xii) as proof that "The Qurʾan explains itself".

[286] *A Reformist Translation*, p. 133.

[287] *A Reformist Translation*, p. 124.

[288] *A Reformist Translation*, p. 131. The endnotes contain a scathing rebuke of Yüksel's father and others who rejected his theories, lampooning "their intellectual and spiritual genetic link with their unappreciative ancestors".

[289] *A Reformist Translation*, p. 135, under verse 148. For false prohibitions, he cites parallels in 10:59-60 and 16:112-116. For the description of *mushriks*, he cites 3:18, 10:59-60 and 16:35 along with the aforementioned 6:22-24. See also under verses 150 (with which he cites 9:31 and 42:2) and 159 (with 3:105 and 22:52-56).

[290] *A Reformist Translation*, p. 131, and see Iṣlāḥī's opinion in the earlier thematic discussion of *kitāb*. Dakake (*Study Quran*, p. 353) notes that if this is taken to imply the legal sufficiency of the Qurʾān, this may be because further sources of law are implicit in the Qurʾān, such as Prophetic *sunna* (33:21, 47:33, 59:7) and consensus of the believers (3:110).

people are setting things right".[291] Using this parenthesis, Ahmed has combined the two interpretations of the clause "*bi-ẓulm*" in the latter verse.[292] He has taken *ẓulm* in al-Anʿām to pertain to the rights of fellow humans, while in the verse of Hūd, he has made it a question of belief (rights of God). Simultaneously, he has used the latter part of 11:117 to support his reading of 6:47.[293] In verse 92, Ahmed insists that the common translation about "guarding prayers" (*ʿalā ṣalātihim yuḥāfizūn*) "makes no sense", and renders the expression as "They ensure following of the Divine Commands".[294] He remarks along with 6:101 – which asks "How can [God] have a son when He never chose for Himself a mate?" – that Jesus, too, must have had a father according to divinely created laws.[295] Ahmed translates 6:156 with an interpretation of *dirāsa* which makes the verse about falsification of earlier scriptures: "…and we remained unaware of what they originally read" – he cites 2:79/101, 3:78 and 5:48 as parallels.[296]

Further examples from Yüksel: he interprets 6:56 to indicate that Muḥammad worshipped idols before his mission, rendering "*innī nuhītu an aʿbuda*" as: "I am warned to stop serving those you call upon…", and citing 42:52 and 93:7 in support.[297] Regarding 6:68, "If you encounter those who make fun of Our signs, then turn away from them until they move on to a different topic": he takes this as an indicator of freedom of belief/unbelief, providing other verses supporting this principle (6:110,

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[291] *The Qur'an as it Explains Itself*, p. 221. Under 6:131, which is worded similarly to 11:117, the clause "*bi-ẓulm*" is left untranslated (ibid, p. 137). Note that there is inconsistency between different versions of this translation, as an open-source project.

[292] Ṭabarī prefers the opinion that *ẓulm* here refers to the people's wrongdoing, specifically *shirk*, making reference to 31:13 (*Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3348). Ṭabāṭabāʾī takes the other view, i.e. "wrongfully, unjustly" (*Al-Mīzān*, 7/368).

[293] Cf. Arnold Mol, 'Divine Respite as Ground for Human Rights Discourse: Theological Trends in Sunnī Tafsīr on Q.11:117,' in R. Harvey and H. Ramli (eds.) *Divine Speech and Prophetology in Medieval and Contemporary Islamic Thought* (Routledge, forthcoming). The chapter was shared kindly by the author.

[294] *The Qur'an as it Explains Itself*, p. 132. The relevance of prayer may not be obvious, but Farāhī explains it (while linking to 2:45-46) as follows: regular prayer denotes the existence of reverence in the heart, which stems from belief in the Hereafter, which denotes soundness of heart and readiness to accept the truth of revelation (*Taʿlīqāt*, 1/192).

[295] *The Qur'an as it Explains Itself*, p. 133. Ahmed implies that this is Joseph, as "three of the four gospels" state. Although he does not provide a citation, there are verses within this *sūra* and elsewhere concerning the immutability of divine norms.

[296] *The Qur'an as it Explains Itself*, p. 141.

[297] *A Reformist Translation*, pp. 125, 131.

2:256, 4:140, 10:99, 18:29, 88:20-21)[298]; he explains <u>6:110</u> in a way similar to the exegetes of the Group (particularly Amritsarī, Iṣlāḥī and Ṭabāṭabāʾī), citing 7:146 to say that it is prejudice and arrogance which prevents people from perceiving God's signs.[299] Finally, he links the root meaning in <u>6:79</u> – "the One who created (*faṭara*) the heavens and the earth" – to 21:30, which he takes to allude to the Big Bang theory (and 21:104 to what is known as the Big Crunch).[300]

## 2.8 − Context and Structure

This case study has focused upon the engagement of the Group of exegetes with the verses of Sūrat al-Anʿām, particularly the intraquranic and intra-*sūra* citations and links they advanced by way of explanation and elaboration.[301] In the multifarious examples presented so far in this chapter, context has played an important role in many of their arguments and conclusions. When examining any Quranic expression, appealing to the words immediately preceding or following it can straightforwardly be described as TQQ in two senses: (a) the explanatory text is also Quranic; (b) the explanation is based upon 'internal' evidence rather than the likes of *ḥadīth*. However, due to the subtlety and ubiquity of interpretation based on context, I have limited the scope of this study, for the most part, to explicit citations.

The style of presentation described disapprovingly by Mustansir Mir as "atomism" – i.e. verse-by-verse analysis – does not entail that the exegetes were incognisant of the impact of various types of context upon each verse.[302] Related to this is their appreciation of *sūra* structure: when they look beyond a verse to its immediate environment for relevance and semantic connections (often described as

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[298] *A Reformist Translation*, p. 132.

[299] *A Reformist Translation*, p. 133.

[300] *A Reformist Translation*, p. 132.

[301] Cf. study of the *sūra* in its own right, as a form of *tafsīr* or literary analysis. An example of a structural study is in Neuwirth, *Studien*, pp. 290–291. She divides the *sūra* into three main sections (1-73 with three sub-groups, and further passage divisions; 74-153 with two sub-groups and further passage divisions; and 154-165 with three short passages).

[302] *Coherence in the Qurʾān*, p. 1; cf. Andrew Rippin's assessment of this "rhetorical move by contemporary writers that serves to justify discarding the legacy of earlier times" ('Contemporary Scholarly Understandings of Qurʾanic Coherence,' p. 4).

*munāsabāt*), it is only a further step to assume that the entire *sūra* may be connected in this way. The strongest such claims are advanced by the Farāhian school in that they posit a unifying theme or "axis" (*ʿamūd*) as a central part of their theory. For al-Anʿām, per Iṣlāḥī, this is the theme of inviting the idolaters of Quraysh within the broader group theme (i.e. Q 6-9) of "Islam as the religion of Abraham".[303] There is a potential circularity in the process of deducing and applying this *ʿamūd*, which remains a matter of opinion and *ijtihād*.

We have already seen one example of this application, in that Farāhī interpreted the four prohibitions in 6:145 and the longer list of injunctions in 6:151-153 as expressions of Abrahamic law, appealing to the context and order of the verses. His argument goes even further, in that he links the preceding phrase "Were you present (*am kuntum shuhadāʾ*) when God gave you these commands (*waṣṣākum*)?" (6:144) to the passage in Sūrat al-Baqara describing the bequests of Abraham and Jacob (2:132-133), which use the same verb *waṣṣā* and the phrase "*am kuntum shuhadāʾ*": thus Farāhī takes the verse in al-Anʿām to be challenging Quraysh to substantiate their claims with reference to the legacy of Abraham through Ishmael.[304] He goes on to say that the invention of laws contrary to the inherited *sharīʿa* is the cause of splitting the community, as expressed in 6:153 and 159.[305]

If this kind of analysis is a recent development – indeed, a nascent trend – there are certainly precedents for structural interpretation in the exegetical tradition. My concern here are such structural considerations that have a tangible impact upon interpretation, as opposed to those which inform investigations of corpus history or appreciation of literary beauty. Structural ideas may be expressed in terms of "sections" of a *sūra*, or otherwise with reference to running threads or anchors which appear at various points. Examples of such threads have been noted previously, such as those on angels, miracles and the question of free will: the fact that exegetes cited other verses within the *sūra* as part of their thematic exegesis indicates their

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[303] Mir, *Coherence*, p. 86.

[304] *Taʿlīqāt*, 1/200. This interpretation is not novel, as Farāhī himself cites a quotation from Ibn ʿAbbās to the effect that the condemnation in 6:144 ("*fa-man aẓlam*") pertains to the individual who altered the *sharīʿa* of Ishmael (see Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 7/199 – he does not accept this). The suggestion could be made that the phrase in al-Anʿām "recalls" that in al-Baqara, except that this may be challenged on the basis of chronology.

[305] *Taʿlīqāt*, 1/201.

appreciation of its connections and semantic flow, despite their overall "atomism". Indeed, one researcher who focused on Ṭabarī's use of context has suggested that he took Sūrat al-Anʿām to revolve around "disbelievers who equate others to God", as he has referred to this phrase (*bi-rabbihim yaʿdilūn*) at least thirteen times throughout his commentary upon the *sūra*.[306] The theme of associating partners with God is prominent here: indeed, the Arabic word *shirk* and its derivatives occur more frequently in al-Anʿām (twenty-nine times) than any other *sūra*.[307] Hence Ṭabarī cited the same verse from Sūrat Luqmān associated with 6:82 – "Verily, *shirk* is a tremendous *ẓulm*" (31:13) – in his explanation of the expression "*bi-ẓulm*" in 6:131, as though a correspondence has been established between these two terms, at least in Sūrat al-Anʿām.[308]

## 2.9 – Conclusions

This *sūra*-wide analysis of a range of TQQ-focused commentaries has both substantiated the basic theories outlined in the previous chapter – hence completing the main descriptive parts of this thesis – and paved the way for the more constructive approach to theories and methods in the remaining chapters. This original and varied presentation has demonstrated that *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* represents a range of methods; the exegetes studied do not share a single approach or reach the same conclusions concerning the verses they study thematically or comparatively along with the wider Quranic corpus. There were also few signs that they consulted and engaged with each other's contributions, with the exception of the Farāhī–Iṣlāḥī lineage and, to some extent, Ṭabarī–Ibn Kathīr–Shinqīṭī. All this diversity presents a substantial challenge to the claims made by some of them (such as Shinqīṭī, and especially ʿAlwānī) that *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* is so objective and authoritative that it has the potential to end the debates of the exegetes; not least when some of these divergent opinions can be traced clearly to sectarian differences or other authorial biases.

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[306] Qāsim, *Dalālat al-Siyāq al-Qurʾānī*, 2/442–444. This is fairly similar to Iṣlāḥī's putative *ʿamūd*.

[307] Via the Dictionary feature on the Qurʾan Wiki website (www.quran-wiki.com). The next highest count is Q 9, with twelve occurrences.

[308] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3348.

Collectively, I would argue that the Group I selected, together with the supplementary resources, represent the best available material on TQQ, including its radical trajectory among the Quranists.[309] While some (notably Ṭabāṭabāʾī) are richer in their combination between citations, analysis and thematic study, no single work would suffice to represent the breadth of TQQ study in Muslim scholarship to date. Ṭabarī, more so than Muqātil, demonstrates that this type of material is found quite frequently among the earliest authorities. Ibn Kathīr, if we assume that he intended to implement Ibn Taymiyya's "best methods" schema, demonstrates that it is impractical to exhaust the Qurʾān before consulting the Sunna, and this was not his method even if the Quranic parallels tend to be cited first. Regarding the Farāhian *naẓm* exegetes, I admit that the methodology employed here (focused almost exclusively on intraquranic citations) was not ideal to highlight the depth of their approach and contribution; however, it has succeeded in bringing them into a comparative analysis not seen before.

The case study (see the aggregated table in the Appendix) has underlined the importance of the concept of the Quranic parallel (*naẓīr*), while also demonstrating that evidentiary citations – broadly defined – feature just as prominently as pure parallels. These parallels themselves have a number of purposes for which they were employed, or for which they can be employed by later scholars; in this way, the lists of citations provided by Ibn Kathīr, for example, may be understood as a proto-concordance as much as an act of *tafsīr*. This foreshadows the modern works I consulted (including Paret's *Konkordanz* and *The Study Quran*), which add further parallels but do not exhaust the cross-references provided in these exegeses; hence further work would be required for a thorough concordance which takes the exegetical tradition into account (see 4.2.1 below).

While the Group's engagement with Quranic citations provides much interesting material, especially when they disagree with each other, there is little added by these TQQ-focused works to the collective interpretive opinions of Muslim *tafsīr*. For the most part, their conclusions agree with those found in other works, albeit with Quranic citations provided as backing for one or more of the opinions on any particular

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[309] This is not to devalue works which were excluded because they did not extend to al-Anʿām, such as the commentaries on fourteen short *sūras* by Bint al-Shāṭiʾ.

verse. If novelty is desirable in its own right, then more is to be found among the Quranists, but there is very little depth to their analysis because they proceed from the assumption that the Qurʾān is clear. There is certainly scope for a more detailed comparison between the TQQ commentaries and those incorporating a broader range of approaches and opinions.[310] Also deserving of further exploration is the chronological aspect in citations, as well as considering any pattern in linkage between *sūras* (e.g. the two Prophetic citations of Luqmān to explain verses in al-Anʿām).

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[310] This can include such encyclopaedic works as *Rūh al-Maʿānī* by Ālūsī, and indeed the exegesis of Ṭabarī himself, as it is not defined as Qurʾān-primary (similarly Ibn Kathīr). This further study can identify cases where TQQ conclusions are overruled by other considerations, such as *ḥadīth*. It can also identify the kind of questions addressed in the broader *tafsīr* tradition which are missed out in a work which focuses exclusively upon one method.

# Chapter 3
# Theories and Principles in TQQ

## 3.0 – Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the assumptions implicit in the texts already examined, and to discuss how these underlying principles are corroborated and problematised by theories in Muslim scholarship and broader academia. As in the overview of Chapter 1, my primary focus is upon the *uṣūl* genre, broadly defined, both classical and contemporary. However, other works will be drawn upon according to relevance.

I have divided the topics into four "principles", under which I consider relevant theories – this means more developed concepts as well as assumptions which have been examined to a lesser degree. The general structure of the discussion is as follows: I begin by summarising the principle, together with any explicit expressions of it in the literature. I then outline the various theories relevant to the principle, focusing on how each impacts upon the viability and/or methodology of TQQ. If there are significant debates over any theory, I present the main points on either side and draw conclusions about the impact of this debate upon TQQ.

The four principles pertain in various ways to the nature of the Qurʾān as a corpus; to the text's history and provenance; and to the role of the interpreter. An exegete or scholar who intends to apply intraquranic methods of interpretation must interact in some way with these principles, either from a position of doctrine or from practical necessity. There is no sense in explaining some verses in the light of others unless there is an actual connection between them, and unless one assumes a level of consistency in their intent and message. Indeed, the very discipline of *tafsīr* assumes that there are processes by which meaning can be determined, and that the truth of the exegete's conclusions derives from the authority inherent in his chosen sources and methods. These are the issues on which I elaborate in this chapter.

# 3.1 – The Principle of Unity

## 3.1.1 – Definition

This is the assumption that the Qurʾān is to be treated as a single work, the *sūras* and *āyas* of which constitute parts of a unified whole. These parts were brought together by an intentional process which makes it feasible to understand some in the light of others, and to draw conclusions about the corpus as a whole. This process of composition and compilation must be attributed to a single source, such that it can be said that "the author knows best his own intent". Moreover, the Qurʾān comprises a discrete corpus in which nothing is extraneous or absent.

Angelika Neuwirth distinguishes between the pre-canonical *qurʾān* ("a chain of oral communications"), and the "closed text" and "fixed corpus" known after the Prophet's era as the *muṣḥaf*. This analysis is, she notes, in contrast with the tendency in Quranic Studies (which thus "reflects Islamic tradition") to consider it "a text pre-conceived, so to speak, by an author" who may have been a single person or a group.[1] Neuwirth advocates a "diachronic" reading of these materials in order to reveal their dialogical engagement with their immediate listeners and a variety of "unspoken intertexts" familiar to them. In any case, both diachronic and synchronic readings depend, in differing ways, upon an assumption of cohesion between parts of the Qurʾān.[2]

The endeavour of TQQ does not depend directly on belief in the divine origin of the text, although that belief is relevant to the Principles of Consistency and Authority, both discussed below. Therefore, by "single source" here, I mean either an author who is responsible for the whole corpus (with or without a messenger who delivers it), or otherwise a group cooperating in such a way that cohesion would be expected. As for the "discrete corpus", Feras Hamza takes this to be a foundational assumption of *tafsīr* in general, contra Wansborough's theory of a gradual separation of the Quranic canon from exegetical and biographical materials, as well as other

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[1] Neuwirth, 'Two Faces of the Qurʾān,' pp. 142–145.

[2] Neuwirth observes that the traditional chronological apparatus assigned to the text in the form of revelatory periods and contexts "does not prevent readers from applying a purely synchronic approach when explaining texts through others" ('Two Faces,' p. 143 note 3). Although TQQ does depend upon a largely synchronic reading, there is a role for chronology in *naskh* and that which resembles it.

words attributed to Muḥammad. In arguing for this assumption, Hamza appeals to the "peculiarity of style" and "unusual narrative form" which are displayed consistently in the Qurʾān, compared to contemporaneous materials. [3] By "neither extraneous or absent", I mean that there neither are there any non-Quranic passages between its covers, nor is there anything outside those covers which ought to be part of any intraquranic analysis.

### 3.1.2 – Unity in Islamic Scholarship

In Chapter 1, we encountered the grammarian Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī's description of the whole Qurʾān as "like a single *sūra*". This was used to support the view that the negating particle *lā* at the beginning of Sūrat al-Qiyāma (Q 75:1) refutes speech cited elsewhere in the Qurʾān, *viz.* the Meccans' denial of resurrection.[4] This idea was explored further by Abū Isḥāq al-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388) in his seminal *uṣūl al-fiqh* work, *Al-Muwāfaqāt*. After noting his theological stance that God's speech (*kalām*) is a perfect transcendental unity[5], he observes how similar may be said of the Qurʾān as people experience it:

> It is correct to say that it is one (*wāḥid*) in the aforementioned sense, namely that the understanding of each part is dependent on other parts in one way or another, so various parts clarify (*tabyīn*) each other. This is to the extent that much of it cannot be understood fully and properly without recourse to the explanation (*tafsīr*) of another passage or *sūra*… Something which has this feature can certainly [be described as] a single speech (*kalām wāḥid*), so the Qurʾān is a single speech in this sense.[6]

This discussion follows the author's detailed argument for the internal cohesion of individual *sūras*, in which he states:

> Sūrat al-Baqara, for example, is a single speech in terms of its structure (*naẓm*). It contains various types of discourse scattered throughout: some act as a preface or introduction to a main point; others as an emphasis or completion; others as the [main

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[3] Hamza, 'Tafsīr and Unlocking the Historical Qur'an' in Bauer (ed.), p. 25.

[4] Ibn Hishām, *Mughnī l-Labīb*, p. 207.

[5] *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 3/420. Wael Hallaq argues that, in this respect, Shāṭibī "came closer to the doctrine of the exegetes than to that of fellow legal scholars" ('The Primacy of the Qurʾān in Shāṭibī's Legal Theory,' in Hallaq and Little (eds.), *Islamic Studies*, pp. 71, 75–76).

[6] *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 3/420.

point] intended by the revelation, namely to establish the various categories of rulings; still others as a conclusion which refer to what preceded in order to emphasise, etc.[7]

However, Shāṭibī goes on to state that it is "more evident" to say that these *sūras* do not, together, constitute one complete discourse, in that they have been separated by the *basmala* formula ("In the name of God…").[8] The more compelling argument he advances is that "most verses" were revealed in response to situations and contexts (*asbāb*) such that "their independent revelation shows that they can be understood in isolation [from each other]".[9] A response to this could be that the previously revealed texts formed part of the very context which made it possible for the new locutions to be understood (intertextually) before becoming part of a corpus (then studied intratextually). We return to this issue shortly.

The reference above to the doctrine of unity of divine speech leads us to discuss another doctrine which has implications for the Principle of Unity, namely the primordial inscription of the Qurʾān in the heavenly tablet known as *al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*, *umm al-kitāb* or *al-kitāb al-maknūn*.[10] It is held that the piecemeal revelations to Muḥammad were from a complete and unified version, and that the eventual compilation of the written text upon earth is, in some sense, a reconstruction of that prior unity. The traditions pertaining to this can be found in works of exegesis under the verses which indicate that the Qurʾān was "sent down" at one specific time, whether the month of Ramaḍān (Q 2:185), or on a "blessed night" (Q 44:3) generally identified with the Night of Glory (*laylat al-qadr*, Q 97:1). How is it said to be revealed at this specific time, when it is known that its proclamation and compilation spanned two decades? The answer is presented in the form of successive revelations: first from the Tablet to the "lowest heaven" as a single unit (at both stages), and then successively from the lowest heaven to the Prophet's heart as appropriate to the needs of its first hearers.

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[7] *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 3/415.

[8] *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 3/420. The editor and commentator, ʿAbd-Allāh Drāz, critiques the author's words here, pointing out that the same types of textual relation which exist within individual *sūras* (which Shāṭibī already acknowledged constitute units in their own right) can be observed across those *sūra* boundaries.

[9] *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 3/420.

[10] Translations for these include, respectively: the Preserved Tablet, the Source of the Book, and the Concealed Writ. See Q 85:22, 13:39/43:4 and 56:78 with commentaries.

The following are illustrative narrations as presented in Suyūṭī's compendium *Al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*[11]:

- Ḥākim, Bayhaqī and others narrate via Manṣūr, from Saʿīd b. Jubayr, that Ibn ʿAbbās said: "The Qurʾān was sent down on the Night of Glory as one unit (*jumlatan wāḥidatan*) to the heaven of this world (*samāʾ al-dunyā*), and it was [as though among] the positions of the stars (*bi-mawāqiʿ al-nujūm*).[12] [Then] God would send it down upon His Messenger piece by piece."
- Ḥākim and Bayhaqī also narrate, along with Nasāʾī, via Dāwūd b. Abī Hind, from ʿIkrima, that Ibn ʿAbbas said: "The Qurʾān was sent down as one unit to the nearest heaven (*al-samāʾ al-dunyā*) on the Night of Glory, then it was sent down thereafter over twenty years." Then he recited: "They cannot put any argument to you without Our bringing you the truth and the best explanation" (Q 25:33) and "It is a recitation that We have revealed in parts, so that you can recite it to people at intervals; We have sent it down little by little" (Q 17:106).

Our interest in these traditions is primarily that they establish the concept of unity of the Qurʾān, such that it could be sent down as "one unit" before being revealed piecemeal in accordance with earthly contexts and concerns. Despite the divergence of opinions concerning the precise meaning of these and similar narrations, which Suyūṭī presents and discusses, this basic point appears to be uncontroversial in classical works.[13]

The quotation above refers to Quranic verses pertinent to the unified nature of the Qurʾān versus its piecemeal revelation. The first quotation is Q 25:33 (in the second narration), but in fact an expression from the preceding verse is found in the first narration, namely "*jumlatan wāḥidatan*"; the verse implicitly accepts the unbelievers' contention that the Qurʾān is not being sent in that manner, whereas the narration from Ibn ʿAbbās (who is presumed to speak on prophetic authority) has it that the Qurʾān was indeed sent in that manner: but in a stage prior to its gradual revelation to the Prophet. The verses together read: "The disbelievers also say, 'Why was the Quran not

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[11] In Chapter 16, "Modality of its Sending Down" (Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān*, 1/268 ff.); cf. the grossly inaccurate translations by Michael Schub in *The Perfect Guide Vol. 1* (p. 91 ff.). See also: Sakhāwī, *Jamāl al-Qurrāʾ*, p. 152 ff.; Abū Shāma, *Al-Murshid al-Wajīz*, p. 31 ff.; and Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān*, p. 132 ff.

[12] This expression is found in Q 56:75, which some commentators interpret in relation to the Qurʾān's revelation dispersed in time, as the stars are dispersed in space. Abū Shāma al-Maqdisī (d. 665/1268), one of Suyūṭī's sources for this discussion, explains that *nujūm* refers to instalments, as the term is used in transactions. The *mawāqiʿ* ("falling times") refer to the occasions of revelation (*Al-Murshid al-Wajīz*, p. 38).

[13] However, see ʿAbbās, *Itqān al-Burhān*, 1/100 ff. for a critical discussion of multiple revelations.

sent down to him all at once?' We sent it in this way to strengthen your heart [Prophet]; We gave it to you in gradual revelation. They cannot put any argument (*mathal*) to you without Our bringing you the truth and the best explanation (*tafsīr*)" (Q 25:32-33). It should be noted that there is no mention or negation here of a prior heavenly transference, but instead the wisdom of its gradual revelation is explained with reference to two recipients: the Prophet and the people. The other verse cited in the narration, 17:106, focuses upon the latter.

Other significant verses in this connection use the term *tafṣīl*, which, according to some exegetes, describes the process of fragmentation of a pre-established Book.[14] Māturīdī quotes the following explanation of Q 11:1, which contrasts a prior *iḥkām* (perfection)[15] with a subsequent *tafṣīl* of its verses:

> *Fuṣṣilat*, meaning the verses came separately in the revelatory process, i.e. piece by piece according to events and circumstances, not as one totality. Had it been so, people would have needed to know the occasion and context of each verse, and [to distinguish] specific import [from] the universal. The revelation in response to events and circumstances allowed them to know all of this without the need for explanation.[16]

We shall return to these latter comments when discussing the challenge posed to the Principle of Unity by the contextual aspect of revelation described as *asbāb al-nuzūl*. The relevant consideration here is the contrast between two stages and the affirmation of the essential unity of the scripture's verses and parts.

The discussion so far has revolved around some key terms and theological concepts. The essential oneness of divine speech is taken as a basis for the primordial unity of the Qur'ān before its revelation. If integrity of the compilation process is assumed, such that the scripture was reconstituted as revelation intended, then it follows that its verses and chapters relate to each other as parts of a whole. For scholars approaching the Qur'ān uncommitted to such doctrines, the matter of its compilation is essentially a historical question; however, clues within the text can form part of the

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[14] See Saleh, 'A Piecemeal Qur'ān,' p. 48; and Sinai, 'Qur'ānic self-referentiality as a strategy of self-authorization' in Wild (ed.), *Self-Referentiality in the Qur'ān*, p. 120. Austin Droge (*The Qur'ān: A New Annotated Translation*, p. 80) notes that *tafṣīl* of God's verses, in this and previous scriptures, is a thread through Sūrat al-An'ām (verses 55, 97-98, 114, 119, 126, 154).

[15] Cf. the use of this term in opposition to *tashābuh* (discussed in Section 3.3.1 below).

[16] *Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān*, 7/125.

argument for the integrity of its compilation and preservation.[17] In a similar way, internal, literary evidence can be employed to support (or critique) the assumption that there is cohesion and unity between various parts of the Qurʾān. This is the approach we shall take in the next section with reference to a range of scholars and literary theories.

### 3.1.3 – Evidence for Unity

<u>(a) The Need for Clarification</u>

In Chapter 1, I argued that the more convincing explanations provided by Muslim hermeneuts for the validity – and even superiority – of the intraquranic method of exegesis were those which appealed to the nature of the Qurʾān as a text and corpus. This is clearly illustrated by the important citation from Ibn Taymiyya's *Muqaddima*:

> The most correct method is for the Qurʾān to be explained using the Qurʾān; what is left **unclear** in one place has been **explained** in another, and what has been made **brief** in one place has been **expanded** in another.[18]

Without any reference to the exegete, he has attributed the qualities of *ijmāl* (unclearness)[19] and *ikhtiṣār* (brevity) to parts of the text and contrasted these, respectively, with *tafsīr* (clarification)[20] and *basṭ* (expansion). Thus the appeal is to two phenomena in tandem: texts which require clarification or expansion, and others which provide these.[21] This feature of the corpus may be considered as indicative of

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[17] See Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qurʾān,' p. 288, where the author concludes that his study "reveals the stylistic continuity and distinctiveness of the text as a whole" and that "style backs the hypothesis of one author".

[18] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, p. 93.

[19] As explained in Chapter 1, I have opted to describe these as "unclear" to reflect the breadth of examples provided in the sources. Ḥanafī scholars use the term *mujmal* for a species of *mubham*, namely a text whose meaning is unclear in the absence of clarification from the author (Ṣāliḥ, *Tafsīr al-Nuṣūṣ*, 1/230); the other schools use the term more broadly to encompass any text whose denotation is unclear (ibid, 1/271). See 4.1 below.

[20] Most likely, Ibn Taymiyya is using this term interchangeably with *bayān/tabyīn*. The *mubayyan* text is that which has been clarified in one way or another (Ṣāliḥ, *Tafsīr al-Nuṣūṣ*, 1/27–44). The *mufassar* in the terminology of the Ḥanafīs is a text which accepts no modification or reinterpretation (except for abrogation) due to its meaning being fixed either by its immediate context or a separate text (ibid, 1/140–142). If (for argument's sake) Ibn Taymiyya intended this technical meaning, it would imply that the explanation derived through TQQ is authoritative and final.

[21] Similar can be said of an earlier discussion by Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004) of the phenomenon of *iqtiṣāṣ* (which he relates to the concept of *naẓm* of the Qurʾān), which means to "follow up" an idea or term expressed in one verse with allusions to that concept in other verses. This implies a chronology between the usages. See *Al-Ṣāḥibī fī Fiqh al-Lugha* (p. 181 ff.) – this was later cited by Zarkashī (*Al-Burhān*, p. 635)

an intentional relationship between the two categories, i.e. that the existence of detail elsewhere made it unproblematic for certain verses to be expressed summarily – and this is the very Principle of Unity we are describing. When this is assumed, it follows that expansion upon unclear passages should be sought within the broader corpus.

The existence of *mujmal* texts in the Qurʾān was documented by Zarkashī in *Al-Burhān* (within Chapter 41, concerning *Tafsīr* and *Taʾwīl*), then in a distinct chapter of *Al-Itqān* (46) by Suyūṭī. The latter mentions that the existence of unclear texts was disputed by Dāwūd, the leader of the literalist Ẓāhirites.[22] He further alludes to a debate over the possibility of such texts remaining without clarification: Suyūṭī states that "the most correct [opinion] is that [texts] upon which action is predicated may not remain [unclear]; this does not apply to other [types of text, e.g. narratives]."[23] As for the clarification (*tafsīr* or *tabyīn*) of these texts, such can be found in the same verse, in its surrounding passage, in unconnected verses elsewhere in the Qurʾān, or in the Sunna.[24] The causes of *ijmāl* and types of *bayān* were discussed in detail by Zarkashī and expanded further by Shinqīṭī with reference to his own TQQ exegesis.[25]

The inference I am making from all these discussions is a sense in which the Qurʾān by its very nature seems to demand intratextual study.[26] The existence of unclear texts leads the exegete to seek clarification; knowing about potential clarifications within the Quranic corpus would surely invite him to give them priority over other sources of clarification, even if he did not seek after these intratexts deliberately. In turn, this feature of the text would build his conviction that these passages were intended to be read together for holistic understanding. Seeing the corpus in this way has led numerous authorities to state that "the Qurʾān explains itself (*yufassiru baʿḍuhū baʿḍan*)", as described in Chapter 1. I consider this statement –

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and Suyūṭī (*Al-Itqān*, 5/1747); see Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qurʾan*, p. 164. However, the role of chronology is not usually addressed in these discussions. Ibn al-Wazīr (d. 840/1436), for example, defines TQQ as: "When something is mentioned repeatedly in the Book, and one passage is clearer and more detailed than another" (*Īthār al-Ḥaqq*, 1/248–250).

[22] *Al-Itqān*, 4/1426.

[23] *Al-Itqān*, 4/1426.

[24] Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān*, p. 348 ff.

[25] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, pp. 7–15; I summarised this in Chapter 1. See more on Zarkashī in 3.4.1 below.

[26] Cf. the concept of "neediness" used to support use of external sources to explain the Qurʾān, especially the Sunna (below in 3.4.3).

which seems to give agency to the text in place of the interpreter – to be, in reality, a statement about the cohesive nature of the Qurʾān as a whole, and the dependency of some parts upon others.

If this perspective on the Qurʾān as a corpus may be derived from the simple fact of *mujmal* and *bayān* scattered throughout, it follows even more clearly from three realities which I shall outline presently. The first is the self-referential nature of the text, and, consequently, its self-descriptions in terms of unity and diversity. The second is the existence of explicit cross-references between passages of the scripture. The third, as some scholars argue, is the structural unity within each *sūra* and how these are arranged in a way which suggests a predetermined structure of the Qurʾān as a whole.

## (b) Self-Referentiality

The phenomenon of self-referentiality (or metatextuality) has been the subject of numerous recent studies[27]: the central idea is that the Qurʾān displays a kind of "self-awareness" by referring to itself in various terms, and to some of its constituent parts: the *sūra* and *āya*. These phenomena may be interpreted in various ways, including to support the principle under discussion here, in that the Qurʾān presents an account of itself as a single "book". Aspects of this have been noted as unique to the Qurʾān, as argued here by Stefan Wild:

> But the Qurʾān is unique in that much of the canonical text itself is already exegesis, much more so than other comparable holy texts. In the case of the Qurʾān, self-referentiality means more than the concentration of much of the text on its own textuality. Its self-referentiality predates the canonization of the text. In the Qurʾān, exegesis itself becomes scripture.[28]

In this connection, it is pertinent to consider some Quranic passages which appear to affirm its unity and intratextuality. A previous discussion touched on the concept of *tafṣīl*; another relevant term is *taṣrīf al-āyāt* (or *al-amthāl* etc.), as found in nine verses

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[27] A fore-runner in this respect is Daniel Madigan's *The Qurʾān's Self-Image*. He contributed also to Wild (ed.), *Self-Referentiality in the Qurʾān*.

[28] 'The Self-Referentiality of the Qurʾān: Sura 3:7 as an Exegetical Challenge,' in McAuliffe et al (eds.), *With Reverence for the Word*, p. 432.

of the Qurʾān, three in Sūrat al-Anʿām.[29] The Farāhian exegete Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī argues in his introduction that the explicit mention by the Qurʾān of this term – which means "turning" or "modification" – implies that its repetitions and variations are neither redundant nor haphazard.[30] In the same context, Iṣlāḥī cites Q 39:23 to highlight the Qurʾān's self-description as both *mutashābih* and *mathānī*: the former term indicates the internal consistency and overall resemblance of parts of the Qurʾān to each other.[31]

## (c) Diachronic Cross-References

Coming back to the idea of the Qurʾān "explaining itself", there is a category of verses which give this appearance most explicitly, namely those which make direct allusion to other passages – albeit without referencing names of *sūras*, for example. As such, they have the appearance of exegesis, even before being so deployed by an exegete. This cross-referencing, sometimes described as *iḥāla*[32], can be categorised into three types: (a) the later verse provides clarification for an earlier one; (b) the later verse alludes to the earlier one, which functions as its elaboration; (c) there is no clarification or elaboration, but a parallel is established. Whichever of these may be the case, the phenomenon is illustrative of the intratextuality of the Qurʾān and supports the motivation to understand its parts in reference to each other.

The examples I have selected pertain to Sūrat al-Anʿām; some were mentioned previously. A clear reference is made in 4:140 to an earlier revelation: "As He has already revealed to you (*pl.*) in the Scripture, if you hear people denying and ridiculing God's revelation, do not sit with them unless they start to talk of other things, or else you yourselves will be like them…" – this is identified uncontroversially with 6:68-69, which contains this very ruling. Most exegetes considered 4:140 a confirmation of

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[29] See Dakake in *The Study Quran*, p. 356 and Wild, 'An Arabic Recitation: The Meta-Linguistics of Qurʾānic Revelation' in Wild (ed.), *Self-Referentiality*, p. 145.

[30] *Pondering Over the Qurʾān Vol. 1*, p. 41.

[31] *Pondering*, 1/41, and see the Urdu edition of *Tadabbur*, 6/582, for his commentary on this verse. The term *mathānī* is often understood to indicate repetition – hence the combined meaning is that there is variety and consistency in how subjects are spread through the Qurʾān; but Iṣlāḥī argues that this refers to the pairing of *sūras* (see his commentary on Q 15:87).

[32] This term is used by some modern authors including Shinqīṭī. It is also used for the linguistic concept of "reference", as in Anīs, *Al-Iḥāla fī l-Qurʾān al-Karīm*.

the original ruling, whereas Muqātil argued that there is abrogation (i.e. firm prohibition after mere discouragement). Brief mention was made also of 16:118 – "We forbade to the Jews what We have recounted to you earlier…"[33] – which exegetes link back to 6:146, which specifies "every animal with claws, and the fat of cattle and sheep (etc.)".

For reference made in al-Anʿām to an external passage, I outlined the opinions concerning 6:119, "He has already fully explained what He has forbidden you". This is often linked to 5:3, but that is generally agreed to be a late revelation. Some linked it to 16:115, given that al-Naḥl is classed as Meccan and therefore could be argued to precede al-Anʿām. However, this complicates the preceding claim that 16:118 refers back to 6:146, a point which Shinqīṭī actually uses as evidence for al-Naḥl being a later revelation.[34] As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the matter could be resolved by positing staggered revelation of these verses, rather than one *sūra* being revealed prior to the other in full. Assuming it is a mutual cross-reference, this raises an interesting question concerning the relationship between the two *sūras*.

## (d) Synchronic Structure

The preceding discussion highlights the significance of diachronic reading of the Qurʾān, which is unavoidable when analysing passages which make explicit mention of "earlier" revelations. On the other hand, the *muṣḥaf* today has a received structure, in which the *āyas* and *sūras* are arranged in the familiar way. It is now common for academic studies to explore the compositional logic of individual *sūras*, as the study of "the Qurʾān as literature" receives greater attention.[35] This has been taking place for longer in Muslim exegetical scholarship, as represented in discussions of *munāsabāt* (linear connections and flow) and the later theories of *naẓm*/*niẓām* (coherence, structure) advanced by Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī.[36] Identifying the arrangement of a particular *sūra* (or the broader structure of the Qurʾān) may be employed to various

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[33] Ali Quli Qara'i translation.

[34] *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, p. 269.

[35] For a round-up of individual *sūra* studies by scholars such as Neuwirth, Robinson and Cuypers, see Randhawa, 'A Bibliography of Studies in English on the Coherence and Structure of the Qur'an's Suras' on the Bayyinah Blog (http://blog.bayyinah.com/nazm-bibliography – accessed 1/9/2017).

[36] See Chapter 4 for more on both topics.

ends: it may tell the researcher something about the history of its compilation, and may be used as evidence for the integrity of the processes of canonisation and preservation. The latter is not exclusive to apologetic contexts, but a stronger claim is that the very fact of a large corpus such as the Qurʾān having a coherent final structure, despite having been assembled from piecemeal revelations, is indicative of a miraculous source or divine hand in its composition.[37] The other key purpose in structural analysis is to inform interpretation, and this is the central aim of Farāhī, who argues for Quranic structure in *Dalāʾil al-Niẓām*. In the present context, my purpose in raising this issue is a combination of the two, namely: that evidence for intentional structure in the Qurʾān lends support to the Principle of Unity which maintains that it is a single corpus; this, in turn, has implications for interpreting any part of the text.

According to Farāhī, an understanding of the organisation of the Qurʾān and its ideas must be derived from the text itself. Unfortunately, his writings on this topic were published in an incomplete form; however, the following excerpt illustrates his conception of how organisational coherence and unity is deduced from the Qurʾān:

> The Quranic text itself demonstrates in the majority of *sūras* a concern for certain features not found in any discourse which is assembled without care for organisation. One such feature is the [rhyming] verse-endings (*fawāṣil*) found in numerous long *sūras*. Another is repeated verses [motifs] as in al-Mursalāt (Q 77) and al-Raḥmān (Q 55). Another is for verses to be connected by means of a style of wording (*uslūb ẓāhir*), such as the verse 9:67, "The male and female hypocrites (*al-munāfiqūn wa-l-munāfiqāt*) belong to each other (*baʿḍuhum min baʿḍ*)" being followed by numerous verses connected by such wording. Likewise, meanings may connect to each other in an obvious fashion, as you see in stories [within a single *sūra*].[38]

These considerations are all linguistic and formal; however, Farāhī states that it is the semantic keys which demonstrate *niẓām* more compellingly, yet identifying the latter requires deeper reflection.[39] A core aspect of his theory concerns the unity of the *sūra*; he considers each *sūra* to revolve around an axis known as the *ʿamūd* (literally: pillar). Despite acknowledging that deducing the unifying *ʿamūd* is extremely difficult

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[37] This motivation is implicit in the structural presentations in Khan and Randhawa, *Divine Speech*.

[38] Marginal note appended to *Rasāʾil al-Imām al-Farāhī*, p. 39.

[39] *Rasāʾil*, p. 39.

(particularly for the longer and more complex *suras*), Farāhī claims that its discovery is "like the emergence of dawn by which the entire *sura* is illuminated".[40]

The Farāhian school further maintains that the *suras* are arranged in groups (and pairs, according to Iṣlāḥī), amounting to a meaningful structure for the entire Qurʾān.[41] Rather than discussing them in detail here, my purpose is simply to highlight that such claims, particularly at their most intuitive and well-evidenced, provide justification for treating the Qurʾān as a unified whole.

## 3.1.4 – Challenges to this Principle

It has already become apparent that the Principle of Unity has to contend with the historical process of the Qurʾān's canonisation. Moreover, any reading which appeals to the structure of the Qurʾān's verses and chapters, and to the textual environment of any particular passage under examination, may also be in tension with the historical approach suggested by the genre of *asbāb al-nuzūl*, the circumstances and contexts (or more literally: causes) of revelation.[42] Muslim tradition holds that revelation came gradually over two periods of time corresponding to the Meccan and Medinan phases of Muḥammad's prophetic career. Revelations would come to him in fragments as short as a verse or less, and as long as a whole *sura*. The *asbāb* literature provides narrations concerning particular passages and the times, contexts and questions which occasioned their revelation. Exegetes incorporate such *maʾthūr* (transmitted) data, to varying extents, into their study of the Qurʾān; this involves assessing strength, relevance and impact, and sometimes negotiating conflicting reports.

A strong dependence on *asbāb* may lead to an "atomistic" approach to interpretation, in which the historical context of each verse is given precedence over

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[40] *Dalāʾil al-Niẓām* (in *Rasāʾil*, pp. 88–89). See also Mir, *Coherence*, p. 34.

[41] Farāhī, *Dalāʾil* (in *Rasāʾil*, p. 103 ff.); Iṣlāḥī, *Pondering*, p. 38 ff., and see Mir, *Coherence*, pp. 34–35. Further work on these ideas is found in Farrin, *Structure and Qur'anic Interpretation*, p. 100 ff. and Khan and Randhawa, *Divine Speech*, p. 217 ff.

[42] Such content is found in *tafsīr* works and specialised collections and overlaps with the *ḥadīth* corpus. A modern work which attempts to gather and grade all such narrations is Hilālī and Naṣr, *Al-Istīʿāb fī Bayān al-Asbāb*. Another work with a more limited scope but more focus on methodology is Muzaynī, *Al-Muḥarrar fī Asbāb Nuzūl al-Qurʾān*. I have previously mentioned *Mawsūʿat al-Tafsīr al-Maʾthūr*, the most comprehensive to date; it includes verdicts from Ṭabarī and Ibn ʿAṭiyya but would benefit from further exegetical insights.

its compiled context. Such a reading, in effect, seeks to restore chronology or historicity to a text which was "flattened" by the process of canonisation. Efforts are directed to seeking (perhaps, at times, hypothesising) historical contexts rather than reading between the lines of the text itself.[43] A commitment to this approach would lead one to agree with the critique levelled at those who looked for *munāsaba* between verses and chapters, pointing out, in the words of Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām quoted in Chapter 1, that connecting verses that were revealed separately is:

> …a task which cannot be fulfilled except with flimsy [hypotheses] which ought to be avoided in reference to any fine speech, let alone the very finest. The Qurʾān was revealed over a period of twenty-odd years with various rulings and in a variety of contexts (*asbāb*), and such cannot then be connected together.[44]

The point being made is that contiguous verses which were revealed separately are bound more strongly to their respective time-contexts than to their position in the text; there is, therefore, no significance for the interpreter in their having been placed together subsequently. This would apply *a fortiori* to verses in different chapters, separated by both time and space.

As noted previously, the doctrine of the Preserved Tablet is integral to resolving this tension between cohesion and fragmentation. It may be visualised like a jigsaw puzzle from which pieces are sent to a recipient in an apparently chaotic sequence, then this recipient must place the pieces in their appropriate places until the puzzle is reassembled in its original form. The image here requires that the recipient (the Prophet) be instructed with these positions, and that he ensure that they are placed correctly as they arrive: this corresponds to the doctrine of *tawqīf* (divine mandate). One expression of this is in Zarkashī's citation from Manfalūṭī, mentioned previously in Chapter 1:

> Those who said that one should not seek after the contextual connection (*munāsaba*) for Quranic verses, in that they relate to unconnected events, were mistaken. The reality of the matter is that their revelation (*tanzīl*) [was] in accordance with events, but their compiled order (*tartīb*) is in accordance with [divine] wisdom (*ḥikma*). Hence the *muṣḥaf* [in our hands], like the *ṣuḥuf* [written by scribe-angels] is in agreement

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[43] See Farāhī on why scholars turn away from *naẓm* in *Dalāʾil al-Niẓām* (*Rasāʾil*, pp. 34–38).

[44] Quoted in Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 1/6.

with the contents of the Concealed Writ (*al-kitāb al-maknūn*) [see Q 56:78]. Its *suras* and *āyas* are arranged by divine mandate.[45]

Manfalūṭī goes on to compare this situation to a scholar who is asked about various issues and responds with Quranic verses according to their relevance; when he comes to recite the Book for himself, he follows only the compiled order which is "as it was sent down in one totality to *bayt al-ʿizza* (the noble abode)".[46] After citing this, Zarkashī notes that the *tawqīf* opinion is the preponderant one (*rājiḥ*) in Muslim scholarship.[47]

Knowledge of *asbāb* has long been emphasised as part of Quranic and exegetical sciences, although classical works have also acknowledged the potential tension between revelatory and compositional contexts, expressed in terms of *ʿumūm al-lafẓ* (universality of wording) versus *khuṣūṣ al-sabab* (particularity of referent as indicated by revelatory context).[48] The quote from Māturīdī above sheds light on the utility of the *asbāb* literature: it is an attempt to reconstruct the contextual knowledge of the Prophet's Companions gained through witnessing the revelation and its engagement with specific events and questions. In this connection, scholars quote a saying from ʿAbd-Allāh b. Masʿūd: "There is no verse in God's Book except that I know concerning whom it was revealed and where it was revealed."[49] In the study of *balāgha*, the rhetoricians refer to the concept of *maqām*, the situation in which speech is uttered, and the need for that speech to be appropriate. However, it is straightforward to argue that, while the original situation helps to clarify the intent of the speaker (or divine locution), the very nature of the Qurʾān's arrangement (non-chronological) indicates that its import is not to be limited by revelatory context. Rather, once the verse 'slots in' to its pre-determined position in the *sūra*, it may be understood on its own terms, and in light of its surrounding verses.[50]

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[45] *Al-Burhān*, p. 42.

[46] *Al-Burhān*, p. 43. This term corresponds to the "lowest heaven" in earlier quotations; see Zurqānī, *Manāhil al-ʿIrfān*, 1/37–38.

[47] *Al-Burhān*, 43. The difference of opinion pertains to the order of *suras* overall, not the order of *āyas* within them – see Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 1/278 ff. See also Farāhī, *Dalāʾil* (in *Rasāʾil*, p. 52).

[48] See for example Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān*, 1/196 ff.

[49] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, p. 96.

[50] See 4.4 below regarding "Contextual Methods".

## *Sabab*-Scepticism (Synchronism)

Having noted the nuances in exegetical scholarship generally, it is pertinent to describe the tendency among some exegetes to limit the use of *asbāb* explicitly. Some clear examples are found within Indian scholarship, especially in the TQQ works already explored in Chapter 2.[51] Critical ideas concerning *asbāb* in the hermeneutical treatise of Shāh Walī-Allāh Dihlawī were quoted at length by Amritsarī at the beginning of his exegesis.[52] Here I summarise those points from two separate sections of *Al-Fawz al-Kabīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*. Some of Dihlawī's remarks concern the compilations in which *asbāb* material is to be found: on the one hand, dedicated collections by the likes of Ibn Isḥāq, Wāqidī and Kalbī contain a majority of unreliable narrations according to the standards of *ḥadīth* scholarship[53]; on the other hand, the broader *ḥadīth* collections mix *asbāb* with extraneous material of little relevance to the exegete.[54]

Even when the relevant reports are identified and authenticated, Dihlawī prescribes caution in understanding the import of certain recurrent expressions. For example, the Companions may say that a verse "was revealed concerning (*nazalat fī*) such-and-such", yet this may not describe the actual context of revelation. Rather, it may mean that the verse – or the core ruling it expresses – applies to that situation (which may even have occurred later).[55] Indeed, a narrator might describe an incident to illustrate the kind of people concerning whom the verse was revealed, without intending to claim that the verse came at that specific time and in direct reference to those described.[56] The Prophet may have recited that verse at a later occasion due to its relevance (even partial), and this may be described with the expression "…and so God revealed (*fa-anzala*) this verse". This is because these words can conceivably

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[51] My choice of al-Anʿām for the case study was not ideal for a comparison of how *asbāb* reports were treated by the various exegetes, because this *sūra* is often considered to have been revealed completely, or mostly, as one unit. Nevertheless, Hilālī and Naṣr list reports in relation to twenty-one verses or passages of al-Anʿām (*Al-Istīʿāb*, 2/130–166). The majority are graded as "weak" or "fabricated". Muzaynī in *Al-Muḥarrar* (pp. 523–537) only discusses four cases drawn from the major *ḥadīth* collections.

[52] Amritsarī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 39.

[53] *Al-Fawz al-Kabīr*, p. 60.

[54] *Al-Fawz*, p. 55.

[55] *Al-Fawz*, p. 55. See also Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān*, 1/208.

[56] *Al-Fawz*, p. 56.

refer to the Prophet's own divinely guided reasoning, by which he applied an earlier verse to a new situation; or it may be that the verse was sent down more than once.[57] Another type of report describes chronology, such as Ibn ʿUmar saying that Q 9:34 was revealed "before *zakāt*". In cases like this, Dihlawī maintains that it refers to conceptual rather than literal priority – hence 9:34 is conceptually prior to the detailed discourses on *zakāt* despite being a late revelation.[58]

Closer to the purpose of this discussion is a further set of problems for taking *asbāb* accounts at face value presented by the nature of Quranic discourse, specifically the contextual flow of verses in their compositional order. Sometimes one verse causes a question to arise in the listener's mind, so the next verse addresses that question. The early authorities would sometimes express that question as though it were the *sabab*, even though it may not have been given voice at the time. Indeed, it is often implausible that a Quranic passage was revealed in separate portions as the *asbāb* reports imply.[59] If the preceding point seems to attribute such statements to the *ijtihād* and inference of the early authorities, a further claim by Dihlawī goes even further: he suggests that they would sometimes notice an obscure allusion in the text and describe a context that could conceivably explain it – then later scholars mistook those for actual claims of *asbāb*.[60]

For Dihlawī, the *asbāb* reports, despite these inherent complications, are indispensable for the *mufassir* in several situations. When there is extensive reference to events at the time of the Prophet, such as battles, then the story must be sourced and summarised as part of the *tafsīr*.[61] Furthermore, any account which modifies the apparent sense of the verse must be taken into account, such as particularisation (*takhṣīṣ*).[62] Whenever a verse presents a puzzle which requires contextualisation, the *sabab* literature can provide the appropriate solution (*tawjīh*). An example is the reason

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[57] *Al-Fawz*, p. 56. See Faḍl ʿAbbās' critique of the claim that certain verses were revealed more than once (*Itqān al-Burhān*, 1/132 ff.).

[58] *Al-Fawz*, p. 58. This may mean that it refers to the broader vice of hoarding wealth despite pressing communal needs, i.e. its revelation and message do not follow from the specific obligation of *zakāt*.

[59] *Al-Fawz*, p. 57.

[60] *Al-Fawz*, p. 98.

[61] *Al-Fawz*, p. 97.

[62] *Al-Fawz*, p. 56.

for the expression *lā junāḥ* ("There is no blame") being applied to the obligatory pilgrimage rite of walking between the Ṣafā and Marwa hills: this is explained by the report which states that some Arabs used to avoid these hills (due to the presence of idols).[63]

These detailed remarks from a scholar who preceded Farāhī can aid in understanding the latter's motivation in minimising the incorporation of *asbāb* reports in his *niẓām/naẓm* approach to interpretation. In his view, the context of revelation should be deduced from the text itself, "just as an expert doctor identifies the ailment a patient is suffering from by simply analysing the medicines mentioned in the prescription by another doctor".[64] He illustrates his argument with appeal to the essential nature of eloquent and effective discourse:

> We experience that an expert orator delivers a speech regarding conditions and requirements before him, in such a way that he does not mention a particular issue, yet his speech covers all the pertinent issues. Likewise, sometimes he mentions a particular person or incident, but his address is all embracing and universal in nature.[65]

In light of Dihlawī's analysis of the *ijtihād*-based statements of the early authorities, Farāhī's proposal to deduce contexts from the text is less radical than it may appear. Moreover, he is willing to consider "external" reports of *asbāb al-nuzūl*, but only those which are "in harmony with the context of the *sūra* rather than those which disrupt its coherence".[66]

With this, I have demonstrated how some of the scholars who wished to prioritise the Qurʾān as a resource for its own interpretation have dealt practically and theoretically with the challenge posed by external *asbāb* reports which have the potential to fragment the text and call into question its overall cohesion and unity.

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[63] *Al-Fawz*, pp. 58–59. See Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 1/92–93.

[64] *Exordium to Coherence in the Quran*, p. 31.

[65] *Exordium*, p. 32.

[66] *Exordium*, p. 33.

# 3.2 − The Principle of Consistency

The second of the four principles which, as I argue, govern, underpin and justify intratextual exegesis of the Qurʾān, is the Principle of Consistency, which is the negation of contradiction. This principle follows closely from the Principle of Unity, in that it assumes that the "single author" did not fall into contradiction upon producing the series of pronouncements, narratives and rulings subsequently compiled in scriptural form. Therefore, every verse of the Qurʾān is consistent with every other, even if there appears to be any conflict or contradiction. It is not unreasonable to assume consistency on the part of any author who is self-aware and has the means to keep track of his various statements. However, the stronger position – one which rules out the possibility of contradiction altogether – relies upon a stronger belief in the author, particularly in a book of the length and complexity of the Qurʾān.[67] Certainly, the Principle of Consistency is a straightforward implication of belief in the scripture's divine origin (verbatim) and protection.

## 3.2.1 – Consistency in Islamic Scholarship

To illustrate this principle and assumption as expressed in Muslim tradition, we refer first to chapters in *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* works which address seeming conflicts, such as Chapter 35 of *Al-Burhān*, entitled *Maʿrifat Mūhim al-Mukhtalif* ("Knowing [the passages] which give the impression of being contradictory"), which the author opens by saying:

> The speech of God, glory be to Him, is perfectly free (*munazzah*) from contradiction (*ikhtilāf*), as God has said: "If it had been from other than God, they would have found therein much *ikhtilāf*" (Q 4:82). However, the beginner may find that which gives the impression of contradiction while not, in reality, being so. Hence this requires resolution, just as there are works in the field of *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* clarifying how to reconcile between [conflicting texts].[68]

This comparison with the genre in *ḥadīth* studies is interesting, as it implies that the problem of contradiction gained more scholarly attention there; Zarkashī alludes to a

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[67] This could be called the Strong Consistency Principle. There is an even stronger notion of consistency that I describe at various points as "reductionism": to hold that the Qurʾān is consistent in its word usages etc. and does not deviate from these norms. This assumption does not follow from belief in divine origin, as one could equally hold that eloquent variety is a feature of divine speech.

[68] *Al-Burhān*, p. 282.

work on the Qurʾān by the Baṣran linguist Quṭrub (d. 206/821), and there does exist a genre known as *muskhil al-Qurʾān* or *mutashābih al-Qurʾān*[69], and other works focused on resolving contradictions.[70] It is clear from the titles or introductions of these various works that they were often motivated by questions, critiques and allegations directed at the Qurʾān. Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) opens his *Taʾwīl Mushkil al-Qurʾān* by citing verses (Q 18:1, 41:42) which negate any "crookedness (ʿiwaj)" or "falsehood (bāṭil)" from God's book.[71]

The concept of *ikhtilāf*, as negated in Q 4:82 cited by Zarkashī above, has been explained by the exegetes in various ways; in the context of negation, it may be argued that all of these are intended. The first is internal contradiction (*tanāquḍ*), which is most relevant here; this explanation is attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās.[72] A second is external contradiction, i.e. for the statements of the Qurʾān – including those which expose the inner motivations of the unbelievers – to be false.[73] It is straightforward to see why both should be ruled out. There is less agreement on the third view, as advanced by Zamakhsharī: that *ikhtilāf* refers to fluctuating levels of eloquence, such that only parts can be recognised as miraculous.[74] Some commentators distinguish between positive and negative *ikhtilāf*: the former is mere variation, such as between readings (*qirāʾāt*), rulings and subject matter, or in lengths of *āyas* and *sūras*.[75]

A quotation from Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 418/1027) in *Al-Burhān* summarises the strategies to be employed in cases of conflict (*taʿāruḍ*) between verses:

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[69] This term is used in two different ways in works relevant to resolving contradictions. One is the category of unclear verses delineated in Q 3:7 (see below), and therefore an alternative term for *mushkil*. The other usage (*mutashābih lafẓī*) is for passages which closely resemble each other; the differences between them may also give rise to claims of contradiction – see 4.3.1 below.

[70] See 4.3.2 below.

[71] Ibn Qutayba, *Taʾwīl Mushkil al-Qurʾān*, p. 67.

[72] See Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 6/164–165.

[73] See Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 5/138. The point about unbelievers pertains to the context of Q 4:82.

[74] Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, p. 249. Ālūsī defends this reading against criticism (without naming the critic); the translation according to his grammatical explanation would be: "They would have found much of it incongruent" (*Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 6/165).

[75] *Al-Itqān*, 4/1485.

When verses conflict and it is not possible to reconcile them[76], then resort is made to chronology (*tārīkh*) and the earlier one is abandoned in favour of the later, which constitutes abrogation (*naskh*). If chronology is unknown, yet there is consensus upon acting on one of the two verses, then this consensus demonstrates that the one so acted upon has abrogated [the other]. There is no example in the Qurʾān of two conflicting verses to which neither of these descriptions applies.[77]

This account begins with the attempt to reconcile and harmonise the conflicting texts, which may take various forms, to be outlined in Chapter 4. When that is not possible, then preponderance is given to one over another (*tarjīḥ*), in the form of abrogation. A strategy not mentioned here is to relegate one of the verses (or one conflicting reading, *qirāʾa* of a verse) to the category of *mutashābih*, such that preference is given to the one deemed to be clearer in import (hence *muḥkam*, univocal). The relevance of that dichotomy (discussed under the next principle, that of Interpretability) to strategies of resolving contradiction is further seen in this citation from Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī, who included non-contradiction among the key principles of his TQQ exegesis:

The Qurʾān, being divine speech, does not contradict itself, so it should be interpreted in that light. The Qurʾān is explicit that its equivocal (*mutashābih*) texts should be referred to the univocal (*muḥkam*), so whatever is established with certainty is made a definitive basis.[78]

## 3.2.2 – The Challenge of Abrogation

As noted above, the appeal to *naskh* (abrogation) is made when reconciliation (*jamʿ*, *tawfīq*) is not possible – this is in the context of rulings, and hence the domain of *uṣūl al-fiqh* as well as *tafsīr*. Whenever chronology can be ascertained, the later of the two rulings is taken to be in force, while the other is considered to have been replaced. Implicit in this account is an affirmation of contradiction between the two rulings. If the Principle of Consistency were to be maintained fully, it would entail withholding judgment whenever reconciliation proved too difficult. However, when exegetes affirm that only one of the two rulings can possibly be operable, based on their meanings and implications, this is to state that they are contradictory. Indeed,

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[76] In *Al-Burhān* this is "*al-tartīb*"; based on another occurrence of this word on the next page (p. 284), I take this to denote "comparison". In *Al-Itqān* (4/1484), it is "*al-tartīb wa-l-jamʿ*": comparison and reconciliation. Another manuscript of *Al-Burhān* (see p. 283 note 5) has *al-tawfīq* in place of *al-tartīb*.

[77] *Al-Burhān*, pp. 283–284.

[78] In *Rasāʾil al-Imām al-Farāhī*, p. 225.

such is made explicit in the conditions stipulated by *uṣūl* scholars for claiming instances of abrogation. The following axiom in a modern work of *qawāʿid al-tafsīr* illustrates that contradiction is a prerequisite, often supported by other evidences:

> Abrogation must be established through evidence, whether in the verse itself or via an explicit statement of the Messenger (peace be upon him) or his Companions; or consensus of the Muslims; or based on the existence of genuine contradiction (*taʿāruḍ ḥaqīqī*) along with knowledge of the chronology. This [contradiction] is simultaneously an evidence for abrogation, and a necessary condition for declaring it.[79]

Scholars have categorised *naskh* into various types, including two forms in which a verse is no longer included in the Qurʾān and no longer recited.[80] The type which is relevant to our discussion is "abrogation of the ruling, not the recited words" (*naskh al-ḥukm dūna l-tilāwa*), as this has implications for the words which remain "between the two covers", or, in other words, considered unanimously to be part of the Qurʾān. This form of *naskh* implies that certain verses have been stripped of their operability, even though a believer still gains reward for reciting them in prayer. We are also concerned only with intraquranic abrogation, rather than abrogation of – or by – the Sunna.

The essential point here is that this theory of abrogation entails that there are, in fact, contradictory verses in the Qurʾān. This could be treated as merely an exception, or the principle modified to state that "No two *muḥkam*[81] verses in the Qurʾān may contradict". One problem for this is the lack of agreement over precisely which verses are abrogated, as demonstrated and discussed below. For an exegete engaging in *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, it is necessary to delineate which verses are to be taken into account: should an abrogated verse be overlooked completely? It may be said that *naskh* is a form of TQQ, in that one verse "explains" that another is no

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[79] Sabt, *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr*, 2/292. See also Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 2/520, 542–544.

[80] These are known as *naskh al-tilāwa*, and it may be combined with *naskh al-ḥukm* such that the words and rulings are both effaced; or the ruling may be maintained despite the removal of the words from the Quranic corpus, as is frequently claimed for the "verse of stoning married adulterers" – see Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 2/547.

[81] This is used as the antonym of *mansūkh*, abrogated. The abrogating verse itself is called *nāsikh*. The other main usage of the word *muḥkam* is discussed under the next principle.

longer active in a legal sense[82]; in other words, it modifies its ruling to the utmost extent, by cancelling it. Any further explanation of the abrogated verse is for historical or literary interest, with no juristic force. The designation of the "later" verse as "abrogating (*nāsikh*)" is to point to it as the operable ruling.

Early authorities used this term more liberally to refer to various types of modification, especially *takhṣīṣ* (particularisation), which means to limit the scope of a ruling which had a universal import. In this regard, Shāṭibī says in his *Muwāfaqāt*:

> It is apparent from the statements of the early authorities (*mutaqaddimūn*) that the term *naskh* was employed in a broader meaning than that used by the jurisprudents (*uṣūliyyūn*). They used this term to describe qualifying the unqualified (*taqyīd al-muṭlaq*); particularising the universal (*takhṣīṣ al-ʿumūm*) via a connected or unconnected evidence; and clarifying the vague or unclear (*bayān al-mubham wa-l-mujmal*), just as they would use it for the cancellation of a legal ruling by a subsequent evidence [i.e. the later technical usage]. This is because all the above shares one meaning [i.e. modification of the original ruling].[83]

This insight makes claims of *naskh* extremely significant for TQQ – even for *naskh*-sceptics – as they may be seen more generally as statements connecting two verses and highlighting that one is essential to understanding the other. Another way in which these claims are significant is the implication of *taʿāruḍ* (contradiction) they contain: this implication can lead the exegete to ponder more deeply on the verses, seeking to resolve the apparent conflict, leading to new interpretations of one or both verses.[84]

## Debates over Abrogation

According to Zarkashī, the mainstream position of the Muslims has been to affirm both the possibility (*jawāz*) of abrogation occurring in the Qurʾān, and the fact

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[82] The expression used is "*bayān muddat al-ḥukm*" (*Al-Burhān*, p. 275), i.e. "clarification of the duration of the ruling", which, in turn, is categorised under *bayān al-tabdīl*, "modifying clarification" (Ṣāliḥ, *Tafsīr al-Nuṣūṣ*, 1/35). It may also be true in some cases that the abrogating verse is not fully understood without reference to the ruling which it replaces. As such, we may describe these two directions as *tafsīr al-mansūkh bi-l-nāsikh* (explaining earlier by later) and *tafsīr al-nāsikh bi-l-mansūkh*, which is to clarify the background to the abrogating verse.

[83] *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 3/108. The author goes on to explain that, since the universality or unqualified meaning (etc.) of the earlier text has been cancelled, this is a situation resembling *naskh* in its later usage. See also Ṭayyar, *Al-Taḥrīr*, pp. 218–219; and Suyūṭī's explanation of what led later scholars to include so many instances of *naskh* (*Al-Itqān*, 4/1441–1443).

[84] This is a way of understanding the care of early authorities in documenting and studying this field (see *Al-Burhān*, p. 273). See 4.3.2 below for more on this approach within TQQ, and what I term "creative conflict".

that this has occurred (*wuqūʿ*). However, he notes positions of some Muslim scholars who either rejected such *naskh* altogether or restricted its applicability.[85] The majority position is supported by at least two verses of the Qurʾān which contain key words for this phenomenon; by narrations from the Companions which describe its occurrence explicitly; and by the existence of conflicting passages for which *naskh* is arguably the strongest – or only – explanation. The most famous proof-text is Q 2:106, which may be rendered: "**Whenever We subject any *āya* to *naskh* or *insāʾ*, We bring forth its superior or equivalent. Do you not see that God has power over all things?**".[86] These key words are the subject of debate amongst the exegetes in general. Those who affirm abrogation in the Qurʾān take the term *āya* to refer to a Quranic verse; however, Abū Muslim al-Iṣfahānī (d. 322/934) argued that it refers to earlier scriptures which are abrogated by the Qurʾān.[87] Much later, Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905) argued that the context – including the emphasis on divine power – entails that *āya* refers to miraculous proofs which were given to prophets in succession.[88] These latter two interpretations have been supported variously by modern-day deniers of abrogation in the Qurʾān.[89]

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[85] *Al-Burhān*, pp. 274–275. See also the end of his Chapter 34 (p. 281), where he cites an unnamed source who emphasises that the Qurʾān is the abrogating guardian (*muhaymin* – see Q 5:48) over other scriptures, as well as self-supporting (*mutaʿāḍid*) and preserved (Q 15:9). As such, there is only a small quantity of internal naskh which is signposted (*maʿlūm wa qalīl*): he gives the example of the Verse of *Najwā*, which I discuss below. The rest of what the exegetes have classed as *naskh* is, according to this person, either *nasʾ* (which Zarkashī explains as suspension of a ruling due to circumstances) or *bayān* of various kinds.

[86] The pairing of *naskh/insākh* and *nasʾ/insāʾ* (according to the various canonical readings) generates numerous possibilities for the exegete and translator, not least because of the ambiguity inherent in the words. Whereas the first is generally taken to indicate "cancellation", the latter may describe "causing to forget", "leaving alone" or "postponing". I suggest that these ambiguities are intended to increase the force of the verse in describing God's power and wisdom, as if to say: "We can do all these things: send down an *āya*, delay it or keep it without revealing; then cancel its meaning and/or blot out its memory; or leave it unchanged. In all these cases We continue to bring what is similar or achieves higher objectives, either as replacement for previous *āyāt* or as complements to them." The other key verses in the abrogation debate (and arguably clearer in their import) are 16:101 (with the term *tabdīl*, exchange) and 13:39 (with *maḥw/ithbāt*, erasure and establishment). Detailed discussions in *tafsīr* works are often found under 2:106 by virtue of appearing first.

[87] This is one of his suggested interpretations (see Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 2/260). Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī preserved Abū Muslim's arguments in response to *naskh* claims throughout the Qurʾān; he sometimes agrees with those responses.

[88] As quoted in Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, 1/399–401.

[89] See Qaraḍāwī, *Fiqh al-Jihād*, 1/285 ff. Muḥammad ʿImāra (*Ḥaqāʾiq wa Shubuhāt*, pp. 34–39) supports the interpretation as "miracle" with a somewhat arbitrary appeal to the usage of *āya* (in the singular) elsewhere in the Qurʾān. Ṭāhā al-ʿAlwāni (*Naḥwa Mawqif Qurʾānī*, p. 52) claimed, rather implausibly, that this is the majority view of the exegetes; however, his own explanation is more concerned with supersession of dispensations (see ibid, p. 48, in which the author repurposes a passage from *Al-Taḥrīr*

There are diverse motivations behind *naskh*-scepticism, which affect the types of arguments levelled against the theory. I have already argued that a TQQ approach to Qurʾān interpretation need not be at odds with *naskh*, but must take such relationships into account. However, stronger claims of Qurʾān-sufficiency (see below under the Principle of Authority) would appear to clash with the suggestion that any part of the Qurʾān is unauthoritative or cancelled; hence the *naskh*-denial of the likes of Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Manṣūr.[90] It is interesting to note, on the other hand, that the *naẓm* theorists such as Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī – despite their emphasis upon the synchronic structure of the Qurʾān – accepted the existence of abrogated verses.[91] As was seen in Chapter 2's discussion of the "Sword Verse" and its over-application, some researchers come to re-evaluate *naskh* due to its implications for a particular issue.[92]

In contrast to outright rejection of *naskh* in the Qurʾān, there has long been a tendency to limit the number of actual occurrences to the most clearly established. An example of this is Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, who cautioned against taking the words of "low-ranking exegetes" and argued that there are only nineteen genuine occurrences.[93]

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*wa-l-Tanwīr* 1/655, and distorts Ibn ʿĀshūr's explanation). The Shīʿite scholar Abū l-Qāsim al-Mūsawī al-Khūʾī, while accepting the principle of *naskh*, selects thirty-six alleged cases and argues that none is a genuine case of abrogation in the Qurʾān (*The Prolegomena*, p. 186 ff.), with the possible exception of 58:12, as a signposted case: see below.

[90] He was mentioned previously under 2.7.2; Khālid al-Basyūni responded to his book *Lā Nāsikh wa Lā Mansūkh fī l-Qurʾān* in his own book, *Al-Naskh Bayna Shubuhāt al-Munkirīn wa Adillat al-Muthbitīn*.

[91] See *Pondering Over the Qurʾān Vol. 1*, pp. 329–331, for Iṣlāḥī's minimalist stance and allusion to eight cases of abrogation, of which one (prayers towards Jerusalem) was not a Quranic directive. His teacher Farāhī appears to accept the phenomenon: see his *Taʿlīqāt* (1/43), in which he describes "closely-following steps" within the Muḥammadan *sharīʿa* after a longer process of progression and elevation through preceding dispensations. Contrast this with the stance of Israr Ahmed Khan in *The Theory of Abrogation: A Critical Evaluation*; Khan is otherwise an ardent supporter of Iṣlāḥī's methods, but here refutes abrogation altogether (albeit as represented by Suyūṭī, not Iṣlāḥī).

[92] Qaraḍāwī, *Fiqh al-Jihād*, 1/287 ff. (and note his lighter scepticism in *Kayfa Nataʿāmal maʿa l-Qurʾān*, p. 326 ff.). The author lists some precedents for his scepticism, all Egyptians: ʿAbduh and Riḍā, Muḥammad al-Khuḍarī, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Khallāf, Muḥammad al-Ghazālī and ʿAbd al-Mutaʿāl al-Jabrī (*Fiqh al-Jihād*, 1/295 note 3).

[93] *Al-Itqān*, 4/1443-1447; the author presents a list of twenty-one from Ibn al-ʿArabī's *Al-Nāsikh wa-l-Mansūkh*, then removes 4:8 and 24:58, and adds 2:115 (abrogated by 2:149 which specifies the *qibla*). This is in contrast with his earlier contribution to *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*; surveying his commentary on Sūrat al-Anʿām, I found that he described 6:159 as "abrogated by the Sword Verse" and noted that several others were "before fighting was mandated". The *ḥāshiya* (supercommentary) by Sulaymān al-ʿUjaylī (known as al-Jamal, d. 1204/1789) points out that Suyūṭī conflates two conflicting opinions under 6:66, in that his presented gloss "*fa-ujāziyakum*" would not be subject to abrogation by the command to fight (see *Al-Futūḥāt al-Ilāhiyya*, 2/391).

Of these, Walī-Allāh Dihlawī only accepted five.[94] Muṣṭafā Zayd in his modern study also concluded that there are five abrogated verses[95]; only two are in common with Dihlawī. Iṣlāḥī affirmed most of these latter five[96], with the addition of two further cases (also included by Suyūṭī).[97]

## Case Study: The Verse of *Najwā*

Some scholars have argued that there is no verse in the Qurʾān that is agreed unanimously to have been abrogated; rather, there are multiple perspectives at each juncture.[98] This is obviously true when *naskh*-deniers are included; however, to assess the value of this claim, one should focus on verses which have received greater agreement on being abrogated. My summary of Suyūṭī, Dihlawī, Iṣlāḥī and Zayd has yielded only one case to achieve "consensus of the minimisers", namely Q 58:12, which is said to be abrogated by the verse immediately following: "You who believe, when you come to speak privately with the Messenger, offer something in charity before your conversation: that is better for you and purer. If you do not have the means, God is most forgiving and merciful. / Were you afraid to give charity before consulting the Prophet? **Since you did not give charity, and God has relented** (*tāba*) **towards you, you should [at least] observe your prayers, pay the prescribed alms, and obey God**

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[94] *Al-Fawz al-Kabīr*, pp. 47-54, 102. Aside from the verse of counsel (58:12) discussed below, the four cases he affirmed are: (a) 2:180 which mandates bequests (*waṣiyya*) to parents and near of kin. This was abrogated by 4:11-12 with stipulations for inheritance, along with the *ḥadīth* "No bequest for an inheritor". (b) 2:240 which stipulates a year's residence and maintenance for widows, abrogated by 2:234 (waiting period of four months and ten days) and 4:11-12 (inheritance of an eighth or a quarter). (c) 33:52 – the Prophet was forbidden from taking more wives, until 33:50 abrogated it. (d) 8:65-66, in which the latter verse expresses "lightening" (*takhfīf*) of the former expectation that believers can defeat an enemy that outnumbers them ten to one.

[95] *Al-Naskh*, 2/337 ff. These include: (a) Obligation of night vigil in 73:1-4 abrogated for general believers by the end of the *sūra*; this depends on *ḥadīth* explanation. (b) Punishment of adultery in 4:15-16 abrogated by 24:2. (c) The lighter ruling on intoxicants in 4:43 replaced by prohibition, 5:90. The last of these is not in Suyūṭī's list of nineteen.

[96] 8:65 is not on his list; see *Tadabbur*, 3/507 for his explanation.

[97] These are: (a) 4:33, which mandated inheritance between *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār*, abrogated by 8:75. (b) 2:184 which permitted those who missed a fast due to sickness or travel to choose between making up the fast and paying the ransom (*fidya*) (see *Pondering*, 1/462), then abrogated by the following verse. Another common opinion, which Iṣlāḥī critiques, is that the ransom was an option (instead of making up the fast) for anyone who found fasting difficult. However, it seems to me that his reading does not account for the preposition *ʿalā*, which implies obligation. His point may be modified to say that people who missed fasts due to sickness or travel were required both to make them up and pay the ransom (if able), until this was lightened; this would be more consistent with the co-text.

[98] E.g. Qaraḍāwī in *Fiqh al-Jihād*, 1/298.

and His Messenger: God is well aware of your actions" (58:12-13, Abdel Haleem translation).

An obvious reason for the broad agreement upon this instance is the immediate sequence between the two statements, and the explicit wording of divine relenting (*tawba*) which implies replacement of the more demanding ruling. While this makes absolute rejection of *naskh* difficult on a practical level, the very existence of such explicit cases could be used by deniers and minimisers to support their view that abrogation should not be read into verses which do not contain such expressions as *tawba* or *takhfīf* (lightening). When the Qurʾān itself indicates that a ruling has been replaced, this cannot be seen as arbitrary, based on external sources, or contrary to its structural integrity – all concerns raised against *naskh* generally. From a TQQ perspective, the exegete would be in no doubt that the verses must be treated together, whether he describes this treatment as *naskh* or as contextual interpretation. The explanation of these verses, according to those who affirm the abrogation, is that a payment was initially made obligatory for anyone seeking private counsel with the Prophet. After a short time, perhaps only a few days or hours, this was lifted and the believers were exhorted to abide by the basic obligation of *zakāt*.[99] Some associated reports – which are sound according to Sunnī standards – indicate that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was the only one from the Companions to act upon the ruling before its abrogation; for Abū l-Qāsim al-Khūʾī, this demonstrates the superiority of the first Shīʿite *imām* and reveals the divine wisdom in revealing the initial ruling and its cancellation.[100]

An opposing view was advanced by Abū Muslim al-Iṣfahānī, who argued that the purpose of the initial injunction was to test the hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*), or specifically to distinguish between those who had entered into genuine faith from those who remained upon their dissimulation. Because this was a temporary need, the ruling was inherently temporary, hence not subject to *naskh*.[101] Upon citing this, Rāzī states: "This is a good, unproblematic statement; however, the majority position is that it was

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[99] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Nawāsikh al-Qurʾān*, p. 596.

[100] Khūʾī, *Prolegomena*, pp. 243–247.

[101] Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 15/276; he summarises Abū Muslim's position: "*Al-taklīf kāna muqaddaran bi-ghāya makhṣūṣa fa-wajaba intihāʾuh ʿinda l-intihāʾ ilā l-ghāya al-makhṣūṣa*". The same rationale for the ruling was narrated from Aslam (the freedman of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb) via his son Zayd, albeit without the denial of *naskh* (Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 4/202).

abrogated by [the second verse]. Some said that it was abrogated by the obligation of *zakāt*."[102] It is important to note that Abū Muslim's strategy here is based on a technical distinction between *naskh* and *intihāʾ al-ghāya*; the latter pertains to situations in which the original ruling did not have a permanent character.[103] Where there is such an expression as *ḥattā* ("until") then the verse containing this caveat retains its proper sense after the subsequent ruling is revealed. However, there is nothing in the wording of 58:12 to fit this description, so the distinction between this case and genuine *naskh* – in which the temporary nature of the ruling is eventually revealed by its abrogating verse – is unclear. Moreover, as Muṣṭafā Zayd points out, Abū Muslim's suggestion that the ones who did not offer the *ṣadaqa* were the hypocrites conflicts with the apparent sense of 58:13, in which God relents towards the believers who had fallen short; similarly the *ḥadīth* reports in this regard.[104]

Another alternative to *naskh* was proposed by Israr Ahmad Khan, based on his understanding of Quranic coherence, influenced by Iṣlāḥī (who did affirm abrogation here and elsewhere). His perspective is that verses 7-13 of Sūrat al-Mujādila "form one single context dealing with one subject matter", and that it is unreasonable to suppose that these two verses were separated by any period of time.[105] Khan goes on to consider the explanations for the initial ruling and its cancellation. If the *ṣadaqa* was mandated in order to deter people from abusing the privilege of private counsel with the Prophet[106], then it would make no sense for this to be lifted so that they could immediately resume this abuse.[107] If the obligation was lifted because the poor

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[102] *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 15/276.

[103] See Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān*, 4/1438.

[104] *Al-Naskh*, 1/289. In attempting to refute Muṣṭafā Zayd in his affirmation of *naskh* at this juncture, the legal philosopher Jasser Auda (*Fiqh al-Maqāṣid*, pp. 182–184) misquotes three classical exegetes. Auda claims that Ibn Kathīr considered the initial command to be a mere recommendation, but Ibn Kathīr is explicit in considering it an obligation which was abrogated (*Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 7/188). He wrongly claims that Qurṭubī denies this instance of *naskh* (cf. *Al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 17/228). His misrepresentation of Ibn al-ʿArabī (who is, in fact, quoting Aslam, as noted above) is particularly strange, as this is among his twenty-one abrogated verses mentioned previously. See *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 4/203 for the crucial phrase removed from Auda's quote ("*wa nasakhat-hā āyat 'Fa-idh lam'*").

[105] Khan, *The Theory of Abrogation*, pp. 94–95. The author also suggests that the associated narrations are contradictory and untrustworthy.

[106] See Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 15/274.

[107] *The Theory of Abrogation*, p. 95.

Muslims were unable to afford the privilege[108], then there was no need for further revelation, since they were already exempted in 58:12: "If you do not have the means, God is most forgiving and merciful."[109] A fundamental problem with Khan's interpretation is demonstrated by his translation of a key phrase from 58:13, as follows: "If you do not do so (*fa-idh lam tafʿalū*), and Allah forgives you…" – which he takes to be a continuation of the dispensation provided in the preceding verse.[110] However, since the particle *idh* is used for the past tense and to explain cause[111], it ought to be rendered: "Since you did not". This confirms the past tense for the preceding phrase also, which Khan renders "Is it that you are afraid of spending sums in charity?" based on his view that this is an address to the poor believers; the verse goes on to exhort the payment of *zakāt*, rendering that theory unlikely.

The preceding discussion has demonstrated that the theory of abrogation entails the existence of what may be deemed a "manageable quantity" of contradiction between Quranic verses. Knowledge of *naskh* was considered from an early stage to be an essential quality for an exegete[112]: this is an affirmation of the importance of intratextual exegesis. Some scholars argued against *naskh* in the Qurʾān based on various convictions concerning the Quranic corpus; they have raised significant questions regarding the import of the textual evidences for *naskh* (such as Q 2:106), and have provided alternative explanations for many of the alleged occurrences. However, some of those explanations fail to be more convincing than the claims of abrogation: unless that is resolved, *naskh* will remain an essential part of the *mufassir*'s toolkit. The existence of minimisers and outright sceptics can certainly encourage greater rigour on the part of interpreters, and it is reasonable to expect harmonisation efforts to be exhausted before resorting to abrogation: this is the classically-advocated procedure.

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[108] See Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 15/275; cf. Khūʾī, *Prolegomena*, p. 246.

[109] *The Theory of Abrogation*, p. 95.

[110] The same is found with a number of prominent Qurʾān translators.

[111] See Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān*, 3/1012.

[112] See *Al-Burhān*, p. 273, and the qualifications list in *Al-Itqān*, 6/2297.

# 3.3 − The Principle of Interpretability

This principle, like the Principle of Unity, may be seen as foundational to the broader enterprise of *tafsīr*[113], and it shares with that principle in ascribing intentionality to the composition of the Qurʾān. By interpretability, I mean that the Qurʾān is taken to contain meanings which the author intended to convey, and which can be understood by the reader. Interpretation may be straightforward or require sophisticated methods, but in either case there is objective meaning to be sought. It is theoretically possible to arrive at the intended meaning, even if subjectivity gives rise to multiplicity in practice. While it can be argued that multiple meanings were intended in some cases, this principle entails that one may claim justifiably that some interpretations are better than others.

I shall not elaborate on the fact of this set of assumptions on the part of the exegetes, as it can be inferred from their interpretative practices, as well as the development of *uṣūl* for exegesis, however rudimentary in some respects. The very discussion of a "best method" for exegesis (per Ibn Taymiyya) implies a search for objective meaning through scholarly methods. There is a recognition of the need for rules for "preference" (*tarjīḥ*) between exegetical opinions. The condemnation of "*raʾy*" in interpretation − whether taken to designate a lack of qualification, the imposition of biases, or merely deviating from the "*maʾthūr*" − is further illustration of this. Some maintain that there can only be one true meaning to any Quranic expression: Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī, for example, argued that this is to be sought through the structural coherence in the text − this, in turn, is a function of authorial intentionality.[114]

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[113] According to Walid Saleh in his review of Boullata (ed.), *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning*, "this elementary hypothesis is absent from much of the scholarly literature" (Saleh, 'In Search of a Comprehensible Qurʾān,' p. 160). In Karen Bauer's words, exegetes "presume that there is intrinsic meaning to the Qurʾān, and their entire venture seems to be focused on understanding the original meaning or meanings" (Introduction to Bauer (ed)., *Aims, Methods and Contexts*, p. 7).

[114] See *Al-Takmīl* (in *Rasāʾil*, p. 229). Farāhī singles out Rāzī for criticism in that he listed as many divergent opinions as possible, and thereby "made the Qurʾān into an obscure (*mushtabih*) and confusing book which one cannot hope to understand". He further criticises Rāzī's stance on the speculative (*ẓannī*) status of linguistic proofs, which is contrary to the Qurʾān's affirmation of its clarity (*bayān*). Farāhī states pointedly: "It is high time to look anew at that which we had treated with suspicion, and approach it with a positive attitude" (ibid, pp. 233−234). For further responses to Rāzī's account of the "ten dependencies" of linguistic proofs (as in *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 1/42, 4/175 etc.), see Qaraḍāwī, *Kayfa Nataʿāmal*, pp. 45−46 and Ḥusayn, *Maʿāyīr al-Qabūl wa-l-Radd*, p. 682 ff.; Ibn Taymiyya composed his

### 3.3.1 – The Problem of *Tashābuh*

Insofar as this is quite apparent in what has preceded, I shall focus on another concept and dichotomy which presents a problem for interpretability. This is the description of some Quranic verses as *muḥkam* and others as *mutashābih*, terms which are derived from a pivotal verse (Q 3:7) which is quoted here from the Abdel Haleem translation:

> It is He who has sent this Scripture down to you [Prophet]. Some of its verses are definite in meaning (*āyāt muḥkamāt*) – these are the cornerstone of the Scripture (*umm al-kitāb*)[115] – and others are ambiguous (*mutashābihāt*). The perverse at heart eagerly pursue the ambiguities in their attempt to make trouble and to pin down a specific meaning of their own[116]: only God knows the true meaning. Those firmly grounded in knowledge say, 'We believe in it: it is all from our Lord'- only those with real perception will take heed.

This verse and the categories it delineates have attracted much scholarly attention. John Wansbrough claimed that it is "unanimously agreed to represent the point of departure for all scriptural exegesis".[117] It will become clear below, based on the reception of this verse in Muslim hermeneutical scholarship, that it has particular significance for TQQ, in that it mandates referring difficult verses to those which are deemed authoritative in import.

<u>Definitions</u>

The precise meaning of *mutashābih* in 3:7 is subject to numerous different opinions.[118] Its linguistic denotation is "resemblance", in that the competing interpretations resemble each other such that the exegete must exert effort to distinguish the correct one(s). Another possibility is that certain verses have a correct meaning alongside others which are false, yet ripe for exploitation by opponents of the

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extensive *Darʾ Taʿāruḍ al-Naql wa-l-ʿAql* in response to this approach of "Rāzī and his followers" (*Darʾ al-Taʿāruḍ*, 1/4).

[115] Cf. the other usage of this expression as in 3.1.2 above.

[116] This is an interpretive gloss; the expression *ibtighāʾa taʾwīlihī* may be read more plainly as "seeking after its meaning/interpretation".

[117] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 149; in Wild, 'Sura 3:7 as an Exegetical Challenge,' p. 423.

[118] See Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān*, 4/1336–1338.

religion (the "perverse at heart" in 3:7) – this is because the verse bears resemblance to meanings which are not intended.[119]

Beyond the context of 3:7, the term is employed in Quranic scholarship in four ways, two of which pertain to interpretation. The usages not relevant to this particular discussion are, first, a description of the whole Qurʾān as being *mutashābih*, as in Q 39:23 – as noted previously, this is taken by some commentators to denote the stylistic unity and non-contradiction within the Quranic corpus. It is thus relevant to the Principle of Consistency, in that parts of the Qurʾān resemble each other. Related to this is the usage of *mutashābih* as a descriptor of near-parallel verses which are studied comparatively – this is further explored in Chapter 4.[120]

As for the two usages relevant to interpretability, these are to consider the *mutashābih* as having meaning known only to God; or to consider them as ambiguous and in need of explication. These can be derived from the famous debate over the syntax (i.e. sentence break known as *waqf*) in 3:7, whereby the reciter affirms either that its *taʾwīl* (interpretation) is known to none "except God (*illā Llāh*)" – as in most translations, such as Abdel Haleem's above – or that it is known to none "except Allah and those firmly grounded in knowledge (*wa-l-rāsikhūna fī l-ʿilm*)" as in the Qara'i translation, for example. The choice between these syntactic readings is not simply a matter of taste or transmission, nor does it rely solely upon internal Quranic evidence; according to Suyūṭī, the majority of scholars argued for stopping upon "except God" due to a number of traditions attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās and other early authorities.[121] However, another narration from Ibn ʿAbbās has him declaring: "I am among those [firmly grounded in knowledge] who know its interpretation."[122] However, in reality

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[119] Ibn ʿAṭiyya, *Al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz*, p. 274. As such, the intended *fitna* is to create confusion and spread doubts among Muslims, and the intended *taʾwīl* is distortion of the true meanings.

[120] Witztum ('Variant Traditions, Relative Chronology and the Study of Intra-Quranic parallels', p. 44) suggests that 3:7 could be taken as referring to this phenomenon. However, he does not explain how this fits the context of contrast with the *muḥkam*.

[121] See *Al-Itqān*, 4/1340 ff.

[122] *Al-Itqān*, 4/1339. Ibn ʿAṭiyya argues that Ibn ʿAbbās advanced both opinions because both are correct, i.e. there are knowable and unknowable categories of *mutashābih* (*Al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz*, pp. 276–277). According to Ibn Taymiyya: "*Tashābuh* is a relative matter, as one thing may be *mutashābih* to one person and not another. However, there are verses which are *muḥkam* with no *tashābuh* in them for anyone. As for these *mutashābih* verses, once their meaning becomes known, they are no longer *mutashābih*" (*Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā*, 13/79). I return to these issues at the end of this section.

the distance between the two positions is not as great as it appears at first glance.[123] Both accept the existence of verses which require interpretation, and of which the interpretation is possible by referring to the unequivocal and authoritative verses. These equivocal verses may be classed as *mutashābih* or not, in that Q 3:7 is not explicit in excluding a middle set of verses which are neither *muḥkam* nor *mutashābih*.[124] In this connection, Zarkashī cites an opinion which defines the former as "that which is known [in meaning] without the need for *bayān* (explanation)" whereas the latter is "that which cannot be explained (*lā yurjā bayānuh*)".[125] This implies that there are other verses which require explanation, and whose explanation is possible: according to other definitions, these are the *mutashābih* – or this term encompasses both types of verse.

The result is that the *mutashābih* refers to a similar concept as the *mujmal* discussed previously (and see 4.1.1). In jurisprudence, these terms are considered equivalent by the majority of legal schools.[126] The definition in the Ḥanafī school appears to have shifted from interpretable to uninterpretable, in that Abū l-Ḥasan al-Karkhī (d. 340/952) defined it as "That which has more than one possible meaning", whereas later authorities defined it as "Any expression which has an inherently obscure meaning and has not been clarified by Qurʾān or Sunna". As Muḥammad Adīb al-Ṣāliḥ argues, such a definition precludes the *mutashābih* from relevance to juristic questions and confines it to the domain of doctrine.[127] This echoes the point raised by Yaḥyā b. Sharaf al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) as cited in *Al-Itqān*: "It is implausible that God would address His servants in terms which none in all creation has hope of understanding."[128]

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[123] I will not elaborate here on the numerous points of divergence in interpreting Q 3:7, such that the two stances may be reconciled in other ways. An example is the word "*taʾwīlahu*": does it refer to interpretation in the conventional sense, or a kind of ultimate knowledge which is the sole preserve of God? Does its pronoun refer to the *mutashābih* portion of the Qurʾān specifically, or the whole scripture? See Wild's summary of "legal, rhetorical, and anti-exegetical" interpretations of the verse ('Sura 3:7 as an Exegetical Challenge' in Wild (ed.), *Self-Referentiality*, pp. 429–430).

[124] See Farāhī, *Niẓām al-Qurʾān*, 1/345.

[125] *Al-Burhān*, p. 293.

[126] Ṣāliḥ, *Tafsīr al-Nuṣūṣ*, 1/274.

[127] *Tafsīr al-Nuṣūṣ*, 1/257–258.

[128] *Al-Itqān*, 4/1339.

We may conclude that the concept of *tashābuh* does not present a significant challenge to the Principle of Interpretability which underpins *tafsīr* in general. This is because the strongest claims relegate this to a small number of verses, such as the mysterious "Opening Letters" (*al-muqaṭṭaʿāt*) which commence certain *sūras*, and to such details as when the Day of Judgement (described in so many verses) will actually occur. Some applied the term to verses which describe God with attributes potentially resembling creation[129]; yet this pious relegation (*tafwīḍ*) did not prevent other scholars from affirming (*ithbāt*) the apparent meanings or otherwise interpreting these attributes metaphorically (*taʾwīl*). This fact points to the subjectivity of identifying the *mutashābihāt*, as I shall discuss further below. Not only is *tashābuh* not a barrier to exegesis, but in fact the identification of *mutashābih* and *muḥkam* verses can be seen as an important starting point and feature of intraquranic exegesis, as I shall now explain.

## Referring Back to the *Muhkam*

It follows from many of the definitions offered by the scholars for these two terms that the *mutashābih* texts must be "referred back (*radd*)" to the *muḥkam*. This would apply to the lightest sense of *tashābuh*, in which a verse simply carries multiple possible meanings: the correct interpretation is identified, or incorrect interpretations ruled out, by reference to verses which only carry one possible meaning. As for the strongest definitions which place the *mutashābih* beyond the reach of the exegete, this too entails a kind of reference and return to the *muḥkam* texts, in that the reader of the Qurʾān is exhorted to give primacy to that which is clear and authoritative, and relegate the knowledge of the *mutashābih* texts to God while having faith in their truth and veracity. This concept of referring back to the *muḥkam* verses is often derived from their description in 3:7 as "*umm al-kitāb*", which is understood here to mean the "source (*aṣl*)" to which other things are referred.[130] Ṭabāṭabāʾī argues that the singular

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[129] See *Al-Itqān*, 4/1354 ff.

[130] Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 3/155. The term may also imply that such represents the "majority" of the Qurʾān (Qaraḍāwī, *Kayfa Nataʿāmal*, p. 267).

word *umm* implies that these verses are in harmony with each other[131], thus making them suitable to be a foundation for understanding the entire book.

These meanings are made more explicit by Ibn al-Ḥaṣṣār (d. 620/1223) as cited in *Al-Itqān*:

> God has divided the verses of the Qurʾān into *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* and described the former as "the source of the Book" in that the latter are referred back to it. These [*muḥkam* verses] are those which are relied upon in understanding what God wants from His creation with respect to the things they are obligated to know… The Legislator intends for us to give priority to understanding these univocal source-texts. Once you have achieved certainty and deep knowledge thereby, you would not be troubled by anything that is difficult to understand.[132]

The distinction between two levels of *tashābuh*, as discussed above, is further elaborated by Ḥamad b. Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998):

> The *mutashābih* is of two types: for one type, the meaning is identified by referring it to the *muḥkam* and examining it in its light; for the other type, there is no way to appreciate its true meaning.[133]

It is thus seen that the language used to describe the process of analysing the *mutashābih* verses is very much the language of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*.[134] As such, the existence of equivocal verses is treated not as an intractable problem, but as the very genesis of the craft of exegesis. Whereas some may question the wisdom of the existence of scriptural texts that are less than explicit and give rise to ambiguity, this contention is answered variously with reference to human nature and language, and to the purpose of religion. As Qaraḍāwī argues, to make the entire Qurʾān *muḥkam* and its verses univocal would mean stripping it of its eloquence and flexibility; depriving the scholars of the opportunity to explore its deeper meanings; and removing

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[131] Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Al-Mīzān*, 3/23. See also Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 4/21, where this meaning ("as though they are a single verse") is suggested alongside the possibility that each *muḥkam* verse is like an *umm* in its own right.

[132] *Al-Itqān*, 4/1349.

[133] Ibid.

[134] This point is illustrated particularly well by this definition narrated from Mujāhid b. Jabr: "The *muḥkamāt* are those verses which pertain to lawful and unlawful things. The remainder is *mutashābih*: its parts corroborate each other (*yuṣaddiqu baʿḍuhu baʿḍan*)" (*Al-Itqān*, 4/1337). This may mean that the *muḥkam* corroborates the *mutashābih* by clarifying the correct meanings; it may also imply that *mutashābih* verses are not mutually contradictory as they sometimes appear before being clarified by the *muḥkam*.

the element of testing which is one of the aims of revelation, as human beings are obligated (*taklīf*) to strive for truth and follow it.[135]

It follows that the categories of *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* may be employed constructively within a TQQ methodology which specifies which kinds of verses require referral, and which others function as clearer authorities. Therefore, more than saying that "verses explain each other" or are "understood in each other's light", there is a sense in which some verses are foundational and take priority over others.[136] By so clarifying the *mutashābih* texts, they may be granted a status of "secondary foundationality", described by some scholars as *muḥkam li-ghayrihī*.[137]

An ostensibly objective definition is available for the *muḥkam*, namely: that which accepts only one interpretation. However, in practice, identifying those incontrovertible verses remains highly subjective, as illustrated by the existence of such a work as *Mutashābih al-Qurʾān* by the prominent Muʿtazilite Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār.[138] In reality, it is a dialectical work which disputes the proofs relied upon by other theological schools, from Ashʿarīs to anthropomorphists; the author acknowledges the problem of subjectivity and relativity in his introduction.[139] One man's *muḥkam* is another man's *mutashābih*; therefore, beyond accusing opposing schools of distorting the evidences by reversing the roles and treating the ambiguous as foundational, it would be necessary – in order for this polemic to be convincing – to demonstrate why specific texts should be agreed upon as *muḥkam*.[140]

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[135] Qaraḍāwī, *Kayfa Nataʿāmal*, p. 270. See also ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mutashābih al-Qurʾān*, pp. 22–24 and Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 4/170.

[136] The broader *uṣūl al-fiqh* categories provide a similar account, in more detail. The most explicit texts are termed *naṣṣ*, *ẓāhir* and *mufassar*, and defined in various ways. See Ṣāliḥ, *Tafsīr al-Nuṣūṣ*, 1/186.

[137] See Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Al-Mīzān*, 3/24 and Ṣāliḥ, *Tafsīr al-Nuṣūṣ*, 1/146.

[138] The editor, ʿAdnān Zarzūr, states that the Muʿtazilites were the first to write such works (in which the word *mutashābih* is used in this sense) and dominated the genre (Preface to *Mutashābih al-Qurʾān*, p. 51). See also Mourad, 'The Introduction to the *Tahdhīb* of al-Ḥākim al-Jishumī', in Bauer (ed.), pp. 111–112.

[139] ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mutashābih al-Qurʾān*, 8–9. See also Belhaj, 'al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār's Qurʾanic Hermeneutics' in Gorke and Pink (eds.), p. 278.

[140] See Rāzī's exegesis of Q 3:7, in which he notes the subjectivity problem and proposes rules for *iḥkām* and *tashābuh* related to rational proofs (*Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 4/173–174).

## 3.4 − The Principle of Authority

The fourth principle underpinning TQQ is epistemological: that the Qurʾān functions as evidence, indeed as the most authoritative textual proof for any religious claim. As such, the Qurʾān is also to be consulted in the process of interpreting the Qurʾān. This is a claim made on an ascending scale of authority: at its most basic, it is to affirm the possibility of TQQ as a mandated method; above this is to consider it the best method; then to criticise the neglect of this method; and at the strongest end, it is to deny the authority of any other source of exegesis besides the Qurʾān itself (along with language and reason). I illustrate this with the following diagram:

*Figure 5 - The Quranic Authority Spectrum in Tafsīr*[141]



**Mandated** (Mainstream)  **Best** (Taymiyyan)  **Primary** (Farāhian)  **Only** (Quranist)
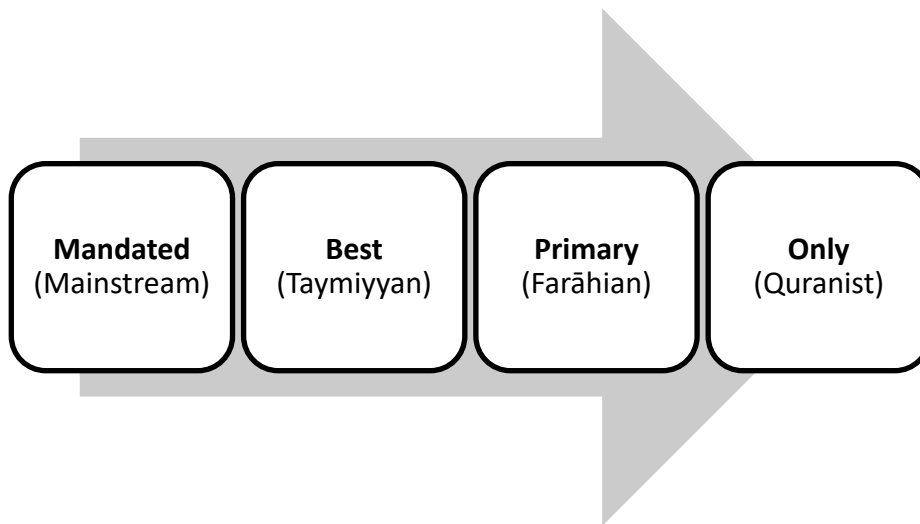
Rather than delving extensively into the most foundational premise here, let us recall the citation by Ibn Taymiyya in his *Muqaddima* of the famous report in which the Prophet's companion Muʿādh b. Jabal, as he was being sent to govern in Yemen, was asked about how he would derive answers to questions arising. Although its authenticity has been challenged in terms of its chain of narration, there is general acceptance that this *ḥadīth* reflects the Muslim scholarly attitude to the primary sources and the place of individual reasoning. As explained in Chapter 1, Ibn Taymiyya

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[141] For the difference between Ibn Taymiyya and the "mainstream", see 1.5.2 above. The difference between "best" and "primary" is that the former amounts to little more than lip-service, as explained with respect to Ibn Taymiyya's hierarchy in his *Muqaddima*. Various figures, such as Farāhī and Ṭabāṭabāʾī, have advocated for intraquranic methods to be given actual primacy.

deployed it in support of his schema of "best methods" of interpretation, while side-stepping the mention of *ijtihād* therein.

> The Messenger of God asked Muʿādh while sending him to Yemen, "By what will you judge (*bi-ma taḥkum*)?" He replied, "By the Book of God." "And if you do not find it (*fa-in lam tajid*) [there]?" "By the Sunna of the Messenger of God." "And if you do not find it [there]?" "I shall strive to form an opinion (*ajtahidu raʾyī*)." So God's Messenger struck [Muʿādh's] chest and said: "Praise be to God Who has guided the messenger of God's Messenger to what pleases God's Messenger."

Clearly, this text says nothing directly about exegesis, but it grants priority to the Qurʾān as a source of legislation – a point which is reflected in all the books of Islamic jurisprudence. However, it does not necessarily follow that the best way to interpret the Qurʾān is to consult the Qurʾān itself.

To give a comparison: a sentence I utter today is to be understood with reference to the denotations and connotations of the words in this communicative act between speaker and listeners, along with the context of place, time and situation in which the words are delivered. Whereas the immediate speech context (i.e. sentences before and after) would play an important role in following my argument, primacy would not be given in this situation to statements of previous weeks or years, or to others yet to be delivered (such may provide further clarification to speech which must, nevertheless, be clear upon delivery). Reference to other parts of my speech may be done in a meaningful way if the principles outlined in this chapter are assumed to hold, particularly unity and consistency (although later utterances may be taken as "abrogating" the earlier). We may certainly accept that this holistic approach is important and indispensable, but it is difficult to maintain that it is "best" in any meaningful sense. This thought process may be compared with the situation of TQQ, which is arguably both valid and necessary – but it cannot be deemed superior to other tools of exegesis in the absolute terms advanced by Ibn Taymiyya and those who followed him in this regard, until it was elevated to "consensus of *salaf* and *khalaf*" – a claim I challenged in Chapter 1.

### 3.4.1 – Rethinking TQQ's Superiority

Before considering an alternative approach to the question of TQQ's relative authority, let us review the arguments underpinning claims of its overall superiority,

outlined in Chapter 1. In some cases, appeal is made to divine authority, as in Shinqīṭī declaring that "None better knows the meaning of the book of God than God." This is related to the problematic categorisation of TQQ under "transmitted exegesis" (*al-tafsīr al-maʾthūr*, or *bi-l-maʾthūr*) which suggests that the explanation was given by an earlier authority – God Himself? – and conveyed faithfully by the exegetes to their readership. An alternative discourse, due to Ṭabāṭabāʾī, speaks of allowing the Qurʾān to "speak for itself" (*istinṭāq al-Qurʾān*), which is a claim to objectivity.[142] The term *al-iḥtikām ilā l-Qurʾān*, as employed by ʿĀʾisha ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (Bint al-Shāṭiʾ), implies that the corpus is made to "adjudicate" between possible interpretations of a word in its local context.[143] A further point which appeals to the Prophet's own use of this method will be considered below. Rarely is an argument advanced based on features of the text itself, as I have attempted above as "Evidence for Unity" (3.1.3).

Regarding divine authority and hermeneutical objectivity, I have underlined the problems with these claims several times before, in that they obscure the inevitable role of scholarly *ijtihād* and *raʾy* – which will feature to various extents in the various types and processes of TQQ. Chapter 2 has demonstrated the wide scope for divergent interpretations based on TQQ, which disproves the notions that it is an objective method or that such exegesis is ready to be "discovered". In my view, such claims place too much emphasis on **sources** at the expense of theories and methods. A single source, in this case the Qurʾān, will be analysed in diverse ways by scholars bringing to the task a variety of theological commitments and biases – a point underlined above in connection with identifying the *muḥkam* verses. When the Muʿtazilite employs TQQ in order to support his school's position, you do not find his Ashʿarīte opponents, for example, acquiescing to that argument simply because it is based on intraquranic methods.[144]

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[142] The term itself admits some ambiguity in this respect. Rather than just "hearing" the Qurʾān, the exegete must play a role in having it speak.

[143] See Naguib, 'Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's Approach to *tafsīr*,' pp. 58–61. The resulting *ḥukm al-Qurʾān* – which, despite this term, does not confer perfect objectivity (ibid, p. 68) – then reveals the internal coherence of the passage.

[144] Indeed, Muṭayrī's book *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān: Taʾṣīl wa Taqwīm* was originally titled (as a PhD thesis): *Asbāb al-Khaṭaʾ fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* (causes of error) – and this is reflected in his Salafi critique of TQQ from other schools. Among the causes he discusses are some connected to *ʿaqīda* (doctrine). He also lists among the sources of error: contradicting prophetic *ḥadīths* or even the opinions

Instead of a sweeping claim for the superiority of TQQ, a more nuanced approach offered by some authors considers various categories of TQQ and their respective levels of authority. In other words, they address the specific types of verses under examination and the type of relations between them, along with other factors pertinent to the truth-bearing potential of TQQ. An early example of this approach is found in *Al-Burhān* of Zarkashī, in his discussion of types of *bayān* (clarification): his categorisation suggests that the clearest type is that which is connected textually to the phrase under examination; citations from elsewhere in the *sūra* or the rest of the Qurʾān may be less compelling due to the connection being less obvious.[145] However, the first example Zarkashī provides demonstrates some problems with this idea. He quotes Muḥammad b. Kaʿb al-Quraẓī as saying that the explanation of *al-Ṣamad* (112:2) is the following verse: "He begot no one nor was He begotten".[146] However, if this were so clear, there would be consensus on this point and no need to cite Muḥammad b. Kaʿb in this connection.

His second example is the word *halūʿan* in 70:19, which is followed by these two verses: "fretful when misfortune touches him, but tight-fisted when good fortune comes his way" – Zarkashī quotes the grammarian Thaʿlab (d. 291/904) as saying: "Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir asked me, what is this *halaʿ*? I replied: God has already explained it."[147] This kind of explicit clarification is described by Muṭayrī as *tafsīr al-Qurʾan **li**-l-Qurʾān*, and other examples include questions posed in the Quranic text together with an immediate answer (e.g. 86:1-3).[148] It may be said, however, that this is so obvious as to make its designation as *tafsīr* unnecessary. In many cases, it is better described as a rhetorical tool than a case of clarification. Indeed, it is not necessarily the case – even when it appears so – that the "answer" corresponds perfectly to the

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of early authorities (*salaf*) – despite this, the author could not escape the "consensus" re: the superiority and priority of TQQ. See Muṭayrī, pp. 74 and 321 ff.

[145] *Al-Burhān*, pp. 348–354. See Chapter 1 for more on Zarkashī's account of TQQ.

[146] *Al-Burhān*, p. 349.

[147] *Al-Burhān*, p. 349.

[148] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, p. 41. A variation on this are *asbāb* reports which indicate that extra phrases were revealed in response to confusion over the original verse. This has been narrated concerning the phrase "*min al-fajr*" being added to 2:187, and "*ghayri ulī l-ḍarar*" to 4:95. The same applies to whole verses which came as clarification, as has been narrated concerning 2:286 (to clarify 2:284) and 21:101 (to clarify 21:98). The relevant narrations are in Suyūṭī's *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*.

"question", as eloquent speech sometimes involves turning away from the question as posed.[149]

For Muṭayrī, there are two main factors which make some TQQ opinions more authoritative than others: first, the person who expresses this opinion, in that Prophetic exegesis is accepted absolutely, and the exegesis of Companions and Followers to a lesser degree. Second, the extent to which the results of TQQ agree with other principles and sources of exegesis (*uṣūl al-tafsīr*), especially the Sunna.[150] The question arises here: in the presence of an explicit, authentic *ḥadīth*, is a TQQ-based explanation still more authoritative ("best" and taken "first", according to Ibn Taymiyya's schema)? This proposition has not found the favour of the exegetes in practice, and modern writers such as Muṭayrī have pointed out that TQQ is open to abuse, so to speak, in substantiating various opinions. His explanation leaves the question unanswered: which has authority over the other, Qurʾān or Sunna?

Ṭayyār argues, similarly, that the authority of a TQQ-based opinion varies according to the authority of the exegete, since it is based upon his *ijtihād*. As such, Prophetic TQQ is the only kind with clear authority, alongside the most explicit and proximate Quranic clarifications as described previously.[151] The example he provides of Prophetic TQQ is the explanation of "*mafātiḥ al-ghayb*" in Sūrat al-Anʿām (6:59) as referring to the five categories of the Unseen as expressed in 31:34. However, as I explained in Chapter 2, some exegetes acknowledged the *ḥadīth* without adopting it as the (sole) explanation of the verse; thus it may be said that they took it as no more than an "authoritative example" and preferred to take the verse at its universal face value.[152]

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[149] One form of this is known as "*al-uslūb al-ḥakīm*" (see Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān*, 4/1311).

[150] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, p. 75.

[151] *Al-Taḥrīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, pp. 46–47.

[152] Similar can be said concerning the *ḥadīth* linked to Q 1:7 which explains "those who incur wrath" as Jews, and "those who are astray" as Christians (see Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 1/199, where it is taken as an "illustration"). In Nasr et al (eds.), *The Study Quran*, the relevant *ḥadīth* is made a postscript to a thematic study of the causes of *ghaḍab* and *ḍalāl* in the Qurʾān (pp. 10–11). The editor, Joseph Lumbard, makes an extreme understatement by describing this identification (found in almost all *tafsīr*) as "one interpretation given by a number of commentators"; he implies falsely that this *ḥadīth* is weaker than others accepted in *tafsīr*, describing it as "a saying attributed to the Prophet, though not considered to be of the highest degree of authenticity". To his credit, he acknowledges that the common opinion is often supported with other verses, such as 5:60 and 5:77 (see Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 1/158, 162). If this opinion is expressed as: "not like the worst members of former communities", then it is uncontroversial and clearly well attested in the Qurʾān. An earlier alternative view was presented by Rāzī (*Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 1/287), in which these terms – following from the praise of believers in 1:6 – refer to *kuffār* and

### 3.4.2 – Revisiting the "Prophetic Method"

As noted previously, some scholars argued for the superiority of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* precisely because it was the "Prophetic method". If methodological principles can be extracted from the Prophet's practice, then these would enjoy a level of authority which could not be rivalled by the scholars. The existence of such *ḥadīths* can establish the validity of this method through precedence, if one disregards the possibility that his method was specific to him: a point related to the existence and nature of his extraquranic revelations.[153] If Muḥammad was informed of the explanation by "non-recited revelation", that may limit the exegete's ability to imitate him; on the other hand, the same issue as faced by the jurist has not hindered the development of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Ibn Taymiyya's quotation from Shāfiʿī is optimistic about imitation of the Prophetic hermeneutic: "Everything that God's Messenger ruled came from what he understood from the Qurʾān".[154]

If the weaker claim is simply that Muḥammad did engage in this method, then the stronger claim is that this was the basis of all his explanations of the Qurʾān, explicitly or implicitly.[155] However, Quranic provenance is not readily apparent in most *tafsīr* attributed to the Prophet, and TQQ-based explanations appear to be very few in comparison with the broader corpus of exegetical *ḥadīths*.[156] To establish this point, I went through one recent compilation which aims to include all explicit narrations of Prophetic exegesis – irrespective of grades of authenticity[157] – and found no more than five, some of questionable relevance. If restricting analysis to reports deemed acceptable by the *ḥadīth* scholars, the corpus narrows further.

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*munāfiqūn* respectively, thus paralleling the opening of Sūrat al-Baqara (2:1–5, 6–7, 8 ff.) – see also Ālūsī's response (*Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 1/312).

[153] See Shāfiʿī, *Al-Risāla*, pp. 91–93. Saleh's observation that "the traditionalist never bothered to explain how a Companion knew the meaning of a certain *āya*" ('Historiography,' p. 26) can be extended to this situation.

[154] *Muqaddima*, p. 93. I noted the unclear provenance of this quotation in Chapter 1.

[155] See ʿAlwānī, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Anʿām*, pp. 27, 29 – the author made some unreferenced attributions to support his contention that most or all Prophetic *tafsīr* was of this nature. See also Chapter 1 re: Ṭabāṭabāʾī's similar claim.

[156] Muṭayrī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, p. 57; the author himself includes improper examples.

[157] Bātilī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Nabawī*. It contains 318 narrations.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the most famous example is the explanation of the *ẓulm* in 6:82 in terms of the *shirk* in 31:13. Here the operative question is: was Muḥammad actually engaging in TQQ when he explained one in terms of the other? Alternatively, could his explanation have been based on some other source or method, such that the citation of 31:13 served another purpose?

> "Upon the revelation of 'Those who believe and do not mix their belief with wrongdoing' [*wa lam yalbisū īmānahum bi-ẓulm* – 6:82], the companions of the Messenger of God found it onerous and said: Which of us does not wrong himself? So the Messenger of God said: It is not as you suppose; rather, it is as Luqmān said to his son: 'O my son, do not associate partners (*shirk*) with God: verily, *shirk* is a tremendous *ẓulm*'." (31:13)

*Ḥadīth* commentators[158] explain that the confusion arose from the universal (*ʿāmm*) term "*ẓulm*" which could refer to any type of transgression against another's rights, or misplacing something. It gains another kind of universality by being indefinite in a negated sentence (*nakira fī siyāq al-nafy*); but this combined universality is still subject to particularisation (*takhṣīṣ*), and this is what the majority of commentators concluded based upon the *ḥadīth*. However, as described previously, some exegetes – including Zamakhsharī and Ṭabāṭabāʾī – opted to retain the universal meaning of *ẓulm* or a variation upon that.

To ascertain whether this *ḥadīth* represents a genuine case of TQQ (as opposed to independent Prophetic teaching), we can ask: could the meaning of *shirk* be independently deduced, even without reference to the verse of Luqmān? The following are indications within the verse and its context:

1. The entire story and the point of contention between the "two parties" was about *shirk*.[159]

2. The verse itself references *ẓulm* in opposition to *īmān*, implying that its opposite is intended.[160]

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[158] See the commentary of Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 1/152. On this genre see Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God*.

[159] Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 7/57. See Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 7/333 for elaboration on the contextual argument.

[160] Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān*, p. 348. This may also be taken as an appeal to Quranic norms, i.e. faith is generally contrasted with disbelief, not lesser sin.

3. According to Arabic rhetoric (*balāgha*), the word *ẓulm* being indefinite may imply "a great injustice" which in turn suggests the greatest form – *shirk* – and indeed may hint to the very wording of Q 31:13.[161]

4. *Shirk* is a dominant theme in Sūrat al-Anʿām, beginning from its first verse.

5. "Most" Quranic warnings to *ẓālimūn* pertain to the unbelievers, says Ibn Rajab, citing Q 14:42 and 42:44 as examples[162]; Shinqīṭī cites Q 2:254 and 10:106 alongside the verse of Luqmān in his exegesis of 6:82.[163]

This shows that the citation of 31:13 was not **necessary**. On the other hand, it may not have been **sufficient** to dispel the misconception, as its wording does not entail that *shirk* is the only form of *ẓulm*. While some narrations have only the quotation, others include a clarification from Muḥammad to the effect that "It means *shirk*". This may be why Zarkashī states that the Prophet based his explanation on 6:82 itself and only cited 31:13 by way of support (*istiʾnās*) for the idea of *shirk* being referred to as *ẓulm*.[164] It may well be, as the Shāfiʿī quotation implies, that the Prophet corrected the Companions based on what he himself understood from the Qurʾān. An obstacle to this – if contextual clues excluding 31:13 are disregarded – is that some narrations have it that the latter was in fact revealed in response to the confusion. Noting the conflict with other narrations which say "Have you not heard what Luqmān said", Nawawī suggests that the Prophet said this to them after the verse was revealed in response to their confusion.[165] This seems less plausible than to say – following Dihlawī's observations above concerning *asbāb al-nuzūl* – that this was either an occasion for re-revelation of the verse (or fragment), or that its description as a *sabab* is imprecise.[166]

My conclusion from this analysis is that this incident is not as clear an example of TQQ as generally assumed. More importantly, it cannot be used to establish

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[161] Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 8/276.

[162] Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 1/144; see Muṭayrī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, p. 91.

[163] Shinqīṭī, *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, p. 251.

[164] *Al-Burhān*, p. 348.

[165] Nawawī, *Sharḥ Muslim*, 1/323; see also Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 1/152. Ibn ʿĀshūr states that Q 6 was the fifty-fifth chapter to be revealed, while Q 31 was the fifty-seventh (*Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 7/123, 21/138), though the inexactness of such designations should be kept in mind.

[166] Assuming that the whole of Sūrat al-Anʿām was revealed before the whole of Luqmān, the latter could still have been known to the Companions before the confusion surrounding the former emerged.

something called the "Prophetic method" of TQQ, nor does it demonstrate convincingly that this was the way that Muḥammad himself deduced meanings from the Qurʾān. It is one thing to conclude, with the majority of exegetes, that the intended meaning of *ẓulm* in 6:82 is indeed *shirk*, based on the Prophet's clarification. However, it is more clearly categorised as an example of Prophetic *tafsīr* than an instance of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*. The most apparent explanation is that he was teaching his Companions (those who misunderstood, who may have been a small group) to deduce this meaning from its immediate context, and only cited 31:13 to demonstrate that this meaning for *ẓulm* exists elsewhere in the scripture. Compared with numerous other examples of TQQ presented in Chapter 2 and elsewhere, the connection between the two verses is not obvious and not convincing in its own right. Indeed, if one were to draw TQQ conclusions in a similar vein – without reference to the various contextual factors listed above – one may well be accused of making flimsy inferences based on the reoccurrence of words (such as *ẓulm* in this instance).

### 3.4.3 – Quranism

The preceding discussion assumes that the Prophet was given the task of explaining the Qurʾān; that he carried out this duty to one extent or another; and that this is reflected in the *ḥadīth* literature which is considered by the bulk of mainstream Islam to represent the second source of legislation known as the Sunna. In contrast, the various individuals and groups known as Quranists (see 2.7 above) do not accept the *ḥadīth* corpus as authoritative – even the most "authentic" reports by Sunnī or Shīʿī standards – insisting that only the Qurʾān should be treated as revelation and scripture. According to the most influential proponents of this trend in the modern era – such as Rashad Khalifa and Ghulam Ahmed Parwez – Muḥammad was tasked only with delivering the divine message intact.[167] The Prophetic *bayān*, rather than explanation

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[167] For this and other key arguments of the two figures, see, respectively: Musa, *Ḥadīth as Scripture*, p. 14, and Baljon, *Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation*, pp. 17–19. Musa draws attention to early manifestations of *ḥadīth* rejection by examining Shāfiʿī's response to that trend; however, this does not establish continuity with modern Quranism. Moreover, while insisting that it is "an inherently Muslim response to inherently Muslim concerns" (p. 3, see also 85), Musa downplays the effects of Western dominance and the ideological trends such as liberalism. See Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, p. 21 ff. for a balanced treatment of 'internal' trends and 'external' influences.

and exegesis, should be understood in its other sense of mere proclamation, whereas God himself retained the prerogative to fulfil its *bayān*-as-clarification.[168]

In my view, there are three main arenas in which debates between Quranists (also known as *ḥadīth* deniers) and affirmers of the authority of *ḥadīth* take place; only one of these is of direct relevance to our discussion on the validity of non-TQQ (or specifically *ḥadīth*-influenced) exegesis of the Qurʾān. Before visiting and refining that aspect, I shall outline the other two and consider some of their problems.

## (a) Debating Quranic Proof-Texts

The first of these arenas is the set of proof-texts advanced from the Qurʾān itself by each side of the debate. In principle, constructive debate could take place around these, in that the Qurʾān is the only source agreed upon by all; however, the divergent views about how its verses are to be interpreted could interfere with the very possibility of mutual understanding being achieved. If advocates of the majority position opt to restrict themselves to forms of argument acceptable to their opponents (i.e. linguistic and intraquranic evidence), then they have already conceded a point about the nature of the Qurʾān: that it can be understood in isolation and abstraction from the life of the Prophet. This is perhaps too much of a concession, considering that both Traditionists (as they are sometimes described) and Quranists accept that Muḥammad received and proclaimed the scripture gradually, and that many verses refer directly to events in his mission. As such, the relationship between message and messenger ought to be of central importance to the debate over Qurʾān and Sunna (or *ḥadīth*) and it seems unreasonable to insist that the former is the only admissible evidence for the latter.

Putting aside these foundational problems, the fact is that proponents of *ḥadīth* have advanced a set of verses as evidence at least since the time of Shāfiʿī, who records a debate in Socratic style in his *Kitāb Jimāʿ al-ʿIlm* (part of *Al-Umm*).[169] Among his

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[168] Daniel Brown quotes ʿInāyat-Allāh Khān Mashriqī as saying: "The correct and the only meaning of the Qurʾān lies, and is preserved, within itself, and a perfect and detailed exegesis of its words is within its own pages. One part of the Qurʾān explains the other…" (*Rethinking Tradition*, p. 45). Khalifa went further to state that Muḥammad was *forbidden* from explaining the Qurʾān. He supported this with the following translation of Q 75:17-19: 'It is we who will put it together as a Quran. Once we reveal it, *you shall follow it*. Then, it is we who will explain it' (emphasis his; see Musa, p. 91).

[169] A translation of this work forms the latter part of Musa, *Ḥadīth as Scripture*.

core strategies was to establish that Muḥammad received two types of revelation, which he termed "recited" and "non-recited", represented by the Qurʾān and Sunna, respectively. A nuanced interpretation of the latter would be that the angelic communications and spiritual inspiration he received – other than the direct words of the Qurʾān – came to be reflected in his other teachings, including his clarifications on the scripture.[170] As part of his case, Shāfiʿī analysed the statements to the effect that the Prophet was to teach both *al-kitāb* and *al-ḥikma* (e.g. 2:151), arguing that if the former is the Qurʾān, the latter must be a distinct entity, and there is no more fitting referent than the Sunna.[171] Other proof-texts from the Qurʾān in support of seeking out and following the Prophetic teachings external to it are such as say "Obey God and obey the Apostle" (4:59) or the instruction contained within 59:7 – which begins by discussing the distribution of spoils of war – to "Take whatever the Apostle gives you, and relinquish whatever he forbids you".[172] Despite the context being clear, the Prophet's companion Ibn Masʿūd and then Shāfiʿī and others argued that this represents a universal principle.[173] These are some of the key texts used to support the legitimacy of *ḥadīth* from the Qurʾān.

Needless to say, modern Quranists are not convinced by these citations. The identification of *al-ḥikma* with the Sunna is plausible but not compelling, especially when these verses are studied thematically.[174] It is a straightforward manoeuvre to relegate obedience to the Messenger to his own lifetime, and to treat the likes of 59:7 as specific to the stated context. For Khalifa, obedience to the Messenger after his life consists in following only the Qurʾān.[175] For their part, the Quranists advance a selection of Quranic texts which they take to support their stance. As Musa notes,

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[170] See Musa, p. 5, where the matter is over-simplified. I believe it is important to distinguish between this "other revelation" as it is posited to exist firstly as divine and angelic communication with the Prophet; secondly as the Prophet's teachings to his followers; and thirdly as the community's efforts to gather these teachings in the form of disparate reports and then compiled books of Sunna.

[171] See Musa, p. 40 and Brown, p. 51.

[172] This and the previous verse are given here in Ali Quli Qara'i's translation.

[173] See Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 27/29–30. The issue of spoils may be thus seen as comparable to a *sabab nuzūl* which is included primarily but does not limit the extension of the rule.

[174] Other prophets were given or taught "*al-kitāb wa-l-ḥikma*" (e.g. 4:54, 5:111). Perhaps the clearest support for Shāfiʿī's interpretation are verses which describe them both as being "sent down" on Muḥammad (e.g. 4:113).

[175] Musa, p. 14. See also Brown, pp. 71–72.

Khalifa had a predilection for verses containing the word *ḥadīth*, such as Q 45:6 [his translation]: "These are God's verses; we recite them for you truthfully. In which '*Hadith*' beside God and His verses do they believe?"[176] If reading the later *ḥadīth* terminology into this verse appears both anachronistic and anti-contextual, the same can be said of examples I shared in Chapter 2 of the tendency to read much of the Qurʾān as a treatise in support of Quranism rather than exhortations to the idolaters, Jews and Christians. Whereas there is abundant support for their insistence that the Qurʾān is "complete, perfect, and fully detailed", the attempt by Khalifa and then Yüksel to make Q 17:46 a proof for mentioning God "in the Qurʾān alone" again fails to withstand contextual and thematic scrutiny.[177]

The foregoing examples were intended to demonstrate that the first "arena" of debate between Quranists and *ḥadīth*-affirming Muslim scholars, while bearing considerable potential for addressing the core questions, has little by way of final conclusions. On the one hand, the Qurʾān emphasises its completeness and perfection, while not precluding that secondary sources may be drawn upon to help explain it. On the other hand, the Qurʾān also underlines the role of the Messenger to convey the revelation accurately, which implies that any misunderstandings on the part of its audience would need to be addressed: either through further *āyāt* of the scripture, or through less formal means. The question remains whether and how those explanations – which presumably were needed only for some of the Qurʾān – were preserved and what authority they continue to hold for later generations of believers.

## (b) Debating *Ḥadīth* Texts

This leads us to consider the second arena: that of the *ḥadīth* literature itself. Most of the debate surrounds its relevance to Islamic legislation, rather than its utility in shedding light on other aspects of Quranic meaning. Although there are significant

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[176] Musa, p. 91. Other examples are 39:23 and 31:6 (ibid).

[177] Yüksel, *A Reformist Translation*, p. 205. This is a good test case for TQQ, as there is a parallel in 39:45, where the wording is "*Idhā dhukira Llāhu waḥdah*" rather than "*Idhā dhakarta rabbaka fi-l-Qurʾāni waḥdah*" as in 17:46. As Yüksel acknowledges, the various occurrences in 7:70, 40:12/84 and 60:4 all refer to "God alone" as object of faith, worship and supplication. However, he prefers to take this instance as being about "Quran alone" and provides this as a heading for the verse. He also supports his position with reference to the controversial "19 mathematical system" first posited by Khalifa.

differences between Sunnī and Shīʿī approaches to *ḥadīth*[178] as well as differences within the sects, affirmers of *ḥadīth* are in agreement that the corpus overall reflects a monumental effort on the part of Muslim scholarship. The presence of reports deemed unreliable or spurious within most of the famous compilations is taken not as a fundamental flaw, but instead as a reflection of the honesty and diligence of generations of scholars who strove to classify them and continue to debate the finer points.[179] In this light, the contention that this corpus is "one-hundred percent conjecture" – per Khalifa[180] – is hyperbolic, to say the least. As a process of recording history, some credit must be granted to the results of the Ḥadīth Project, as it may be termed. After all, the Qurʾān itself would have had to pass through the same hands and minds which the Quranists accuse – explicitly or by implication – of forgery, ignorance and conjecture.

Like from the Qurʾān, both sides have, at times, cited *ḥadīth* texts in support of their respective stances. There is an obvious problem for Traditionists in this respect, as the sources they point to are not accepted as accurate and authoritative by their interlocuters. Surprisingly, some sceptics have used *ḥadīth* texts as positive evidence, such as: "*Ḥadīths* from me will spread, so whatever comes to you that is in harmony with the Qurʾān, it is from me; but whatever comes to you that contradicts the Qurʾān, then it is not from me." As the *ḥadīth* compiler Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) pointed out: "The text is self-defeating, for there is no indication in the Qurʾān that we ought to compare a *ḥadīth* to the Qurʾān."[181] Of course, the deployment of such texts is intended to convince the *ḥadīth* advocates that their stance is inconsistent; however, a sceptic who holds that only this type of narration is reliable would need to explain his own inconsistency.

More frequent is the citation of *ḥadīths* which exemplify, for Quranists, the self-evident implausibility of numerous texts which have passed the criteria of Sunnī scholarship, such as those in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections of Bukhārī and Muslim. As Daniel Brown notes, various figures have described how discovering such "vulgar, absurd,

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[178] See Brown, J., *Hadith*, p. 123 ff.

[179] See Sibāʿī, *The Sunnah and its Role in Islamic Legislation*, p. 127 ff.

[180] Musa, p. 14.

[181] Sibāʿī, *The Sunnah*, p. 228.

theologically objectionable or morally repugnant" texts in the famous books is what led them to reject *ḥadīth* altogether.[182] In response to (or even in anticipation of) such critiques, the genre of commentaries – including the sub-genre which addresses the problematic texts known as *Mushkil* or *Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth*[183] – have discussed many such points, and the answers may at times be satisfactory, at others unsatisfactory to the critics.[184] However, to dismiss the whole corpus summarily in this way leads one to enquire why the Qurʾān itself should be accepted despite containing numerous verses which have faced criticism and claims of contradiction – hence the genre of *Mushkil al-Qurʾān* and others discussed in Chapter 4.

## (c) Quranic "Neediness"

The third "arena" for debate – and the one of most relevance to principles underpinning TQQ – is the nature of the Qurʾān itself, and its "neediness" (*iḥtiyāj*) for external sources to help understand it. This concept was perhaps expressed most directly by the jurist ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Awzāʿī (d. 158/774): "The Book is more in need of (*aḥwaj ilā*) the Sunna than the Sunna is of the Book."[185] This has typically been understood as describing the role of the Prophet's words and examples in clarifying the import of Quranic rulings and teachings, including to resolve aspects of ambiguity. This type of contrast is also found in the following reports recorded by Suyūṭī in his chapter on Polysemy:

> Ibn Saʿd reported via ʿIkrima from Ibn ʿAbbās, that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib sent him to the Kharijites, saying: "Go to them and debate them; but do not dispute with them using the Qurʾān, for it is multifaceted (*dhū wujūh*). Rather, debate them with the Sunna." He reported with another chain that Ibn ʿAbbās said to him: "O commander of the faithful, I am more knowledgeable than they concerning the Book of God, for in our houses it was revealed." He replied: "You are right; but the Qurʾān is multivalent (*ḥammāl*) and multifaceted. You will talk, and they will talk. Rather, dispute with them using the Sunna (*khāṣimhum bi-l-sunan*), for they will find no escape from it."

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[182] *Rethinking Tradition*, p. 95.

[183] See Musa, pp. 19–20.

[184] See, for example, Sibāʿī, p. 358 ff.

[185] Zarkashī, *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, 4/167. Cf. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's hesitance to affirm the expression that the Sunna is the arbiter of the Qurʾān, instead saying: "It explains and clarifies it." See also Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, p. 43. Compare with Wansborough's *Deutungsbedürftigkeit*, "that the scriptural style is incomplete without commentary" (*Quranic Studies*, p. 100; see Bauer (ed.), p. 277).

> So he went to them and disputed using the Sunna, leaving them devoid of arguments.[186]

Quranists may well point out the tension between such statements and the Qurʾān's self-descriptions as clear and perfect guidance.[187] Putting aside this theoretical problem, I suggest that the neediness of the Quranic text is a fact experienced by any scholar who undertakes the detailed process of exegesis.[188] There are various types of *ijmāl* that cannot be clarified by intraquranic investigation alone: some of which are necessary to reach a plausible understanding of the text. For example, the *mufassir* often needs to know the revelatory context and the initial referents of a Quranic locution; despite Farāhī's optimism about deducing this information from the Qurʾān itself, this is not possible in all cases. This very need is what led exegetes to speculate in many cases, as suggested by Dihlawī. Another example is statements which appear to contradict: these may be resolved by external context, or the Sunna may reveal the specific application of each, or that one ruling has abrogated the other.[189]

Rather than focusing on the "neediness" of individual verses of the Qurʾān, the idea may be taken to apply to the text as a whole and the broader context in which it must be placed and understood. The term Sunna (or plural *al-sunan* as in the second narration from ʿAlī above) is sometimes used in early sources in the broader sense of the knowledge of religion as practised by the community.[190] As the narration from ʿAlī also suggests, the Qurʾān is more subject to biased reading when taken in isolation, as opposed to reading it in conjunction with the shared understanding which is derived, in large part, from the teachings and actions of the Prophet. Therefore, one may engage in a *Sunnī* reading of the Qurʾān and/or readings influenced by modern-day worldviews – but a completely objective reading is unattainable.

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[186] *Al-Itqān*, 3/977.

[187] Cf. Kermani on the Qurʾān's insistence on being clear, which, he argues, served as a counter-balance to the mystery and obscurity inherent in the term *waḥy*, for revelation (*God is Beautiful*, p. 104).

[188] I recognise that this perception is relative, and that it is possible to go to extremes in assuming "neediness", thus falling short in understanding the Qurʾān on its own terms. I have seen numerous examples in which Farāhī, for example, offers a coherence-based explanation which is more convincing than the opinions of earlier exegetes who took external reports as their starting point.

[189] See Musa, p. 43 for Shāfiʿī's point concerning *naskh*.

[190] See Zarkashī, *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, 4/378.

In the field of legislation particularly, a popular strategy to undermine the Quranists' position is to highlight directives in the Qurʾān that lack sufficient detail to be implemented; most obviously, the repeated command to "establish *al-ṣalāh*" and the paucity of detail concerning timings, postures and words, and other prerequisites and integrals.[191] To approach it in another way, the question may be: how did the Muslim community come to agree upon five daily prayers and other core rituals not detailed in the Qurʾān? Daniel Brown describes an early trend among modern Quranists, exemplified by ʿAbd-Allāh Chakrālawī of the of the *Ahl-i-Qurʾān* movement, to "prove that the details of the five daily prayers can all be derived from the Qurʾān".[192] By indulging in what Brown calls "exegetical fantasies", Chakrālawī went to great lengths to affirm most of the accepted rituals rather than remoulding the *ṣalāh* rules significantly[193], or redefining the term altogether[194], as attempted by later Quranists in the Subcontinent and beyond. On the question of community practice of Sunna, the approach taken by Khalifa and others has been to claim that "Religious practices came from Abraham, not Muḥammad"[195] – as such, they would have been known to the Quraysh before the latter proclaimed his teachings.

### 3.4.4 – Relative Authority: Conclusion

The purpose of outlining the perspective of Quranists and the divergence between their approach to the Qurʾān and those of mainstream exegetes was to complete the illustration of a spectrum of views on Quranic authority. On one end is the commitment of "Traditionists" to the primacy of the Qurʾān, albeit with a stronger belief in its "neediness" and often a practical emphasis on external sources and neglect of intraquranic reflection.[196] For these authors, TQQ is valid and praiseworthy, but

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[191] For an outline of types of clarification or modification by the Sunna of the Qurʾān, see Nyazee, *Islamic Jurisprudence*, pp. 177–179.

[192] *Rethinking Tradition*, pp. 45–46. See also Qasmi, 'Towards a New Prophetology'.

[193] See a recent example in Yüksel, *A Reformist Translation*, pp. 505–509.

[194] This can be seen in Shabbir Ahmed (*The Qur'an as it Explains Itself*, xiii); also Baljon, pp. 76–78.

[195] Musa, p. 14; see also Yüksel, p. 506. See Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, pp. 101–102 for a discussion of "Sunna without *ḥadīth*". Javed Ghamidi, student of Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, offers an account of prayer (translated from his Urdu book entitled *Mīzān*) which incorporates *ḥadīths* but begins with a related perspective on Abrahamic teachings (*Islam: A Comprehensive Introduction*, 262 ff.).

[196] I have suggested previously that this is represented by the overall trajectory of Ibn Taymiyya's *Muqaddima*, which Walid Saleh termed "radical hermeneutics". Works such as the *Tafsīr* of Ibn Kathīr

they may also highlight the dangers of allowing it to override the Sunna. My analysis of a range of *tafsīr* works including that of Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī has demonstrated that an exegete may well cite an opinion based on TQQ but prefer a different opinion.[197]

The opposite end of the spectrum is in fact more radical in that it rejects the authority of any source beside the Qurʾān and insists on intraquranic methods coupled with lexical and rational considerations. Notably absent is a detailed hermeneutical account, which may be explained in part by the commitment of Quranists to the notion that the Qurʾān is clear in practical terms, and therefore in no need of exegesis.[198]

Between these two exist a range of approaches to exegesis which place TQQ at the peak of hermeneutical methods. This is the theoretical position of Ibn Taymiyya in the relevant section of his *Muqaddima*; in Chapter 1, I discussed various problems with this account, as well as the contrast between its enthusiastic reception in theoretical treatises and its limited application in exegetical works. One category of works falling in the middle of the spectrum are those which took seriously the belief that *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* is superior to other approaches, such as Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī. They are of particular note because they built their explanations of the Qurʾān upon an identified theory (i.e. *naẓm*), and their hermeneutical ideas continue to attract interest and grow in influence.[199] Similar may be said about the commentary of Ṭabāṭabāʾī: its influence – in methodology, more than any novel conclusions – is evident in subsequent Shīʿa *tafsīr*.[200] Amritsarī drew inspiration from Dihlawī's *asbāb*-scepticism but his commentary is too concise to display much variance from the general *Ahl-i-Ḥadīth* trend, despite the backlash he faced for incorporating aspects of Māturīdī theology in the first edition.

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are certainly not devoid of TQQ, but in real terms (ignoring sequence of presentation), priority is given to the Sunna and opinions of the *Salaf*.

[197] See Rūmī, *Dirāsāt fī Qawāʿid al-Tarjīḥ*, pp. 314–370: the author has included examples of TQQ working in tandem or competing, as it were, with other principles.

[198] See 2.7 above.

[199] Farāhī's works continue to be published by Al-Dāʾira al-Ḥamīdiyya in Azamgarh, India, but the associated seminary, Madrasat al-Iṣlāḥ, does not appear to have maintained a leading status in Quranic training since his time. Through a network called Al-Mawrid, Javed Ghamidi promotes these works and advances his own theories. Another prominent figure in Farāhī's school is the *ḥadīth* specialist Mohammad Akram Nadwi, who connects to the founder through his lesser-known (but longer-associated) student, Akhtar Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī (d. 1958). [Source: lecture by M. Akram Nadwi, July 2014].

[200] See Medoff, *Ijtihad and Renewal*, p. 112 ff.

The case of Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shinqīṭī is different, however. Despite being among the best known of this group of commentaries, and most readily identified as a TQQ work, the conclusions reached therein are not ground-breaking. The author's introduction is, in reality, more about the nature of the Qurʾān and the forms of intraquranic *bayān* – identified after completing his project – than an elaboration of methodology. The work is at its most sophisticated when Shinqīṭī indulges in questions of jurisprudence, at which points the intraquranic contribution is negligible. The specialities of *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān* are its collection of parallels – drawing from Ibn Kathīr and others, including the author's own insights – and application of juristic methods of exegesis (see Chapter 4 for this category). In describing these limitations, I am querying: what was the need to author such a work, if it did not yield significant conclusions or point the way to further intraquranic research (cf. Farāhī et al)?[201]

I propose that the *Aḍwāʾ* (and arguably some others) be classified alongside Suyūṭī's *Al-Durr al-Manthūr* as a thematic collection of exegesis. Whereas Suyūṭī's is limited to materials from *ḥadīth* (broadly defined) of importance to the exegete, Shinqīṭī's functions as a collection of verses together with his views on their relevance – as simple parallels or as evidence. Neither work is a stand-alone exegesis, especially considering that Shinqīṭī passes over many verses without comment, presumably because no TQQ explanation occurred to him. The same verses may well receive detailed treatment in standard works of *tafsīr*, centred not only upon *ḥadīths* but on questions of language, theology and so on. Therefore, Shinqīṭī's compilation and similar works may be drawn upon by any exegete looking for a detailed treatment of one particular aspect and source, just as he or she is likely to consult specialist works on linguistic analysis (*iʿrāb wa maʿānī*), abrogation (*nāsikh wa mansūkh*), juristic interpretation (*aḥkām al-Qurʾān*) and contexts of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*). These classical genres can be seen as thematic aids to studying the Qurʾān; just as they cannot suffice in isolation from that broader discussion and synthesis, the same may be said for TQQ compilations. Indeed, I suggested previously that Ibn Kathīr, by leaving many

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[201] In his introduction, Shinqīṭī does not include bold claims like most of the other TQQ exegetes about how his work will be different, nor does he dismiss other works as lacking objectivity or being in need of this new method to resolve their conflicting opinions.

of his cited parallels without analysis and comment, may have intended for these cross-references to be of use to later exegetes inspired to investigate further.

The discussions in this chapter have encompassed a number of key principles underpinning *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, providing it with its epistemic authority; as well as related theories which may problematise this authority in some respects, such as temporal revelation and abrogation. What emerges is a complex picture of what TQQ involves in theory, just as there is a range of processes and methods outlined in the next chapter. As such, it makes little sense to treat TQQ as one thing, on one level of authority, such that it can be considered the "best" or otherwise. The distinction was made above between levels of clarity of TQQ (from Zarkashī's types of *bayān*), and some scholars outlined factors which make TQQ opinions more compelling, namely the personal authority of the exegete (especially the Prophet) and the support of other exegetical sources and methods. If it is useful to compare TQQ with other approaches in terms of authority, the account would be far more complex once these factors are combined with the diversity of methods constituting TQQ. However, in my estimation, an exegete is not in need of simplistic or detailed accounts of what is "best", as exegesis is a complex and subtle craft involving careful negotiation with the sources together with rational and narrated evidence. In short, there will be times when his conclusions depend most strongly upon one or another form of TQQ, and times when other considerations are at the forefront: this is the reality of most exegesis as found in the books.

# Chapter 4

# Methods and Genres in TQQ

## 4.0 – Introduction

At various points, I have referred to TQQ as the "intraquranic method" in the singular; yet it has become clear through the theoretical discussions and study of exegetical examples that there are various methods at play. In this chapter, these aspects of methodology will be examined more closely and brought together into one context, as though to represent the "TQQ toolkit" from which the exegetes have drawn and continue to draw. I am also interested in how the truth-bearing potential of these tools can be optimised for the future *mufassir* or student of the Qurʾān. The result may then be seen as one "method" encompassing a variety of techniques and processes, alongside the aspects of theory addressed previously. I take as a starting point the relevant discussions identified in hermeneutical works of *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* etc. (Chapter 1) and build upon the observations in Chapter 2 concerning the practices of those exegetes who defined their own projects as being based wholly or primarily upon the intraquranic method. The methods discussed here can, in numerous cases, be linked directly to theories discussed in Chapter 3; there are also fresh theoretical considerations related to a number of the methods examined.

I have divided the methods under consideration into four groups, namely: juristic, thematic, comparative and contextual. Excluding the first, these groups form a conceptual whole, insofar as a **thematic** approach to the Quranic entails finding parallels and building a more complete picture; a **comparative** approach is to give some parts or meanings preponderance over others; and a **contextual** approach is to draw conclusions from a text's immediate surroundings rather than the broader corpus. Under each group, I have drawn material and conclusions from both theory and practice. As well as summarising the methods employed by the TQQ exegetes (and others), I refer to the *uṣūl* and *ʿulūm* literature to clarify the methodology by which these authors operated. In order to arrive at the most complete picture possible of a theory and methodology of TQQ, I have widened the net to specialist works in Quranic

studies as well as other genres in Muslim scholarship which display direct relevance to the methods under consideration. The first of these genres which have the appearance of being external to Quranic studies is *uṣūl al-fiqh*.

# 4.1 – Juristic Methods

This group of methods is distinct from the others by virtue of being more developed and thoroughly articulated; I have called them "juristic" because they have been codified in the genre of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, which is generally translated as jurisprudence, legal theory, or similar.[1] Since interpreting scripture is integral to the formation and justification of Islamic law, scholars of legal theory developed hermeneutics of textual interactions in the Qurʾān and Sunna. However, this does not entail that theories and methods so elaborated were intended to be exclusive to the domain of *fiqh* or to those verses classified as having legal relevance.[2] I am proceeding on the assumption that these methods are applicable – or adaptable – to the hermeneutics of the entire Qurʾān with its varied subjects, insofar as the interpretation of these passages involves the juxtaposition of texts which are explained with respect to each other.[3] Here I discuss the three types of interaction which are of most direct significance to *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, as reflected in books of *uṣūl al-tafsīr*.[4]

## 4.1.1 – *Bayān* of the *Mujmal*

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a detailed account of the causes of *ijmāl*, meaning "lack of clarity in denotation", was included by Zarkashī in his chapter concerning "*Tafsīr* and *Taʾwīl*". At the end of this chapter (41), he describes those texts

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[1] Vishanoff uses the latter along with "hermeneutics" in *The Formation of Islamic Hermeneutics: How Sunni Legal Theorists Imagined a Revealed Law*.

[2] Such verses are described as *āyāt al-aḥkām* and commonly estimated at five hundred. As Zarkashī points out (*Al-Burhān*, p. 262), other passages – such as narratives and parables – can also be sources for rulings. Books of *uṣūl al-fiqh* do cite "non-legal" verses in the course of establishing legal principles, especially points of language.

[3] Muḥammad al-Ghazālī and others have cautioned that *uṣūl al-fiqh* cannot simply be universalised to all texts and topics within the Qurʾān (see Ḥammād, *ʿIlm Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, pp. 56–57). My own view is that multiple types of *uṣūl* could be formulated to reflect different Quranic 'genres', or various 'readings' of the text – see 4.2.3 below.

[4] See Chapter 1. Other *uṣūl al-fiqh* topics are addressed elsewhere, particularly *naskh* (3.2.2) and *dalālāt* (4.4.1).

in the Qurʾān which are "ẓāhir, i.e. denoting a meaning with alternative possibilities remaining", as opposed to the unequivocal category known as naṣṣ.[5] These alternatives are eliminated by recourse either to verbal or non-verbal indications (qarāʾin), and the verbal consists of either connected or unconnected speech. Whereas the "connected" type has the potential to be most authoritative (as I discussed in Chapter 3), the "unconnected" category is the most relevant to the majority of intraquranic exegesis.

As Zarkashī explains, wherever there is an equivocal verse which is clarified by another text, the latter has one of two effects: (a) to demonstrate that the equivocal text is to be understood in other than its most apparent meaning: this is called taʾwīl (interpretation) or takhṣīṣ (particularisation); or (b) to make clear the actual meaning of that equivocal verse: this is bayān (clarification). The example he gives for taʾwīl is the statement "Divorce is twice" (al-ṭalāqu marratān; Q 2:229): with reference to the following verse, it becomes clear that this ṭalāq is the revocable type, which may be followed by the third, binding pronouncement. As for bayān, this is exemplified by Q 6:103 (lā tudrikuhu l-abṣār), which – as explained in Chapter 2 – may be taken as denying altogether that people may see God, or merely denying that their vision may encompass Him; according to Sunnī interpretation, other verses (75:23, 83:15) clarify that only the latter sense is intended.[6]

Zarkashī lists nine general causes of ijmāl, which I summarise here:[7]

a. Ishtirāk (homonymy and polysemy) on the word level;
b. Ḥadhf (ellipsis) in the sentence;
c. Identifying referents of pronouns;
d. Waqf and ibtidāʾ, i.e. where sentences begin and end;
e. Gharīb (uncommon) words;
f. Archaic expressions;
g. Taqdīm and taʾkhīr, i.e. unusual word order;
h. Manqūl/munqalib words, i.e. adapted forms;

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[5] Al-Burhān, p. 361. It is evident from the heading given to this section that the term ẓāhir is being used as an equivalent for mujmal; indeed, they are used interchangeably within this section, just as various terms have been used synonymously with bayān/tabyīn. See 3.3 above for mutashābih and muḥkam as closely related concepts.

[6] Al-Burhān, pp. 361–362.

[7] Al-Burhān, pp. 359–361. I have not included his examples.

i.     Repetitive phrases which obscure the apparent sentence structure.

These various types of *ijmāl* are then subject to *bayān* (or *tabyīn*), which may be found within the immediate context, in other Quranic passages, or in the Sunna. Zarkashī provides over thirty examples of *bayān al-mujmal* by separate passages of the Qurʾān – though he does not describe it as such, this is an obvious application of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*. These examples suffer from a lack of organisation and a disconnect from theory.[8] In many cases, it is not clear that any *ijmāl* is present and/or that the other verse has provided genuine *bayān*; this applies most of all to the examples of response (*radd, jawāb*) given in one verse to a contention raised by various unbelievers in another. Some involve vague (*mubham*) expressions given more detail elsewhere, such as the famous example of "those You have blessed (*anʿamta ʿalayhim*)" (Q 1:7) being elaborated in 4:67, "Whoever obeys God and the Messenger will be among those God has blessed (*anʿama Llāhu ʿalayhim*): the messengers, the truthful, those who bear witness to the truth, and the righteous". Zarkashī discusses why this citation is more fitting as *tafsīr* than 19:58 (which contains the same expression): he argues that its meaning is broader and closer to the intent of 1:7.[9]

      Since the category of *mujmal* may be defined as a catch-all which includes those which I discuss below, it is unsurprising that some examples pertain to *takhṣīṣ* or *taqyīd*, or involve thematic or comparative approaches. An example of particularisation (using a conditional) is that the apparent universal response to supplications in 2:186 must be understood as predicated upon God's will and intent to respond – a point made explicit in 6:41 ("…if He wills").[10] A questionable thematic reading is provided for Moses' request to see God (7:143): Zarkashī cites an earlier suggestion that he was not asking on his own behalf, but based on the Israelites'

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[8] *Al-Burhān*, pp. 350–352. In addition, they suffer from a lack of editorial rigour in every edition I consulted. The second item in the list ("*fa-lahū khayrun minhā*", Q 27:89, 28:84) does not have its *bayān* provided. The third item is missing its first stage of *ijmāl*, i.e. verses which state that the Qurʾān was sent down "without clarifying whether this occurred by day or night", followed by those which specified night (44:3), then the name of this night, 97:1. Instead, these two items run together in the printed editions, incomprehensibly.

[9] *Al-Burhān*, p. 353.

[10] *Al-Burhān*, p. 350. Zarkashī also quotes a *ḥadīth* which explains different forms of "response" which are vouchsafed for supplications which fulfil certain conditions.

demand (2:55).[11] Another example involves an apparent conflict between two effects of God's remembrance (*dhikr*) upon the believers: to create tranquillity in their hearts (13:28) and to make their hearts tremble (8:2) – a further verse is said to juxtapose these and resolve the tension, namely 39:23.[12]

A noteworthy aspect is the role – or absence – of context in some of the examples. The clarification provided by context is sometimes overlooked for the sake of arguing that this was provided by a separate verse. Zarkashī states that 43:17 – "When one of them is brought the news of *what he ascribes to the All-beneficent*, his face becomes darkened" – is clarified by 16:58, "When one of them is brought the news of a *female*, his face becomes darkened".[13] However, this is unnecessary because the preceding verse makes this explicitly clear: "Did He adopt *daughters* from what He creates while He preferred you with sons?" (43:16).

The conclusion I draw from surveying the treatment of this category is that, despite being listed by the likes of Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī and Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ as one of the forms of intraquranic exegesis (see Chapter 1), *bayān al-mujmal* is in fact too broad a concept to be thus subsumed. Since there are numerous forms of *ijmāl,* and the concept is applied subjectively – indeed, many examples provided by the authors involve modification of something that appears clear in itself – it would be more fruitful to break this concept into its constituent elements. As described in Chapter 1, a more detailed account of Quranic *ijmāl* and *bayān* is provided by Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shinqīṭī in the introduction to *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*. With further refinement and organisation, the specific elements requiring clarification – such as homonymy, which heads both Zarkashi's and Shinqīṭī's lists – may be identified and systematised along with the ʿ*āmm* and *muṭlaq* texts discussed below.

From an *uṣūl al-fiqh* perspective, the "ruling" (*ḥukm*) concerning any *mujmal* text is that its *bayān* must be sought out (whether from the Qurʾān or externally) in

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[11] *Al-Burhān*, p. 353. The unnamed scholar further states that "It is not stated in the Torah that [Moses] requested to see [God] at any other time than when he had his people with him." However, such is found in Exodus 33.

[12] *Al-Burhān*, p. 351.

[13] *Al-Burhān*, p. 350. These translations are by Qara'i, emphasis added. Note the contrast here with Zarkashī's own point about context versus *istiʾnās* in the identification of *ẓulm* (in 6:82) with *shirk* (in 31:13) – see 3.4.2 above.

order to "act upon it".[14] This account focuses upon verses which contain practical rulings (*āyāt al-aḥkām*), and can extend unproblematically to points of creed, in that affirming beliefs is a kind of action. As for scenarios of *ijmāl* beyond these categories, such as narratives or descriptions of natural phenomena, it should be said that the exegete is required to seek out *bayān* for the purpose of understanding, rather than action. This is to assume that the *bayān* will always be available: as mentioned in Chapter 3, there is a debate among the legal theorists on this point. According to Suyūṭī, "The most correct [opinion] is that [texts] upon which action is mandated may not remain [unclear]; this does not apply to other [types of text]."[15] The stipulation (by Dhahabī et al) that the exegete must seek out relevant verses for clarification and completeness is, essentially, a **thematic** approach; this is especially the case in examples where the text does not appear problematic in itself. Rather, it is simply the case that other verses (or *ḥadīths*, etc.) indicate that it should not be understood in its apparent sense.[16]

## 4.1.2 – *Takhṣīṣ* of the *ʿĀmm*

Whereas the previous type of textual interaction was relatively broad, this and the following type pertain more directly to juristic rulings; the topics of universal (*ʿāmm*) and particular (*khāṣṣ*) expressions, especially, receive extensive attention in *uṣūl al-fiqh* works. The *ʿāmm* expression is one which "denotes all items to which the wording extends, comprehensively, with no limitation in terms of amount or quantity".[17] Whereas the *khāṣṣ* is "that which was coined to denote a single, specific meaning"[18], the concept which is of relevance to our discussion is in fact the particularisation (*takhṣīṣ*) of universal expressions: this may be defined as "removing universality from the *ʿāmm*, clarifying that it denotes only some of those items to which the wording extends".[19]

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[14] Ṣāliḥ, *Tafsīr al-Nuṣūṣ*, 1/247.

[15] *Al-Itqān*, 4/1426.

[16] See 2.2.3 above for examples of "modifying sense" in Sūrat al-Anʿām.

[17] Ṣāliḥ, *Tafsīr al-Nuṣūṣ*, 2/15.

[18] Such as an individual person (e.g. *Zayd*), a species (e.g. *insān*), genus (e.g. *ḥayawān*) or concept (e.g. *ʿilm*) – see Ṣāliḥ, 2/136.

[19] Adapted from Ṣāliḥ, 2/69.

There are a host of Arabic expressions which are taken to denote universality,[20] and a universal meaning is also created by certain structures, such as a negated indefinite word (as in 6:82, where, linguistically, all *ẓulm* is negated). Once these linguistic expressions are identified as being universal in principle, they are divided into three categories[21]: (a) that by which the universal meaning is, in fact, intended; (b) that which is known – through context and reason – not to be intended literally, but restricted by necessity; (c) those which are universal in themselves, but have been restricted and particularised by another text through *takhṣīṣ*: our focus is solely on this latter category (known as *makhṣūṣ*).[22]

The procedure with respect to *ʿāmm* texts and *takhṣīṣ* is articulated in the various works of Quranic and juristic studies, and at its tersest in the form of an axiom (*qāʿida*): "*A universal expression is considered universal unless there is evidence to particularise it.*"[23] This means that the default attitude to any wording which appears to denote universality is that it does so in fact; there is no need to search out a particularising locution (*mukhaṣṣiṣ*) – contrary to the situation when faced with a *mujmal* text – and the exegete may not exclude referents from the expression without justification.[24] Writers of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, as noted above, are concerned with the imperative to "act upon" the universal import of the locution. However, the axiom as presented is broad enough to include other types of Quranic discourse.

As Suyūṭī outlines, there are numerous linguistic features which act as *mukhaṣṣiṣ* and particularise the universal. Of these, some are connected to the original locution, namely: exceptions, adjectives, conditions, limits and substitutions. However, the relevant categories for TQQ are the unconnected particularisers within

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[20] These include words made definite with the article denoting comprehensiveness (*istighrāq*), or those which have a similar meaning through annexation (*iḍāfa*) to a definite genitive. There are auxiliary words which denote universality, including conditionals, interrogatives and relative pronouns. This is in addition to words coined as emphasis in this regard, e.g. "*kulluhum, ajmaʿūn* (all of them, all together)". See Wahbī, *Al-Masāʾil al-Mushtaraka bayna ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān wa Uṣūl al-Fiqh wa Atharuhā fī l-Tafsīr*, pp. 458–469.

[21] Wahbī, pp. 469–474.

[22] For elaboration on the difference between the latter two, see Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān*, 4/1414–1416. He discusses the claim that there are hardly any genuine universals – he argues that this applies only to legal rulings (see also Wahbī, p. 474). Suyūṭī also notes the opinion which holds the *ʿāmm* text to be non-literal (*majāzī*) when it is subject to *takhṣīṣ*.

[23] Sabt, *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr*, 2/140.

[24] See Wahbī, pp. 475–478 (including Quranic evidences for this axiom) and 538–540.

the Qurʾān (while Suyūṭī further lists *ḥadīth*, *ijmāʿ* and *qiyās*).[25] An example of such *takhṣīṣ* is the universal statement concerning "divorced women" (*al-muṭallaqāt*) in 2:228, that they must "wait for three monthly periods" before remarrying. Whereas the term encompasses all women upon whom divorce (*ṭalāq*) has been pronounced, two other verses demonstrate that this ruling does not apply equally to all divorcées. First, it excludes cases of divorce prior to consummation, in which no waiting period is mandated (33:49). Second, pregnant women are to remain in waiting until giving birth (65:4).[26] As such, the original term "*al-muṭallaqāt*" in 2:228 should be interpreted as "consummated, non-pregnant divorcées". This manoeuvre is sometimes looked at from the perspective of the original term being limited in scope (hence being made more particular or specific), and at other times the focus is upon the exclusions being made. The latter is illustrated by Suyūṭī's second example: both "carrion and blood" are prohibited by 5:3, but fish was excluded (*khuṣṣa l-samak*) by 5:96, and non-flowing blood by 6:145[27] – here, the word *takhṣīṣ* pertains to the item "specified as exception".

The question of priority is important here. The procedure of *takhṣīṣ* grants the particular (*khāṣṣ*) priority over the universal (*ʿāmm*). In cases where the universal was revealed earlier, the *khāṣṣ* ruling replaces one which originally was – or appeared to be – *ʿāmm*: this replacement occurs in the subset to which the *khāṣṣ* pertains. As noted in the discussion on abrogation, the resemblance here to *naskh* led frequently to early authorities using that term while intending *takhṣīṣ*.[28] It is certainly conceivable that a universal statement be revealed subsequent to a particular one – in such cases, to take the universal at face value would amount to *naskh*, in that the universal overrides the particular.

This question is related to another scenario, in which there are two rulings which appear to contradict, one being universal and the other particular. According to Fahd al-Wahbī in his recent work outlining areas of overlap between *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*, this is an issue overlooked within the latter genre despite its

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[25] *Al-Itqān*, 4/1417–1418.

[26] *Al-Itqān*, 4/1418.

[27] *Al-Itqān*, 4/1418. See below re: *taqyīd*, as 6:145 is an example of that. The point concerning fish is that it is not such as can be slaughtered by knife, and thus would fall naturally under the category of carrion (*mayta*).

[28] See 3.2.2 for the quote from Shāṭibī.

importance.[29] The majority of legal schools take the approach of considering both verses operational, which can only be achieved by giving priority to the *khāṣṣ*, thereby doing *takhṣīṣ* of the *ʿāmm* ruling. In this, chronology is irrelevant. The example Wahbī gives is of the permission to marry Jewish and Christian women (Q 5:5), and the prohibition of *mushrik* women (2:221): the former is taken to limit and qualify the latter.[30] The Ḥanafī school, on the other hand, proceeds from a stance that both the *ʿāmm* and *khāṣṣ* are definitive (*qaṭʿī*) in import – as such, the conflict must be resolved in light of chronology.[31] A particularising locution which follows the universal one immediately is considered *takhṣīṣ*, whereas any separation in time would require that it be categorised as "partial abrogation" (*naskh juzʾī*).[32] An example of the former is the command in Q 2:185 for everyone who enters Ramaḍān to observe the fast, followed immediately by the dispensation for people who are ill or travelling.[33] As for the latter, this is exemplified by the *ḥadd* penalty for accusing chaste women of adultery without four witnesses (24:4), which conflicts with the verse permitting a husband to bear witness by himself four times (24:6). Due to the existence of a *sabab* report which has it that the latter was revealed separately in response to a particular case which arose, the Ḥanafīs consider this to effect abrogation of a part of the original verse, namely its application to husbands as accusers.[34] A third possibility is that chronology cannot be determined, in which case other methods are used to decide on the preponderant ruling; if that is not possible, then neither of the verses (or evidences) is acted upon with respect to the area of overlap between them.[35]

It is clear from the preceding discussion that there are underlying theoretical considerations and debates between the jurisprudential schools, especially between the Ḥanafīs and the other three Sunnī schools known as "the majority" (*al-jumhūr*). One

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[29] *Al-Masāʾil al-Mushtaraka*, p. 535.

[30] Ibid. This is on the assumption that *mushrik* extends here to Jews and Christians, which is in fact a subject of debate (see Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 3/259).

[31] Ṣāliḥ, *Tafsīr al-Nuṣūṣ*, 2/107.

[32] Suyūṭī points to these differing approaches at the beginning of his discussion of Meccan and Medinan revelations (*Al-Itqān*, 1/43). Hamid Algar's translation obscures this point: "according to those who believe that a specifying verse always comes later" (*The Perfect Guide Vol. 1*, p. 1).

[33] Ibid. There is a typographical error here which is clarified by reference to 2/86 of the same volume.

[34] Ṣāliḥ, 2/108–109.

[35] Ṣāliḥ, 2/109.

of the challenges of generalising the hermeneutical rules from *uṣūl al-fiqh* to the whole of *tafsīr* – in addition to the inherent variety of Quranic literary genres beyond the *aḥkām* verses – is that these rules were developed in the context of juristic debates that encompassed a range of legal evidences, along with the diversity of inherited practices and approaches of the earliest generations. Whereas the proper interpretation of the Qurʾān and Sunna is, on a purely conceptual level, the source and justification for legal opinions, the reality is that some interpretations – and even principles of interpretation – are influenced by practical positions and used to justify them.[36]

Nevertheless, the basic concept of particularisation of universals is clearly an important aspect of textual interplay which features in TQQ, and this applies outside the context of juristic rulings. An example from Chapter 2 pertained to Q 6:20, which contains two universals: "Those to whom We have given the Scripture" who recognise the Prophet and/or Qurʾān; and that "they will not believe". The first of these, as argued by some of the exegetes, is particular to the knowledgeable ones among them, as evidenced by 34:6. The second apparent universal is particular to the stubborn and wicked among them, as evidenced by 5:83. The procedure of *takhṣīṣ* may, indeed, be simpler outside the context of *aḥkām*.

In closing, I shall highlight two concepts to which *takhṣīṣ* has a relationship. The first of these is ***naskh***, as already mentioned. It remains to be said that they share in the assumption of their absence: that is to say that any *ʿāmm* verse is assumed to be universal in import unless a particulariser is identified; likewise, it is assumed to be operative (*muḥkam*) unless abrogation is established. The other relationship is with ***asbāb al-nuzūl***, revelatory contexts. In the summary in Chapter 3 of Walī-Allāh Dihlawī's critical remarks on *asbāb*, it was noted that he considered those reports to be indispensable whenever they are authentic and indicate that the apparent sense of the verse is not intended, such as with *takhṣīṣ*.[37] The core question is: if a universal wording is revealed concerning a particular circumstance, does that circumstance particularise the wording? This is the debate over *ʿumūm al-lafẓ* (universality of locution) versus *khuṣūṣ al-sabab* (particularity of context). Those who argued for

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[36] See Jackson, 'Fiction and Formalism: Toward a Functional Analysis of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*' in Weiss (ed.), *Studies in Islamic Legal Theory*, p. 200.

[37] *Al-Fawz al-Kabīr*, p. 56.

particularism intended that the verse should be understood as applying to any situation that matches – in all relevant aspects – with the original context of revelation: this original scenario is known as *ṣūrat al-sabab* (its "form"). As such, any further extension is based on analogy (*qiyās*). As Wahbī states, the majority position is that the universality of the statement is maintained; the *ṣūrat al-sabab* is therefore no more than an incontrovertible example of that to which the locution extends.[38]

## 4.1.3 – *Taqyīd* of the *Muṭlaq*

This type of textual interaction bears similarity to the previous, insofar as a broader wording is restricted in meaning by another text.[39] The *muṭlaq* locution is in fact a subcategory of the *khāṣṣ* and defined as that which "denotes an essential meaning without any qualification (*qayd*) to restrict its extension"[40]. For example, the term "*shahrayn* (two months)" – as a period of fasting – is specific in its import but is not restricted by any further stipulations. Qualification would come in the form of connected words, e.g. an adjective – like "*mutatābiʿayn* (continuous)" – or similar.

In addressing the rulings pertaining to the *muṭlaq* (unqualified, unrestricted) and *muqayyad* (qualified, restricted) texts of the Qurʾān, the similarity to the case of particularisation of the universal is clear: "*An unqualified expression is treated as unqualified unless there is evidence to qualify it.*"[41] In reality, however, the similarity is not between *taqyīd* and *takhṣīṣ* but between interpreting each type of locution (universal or unqualified) in the light of the other (particular or qualified, respectively) – the operation described as "applying" (*ḥaml*) one to the other. To do so is a reductionist approach, whereby a qualifying or restricting clause found at one juncture is assumed to apply to similar expressions where it is absent. Hence the qualified expression is taken as *tafsīr* or *bayān* of the unqualified one, and this is TQQ when both are in the Qurʾān.

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[38] *Al-Masāʾil al-Mushtaraka*, pp. 516–522, including a citation from Ibn Taymiyya's *Muqaddima*. This is comparable to the authority of examples expressed by the Prophet (see 3.4.1 above).

[39] Wahbī uses this to explain the fact that it contains less enquiries within works of *uṣūl*: much is implicit from the treatment of *ʿāmm* and *khāṣṣ* (*Al-Masāʾil al-Mushtaraka*, p. 543).

[40] Ṣāliḥ, *Tafsīr al-Nuṣūṣ*, 2/159. A *khāṣṣ* locution is in contradistinction to the *ʿāmm* and hence not universal. The *khāṣṣ* is then either *muṭlaq* or *muqayyad*.

[41] Sabt, *Qawāʿid*, 2/165.

Since the operation of equating two junctures is not self-evident but involves some subtle considerations, there are varying positions on the matter among the juristic schools. By default, two separate verses in which a similar expression occurs – one with a restrictive clause, the other without – are to be considered individually. This point was underlined by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī (d. 483/1090), the Ḥanafite jurist, with the following example:

> Every [instruction] of fasting in the Qurʾān which God has not stipulated to be continuous, a may be performed intermittently. However, what He has stipulated as continuous may not be made intermittent… [An example of the former] is making up missed [fasts of Ramaḍān], as God said "Fasting on other days" (Q 2:185): these may be made up continuously or intermittently, as the [word "*ayyām* (days)"] is unqualified by any description. Ibn ʿAbbās said: "Treat as vague (*mubham*) whatever God left vague."[42]

Concerning this specific ruling, the major Sunnī schools are in agreement. However, some jurists are more cautious than others in applying the reductionist approach (i.e. *ḥaml al-muṭlaq ʿalā l-muqayyad*), as we shall see in the examples which follow.

The *taqyīd* vs. *iṭlāq* may occur in a number of different scenarios. First, it may either be in the ruling (*ḥukm*) itself, or in its obligating cause (*sabab*). In the latter case, the Ḥanafīs are alone in considering such a qualifying clause inoperative.[43] As for the occurrence of such competing expressions pertaining to the ruling itself, there are four possibilities: the texts match up in both *ḥukm* and *sabab*; they match up in *ḥukm* only, or in *sabab* only; or they differ in both respects. The legitimacy of interpreting the unqualified in terms of the qualified receives broad acceptance in the first of these scenarios. An example is found in Sūrat al-Anʿām, in which verse 6:145 – which specifically prohibits "flowing blood" (*dam masfūḥ*)[44] is taken to clarify and restrict the unqualified prohibition of "blood" in other verses, e.g. 5:3. Here, the ruling – prohibition of consuming blood – is the same in the two places, and the cause – the

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[42] From *Al-Mabsūṭ*; quoted in Ṣāliḥ, *Tafsīr al-Nuṣūṣ*, 2/164. The quote from Ibn ʿAbbās, *"Abhimū mā abhama Llāhu"* means to consider expressions open to various possibilities when the wording contains no restrictions. See also Ibn Rushd, *The Distinguished Jurist's Primer*, 1/350.

[43] Ṣāliḥ, 2/171. There may be Quranic examples, but the sources I consulted used rulings based on *ḥadīths*, such as whether *zakāt al-fiṭr* is to be paid on behalf of non-Muslim dependents.

[44] That is, blood which has been caused to flow out from the animal, contrary to that which remains in the meat.

harm associated with this consumption – is also shared: the consensus in this scenario is to interpret reductively.[45]

Likewise there is consensus that, when there is a difference in *ḥukm*, this manoeuvre is improper, even if the *sabab* is one and the same. For example, Q 5:6 stipulates washing (*ghasl*) the hands/arms (*aydī*) up to the elbows (*ilā l-marāfiq*) in order to remove minor ritual impurity before prayer, in the ablution process known as *wuḍūʾ*. The same verse then describes the procedure to remove ritual impurities when water is unavailable, known as *tayammum*: i.e. to seek clean earth and wipe (*masḥ*) the face and hands/arms. Here, the rulings of washing and wiping are different, even though the cause – ritual purification – is one.[46] Therefore, even though the same term *aydī* (singular: *yad*) is mentioned twice, the qualification of "to the elbows" may only be applied where it occurs and not transferred to the context of *tayammum*. However, texts from the Sunna have been used by the various juristic schools to limit the obligation of wiping to either the elbows or wrists.[47] The illegitimacy of reductionism is even more pronounced if both *sabab* and *ḥukm* differ: for example, this ruling of washing the *yad* up to the elbow has no bearing upon the ruling to "cut the *yad*" of the thief in 5:38. However, that is limited to the below the wrist based on evidences from the Sunna.[48]

As for the scenario of two texts sharing in *ḥukm* only, this is the greatest point of divergence between the jurists. A common example of this is the question of freeing a slave as expiation for the pseudo-divorce practice known as *ẓihār*: is it necessary for this to be a Muslim slave? The verse of *ẓihār* (58:3) stipulates "freeing a slave [literally: a neck] (*taḥrīr raqaba*)" without any qualification, whereas the expiation in the case of unintentional killing (*qatl khaṭaʾ*) includes "freeing a believing slave (*raqaba muʾmina*)" (4:92). Does the latter imply anything for the former? The Ḥanafīs argue that each should be treated as a distinct ruling, because they pertain to different causes, namely *ẓihār* and unintentional killing. Since there is no conflict between the

[45] Ṣāliḥ, 2/175–176.

[46] Ṣāliḥ, 2/179–180. Cf. Wahbī, who attributes the relevant *uṣūlī* position to "most" rather than all scholars (*Al-Masāʾil al-Mushtaraka*, p. 551).

[47] Ṣāliḥ, 2/176–177.

[48] Ṣāliḥ, 2/178–179.

two rulings, each can be applied independently: a believer is required in the latter, but not in the former.[49] The **second** position belongs to many among the Shāfiʿīs, namely: to apply the restricting clause to both, as though it was only left out at one juncture because it is self-evident, or due to the fact it is explicit at the other juncture.[50] It is interesting to note the appeal of these scholars to what I have described in Chapter 3 as the Principles of Unity and Consistency, saying that the Qurʾān is "as though a single word (*ka-l-kalima al-wāḥida*)". As Muḥammad Adīb al-Ṣāliḥ points out, citing an earlier objection by the Shāfiʿite scholar ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), this argument fails to acknowledge the diverse rulings and purposes which the Qurʾān addresses in its various passages and contexts.[51] A **third**, related, position – held by some from the Shāfiʿī and Mālikī schools – is to extend the import of the qualifying clause through the process of analogy (*qiyās*) rather than directly through the expressions (*lafẓ*). For example, in this case, the two sins share in requiring expiation of the "optimum" form, and the Sharīʿa has placed particular virtue in freeing believers from slavery.[52]

A final case ought to be mentioned: when an unqualified expression has two potential qualifiers (*qayd*) from elsewhere in the Qurʾān. In Khālid al-Sabt's collection, the relevant axiom is expressed as so: "*If there are two competing qualifiers for an unqualified expression and it is possible for one to be preponderant over the other, the expression must be qualified using the preponderant one.*"[53] An example of this situation is described by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in *Al-Maḥṣūl*[54], to the effect that, according to Q 2:185, making up missed fasts of Ramaḍān is to be on "other days (*ayyām ukhar*)" – continuity or otherwise is not stipulated. While there is another verse

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[49] Ṣāliḥ, 2/184–185. See also 2/186–188 concerning the relevance of contrary implication (*mafhūm al-mukhālafa*) to this debate and the position of the Ḥanafīs.

[50] Ṣāliḥ, 2/185.

[51] Ṣāliḥ, 2/186. This is an example of an anti-reductionist statement.

[52] Ṣāliḥ, 2/189.

[53] *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr*, 2/168.

[54] I have mentioned this detail to draw attention to the possibility that the very authors of *tafsīr* and *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* works may have reserved pertinent discussions and details for their *uṣūl al-fiqh* works. This may be seen also in Fahd al-Wahbī's section on "Issues Covered Only by *Uṣūl* Scholars Concerning *Muṭlaq* and *Muqayyad*" (*Al-Masāʾil al-Mushtaraka*, pp. 471–473), in which he quotes a list of conditions from Zarkashī's *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*. This implies that the same issues were not included in his Quranic encyclopaedia *Al-Burhān*. For the conditions, see also Ṣāliḥ, 2/191.

which includes a continuity clause (58:4, in the context of *ẓihār*), yet another passage mandates separating fasts (2:196, for the pilgrim who fails to offer sacrifice). Referring to the above-noted juristic distinction between equating through *lafẓ* or *qiyās*, Rāzī states: "Those who claim that the *muṭlaq* may be qualified by the *muqayyad* through the expressions themselves, must leave the *muṭlaq* here unqualified: this is because neither [of the latter two verses] is worthier than the other of serving as qualification. As for whoever does so by means of analogy, they would decide which is more suitable as a basis for analogy."[55]

### 4.1.4 – Conclusions

The purpose of the above outline of several key intertextual (or intratextual) operations discussed primarily in *uṣūl al-fiqh* was to illustrate the level of detail characterising those discussions. They are indisputably part of Quranic hermeneutics, but the extent to which *fiqh*-centric conclusions can be generalised to other discourses and genres within the Qurʾān remains an open question. Among those detailed *uṣūl al-fiqh* discussions are topics which have not been covered in the *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* literature, although the influence of the former upon the latter was noted in the Introduction and Chapter 1. The process of incorporating the jurists' insights into a broader Quranic hermeneutics must be selective and draw from more examples outside the sub-corpus known as *āyāt al-aḥkām*. In so doing, the insights of the exegetes must be given prominence.[56]

In terms of content, the above discussions represent a sub-concern within what I have classed below as thematic, comparative and contextual methods: once texts are juxtaposed for analysis, there are a number of procedures which may be applied, including modification through *takhṣīṣ* or *taqyīd*. As noted above, the topic of *bayān al-mujmal* is broad and contains a number of elements which could be given more detailed treatment. Eventually, I propose that the juristic methods be subsumed within the other three: they are privileged here in recognition of historical realities.

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[55] Ṣāliḥ, 2/190. See Rāzī's quote in *Al-Maḥṣūl fī ʿIlm Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, 3/147.

[56] My contention is that scholars steeped in the specialities of Quranic interpretation – beyond its utility for juristic reasoning – may reasonably be expected to have unique insights concerning textual interactions. At the same time, the historical reality is that most *mufassirūn* were also *fuqahāʾ*, even when their exegetical contributions came to be their most influential.

The role of theories and principles was noticeable at various junctures above. The domain of *uṣūl al-fiqh* is also rich in this regard, especially as it is linked to core questions in theology, philosophy and linguistics. It is also clear that many issues are subject to debate, at times with clear divergence between the schools (including between the *mutakallimūn* majority and the Ḥanafī *fuqahāʾ*, according to the famous dichotomy). What will happen if these debates and divergent opinions are transferred to the pages of *uṣūl al-tafsīr* works? At present, there is no developed notion of "schools" of exegesis or hermeneutics in Islamic thought, each with its own principles and methods. This could change as the field develops.[57]

Finally, the note of caution concerning reductionist approaches sounded by some scholars (in the context of *taqyīd*) is pivotal to performing TQQ soundly. The point expressed there in terms of *sabab* is, more broadly, the question of relevance and relations between verses of the Qurʾān. Mere resemblance and superficial similarities are insufficient to establish that one should be interpreted in light of the other. We shall return to this point in some of what follows.

## 4.2 − Thematic Methods

This second group of methods pertains to one of the core processes of TQQ, namely to gather verses upon a theme. Upon so doing, the exegete may apply rules of textual interaction as described above. When the outcome of this process is to build a fuller picture of the meanings and establish connections across the Quranic corpus, I describe the approach as "thematic"; when it involves clarifying the meaning of one verse by contrasting it with others, I describe it as "comparative". Both of these depend upon identifying verses of relevance: when such provide some form of support for the verse under study, they are often described as "*naẓāʾir* (parallels)", singular *naẓīr*. Our consideration of thematic approaches to Qurʾān exegesis will begin with the concept

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[57] Cf. Abdul-Raof, *Theological Approaches to Qur'anic Exegesis*, who outlines what he terms the "traditional", "hypothetical opinion" and "linguistic" schools. In reality, these are aspects and methods of interpretation which are employed – to various degrees – by all the exegetes. The notion of "schools" I am describing here pertains to diverging opinions about how to approach certain questions.

of the parallel verse, followed by that of Quranic "rules and norms", and then modern developments in thematic *tafsīr* methodology and study.

### 4.2.1 – Parallels (*Naẓāʾir*)

It is evident from the case study of TQQ-based exegeses in Chapter 2 that some of them – notably Ibn Kathīr – placed emphasis on presenting verses which resembled the one under study. As I argued there, this should not, in itself, be considered a form of *tafsīr*: the term implies that the additional verses have been used to clarify or modify something. Instead, the stage of gathering identical or resembling wordings from the Quranic corpus is a foundation for applying interpretive methods such as those described above. Rather than "exhausting Qurʾān before turning to Sunna" as his stated methodology (from Ibn Taymiyya) mandates, it seems that Ibn Kathīr chose to suffice with indications for further exploration; this could be seen as a step towards a concordance of sorts, before such works were compiled.[58] Even if the parallel in itself has no obvious explanatory function, it may be instructive to compare the respective contexts in which the resembling verses are located. In this way, even exact matches can be useful to the exegete, as well as slight variations which can perform functions of *takhṣīṣ*, *taqyīd*, etc.

Another way of understanding many of these citations by Ibn Kathīr and others is that the parallel performs a supporting role, in which case it may also described as *shāhid* (pl. *shawāhid*) – literally "witness". In the context of *ḥadīth* criticism, such similar wordings may be used to support a claim to authenticity of a particular tradition which is lacking some standards of transmission.[59] In the context of TQQ, the need to support the authenticity of a verse is absent; therefore, the exegete must be seeking to support a particular interpretation. In many cases, this is fairly mundane, and the author is merely drawing attention to the fact that the same meaning is found elsewhere in the Qurʾān. In other cases, there are divergent opinions concerning a verse, and the author cites a parallel in order to establish the plausibility of the interpretation he supports:

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[58] Although based on differing organising principles, word indexes (such as *Al-Muʿjam al-Mufahras li-Alfāẓ al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*, which Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī based on the work of Gustav Flügel) and subject indexes (such as *Muʿjam al-Aʿlām wa-l-Mawḍūʿāt fī l-Qurʾān* by ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr Marzūq) overlap in some ways with the idea of a cross-reference concordance.

[59] See Brown, *Hadith*, p. 92. Similar can be said for supporting the authenticity of certain readings in the field of *tawjīh al-qirāʾāt*, discussed under 4.3.3.

this process is described as *istishhād*, "appeal to witness".[60] As I argued in Chapter 3, following Zarkashī, this is even the case with the *ḥadīth* in which Prophet Muḥammad explained the universal term *ẓulm* (wrongdoing) in 6:82 as denoting one particular type, namely to associate partners with God (*shirk*). When he cited 31:13 which describes *shirk* as a major *ẓulm*, this was in order to demonstrate that the meaning is found elsewhere in the Qurʾān and could already be familiar to its audience.[61]

In summary (from above and Chapter 2), I conclude that a parallel verse may serve one or more of the following functions:

a. Support for the exegete's reading or interpretation;

b. Clarifying through more explicit or expansive wording, or through context;

c. Modification, e.g. particularisation or qualification;[62]

d. Additional details;

e. Cross-reference for further exploration of Qurʾān;

f. Cross-reference to the exegete's detailed explanation under that verse.

In light of this variety of purposes, we can revisit the question of **relevance** raised above. This is a point on which the exegete needs to satisfy himself or herself, and possibly justify to the reader: what makes this verse "parallel" to the one under examination, and what is achieved through citing it? There are different types of parallel, and the matter is not limited to repetition of key words and phrases. The two verses may express similar meanings with differing vocabulary and/or sentence structure. Subtler still is for an exegete to consider a verse parallel in one particular respect, such as a point of grammar or an implication: examples of this abound in the case study of Al-Anʿām. It follows that exegetes may identify different parallels depending on their interpretation of the verse at hand, and that they may disagree with citations advanced by others. An example which I did not include in Chapter 2 pertains to the term *al-fawāḥish* in 6:151 (literally: "abominable acts"). This is often taken to

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[60] Farāhī states that selecting a meaning which appears elsewhere in the Qurʾān is "more cautious" in order to avoid following personal whims – see *Rasāʾil*, pp. 264 and 268 (the latter in *Al-Takmīl*).

[61] See Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān*, p. 348, where he describes this as *istiʾnās*, which is similar to *istishhād*.

[62] In Chapter 2, I have distinguished between parallels and evidentiary citations. When the wording of the two verses is similar (but differs in a crucial sense such as the existence of a *qayd*, qualifying clause) then it belongs to both categories.

denote extra-marital sex (*zinā*) specifically, due to this same description (in the singular, *fāḥisha*) being applied to *zinā* in 17:32.[63] However, the modern exegete Ibn ʿĀshūr – whose note of caution regarding reductionism was quoted in Chapter 1 – comments on this: "It is not necessarily the case that the meaning intended by similar verses is one and the same."[64] The problem of reductionism vs. pluralism is examined further in the next section.

I have described seeking parallels as a first stage of thematic (and comparative) analysis; it should also be noted that it is only a part of the broader task of "gathering verses upon a theme" as advocated by Dhahabī and others (see Chapter 1). Relevance is not only similarity, but also contrast: intratexts which appear to contradict are thematically linked to the same extent, and ought to be taken into account when explaining any verse. Although it is not feasible to consider in much detail here the process of locating parallels (and other relevant cross-references), it should be noted that technology allows for more possibilities than were available to Ibn Kathīr, or even to Rudi Paret, author of *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz* (first published 1971). Although modern search and index technology can summon parallel words and phrases in an instant, there remains a role for scholarly refinement and enhancement of those results.[65] A careful methodology could incorporate the insights of exegetes, especially TQQ-focused ones, as presented in the Appendix of this thesis in tabular form. A well-designed interface – whether in print or otherwise – would prove valuable to exegetes or to researchers exploring the Qurʾān thematically.[66]

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[63] Of the Group studied in Chapter 2, only Iṣlāḥī made this link explicitly. Ibn Kathīr cited parallels in 6:120 and 7:33.

[64] *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 8/160.

[65] I have corresponded with a Canadian researcher concerning his corpus linguistics project which maps relationships between verses based on their collocation in a vast number and range of writings, many outside the genre of *tafsīr*. My brief engagement with his results (including on Sūrat al-Anʿām) suggests that the lists generated appear random and further refinement is necessary for it to prove useful.

[66] A potential advance is being made with the "Cross-References Project" by the International Qurʾanic Studies Association, though I was unable to ascertain its current status. According to the IQSA website, this presentation prioritises links in meaning and theme rather than simply words. It is based on similar reference works on the Bible (https://iqsaweb.wordpress.com/2012/11/19/qcrtqq – accessed 1/9/2017).

## 4.2.2 – Quranic Norms and Rules (*ʿĀdāt, Kulliyyāt, Qawāʿid*)

There are reports attributed to early authorities, and conclusions expressed by later authors, concerning general rules about Quranic usage of words and grammatical features. In order to reflect the contents of the Qurʾān accurately, these would have to be based on a comprehensive study of relevant passages; therefore, a thematic approach was implicit in the formulation of these "rules" (*qawāʿid*). Based on an inductive process from specific instances (which may be called *juzʾiyyāt*), these are claims – at their strongest – of general rules governing the usage of these terms, hence *kulliyyāt* (i.e. "Every (*kull*) instance of this word means X"). Their utility to the exegete, therefore, is as ready-made TQQ which he or she may then re-apply to *juzʾiyyāt*.

Another way in which these phenomena is described is as "norms" (*ʿādāt*) of the Qurʾān, which can be used to give weight to a certain opinion about a word or point of grammar under examination. If, for example, a word was used with a particular meaning in numerous verses of the Qurʾān, then it may be argued that – in a single case where it is ambiguous – it has that same meaning. In Chapter 2, it was seen that exegetes occasionally appeal to this reductionist argument in support of a conclusion based on other evidences (in other words, it is more a factor in *tarjīḥ* and treated as circumstantial evidence). Returning to the *ẓūlm* and *shirk* example: I previously cited Ibn Rajab as stating that "most" Quranic warnings to *ẓālimūn* pertain to the unbelievers, citing 14:42 and 42:44; Shinqīṭī added 2:254 and 10:106.[67]

As we shall see below, this reductionist approach exists in tension with another approach (represented by the study of *wujūh al-Qurʾān*) which recognises plurality and the possibility that one meaning or usage exists in isolation and distinction from other usages of the same word. Although the issue extends beyond individual lexical items and encompasses grammar, meanings and concepts, I shall focus on the example of defining words through the process of TQQ, and its relationship to the study of *kulliyyāt*. It should be noted that it is not possible for the meaning of Quranic words to be determined through purely intratextual means, not least those which occur only

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[67] Ibn Rajab, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 1/144. I have not checked whether this claim of majority holds true.

once.[68] The meaning of words must naturally be derived from the Arabs' usage at time of revelation. However, both the immediate co-text and broader Quranic usage serve as guides to the meaning of a particular usage, and to restrict the polyvalency of words.[69]

I shall illustrate the *kulliyyāt* genre with some selections from *Al-Itqān*[70], while noting that Suyūṭī did not dedicate a chapter to this topic. In Chapter 39, he attributes a report to Prophet Muḥammad to the effect that "Every occurrence in the Qur'ān of *qunūt* means obedience (*ṭāʿa*)."[71] Among the early reports, a good number are attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās via various chains:[72]

> Ibn Abī Ḥātim reported via 'Ikrima that Ibn 'Abbās said: "Every case of *alīm* means painful (*mūjiʿ*)." He also reported via 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa that Ibn 'Abbās said: "Every occurrence of *qutila* means 'cursed be' (*luʿina*)." Via Ḍaḥḥāk, he reported that Ibn 'Abbās said: "Every *rijz* in the book of God means 'punishment'." Firyābī said: "Qays narrated to us from 'Ammār al-Duhnī, from Saʿīd b. Jubayr, that Ibn 'Abbās said: 'Every *tasbīḥ* in the Qur'ān is prayer (*ṣalāt*), and every *sulṭān* in the Qur'ān is a proof (*ḥujja*).'" Ibn Abī Ḥātim reported via 'Ikrima that Ibn 'Abbās said: "Every occurrence in the Qur'ān of *dīn* means 'accounting' (*ḥisāb*)."[73]

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[68] Shawkat Toorawa has written several articles on *hapax legomena*, singularly-occurring words in the Qur'ān. In his chapter in Reynolds (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Qurʾān*, p. 245, he cites notes of caution via biblical scholars Metzger and Ehrman concerning the assumption that any anomalous usage must be an error: "Before resorting to conjectural emendation, therefore, the critic must be so thoroughly acquainted with the style and thought of the author that a certain anomaly must be judged to be foreign to the author's intention". Applying this thought to the study of *kulliyyāt* vs. *wujūh*, it suggests that there are levels of familiarity with the spirit of the text: while reductionism is the more obvious approach at an early or middle stage, the deepest familiarity entails recognition of those instances when the author contravenes his own norms to make a point.

[69] The point about co-text is best illustrated by the Farāhian approach, but the point has long been recognised. See Chapter 1 for comments by Zarkashī referring to Rāghib and his *Mufradāt* (*Al-Burhān*, p. 343). The broader appeal to Quranic usage is demonstrated well by Ṭabāṭabāʾī and Bint al-Shāṭiʾ.

[70] The relevant material appears in Chapters 39 (on *wujūh* and *naẓāʾir*), 40 and 42. See my forthcoming translation.

[71] *Al-Itqān*, 3/994. While Suyūṭī described this report as possessing "a good chain which Ibn Ḥibbān considered sound", various authorities including Ibn Kathīr (*Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 1/231) declared it unreliable. See also the list from Ibn Fāris below which cites two Quranic exceptions.

[72] See Berg, 'Lexicological Hadith and the 'School' of Ibn 'Abbās' in Burge (ed.), *The Meaning of the Word*, pp. 81–83, re: the tendency to ascribe copious material to Ibn 'Abbās.

[73] *Al-Itqān*, 3/994–995.

The purpose of such rules is, in the first place, to clarify a word which is otherwise classed as difficult or uncommon (*gharīb*)[74], and the "every" aspect sometimes appears unnecessary. A reader of the Qurʾān who accepts the rule would perhaps be expected to cast other possible interpretations from his mind. However, it is clear that some examples cannot be taken at face value, such as the final one which overlooks the use of *dīn* as religion. Another problem is the conflict between some alleged rules and the variety of *qirāʾāt*, as demonstrated by the following examples of contrasting terms:

> From Abū Bakr b. ʿAyyāsh: "Every *kisfan* means 'punishment', while *kisafan* means 'chunks of cloud'." And from ʿIkrima: "The barrier made by God is called *sudd*, whereas that made by people is *sadd*."[75]

In each of the instances of *sadd/sudd*, and all but 52:44 from among the occurrences of *kisf/kisaf*, both vocalisations are attested among the canonical 'Ten Readings'. Therefore, these rules either pertain to specific readings, or they must be taken as purely linguistic claims. If the latter, it is seen that the reciter-*imāms* did not accept these 'rules' universally or apply them consistently in their selections (*ikhtiyār*).[76] While his overall approach was simply to reproduce these claims, Suyūṭī made the occasional comment on an inaccuracy. After quoting Sufyān b. ʿUyayna as saying that "God only used the word *maṭar* [literally: rain] in the Qurʾān for punishment, whereas the Arabs call [the rain] *ghayth*," he remarks: "The exception to this is 4:102, where rainwater is definitely intended."[77]

In these presentations, the existence of exceptions is not seen as a challenge. Rather, such are sometimes presented directly as part of the account, and drawing

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[74] See *Al-Itqān* Chapter 36, which is mostly based upon narrations from Ibn ʿAbbās, including the "Enquiries of Ibn al-Azraq".

[75] *Al-Itqān*, 3/998.

[76] I checked the four occurrences of *sadd/sudd* against the recitations, and found that four of the Ten Reciters use *sudd* throughout (Nāfiʿ and Abū Jaʿfar of Medina, Ibn ʿĀmir of the Levant, and Yaʿqūb of Baṣra). The Kūfan recitation of ʿĀṣim is divided between the constant *sudd* of Shuʿba and *sadd* of Ḥafṣ (i.e. the most widespread reading today). The two occurrences in al-Kahf (Q 18:93, 94) refer, respectively, to mountains (God-made) and a barrier which Dhū l-Qarnayn was asked to construct. The other three Kūfans (Kisāʾī, Ḥamza and Khalaf) shift from *sudd* to *sadd*, which is consistent with the narration from ʿIkrima. However, they recite the two occurrences in Q 36:9 as *sudd*, despite the maker being God (albeit not mountains). The remaining two Readers (Ibn Kathīr of Mecca and Abū ʿAmr of Baṣra) recite *sadd* in al-Kahf and *sudd* in Yā-Sīn, which is difficult to resolve semantically.

[77] *Al-Itqān*, 3/1000. For brevity, I have elided the Quranic citation and replaced it with a reference. The same applies to what follows from Ibn Fāris.

attention to the 'anomaly' may well be the reason for the rule to be formulated and recorded. The following selection from a list in *Al-Itqān* – sourced from Ibn Fāris' *Al-Afrād*[78] – is indicative of this:

- Every mention in the Qur'ān of *asaf* means 'sadness', except 43:55 where it means 'anger'.

- Every mention of *burūj* means 'heavenly bodies' (*kawākib*), except 4:78 where it means 'lofty fortresses'.

- Every mention of *barr* and *baḥr* means 'dry land' and 'water' respectively, except 30:41 where they refer to 'empty land' (*barriyya*) and 'settlements' (*ʿumrān*).

- Every mention of *baʿl* means 'husband', except 37:125 where it is the name of an idol.

- Every occurrence of *jithiyyan* means 'all together' (*jamīʿan*), except 45:28 where *jāthiya* means 'kneeling upon their knees'.[79]

- Every mention of *rijz* means 'punishment', except 74:5[80] where it refers to idols.

- Every mention of *rajm* means to 'kill (by stoning)', except 19:46 where it means 'to abuse verbally' [and 18:22 where it means 'speculation' (*ẓann*)].[81]

- Every mention of *zakāt* refers to 'wealth', except 19:13 where it means 'purity' (*ṭuhra*).[82]

- Every mention of *zaygh* means to 'incline' (*mayl*), except 33:10 where it means 'to stare' (*shakhaṣat*).

- Every occurrence of *sakhira* means 'mocking', except 43:32 where [*sukhriyyan*] is derived from *taskhīr*, meaning to be subjected to use.

- Every mention of *aṣḥāb al-nār* refers to 'the denizens of hell', except 74:31 where it means its 'wardens' (*khazana*).

- Every mention of *qunūt* means 'obedience' (*ṭāʿa*), except 2:116/30:26 where it means 'to acknowledge' (*muqirrūn*).

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[78] The title indicates that the exception was the purpose, something like "hapax". See Haykal, '*Al-Afrād* (Word Choice) in Uri Rubin's Hebrew Translation of the Qur'an' (Arabic paper).

[79] There are only two occurrences of *jithiyyan*, both in Sūrat Maryam (19:68, 72), which are also taken by exegetes to denote kneeling.

[80] According to most of the Readers. However, Ḥafṣ, Abū Jaʿfar and Yaʿqūb have it as *rujz*.

[81] This second exception reveals that the author has quoted this section from *Al-Burhān* (pp. 74–77) without proper attribution, as it is in fact Zarkashī who appended it to the exception provided by Ibn Fāris. See Ḥaydar, *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān bayna l-Burhān wa-l-Itqān*, p. 147.

[82] The exception extends to 18:81 and possibly others, as argued by Qarnī, *Kulliyyāt al-Alfāz fī l-Tafsīr*, 2/679 (and preceding discussion).

- Every mention of *nikāḥ* means 'marriage' (*tazawwuj*), except 4:6 where it refers to the 'age of puberty' (*ḥulum*).

- Every mention of *ya's* means 'despair' (*qunūṭ*), except 3:2 where it means 'knowledge'.

It is clear that the *kulliyyāt* genre, subject to complete *istiqrā'* (i.e. accounting for any exceptions) and verified with reference to works of *tafsīr* as well as *qirā'āt*, is of use to the exegete in summarising the Quranic usage of a word which may be understood differently in other texts.

## The Polysemic Approach (*Wujūh al-Qur'ān*)

The above material features in Suyūṭī's Chapter 39 concerning "*Wujūh* and *Naẓā'ir*" (drawn from Chapter 4 of Zarkashī's *Al-Burhān*) – these two terms may be understood as opposing concepts. We have already seen the latter meaning "parallels" in the Qur'ān, and this description fits the idea of *kulliyyāt* just described. Zarkashī provides himself gives a somewhat imprecise definition: "The meaning of *naẓā'ir* is similar to that of *mutawāṭi'* (category) words."[83] As for the term **wujūh** (facets), he states that it describes "a single word (*mushtarak*) carrying multiple meanings". Emphasising the importance of this appreciation of plurality, he cites Muqātil b. Sulaymān's volume on *Al-Wujūh wa-l-Naẓā'ir*, in which this saying is attributed to the Prophet: "One does not become a scholar (*faqīh*) with complete understanding until he sees many facets (*wujūh*) to the Qur'ān."[84]

To illustrate the genre, I have selected one list from *Al-Itqān* which is also the longest in *Al-Burhān*; Suyūṭī's added one item to make eighteen senses (*wujūh*) for the

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[83] *Al-Itqān*, 3/976. This definition (from Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān*, p. 73) compares the concept of *naẓā'ir* to a word that has a single definition but applies equally to multiple members of its set, such as "animal" to humans, birds and horses. When such a word is used throughout the Qur'ān, it has only one meaning but may refer to different member(s) in each case. See El-Awa, *Al-Wujūh wa-l-Naẓā'ir*, pp. 44–47.

[84] *Al-Itqān*, 3/976–977. The modern scholar Aḥmad Ḥasan Faraḥāt proposes that this thought be completed by saying "…and gives preference to one of these facets." While conceiving of many possible meanings is a sign of hermeneutical prowess (or horizontal knowledge), doing *tarǧīḥ* of one demonstrates depth of knowledge (see Būzī, *Mafhūm al-Taqwā*, p. 46 for this citation and explanation). However, it is not clear that the original saying (more authentically attributed to the Companion, Abū l-Dardā') pertains to words having multiple meanings as spread across the corpus, as it may refer to layers of meaning within a single verse, as Suyūṭī notes. See also: Kermani, *God is Beautiful*, pp. 105–106.

word ***al-hudā***.[85] Since a conventional translation for this is "guidance", I have used that in the translation of the example verses wherever possible. However, the polysemic approach entails that one should read the specific meaning in place of each occurrence of "guidance", e.g. "Grant us steadfastness" and "Those are upon clarity".

a. Steadfastness (*thabāt*): 'Guide us on the straight path' (1:6).

b. Clarity (*bayān*): 'Those are upon guidance from their Lord' (2:5).

c. Religion (*dīn*): 'The [true] guidance is the guidance of God' (3:73).

d. Faith (*īmān*): 'And those who have followed guidance, God increases them in guidance' (19:76).

e. Invitation (*duʿāʾ*): 'And to every people, a guide' (13:7); 'And We made them leaders, guiding by Our command' (21:73).

f. Messengers and scriptures: 'So if there should come to you, from Me, guidance…' (2:38).

g. Awareness (*maʿrifa*): 'And by the stars they derive guidance' (16:16).

h. The Prophet: 'Verily those who conceal what We have sent down of clear signs and the guidance…' (2:159).

i. The Qurʾān: 'And there has already come to them, from their Lord, the guidance' (53:23).

j. The Torah: 'And We did indeed give Moses the guidance' (40:53).

k. To recite the *istirjāʿ* [formula][86]: 'And those are the guided' (2:157).

l. Proof (*ḥujja*): 'And God does not guide the wrongdoing people' (2:258) coming after 'Have you not seen the one who disputed (*ḥājja*) with Abraham', i.e. He does not guide them to a proof.

m. Monotheism (*tawḥīd*): 'And they say: If we were to follow the guidance with you…' (28:57).

n. Example (*sunna*): 'So follow their guidance' (6:90); 'And we follow guidance upon their footsteps' (43:22).

o. Reform (*iṣlāḥ*): 'And that God does not guide the plot of the traitors' (12:52).

p. Inspiration (*ilhām*): 'He Who gave everything its creation, then guided' (20:50), i.e. inspired it with its way of living.

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[85] *Al-Itqān*, 3/978. See also Abdussalam, *Concordance of Qurʾānic Polysemy*, p. 252: this work demonstrates some of the challenges facing a translator in this connection.

[86] That is, to utter the formula mentioned in the preceding verse: "To God we belong and to Him we shall return (*rājiʿūn*)". The name derives from the last word in that verse.

q.  Repentance (*tawba*): 'We have repented to you' (7:156).[87]

r.  To direct (*irshād*): 'Perhaps my Lord will guide me to the right way' (28:22).

It is evident that these diverse meanings or nuances are derived with reference to the co-text of each occurrence.[88] In stark contrast to the reductionist approach, this mode of study seems, at times, to over-emphasise the distinction between these various senses:[89] this led al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 255/869) to respond to these lists in his *Taḥṣīl Naẓāʾir al-Qurʾān*, explaining how one essential meaning is present in all usages (in the case of *hudā*, it is *mayl*, "inclination").[90] In the verses cited above, more than one of these meanings could apply to some of the junctures. Some, like the claim concerning *istirjāʿ*, are hardly plausible and receive little credence in the *tafsīr* works.[91]

What has now come into view is an inherent tension: not only between the approaches which favour reductionism or plurality, but potentially between two methods of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*. The *wujūh* genre points to a broader approach which draws from the surroundings of a word to help determine its meaning. The *kulliyyāt* genre is based on studying the Quranic corpus holistically. Therefore, an exegete may be faced with two competing TQQ imperatives: to situate the word in its co-text, and to consider its usages elsewhere in scripture. This is a subtle balance which

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[87] I did not translate this verse with a derivative of 'guidance' because it is unclear how it would be derived from this root. It is generally considered to come from *hāʾ-wāw-dāl*. See Farāhī, *Mufradāt al-Qurʾān*, p. 324 concerning this root and its denotations of 'returning/repenting' as well as 'Jewishness'. Nevertheless, Tirmidhī includes it in his reductive account of derivatives of *hudā* (*Taḥṣīl Naẓāʾir al-Qurʾān*, p. 20).

[88] The role of *siyāq* in this genre was detailed by Salwa El-Awa in her hermeneutical study *Al-Wujūh wa-l-Naẓāʾir fī l-Qurʾān al-Karīm* (pp. 62–78).

[89] The strongest claim of diversity of meaning occurs in the category of words known as *aḍdād*, auto-antonyms. See Munajjid, *Al-Taḍādd*, pp. 167–174 in which the author argues that certain meanings were advanced for the word *ẓann* (assumption) for theological reasons linked to its occurrence in the Qurʾān, but that it need not be interpreted as equivalent to *yaqīn* (certainty) in any instance. See also El-Awa's detailed study of *ẓann* in its Quranic contexts (*Al-Wujūh wa-l-Naẓāʾir*, pp. 95–127); this is followed by examination of the semantic fields of related words *rajāʾ* and *khawf*, which could aid the kind of study discussed under Comparative Methods below.

[90] *Taḥṣīl Naẓāʾir al-Qurʾān*, pp. 19–24. This was apparently a response to Muqātil's work. See also the introduction to Rāghib's *tafsīr*, in which he criticises the frequent conflation of genuine *wujūh* (he uses the term *naẓāʾir*) with cases in which a broad word is used in several of its narrower senses (*Muqaddimat Jāmiʿ al-Tafāsīr*, p. 61). The same trend in Tirmidhī's work is present in dictionaries which specialise in root meanings and derivations, particularly Ibn Fāris' *Muʿjam Maqāyīs al-Lugha* and the recent publication by Muḥammad Ḥasan Jabal, *Al-Muʿjam al-Ishtiqāqī al-Muʾaṣṣal*.

[91] Although some exegetes may have noted this opinion, the general approach concerning 2:157 is to describe various senses in which such people could be described as "guided"; not that *hudā* here has the meaning of *istirjāʿ*. See for example Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 2/450.

will be affected by the predilections and theoretical commitments of the exegete: some prioritising the immediate context, coherence and semantic flow; others being persuaded by the frequency of a meaning and usage which amounts to a Quranic norm. Both approaches or emphases rely upon the flexibility of such words as *kitāb* (see Chapter 2) which has literal denotations as well as numerous metaphorical usages.[92] Neither would be excused for overlooking the other dimension of the question, such as to ignore co-text or other occurrences of the word within the scripture.[93]

## 4.2.3 – Thematic Exegesis (*al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍūʿī*)

Aspects of the preceding discussion have already pointed the way to a fully thematic approach to the Qurʾān based on a comprehensive study of selected words, concepts, issues and features. A modern coinage for this is *al-tafsīr al-mawḍūʿī*, a term in which the adjective refers to "themes/subjects" in the Qurʾān.[94] However, the genre has precursors both within and beyond the works of *tafsīr*. Some exegetes punctuate their verse-by-verse analysis with topical asides in order to explore key concepts, based exclusively or partially on intraquranic citations – Ṭabāṭabāʾī stands out in this respect. There are other works and genres based on study of specific themes and recurring features of the Qurʾān.[95] Of these, two in particular are of interest in light of the preceding discussions. Collections of legal verses (**āyat al-aḥkām**)[96] take it as axiomatic that the explanation of one such verse is incomplete, and may be misleading, if it is not juxtaposed with verses which complement or modify its meaning, as well as evidence from the Sunna and opinions of the jurists. Aside from the legal context, the

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[92] The same question faces a translator: if a word with similar flexibility is available in the target language – say, for example, "book" – then that word may be applied to all the various contexts; otherwise, alternatives are required in at least some. See Abdel Haleem, 'The Role of Context in Interpreting and Translating the Qur'an', pp. 54–55.

[93] An example of the latter would be to interpret the *nushūz* on the part of the wife, in Q 3:34, without consideration of the same word as used in 4:128 on the part of the husband. See Hidayatullah, *Feminist Edges of the Qur'an*, p. 104.

[94] I am referring here to Qurʾān-wide studies of concepts and topics. The term *al-tafsīr al-mawḍūʿī* is also used frequently to describe thematic studies of *sūras* individually, as in Muḥammad al-Ghazālī's *Naḥwa Tafsīr Mawḍūʿī li-Suwar al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*. An unrelated meaning of the word *mawḍūʿī* is "objective".

[95] Further examples: polysemy (*wujūh wa naẓāʾir*), metaphors (*majāz*), abrogation (*nāsikh wa mansūkh*), uncommon/difficult passages (*gharīb/mushkil*), oaths (*aqsām*), parables (*amthāl*). See 3.4.4 above.

[96] Examples in the genre are *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān* by Abū Bakr al-Rāzī al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370/981), a Ḥanafite authority, and works by the same title by the Shāfiʿite al-Kiyā al-Harrāsī (d. 504/1010) the Mālikite Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148). See Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn*, 2/385–400.

genre of Quranic narratives (***al-qaṣaṣ al-qurʾānī***)[97] is another example of the need to synthesise materials from across the Quranic corpus, along with *ḥadīths* and other sources. My case study of Sūrat al-Anʿām demonstrated that the story of Abraham raises sensitive issues which require a careful reconstruction of chronology and individual contexts for their resolution.[98]

I shall describe here how thematic exegesis is conceptualised in two scholarly centres today: the University of Al-Azhar in Egypt, and the Moroccan research institute MUBDIʿ, founded in 2007 by al-Shāhid al-Būshīkhī.[99] Al-Azhar has the distinction of being home to some of the earliest figures in *tafsīr mawḍūʿī*[100] and its subsequent development into a distinctive approach and emerging genre within *tafsīr*; books produced and taught in the Faculty of Theology (*Uṣūl al-Dīn*) cover selected Quranic themes as well as the method for their extraction.[101] The Moroccan institute has more pronounced emphasis on methodology; its approach is centred on the idea of "**Quranic terminology**" (*al-muṣṭalaḥ al-qurʾānī*).[102] In his study of the concept of

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[97] The genre of *qaṣaṣ* (verbal noun meaning "narrative content"; alternatively *qiṣaṣ*, "stories") is both thematic and comparative, as will become clearer in the next section. Some important works deal particularly with the Prophets, such as the publication *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ*, extracted from Ibn Kathīr's history *Al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya*. See for issues surrounding this and the broader genre, and its relationship to the Qurʾān and exegesis: Michael Pregill et al, 'Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ as Genre and Discourse' in Mizan Journal 2, 1 (2017) – accessed online 1/9/2017.

[98] For example, whether he was already fully immersed in monotheism when he said to his people concerning certain heavenly bodies, "This is my Lord".

[99] This name is short for Muʾassasat al-Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt al-ʿIlmiyya; in my introduction, I mentioned the significance of this Moroccan centre, along with Markaz Tafsīr in Saudi Arabia, in current Quranic research. They have a broader interest in "methodology (*manhaj*) studies".

[100] For example, Muḥammad ʿAbd-Allāh Drāz is credited with being a pioneer of *sūra* studies, with his thematic overview of al-Baqara (see *The Qurʾan: An Eternal Challenge*, p. 137 ff.) – this is relevant to the study of coherence and structure (4.4.3 below). More relevant to our present discussion is his study of ethical content in the Qurʾan, originally written in French, and translated to Arabic as *Dustūr al-Akhlāq fī l-Qurʾan* and to English as *The Moral World of the Qurʾan*.

[101] One of its retired professors, ʿAbd al-Sattār Fatḥ-Allāh Saʿīd, expressed his hope for an encyclopaedia of Quranic topics to be created (see *Muḥāḍarāt fī l-Tafsīr al-Mawḍūʿī*, p. 16). Something of this nature is being achieved (in English) through the Integrated Encyclopedia of the Qurʾān (IEQ), an ongoing project of the Center for Islamic Sciences, Canada.

[102] The project aims at reforming Islamic thought and assumes that religious concepts are best understood when their scriptural usage is studied holistically (see Būzī, *Mafhūm al-Taqwā*, p. 58). Similar motivations underpinned the "Quranic Methodology" project of the International Institute of Islamic Thought, represented most clearly by Ṭahā al-ʿAlwāni's book *Maʿālim fī l-Manhaj al-Qurʾānī*.

*taqwā*[103], Muḥammad al-Būzī describes the development of thematic study of Quranic terms from early scholarship (including the genres of exegesis, jurisprudence, theology and lexicography) to Farāhī's *Mufradāt al-Qurʾān* and the Egyptian exegetical trends initiated by Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Amīn al-Khūlī.[104]

What follows is a summary and synthesis of the key processes outlined by writers on *tafsīr mawḍūʿī* and Quranic *muṣṭalāḥ*. Būshīkhī has described "five pillars" which involve stages of preparation, analysis (the central pillar) and presentation. Taking these as the headings for the points below, I have combined various sources in the description.[105]

1. *Al-Dirāsa al-iḥṣāʾiyya.* Using concordances or computer programs, all potentially relevant verses are identified and gathered. This may require creative use of synonyms (and antonyms, etc.) to ensure comprehensive coverage of the topic. This stage may involve initial sorting into categories including awareness of chronology.[106]

2. *Al-Dirāsa al-muʿjamiyya.* This involves study of the linguistic roots pertaining to the key terms and the nature of their derivation from those roots.[107]

3. *Al-Dirāsa al-naṣṣiyya.* This is the stage of examining the selected texts closely. Traditional exegesis (known in contrast as *tafsīr mawḍiʿī*)[108] is consulted to determine the meaning of individual verses and take account of relevant details

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[103] Originally a doctoral thesis supervised by Būshīkhī, its full title is: *Mafhūm al-Taqwā fī l-Qurʾān wa-l-Ḥadīth*, so it extends beyond the Quranic corpus. Both aspects under study here are reflected in the book's sub-heading: *Dirāsa muṣṭalaḥiyya wa tafsīr mawḍūʿī*.

[104] Būzī, pp. 22–35, also 35–52. He does not include Orientalist contributions to analysing Quranic terms. Of particular significance are the works of Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur'an* and *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*.

[105] The "pillars" are summarised in Būzī, pp. 61–69. Most of the supplementary points here are from Saʿīd, *Al-Madkhal ilā l-Tafsīr al-Mawḍūʿī*, pp. 60–70. Regarding topic selection, Saʿīd insists that this be native to the Qur'ān and not imposed upon it; he mentions one study concerning "the nuclear bomb in the Qur'ān"! If a number of related terms are to be examined, the broadest should be placed in the title of the study.

[106] The minimum is to divide them into Meccan and Medinan. There is surprisingly little emphasis on chronology in the sources I consulted, compared to the diachronic approach of Neuwirth and others.

[107] The researcher should not take dictionary definitions for granted, as the very purpose of thematic study is to determine meanings in and through the Qur'ān.

[108] I.e. specific to the place, like Mir's "atomistic" or Hassan Hanafi's "longitudinal" ('Method of Thematic Interpretation of the Qur'an' in Wild (ed.), *The Qur'an as Text*, p. 195). Although some writers like Saʿīd consider thematic exegesis a new frontier requiring attention in the modern age, they emphasise the integral nature of traditional *tafsīr* to this endeavour.

such as Prophetic explanations, revelatory contexts, abrogation, and relation to other verses (e.g. *ʿāmm* and *khāṣṣ*) as explained by previous authorities.

4. *Al-Dirāsa al-mafhūmiyya*. This involves observing trends, defining concepts and constructing categories.[109]

5. *Al-ʿArḍ al-muṣṭalaḥī*. The relevant data is presented under sub-headings. The primary presentation is of the verses themselves together with any explanation required, citing trusted sources. The book or research paper also requires an introduction and conclusion, and coherent flow of concepts is maintained by focus upon the central theme.[110]

Despite hopes expressed by proponents of the above thematic methods that they will reform approaches to study of the text and even enrich society through clearer concepts derived from scripture, the purpose of *tafsīr mawḍūʿī* in their approach is to **survey** and present the contents of the Qurʾān as objectively as possible. This contrasts with an approach to thematic study – as outlined by Hassan Hanafi – which acknowledges clearly the significance of the interpreter's convictions and social context.[111] Thematic study in this account amounts to a "**reading**" of the text proceeding from known assumptions and needs. This is nothing new, as jurists, for example, approached the Qurʾān with the intent of *instinbāṭ* (extraction and deduction) of practical rulings, and as *dalīl* for their positions: an approach not limited to the so-called *āyāt al-aḥkām*.[112] Contemporary advocates for social justice have adopted intratextual and thematic methods to reassess Quranic positions which may have been misunderstood or overlooked previously. Aysha Hidayatullah has described this as a "keystone feminist exegetical strategy" which consists both of comparing Quranic verses, and reading them in light of the scripture's "overall movement" towards egalitarianism.[113] This reading involves gathering texts and then identifying which of

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[109] Būzī, p. 65.

[110] See Būzī, pp. 67–68 for a regimented approach to structuring *muṣṭalaḥ* research.

[111] Hanafi, 'Method of Thematic Interpretation' in Wild (ed.), pp. 202–205.

[112] See Hanafi, pp. 197–200 for more on "disciplinary commentaries", and see 4.4.1 below.

[113] Hidayatullah, *Feminist Edges of the Qurʾan*, p. 87. She notes the general lack of application of Ibn Taymiyya's recommendation of TQQ, and the critique by "modernist" scholars including Fazlur Rahman of "atomistic" approaches. This provided an epistemic starting point for feminist exegetes such

them represent "guiding principles" to interpret problematic passages[114] – this recalls the concept of *muḥkam* verses[115] discussed in Chapter 3.

Both thematic approaches to exegesis – surveys and readings – require further development in their theoretical grounding.[116] Wadud has proposed a major, long-term treatment of "the larger textual development of [each Quranic] term" and study of "trajectory of meaning and application".[117] At least superficially, this resembles the project being undertaken by Būshīkhī and colleagues, namely "a historical dictionary of Quranic terminology".[118] Such scholarly resources would, undoubtedly, benefit writers with a wide variety of motivations and perspectives.[119]

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as Asma Barlas and Amina Wadud; the latter describes this approach as "hermeneutics of *tawḥīd* (unity)" (ibid, pp. 88–89).

[114] Hidayatullah, p. 93.

[115] I am unsure whether this term is invoked by feminist exegetes. Concerning another classical concept, namely *naskh*, Hidayatullah describes its relationship and relevance to the "trajectory argument" (*Feminist Edges*, pp. 97–98). Although its proponents describe their aim as preserving the unity and integrity of the scripture, this argument and strategy goes beyond intratextual analysis to what Hidayatullah describes as "reading the Qur'an 'beyond' the Qur'an" (ibid, p. 99).

[116] A recent publication by Ramon Harvey, *The Qur'an and the Just Society*, straddles a line between these approaches: it takes its cue from *tafsīr mawḍūʿī* (Introduction, p. 5) but describes itself as "a thematic reading of the Qur'anic blueprint for the just society" (ibid, p. 2). His introductory chapters include one on hermeneutics, which describes his process of "intra-textual analysis" (which entails primary comparison) followed by four modes of study. Two are "semi-internal", namely syntax-pragmatics and semantics, while the others are "external": textual structure and socio-historical context (ibid, pp. 44–45). The author explains that the latter two represent synchronic and diachronic modes of engagement with the text, respectively (ibid, p. 44). The purpose of this process is defined as "extracting *ḥikmas*" i.e. divine wisdoms behind rulings (ibid, p. 45). This could certainly be considered beyond the purpose of *tafsīr*, although Harvey places his project in the third of Abdullah Saeed's "four-stage model" of exegesis (ibid, p. 3, citing Saeed, *Interpreting the Qurʾān*, pp. 150–152).

[117] Quotes from Hidayatullah, p. 108.

[118] See Būshīkhī's paper: '*Naḥwa Muʿjam Tārīkhī li-l-Muṣṭalaḥāt al-Qurʾāniyya al-Muʿarrafa*'. As I understand, this project remains in its early stages. The paper contains an interesting case study of the term *taghyīr* (change), in which it can be observed that exegetes generally equated the implications of Q 8:53 and 13:11 (i.e. the people's change towards ingratitude and sin results in the removal and change of divine favours), even though the latter verse is potentially broader (see pp. 382–390).

[119] For an example of traditionalist responses to feminist readings, see Raysūni, *Al-Naṣṣ al-Qurʾānī min Tahāfut al-Qirāʾāt ilā Ufuq al-Tadabbur*, pp. 340–360. In this section, the author comments particularly on Wadud's *Qur'an and Women*. He is critical of the idea of "readings" (as his title suggests) and the use of Western hermeneutics in Qur'ān interpretation. The book was awarded a governmental prize in Morocco and published by its religious ministry in 2010.

## 4.3 − Comparative Methods

The thematic approach, with its various methods, involves finding texts which complement and support the meaning of the verse under study. A variation on this is to find texts which touch on the same subject but in a way that modifies the initial understanding of that verse. The spectrum of modification includes the likes of qualification and particularisation, and – at its extreme – abrogation (according to the majority of Muslim scholars). The common starting point for all the comparative methods discussed below is to perceive tension between two expressions, even to the extent of contradiction. Faced with this, together with basic assumptions about the unity and consistency of divine speech (see Chapter 3), the exegete will draw upon a set of methods to resolve this tension.

These methods generally proceed on a path of 'least resistance', which is to say that the goal is to maximise the sense of harmony among meanings of the Qurʾān, and resort to 'disruptive' claims – such as abrogation – as infrequently as possible. The procedure is both logical and reflected in other fields of scholarship, especially *ḥadīth* studies. First, the exegete attempts to reconcile the two meanings in a way which is straightforward, or at least plausible, without any active modification of the sense of either verse. If that is not possible, and there remains tension or *ikhtilāf* between them, then this may be treated as 'creative conflict'[120] that leads to understanding each of the verses under examination more fully and correctly, through a process of modification. When one verse is considered a modifier to another, this may be seen as a form of preponderance (*tarjīḥ*). In a closed corpus in which all verses are considered of equal authority, established definitively (*qaṭʿī al-thubūt*), the scope of *tarjīḥ* is necessarily more constrained than in the context of *ḥadīth*. However, there are various senses in which a particular verse may be "overruled" by others via a comparative process.

The initial stage of locating relevant verses was discussed in the context of parallels and thematic exegesis, so there is no need to reiterate those points. Instead, we shall address three issues – and genres with their respective methods – in turn. First,

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[120] The term *ikhtilāf* may mean contradiction (as in Q 4:82; see 3.2.1 above), but it has also been used in a positive sense as *ikhtilāf al-tanawwuʿ*, i.e. such as represents complementarity rather than conflict (see Ibn Taymiyya's *Muqaddima*, p. 38 ff., regarding differences between the *Salaf*). That kind of variation belongs to the thematic domain, rather than comparative.

how the exegetes and others identify nuances of meaning by comparing individual words and extended passages – such as stories – in the Qurʾān. Thereafter, a closer look at how they seek to resolve apparent contradictions in the text. Finally, how they treat variant canonical readings (*qirāʾāt*), with both thematic and comparative methods at play.

### 4.3.1 – Near-synonyms (*Mutarādifāt*) and Near-parallels (*Mutashābihāt*)

In this chapter, I am outlining intraquranic methods employed within *tafsīr* works, which are often complemented by distinct sub-genres of *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* that have the potential to be integrated into the hermeneutical account of TQQ. Two such methods and sub-genres involve the study of lexical nuances (*furūq*) between words which appear synonymous; and the subtle differences between verses which are similar in wording (*mutashābihāt*).[121] The connection between these two phenomena is that they proceed from observing similarities to investigating distinctions, thereby seeking a fuller understanding of each lexical item or each verse, respectively. The two fields overlap in those resembling verses which differ with respect to a particular pair of words used synonymously.[122] Both genres are built upon an anti-reductionist assumption, namely that the author of the Qurʾān had a purpose in using specific wordings and varying these according to context.[123]

<u>Near-Synonyms (Word-Level)</u>

Zarkashī gathered a number of examples of "Words misconstrued as synonymous" in his lengthy Chapter 46 of *Al-Burhān*[124], drawing from several sources

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[121] The variety of usages of this word was outlined in Chapter 3. This usage is sometimes given the adjective *lafẓiyya*, i.e. verbal resemblance between verses. The differences I am considering here do not reach the level of tension or contradiction, which is the topic of the next section.

[122] The difference between this lexical enquiry and those of *kulliyyāt* and *wujūh* described previously, is that the latter deals with a single word which is used for one or more meanings. *Furūq* pertains to different words which are used for the same meaning.

[123] For an overview of negative positions of Qurʾān scholars towards synonymy, see Munajjid, *Al-Tarāduf*, pp. 121–125.

[124] This was summarised in *Al-Itqān* Chapter 42, "Rules (*qawāʿid*) the exegete must know".

including the famous lexicon of al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī.[125] The first example is the distinction between *khawf* and *khashya*, both of which may be translated as 'fear'[126] – Zarkashī observes that "linguists seldom make any distinction between them."[127] The relationship he describes between them is *ʿumūm wa khuṣūṣ*, which is to say that one is a subset of the other, i.e. more specific: this is a common strategy in differentiating between near-synonyms. The first argument stems from the respective Arabic roots along with their usage in the Qurʾān:

> *Khashya* is undoubtedly more intense, the strongest type of *khawf*. It comes from 'a dry (*khashī*) tree', which refers to complete loss, whereas *khawf* comes from 'a diseased (*khawfāʾ*) she-camel', i.e. a shortcoming which does not amount to loss. Therefore, *khashya* particularly is linked to God in the verse: "They are in awe (*khashya*) of their Lord and in fear (*khawf*) of the evil reckoning" (13:21).[128]

Zarkashī expands this point further, drawing from 'major derivation'[129] applied to each root, concluding that "*khashya* follows from the greatness of the one feared, even if the fearful one is himself strong; as for *khawf*, it results from one's own weakness and thus may obtain even with respect to something insignificant." Why, then, Zarkashī asks, was it appropriate for *khawf* to be used in 16:50 – "They fear their Lord" – even though, according to his earlier point, the norm is to use *khashya*? He responds that both words hold true and are used according to perspective, i.e. one is described with *khashya* of God in respect to His greatness, and *khawf* of Him due to weakness before Him.[130] The result of this manoeuvre is to turn an objection into a subtlety which

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[125] Rāghib's critique of excessive pluralism in *wujūh* was mentioned above: in the domain of *furūq*, he is advocating pluralism over the reductionism represented by *tarāduf* theory. The same applies to Tirmidhī, who – as well as his *Taḥṣīl Naẓāʾir al-Qurʾān* described above – penned another influential work entitled *Al-Furūq wa Manʿ al-Tarāduf*. This combined stance is to say that each Quranic word is distinct from others, and each is used consistently throughout the text.

[126] The late Azharite scholar M.M. Ghālī, in *Synonyms in the Ever-Glorious Qurʾan*, suggested English terms for each near-synonym, which he also applied in his translation of the Qurʾān. In this case, he has *khashya* as "apprehension" and *khawf* as "fear".

[127] *Al-Burhān*, p. 751.

[128] *Al-Burhān*, p. 751. This verse is itself an indication that the two words are not synonymous. A commonly cited rule is that when words are cited together (or contrasted), their denotation diverges, whereas they may be synonymous when occurring individually.

[129] The study of meta-meanings through various permutations of root letters is known as *al-ishtiqāq al-kabīr*. See Jabal, *ʿIlm al-Ishtiqāq*, p. 41.

[130] *Al-Burhān*, p. 751.

further supports the belief that the Qurʾān employs these near-synonyms with attention to detail; the argument is here summarised by Suyūṭī:

> As for 16:50 – "They fear (*khawf*) their Lord above them" – it contains a subtlety in that it refers to the angels; since they were described as great and powerful creations [in other verses], their attitude was expressed here as *khawf* to indicate that despite their severity and strength, they are weak before Almighty God. Then the concept of elevation (*fawqiyya*) was added, which entails greatness, so the two aspects were combined. As for humans, their weakness is known, so there was no need to draw attention to this matter in their regard.[131]

A modern scholar, Muḥammad Dāwūd, studied these two terms along with six other near-synonyms (*ruʿb*, *rahba*, *rawʿ*, *faraq*, *fazaʿ* and *wajal*) in their Quranic usages, concluding that some overlap almost completely, whereas each displays certain nuances.[132] The purpose behind such study is for the interpreter to go beyond the obvious denotation of a word, to consider the subtleties of its usage and connotations. As such, when studying the vocabulary of a particular verse, the meaning is further refined and clarified by comparing it with similar words used elsewhere. The very fact that near-synonyms exist in the Quranic corpus is a stimulus to investigate the intended meaning of each in its place.

<u>Near-Parallels (Verse-Level)</u>

We turn now to focus on the resembling verses, for which Zarkashī composed *Al-Burhān*'s Chapter 5, *ʿIlm al-Mutashābih*.[133] As I noted in Chapter 2 of this study, many of the verses categorised as parallels could equally be studied for their variations, hence under this genre.[134] However, in practice, the TQQ exegetes did not incorporate

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[131] *Al-Itqān*, 4/1304.

[132] Dāwūd, *Muʿjam al-Furūq al-Dalāliyya*, pp. 237–245.

[133] Suyūṭī summarised this in *Al-Itqān* Chapter 63. Both Zarkashī and Suyūṭī described Ibn al-Zubayr's work *Milāk al-Taʾwīl* as the best and most extensive of the genre, hence my focus upon it in this section. The remainder of the book's title indicates its purpose: "*Al-qāṭiʿ bi-dhawī l-ilḥād wa-l-taʿṭīl* [i.e. responding to critics of the Qurʾān] *fī tawjīh al-mutashābih al-lafẓ min āy al-tanzīl* [by providing explanations for such variations, i.e. other than confusion in the text]". In his detailed study of the work, Muḥammad al-Sāmarrāʾī demonstrates that, despite stating in *Al-Itqān* that he had not encountered *Al-Milāk*, Suyūṭī reproduced extensively from it – without attribution – in another of his works, *Muʿtarak al-Aqrān* (Sāmarrāʾī, *Dirāsat al-Mutashābih al-Lafẓī*, p. 60).

[134] There are books compiled specially to summarise these variations as an aid to accurate memorisation, e.g. Zawāwī's *Muṣḥaf al-Mutashābihāt*. These could be used as a source for the *tafsīr* study described here.

this form of analysis in their works consistently.[135] This becomes clear by comparing the citations linked to Sūrat al-Anʿām in Ibn al-Zubayr's *Milāk al-Taʾwīl*[136] with those provided under the same verses by the Group[137] in my case study. In the right-hand column, I have summarised the point(s) of divergence between the near-parallels and, wherever relevant, what implications Ibn al-Zubayr concludes this has for the interpretation of the verse in al-Anʿām.[138]

*Figure 6 - The Group's Nazāʾir / Ibn al-Zubayr's Mutashābihāt*

| # | Phrase | Parallels | Near-Parallels | Divergence/Implication |
|---|--------|-----------|----------------|------------------------|
| 1 | | | 1:1*, 18:1, 34:1, 35:1 | Phrases following *ḥamd*: al-Anʿām theme is negation of Dualism. |
| 5 | | 13:17, 37:176-177, 42:24, 61:8-9 | 26:6-7 | Extra phrase. *Sawfa* vs. *sa-*. Following verse without conjunction. |
| 6 | Destruction of stronger communities | 7:95, 19:74, 30:9, 34:45, 35:44, 40:21/82, 43:8, 46:26, 50:36 | 19:74/98, 20:128, 36:31, 50:36 | Inclusion of *min*. |

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[135] Joseph Witztum further states that this genre is "rarely referred to in Western Quranic studies" despite its value to the critical researcher ('Variant Traditions, Relative Chronology and the Study of Intra-Quranic Parallels,' in Sadeghi et al (eds.), p. 9). Witztum argues that a variety of approaches are required in order for systematic analysis of this phenomenon and to understand its implications for the Qurʾān's composition (ibid, p. 2). He summarises the various approaches under the following six "axes": synchronic–diachronic, atomistic–coherent, oral–written, single–multiple authorship, harmony–discord, human–divine (ibid, p. 4). He then provides examples of traditional and modern studies which involve harmonisation, appeal to *sūra* context, diachronic reading, and others (ibid, pp. 5–12).

[136] Sourcing these citations requires not only going through the *sūra* in question, but the whole book prior to it. This is because, if Ibn al-Zubayr was comparing between verses in al-Baqara and al-Anʿām, for example, he would only mention this comparison under al-Baqara. I have marked the verse where the discussion appears with an asterisk (*). Underlined verses were also cited by the Group; if they do not appear in the Parallels column, this is because they were cited as evidence (see full table in Appendix).

[137] In this version of the table, I have combined the parallels cited by the Group with those from the Supplementary works (see Chapter 2). However, I have sometimes restricted the parallels list to those relevant to a phrase.

[138] I am disregarding here explanations which touch purely upon word-forms, for example, as my topic of study is meaning. I have also left out points which are easily derived from the context rather than comparison with *mutashābihāt*. Some explanations are informative about the non-Anʿām verses, but I have left those out for clarity in the table.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11 | | 3:137, 7:84/86, 10:39/73, 28:58 | 27:69, 29:20 | *Thumma* vs. *fa*-: implies command to observe creation first, then the fate of previous nations. |
| 16 | | **3:185** | 45:30 | Lack of separating *huwa*. |
| 17 | | 10:107, 23:88-89, 35:2 | <u>10:107</u> | Focus on God's ability vs. idols' inability. Touch vs. intend. |
| 21 | *man aẓlam* | 6:93, 6:137-140, 6:144, 6:157, **10:17** | <u>6:93</u>, 7:37, <u>10:17</u>, 29:68, 61:7 | Various additions to condemning fabrication. |
| 25 | | 8:31, 16:24, 25:5 | 10:42 | Singular verb vs. plural. |
| 29 | | | 23:37, 45:24 | Lack of "We die and live". Final phrase. |
| 32 | *laʿib* and *lahw* | 7:169-170 | 6:70, 7:51, 29:64, 47:36, 57:20 <br> <u>7:169</u>, 12:109 | Order of nouns: represents early life (some carry on as though children). Followed by *al-dār al-ākhira* vs. *dār al-ākhira*. Imperfect tense *yattaqūn* vs. perfect. |
| 37 | | 17:90ff, 25:7-8 | <u>29:50</u> | Singular *āya* vs. plural: implies the demand for one overwhelming sign (hence *tanzīl* vs. *inzāl*). |
| 40 | | | 6:46-47, 10:50 | *A-raʾaytakum* and *a-raʾaytum*. |
| 42 | | **7:94-95** | <u>7:94</u> | *Yataḍarraʿūn* vs. *yaḍḍarraʿūn*. |
| 50 | | 11:31 | <u>11:31</u> | Inclusion of *lakum*: Quraysh are addressed in harsher tone than the people of Noah. |
| 90 | | 16:37 | 81:27 | *Dhikrā* vs. *dhikr*. |
| 92 | guard prayers | 2:45-46, **23:2/9** | <u>23:9</u> | Singular "prayer" vs. plural. |
| 94 | brought again | 18:48, 19:95, 21:104 | <u>18:48</u> | Inclusion of "singly": focus is on loss of intercessors. |
| 95 | | 36:33-36 | 3:27*, 10:31 | Use of active participle *mukhrij*. |
| 97-99 | | | | Verse endings. |
| 99 | | 13:4, 16:67, 36:34 | 6:141 | First *mushtabih* vs. *mutashābih*. "Observe" vs. "eat". |
| 102 | | 13:16, 39:62, 40:62 | <u>40:62</u> | Placement of "There is no god but He". |

| 112 | | 2:14, 3:184, 6:34, 25:43, 41:43 | <u>6:137</u> | *Rabbuka* vs. *Allāh*. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 117 | | 3:5 | 53:30, 68:7 | Lack of *bi-* attached to *man*. Imperfect *yaḍillu* vs. perfect. |
| 122 | | 2:257, 6:1, 11:24, 16:76, 35:19-23, 67:22 | 10:12 | *Kafirīn* vs. *musrifīn*: here refers to incorrigible deniers, cf. *isrāf* which a believer may fall into. |
| 131 | | 4:165, 5:19, 11:117, 16:36, 17:15, 28:59, 35:24 | <u>11:117</u> | *Ghāfilūn* vs. *muṣliḥūn*. |
| 135 | | 14:13-14, 21:105, 24:55, 28:37 40:51-52, 58:20 | 11:93, 39:39 | Inclusion of conjunction *fa-*. |
| 145 | | 2:173, 16:115 | <u>2:173</u>*, <u>5:3</u>, <u>16:115</u> | Placement of prepositional phrase. |
| 148 | | 16:35, **43:20** | <u>16:35</u> | |
| 151 | *min imlāq* | | <u>17:31</u> | [See Chapter 2 – 2.3.5] |
| 151-153 | | | | Verse endings. |
| 163 | first of the Muslims | 6:14, 39:12 | 7:143 | *Muslimīn* vs. *muʾminīn*. |
| 165 | *khalāʾif* | 17:21, 43:32 | 35:39 | Lack of preposition *fī* (more expansive sense). |
| | punishment/ forgiveness | 6:133, 13:6, 15:49-50, 42:13 | 7:167 | Lack of emphatic particle *la-* on *sarīʿ*. |

Contrary to my expectations, this survey of *Milāk*'s entries for al-Anʿām does not yield a great deal of valuable TQQ content. Nevertheless, the approach and some of the techniques employed by this and other authors has potential to add to the understanding of certain verses by comparing them with variants within the corpus. The example of 6:151 was discussed in Chapter 2: based on the interpretation Ibn al-Zubayr has taken from *Durrat al-Tanzīl* by Iskāfī, this could be glossed as follows: "Do not kill your children due to your *current poverty*, for God will respond to your righteous behaviour by alleviating your present hardship and providing for your progeny in the future." Thus it is markedly different from its near-parallel in 17:31, which provides: "Do not kill your children out of fear *that they will make you poor.*

Rather, God will guarantee their provision and yours."[139] Whereas some exegetes treated them as parallels or explained both reductively in terms of that fear (*khashya*), the comparative approach allows for both these forms of reasoning to exist in the Qurʾān against the practice of infanticide.[140]

Aside from the intricacy of Ibn al-Zubayr's prose, challenges to incorporating his detailed study into the genre of *tafsīr* include its polemical bent, the speculative nature of many of his explanations – a reality the author readily admits with humble interjections of "*Allāhu aʿlam*" – and the fact that these explanations are frequently strained. Rather than aiming at exposition of the verses of the Qurʾān, the author has based his project on establishing the "appropriateness (*munāsaba*)" of each wording to its context. The vagueness of this concept is readily observed, for example, in his explanation for the particle *fī* being present in 35:39 – hence "successors on the earth" – but absent from 6:165, which uses the *iḍāfa* construction – hence "successors of the earth".[141] Ibn al-Zubayr attributes this difference to a general sense of "constriction" surrounding the first juncture in Sūrat Fāṭir, compared with a sense of "expanse" in the themes and statements leading to the closing of al-Anʿām. This is related to the fact that removing the preposition *fī* results in a more expansive image of human population of the earth, not bound to a particular location.[142]

I conclude the discussion on the *mutashābihāt* genre with brief points on method and prospects. As with other TQQ-related fields of enquiry, surveying the Qurʾān comprehensively is essential, in order to gather all relevant parallels and near-parallels, and check for counters to whatever deductions are made, including in the corpus of *qirāʾāt*.[143] As Muḥammad al-Sāmarrāʾī states, such study depends on

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[139] See *Milāk al-Taʾwīl*, 1/479.

[140] A similar point is made by Muḥammad ʿAbd-Allāh Drāz in his book *Al-Nabaʾ al-ʿAẓīm* concerning the statement of divine incomparability in 42:11 (*Laysa ka-mithlihī shayʾ*), which is generally conflated with that in 112:4 (*Wa lam yakun lahu kufuwan aḥad*). After dismissing explanations which treat the 'double-preposition' *ka-mithli* as a problem to be explained away, he uses this construction to build two distinct theological arguments from the verse. The first is that nothing resembles God in any way: therefore, not only does He not have any equal (*kufuʾ*) in all respects, but no equal in any of the divine attributes (such as hearing and sight, mentioned immediately after). The second argument is that incomparability is by virtue of the very nature of divinity itself (see in translation, *The Qurʾān: An Eternal Challenge*, pp. 116–119).

[141] Some translators, such as Abdullah Yusuf Ali, seem to have taken note of this distinction.

[142] *Milāk al-Taʾwīl*, 1/484.

[143] See Ḥaydar, *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, p. 626. Ibn al-Zubayr did take account of variant readings in his arguments concerning 6:37 and 29:50, which have the same singular *āya* in the readings of Ibn Kathīr,

thorough familiarity with Arabic grammar and morphology, and often external factors including revelatory contexts (*asbāb al-nuzūl*).[144] His own publication, based on a rearrangement of *Milāk al-Taʾwīl*, facilitates the process of applying the insights and techniques of Ibn al-Zubayr et al to the craft of exegesis. This can be further developed into Quranic style manuals which guide the reader to the impact of verbal nuances upon meaning.[145]

## 4.3.2 – Resolving Apparent Contradiction (*Taʿāruḍ*)

A genre which overlaps with the study of *mutashābihāt* verses seeks to respond in particular to apparent or alleged contradictions between verses of the Qurʾān. Zarkashī titled *Al-Burhān* Chapter 35 on this topic: *Mūhim al-Mukhtalif* [or *al-Mukhtalaf*][146], recalling the concept of *ikhtilāf* (inconsistency) mentioned in Q 4:82 and discussed previously in Chapter 3. Suyūṭī based Chapter 48 of *Al-Itqān* on this and titled it: *Mushkil [al-Qurʾān] wa Mūhim al-Ikhtilāf wa-l-Tanāquḍ*. Though the second and third of these terms can hardly be distinguished, the first represents a broader genre of problematic (*mushkil*) verses.[147]

Although not widely employed, Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shinqīṭī also used the term *iḍṭirāb* for internal contradiction: he authored a work separate from his TQQ exegesis *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, entitled *Dafʿ Īhām al-Iḍṭirāb ʿan Āyāt al-Kitāb*. As previously for *mutashābihāt*, the following table outlines the entries pertaining to Sūrat al-Anʿām, noting the contradiction and the nature of Shinqīṭī's response. Of these, only

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Kisāʾī, Ḥamza, Khalaf and Shuʿba–ʿĀṣim (*Milāk*, 1/450). See also ibid, 1/460 for his exclusion of the singular reading *ṣalātihim* of Ḥamza and Kisāʾī from his comparison with 6:92. However, there is a conflict between such acknowledgements (if Ibn al-Zubayr accepts these all as canonical) and statements like "The opposite would not have been appropriate". This can be seen in his statement that *iḍāfa* was appropriate to 12:109 (*dār al-ākhira*) but *naʿt* (adjective) was appropriate to 6:32 (*al-dār al-ākhira*); he notes earlier that Ibn ʿĀmir recited 6:32 with *iḍāfa* (ibid, 1/449-450) but does not comment on the appropriateness of that reading.

[144] Sāmarrāʾī, p. 234.

[145] The writer's father, Fāḍil al-Sāmarrāʾī, has authored a number of works which contribute to this aim (see *Dirāsat al-Mutashābih al-Lafẓī*, p. 28).

[146] Both renderings are common in describing this genre and its equivalent in Ḥadīth Studies.

[147] Perhaps the most famous work of the broader genre is Ibn Qutayba's *Taʾwīl Mushkil al-Qurʾān*. I disagree with Ḥaydar (*ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, p. 269) in saying that the term *ikhtilāf* encompasses the meaning of *ishkāl*. As he notes himself (ibid, note 3), contradictions form only a subset of Ibn Qutayba's discussions. Suyūṭī does not go beyond this subset in the chapter in question.

half were discussed by one or more exegetes in my case study, highlighting the importance of looking beyond the immediate *tafsīr* genre.[148]

*Figure 7 - Seeming Contradictions in al-Anʿām According to Dafʿ Īhām al-Iḍṭirāb*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **6:62** describes God as the true *mawlā* of all people. | **47:11** denies that the unbelievers have any *mawlā*. | Two senses of *wilāya*: God is "master" of all, but patron and supporter of the believers. |
| **6:69** implies that one is not sinful for sitting with mockers of the religion. | **4:140** equates the mocker and listener in sin. | See Chapter 2 (Abrogation). |
| **6:92** appears to limit the Prophet's message to the environs of Mecca. | 6:19, 7:158, 25:1, 34:28 – these make the mission universal. | See Chapter 2 (Thematic, universality of message). |
| **6:103** implies that God cannot be seen. | 10:26, 50:35, 75:22-23, 83:15 – these imply seeing God. | See Chapter 2 (Thematic, seeing God). |
| **6:128** implies that the torment of Hell may end. | 4:169 and many others state that it is everlasting. | The exception may pertain to sinning believers "those whom God wills"; or the excluded time may be that between resurrection and being placed in Hell.[149] |
| **6:107** states that if God willed, none would commit *shirk*. | **6:148** condemns the *mushrikūn* for stating exactly that. | The Qurʾān is refuting not the words expressed, but the intended implication: that God is satisfied with their actions. |

There are some differences between the opinions presented in this work and in *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, studied in Chapter 2. In his *tafsīr*, Shinqīṭī treats 4:140 as clarification of 6:69, but in *Dafʿ al-Īhām*, he seems to treat the possibility of abrogation as equally plausible.[150] Moreover, I did not find him mentioning in *Aḍwāʾ* that the "Sword Verse" abrogated any of al-Anʿām; however, in *Dafʿ*, he states concerning 6:106 – which exhorts Muḥammad to "turn away from the polytheists" – that "It does not contradict

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[148] Shinqīṭī does not suggest in his *Aḍwāʾ* that 6:92 conflicts with the other verses. In general, *Dafʿ al-Īhām* is a more detailed study of apparent tensions than in his exegesis proper. I left out of this table the suggestion concerning 6:141 (also 6:99), that "*mutashābih wa ghayr mutashābih*" might be considered a contradiction (*Dafʿ al-Īhām*, p. 130)!

[149] *Dafʿ al-Īhām*, p. 134. The author goes on to respond in detail to scholars who argued that Hell will indeed perish.

[150] *Dafʿ al-Īhām*, p. 128.

(*taʿāruḍ*) the Sword Verse, because that abrogates this."[151] As discussed in Chapter 3, the technical sense of abrogation (*naskh*) only applies when two texts are irreconcilable – therefore, his point, effectively, is that this is an acceptable contradiction.

An example from al-Anʿām not analysed by the Group or by Shinqīṭī in this work, was discussed by Ibn al-Zubayr[152], but without a direct acknowledgement of the apparent contradiction between the statements. I refer here to the verses which ask: "Who does greater wrong (*man aẓlam*) than one who…?" – as in verses 21, 93, 144 and 157 of this *sūra*, among other references. Since the rhetorical force of the question is to describe each type of person as the greatest wrongdoer (or most unjust, *aẓlam*), it does not seem possible for the superlative to hold true for the whole range. The problem was noted by Suyūṭī, who reproduced several explanations from Abū Ḥayyān's exegesis, which I summarise here:[153]

a. Each is relative to the type of action described, e.g. the worst and most unjust "prevention" is to prevent people from the mosques (2:114), and the worst "invention" is to invent lies against God (6:144).

b. Each describes the first to perform the respective sins, therefore described as *aẓlam* relative to all who follow in their footsteps.

c. The verses, taken together, can be understood as equating these various sins to each other in wrong and injustice. Each only negates that there is anyone *more* unjust, not that there is anyone *as* unjust.

Suyūṭī adds one more explanation from an unnamed source, to the effect that the verses should not be taken literally to entail that each sinner described is the worst; rather, it is a rhetorical question which emphasises the great wrong that each is committing.[154]

The general strategies for dealing with conflicting verses were summarised by Isfarāyīnī, quoted in *Al-Burhān*, as I cited previously in Chapter 3. It should be noted

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[151] *Dafʿ al-Īhām*, p. 132.

[152] *Milāk al-Taʾwīl*, 1/431.

[153] *Al-Itqān*, 4/1482. Suyūṭī is not explicit about his source, though he mentions that Abū Ḥayyān preferred the third explanation. See Ḥaydar, *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, p. 271.

[154] *Al-Itqān*, 4/1483. This is the perspective I find most convincing.

that the location of these discussions has generally been *uṣūl al-fiqh*, pertaining to practical rulings, as the reference to abrogation implies:

> When verses conflict and it is not possible to reconcile them, then resort is made to chronology and the earlier one is abandoned in favour of the later, which constitutes abrogation. If chronology is unknown, yet there is consensus upon acting on one of the two verses, then this consensus demonstrates that the one so acted upon has abrogated [the other].[155]

The process can be summarised as follows.

1. The exegete attempts to reconcile (*tawfīq, jamʿ*) between the statements or rulings, such that both hold equally true. This may involve:
   - Clarifying the vocabulary and/or grammar: the confusion may arise from a simple misreading. A word may have *wujūh* such that two verses may appear contradictory while actually speaking of different things.[156]
   - Clarifying the scope of each utterance: if they apply to different people, places, times or situations, then contradiction does not obtain.[157] A closer examination and comparison allows for clearer meanings to arise for the individual verses: this is "creative conflict".

2. If straightforward reconciliation is not possible, then one is given preponderance (*tarjīḥ*)[158] over the other: both remain operable, but one is "modified" by the process.

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[155] *Al-Burhān*, pp. 283–284.

[156] This includes the possibility of literal (*ḥaqīqa*) and non-literal (*majāz*) meanings, as well as idioms not to be analysed for literal import. This axiom was mentioned in Chapter 1: "Contradiction between a negative statement and an affirmative statement only exists if they are equal in terms of the statement itself, the subject, their circumstances, time and place, and whether literal or figurative meanings are intended" (Sabt, *Qawāʿid*, 2/256).

[157] Zarkashī provides an instructive account of five "causes (*asbāb*) of contradiction" (*Al-Burhān*, pp. 286–291) which expands on this point.

[158] Isfarāyīnī did not mention *tarjīḥ*, presumably including it as a form of *jamʿ*. It may also be said that *naskh* is a form of *tarjīḥ*, since both verses remain in the recited Qurʾān but it is considered necessary to refer to and act upon the *nāsikh*. Zarkashī includes a list of "preponderating factors (*murajjiḥāt*)" in *Al-Burhān*, p. 284.

- If one verse is univocal (*muḥkam*) and the other equivocal (*mutashābih*), then the latter is interpreted in light of the former.[159]

- If one is more particular or qualified than the other, then a process of *takhṣīṣ* or *ḥaml* may be applied, as described previously.

3. *Naskh*, which is to consider one of the verses "cancelled" in terms of its ruling, is the last resort.[160] This is established by chronology, which depends upon explicit reports as well as circumstantial evidence; the consensus of early jurists is a form of the latter.

A thorough study of the treatment of conflicting verses by the exegetes as well as writers in these various sub-genres in Quranic studies could form the basis for a more detailed theoretical account and systematic approach to resolving tensions and contradictions. This could include specific approaches to types of content in the Qurʾān, such as its stories (*qaṣaṣ*), which may differ from rulings (*aḥkām*), for example.[161]

### 4.3.3 – Canonical Readings (*Qirāʾāt*)

Some of the theoretical accounts of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* encountered in Chapter 1, particularly later texts, included the use of *qirāʾāt* as one of its forms. Whereas Dhahabī provided examples outside the recognised canon of the Seven or the Ten Readings, others restricted TQQ to those described as *al-qirāʾāt al-mutawātira*, i.e. those which fulfil the criteria set by Muslim scholarship to be considered as part of the Qurʾān. The relevance of multiple, variant readings to TQQ stems from the very conception or definition of the Qurʾān: alongside the written consonantal skeleton, the text has an oral reality and has been vocalised in different ways. Thus, in the present time, there are differences between the Qurʾān as heard (and as vowelled in the printed copies) in different regions: although the Ḥafṣ–ʿĀṣim sub-reading is the predominant

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[159] See 3.3.1 above. I have explained above that the term *mujmal* is treated by some *uṣūl* scholars as equivalent to *mutashābih*. Zarkashī (*Al-Burhān*, p. 285) cites examples, via Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, of verses which are subjected to *taʾwīl* (interpretation) in the light of more authoritative ones.

[160] This is assuming that there is no explicit and authoritative statement to the effect that *naskh* has taken place. In that case, it would not make sense to insist on reconciliation as the first step.

[161] By way of example: quotations in the Qurʾān of historical figures who did not speak Arabic necessarily involve adaptation. In that light, variations in different *sūras* do not present the same challenge as points of law or doctrine.

one around the world today, there is strong representation of Warsh–Nāfiʿ, Qālūn–Nāfiʿ and others in parts of Africa, for example.[162] Even when such differences in transmission and recitation result in divergent meanings within some verses of the Qurʾān, Sunnī consensus[163] maintains that each of these is authentic and authoritative in its own right.[164] This is reflected in the learning institutions in which specialists are trained to recite in multiple ways, usually relying upon the didactic poems composed by al-Qāsim b. Fīrru al-Shāṭibī (d. 590/1194) and Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Jazarī (d. 833/1429). For students of this field, the various readings are treated equally, and the idea that Ḥafṣ–ʿĀṣim is the "standard" does not feature.

The role of variant readings in *tafsīr* is intimately connected to the conceptualisation of their provenance, and doctrine concerning their authority. It is not possible here to explore the core questions regarding *qirāʾāt* – and their relationship to the traditions concerning seven *aḥruf*, "letters" or modes – as my focus is upon the general stance of Islamic scholarship post-canonisation, which began with Ibn Mujāhid (d. 324/936) selecting seven variants from five regional centres in his book *Kitāb al-Sabʿa*.[165] In later scholarship – particularly under the influence of Ibn al-

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[162] See Ghānim al-Ḥamad, *Muḥāḍarāt fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, pp. 148–150 for an outline of the historical rise of ʿĀṣim and its Ḥafṣ transmission, which were originally identified among Iraqi readings; he argues that this preceded the advent of printing and the patronage of the Ottomans (cf. Nasser, *Transmission*, p. 1).

[163] The cautious adjective reflects the existence of *qirāʾāt*-scepticism in Shīʿī scholarship, as exemplified by Khūʾī in his *Prolegomenon* (see pp. 92–93 and 114–117, and his conclusion regarding readings "well established during the lifetime of *Ahl al-Bayt*". Faḍl ʿAbbās responds to Khūʾī in *Itqān al-Burhān*, 2/422–425). See re: other major figures in Nasser, *Transmission*, pp. 112–115. Dissent of a similar character is expressed by Javed Ghamidi, who argues, based on a quotation from Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (see Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān*, p. 137), that there was a single reading at the time of the Companions, described as *al-qirāʾat al-ʿāmma*. Ghamidi equates this to the Ḥafṣ sub-reading, and quotes Iṣlāḥī as saying that no other *qirāʾa* is as eloquent and coherent (see *Islam: A Comprehensive Introduction*, pp. 33–34). Both assertions are highly problematic; moreover, Zarkashī clearly places Sulamī's quotation in the context of major variations (affecting orthography).

[164] A related question is whether each reading is *sufficient* in its own right. That is the broad assumption even in scholarship, which rarely treats comparison of *qirāʾāt* as a necessity in presenting or interpreting the Qurʾān. Translations of the Qurʾān are, almost universally, based on the Ḥafṣ narration (that of Aisha and Abdal-Haqq Bewley is an exception, being based on Warsh). Word indexes, such as *Al-Muʿjam al-Mufahras* of ʿAbd al-Bāqī, also fail to take variants into account, which would increase or decrease occurrences of certain words. According to the late Azharite scholar Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Khāliq ʿUḍayma, grammarians frequently make judgements without surveying the Qurʾān comprehensively, including its multiple readings. See his immense work *Dirāsāt li-Uslūb al-Qurʾān*, 1/15–17.

[165] Re: Ibn Mujāhid's 'sevenisation', see Nasser, *Transmission*, pp. 35–36 and 48–61, and Shah, 'The Early Arabic Grammarians' Contributions to the Collection and Authentication of Qurʾanic Readings: The Prelude to Ibn Mujahid's *Kitāb al-Sabʿa*'. An area requiring further research and elaboration is the role and processes of *ikhtiyār* (selection) on the part of the reciter-imāms (see Aḥmad ʿAlī al-Imām, *Variant Readings of the Qurʾan*, p. 141 ff.). Whether they were selecting purely from received readings (upon the

Jazarī, author of *Kitāb al-Nashr* which incorporated three further readings which had retained popularity – the Seven and, subsequently, Ten Readings were classed as "***mutawātir***". Although this label purports to refer to the successively multiple transmission of these readings, its accuracy from an *uṣūl al-fiqh* or *ḥadīth* perspective is a matter of dispute.[166] For this reason, I opt to describe the Ten as "canonical" and such readings as fall outside this corpus (known as *shādhdh* readings, literally: anomalous) as "non-canonical". This perspective treats the *qirāʾāt* not as a separate phenomenon from the Qurʾān, but a "composite part of its nature".[167] Each divinely-ordained mode of recitation of a verse has the same Quranic status: as such, any comprehensive survey (*istiqrāʾ*) of the Qurʾān would require taking all canonical readings into account.

As Shady Nasser has documented, there was a marked shift from early approaches to variant readings to a developed consensus of both reciters (*qurrāʾ*) and *uṣūl* scholars, affected by methodologies in *ḥadīth* studies, that the Ten Readings enjoy an equal status as Qurʾān, and that any textual variant found in these canonical readings is above criticism. This shift is reflected in the *tafsīr* tradition, as observable in the relevant section of my case study in Chapter 2. Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, who preceded and even taught Ibn Mujāhid, did not hesitate to express preference for some readings over others, or even to criticise some (such as Ibn ʿĀmir's reading of 6:137) in the strongest terms.[168] Later scholars would mount a staunch defence of any reading from the Seven in particular, responding to the critiques of early exegetes, and especially linguists and grammarians.[169] Upon either stance, the variant readings – even those downgraded as

doctrine of recitation as "strictly adhered-to tradition, *sunna muttabaʿa*"), or the matter was freer than that (involving linguistic preferences, analogy, etc.), it would be interesting to consider the extent of intraquranic methods in guiding *ikhtiyār*.

[166] See Nasser, *Transmission*, p. 98 ff.

[167] Shah, 'Review of *Variant Readings of the Qurʾān* by Aḥmad ʿAlī al-Imām,' p. 78. A contrary expression is used by Zarkashī, who describes the Qurʾān and the *qirāʾāt* as "distinct realities (*ḥaqīqatān mutaghāyiratān*)": the former is revelation, and the latter refers to variations and selections pertaining to some of the words from that revelation – *Al-Burhān*, p. 180. This does not contradict the assertion that the existence of the Qurʾān depends upon the existence of at least one *qirāʾa*: then the question would be how this is identified.

[168] See 2.5.1 above. Aside from linguistic considerations, Ṭabarī frequently justifies his preference with appeals to the "majority" of readers, before such matters were defined through canonisation.

[169] See Rufaydah, *Al-Naḥw wa Kutub al-Tafsīr* for chronological accounts of the exegetes' treatment of *qirāʾāt*. Shawkānī is unusual as an exegete who engaged in critique of particular readings long after canonisation.

*shādhdh* – do have a role to play in exegesis, but the inclusion of this source in TQQ is predicated upon this later consensus.

Alongside this assumption of the 'Quranicity' of each of the Ten Readings, there is another key principle underpinning their use in explaining each other intraquranically. This is that each canonical *qirāʾa* of a verse is to be considered equivalent to an independent verse[170], such that one may be explained with reference to the other – in the same manner as other cross-references and evidentiary citations. From this perspective, variant readings represent not indeterminacy, but richness of content. This, too, marks a shift from early trends of preferring some readings over others, to explaining the import of each, and even studying them thematically.

### The *Tawjīh* Genre

There are some exegetical works which have given greater attention to comparing *qirāʾāt*: a late example is *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī* by Maḥmūd al-Ālūsī. Aside from this is a complete genre of works known as *iḥtijāj li-l-qirāʾāt, ʿilal al-qirāʾāt*, or *tawjīh al-qirāʾāt*.[171] The first of these titles implies that there were debates over which readings were best attested in language, and which should be considered weak: *iḥtijāj* means to argue for the validity of readings using linguistic citations, including Quranic parallels.[172] Thus one of the main functions of this genre is to explain the basis for each reading, even when the validity of the Seven and Ten has become a foregone conclusion. This is the import of *ʿilal*, whereas the term *tawjīh* may also describe an additional function of this genre: to explain the implications of these readings for the meaning of the text. One can observe a pluralistic approach in some works, which may yet be combined with the reductionism of preferring some readings over others (or, less controversially, preferring one *meaning* over others). This is demonstrated, for

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[170] In his chapter on seeming contradictions, Zarkashī states: "[Authorities] have treated the conflict between two readings of a single verse like the conflict between two verses" (*Al-Burhān*, p. 285).

[171] Nasser describes such works in 'Revisiting Ibn Mujāhid's Position on the Seven Canonical Readings,' pp. 88–89. He does not point out that later works in the genre eschew denigration of any of the readings.

[172] Some works are specific to one reading, whereas others: such as *Al-Ḥujja* by Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī, a leading grammarian and student of Ibn Mujāhid, encompassed the Seven or more.

example, by Abū Manṣūr al-Azharī (d. 370/980) in *Maʿānī l-Qirāʾāt*, which is titled to reflect its focus upon meanings.[173]

The modern era has seen the compilation of several *tawjīh* works which place greater emphasis on the canonicity and relevance of all *mutawātir* readings.[174] Even so, the dichotomy between reductionism (i.e. harmonisation) and pluralism (i.e. adding further meanings) exists here as elsewhere in intraquranic exegesis. Is it the case that *Mālik* and *Malik* – the variants describing God as "Master" or "King" of Judgment Day, respectively, in Q 1:4 – should be understood as equivalent? Or should the *mufassir* inform us that the verse delivers both these meanings, which are complementary? Here, as in the case of apparent contradiction, a staged process may apply. According to the grammarian Ibn Hishām (d. 761/1359), the default presumption is that variant readings agree in meaning.[175] Where that is not feasible, the next recourse of the exegete is to explain that the meanings are not contradictory; indeed, they may enhance the understanding of the verse. In some cases, *tarjīḥ* may be necessary: not to the extent of negating the authenticity of a reading (as in pre-canonical times), but to interpret it in light of a clearer reading of the same verse.[176]

The logical conclusion of the canonical and pluralistic approach to multiple readings is to expect them all to be taken into account in the interpretation of any particular verse.[177] This is the premise of a series of Master's theses at the Islamic University of Gaza, subsequently published under the title of *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qirāʾāt al-ʿAshr al-Mutawātira* ("Exegesis of the Qurʾān through the Ten Canonical

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[173] See Brockett, 'Value of Ḥafṣ and Warsh Transmissions' in Rippin (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qurʾān*, pp. 37–40 for interesting comments on pluralism and reductionism (though Brockett does not use these terms).

[174] Most influential is Ḥabash, *Al-Qirāʾāt al-Mutawātira*, which is arranged thematically around juristic and creedal issues. A different focus is provided by Aḥmad Saʿd Muḥammad in *Al-Tawjīh al-Balāghī li-l-Qirāʾāt al-Qurʾāniyya*, which is arranged according to topics in Arabic rhetoric and includes non-canonical readings. A new publication which I did not include here is Mihannā and Wādī, *Ittisāʿ al-Dalālāt fī Taʿaddud al Qirāʾāt al-Qurʾāniyya*.

[175] Ibn Hishām, *Mughnī l-Labīb*, p. 30. See also Rakītī, *Qawāʿid*, p. 269 for this axiom as implemented by the exegete Ibn ʿAṭiyya, and Rūmī, *Dirāsāt fī Qawāʿid al-Tarjīḥ*, 2/476 ff. for the same with Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzi.

[176] A reading at one juncture could even be classed as *mutashābih*, beyond explanation (see 3.3.1).

[177] Ibn ʿĀshūr states in his introductions (*Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 1/55–56 and 96) that whenever canonical readings yield multiple meanings, those meanings should all be regarded as "intended" by the verse. However, on the whole, he does not consider their study integral to *tafsīr* (ibid, 1/25 and 51).

Readings").[178] The analysis in this series resembles other modern *tawjīh* works, but each discussion culminates in a section "combining" the readings (*al-jamʿ bayna al-qirāʾāt*) pluralistically, as far as possible.

With reference to a range of *tawjīh* works, I have studied a selection of variants in Sūrat al-Anʿām to summarise the various explanations and harmonisations featured, as well as some which were not expressed in the sources I consulted.[179] The "reductionist" explanation here means either to say that the two readings amount to the same meaning, or that one is interpreted in light of the other. A "pluralistic" explanation is to say that the combination of *qirāʾāt* results in a fuller understanding of the verse than could have been attained without that multiplicity.

*Figure 8 - Analysis of Selected Variants in al-Anʿām from Tawjīh Works*

| Variants | Reduction | Plurality |
|---|---|---|
| **23:** *wa-llāhi rabbinā / wa-llāhi rabbanā* | The second reading may be the "accusative of praise"[180], hence means the same as the first. | The two expressions describe the same moment in two ways. The first suggests that the *mushriks* felt solidarity with each other in the face of punishment. The second emphasises their desperation before God.[181] |
| **55:** *wa li-tastabīna sabīlu l-mujrimīn / wa li-tastabīna sabīla l-mujrimīn* | The first encompasses the second, as it describes the path becoming clear irrespective of the observer.[182] | Realities are made clear through the revelation, *primarily* for the Prophet himself.[183] |

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[178] Another premise is that the multiplicity of readings and meanings reflects the miraculous nature of the Qurʾān. The portion including Sūrat al-Anʿām was written by Fātina al-Sakanī (2006). It covers fifty-one verses of al-Anʿām, but it missed *yudillūn* vs. *yaḍillūn* in 6:119. The writer has sometimes mixed up explanations from the sources and failed to articulate conclusions clearly.

[179] These are the same as in Figure 4 in Chapter 2, in which I summarised Ṭabarī's opinions. I refer here to classical works (in the "longitudinal" format), as well as modern thematic *tawjīh* works and the Gaza series. This whole genre requires further study to establish its principles and lineages.

[180] Azharī, *Kitāb Maʿānī l-Qirāʾāt*, p. 150, citing Abū Isḥāq al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923), whose book demonstrates the grammarians' approach to outlining linguistic possibilities: Zajjāj also explained how *rabbunā* (nominative) would be appropriate, though it is not attested in the *qirāʾāt* (*Maʿānī l-Qurʾān wa Iʿrābuh*, 2/190).

[181] Sakanī, p. 89.

[182] Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3197.

[183] Sakanī, p. 109.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **74:** *li-abīhi āzara* / *li-abīhi āzaru* | | [His father was named Āzar and he addressed him by this name.][184] |
| **83:** *narfaʿu darajātin man nashāʾ* / *narfaʿu darajāti man nashāʾ* | *Whoever* is raised, so are his degrees. The first is clearer in denoting multiple degrees of elevation.[185] | These are separate concepts: a person is raised (in knowledge etc.) or favoured over others (*tafḍīl*).[186] Or: God raises people's ranks and raises them to those ranks [combined, this results in greater elevation].[187] |
| **96:** *wa jaʿala l-layla sakanan* / *wa jāʿilu l-layli sakanan* | Two expressions for the same meaning.[188] | |
| **119:** *la-yuḍillūna bi-ahwāʾihim* / *la-yaḍillūna bi-ahwāʾihim* | One who leads others astray is necessarily astray himself.[189] One who is astray is likely to mislead others (without even intending).[190] | [Desires are a cause for going astray, and used to lead others astray.][191] |
| **159:** *farraqū dīnahum* / *fāraqū dīnahum* | Both verbs mean "split".[192] | Abandoning any part of the religion is abandoning it all.[193] Their selective |

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[184] This example demonstrates that, upon the canonical approach, explanations of vocabulary such as *Āzar* ought to be checked against the various *qirāʾāt* for consistency.

[185] This semantic preference for the *tanwīn* reading is attributed to Abū ʿAmr, who is one of the Seven, yet the reading with his name is with *iḍāfa*. The author of *Al-Tawjīh al-Balāghī* (p. 146) questioned his claim that "We raise the degrees (*darajāt*) of whomever We will" could refer to raising even by one degree. I suggest that the idea is that each person occupies several *darajāt*, and these could be elevated collectively even by one. On the other hand, "We raise by degrees whomever We will" is explicit in denoting multiple degrees of elevation.

[186] Fārisī, *Al-Ḥujja*, 2/817–818.

[187] Sakanī, p. 127.

[188] Fārisī, *Al-Ḥujja*, 2/835. He explains that conjoining *jaʿala* to *fāliq* requires their equivalence in denoting past tense. Similar is said concerning the conjunction of *wa-l-shamsa* (accusative) to *jāʿil al-layli* (genitive), which requires semantic equivalence. Therefore, it is difficult to argue for any divergence between the use of perfect verb and active participle in this instance. Cf. Sakanī, p. 140, where a tentative attempt is made but the conclusion is unclear.

[189] Ibn Khālawayh, *Iʿrāb al-Qirāʾāt al-Sabʿ wa ʿIlaluhā* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2006), p. 105. [NB: contrary to the cover and front matter, which attribute it to a scholar two centuries subsequent, the author is Abū ʿAbd-Allāh Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn Ibn Khālawayh (d. 370/980).] See also Fārisī, *Al-Ḥujja*, 2/860, part of a longer intraquranic study of this word-pair. Ibn ʿĀshūr excludes from this the scenario in which a person walks the correct path but misinforms others so they go astray (*Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 8/36). However, in theological terms, such a person must be considered astray himself.

[190] Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 8/36.

[191] Exegetes state that the *bāʾ* preposition in *bi-ahwāʾihim* is for *sababiyya* (causation). While this is undoubtedly the case for the intransitive reading, I propose that the same preposition in the transitive reading could be interpreted as instrumental (*bāʾ al-istiʿāna*) – see Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān*, 3/1083.

[192] Azharī, *Maʿānī l-Qirāʾāt*, p. 174.

[193] Sakanī, p. 197, citing Ālūsī. See also Ḥabash, *Al-Qirāʾāt al-Mutawātira*, p. 229; Muḥammad, *Al-Tawjīh al-Balāghī*, p. 77.

| | | attitude to religion explains their departure from its core body and essence.[194] |
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In the preceding study of variants, I have looked for reductionist and pluralistic approaches in the *tawjīh* literature and added some suggestions to make these approaches clearer. Some of the attempts to generate multiple meanings are unconvincing (such as in 6:23), and at other times, this appears to be impossible (6:96). A clear methodology in this regard has not been elaborated, as far as I can tell, in the Gazan project. On the other hand, there are some meanings that are unavoidably separate, without necessarily contradicting: an example is "his father Āzar" and "said to his father, 'Āzar'". The syntactic readings (*naʿt* and *nidāʾ*, respectively) are necessarily separate, whether Āzar describes the "father" or an idol, as some exegetes claimed.[195]

There is very little comparative study of works of *tawjīh*, let alone comparing these two approaches applied by the authors without an obvious methodology and consistent distinction between them. Moreover, while one may expect later works to incorporate the best insights of the early scholars, I found points in the earlier works (which may be longer, as with *Al-Ḥujja* of Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī) which are absent from later works: an example is the distinction between the senses of "raising someone in ranks" and "raising someone's ranks" (6:83).[196] Therefore, if the method I have outlined here – presenting reductionist and pluralist readings in parallel – is to be applied to the whole Qurʾān, it should draw from the earliest sources (including the *tafsīr* genre itself) as well as making use of later insights.

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[194] Bāzmūl, *Al-Qirāʾāt wa Atharuhā fī l-Tafsīr wa-l-Aḥkām*, 2/553. The author lists this example in his chapter concerning "readings which expand the meaning of the verse". His other chapters include those which "explain" or "resolve problems"; stylistic variants; and readings pertaining to *ʿumūm*, *khuṣūṣ* and *ijmāl*.

[195] In the latter case, it may be translated, respectively, as: "to his father, (do you worship) Āzar?" or "to his father, O (worshipper of) Āzar!" – Ibn Kathīr describes the first of these and dismisses it as implausible grammatically (*Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 3/206).

[196] For further points on traditional methodologies of using *qirāʾāt* in *tafsīr*, see Shiddī, *Ḍawābiṭ wa Āthār Istiʿānat al-Mufassir bi-l-Qirāʾāt*.

# 4.4 – Contextual Methods

## 4.4.1 – Importance and Types

In the thesis introduction and some points subsequently, I have drawn attention not only to the importance of context in performing intraquranic textual operations, but also to the fact that co-textual reading of any verse may itself be described as *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* – even if that is not the way the term has been used traditionally. By the same token, it may be said that all TQQ is contextual reading, whether a verse is studied with reference to its immediate surroundings or against the backdrop of the entire Quranic corpus.[197] Based on the recognition that an utterance may have starkly differing – or even opposite – senses depending on its context, it was an issue that received attention of exegetes, linguists and jurists from the earliest times.[198] In this section, I aim to shed some light on how Islamic scholarship – particularly in the study of *tafsīr* – has conceived of the role of context, most broadly referred to in Arabic as *siyāq*. Further development of contextual studies of the Qurʾān can thus be designed with reference to existing exegetical theory and practice.

Terms related to "context" are used in three distinct ways relevant to our study of TQQ, two of which are generally accepted in modern scholarship.[199] The first of these is textual (*naṣṣī/lughawī*) context, or **co-text**. When a Quranic expression is explained with reference to verses which precede or follow it in a passage – or a little farther afield within the same *sūra* – then it is an obvious example of explaining the Qurʾān through the Qurʾān. Putting aside debates over contextual flow and relevance represented by the study of *munāsabāt*[200], there is prima facie plausibility to the notion that proximity increases relevance. However, appealing to passage context does not

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[197] See Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's words to this effect in Chapter 1.

[198] A quote from Zarkashī in this connection (with Q 44:49 as an example) was cited in Chapter 1. For the earliest examples, see Jār-Allāh, *Naqd al-Ṣaḥāba wa-l-Tābiʿīn*, p. 365 ff.

[199] See Raysūnī, *Al-Naṣṣ al-Qurʾānī*, p. 83 for all three, and Abdel Haleem, 'The Role of Context', p. 47, for the first two which he calls *siyāq al-naṣṣ* and *siyāq al-mawqif*, respectively. There is a further type of context which I am not addressing here: the intertextual phenomenon whereby the Qurʾān points to earlier scriptures or literature in circulation at the time of its revelation: see for example Reynolds, *The Qurʾān and its Biblical Subtext*.

[200] The study of *munāsabāt*, as discussed by exegetes such as Rāzī, is about establishing connections (between verses and chapters) where such are not obvious; it is about *establishing* contextual flow, rather than *using* it. Our discussion here starts with context which is readily discernible, then considers the subtler aspect represented by the elusive "*ʿamūd*" in Farāhī's theory.

necessarily follow the same procedures described previously in general TQQ: the matter is subtler and points towards the other aspects of context.

The second type of context is described by the rhetoricians as *ḥāl* or *maqām*, i.e. the **situation** in which the utterance is made: this may be linked to *asbāb al-nuzūl*, hence best rendered as "contexts/situations of revelation".[201] The specific event which accompanied a particular verse being presented before its listeners can elucidate its meaning and application – without necessarily limiting it to that exact situation. We may differentiate between the "micro-*sabab*" – i.e. a specific event – and the "macro-*sabab*" which is a social phenomenon being addressed, implicitly or explicitly, by a passage of the Qurʾān: both of these fall within this sense of the word "context".[202] There are two possible routes to acquire information about situational context: internal and external. The former, as Farāhī argued (see Chapter 3), is to infer this from the text itself; the latter relies on historical reports.

The third usage is found mainly with *uṣūl al-fiqh* scholars: this is for *siyāq* and similar to describe the speaker's **intent** (*gharaḍ*), i.e. the purpose behind the utterance.[203] More evidently, this is the purpose of studying context (textual and situational), and indeed the very purpose of *tafsīr* is to discern "what God intends (*murād Allāh*) from His words."[204] It may be confusing to use the same term for this higher-order reality alongside the forms of context which the reader can access directly (co-text) or through secondary texts (such as *asbāb*); the latter two can be described in terms of internal or external "cues" (*qarāʾin*).[205] At the same time, this is the sense in which one commonly speaks of reading a verse "in context" or "out of context", i.e. according to its original, intended purpose or otherwise. As I shall describe below, some of the jurists built textual categories explicitly upon this distinction.

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[201] The literal sense of "cause" is also relevant here, as the situation is what "causes" or prompts the response in the form of revelation. Although the word "occasion" is often appropriate, it has the appearance of referring to time rather than events and realities.

[202] See the discussion of *asbāb* in Chapter 3, especially re: Dihlawī and Farāhī, and the discussion of *khuṣūṣ al-sabab* above (4.1.2). See also Rippin, 'The Construction of the Arabian Historical Context' in Bauer (ed), *Aims, Methods and Contexts*, pp. 173–198.

[203] Raysūnī, *Al-Naṣṣ al-Qurʾānī*, p. 83 and Aḥmad, *Athar al-Siyāq fī Tawjīh al-Maʿnā*, p. 40.

[204] See for example: Zurqānī, *Manāhil al-ʿIrfān*, 2/381.

[205] For a summary of these in the context of *tafsīr* see Aḥmad, *Athar al-Siyāq*, pp. 57–58.

Whether or not we accept "context" as denoting authorial intent itself, the various aspects can be illustrated as in the following figure: the summit represents the purpose or higher-order reality, and the arrow demonstrates that co-text is one of the key sources to determine situational context.

*Figure 9 – Context Family in Tafsīr*
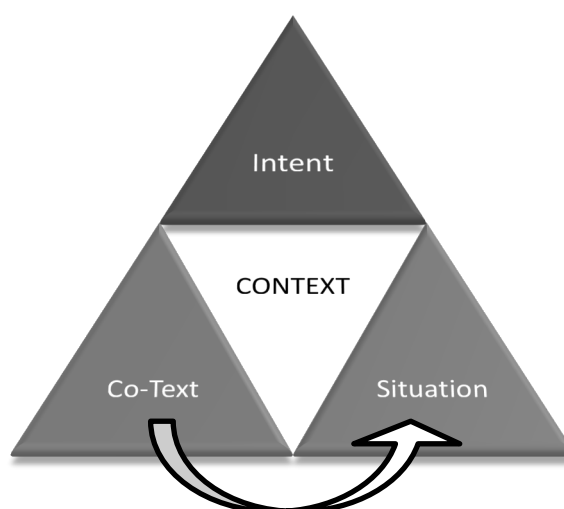


The importance of context to scriptural interpretation is well known even in popular discourse around religion. The problem of taking verses out of context is most noted when it results in violent interpretations (or the imputation of such negative teachings to the scripture), as with the famous "Sword Verse". However, one of the key forms of interaction with the Qurʾān, namely deducing rulings (*istinbāṭ*)[206] and identifying evidences (*istidlāl*), often involves taking fragments of text in isolation from co-text and/or revelatory context. From the perspective of a jurist (and in other evidence-based disciplines), the *dalīl* has a function independent of the purpose of its revelation, as long as there is a genuine relationship between the text and the meanings

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[206] By rulings, I do not mean only juristic (*fiqhī*) rulings, as this term may apply to theology, language, and other fields: any judgement of what is permissible, obligatory, illicit, and so on. A valuable resource for the study of *istinbāṭ* is Suyūṭī's *Al-Iklīl fī Istinbāṭ al-Tanzīl*, a compilation from various disciplines, which deserves a thorough study to identify the routes of denotation employed by scholars and to sift the stronger *istidlāl* from the weaker: this will often be a function of context. See also Ḥusayn (*Maʿāyīr al-Qabūl wa-l-Radd*, pp. 710–717) for rules to balance between *naẓm* (here denoting the wording, not context) and *siyāq*. For example, "Those who do not judge according to what God has sent down" (Q 5:44) refers primarily to the Israelites (in context), but the wording encompasses anyone who fits the description.

and implications drawn from it. The various relationships are known as the denotations (*dalālāt*) of words, and the Ḥanafites categorised these as four, in order of strength of denotation: *ʿibārat al-naṣṣ, ishārat al-naṣṣ, dalālat al-naṣṣ* and *dalālat al-iqtiḍāʾ*. The first of these refers to a text being used in its plain meaning, in line with its evident purpose (*mā sīqa l-kalāmu lahu*)[207] – in other words, in its original context. The second type of denotation is for a ruling to be concomitant (*lāzim*) to the original context and purpose: this is less evident than the *ʿibāra*, yet nevertheless authoritative.[208] The third category is similar to analogy (*qiyās*), but it is for a ruling to extend to unstated scenarios due to an overlap – evident from the text itself – with the original context.[209] The last is when something must be assumed in order for the text to hold true.[210]

The purpose of enumerating these categories – aside from their inherent value to *uṣūl al-tafsīr*, originating in *uṣūl al-fiqh* – is that they demonstrate that a ruling may be deduced from a text which is not concerned directly with conveying that ruling: in other words, **out of context**. That does not mean that rulings – or their evidential basis – cannot be challenged on the basis of context, as this does occur in works of exegesis. A juristic example is found in Rāzī's *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* under Q 7:204, "When the Qurʾān is recited, listen to it attentively and be silent, so you may be shown mercy".[211] After enumerating the positions of the *fiqh* schools, he dismisses their various applications of the verse, because the surrounding verses demonstrate that this was "addressed to the unbelievers in the context of the Messenger reciting to them".[212] An example mentioned previously is ʿAbduh's interpretation of the verse of *naskh* (2:106): if, as he argues from context, it is actually about one miraculous sign (*āya*) replacing another, then it has no evidentiary value for the theory of abrogation.[213]

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[207] Ṣāliḥ, *Tafsīr al-Nuṣūṣ*, 2/384. I am not providing precise *uṣūlī* definitions here but describing the relation to context in simple terms.

[208] Ṣāliḥ, 2/391.

[209] Ṣāliḥ, 2/420–421. Shāfiʿites describe this as *mafhūm al-muwāfaqa*, and it is sometimes known by *faḥwā l-khiṭāb* and other names.

[210] Ṣāliḥ, 2/443.

[211] Translation: Mustafa Khattab, *The Clear Quran*.

[212] *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 8/99.

[213] *Tafsīr al-Manār*, 1/399–401. This verse, although the most famous proof-text for abrogation (and the first in the *muṣḥaf*-order of the Qurʾān), is by no means the strongest evidence for the theory (see 3.2.2 above).

Apart from evidentiary use for rulings, there are at least two other ways in which Quranic expressions are regularly taken out of context. One is for these to be used similarly to proverbs and sayings, such as "The male is not like the female" in 3:36.[214] Whereas this is sometimes used to emphasise gender differences or even to denigrate women, the original context presents it either as the perspective of Mary's mother, or as divine praise of that particular female, to whom no (imagined) male could compare – according to the interpretation of Zamakhsharī.[215] The other is the field of mystical commentary known as *al-tafsīr al-ishārī*, found in early Ṣūfī works such as the *Laṭāʾif al-Ishārāt* of Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1073), and later in discrete sections of Ālūsī's *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*. Whereas some writers have criticised such commentaries for indulging spiritual allusions at the expense of both text and context, others believe that they may be accepted on the condition that they are not considered to reflect the actual meaning of the text, and intent of the Author.[216]

Unlike various sets of methods described previously, there is no distinct genre in Islamic scholarship dedicated to the study of context per se. Rules and methods to form part of a developed intraquranic hermeneutics can be derived from two main sources: the practice of the exegetes (classical and modern), and theories from linguistics (Arabic and comparative). Here I give more attention to the former, beginning with more traditional scholars before the advocates of context, coherence and structure.[217]

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[214] This is an example of what some writers call a Quranic maxim (*qāʿida*), which is akin to a proverb or *mathal* (and close to the concept of *iqtibās*, citation in other contexts). Ibn ʿĀshūr provides an interesting argument for extracting such expressions from their original contexts, finding precedence in Prophet Muḥammad's citation of 8:24 (see *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 1/94–95; see also Maḥmūd, Introduction to the Principles of Qur'anic Exegesis, pp. 71–75). This particular expression features in the titles of various articles about gender, including one by Karen Bauer ('*The Male Is Not Like the Female* (Q 3:36): The Question of Gender Egalitarianism in the Qur'ān'). An anti-equality reading is elaborated in Muqbil, *Qawāʿid Qurʾāniyya*, pp. 57–64. For his part, Suyūṭī only mentions in *Al-Iklīl* (p. 171) the argument that women who menstruate may not be hired to serve [in the relevant sense] in the mosque.

[215] Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, p. 169. This was adopted by Muḥammad Asad in his translation.

[216] For rejection, see Muḥammad al-Fāḍil Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Tafsīr wa Rijāluh*, pp. 168–169: his points echo criticism by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) of esoteric (*Bāṭinī*) interpretations. For cautious acceptance, see Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn*, 2/328–331.

[217] An example of the latter approach is El-Awa, *Textual Relations in the Qurʾān: Relevance, Coherence and Structure* (see pp. 7–8); this work draws particularly upon Western theories of verbal communication.

## 4.4.2 – Context in Traditional Exegesis

By "traditional", I mean works by exegetes who did not take context as fundamental to their approach. Whereas Mir has described the bulk of exegesis prior to Farāhī (see below) as "atomistic", the role of context in their deliberations is undoubtedly a vast area of enquiry.[218] What concerns us at this juncture is co-text, i.e. the words and sentences which surround an expression under examination. I shall suffice here by outlining some principles of contextual study, drawn from one early and one late exegete, namely Ṭabarī (d. 923 CE) and Ibn ʿĀshūr (d. 1973). A contemporary researcher, ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm al-Qāsim, has drawn the following axioms from Ṭabarī's *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, some verbatim and others paraphrased (I have added some brief comments):[219]

a. *Assume that context is connected unless there is evidence to the contrary.* Discontinuities include, for example, shifts in speakers, referents or addressees, and may be deduced from internal or external cues.[220] Similarly: *The interpretation which [most] results in congruence is to be preferred.*[221]

b. *The best explanation of a verse is one which accords with the* sūra *context.* This is another factor in preferring opinions (*tarjīḥ*), and predates modern focus upon *sūra* unity.[222]

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[218] Mir acknowledges this in 'Continuity, Context, and Coherence,' p. 17. Surprisingly, Muṭayrī remarks that Ṭabarī would sometimes appeal to context at the expense of more important considerations (*Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, p. 174).

[219] *Dalālat al-Siyāq al-Qurʾānī*, p. 142 ff. From his list of nine (which included other forms of context), I have quoted five in total.

[220] *Dalālat al-Siyāq*, p. 183 ff. The internal cues mentioned are: language, syntax, frequent usage. External: revelatory context, Prophetic *ḥadīth*, statements of Companions, consensus.

[221] *Dalālat al-Siyāq*, p. 262.

[222] *Dalālat al-Siyāq*, p. 215 ff. and cf. Mir, 'The Sura as a Unity: A *Twentieth Century Development* in Qur'an Exegesis' in Hawting and Shareef (eds.), *Approaches to the Qurʾān*. An example is Sūrat al-Anʿām, as mentioned previously (2.8): Ṭabarī refers back to the phrase in Q 6:1 at various points in his *tafsīr*, indicating that he considers *shirk*, or "those who equate others with their Lord" a recurring theme in the *sūra*.

c. *Studying the beginning of a verse assists in understanding the relevance of its ending*, such as the divine names which appear in various formulations. The reverse may also be true.[223]

d. *Any interpretation which implies meaningless repetition is to be rejected.* As such, the relevance of each iteration (e.g. the motifs in Q 55 and Q 77) must be established. This applies also to lexical items when juxtaposed, e.g. *fuqarāʾ* and *masākīn* cannot be synonyms in Q 9:60.[224]

As a twentieth-century reformist scholar with an intimate, analytical engagement with the exegetical tradition, Ibn ʿĀshūr's extensive use of context is particularly worthy of study.[225] In contrast to Farāhī's goal to discover the single correct interpretation of each Quranic verse by placing it in its context, Ibn ʿĀshūr affirms the polyvalency of the text: multiple linguistic possibilities are to be accepted as long as they do not violate context. While critical of opinions deemed to violate context or fragment the text,[226] Ibn ʿĀshūr is also sensitive to the subtleties of semantic flow, recognising the frequent use in the Qurʾān of interruptions or interjections (*iʿtirāḍ*) to rhetorical ends. In such cases, he appeals to broader context, such as other textual connections and the argument being made throughout the passage. Therefore, it can be seen that two contexts (even two co-texts) are in competition, or that generic *siyāq* (in the sense of continuity) is competing with broader coherence (*naẓm*).[227]

An example of this is Q 27:88, which Abdel Haleem translates: "You will see the mountains (*tarā l-jibāl*) and think they are firmly fixed, but they will float away like clouds (*tamurru marra l-saḥāb*): this is the handiwork of God who has perfected all things. He is fully aware of what you do". Like in most translations, the "seeing" and "moving/floating" are both rendered in the future tense, which is a well-known

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[223] *Dalālat al-Siyāq*, pp. 229–240.

[224] *Dalālat al-Siyāq*, pp. 248, 254. This denial of synonymy depends on the principle "*Al-ʿaṭf yaqtaḍī al-mughāyara*", i.e. conjunction only makes sense between distinct concepts. However, there is another view concerning 9:60 that the conjunction is for emphasis (see Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 10/235). See also 4.3.1 above.

[225] See Aḥmad, *Athar al-Siyāq*, which is a beneficial study of Ibn ʿĀshūr. However, the section on axioms for weighing and critiquing opinions is general and not limited to the contextual aspect.

[226] See examples in Aḥmad, pp. 534, 539.

[227] See Muṭayrī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, pp. 194, 199, 209 for examples of competing contexts (*siyāq* or *qarāʾin*).

usage of Arabic imperfect verbs; moreover, this future reading is well-supported by contextual flow, since the preceding verse begins: "On the Day the Trumpet sounds", and the following verse speaks of "the terrors of that Day".[228] However, Ibn ʿĀshūr argues[229] that 27:88 describes a present reality, namely the movement of the mountains as the earth rotates on its axis: knowledge unknown to the Arabs, and not confirmed scientifically until centuries later.[230] Noting that this results in discontinuity, he proposes a different scheme of connection: this verse follows logically from 27:86, which points to the alternating phenomena of night and day. Upon this account, it is 27:87 which constitutes *iʿtirāḍ*, but that is justified because the preceding verse contains a subtle allusion to life after death.[231] He further advances positive contextual arguments for this reading:

- The alternation of night and day results from the earth's rotation.
- Specifying the mountains is appropriate due to their position relative to the earth, and to the sun for an observer.[232]
- The comparison to the motion of clouds is because the latter also move at a pace that is not immediately apparent. The author therefore distinguishes the verbal noun *marr* from the word *sayr* which features in 18:47, which many exegetes cite as a parallel, treating both terms as synonymous.[233]

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[228] There is a story behind my study of this verse and its context. In 2015, I attended a seminar by an Arabic scholar who argued that the exegetes and translators (excluding Richard Bell) were completely mistaken in adopting the future tense. He 'excused' them for being unaware of the scientific fact of the rotation of the earth. When I raised the point about context with him, he seemed not to have considered it. Upon investigation, I came across this thorough argument from Ibn ʿĀshūr. Several recent translators have adopted this reading, including Ali Quli Qara'i, Muḥammad Ghālī and Mustafa Khattab.

[229] Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 20/47–51.

[230] Ibn ʿĀshūr makes occasional arguments for "scientific miracles" in the Qurʾān: see his tenth introduction (*Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 1/127). In the present verse, he notes that the address has shifted to the Prophet directly ("You see" in the singular), indicating that elite knowledge is being imparted, like that given to Abraham (ibid, 20/49).

[231] *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 20/48.

[232] *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 20/49; these two points were not made entirely clear and explicit.

[233] *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 20/50.

- The reference to "God's handiwork (*ṣunʿ Allāh*)" etc. is more appropriate to describe a perfected system than its eventual unravelling.[234]

### 4.4.3 – The Farāhian School

The preceding example is illustrative of the subtleties involved in appeal to various types and levels of context. While it is true that many exegetes engaged such considerations (explicitly or implicitly), the famous proponents and practitioners of *naẓm*-based exegesis are Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī and his student Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, author of *Tadabbur-i-Qurʾān*. In Chapter 2, I focused on their use of cross-references for the sake of comparison with other exegetes. However, this aspect of intraquranic *tafsīr* is secondary to their focus upon context and coherence. Although excellent studies of their work continue to be published, much of this focuses upon their observations concerning the structure of *sūras* and the architecture of the Qurʾān.[235] While it is true that structure impacts – to one extent or another – upon passage context and the meanings of verses, much of the current discourse on the topic stems from an interest in its compositional history and literary features.[236] Another aspect lacking until now is a thorough comparison of the reasoning and conclusions of this school alongside other exegetes (beyond Rāzī and Biqāʿī, who have been identified as proponents of a less sophisticated *naẓm* approach).[237]

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[234] *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 20/51. I have suggested that Ibn ʿĀshūr has applied a *naẓm*-based approach to this passage. In contrast, Farāhī (*Taʿlīqāt*, 2/30) and Iṣlāḥī (*Tadabbur*, 5/637) adopted the standard future interpretation which accords with contextual flow.

[235] An example is Farrin, who titled his work *Structure and Qurʾanic Interpretation* but gave little or no treatment of interpretation. More broadly, structural studies of the Qurʾān represent a burgeoning field, with Angelika Neuwirth and Neal Robinson being influential figures. The approach of Michel Cuypers (see *The Composition of the Qurʾan*, pp. 10–12) proceeds from a theory that Semitic rhetoric calls for forms of organisation which include cyclical patterns. The recent publication *Divine Speech* by Khan and Randhawa builds on these various ideas, and its co-author Nouman Ali Khan, utilises them in his popular lectures for two main purposes: to inspire people concerning the "perfection" of the scripture, and to highlight meanings which would otherwise remain unnoticed. It is the latter purpose which is most pertinent to our discussion of *uṣūl al-tafsīr*.

[236] See discussion and critiques of the various approaches in Sinai's review essay 'Going Round in Circles'; Rippin, 'Contemporary Scholarly Understandings'; and Friedman, 'Interrogating Structural Interpretation'.

[237] See for example: Mir, *Coherence*, pp. 17–18; El-Awa, *Textual Relations*, pp. 16–17; and Khan, *Understanding the Qurʾan*, pp. 137–184. The latter is a thematic comparison between Biqāʿī and Iṣlāḥī, largely to the favour of the latter. The author's dismissive characterisations of major *tafsīr* works (ibid, v–viii) may have been influenced by Farāhī's terse summaries of the approaches of Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, Zamakhsharī and Rāzī (see marginal note in *Rasāʾil al-Imām al-Farāhī*, p. 216).

The term *naẓm*, which has frequently been translated as "coherence"[238], may encompass several levels or forms of context. Mustansir Mir uses it for three different types in his paper on 'Continuity, Context, and Coherence':

> "By **continuity** I mean linkage between some or all the verses of a *sūrah*; by **context** I mean a framework of meaning which is typically created by a set of verses seen to form a cluster and which helps to determine the meaning of one or more verses occurring inside or in the vicinity of that cluster; and by **coherence** I mean overall, or organic, unity or coherence in a *sūrah*."[239]

It is therefore worthwhile to summarise these levels of text relations (and various terms used to describe them) before making some final observations on the Farāhian school and its implications for contextual methods for interpreting the Qurʾān.

1. Relationship between meaning and words in a single expression (known in Arabic rhetoric as *naẓm*).[240]

2. Links between sequential verses or passages, classically known as *munāsaba* (Abdul-Raof: consonance. Mir: continuity. Khan and Randhawa: linear coherence).[241]

3. Broader textual relations inside passages (Mir: context).

4. Thematic unity to the level of the *sūra*. (Farāhī: *niẓām*, Iṣlāḥī: *naẓm*. Mir: coherence. Khan and Randhawa: holistic coherence).[242]

5. Intra- and inter-*sūra* structural observations. (Part of Farāhian theory. Harvey: *niẓām*.)[243]

6. Intraquranic cross-references (classically *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*).[244]

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[238] Notably by Mustansir Mir in *Coherence in the Qur'ān*. However, Salwa El-Awa argues that the term coherence is closer to the concept of *munāsaba*, which is not necessarily linear and sequential as Mir infers from his reading of Rāzī (see El-Awa, pp. 15 and 165). She further explains that in linguistic theory, "coherence" pertains to relations between linguistic units, whereas "relevance" (her preferred approach) extends also to the information being communicated (ibid, p. 26).

[239] Mir, 'Continuity, Context, and Coherence in the Qur'ān: A Brief Review of the Idea of *Naẓm* in *Tafsīr* Literature', p. 15.

[240] See Khalfallah, 'al-Jurjānī: *Tafsīr* Theory between Linguistics and Theological Dogma' in Görke and Pink (eds.), p. 260.

[241] Abdul-Raof, *Consonance in the Qur'ān*; Khan and Randhawa, *Divine Speech*, p. 151.

[242] Khan and Randhawa, p. 152.

[243] See Harvey, *The Qur'an and the Just Society*, pp. 50–52 for a good overview of these concerns and his distinction between *naẓm* and *niẓām*.

[244] See El-Awa, *Textual Relations*, pp. 41–42. The highly influential sentence on the subject by Ibn Taymiyya, on which I have commented several times in this thesis, describes the relation between one

I have previously discussed Farāhī's theoretical discussions in *Al-Takmīl fī Uṣūl al-Taʾwīl* (see Chapter 1), *Dalāʾil al-Niẓām* (see Chapter 3) and other sources including his unfinished notes. For him, the organisation and flow of the text is an aid to eliminating possibilities and identifying the single correct interpretation.[245] If that is so, then it is necessary for the principles and processes to be clarified fully; his own writings, which were incomplete at the end of his life and are currently being collected and published, are nevertheless a rich source for further development in this regard.[246] His explanation of the importance of context is similar to comments of earlier scholars, the key difference being his emphasis on the thematic "pillar" of the *sūra* or smaller passage:

> "Where there are multiple possibilities, we opt for the best and most suited to the structure (*niẓām*) and central theme (*ʿamūd*)."[247]
> "When there are various meanings and aspects (*wujūh, iʿtibār*) [for an expression], we opt for that most suited to the context (*maqām*) and the theme of the passage (*ʿamūd al-kalām*)."[248]

Farāhī acknowledges that deducing the *naẓm* and the unifying *ʿamūd* is extremely difficult[249] – this is a point which requires further investigation if this methodology is intended to settle exegetical differences. The very fact of its difficulty presents a challenge to the assumption of clear Quranic discourse, which is one of the premises of his approach with its minimal use of "external" sources. Nevertheless, clarity is achieved or restored once the unifying theme is identified – as Farāhī says, it illuminates the *sūra* "like the emergence of dawn".[250]

This process is, therefore, inferential then deductive, going from *juzʾī* (the meanings of individual verses) to *kullī* (theory concerning the entire edifice) and back

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verse and what is found "at another juncture (*fī mawḍiʿin ākhar*)". Modern accounts have tended to integrate different fields into TQQ (see Chapter 1).

[245] *Al-Takmīl fī Uṣūl al-Taʾwīl* in *Rasāʾil al-Imām al-Farāhī*, pp. 229–230.

[246] See for example *Al-Takmīl*, p. 266, where he gives an example of context clarifying *mujmal* expressions in a passage.

[247] Added by the editor from Farāhī's notes to *Rasāʾil*, p. 225.

[248] *Al-Takmīl* in *Rasāʾil*, p. 267.

[249] *Dalāʾil al-Niẓām* in *Rasāʾil*, pp. 89–91.

[250] *Dalāʾil* in *Rasāʾil*, p. 89.

to *juzʾī* again.[251] It is the final stage which is the test of the efficacy and value of *naẓm* theory, and this is where a comparative study of the conclusions of this school and the broader corpus of *tafsīr* would be instructive. In Chapter 2, I cited the example of Farāhī reading the injunctions in Q 6:145 and 6:151-153 as a reference to Abrahamic *sharīʿa*, rather than laws revealed upon Muḥammad.[252] This accords with the putative *ʿamūd* of al-Anʿām, which Iṣlāḥī articulates as "inviting Quraysh" to "Islam as the religion of Abraham".[253] At the very least, this method can be used to select, from multiple linguistic possibilities, the interpretation most appropriate to the *sūra* and its overall purpose.[254]

Apart from the unifying theme, the other novel feature of *naẓm* theory concerns the structure and arrangement of verses. For the most part, these accounts do result in novel interpretations of individual verses; rather, they often lead to greater appreciation of the appropriateness of their placement, and, more importantly, their significance. Mir gives three examples of verses which Watt considered "isolated" from their contexts, and the explanations given by Iṣlāḥī.[255] The first of these is the verse of *qiṣāṣ*, or just retribution for murder (2:178). Iṣlāḥī looks at the preceding verses (from 2:163) as a "Law" section which emphasises, first, the monotheistic faith, then the inextricable link between faith and ethical behaviour in society (2:177); then the following two verse-pairs outline rules which ensure respect for human life and property, respectively.[256]

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[251] According to Iṣlāḥī, *Pondering*, 1/33–35, coherence points to emergent properties of the *sūra* as a message of guidance, hence making it more than the sum of its parts. The opposite of emergence and holism is reductionism, but I have used the latter word in a different sense above.

[252] Farāhī, *Taʿlīqāt*, 1/201, 204.

[253] Mir, *Coherence*, p. 86.

[254] Another example from al-Anʿām is Iṣlāḥī's interpretation of Abraham's dialogue (see Mir, p. 112), which accords with most of the Group (see 2.3.2 above).

[255] Mir, pp. 108–111.

[256] *Pondering Over the Qurʾān Vol. 1*, p. 443 ff; see also Khan and Randhawa, *Divine Speech*, pp. 201–204. In my study of 2:178, I found that Ibn Taymiyya advanced a novel interpretation (with partial precedence in narrations mentioned, not adopted, by Ṭabarī) which no exegete after him adopted or cited, as far as I could ascertain (which raises the question of his influence as a *mufassir*). He understood the verse to be an address to previously warring tribes to tally their existing losses and settle the excess on either side with blood money, to stem further bloodshed (see Hindī, *Ikhtiyārāt Ibn Taymiyya*, 2/321–335). Taken in this light, the position of the verse is perhaps even more profound, as it opens a series of legal precepts for the new *umma* by ensuring that past scores are settled.

Some *naẓm* enthusiasts of the present day seem convinced that this methodology is the future of Quranic hermeneutics and the route to Muslim renaissance.[257] In my view, its potential is great, but much work remains to be done to clarify the processes involved.[258] I also question the portrayal of coherence-based exegesis, as sometimes with *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* generally, as an objective method which will lead to unified results. The chapters of this thesis may serve to place Farāhī's school in context and identify issues for further exploration in that method, and in intraquranic hermeneutics as a whole.

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[257] See Khan, *Understanding the Qurʾān*, x.

[258] As stated earlier, this enrichment may draw from up-to-date linguistic and hermeneutical theories.

# Conclusion

Through my survey of Islamic hermeneutical works of various genres, I found the claimed underdevelopment of *uṣūl al-tafsīr* to hold true for the specific area of intraquranic exegesis. While it is the case that such methods were practised in *tafsīr* works such Muqātil's and Ṭabarī's, and sometimes acknowledged explicitly, as in Zamakhsharī's and Rāzī's, there was no theoretical account – as far as I could trace – of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* in early treatises and exegetical introductions until the famous sentence of Ibn Taymiyya concerning the "best method". I noted how this claim was adopted in subsequent works – with notable exceptions, such as *Al-Fawz al-Kabīr* by Dihlawī – and continues to be reproduced uncritically in modern works.

At various points, I discussed the problems inherent in that account, beyond the fact that it received little elaboration or implementation over the centuries and claims of "consensus" on the matter are overstated. I have argued that TQQ cannot be reduced to one method which is "best" as an absolute, but that various factors affect its accuracy as well as its relationship with other sources and approaches – hence it cannot be exhausted "first" as Ibn Taymiyya implied. Likewise, the classification of TQQ as "*maʾthūr*" (transmitted) has tended to obscure the role of the exegete's *ijtihād* and *raʾy*, which may explain the lack of attention to probing TQQ theory and methods until recently. Nevertheless, important materials have long been available – for example in Suyūṭī's *Al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* – but in need of critical analysis, development and integration.

The twentieth century saw not only the compilation of TQQ works such as Shinqīṭī's *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, but the emergence of modern approaches as seen in the Farāhian structural coherence school and the literary school emerging from Egypt. In order to assess the actual practice of exegetes from the earliest time and the modern era, I examined as many TQQ-primary *tafsīr* works as were available to me, along with various secondary works for my comparative case study of Sūrat al-Anʿām. This provided a greater understanding of the general trends in this genre as well as individual features of the exegeses and their relative value to the researcher and *mufassir*. The roles of parallels, near-parallels and evidentiary citations have been

clearly delineated, and the quantitative approach of the citations table (see Appendix) can be extended or developed for future projects.

Key findings from the case study include the extent of divergence between opinions of TQQ exegetes, which underscores the subjectivity involved. The works surveyed tended not to place much emphasis on *naskh* or *qirāʾāt*, a point which reflects some of the individual attitudes of those exegetes, or implications of intraquranic study more broadly. They did not display a heavy reliance on *ḥadīth* literature, even those which represent Prophetic TQQ; some adopted the meaning without citing the report. Despite some overlap and signs of lineage between the exegetes, for the most part they operated independently. Future concordances should include these sources which contain some citations missed by the likes of Paret; more can be found in general *tafsīr* works, and all should be classified according to relevance.

It seems that commentaries based on Quranic cross-references have not presented many conclusions not already found in general *tafsīr* works – though more comparison is needed. I propose that some, such as *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān* – and similarly *Al-Durr al-Manthūr* for narrated exegesis – be considered as thematic collections of exegesis (i.e. resources for the exegete). Further studies of the various approaches are needed, and some – such as the contemporaries Iṣlāḥī and Bint al-Shāṭiʾ – have yet to be studied comparatively, to my knowledge. As for 'Quranists', their contributions to date are limited and unsophisticated, though the convictions of the authors studied led them to some novel conclusions.

Through the study of exegetes, I gathered some insights into al-Anʿām itself, such as the prominence of the issue of *shirk* and some which were less obvious at first, e.g. the tension between freewill and predestination. An improvement on my case study approach could give greater attention to the chronological aspect of citations and consider whether the verses could have had the same explanatory effect at the time of revelation. Another aspect which requires more expansive study is the use of context by exegetes in general. My comparative approach allows the methods to come more clearly into focus.

In terms of theoretical underpinnings of the TQQ endeavour, I summarised these in the form of four principles: **Unity**, **Consistency**, **Interpretability** and **Authority**. Some of these are intuitive and general; hence, rather than an imposed

doctrine, TQQ can be seen as an inherent need and logical approach for a corpus containing unclear and clarifying passages. I identified some inherent tensions between various principles and theories: between scriptural unity (synchronicity) and contextual revelation (diachronicity); between consistency and abrogation; between interpretability and equivocality (*tashābuh*); and between Quranic authority and "neediness" for clarification through the Sunna or other external sources. In terms of exegetical methodology, there is a further tension between reductionist and pluralistic readings of Quranic passages.

I outlined historical and potential approaches to these tensions, such as a minimalist approach to *asbāb* and *naskh*. Whereas abrogation has often been exaggerated, the explanations offered concerning specific passages in the Qurʾān, by those who opposed the idea altogether, are not all convincing. In the end, *naskh* can be categorised as a form of TQQ (based on chronology), just as the categories of *muḥkam*/*mutashābih* are the basis of a form of TQQ (based on relative clarity). Another important conclusion in Chapter 3 was that, while the commonly-cited examples of Prophetic TQQ provide a mandate to interpret the Qurʾān contextually and intratextually, they cannot inform methodology and may not be true examples of TQQ at all.

Regarding methodology, I drew attention to a range of genres (including *uṣūl al-fiqh*, lexicography, thematic/comparative studies, and *qirāʾāt* literature) in which relevant materials can be found and extracted, beyond the works of *tafsīr* and *uṣūl al-tafsīr* already described. I considered how these various sources can be approached and what further work is needed to improve and integrate these areas of study. Whereas *uṣūl al-fiqh* has historically been the primary domain for Islamic hermeneutical activity (and overlap with theology, philosophy and linguistics), a generalised approach would require sensitivity to different genres within the Qurʾān. Therefore, while *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *uṣūl al-tafsīr* overlap where legally significant verses of the Qurʾān are concerned (including the topics of *dalālāt*, *takhṣīṣ*/*taqyīd* and *naskh*), each has a domain of interest distinct from the other. An increased incorporation of *uṣūlī* debates may result in further diversity in Quranic exegesis and a clearer delineation between hermeneutical "schools".

Both thematic exegesis and coherence-based exegesis display potential to advance and refine our understanding of the Qurʾān. In the case of the former, I delineated the survey approach (which purports to be objective) and "readings" of the Qurʾān which are inherently goal-oriented (if not called biased). All these approaches require further methodological grounding, and the comprehensive study in this thesis of intraquranic methods and their underlying theories can be of service in this regard, including to evaluate new developments in Quranic hermeneutics, whether in East or West.

For next steps in *tafsīr* and *uṣūl al-tafsīr* studies, I propose that further focus be directed to the following areas (some of which were covered to an extent in this study): interpretation on the basis of language; use of narrations from the Prophet and early authorities; use of *qirāʾāt*; contextual and structural study; methods in Quranic stories; understanding references to earlier scriptures and religions (and use of *isrāʾīliyyāt*); and *uṣūl* for general deduction (*instinbāṭ*) and reflection (*tadabbur*) along with the existent body of legal hermeneutics. Much of this requires a two-stage process: gathering and clarifying the traditional approaches, and incorporating the most pertinent concepts and techniques from the modern humanities.

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# Appendix

# Qurʾān Citations in al-Anʿām Commentaries

| Verse | Phrase | Parallels | Evidence | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *al-nūr* (singular) <br><br> *yaʿdilūna* | | 153, 16:48 <br><br> 2:165, 26:98 (150, 27:60) / 23:74 (4:135) | |
| 2 | the two uses of *ajal* | | 2:28, 63:11 / 7:187, 31:34, 79:42-44 / **60** (39:42, 40:67) / 10:49, 13:38-39, 16:96 | |
| 3 | heavens and earth | | **43:84** / 25:6 / 67:16-17, 20:5 / 7:7, 57:4, 58:7 | Various readings of syntax |
| 4 | | (10, 12:105, 15:81, 26:5, 36:46, 54:2) | | |
| 5 | | 13:17, 42:24, 61:8-9 / 37:176-177 | 19, 66, 104-106, 17:105 | |
| 6 | destruction of stronger communities <br><br><br><br> replacement with new generation | 7:95, 34:45 (19:74, 30:9, 35:44, 40:21/82, 43:8, 46:26, 50:36) <br><br> (5:54, 7:169, 23:31/42, 28:45) | | 133 was not noted. |
| 7 | | 25, 111, 7:132, 10:96-97/101, 15:14-15, 52:44 | 4:153, **17:93** | |
| 8 | demands for angel <br><br><br> *quḍiya l-amr* | 17:94, 64:6 <br><br><br> **15:8, 25:22** | **25:7** / 17:92, 38:67-70, 41:13, 81:19-21 | |
| 9 | | 50, 3:164, 16:43 **17:95**, 36:30 | 43:60 | |
| 10 | | | 29:40 etc. | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11 | | (3:137, 7:84/86, 10:39/73, 28:58 etc.) | | |
| 12 | question & response | 13:16 | | Muqātil cites reading of Ubayy/Ibn Masʿūd |
| | mercy | | 54, 21:107 | |
| | *la-yajmaʿannakum* | 4:87 | 54, 12:35[1] | Ṭabarī cites for grammar |
| | disbelief/loss | | 31 | |
| 13 | | | (96) | Re: ellipsis |
| | divine knowledge | | 59-62 | |
| 14 | | 39:64 | | |
| | *fāṭir* | | 67:3, 42:5 | |
| | God feeds, is not fed | 26:79, 35:15, **51:56-58**, 112:2 | | Droge suggests 22:37 relevant; hence 136 too. Dakake links to argument in 5:75. |
| | first to submit | (163, 39:12) | | |
| 15 | | (10:15, 11:63, 39:13) | 48:1 (*naskh*) / 39:65 | |
| 16 | | **3:185** | | |
| 17 | | 10:107, 23:88-89, 35:2 | | |
| 18 | | 61 | | ʿAlwānī compares 14-18 to Abraham's stance in 26:70-89. Yuksel cites 53:42-62 as elaboration. |
| 19 | witness | 4:166, 63:1 | 57 | |
| | reach of warning | 29:50, 35:23 | **7:158**, 11:17, 25:1, 34:28 / 2:143, 9:122 | Final phrase obviously similar to Abraham's statement (78 – noted by Paret, Droge, Dakake). |
| | *lā ashhad* | 150 | | |
| 20 | | **114**, **2:146**, 10:94 | 5:83 | |
| | pronoun him/it | | 19 / 7:157, 26:197, 48:29 | |

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[1] See Hamza and Rizvi (eds.), *An Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries*, p. 309.

262

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21 | *man aẓlam* <br><br> not prosper | 137-140, **10:17** (93, 144, 157) | <br> 2:95, 22:9, 39:26 | |
| 22 | | 28:62 | | |
| 23 | | **40:73-74** | | |
| 24 | lying <br><br> abandonment <br><br><br> forgery | <br> 2:165, 40:16, 82:19 / 10:28-30, 16:86-87, 35:14 / 24:39 | 4:42, 38:64 <br><br><br><br><br> 10:18, 39:3 | |
| 25 | <br><br><br> *akinna* <br><br> *asāṭīr* | <br><br><br><br><br> 8:31, 16:24 (25:5) | 2:171, 8:93, 83:14 <br><br><br> 37:49 | |
| 26 | | | | None noted. |
| 27 | | 7:53, 23:99-100 | 32:12, 35:37 | |
| 28 | manifest <br><br> used to hide <br><br> divine knowledge | 39:37-38, 45:33, 50:22 <br><br><br><br> 9:47, 23:75 | <br><br> 23 / 17:102, 27:14 / 29:11 | |
| 29 | | | | See Paret, Dakake. |
| 30 | | 46:34, 52:15 | 2:174 | |
| 31 | | 164 | 93, 31:34, 39:15 | |
| 32 | | 7:169-170 | 24:37, 34:13 | |
| 33 | grief <br><br> what they say <br><br> attitude to God <br><br> implication | 18:7, 26:3, 35:8 <br><br><br><br> 4:80 (3:31, 48:10) | 5:68, 18:6, 26:3 <br><br> 8, 37, 50 / 21:5 / 28:57 <br><br><br> 31:23, 36:76, 74:11 | |
| 34 | *kalimāt* <br><br><br> messengers | 17:77, 35:43 <br><br><br> 41:43 | **37:171-173, 58:21** <br><br> 90 | |
| 35 | demand <br><br> impossibility <br><br> if your Lord willed | <br><br> 22:15 <br><br> 10:99 | 17:90-93 <br><br> 13:38 <br><br> **32:13** etc. | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| | prohibition | | 53 / 68:2-4 | |
| 36 | hearing/deafness | 122, 27:80-81 | 39, 2:171, 32:12 | |
| | dead | | 122, 35:22 | |
| 37 | no miracle | 17:90ff, 25:7-8 | **17:59**, 26:4, 29:51 / 54:1-2 | |
| | what they know not | | 57-67, 3:128, 13:38 | |
| 38 | communities | 11:6/56, 17:20, 29:60 | | |
| | al-kitāb | | 59, 13:9-10 / 16:89 | |
| 39 | deaf and dumb | 2:17-18, 24:40 | 26, 37 | |
| | divine will | | 2:26, 4:40, 42:13 | |
| 40 | torment | | 10:22-23, **17:67**, **29:65**, 31:32 | |
| 41 | | | 64 | |
| 42 | | | | Farāhī: expanded in al-Aʿrāf (Q 7) |
| 43 | | 31:32, 40:84 | 4:147 | |
| | lawlā | | 63:10 | |
| 44 | | **7:94-95**/182-183 | | Ṭabarī narrates that Ibn Zayd compared *mublis* here with *mustakīn* in the similar verse. |
| | forgot | 5:13-14, 7:165 | | |
| | open doors | | 35:2 | |
| | mublis | | 23:76 | |
| 45 | | 69:8 (23:28), | 30:41 | The expression *qaṭʿ al-dābir* is in 7:72, 8:7, 15:66 (Dakake). |
| 46 | | | 67:33 / 8:24, 10:31 | |
| | | | 35:3 | |
| 47 | | 7:165, 16:45-47 | | |
| | ẓulm | | 82 | |
| 48 | | 7:35 | 43:59 | |
| 49 | | | | None noted. |
| 50 | | 11:31 | | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *khazāʾin* | | 17:100, 35:2 / 15:21, 36:82 | |
| | unseen | | 3:44, 11:49, 12:102, **72:26-27** | |
| | not angel | 41:14 | 7:187, 17:51/90-93, **25:7-8** / 18:110 | |
| | what follow | | <u>56</u> | |
| | blind | <u>122</u>, 13:19 | | |
| **51** | those who fear | 23:57, 13:21 | <u>19</u> | |
| | no intercessors | | 2:255, 20:109, 21:28, 43:86 | |
| **52** | | 11:27-31, **18:28**, 26:114 | | |
| | *yadʿūn* | | 40:60 | |
| | *wajh* | | 92:20 | Ṭabāṭabāʾī presents a study of this concept |
| | not accountable | | <u>164</u>, 2:286, 4:86, **26:112-113**, 88:26 / <u>69</u> | |
| **53** | | 11:27/31, 19:73, 23:55-56, 25:20, 43:31, 46:11 | | |
| | grateful | 68:7 | <u>92</u>, 12:38 29:69, 31:12 | |
| **54** | *salām* | | 16:32 | |
| | mercy | 7:156 | | |
| | *jahāla* | (4:17) | 7:201 | |
| | *tāba…wa aṣlaḥa* | 25:70 | 2:284, 4:17-18 | |
| **55** | | <u>75</u>, 3:140 | | Syntactic similarity |
| **56** | | 17:22 / 3:73 | | |
| **57** | *bayyina* | | <u>19</u>, <u>157</u> | |
| | rejection | | 21:3-5 | |
| | hastening | | | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *ḥukm* | 10:50, 11:8, 29:53-54, 38:16, 42:18 <u>62</u>, 12:67, 13:41, 28:70, 40:12 | 17:93 | Ṭabāṭabāʾī differentiates creative and legislative usages |
| **58** | | | <u>47</u>, 21:37 | |
| **59** | *mafātiḥ* | | **31:34** / 42:12 / <u>50</u>, 15:21 etc. / (72:26) | 31:34 and its ḥadīth not cited by Muqātil, Amritsarī, Iṣlāḥī, Ṭabāṭabāʾī. [See 2.6.1] |
| | unseen known only to God | <u>50</u>, **27:65** | 3:179, 72:27 | |
| | divine knowledge | 40:19 | | |
| | *kitāb* | | <u>38</u>, 10:61, 20:52, 34:3, 57:22 | |
| **60** | *tawaffī* | 3:55, **39:42** | 32:11 | |
| | day and night | 13:10, 28:73, 78:10-11 | | |
| | prescribed time | 7:24/34, 11:3, 42:14 | | |
| **61** | *ḥafaẓa* | | **13:11** / 43:80, **50:17-18, 82:10-12** | |
| | never fail | | 66:6 | |
| **62** | they are returned | | 18:47-49, 56:49-50 | |
| | *mawlā* | | 18:44 | Amritsarī's citation pertains to *wilāya* (authority). The other canonical reading *walāya* was deemed equivalent by some – see Ālūsī 15/360. |
| | *ḥukm* | <u>57</u> | | |
| | swift reckoning | | 34:3 | |
| **63** | *ẓulumāt* | **10:22**, 17:67, | 24:40 | |
| **64** | | 18:32-38, 27:63 | | |
| **65** | above | 17:66-69 | 67:16-18 | |
| | below | | 5:66 | |
| | intranecine war | 21:93-97, 30:31-32, 59:14 | | |

| 66 | qawm | | 14:4, 26:198-199 | |
| | not guardian | 2:119, 18:29 | | |
| 67 | | 13:38, 38:88, 44:9-15, 54:3 | | |
| | naba' | | 78:2 | |
| | will know | | 11:39 | |
| 68 | khawḍ | | <u>70</u>, **4:140**, 9:65 / 2:258 / <u>159</u>, 3:105, 42:13 | |
| 69 | | 2:286, 5:105 | 4:63 | |
| 70 | leave them | 74:11 | | |
| | an tubsala | | 74:38-39 / 4:176 | |
| | no intercessor | 2:254, 74:48 | | |
| | ʿadl | 3:91, 70:11-14 | 5:95 | |
| | drink | | 56:93 | |
| 71 | | 46:17 | | Muqātil says both refer to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr[2] |
| | no benefit or harm | 7:188, 72:21-22 | | |
| | istihwāʾ | | **14:37** | |
| | God's guidance | <u>90</u>, 16:37, 39:37 | 10:25 | |
| 72 | | | | None noted. |
| 73 | bi-l-ḥaqq | | **38:27-28**, 45:22 / 41:11 | |
| | word is true | 38:84 | | |
| | "All control is His on the day…" | | 25:26, **40:16** | |
| | al-ṣūr | | 36:51-53, 39:68 | |
| 74 | | | **19:41-48**, **37:95** | |
| | father | | 14:41, 26:86, 60:4 / 2:133, 12:38 | |
| 75 | nurī (tense) | 28:5 | | |
| | malakūt | 29:27 | 3:191, 7:185, 10:101, 27:88, | |

[2] Wrongly referenced to 21:67 in printed editions. See Saleh, 'Rereading al-Ṭabarī,' p. 196 for the contrasting approaches of Ṭabarī and Māturīdī re: this charge against a companion.

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| | | | 34:9 / 3:26, 5:120, 7:185, 36:83, 67:1-3 | |
| | *wa li-yakūna* (conjunction) | 14:52 (see 55) | 32:24, 83:18-21, 102:5-6 / 17:1, 53:17-18 | |
| | certainty | | | |
| 76 | *āfilīn* | | 7:191, 16:17 | |
| 77 | need for guidance | 24:21, 28:56 | | |
| 78 | | | | |
| 79 | | 7:54 | | |
| 80 | | 2:258 / 7:89, **11:53-56**, 21:51, 39:38 | | Muqātil identifies both disputants as Nimrod |
| 81 | no proof | 42:21, 53:23 | | |
| 82 | *ẓulm* | | 2:254, **31:13**, 10:106 | [See 2.6.2] |
| | security | | 41:30 | |
| 83 | *darajāt* | | 58:11 | Dakake suggests 165, 2:253 and 4:96 as alternative parallels; no mention of 132. |
| | all-knowing | | 10:96-97 | |
| 84 | Isaac and Jacob | 11:71, 19:49, 37:112 | | |
| | thus We reward | | 2:257 | |
| 85 | | | | Paret cites 2:130 to explain *min al-ṣāliḥīn* in terms of the Hereafter |
| 86 | al-Yasaʿ | 38:48 | | |
| 87 | a straight path | 1:6-7 | 3:19, 21:25/92, 30:30, 42:13 | |
| 88 | guidance | | 2:85, 4:150-151, 28:50, 42:13 | |
| | *shirk* | 22:31, **39:65** | **21:17, 39:4, 43:81** | |
| 89 | *kitāb* and *ḥukm* | | 2:213, 4:105, 5:44/48 / 21:78, 26:83, 38:26 | |
| | disbelieve in "it" | | 2:38, 72:13 | |
| | *qawm* | | 59:9 / 5:54 | |

| 90 | guidance<br>all peoples | 16:37 | 4:131<br>73:19 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 91 | | 10:2, 17:94 | 22:73-74, 39:67 | |
| | you were taught | | Contrast with<br>16:78, 96:5 | |
| | say "Allāh" | 7:199 | <u>63-64</u> | |
| 92 | | 38:29 | | Ṭabāṭabāʾī explains<br>the absence here of<br>*ilayka* |
| | *mubārak* | | 7:58, 16:37,<br>61:5 | |
| | *muṣaddiq* | | 5:48 | Also *muhaymin*<br>(Amritsarī) |
| | *wa man ḥawlahā* | | <u>19</u>, <u>90</u>, 3:20,<br>**7:158**, 25:1 /<br>26:214 | |
| | guard prayers | 2:45-46, **23:2/9** | | |
| 93 | forgeries | | 7:169 | |
| | false claim to prophecy | | 34:24 | Amritsarī takes it as<br>hypothetical<br>reference to<br>Muḥammad. |
| | claim to be able to reveal<br>its like | **8:31** / 2:23,<br>10:38, 11:13,<br>17:88, 52:34 | | Ṭabāṭabāʾī disagrees<br>with the link to 8:31,<br>which is conditional<br>("Had we wished"). |
| | outstretched arms | | **5:28**, **8:50**,<br>47:27, **60:2** | |
| | let out your souls | | 53:44 | |
| | today | | 23:100 | |
| | arrogance | 39:45 | 40:56 | |
| 94 | brought singly again | 18:48, 19:95,<br>21:104 | | |
| | left behind | | 104:3 | |
| | intercessors | <u>100</u>, **10:18**,<br>39:3 | | |
| | abandonment | <u>22-24</u>, 2:166-<br>167, 23:101,<br>**26:92-93**,<br>28:64, **29:25**,<br>46:6, 29:25 | | |
| 95 | living from dead | 36:33-36 | 36:77 | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| | that is God | | 16:17 / 56:86-87 | |
| 96 | morning light | <u>1</u>, 7:54, 41:37, 91:3-4, 92:1-2, 93:1-2 | | |
| | night | **10:67**, **28:72-73**, 78:9-11 | | |
| | sun and moon | **10:5**/67, **36:40**, **55:5** | | |
| | *taqdīr al-ʿazīz al-ʿalīm* | **36:37-38**, 41:12 | | |
| 97 | stars | 16:16 | 37:6-10, 41:12, 67:5 | |
| | for people who know | | 17:82, 62:5 | |
| 98 | single soul | **4:1** | 7:189 | |
| | *mustaqarr, mustawdaʿ* | | **2:36**, **11:6**, 22:5, 80:21-22 | |
| 99 | | 13:4, 16:67, 36:34 | | Dakake via Zamakhsharī: explicit singularity in 13:4 (diversity arising from single rain) is subtle comparison with "single soul" of <u>98</u>. |
| | *anzala* (tense) | | 10:31 | |
| 100 | *al-jinn* | 4:117-120, 18:50, 19:44, 34:41, 36:60-61, 37:158 | | Some of these also touch on "daughters". See also 17:40 with 16:57, 37:153, 43:16 (ʿAlwānī) |
| | created | 37:95-96 | | |
| 101 | | 19:88-95 | | |
| | created, knows | 67:14 | 16:17 | |
| 102 | | 13:16, 39:62, 40:62 | 20:50, 25:2, 87:3 | |
| 103 | *lā tudrik* | | 10:26, **75:22-23, 83:15** / 7:143, 42:51 | Use of 10:26 (also 50:35) depends on interpretation via *ḥadīth* |
| | (*idrāk*) | 2:255, 20:110 | 10:90, 20:77, 26:61 | |
| | *huwa yudrik* | 11:56, 67:14 | | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *laṭīf, khabīr* | | 31:16 | |
| **104** | *baṣāʾir* | 7:203 | 22:46 | |
| | blind | 13:19, 17:15, 22:46 | | |
| | not guardian | 2:119 | | |
| **105** | *darast* (human teacher) | 16:103, **25:4-5**, **74:24-25** | | |
| | for people who "know" | | **2:26**, **17:82**, 19:97 22:53, **41:44**, **74:31** | |
| **106** | | 31:17 | | |
| **107** | | 21:23 | | |
| | not guardian or trustee | 13:40, 42:48, 88:21-22 | 26:3 | |
| **108** | | 4:86/148 | 102 | One may query the need for Amritsarī's citation of 102 to the effect that there is only one God. |
| | *tazyīn* | | 20:50 / 27:24 | |
| **109** | | 13:38, 17:59 | 17:90-93, 54:2 | |
| | *lā yuʾminūn* | 80:3-4 | 7:12, **21:95** | |
| **110** | vain wishes | 28, 39:56-58 | | |
| | left to wander | **61:5** | | |
| **111** | | 124, 8:32, 10:96-97, 17:92, 25:21 | 25:7/21 | |
| | *qubul* | | 17:92 / 18:55 | |
| | *illā* | | 42, 76:30-31 | |
| **112** | | 34, 2:14, 3:184, 25:43, 41:43 | **123**, 25:7 / 3:21 | Shinqīṭī states this verse clarifies 25:31 |
| | *waḥy* | | 121, 128, 114:5-6 | |
| | *zukhruf* | | 138 / 7:20-21, 41:25 | |
| | divine will | | 32:13 | |
| | forgery | | 140 | |
| **113** | | 150, 37:161-163, 51:8-9 | | |
| | gains | | 9:34 | |
| **114** | | 10:35, 40:20 | | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| | those given *al-kitāb* | | **20**, 10:94, **28:52** / 2:146 / 34:6 | |
| | *bi-l-ḥaqq* | | 72:26-28 (cf. 26:221-223) | |
| | prohibition | | 12:108 | |
| **115** | *tammat* | | <u>20</u>, <u>114,</u> 2:129, 7:157, 42:13, 61:8-9 | |
| | *ʿadl* | | 7:157 | |
| | none can change His words | | 9:82, 48:15 / <u>18</u>, 2:255 | |
| **116** | | 12:103, 13:1 / 26:8, 34:13, 37:71 | | |
| | misguide "you" | | <u>119</u> | |
| | *ẓann* | <u>148</u>, 17:36, 53:28-30 | | |
| **117** | | 3:5 | | |
| **118** | | | | None noted |
| **119** | *an-lā taʾkulū* | | 2:246 / 4:176 | |
| | "already detailed" | | **145** / 5:3 / **16:114-116** | |
| | Exception | 5:3 | 39:45 | |
| | many misguide | <u>116</u>, <u>117</u> | | |
| **120** | | | **151**, 7:33 / 4:22-23 | |
| **121** | | 22:67 | | Muqātil links revelatory context |
| | prohibition | | **145**, 5:4-5 | |
| | pronoun *innahū* | | 3:179 | |
| | devilish inspiration | <u>112</u>, <u>128</u> | | |
| | *mushrikūn* | | 5:51 / 9:31 | |
| **122** | | <u>1</u>, 2:257, 11:24, 16:76, 35:19-23, 67:22 | <u>114-119</u>, 12:108, 42:52 / <u>36</u>, 7:179, 16:97, 58:22 | |
| | *kadhālika* | | 13:17 | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *tazyīn* | | <u>125</u>, 2:7, 16:35 | |
| **123** | | 17:16, 25:31, 33:67, 34:34-35, 43:23 | <u>112</u>, <u>121</u>, 2:205, 7:179 | |
| | *makr* | | **34:33**, **71:22** | |
| | against themselves | 35:43 | 16:25, 29:13 | |
| **124** | *Āya* | | 54:2 | |
| | obstinacy | 2:118, 17:92, 25:21 | | |
| | God knows best | <u>10</u>, 21:36, 25:41, **43:31-32** | | |
| | *makr* | | 43:31 / 25:41, 46:11 | |
| | outcome | | 18:49, 40:60, 86:9 | |
| **125** | *sharḥ* | **39:22**, 49:7 (20:25, 94:1) | 2:257, 92:5-7 | |
| | *islām* | | <u>87</u>, <u>161</u> | |
| | misguided | 22:46/78 | 22:78, 39:45 | |
| | *al-samāʾ* | | 14:24 | |
| | *rijs* on hearts | 15:12 | | |
| **126** | *ṣirāṭ* | | <u>115</u> | |
| **127** | *al-salām* | | 10:62, 15:48 | |
| | their *walī* | 2:257 (cf. <u>112</u>) | | |
| | reward | 7:43 | | |
| **128** | | | <u>123</u> | |
| | *Istakthartum* | 36:60-62 | 7:17, 17:61 | |
| | mutual profit | 37:27-28 | | |
| | appointed time | | 32:12 | |
| | *illā mā shāʾ Allāh* | **11:107** | | |
| **129** | | 2:26 | 38:59 / **43:36** | |
| **130** | *minkum* | | 4:163-165, 12:109, 25:20, 29:27, **35:12**, **55:22**, 71:16, | |
| | testimony against selves | 67:9-11 | | |

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| | | 91:14 / 35:24, **46:29** | |
| **131** | | 4:165, 5:19, 16:36, 17:15, 28:59, 35:24 (11:117) | | |
| | He "would not" | 11:56 | | |
| | *bi-ẓulm* | | **31:13** | |
| **132** | | 46:19 | | |
| | to each | | 7:38, 16:88 | |
| | degrees | | 17:21 | |
| **133** | | 4:133, 35:15-17, 47:38 | | |
| **134** | | 56:60 | | |
| **135** | | 28:37 / 14:13-14, 21:105, 24:55, 40:51-52, 58:20 | 106, 18:29 | |
| | *makāna* | | 36:67 | |
| | *ʿāqiba* | | 11:49, 20:132 | |
| **136** | | 16:57, 43:15, 53:21-22 | 19:55 | |
| | *bi-zaʿmihim* | | 21:26 | |
| | poor judgment | 16:17 | | Amritsarī cites this as a fundamental concept |
| **137** | | 151, 16:58-59, 17:31, 81:8-9 (60:12) | | Ṭabāṭabāʾī argues these are unrelated: this refers to sons sacrificed to idols |
| | *shurakāʾ* | | **100** / 14:36 | |
| | if God willed | 32:13 | | |
| | abandon them | 73:10 | | |
| | invent | | 7:28 | |
| **138** | | **5:103, 7:28**, 10:59 | | |
| **139** | *waṣf* | | 16:62/116 | |
| **140** | forgery | 112, 10:69-70 | | |
| **141** | | | 147, 68:17-33 | Shinqīṭī states Sunna is needed to "complete" the ruling; some consider it abrogated. |
| | *isrāf* | | 25:67, 17:26-27 / 7:31 | |

| 142 | ḥamūla, farsh<br><br>Satan's footsteps | <br><br>4:119, 7:27, 18:50, 35:6 | 16:7/69-80, 36:71-72, 40:79-81 | "Cutting cattle's ears" in 4:119 is related to their dedication to idols, the theme here in al-Anʿām.[3] |
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| 143 | azwāj<br><br>inform me | <br><br>46:4 | 7:189, 33:37, 51:49 / 39:6<br><br>148 | |
| 144 | shuhadāʾ/waṣṣā | | 2:132-133 | |
| 145 | <br>mayta<br><br>dedicated not to Allah<br><br>ghayra bāghin wa lā ʿādin | 2:173, 16:115 | 138-139<br><br>5:3<br><br>136<br><br>5:3 | Tension between this statement and the existence of other prohibitions (e.g. 5:90) |
| 146 | | 3:93, **4:160** | | |
| 147 | | 165, 13:6, 15:49-50, 40:3, 85:12-14 | 2:168 | |
| 148 | <br>those before<br><br>ʿilm | 16:35, **43:20** | **107**, 149, **39:7**<br><br>41:15<br><br>46:4 | Shinqīṭī considers this a prediction; later verses expressed fulfilment |
| 149 | al-ḥujja al-bāligha<br><br>if He willed | <br><br>35, 10:99, 11:118-119 | 61<br><br>5:48, 21:23, 68:35-36 | |
| 150 | shuhadāʾ | 144 | | |
| 151 | <br>shirk<br><br>parents<br><br>min imlāq<br><br>fawāḥish | <br>4:48/116<br><br>**2:83, 31:14-15**<br><br><br>120, 7:33 | 42:13<br><br><br><br>**17:31**, 81:8-9<br>17:32 | The prescriptions of these three verses match 17:23-39 (Farāhī, Iṣlāḥī)<br><br>See 4.2.1 for Ibn ʿĀshūr's caution re: superficial similarities |
| 152 | orphans<br><br>measure and weight | <br><br>17:35 | **4:6**, 2:220<br><br>**83:1-6** | |

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[3] Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 5/205.

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| | speak justly | **4:135**, **5:8**, 17:36 | 5:106, **17:34** / 5:7 | |
| | covenant | | | |
| 153 | | **42:13** | | Ṭabāṭabāʾī argues "my path" is most evidently in voice of the Prophet. 12:108 supports this. |
| | *ṣirāṭī mustaqīman* | 11:72 (grammar) | 1:6-7 | |
| | *ṣirāṭ* vs. *subul* (number) | | 2:257 | |
| | distance from path | | 4:116 | |
| 154 | | 91-92, 28:48, 46:12/30 | 5:44 | Ibn Kathīr notes other juxtapositions of Qurʾān and Torah. Farāhī uses its mention here to argue that the previous laws were Abrahamic. |
| | *tamām* | **7:145** | 28:5-6 | |
| | *ʿalā lladhī aḥsan* | | 2:124, 32:24, 55:60 / 9:69 / 7:144 / 2:58 | |
| 155 | | | 7:3 | |
| 156 | | 5:19, 28:47 | | |
| | *an taqūlū* | | 4:176 / 49:2 | |
| | *dirāsa* | | 7:169 | |
| 157 | | 35:42 | | |
| | *bayyina* | | 98:1-2 | |
| | *hudan/raḥma* | | 2:2 | |
| | *ṣadafa/yaṣdifūn* | | 26, **16:88** / **75:31-32** | |
| | torment | | 20:124 | |
| 158 | | | 2:210, 16:33, **89:22** | |
| | demand | | 15:6-8, **25:21** | |
| | that day | 2:210 | 25:22 / 32:29 | |
| | *āyāt* | | 27:82, 32:28-29 / 40:84-85 | |
| | no benefit | 4:18, 40:84-85, 47:18 | | |
| | wait | 20:135 / 10:47-53 | | |
| 159 | disunity | 153, 42:13 | 3:110, 98:4 | |
| | case rests with God | 22:17 | 59:14 | |

| 160 | ten times reward | 27:89 (expanded here) | 2:261, 4:40 (39:10) | These suggest rewards for the elite beyond the multiple |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | evil with its like | | 42:40 / 78:26 | of ten |
| 161 | *qayyiman* (reading) | 9:36, 98:5 | 159 | |
| | straight path | 153, 36:61, 43:64 | | |
| | Abraham's way | 2:130, 16:120-123, 22:78 | | |
| 162 | | | 3:20, **108:2** | |
| 163 | first of the Muslims | 14, 39:12 | 2:128-132, 5:44/111, 10:72/84-86 12:101, 21:25, 27:42-44, 51:36 | Ibn Kathīr states that these verses together represent devotion to God in worship and reliance (in that order), and cites parallels: 1:5, 11:123, 67:29, 73:9. |
| 164 | other than Allah | 16:17 | | |
| | individual responsibility | 20:112, 34:25-26, 35:18, **74:38**, 109:5 | 52:21, 74:39 | |
| 165 | *khalāʾif* | 17:21, 43:32 | 133, 2:30, 7:129, 10:14/73, 27:62, 43:60 | |
| | testing | | 158 / 156, 159, 5:48 | |
| | punishment/forgiveness | 133, 13:6, 15:49-50, 42:13 | | |