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AL-*TAFSĪR BI AL–MA'THŪR*:
THE QUR'ĀNIC EXEGESES OF THE PROPHET
MUHAMMAD, HIS COMPANIONS, AND SUCCESSORS

by

Ali Suleiman Ali

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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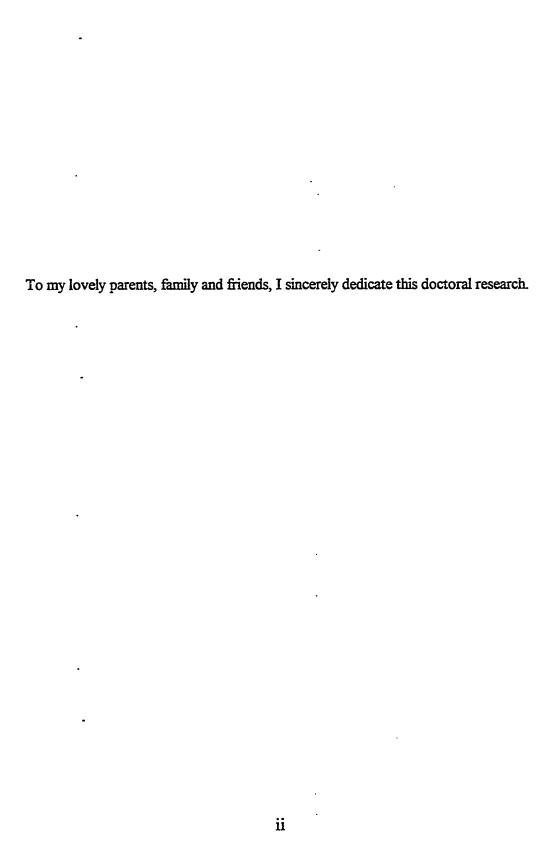in the University of Michigan
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To my lovely parents, family and friends, I sincerely dedicate this doctoral research.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Scope, Objective, and Importance

This dissertation is primarily concerned with the belief held by a majority of traditional scholars that *"al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr"* (Traditional exegesis) is *ḥujja* (a binding proof). This type of *tafsīr* (Qur'ānic exegesis) is based upon the traditions of the Prophet, his *Ṣaḥāba* (Companions), and the *Tābi'ūn* (immediate Successors of the Companions). This thesis argues the viewpoint of al-Ghazālī and others that only the *tafsīr* of the Prophet Muḥammad is *ḥujja*. Therefore, only his *tafsīr* should be called *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*. *Al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* is one of the two major types of *tafsīr*. The second type is *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y*, (exegesis based on independent opinion). The focus of this study will be the concepts of *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*, its various definitions, the reasons for these variations, and their implications. *Al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y* will be discussed in lesser detail.

Aspects of the Qur'ānic studies dealing with the authenticity of the Qur'ānic text, its compilation, style, and coherence are beyond the scope of this research. Another major aspect which will not be discussed is that of the *"ikhtilāf al-qirā'āt"* (differences in proper Qur'ānic recitation). Our aim is to highlight the problems involved in the definitions of *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* and to offer some suggestions that might help resolve the problem.

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Although the Qur'ān has occupied a high place of interest for both Muslim and
non-Muslim scholars, some aspects of Qur'ānic studies have as yet received little
attention.[1] *Al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* is one of these areas; it needs further objective
investigation.

Al- Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr has generally been understood in four different ways.
Some scholars, including Mālik Ibn Anas [d. 179-801][2] and Ahmad Ibn Hanbal [d. 241-
855] [3] held that *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* is the exegesis of the Qur'ān by the Prophet and
his Companions. Others, including Ibn al-Salāh [d. 643-1257],[4] understood it to be the

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[1] In his article " *Tafsīr Studies*", Rippin has expressed the need for an adequate general introduction to
Tafsīr. He recognized the good attempt Kenneth Cragg made in his " *The Mind of the Qur'ān*" and that
of Ilse Lichtenstadter in her article "*Qur'ān and Qur'ān Exegesis*" Yet he stated that " there still
remains, however, a need for a suitable textbook to introduce students and fellow Islamicists to the general
field in an appropriately technical manner". Andrew Rippin, *The Muslim World*, Vol. LXXII, (1982), p.
237. Similarly, he called to the need of a new history of *tafsīr*, but he recognized the problems involved in
such a project. He asked "... how to go about writing such a history" What form should such a work take?
What approach should it take? Who would, in fact, be qualified to take on such a task?" Rippin.
Approach to the History of Interpretation of the Qur'ān (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988). p. 4. Hereafter
referred to as AHIQ.

[2] Imām Mālik Ibn Anas was born in Medina [93-715]. Mālik was an outstanding scholar of Medina.
Mālik, known as the founder of the Mālikī school of thought. His major work is titled *Muwatta*. See
Abū 'Abd Allāh Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Ibn 'Uthmān al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A 'lām al-Nubalā'* (Cairo:
Ma'had al-Makhtūtāt al-'Arabiyya, 1956-1952). 8: 47-9.

[3] Ahmad Ibn Hanbal was born in Baghdad [164-778] Ahmad, an outstanding scholar of Hadīth and Fiqh,
is known as the founder of the Hanbalī School of thought. His works include *Musnad al-Imām Ahmad,
Masā'il Ahmad Ibn Hanbal* . See Abū 'Abd Allāh Shams al-Dīn Muhamad Ibn 'Uthmān al-Dhahabī,
Mīzān al-I'tidāl, ed. 'Alī Muhammad al-Bajāwī (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya 'Isā al-Bābī al-Halabī,
1963). 1: *345*.

[4] Taqī al-Dīn 'Uthmān Ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān Ibn al-Salāh was born in Sharakhan (near present Irbil,
Iraq). Ibn al-Salāh, is a renowned jurist and scholar of hadīth. His most popular work is *Muqaddimat Ibn
al-Salāh*. See, Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *A 'lām: Qāmūs Tarājīn li Ashhar al-Rijāl wa al-Nisā' min al-
'Arab wa al-Mustashriqīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Malāyīn, 1980, 9: 458).

explanation of the Qur'ān by the Prophet and *"asbāb al-nuzūl"* (the occasions of revelation).[5]

Some contemporary Qur'ānic scholars, such as the late Egyptian Muḥammad al-Zurqānī and the Syrian 'Alī al-Ṣābūnī, understood *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* to be the interpretation of the Qur'ān that made use of other Qur'ānic verses and the exegesis of the Prophet and his Companions.[6] Many modern scholars including Muḥammad al-Dhahabī, Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ, Shaykh Ibn Uthaymīn, and others agreed with the latter definition adding the interpretation of the Qur'ān by the *Tābi'ūn*.[7]

The question that arises here is: Why did the scholars differ in defining *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr?* The reason was connected to the notion of *ḥujja* (binding proof) which, in turn, has been tied to the definition of *Ma'thūr* (oral or written transmitted text) and the authority of the transmitter.

The scholars who considered transmission emanating from the Ṣaḥāba as *ḥujja* naturally included their tafsir within *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*, based on the assumption that the Ṣaḥāba had learned all they knew about the Qur'ān from the Prophet. The scholars who considered both the tafsīr of the Ṣaḥāba and the *Tābi'ūn* to be *ḥujja* included the tafsīr of the latter, because they believed that the *Tābi'ūn* had directly learned the meaning

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[5] Taqī al-Dīn 'Uthmān Ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddimat Ibn Ṣalāḥ*, ed. 'Ā'isha Bint al-Shāṭi' (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, n.d). P. 128.

[6] Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Aẓim al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil al-'Irfān* (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, n.d). 2: 18.

[7] Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1961-1381, 1st ed). 1: 78.

of the Qur'ān from the Companions. Such reasoning placed the *tafsīr* of both groups within the definition of *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* and, thus equal to *ḥujja*.

In this manner we see that the application of the term *ḥujja* is the key component concerning the scholarly debate about what constitutes *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*. The traditional Muslim scholars have never precisely defined this expression (the English translation "binding proof," notwithstanding). Throughout my search for the definition of the term *ḥujja* to determine if it does indeed mean binding proof, I did not find any traditional scholar who defined the term as applying specifically to *uṣūl al-fiqh* (Islāmic jurisprudence) or *uṣūl al-tafsīr* (the science of *tafsīr*). In his *al-'Udda fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, the outstanding Ḥanbalī jurist Abū Ya'lā stated that the term *ḥujja* and *barāhīn* (proofs) have the same meaning as *dalīl* (indication or proof). He further defined *ḥujja* by saying "*wa qīl dhālik (ḥujja) ism limā dalla 'alā ṣiḥḥat al-da' wā wa li-hādhā summiyat bayyinat al-mudda'ī ḥujjatuh wa burhānuh, wa laysa kull dalīl ḥujja.*"[8] (It has been said that *ḥujja* is that which pertained to the authenticity of a claim, for that the clear evidence of a claimer is his proof and evidence, and not every *dalīl* is *ḥujja*). The traditional understanding of *ḥujja* is the same as that of the late outstanding Egyptian jurist, 'Abd al-Ghanī 'Abd al-Khāliq who stated, "*fa al-ma'nā al-ḥaqīqī li-al-ḥujja, huwa al-iẓhār wa al-kashf wa al-dalīl wa yalzam al-'amal ḥaythu annahu ḥukm Allāh.*"[9] (The real meaning of *ḥujja* is to

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[8] Al-Qāḍī Abū Ya'lā Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Farrā' al-Baghdādī al-Ḥanbalī, *al'Udda fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, ed. Aḥmad Ibn 'Alī Sayyid al-Mubārakī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1980-1400). 1: 132.

[9] 'Abd al-Khāliq 'Abd al-Ghanī, *Ḥujjiyat al-Sunna* (Beirut: Dār al-Qur'ān, 1986, 1st ed). p. 413.

make something clear, to expose and explain and when it is presented before you, it becomes binding to act upon it because it is the decree of God).

When one reads the major works of *uṣūl al-fiqh* such as *al-Risāla* by al-Shāfi'ī,[10] al-Ghazālī's *al-Mustasfā*,[11] al-Āmidī's *al-Iḥkām*,[12] al-Sarkhasī's *Uṣūl*,[13] Ibn Ḥazm's *al–Ihkām*,[14] Abū Ya'lā's *al-'Udda*[15] and others, the impression that one gets is that *ḥujja* means "binding proof" only as a matter of *'urf* (common usage) or tacit agreement among scholars. Most probably, the common notion of *ḥujja* came from the understanding of the term as used in the Q. 4:165 رسلامبشرين ومنذرين لئلايكون للناس على الله حجة بعد

الرسل وكان الله عزيزاحكيما (Messengers are bearers of good news, as well as warning, that mankind, after the coming of the messengers should have no plea against God. For God is Exalted in power, Wise.) Similarly, this notion of *ḥujja* is found in a popular ḥadīth: "*wa al-Qur'ān ḥujja lak aw 'alayk.*"[16] (and the Qur'ān is an argument for or against you).

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[10] See Muḥammad Ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Risāla*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-Turāth, 1979-1399). pp. 596-600.

[11] See Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl wa Ma 'ahū Kitāb Fawātiḥ al-Raḥmūt*, ed. al-Shaykh Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Muḥammad Ramaḍān (Beirut: Dār al-Arqam Ibn Abī al-Arqam li Ṭibā' wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 1994-1414). 1: 616-626.

[12] See Alī Ibn Muḥammad sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī, *Kitāb al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, ed. 'Abd al-Razzāq 'Afīfī, (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1402; 2nd edition). 4: 149-156.

[13] See Abū Bakr Ibn Aḥmad al-Sarkhasī, *Uṣūl al-Sarkhasī*, ed. Abū al-Wafā' al-Afghānī (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'ārif li al-Ṭibā' a wa al-Nashr, 1973-1393). 1: 108-114.

[14] See Abū Muḥammad 'Alī Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Sa'īd Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, ed. Aḥmad Shākir (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Ḥadītha, 1983-1403, 2nd ed). 6: 16-25.

[15] See Abū Ya'lā, *al-'Udda*, 3: 714-721.

However, the acceptance of the views of the *Ṣaḥāba* and *Tābi'ūn* as *ḥujja* was critically challenged by al-Ghazālī, [d. 505-1111],[17] Ibn Ḥazm, [d. 456-1000][18] and others. The problems encountered here are of two kinds,[19] one religious, the other intellectual. The religious dimension concerns the acceptance of the opinion of a Companion as *ḥujja*. If this is done, it implies that no one has the right in Islām to reject a Companion's opinion. Al-Ghazālī said that for this to occur, the opinion must be established in the same manner as the other principles of Islām were established, namely, through proofs and clear arguments from the Qur'ān and ḥadīth.[20]

The second dimension concerns *"taqlīd"* (following and accepting someone's action or idea without any reservation); al-Ghazālī and al-Āmidī stated that if one accepts

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[16] Abū Zakariyā' Yaḥyā Ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Matn al-Arba' īn al-Nawawiyya*, translated Ezziddin Ibrāhīm Denys Johnson-Davies.(Damascus: Ernst Klett Printers Stuttgart, 1977). p.79.

[17] Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī was born in a small village near Tus (Iran). He was well known theologian and jurist in Islām. His most prominent works include *al-Mustasfā min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl*, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn, Tahāfut al-Falāsifa, Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*. Al-Ziriklī, A'lām 6: 489. 'Imād al-dīn Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Najdī (Riyadh: Mu'assat al-Kutub, n.d). 12: *173-4*.

[18] Muḥammad Ibn 'Alī Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Sa'īd Ibn Ḥazm was born in Spain [384-994] He was a famous theologian and jurist. His famous works include *al-Muḥallā bi al-Āthār, al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām, al-Fiṣal fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwā' wa al-Niḥal*. See Muḥammad Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥazm: Ḥayātuh wa 'Aṣruh wa Ārā'uhu wa Fiqhuh*. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Arabī, n.d). pp. *12-16*

[19] We called it a problem because the issue of whether or not an opinion of a Ṣaḥib or a *Tābi'ī* is a *ḥujja*, has led to a theological debate between some of the Traditionalists and certain Jurists and Theologians. See for example, al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā*, 1: 616-226 and Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Abū Bakr Ibn Qayyim, *I 'lām al-Muwaqqi'īn 'an Rabb al-'Ālamīn*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1977-1397, 2nd ed). 4: *118-155*

[20] Al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā*, 1: 616-620.

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the opinion of the *Ṣaḥābī* or a *Ṣāḥib* (singular of *Ṣaḥāba*)[21] as *ḥujja*, it is *taqlīd*, which according to these two scholars is contrary to the Qur'ānic injunction Q.47:24.

أفلا يتدبرون القرآن (Do they not ponder over the Qur'ān?). Al-Ghazālī believed it is incumbent upon Muslims to ponder and analyze information, even that which is revelation from God.[22] Thus, a scholarly implication concerning whether or not an opinion of a *Tābi'ī* (singular of *Tābi'ūn*) is *ḥujja*, involves the question of intellectual inquiry.

Abū Ḥayyān[23] raised another interesting issue. He said that if it were true that the Qur'ān can be understood only by referring to the *tafsīr* of *Tābi'ūn*, then there would be no use for the exegesis of those who came after them.[24]

The question then arises: Did the scholars see such implications and their consequences? If so, another question arises: Did anyone attempt to solve this matter, or provide any suggestions? My research revealed that no adequate attempt has been made to resolve this continuing difficulty. Al-Ghazālī, who seems to be more insistent about rejecting the notion that *ḥujja* is established by the opinion of a *Ṣāḥib*, did not attempt to redefine *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*, or what a *Ṣaḥābī*'s opinion should be called; he simply

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[21] The terms *Ṣaḥābi* and *Ṣāḥib* are used interchangeably in this thesis.

[22] Al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustaṣfā*, 1: 616-620.

[23] Abū Ḥayyān Muḥammad Ibn Yūsuf Ibn 'Alī Ibn Yūsuf Ibn 'Alī al-Andalusī was born in Spain in (654-). He was a famous exegete and grammarian. His prominent works include *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, *Kitāb al-Tajrīd li Sībawayh*. See Muṣṭafā Ibrāhīm al-Mushīnī, *Madrasat al-Tafsīr fī al-Andalus* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1986-1406, 1st ed). pp. 104-5.

[24] Muḥammad Ibn Yūsuf Ibn 'Ali Ibn Yūsuf Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalūsī, al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ (Riyadh: Maktabat wa Maṭba'at al-Nashr al-Ḥadītha, 1969). 1: 154

criticized the concept of *hujja* intellectually and theologically. Ibn al-Salāh rejected the

notion as al- Ghazālī did, but he did not justify his point of view.

Modern scholars have not discussed the issue in depth, possibly out of Muslim

respect and deference to the Companions and Successors of the Prophet for their

pioneering role in Islām. In his *al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn*, al-Dhahabī stated, "Despite

various opinions concerning the authority of the *tafsīr* of the *Tābi'ūn*, we have included it

in the definition of *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*, because we found the *tafsīr* literature such as

al-Tabarī's *Jāmi' al-Bayān* identifying it as *al- Tafsīr bi al- Ma'thūr*.[25]

'Abd al-Razzāq 'Afīfī gives a hint that he is aware of the issue, but choses to

ignore it. His work about *tafsīr* is titled *Muqaddima fī Tafsīr al-Rasūl li-al-Qur'ān al-*

Karīm; however, he discusses only Prophetic *tafsīr*. Perhaps his role as a Sunni theologian

living in Sunn circles prevented him from engaging in such a discussion.[26]

Although many works and articles have been written concerning *tafsīr*, none has

addressed in depth the issue before us, despite the brief mention appearing occasionally in

some works.[27]

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[25] Al-Dhahabī, *al- Tafsīr*, 1: 52.

[26] 'Abd al-Razzāq 'Afīfī, *Muqaddima fī Tafsīr al-Rasūl li al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1402). pp. 3-12

[27] The authors and works included in our review of the pertinent literature include Mujāhid al-Sawwāf, *"Early tafsīr — A Survey of Qur'ānic commentary Up to 150 A.H."* Islāmic Prespectives, ed. Khurshid Ahmad, Zafar Ishāq Ansārī (U.K: Islāmic Foundation, 1979.) pp. 135-143, Rashīd Jullundri, *"Exegesis and Classical tafsir"* Islamic Quarterly XII, 1968, p. 138, Ignaz Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden: Brill, 1920). pp. 55-98, Nabia Abott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri: Qur'ānic commentary and Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967). pp. 106-113, Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis*

More books and articles could be added to the list of works we present in our references, but none would bring any new ideas that help this thesis. Our research shows that few modern scholars, Muslim or non-Muslim, have addressed the problems associated with the definition of *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*. This lack of attention was what attracted me to this research and is what determines the singular role of the thesis at hand.

In this study we show that the concept of *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* does not conform to the literal definition of the phrase itself; hence, the term "*Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*" has to be redefined. We suggest that *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* should designate only the Prophetic explanation of the Qur'ān; while the Qur'anic exegesis by the *Ṣaḥāba*[28] and the *Tābi'ūn* should be considered as *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y* or *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ijtihād.*

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991,1st ed). pp. 13-89, Fred Leemhus, "*Origin and Early Development of the Tafsīr Tradition*" In Andrew Rippin ed. *AHQI.* pp. 13-30, Amīn Al-Khūlī. "*Al-Tafsīr*", *Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Islāmiyya, ed.* Majmū'a min al-Mustashriqīn (Cairo: Dār al-Sha'b, 1969, 2nd ed). pp. 409-430, Helmut Gätje, *The Qur'ān and Its Exegesis,* trans. and ed. Alfred T. Welsh (Berkely and Los Angeles, 1976). pp. 30-44, Muḥammad Ayoub, *The Qur'ān and Its Interpretation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984). 1: 1-40 Muḥammad Ibn Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Tafsīr wa Rijāluh* (Tunisia: Al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya li al-Ṭibā'a wa al-Nashr, n.d.) pp. 14-20, Regis Blachere, *Introduction au Coran* (Paris: Besson and Chantemerie, 1959). pp. 211-219, Ṣubḥi al-Ṣāliḥ, *Mabāḥith fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Beirūt: Dār al-Malayīn, 1976). p. 213, Al-Dhahabī, *al- Tafsīr,* 1: 153-205, Muḥammad Ibn 'Uthaymīn, *Muqaddima fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr* (Cairo: Dar Ibn Taymyya,1990-1410). pp. 2-34, 'Abd Allāh Āl Ja'far, *Athar al-Taṭawwur al-Fikrī fī al-Tafsīr fī al-'Aṣr al-'Abbāsī* (Beirut: Dār al-Mu'assasa; 1984-1405,1st ed). pp. 72-103, Abū Ghazāla, Maḥmūd Abd al-Ḥalim. *al-Tafsīr bayn al-Ra'y wa al-Athar* (Mecca: Jāmi'at Umm al-Qurā, 1976). pp. 86-124, Al- Shaykh Khālid 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-'Ak, *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr wa Qawā'iduh* (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā'is, 1986-1406, 2nd ed). pp. 111-14, Al-Sayyd Aḥmad , *Nash'at al-Tafsīr fī al-Kutub al-Muqaddasa wa al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Ḥalabī, n.d). pp. 83-90, Ismā'īl al-Fārūqī and Layāl al-Fārūqī, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (New York: Macmilian Publishing Company, 1986). pp. 240-251, Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata'āmal ma' al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1988). p. 128 and Azād Fārūqī, *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān: A critical analysis of Maulānā Abu'l Kalām's approach to the understanding of the Qur'ān* (New Delhi : Vikas Publishing House, P.VT Ltd). pp. 1-11.

[28] Ṣubḥi al-Ṣāliḥ, *Mabāḥith.* p. 213

Having said this, we do not propose to create a new school in the field of *al-Tafsīr*, but rather to present a valuable model. We hope that it will at least be an important step in the right direction, even if it does not put the issue to rest.

Overview and Plan

This study deals with the controversy concerning the definition of *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*. It involves four different groups. The first group defined it as the interpretation of the Qur'ān by the Prophet and his Companions, traced back with lines of transmission. The second group understood it to be the exegesis of the Prophet, and the *"asbāb al-nuzūl"* (the occasions of revelation). The third group maintained that it is the interpretation of the Qur'ān by using other Qur'ānic verses and the exegesis given by the Prophet and his Companions. The fourth group agreed with the third definition and added the interpretation of the Qur'ān by the *Tābi'ūn* as another legitimate source of exegesis.

Each group's point of view will be identified and presented. My approach to these ideas will be a critical one. The text (not necessarily the sources of this text) that each group has presented as evidence to support its concepts and position are critically analyzed. It is not my aim, however, to engage in polemics or apologetics, or to argue for any position or interpretation. This dissertation will prove that there have been unintentionally misconceptions concerning the definition and application of *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* throughout the history of Islāmic exegesis. In my analysis of this exegetical tradition, I have used the same five tools that the four involved parties utilized: the

Qur'ānic text, the ḥadīth of the Prophet, the sayings of the *Ṣaḥāba*, the statements of the *Tābi 'ūn* and the logical conclusions derived from the four preceding categories.

Essentially, two considerations were taken into account in the selection of the Qur'ānic verses for our presentation. The first was the need to establish the characteristic nature of the exegesis of the Prophet, his Companions, and the *Tābi 'ūn*. The second was the necessity to establish the existence of different interpretations of some Qur'ānic verses as viewed by the *Ṣaḥāba* and the *Tābi 'ūn*. The latter is necessary for any resolution of the debate or suggestions that which this research yields. I shall conclude by giving a brief summary of the issue. This process will be used in every chapter throughout this dissertation.

This work contains seven chapters. Chapter one establishes the need for the study and outlines its scope and objectives. It also includes the principle sources, plan and methodology. Chapter two presents the evolution of Qur'ānic *Tafsīr* from the time of the Prophet up to the present. The second part of chapter two gives a brief discussion concerning *Tafsīr* in modern times, particularly trends and objectives. Chapter three focuses on the concept of *al- Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y*, the causes of the emergence of such a *Tafsīr*, and some of its major works. Chapter four provides a detailed account of *al-Tafsīr bi al- Ma'thūr*, the Prophetic tradition in relation to Qur'ānic exegesis, its legal status, its characteristics, methodology, and its sources. Chapter five sheds light on the *tafsīr* of the *Ṣaḥāba*, its legal status, characteristics, methodology and sources. Chapter six discusses

the exegesis of the *Tābi'ūn*, its legal status, characteristics, methodology and sources. Chapter seven is reserved for summary, comments and suggestions.

Principal Sources

This study deals with various Islāmic sciences and skills, such as those associated with hadīth, *tafsīr*, *usūl al-tafsīr* (the principles of *tafsīr*), *usūl al-fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *tarājim* (biographical works), and others. Because there are many works available on these Islāmic sciences, we are forced to select only some of them as named below.

Two considerations were taken into account concerning the listing below of our primary sources: the first concerned acquiring a sufficient amount of quality materials pertaining to our study; the second involved taking into account the position of the works in the eyes of both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. Some important works, however, are not listed, such as al-Ghazālī's *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, Ibn Hazm's *al-Ihkām fī Usūl al-Ahkām*, al-Shātibī's *Muwāfaqāt*, and al-Bayhaqī's *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*. However, we will quote them where it is needed. We did consult both modern Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. We selected only Muhammad al-Dhahabī's *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn* and Ignaz Goldziher's *Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranauslegung* as representatives of modern sources for two reasons. First, both works presented detailed accounts of *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* and *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y*, including discussions about the variations and modern trends in *tafsīr*. Secondly, many modern scholars of *tafsīr* depend on these

two works. As far as providing comprehensive overview of *tafsīr*, they have yet to be replaced.

The list of principal sources is not according to alphabetical order but according to subject matter as follows: *ḥadīth, tafsīr, uṣūl al-tafsīr, uṣūl al-fiqh, tarājim,* and some modern works.

Ḥadīth

Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ, by Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī [d. 256-870]

Sunan al-Tirmidhī or al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ, by Abū 'Īsā Muḥammad al-Tirmidhī [d. 279-892]

Fatḥ al-Bārī bi Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Imām Abī 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, by Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī Aḥmad Ibn 'Alī [d. 852-1449].

Tafsīr

Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān, by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī [d. 310-]

Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm, by Abū al-Fidā' Ismā 'īl Ibn Kathīr [d. 774-1373]

Al-Durr al-Mathūr fī al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr, by Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī [d. 911-1505].

'Ulūm al-Qur'ān

Muqaddimatān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān, by Ibn 'Aṭiyya, 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Ibn Ghālib (d. 546-1104)

Al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān, by Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī [d. 711-1311]

Muqaddima fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr, by Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Tamiyya [d. 728-1328]

Al- Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Abū Bakr Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī.

Uṣul al-Fiqh

Al-Risāla, by Muḥammad Ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī [d. 204-820]

Al-'Udda fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh, by Qāḍī Abū Ya'lā [d. 458-1071]

Uṣūl al-Sarkhasī, by Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Sarkhasī [d. 490-1103]

Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām, by 'Alī Ibn Muḥammad al-Āmidī [d. 567-1144]

Al-Mustasfā min 'Ilm Uṣūl al-Fiqh, by Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī [d. 572-1149]

I'lām al-Muwaqqi'īn 'an Rabb al-'Ālamīn by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya [d. 751-1350]

Tarājim (biography)

Ṭabaqāt Ibn Sa'd, by Muḥammad Ibn Sa'd [d. 303-844]

Mīzān al-I'tidāl, by Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī [d. 786]

Tadhkirat al-Ḥufāaz, by Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī

Siyar al-Nubalā', by Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī

Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb' by Aḥmad Ibn ʿAlī Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī[852-1449]

Modern Works

Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranauslegung, by Ignaz Goldziher

Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn, by Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī

CHAPTER II

THE EVOLUTION OF TAFSĪR

Two terms fundamental to our discussion are *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl. Tafsīr*, a verbal

noun in Arabic, is usually rendered as an equivalent of 'exegesis'. Traditional Muslim

scholars state that *tafsīr* is derived from *fasr*—to explain, to unveil, to discover or from

tafsira—a physician's examination of urine to determine a patient's illness. Both of these

Arabic terms are derivations of transitive verbs, although the term *tafsīr* is used more for

its intensive signification.[29] The terms, *fasr, tafsira,* and *tafsīr* all denote explanation,

exposition, and unveiling. In Islām, however, *tafsīr* signifies the explanation of the

meanings of Qur'ānic words, their interpretations and legal implications.

Ta'wīl: Its Definition and Use According to Islāmic Specialization

According to Arabic lexicographers, the word *ta'wīl* is a derivation of either

awwala (to return, or to arrive at the final end) and/or *iyāla* (to arrange or to shape). In

the Qur'ān the word *ta'wīl* was mentioned in several passages primarily to convey three

meanings. First, the literal meaning, that is to say, the real intended meaning of a word or

an expression. The example of this, is Q. 3:7

هوالذى أنزلعليك الكتاب منه آيات محكمات هن أم الكتاب وأخر متشابهات فأما الذين

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[29] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 281. Ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*. Tunis: Al-Dār al- Tūnisiyya li Ṭibā'a wa al-Nashr, n.d). 1: 5

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فى قلو بهم زيغ فيتبعون ما تشابه منه ابتغا. الفتنة وابتغا. تأويله وما يعلم تأوينه إلا الله

والراسخون فى العلم يقولون آمنا به كل من عندربنا وما يذكر إلا أولوا الألباب

(He is the one who sent you down the Book which contains decisive verses. They [form] basis of the Book; while others are allegorical. Those whose hearts are prone to falter follow whatever is allegorical in it, seeking to create dissension by giving [their own] interpretation of it. Yet only God knows its *ta'wīl* (interpretation); those who are versed in knowledge say: " We believe in it ; it all comes from God and none take heed except those gifted with undrestanding).

Obviously, the term تأويل *"ta'wīl"* in this verse means actual intended meaning or literal meaning. Secondly, the Qur'ān used the word *ta'wīl* to mean the interpretation of dreams, as it is clear from Q. 12 : 44 بل قالوا أضغاث أحلام وما نحن بتأويل الأحلام بعالمين

(They said, " Jumbled dreams, we do not know how to interpret dreams"). In another verse in the same chapter Q.12 100 we read

وقال يا أبت هذا تأويل رؤياى من قبل قدجعلها ربى حقا. (He [the Prophet Joseph] said: " O, my father, this is the *ta'wīl* of my earlier vision [dream]; my Lord has made it come true.)

Thirdly, the Qur'ān utilized the term *ta'wīl* to explain unusual deeds. In other words, the Qur'ān used *ta'wīl* in an allegorical sense. The relevant example for this is Q. 18 : 66-82

قال له موسى هل أتبعك على أن تعلمنى مما علمت رشدا. قال إنك لن تستطيع معى

صبرا. وكيف تصبر على ما لم تحط به خبرا. قال ستجدنى إن شا. الله صابرا ولا أعصى لك

أمرا. قال فان ١ تبعتنى فلا تسألنى عن شى. حتى أحدث لك منه ذكرا. فا نطلقا حتى إذا

ركبا فى السفينة خرقها قال أخرقتها لتغرق أهلها لقد جئت شيئا إمرا. قال ألم أقل إنك لن

تستطيع معى صبرا. قال لا تؤاخذنى بما نسيت ولاترهقنى من أمرى عسرا. فا نطلقا حتى إذا

لقيا غلاما فقتله قال أقتلت نفسا زكية بغير نفس لقد جئت شيئا نكرا. قال ألم أقل إنك لن

تستطيع معى صبرا. قال إن سألتك عن شي . بعدها فلا تصا حبنى قد بلغت من لدنى عذرا.

فا نطلقا حتى إذا أتيا أهل قرية استطعما أهلها فأ بوا أن يضيفوهما فوجدا فيها جدارا يريد

أن ينقض فأ   قامه قال لوشئت لاتخذت عليه أجرا. قال هذا فراق بينى وبينك سأنبئك بتأويل

ما لم تستطع عليه صبرا. أما السفينة فكانت لمساكين يعملون فى البحر فأردت أن أعيبها وكان

وراهم ملك يأخذ كل سفينة غصبا وأما الغلام فكان أبواه مؤمنين فخشينا أن يرهقهما

طغياناوكفرا فأردنا أن يبدلهما ربهما خيرا منه زكاة وأقرب رحما وأما الجدارفكان لغلامين

يتيمين فى المدينة وكان تحته كنز لهما وكان أبوهما صالحا فأراد ربك أن يبلغا

أشدهما ويستخرجا كنزهما رحمة من ربك وما فعلته عن أمرى ذلك تأويل ما لم تسطع عليه صبرا.

[The Prophet] Moses said to him:[30] "May I follow you so you may teach me some of the common sense you have been taught?" He said: You will never have any patience with me. How can you show any patience with something that is beyond your experience?. He said: You will find me patience, if God so wishes. I will not disobey you in any matter.

He said: "If you follow me do not ask me about anything until I tell something to remember it by. So they both started out until , as they boarded the ship, he bored a hole in her. He said: " have scuttled her to drown her crew?. You have done such a strange thing He said: " Didn't I say that you would not manage to show any patience with me?. He said: " Do not take me to task for what I have forgotten, nor weigh me down by making my case too difficult for me.

They journeyed on until when they met a youth, and he killed him. He said: " Have you killed an innocent soul without any previous murder? You have committed such a horrible deed. He said: " Did I not tell you that you would never manage to have any patience with me?. He said: "If I ever ask you about anything after this, do not let me accompany you. You have found an excuse so far as I am concerned"

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[30] The pronoun [him] referred to al-Khidir. Some Muslim scholars considered him to be a Prophet while the majority regarded him as " 'Abd Ṣāliḥ" (a righteous servant of God). The ḥadīth supported the latter opinion. According to Islāmic tradition, while Prophet Moses was delivering a speech he was asked: Which of mankind is more knowledgeable? Prophet Moses answered. "I am." Thus, God commanded him to go and learn from al-Khidir [as discipline for Moses]. See, Aḥmad Ibn 'Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī bi Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Imām Abī 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Ismā 'īl al-Bukhārī*, ed. *Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d). 8: 409

They both proceeded further until when they came to the people of [a certain] town; they asked its inhabitants for some food, and they refused to treat either of them hospitably. They found a wall there which was about to tumble down, so he set it straight. He said: "If you have wished you might have accepted some payment for it". He said: " This [means] a parting between you and me. Yet I shall inform you about the 'ta'wil' interpretation of you have no patience for."

As for the ship, it belonged to some poor men who worked at sea. I wanted to damage it because there was a king behind them seizing every ship by force. The young man's parents were believers, and we dreaded lest he would burden them with arrogation and disbelief. We wanted their Lord to replace him for them with someone better than him in purity and nearer to tenderness.

The well belonged to two orphan boys [living] in the city, and a treasure of theirs lay underneath it. Their father had been honorable, so your Lord ? them to come of age and claim their treasure as a mercy from your Lord. I did not ? it of my own accord. That is the "ta'wil" the interpretation for which you showed no patience.

Throughout the Qur'ān the term ta'wil was used to convey the three above-cited meanings. Similarly, the Prophet and his Companions utilized ta'wil to mean the literal meaning. One reference can be found in a popular prayer of the Prophet "allāhumma faqqih-hu fi al-dīn wa 'allim-hu al-ta'wil"[31] (O, God bless him [Ibn 'Abbās] with Islāmic knowledge and teach him ta'wil [the meaning of the Qur'ān].) After the war between 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib and Mu'āwiya Ibn Abī Sufyān the word ta'wil began to have negative connotations. This explains Ibn Rushd's (popularly known in the West as Averroes) statement that the first people to practice ta'wil were Kharijites, Mu'tazilites, Ash'arites and Ṣūfis.[32]

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[31] Abū 'Isā Muḥammad Ibn 'Isā Ibn Surā al-Tirmidhī, al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ, ed. 'Abd Raḥmān Muḥammad 'Uthmān. (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1964-1384). 2: 398

[32] Muḥammad Ibn Rushd, Faṣl al-Maqāl wa Taqrīr mā bayn al-Sharī' a wa al-Ḥikma min al-Ittiṣāl. (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīda, n.d). pp. 46-67

Nonetheless, the term *ta'wīl* came to be used in the following five different

classical Islāmic sciences and each used the term to express different meanings and

implications. 1. *Uṣūl al-fiqh*. 2. *'Ilm al-kalām* (theology). 3. *'Ilm al-falsafa* (philosophy).

4. *Taṣawwuf* (Ṣufism). 5. *'Ilm al-tafsīr*.

Al-Ghazālī as a jurist defines *ta'wīl* as "a possible meaning of an expression that a

supporting indicator has rendered more probable than the meaning that the expression

signifies as *ẓāhir* expression [i.e., the apparent meaning]".[33] Al-Āmidī seems not to be

satisfied with al-Ghazālī's definition, except that al-Āmidī says that al-Ghazālī means, by

his definition, a sound or valid *ta'wīl Allāhumma illā an yuqāl innamā arāda ta'rīf al-

ta'wīl al-ṣaḥīḥ dūna ghayrih*). The problem of al-Ghazālī's definition, as al-Āmidī views

it, is that al-Ghazālī defines *ta'wīl* with a possible meaning (*iḥtimāl*) when it should be

identified with a diversion (*ṣarf*) of that expression from its apparent meaning to non-

apparent meaning. Hence, al-Āmidī provides his definition as follows: *ta'wīl* is " the

diversion, attested by a [contextual] indicator, or expression to a meaning that is not its

apparent meaning but nonetheless a possible meaning"[34]

Al-Mutakallimūn (Theologians) and *Ta'wīl*

Al-Mutakallimūn limited the scope of *ta'wīl* to the verses pertaining to the

attributes of God only or related theological propositions, such as whether or not one

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[33] Al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā*, 1: 716. Bernard G. Weiss, *The Search for God's Law: Islāmic Jurisprudence in the writing of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992). p. 473.

[34] Al-Āmidī, *al-Iḥkām*, 3: 53. Weiss, *The Search for God's Law*, p. 474.

would be punished in his grave, *shafā'a* (intercession in the day of judgment) and others.
The aim of all the theological groups such as the Ash'arites, Mu'tazilites, Qadarites etc., in
their exercising *ta'wīl* is basically to purify God from what they consider as imperfect
qualities. In other words, their intention is to save the goodness of God. Thus, these
groups divert the apparent meaning of a Qur'ānic verse to nonapparent meanings when
such a verse seems to depict God with human or physical qualities or which ascribe to
God imperfect qualities. For example, in Q. 55 : 26-27 كل من عليها فان ويبقى وجه ربك
ذو الجلال والأكرام (All that lives on earth is bound to pass away but forever will abide the
face of your Lord full of Majesty and Honor). The traditional interpretation of the verse is
as Ibn Kathīr presented: Every one on earth will pass away. There remains the face of
your Lord.[35] Another traditional interpretation of the verse is: Every one on earth will
pass away. There remains the *dhāt* (essence) of your Lord.[36]

The difference between the two interpretations is that the first one adheres to the
literal meaning based on the concept of *tafwīd* (the opinion that believes that the verses
pertaining to the attributes of God should not be interpreted). They should be understood
at face value but without the literal physical attributes applied to created beings. The latter
interpretation is based on Arabic language because Arabs use the word face to mean
"self". The Mu'tazilites considered the verse to be metaphorical. Al-Ḥākim al-Jushamī [d.

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[35] 'Imād al-Dīn Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl Ibn Kathīr, *Mukhtaṣar Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Ṣabūnī (Beirut: Dār al-Qur'ān, 1981-1402, 8th ed). 3: 418.

[36] Muḥammad Ibn 'Alī al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr, al-Jāmi' bayn Fannay al-Riwāya wa al-Dirāya min 'Ilm al-Tafsīr* (Beirut: Maḥfūẓ al-'Alī, n.d). 5: 136.

494]³⁷, one of the Muʿtazilites scholars, stated that this is *majāz al-ziyāda* (metaphor increased or figurative expression). That is to say the word *"wajh"* in the verse has properties beyond the common understanding of the term when applied to created beings. This is, in Arabic, 'an increase' for the sake of emphasizing the meaning. He further elaborated his position by saying "it is commonly understood as in the phrase *"wajh al-ra'y"* [lit. The face of opinion]. It was al-Ḥākim's opinion that God does not have a face. Thus, the core meaning in order to understand the word is to adhere to *"ḥaqīqatuh wa ṣawābuh"* (its actual meaning and correctness)." Therefore, to adhere to *ẓāhir* as *al-mushabbiha* (anthropomorphists) is not correct according to al-Ḥākim. The implication of his analysis is that God has no face, but He is the only one who does not perish.

Muslim *Falāsifa* (Philosophers) and *Ta'wīl*

The origin of the term *falsafa* is purely Greek. The activity of *falāsifa*, as R. Arnaldez pointed out, began with Arabic translations of the Greek philosophical texts (whether direct or through a Syriac intermediary).³⁸ Thus *falsafa* appears first as the continuation of *philosophia* (a Greek term which has been derived from two terms: *philos* - meaning love and *sophia* - meaning wisdom). Thus, the meaning of the term *philosophia*

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³⁷ Al-Ḥākim al-Muḥassin Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Karrama al-Jushamī al-Bayhaqī is one of the famous Muʿtazilite scholars. Al-Ḥākm al-Jushamī authored more than forty books. See, ʿ Adnān Zurzūr. *Al-Ḥākim al- Jushamī wa Manhajuhu fi Tafsīrih* (Beirut: Muʾassas al-Risāla, n.d). pp. 154-5

³⁸ R. Arnaldez , *The Encyclopedia of Islām*. II E-K, Leiden: E.J. Brill. LTD (London: Luzac and Co, 1927). p. 769

is "love for wisdom" in a Muslim setting. Yet Arnaldez noted that this definition leads at once to a more precise formulation.[39]

The Muslim philosophers who mastered Greek philosophy and believed in it, such as Ibn al-Qifṭī, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sīnā (popularly known in the West as Avicenna) and others are convinced that philosophy is the study of reality and that it does not contradict the Qur'ān. Thus, if the *ẓāhir* of Qur'ānic text seems to disagree with the philosophical reality, *ta'wīl* must be applied so that harmony between the two [Qur'ān and philosophy] can be achieved.[40] If, however, the *ẓāhir* of the text pertains to a theological issue, the *ta'wīl* of Muslim philosophers is no different from juridical *ta'wīl* or *'majāz'* .

In this respect, we quote Ibn Rushd's definition of *ta'wīl*, "extension of the significance from real to metaphorical significance, without forsaking therein the standard metaphorical practices of Arabic, such as calling a thing by the name of something resembling it or a cause or consequence or accompaniment of it, or other things such as are enumerated in accounts of the kinds of metaphorical speech".[41]

Ṣūfis and *Ta'wīl*

Due to some Qur'ānic verses and some aḥādīth,[42] Ṣūfis believe that existence, Islāmic rituals in general and the meaning of the Qur'ān in particular have two meanings:

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[39] *Ibid*, p. 769.

[40] George. F. Hourani *Averroes: On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*. A translation with introduction and notes of Ibn Rushd's Kitāb *faṣl al-maqāl*, with its appendix and extract from *Kitāb al-Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla*, by George F. Hourani (London: Messers. Luzac and Company,1961). p. 23,

[41] *Ibid*, p. 23

ẓāhir and *bāṭin* (outer and inner meanings.) Thus, all the interpretations of the Ṣūfis are based on the concepts of *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*. Ṣūfis believe that common people understand *ẓāhir* only, while the knowledge of *bāṭin* is reserved for Ṣūfis.

In his *Falsafat al-Ta'wīl*, Abū Zayd has correctly pointed out that Ṣūfi *ta'wīl* is not based on linguistic implication, intellect, or analogy.[43] Their *ta'wīl* is typically mystical. Ṣūfis believe that their interpretation is referring to or returning a real intended meaning to its origin. That is to say, they are referring it back to God who inspired them with that knowledge.[44]

Ta'wīl in the Science of Tafsīr

There is no specific definition of *ta'wīl* in the science of *tafsīr*. The conclusion that one would arrive at by reading the literature on *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, such as al-Zarkashī's *al-Burhān*, al-Suyūṭī's *al-Itqān* and others, is that the scholars of *tafsīr* understood and presented the term with a meaning summed up from the different understandings of *ta'wīl* derived from the five sciences we previously mentioned. In addition, the scholars of *tafsīr* did not mention the different interpretations or understandings of *tawīl* in those different sciences.

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[42] Such as Q. 18 : 60-82, Q. 3: 7-8, Q. 2: 282, Q. 8: 29, and ḥadīth *"Inna li al-Qur'ān ẓāhir wa bāṭin wa ḥadd wa maṭla'.*(the Qur'ān has both apparent and nonapparent meaning, as well as boundary and beginning) See, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Iḥya' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, n.d). 1: 91-108.

[43] Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, *Falsafat al-Ta'wīl: Dirāsa fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān 'Inda Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī* (Beirut: Dār al-Tanwīr li al-Ṭibā'a wa al-Nashr, 1983, 1st ed). pp. 376-8.

[44] *Ibid, p.*

Qur'ānic Exegesis: a Historical Sketch

The Difference between *Tafsīr* and *Ta'wīl*

According to Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Maturīdī [d. 333-946], *tafsīr* is the

explanation of the ultimate meaning of the text asserting what God exclusively intended by

the text, while *ta'wīl* is to uphold the more likely one when the text has two possible

meanings.[45] Ḥusayn Ibn Muḥammad al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī [d. 502-1108] stated that *tafsīr*

is more comprehensive than *ta'wīl* and used more commonly to mean the explanation of

words and isolated vocabularies. He stated that *ta'wīl* is often used to mean elucidation of

meanings and sentences as used in the theological books and others.[46] Al-Suyūṭi reported

that *ta'wīl* is information about the actual intended meaning, while *tafsīr* is information

about the indication of the meaning.[47] Finally, some other scholars understand *tafsīr* as an

explanation of the Qur'ān based on transmitted traditions from the Prophet, his

Companions and the *Tābi'ūn*, and *ta'wīl* as personal knowledge which goes beyond the

apparent meaning.

For example, a *tafsīr* of Q. 110 : 1-5 إذاجاء نصرالله والفتح ورأيت الناس يدخلون

(When God's support comes as well فى دين الله أفواجا فسبح بحمدربك واستغفره إنه كان توابا

as victory and you see mankind entering God's religion in droves, extol thy sustainer's

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[45] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 381

[46] Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn Ibn Muḥammad al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*. (Lahore: Ahl al-Ḥadīth Ikadami, 1971). p. 162.

[47] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2, p. 382.

limitless glory and praise Him, and ask for His forgiveness: for, behold, He is ever an acceptor of repentance). The *tafsīr* of the verses is the apparent meaning as is indicated in the translation. The *ta'wīl* of the verses is how Ibn 'Abbās interpreted it. He stated that these verses indicate the death of the Prophet.[48] The explanation of this understanding is that, the Prophet is a messenger, and his mission came to an end with the acceptance of Islām by the people in Arabia. Thus, he had to return to God, the One who sent him.[49] However, Abū 'Ubayda Mu'ammar Ibn al-Muthannā [d. 210-825] and al-Ṭabarī differ with all the above-cited definitions. To them, there is no difference between the two, they are synonymous.[50] I am inclined to believe that there is no difference between *ta'wīl* and *tafsīr* for the following reasons:.

The term *tafsīr* when used to mean the explanation of the Qur'ān was developed towards the second half or the end of the first Islāmic century. Thus, we find no mention of the word *tafsīr* in the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth to mean the explanation of the meaning of the Qur'ān. The terms that both Qur'ān and ḥadīth use for Qur'ānic exegesis are "bay*ān*", "*tabyīn*", "*ta'wīl*" and "qawl". The following passages of Qur'an and ḥadīth support my view. In Q : 75: 18-19 فاذا قرأناه فاتبع قرانه ثم إن علينا بيانه (So whenever We do read it , follow in its reading it is then We who must explain it.) The word "بيانه" -to explain it in

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[48] Ibn Kathīr, *Mukhtaṣar*, 3: 634.

[49] This should not be understood that we mean that the Prophet was sent to Arabs only. The Qur'ān has stated clearly that the Prophet was sent to mankind in general as the last messenger. See for example, Q: 107. 21. Q:28.34

[50] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 439

the verse, is used to mean the explanation of the Qur'ān. In Q.16: 44 للناس مانزل إليهم

وأنزلناإليك الذكر لتبين (and We sent down to you the reminder so that you may explain to

mankind what was sent down to them). The word "لتبين" in the verse refers to the

clarification of the Qur'ānic verses. In Q.3: 7. ومايعلم تأويله إلاالله (No one knows its true

meaning except God). The word *ta'wīl* means explanation of the Qur'ānic passage or

interpretation. In a popular ḥadīth, Ibn 'Abbās states that the Prophet said, "*Allāhumma

faqqih-hu fī al-Dīn wa 'allimhu al-Ta'wīl*". (O God, make him knowledgeable about

Islām and teach him the explanation or exegesis of the Qur'ān). The word *ta'wīl* in the

ḥadīth means exegesis of the Qur'ān. In al-Tirmidhī's collection of ḥadīth, one narration

reads "*Man qāl fī al-Qur'ān bi ra'yihi fa-l yatabawwa' maq'adah min al-nār*"[51]

(Whosoever talks about the Qur'ān using his own opinion, let him take his seat in the fire).

The term qāla in the ḥadīth refers to the interpretation of the Qur'ān.

Furthermore, both the Prophet and the Companions allegorically interpreted some

Qur'ānic verses.[52] Yet, their interpretations are being called *tafsīr*, not *ta'wīl*. This, I

assume, is because many scholars of *tafsīr*, if not the majority of them, have not seen any

differences between the two meanings.

Indeed, the two major types of *tafsīr* employ the term *tafsīr* only: *al-Tafsīr bi al-

Ma'thūr* and *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y*. I have never read anywhere that a scholar mentioned

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[51] Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi'*. 2: 397.

[52] See, pp. 150-53 in this thesis.

the two above mentioned types of *al-tafsīr* otherwise. This also suggests that both *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl* are synonymous. Interestingly enough, the works of some prominent scholars such as Fahkr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Abū Ḥayyān, al-Nasafī, al- Alūsī and others, contain considerable amounts of what can be regarded as *ta'wīl* in the view of those scholars, who differentiate between *ta'wīl* and *tafsīr*. Nevertheless, the titles of works (those of Fakhr al-Dīn and others) carried the term *al-tafsīr*, not al-*ta'wīl*. One can deduce from this that those scholars do not see any differences between the two terms. Similarly, al-Ṭabarī includes in the title of his work the term *ta'wīl*, but he treats both terms as synonymous.

The use of these terms in the Qur'ān and ḥadīth leads us to postulate that al-Ṭabarī used the word "التبيان" and "تأويل" in the title of his *tafsīr* because of the term's connection to Qur'ānic explanation. His voluminous work is called "*Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*. Similarly, al-Zamakhsharī used the terms "*aqāwīl and ta'wīl*" in the title of his famous *al-Kashshāf*.

Let us now proceed to discuss the evolution of Qur'ānic exegesis.

The Prophet Muḥammad and *Tafsīr*

Muslim scholars assert that the first *mufassir* (exegete) of the Qur'ān was the Prophet Muḥammad. He did not explain the whole Qur'ān word for word, because many of the verses were clear to the Ṣaḥāba by virtue of their being Arabs who understood their own language.[53]

Generally, his explanations of Qur'ānic text were on one of the three occasions:

when a particular passage could not be comprehended through a typical understanding of

Arabic; when the literal meaning of a verse, say Muslim scholars, was not intended by

God; or when a Companion asked for clarification of certain verses.[54] For example,

'Ubāda Ibn al-Ṣāmiṭ asked the Prophet about the meaning of *bushrā* (glad tidings) in Q.

10:64 البشرى لهم يتقون وكانوا امنوا الذين (those who believe and who have *taqwā* will

have good news concerning the life of this world as well about Hereafter)[55] The Prophet

said: you have asked me something none have ever asked before. *Bushrā*, said the

Prophet, in this verse means, a good dream that a righteous person sees.[56]

The command about the time for eating during the days of obligatory fasting in the

Ramaḍān (the ninth month of the Islamic calendar) is in Q. 2:187.

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[53] *Ṣaḥāba* is a plural of Ṣāḥib, a 'companion " Ṣaḥāba", is an Islāmic term applied to any one who met the Prophet Muḥammad, was a believer, and died as a Muslim. The term Ṣaḥāba will be used interchangeably with 'companions' See Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba fī Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥāba* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Kulliya, 1969). 1: 4, Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dīl*. (India: Maṭba'at Majlis Dā'ira Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya, 1952-1371). 1: 1-2. Aḥmad Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm IbnTaymiyya, *Muqaddima fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, ed. 'Adnān Zurzūr (Beirut: Dār al-Qur'ān al-Karim, 1979-1399, 3rd ed). p. 35

[54] Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī li Ṭibā' a wa al-Nashr, 1967-1387). 1: 34. 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Ibn Ghālib Ibn 'Aṭiyya, *al-Muḥarrir al-Wajīz fī Tafsīr al-'Azīz*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām al-Shāfī Muḥammad (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1993, 1st ed). 1: 7.

[55] The translation of the Qur'ānic verses cited in our study is based on T.B. Irving's translation and commentary: *The Qur'ān*. We have chosen this for two reasons. First, it is the first translation of the Qur'ān available in American English. Secondly, the translator is a native speaker of American and widely recognized by Muslims in America as being knowledgeable in Islām. In a case where we disagree with Irving's translation we will consult Muḥammad Asad's *The Message of the Qur'ān* because of his mastery of both Arabic and English.

[56] Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī bi Tartīb Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad al-Shaybānī*, comp 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Bannā (Cairo: Dār al-Shihāb, n.d). 18: 175-6

وكلوا واشربواحتى يتبين لكم الخيط الأبيض من الخيط الأسودمن الفجر

(And eat and drink until the white streak [of dawn] can be distinguished by you from the black thread). To comply with the regulation, 'Adī Ibn Ḥatam, who did not understand this figure of speech, kept a white and black thread specifically to see when the early light of dawn would allow him to differentiate the threads in order for him to begin fasting for the day. The Prophet Muḥammad explained to him, that the white and black thread of the Qur'ānic verse referred to the early morning light of the horizon contrasting with the darkness of the sky.[57]

Tafsīr after the Death of the Prophet Muḥammad

The Muslims living immediately after the death of the Prophet recognized certain *Ṣaḥāba*'s prominent in Qur'ānic knowledge. Before he died, the Prophet usually proclaimed their superior status concerning the Qur'ān in three ways. He used to send them to other cities to teach the Qur'ān and Islām. He sent Muṣ'ab Ibn 'Umayr [d. 3-625] to Medina before the general *hijra* 'migration' of the Meccan Muslims. Similarly, 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib [d. 39-659 or 660] and Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal [d.18-640] were sent to Yemen at different times to instruct the new Muslims about Islām and invite non-Muslims to Islām.[58]

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[57] Abū Ja'far Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir and Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d). 1: 204.

[58] 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib was a cousin of the Prophet. He was the first child to accept Islām and was listed second only to Khadīja Bint Khwaylid, the Prophet's first wife, whom he married prior to the migration. 'Alī was the fourth khalīfa (successor) in Islām. During his caliphate, Muslims divided into three main groups: The Umayyads, the 'Alids (the supporters of 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib) and the Kharijites. See, al-

Secondly, the Prophet would praise certain Companions such as 'Abd Allāh Ibn Mas'ūd [d. 32-653], Ubay Ibn Ka'b al-Quraẓī [d. 30-651], Zayd Ibn Thābit [d. 45-665] and Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal for their skill in reciting the Qur'ān properly and thoroughly.[59]

Thirdly, he would ask certain Companions to give a *fatwā* (legal opinion) in his presence. For example, on different occasions, he requested Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq [d. 13-634], 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb [d. 23-644],'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān [d. 34-655], and 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib [d. 40-661] [60] to give *fatwā* in his presence. After the death of the Prophet, Muslims turned to these Ṣaḥāba and others to learn about the Qur'ān and its *tafsīr*. Other Companions noted for their exegetical ability were Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī [d. 44-664], 'Ā'isha Bint Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq[d. 58-678], Abū Dardā' 'Uwaymir Ibn Zayd [d. 32-653], and 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Zubayr [d. 73-692].[61]

Ash'arī, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Ali Ibn Ismā'īl, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa Ikhtilāf al-Muṣalīn* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1969-1389). 1: 45-6. Muḥammad Ibn Sa'd *Ṭabaqāt* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1957-1968). 2:104-107

Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal was one of the earliest people of Medina to accept Islām; his knowledge of the Qur'ān was publicly acknowledged by the Prophet. He was considered to be one of the outstanding scholars among the Ṣaḥāba, See Ibn Sa'ad, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2: 107-110.

[59] 'Abd Allāh Ibn Mas'ūd was the sixth person of Mecca to accept Islām; his knowledge of the Qur'ān was publicly acknowledged by the Prophet. He was the principle teacher of the Iraqī School of Tafsīr. See Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, p. 61. Ubay Ibn Ka'b was one the early Medinan converts to Islām prior to the Prophet's migration . He was among the Companions whom the Prophet invited people to learn from them the Qur'an. See Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2, pp. 98-103.
Zayd Ibn Thābit was one of the young converts of Medina. He was chosen as the head of committee appointed by both Abū Bakr al-Siddiq , the first Khalifa in Islām and 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān, the third Khalīfa, to compile the Qur'ān in one book. See Ibn Sa'ad, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:. 94 al-Dhahabī *Mīzān al-I'tidāl* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī,1963). *1: 73*.

[60] Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1: 98-9.

[61] 'Abd Allāh Ibn Qays known as Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī became a muslim six years before the migration of the Prophet. He was blessed with a beautiful voice. The Prophet often listened to his recitation of the

After the death of the Prophet and with the spread of Islām, Muslims settled in the

formerly non-Muslim lands and took upon themselves the responsibility of propagating

Islām and teaching Qur'ānic recitation and exegesis. Subsequently, four distinct schools of

Qur'ānic exegesis and *qirā'a* (recitation) emerged and were identified by the areas in

which they became prominent: Mecca, Medina, Kūfa (in the area of present day Iraq), and

Shām (Syria).

The School of Mecca

According to Ibn Taymiyya [d. 723-1327], the exegesis of the Meccan school was

the most prominent because its proponents were students of Ibn 'Abbās, the principle

teacher of the Meccan School of *tafsīr*. Most of the knowledge he acquired about

exegesis, hadīth and other sciences came through the prominent Ṣaḥāba, because he was

only 13 years when the Prophet died. They included 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, Ubay Ibn Ka'b,

Zayd Ibn Thābit, and 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb.[62] Praise for Ibn 'Abbās from various

contemporaries of the Prophet abounds in Muslim texts and he was given honorific titles

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Qur'ān and said his voice was like that of the Prophet Dāwūd. See al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, n.d).1: 23-4. 'Ā'isha Bint Abū Bakr, one of the Prophet's wives, was the most knowledgeable among them. The total number of ḥadīth which has been narrated from her is 2, 210. Al-Ziriklī, *A 'lām*, 8: 89.

Abū al-Dardā' became a Muslim after the second year of the Prophet's migration to Medina. He was known for his asceticism and wisdom and was the prominent teacher of Shām School of *tafsīr*. See, al-Abū 'Abd Allāh Shams al-Dīn Ibn 'Uthmān Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-Ḥufāẓ*, 1: 14

'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Zubayr was the first child born in Medina after the Hijra and was known as the greatest warrior of his time. See al-Ziriklī, *A 'lām*, 2; 148.

[62] Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Isāba*, 4: 147. See also Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2: 133. Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 2: 157, and al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān*, 2: 413.

such as the '*ra's al-mufassirīn*' (outstanding of all exegetes) and *ḥabr hādhihi al-umma* (the scholar of the Muslim community).[63]

After the assassination of 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, whom Ibn 'Abbās supported and fought for throughout the *Caliph's* stormy tenure, Ibn 'Abbās returned to Mecca, his place of birth. He dedicated himself, until his death in Ṭā'if some twenty years later, to the teaching of the Qur'ān and its exegesis, history, jurisprudence, hadīth, Arabic, and poetry.[64] His classrooms were the mosque and his house. Students from different cities traveled to Mecca to study under him. His teaching circles were always full. By all accounts, his eloquence was superb and persuasive.[65] Ibn Abbās was blessed with many students who transmitted his knowledge. The most prominent of them were: 'Ikrima al-Barbarī [d. 105-723], Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr [d. 95-714], and Mujāhid Ibn Jabr [d.104-722]. Mujāhid has received the most acclaim, for it is reported that he went through the Qur'ān verse by verse three times with Ibn 'Abbās.[66]

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[63] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, p. 91. Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2: 119. Goldziher, *Madhhab fī al-Tafsīr al-Islāmī. Translated Dr. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm al-Najjār (* Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānajī wa Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1955-1374). p. 83. The Encyclopedia of Islām, 1: 48 Ibn Ḥajar al'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir li al-Ṭibā'*a wa al-Nashr, n,d).* 5: 382; (He was "the best interpreter of the Qur'ān (*Ni'ma Tarjumān al-Qur'ān*). al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 413.

[64] Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2: 119.

[65] "Had the Persians, Romans and Turks been present (to have heard Ibn 'Abbās), they would have had no choice but to accept Islām." Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2: 121-3. See also Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb,*. 10: 43, al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān*, 3: 439-40.

[66] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 414-5.

The School of Iraq

According to Ibn Taymiyya, al-Suyūṭī and others, 'Abd Allāh Ibn Mas'ūd [d. 32-653], also known as Ibn Umm 'Abd, was the founder of the Irāqī School of *tafsīr*.[67] 'Abd Allāh, the sixth person to accept Islam and one of the first scribes of the Qur'ān, was born in Mecca and died in Medina. He was one of the four Companions whom the Prophet recognized for their excellent recitation of the Qur'ān.[68] Ibn Mas'ūd claimed to have learned seventy chapters directly from the Prophet.[69] His contemporaries highly praised his knowledge of *tafsīr*, ḥadīth, and *qirā'a* to the extent that Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī [d. 52-672] said to those who came to ask him some questions, "do not ask me anything as long as Ibn Mas'ūd is among you."[70] After the Prophet's death and prior to the time when Ibn 'Abbās became recognized as the most scholarly in *tafsīr*, no one took offense to Ibn Mas'ūd's claim to being the most Islamically learned: "If I knew anyone with greater knowledge of the book of God than me, I would go to him; there is no verse but that I

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[67] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, p. 61. See also al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 413. Al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 2: 18.

[68] Ibn Sa'ad reported that the Prophet said " Whosever wishes to recite the Qur'ān *Ghadda* "fresh" as it was sent down, let him recite it according to the recitation of Ibn Umm 'Abd." Thus, the Prophet liked to listen to him. One day, the Prophet asked him to recite for him the Qur'ān. Ibn Mas'ūd said with surprise, " How can I recite for you while it was sent down to you."? The Prophet replied, "I love to hear it from someone else." Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2: 103.

[69] Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawziyya , *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, ed. Maḥmūd Fākhūrī (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1978-1399, 2nd ed). 1: 55.

[70] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 413. 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib has described him as a man of knowledge in the Qur'ān and the Sunna (Tradition of the Prophet).

know where and when it was revealed."[71] Ibn Mas'ūd became the founder of the *Kūfan* school when the Caliph 'Umar sent him there as an advisor to the *Kūfan* governor and to teach Islām to the general population.[72] He had many students. The most notable were Masrūq Ibn al-Ajda' [d. 63-681], 'Alqama Ibn Qays [d. 63-681], and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110 -728).

The School of Medina

The main teacher of this school was Ubay Ibn Ka'ab Ibn Qays al-Khazrajī al-Anṣārī [d. 21-642]. Ubay was a man of Jewish origin, who was born and died in Medina. Ubay was one of the first people of Medina to accept Islām before the migration of the Prophet to Medina. He participated in all wars in which the Prophet was fought. Ubay, was one of the four Companions whose recitation of the Qur'ān was praised by the Prophet, when enjoining the Companions to learn the Qur'ān. Ubay was one of the scribes of the Qur' ān, and he also memorized the whole *Qur' ān* and gave *fatwā* during the Prophet's life time.[73] According to Ibn Sa'd, the Prophet said that, "Ubay is the best reciter of the *Qur' ān* of the Prophet's community." Ubay's contemporaries, such as Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān, acknowledged his Qur'ānic knowledge. Both Abū Bakr and 'Uthmān appointed Ubay to the committee that

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[71] Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, 2: 164. Al-Ṭabarī *Jāmi'al-Bayān*, 1: 80. Ibn Jawzī, Ṣifat, 1: 158.

[72] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 1: 470-87. Ibn Jawzī, Ṣifat, 1: 46.

[73] Ibn Sa'ad, *Tabaqāt*, 2: 98-103. Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 1: 391. Al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān*, 3: 94. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb*, 7: 264.

codified the *Qur'ān*.[74] It is recorded that 'Umar announced: "Whoever wants to learn the *Qur'ān*, let him go to Ubay."[75]

After the death of the Prophet, Ubay dedicated himself to teaching the *Qur'ān* and its exegesis in Medina. Students from Syria and other cities came to Medina specifically to learn from him.[76] Ubay continued to teach the *Qur'ān* and *tafsīr* until his death. Among the prominent students who transmitted Ubay's knowledge were his son, al-Ṭufayl Ibn Ubay [d. 85-704], Abū al-'Āliya Ibn Maḥram al-Riyāḥī [d. 90-709], and Muḥammad Ibn Ka'āb al-Quraẓī [d. 78-698].[77]

The School of Syria

The principle teacher of this school was 'Umayr Ibn Zayd Ibn Qays al-Khazrajī,[78] he was popularly known as Abū al-Dardā' [d. 32-652]. He converted to Islām in the third year of the migration of the Prophet. During his tenure in Syria, where he died, he taught the Qur'ān in the Umayyad mosque. Abū al-Dardā' was a famous scholar and *zāhid* 'ascetic'. He was one of the few Companions who compiled a complete hand written Qur'ān during the lifetime of the Prophet.[79]

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[74] Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2: 103. Al-Saḥāta al-Sayyid Zaglūl, *Ubay Ibn Ka'ab*: al-Rajul wa al-Muṣḥaf, (Cairo: Al-Hay'at al-Miṣriyya al-Āmma li-al-Kitāb, 1978, 1st ed). pp. 33-6.

[75] Ibin Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 62. Zaglūl , *Ubay Ibn Ka'ab*, p. 28.

[76] Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh*, 1: 102.

[77] Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *Kitāb Maṣāḥif*, p. 236. See also Zaglūl, *Ubay Ibn Ka'ab*, p. 18-9.

[78] Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:185-9.

[79] *Ibid*, 2: 125.

There were a number of important scholars from this school. One of the most notable was 'Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Ghanam al-Ash'arī [d.78-697] who was sent to Syria by 'Umar to teach the Qur'ān and Sunna.[80] Another prominent student of this school was Rajā' Ibn Haywa al-Kindī [d. 131-719] known for teaching the meaning of the *Qur'ān*.[81] The third student was 'Umar Ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn Marwān [d.101-720], the eighth Umayyad Caliph. He was recognized as an authority in jurisprudence, the Qur'ānic sciences and hadīth, and acquired a great reputation for *zuhd* (asceticism) and being '*ādil* (just).[82]

Tafsīr after the Era of the Prominent Exegetes among the Companions until Modern Times

By the middle of the first century A.H., the prominent Companions who were exegetes had died, except Ibn 'Abbās who died in 68 A.H. In this period *tafsīr* was taught through *ra'y*, and transmission by the students of the Companions, the *Tābi'ūn*.[83] Among the most outstanding were Mujāhid Ibn Jabr [d. 104-724],[84] Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr [d.95-

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[80] Al-Ziriklī, *A'lām*, 3: 322 Ibn Hajar, al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb*, 3: 265.

[81] Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, 2; 161. See also Muhammad Sha'bān Ismā'īl, *al-Madkhal li dirāsat al-Qur'ān wa al-Sunna wa al-'Ulūm al-Islāmiyya* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Halabi,1986). 2: 232.

[82] Al-Ziriklī, *A'lām*, 4: 96. Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkira*, 1: 48. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb*, 3: 265.

[83] Tābi'ūn is a plural of tābi' 'a follower' and as an Islāmic term applied to those Muslims who learned directly from a companion of the Prophet and died as a Muslim.

[84] Mujāhid Ibn Jabr is a famous student of Ibn 'Abbās. He transmitted tafsīr and hadīth from more than 12 Sahāba on one hand, and on the other hand, more than 28 Tābi'ūn and immediate subsequent generations narrated from him tafsīr, hadīth and fiqh (jurisprudence). He claimed to have studied the

714],[85] 'Ikrima al-Barbarī [d. 105-725],[86] 'Alqama Ibn Qays [d. 63-681],[87] Masrūq Ibn

al-Ajda' [d. 63/681],[88] Muḥammad Ibn Ka'ab al-Quraẓī [d. 78-696],[89] Abū al-'Āliya Ibn

Maḥram al-Riyāḥī [d. 90-708],[90] Zayd Ibn Aslam [d. 136-754],[91] Raja' Ibn Ḥaywa

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whole Qur'ān with Ibn 'Abbās three times. During each studying, he stopped at the end of every verse and asked Ibn 'Abbās where and about whom it was revealed. Mujāhid was described as the head of Mufassirūn, as well as a "Thiqa" (trustworthy). See al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 4: 449.

[85] Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr is one of Ibn 'Abbās' students. He narrated tafsīr and *ḥadīth* from about ten Ṣaḥāba, and other hand, more than 86 students transmmitted from him. Ibn 'Abbās appreciated greatly his knowledge. When the people of Iraq came to Ibn 'Abbās asking religious questions, he (Ibn 'Abbās) said: "Are your asking me when you have someone among you (in Iraq) like Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr ?" Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr was qualified as a "Thiqa". See al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 4: 328. Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 6: 179.

[86] 'Ikrimā al-Barbarī was an outstanding student of Ibn 'Abbās who lived with him at his home. 'Ikrima had learned and narrated from more than 10 Companions, on the other hand, more than 20 Tābi'ūn and subsequent generation narrated from him. Ibn 'Abbās publicly recognized his knowledge and encouraged him to give fatwa at his presence. 'Ikrima claimed that no verse in the Qur'ān he had not heard something about it. Some of his contemporaries described him as " al-Baḥr " (the ocean), and as a " Thiqa ". See al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkira*, 1: 96.

[87] 'Alqama Ibn 'Abd Allāh Ibn Mālik Ibn Qays was a notable student of Ibn Mas'ūd. In addition to Ibn Mas'ūd, he also learned from 15 Ṣaḥāba and more than 30 Tābi'ūn and immediate subsequent generation narrated tafsīr and ḥadīth from him. Ibn Mas'ūd publicly declared " Whatever knowledge I have, I have found 'Alqama also has it". See Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb*, 7: 276-9.

[88] Masrūq Ibn al-Ajda' was also a notable student of Ibn Mas'ūd. He transmitted tafsīr and ḥadīth from about 17 Ṣaḥāba on one hand, and on the other hand, more than 20 of his contemporaries and the subsequent generation transmitted and learned from him. See al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat*, 1: 49.

[89] Muḥammad Ibn Ka'b al-Quraẓī is one of the remarkable *mufassirs* of the Medina School. He learned and transmitted tafsīr and ḥadīth from more than 20 Ṣaḥāba and many Tābi'ūn and subsequent generation transmitted his knowledge. He has been qualified as a " Thiqa ". See Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb*, 9: 421.

[90] Abū al-'Āliya Rāfi' Ibn Maḥram al-Riyāḥī was primarily a student of Ubay Ibn Ka'ab. He also learned from about 11 Ṣaḥāba and more than 30 people narrated and translated tafsīr from him. He was described as a " Thiqa " and one of the most knowledgeable in tafsīr. See al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 417. al-Dhahabī, *Siyār*, 4: 207-12.

[91] Zayd Ibn Aslam al-'Adwā was one of the famous mufassirs of the Medina School of Tafsīr. He learned and narrated tafsīr, ḥadīth and fiqh under more than seven Ṣaḥāba and many Tābi'ūn, and subsequent generations transmitted from him tafsīr and ḥadīth. Al-Dhahabī described him as an Imām (a leading scholar). See al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat*, 1: 132.

[d.131-719],[92] and 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Ghanam [d. 78-696].[93] Each of these scholars learned from many Companions, although each of them associated himself with one Companion over a period of many years and, ultimately, became known as a student of that particular Companion. For instance, Mujāhid Ibn Jabr, Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr, and 'Ikrima were known as students of Ibn 'Abbās, while 'Alqama Ibn Qays and Masrūq Ibn al-Ajda' were known as students of Ibn Mas'ūd.

During this time some new trends began to emerge in Qur'ānic exegesis, such as using *ra'y* (one's personal opinion which has no precedence in the tradition of the Prophet or his Companions) in interpreting Qur'ān to predict the future destruction of a nation or in interpreting Qur'ānic words which are obviously contradictory to the Prophetic exegesis and his Companions.

Ra'y was also used to interpret the meanings of the Qur'ān in such away that it later was termed sectarian *tafsīr*. Furthermore, *quṣṣāṣ* 'the story tellers' became more involved in this period of Qur'ānic exegesis using incredible imagination and drawing from legendry sources. For example, al-Ḍaḥḥāk Ibn Muzāḥim [d. 105-725] interpreted Q. 17:58.

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[92] Rajā' Ibn Ḥaywa learned and narrated tafsīr and ḥadīth from more than 15 Ṣaḥāba and many Tābi'ūn and subsequent generations learned and transmitted from him. He was ranked second to Abū al-Dardā' among the leaders of the Shām School of Tafsīr. He was qualified as a thiqa. According to Ibn Sa'd's report, the people of Damascus were in debt to him in tafsīr. Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2: 161.

[93] 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Ghanam was a notable scholar of tafsīr and sunna. He learned under more than 20 Ṣaḥāba and a considerable number of Tābi'ūn learned and transmitted his knowledge. He has been described by scholars of ḥadīth as a "Thiqa". Ibn Ḥajar 'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb*, 3, p. 265. Al-Ziriklī, *A'lām*, 3: 44.

(وإن من قرية إلا نحن مهلكوها قبل يوم القيامة أو معذبوهاعذاباشديدا No town exists but We
shall act as its destroyers before resurrection Day or as its punishers by means of severe
torment.)-- as the victory of Muslims over Constantinople and the conquest of al-
Andalus).

Mujāhid Ibn Jabr interpreted Q.75: 22-3 وجوه يومئذناضرة إلى ربها ناظرة (Some
faces will be radiant on that day looking toward their Lord.) contradicting to the Prophetic
tradition and his Companions. According to the Prophet and his Companions'
interpretation, the verse refers to the fact that Muslims will see God with the naked eye on
the Day of Judgment, but Mujāhid explained the verse as Muslims will be expecting a
reward from God.[94] This interpretation of Mujāhid was later adopted by Muʻtazilites and
it became identified with them instead of Mujāhid. Other prominent Muslims, notably, al-
Ḥasan al-Baṣrī [d. 110-730] and Qatāda Ibn Duʻāma were accused of using sectarian
elements in their *tafsīr*.[95] The aforementioned trends, mainly using Jewish and Christian
sources in explaining some Qur'ānic passages and the relying on one's opinion without
referring to the Prophetic tradition or his Companions, made some scholars read with
caution the exegeses of Mujāhid, ʻIkrima, Zayd Ibn Aslam, and others. They believed that
ra'y and *Isrā'iliyyāt* (Jewish and Christian sources) had become incorporated into their
tafsīr.[96] Other scholars such as al-Qāsim Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Abū Bakr [d. 106-724], a

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[94] Al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qādir*, 5; 338.

[95] Ibn Ḥajar al ʻAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb*, 1: 263.

[96] Ibn Saʻd, Tabaqāt, 5: 467. See al-Dhahabī, *Siyār*, 4: 451.

grandson of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, and ‘Ubayd Allāh Ibn ‘Umar Ibn Ḥafṣ [d. 104-722], a

grandson of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, abstained altogether from Qur’ānic exegesis to avoid

such accusations.[97] The question of using *ra’y* along with its legitimacy and the using of

Isrā’lliyyāt will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

One of the outstanding works of this period is Muqātil Ibn Sulāymān’s “*al-Wujūh*

wa al-Naẓā’ir” The work is believed to be the first complete work on *ra’y*. Detailed

account on the book will be given in Chapter three. The *tafsīr* of this period, however, is

classified as “the best” and "the worst". The best *tafsīr* is the one which does not contain

ra’y, and the worst is the one which consists of *ra’y*. Among the best are listed works of

Ibn ‘Abbās, Mujāhid, etc. Among the worst are listed those of al-Ḍhaḥḥāk, Abū Ṣāliḥ,

etc.[98]

Tafsīr after the Era of the *Tābi‘ūn*

By the end of the second century A.H., the students of the Companions of the

Prophet, the *Tābi‘ūn*, had died. No exegete of the period compiled a written work

devoted exclusively to Qur’ānic exegesis. It has been claimed that Mujāhid Ibn Jabr wrote

a complete *tafsīr* of the Qur’ān, but this has not yet been proven.[99] During the latter half

of the second century A.H., various scholars began compiling texts according to their

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[97] Goldziher, *Madhhab*, pp. 73-86.

[98] Nabia Abbott *Studies Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri Qur’ānic commentary and Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967). P. 112.

[99] The Encyclopedia of Islām. 7; 215.

specialties and interests concerning the Qur'ān. *Tafsīr* emerged as one such specialty. Scholars such as Shu'ba Ibn al-'Ajjāj, Ibn al-Ward [d.160-776],[100] Wakī' Ibn al-Jarrāḥ [d. 197-813],[101] and Sufyān Ibn 'Uyayna Ibn Maymūn [d. 198-815],[102] paid special attention to the narration of *tafsīr* attributed to the Prophet, his Companions and the *Tābi'ūn*.[103] Grammarians and linguists wrote authoritative works on the Qur'ān demonstrating their expertise, such as *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, by Abū Zakariyā Yaḥyā Ibn Ziyād al-Farrā' [d. 207-725],[104] and *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, by Abū 'Ubayda Ibn Mu'ammar Ibn al-Muthannā al-Taymī [d. 204 or 224/819 or 839].[105] Al-Farrā's work contained a small amount of Qur'ānic exegesis from the Prophet, his Companions and the *Tābi'ūn*.[106]

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[100] Shu'ba Ibn 'al-Ajjāj was given the title "Amīr al-Mu'minīn fī al-ḥadīth" (the commander of the faithful in ḥadīth). He was the first scholar to do a critical study of ḥadīth. He was described as a "Thiqa". Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkira*, 1: 19. Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, p. 105.

[101] Wakī' Ibn al- Jarrāḥ was known for his extraordinary memory. One of his contemporaries said he heard him narrating 700 ḥadīth by heart. He is considered as one of the outstanding scholars of ḥadīth. See, Muḥammad Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Rāzi, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dīl* (India: Maṭba'at al-Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma'ārifa al-Uthmāniyya, 1952-1371).1: 219-20.

[102] Sufyān Ibn Uyayna held the reputation of being the most knowledgeable and expert in ḥadīth in the Ḥijāz (Meccan and Medina). He was one of the outstanding scholars of ḥadīth. He has been described as a " Thiqa ". See, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ*, 1: 32-5.

[103] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 418.

[104] Al-Farrā' Abū Zakariyyā' Yaḥyā Ibn Ziyād, *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, ed. Aḥmad Yūsuf al-Najjār. (Cairo: Al-Hay'at al-Miṣriyya al-Āmma li-al-Kuttāb, n.d). 1: 13-14.

[105] Abū 'Ubayda ai -Muthannā ai-Taymī was a notable linguistic and man of literacy. Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 5: 369

[106] Published in three volumes by Aḥmad Yūsuf Najātī and Alī Najjār in 1955.

According to Ibn Khallikān, a person called Ibrāhīm Ibn Ismā'īl asked Abū 'Ubayda about some meanings of the Qur'ān. After Abū 'Ubayda had explained the meanings, he committed himself to writiting a book explaining the meanings of the Qur'ān[107]. The completed work approaches the Qur'ān from linguistic and grammartical perspectives and it also includes explanations of *gharīb* (difficult words). He used poetry extensively as part of his explanations. The work was published in one volume edited by Fu'ad Sezgin in 1959.[108]

These approaches, the methodologies used by grammarians and linguisits and that of the traditionists flourished until the end of the third century A.H. and the early fourth century. Hence, *tafsīr* literature became separated from the main body of ḥadīth literature. Both came to be established as independent sciences.

The separation between ḥadīth and *tafsīr* should not confuse the reader. *Tafsīr*, as noted as the outset, is explanation of the Qur'ān's meaning, words and legal implications. The subject of *tafsīr* is the Qur'ān. *Tafsīr* was practiced by the Prophet, his Companions, the *Tābi'ūn*, or also by modern scholars. On the other hand, ḥadīth literally means news or new report.[109] As an Islāmic term, it refers to the sayings, actions and tacit

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[107] Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Abū Bakr Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān wa Anba' abnā' al-Zamān.* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1948-1950). 1: 139. See also, Abū Zayd, *al-Ittijāh 'Aqlī fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Tanwīr li al-Ṭiba'a wa al-Nashr,1982). p. 100

[108] Mu'ammar Ibn al-Muthannā Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Al-khanji, 1954). p. 6

[109] Muḥammad Sha'bān Ismā'īl, *al-Madkhal li dirāsat al-Qur'ān wa al-Sunna wa al-'Ulūm al-Islāmiyya* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Ḥalabi,1986). 2: 210.

endorsements of the Prophet Muhammad. Thus, the subject of hadīth is the Prophet.[110]

Thus, every *tafsīr* of the Prophet is hadīth but not every hadīth is *tafsīr*.

After the separation of *tafsīr* literature from the main body of hadīth, each became

an independent science with its own literature and concerns. The hadīth literature, for

instance, is concerned with the transmission of information regarding the the Prophet only.

These reports were the object of intense search during the first two and a half centuries of

the Islamic era. They were collected into many written compilations and gradually six of

these became recognized in many, if not all, Sunni circles as the most authentic. The six

books are technically called *"al-Kutub al-Sitta"*.

They are:

1). *Al-Jāmi' al-Saḥīḥ*, by Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī[111]

2). *Saḥīḥ Muslim,* by Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qqshayrī .[112]

3). *Sunan Abū Dāwūd,* by Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān Ibn al-Ash'ath al-Sijistānī.[113]

4). *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī,* or *Sunan al-Tirmidhī,* by Abū 'Isā Muḥammad Ibn 'Isā
    al-Tirmidhī.[114]

5). *Sunan al-Nasā'ī,* by Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn 'Alī Ibn Shu'ayb al-Nasā'ī [115]

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[110] Muḥammad Adīb Ṣāliḥ, *Lamaḥāt fī Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth* (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1988-1409, 5th ed). p. 27.

[111] The work is published in Cairo: Dār al-Nashr wa Maṭba'at al-Sha'b, n.d.

[112] Ed. Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī. (Cairo: 'Isa al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1955).

[113] Ed. Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥāmid (Cairo: Maṭba'at Muṣtafā Muḥammad. n.d).

[114] Ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1937).

6) *Sunan Ibn Māja* by Abū 'Abd Allāh Yazīd Ibn Māja.[116]

Tafsīr literature is concerned with the transmission of reports regarding the explanation of the Prophet in relations to Qur'ānic text, the Prophet's Companions, the *Tābi'ūn*, and also linguistic, rhetoric, juridical and theological considerations. These reports and considerations were the object of intense search after the separation between ḥadīth and *tafsīr* took place. The *tafsīr* literature was eventually divided into two major types technically known as *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr and al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y*. Examples of *Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*: are *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Tawīl Āy al-Qur'ān* by Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī; *Al-Muḥarrir al-Wajīz fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-'Azīz* by 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Ibn Ghālib Ibn 'Aṭiyya; and *Tafsīr al Qur'ān al-'Azīm* by 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl Ibn Kathīr. Examples of *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y*, are *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* also known as *Mafātīh al-Ghāyb* by Muḥammad Ibn 'Umar Fahkr al-Dīn al-Rāzī; *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* by Athīr Al-Dīn Ibn Yūsuf Abū Ḥayyān; and *al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq wa Ghawāmiṣ al-Tanzīl wa 'Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Ta'wīl*, by Maḥmūd Ibn Muḥammad Ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī.

Tafsīr in the Third and Fourth Century A.H.

In this period, the transmission of *tafsīr* mentioning the complete *isnād* (name of each teacher-narrator of the text) became popular on the one hand, and on the other hand, a specialization in one aspect of the Qur'ān began to attract the attention of theologians and lexicographers. Thus, they began to produce *tafsīr* which is obviously dominated by a

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[115] Ed al-Ḥasan Muḥammad al-Mus'ūdī (Beirut: Iḥya' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1348-1930).

[116] Ed. Muḥammad Fu'ad 'Abd al-Bāqi (Cairo: 'Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Shurakā'ḥu, 1972).

notable element. Relevant but nonextant works include exegeses by Abū 'Abd Allāh

Yazīd Ibn Māja [d. 273-887],[117] 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Abī Ḥātim [d.804 0r 5],[118] and

Ḥusayn Sunayd.[119] According to Ibn Taymiyya, the works of the above-mentioned

traditionists were solely based only on the sayings of the Prophet, the Companions, and

the Tābi'ūn.[120]

Among the representative of works by lexicographers and linguists were Ibn

Qutayba's [d. 276-900],[121] Tafsīr Gharīb al Qur'ān, and al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī's [d.

502/1108], al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān.[122] Al-Mufradāt is believed to be the best

work in this field.[123] These works dealt with the lexical difficulties of the Qur'ānic

words. During this period Abū Ja'far Muḥammad Ibn Yazīd al-Ṭabarī appeared with a

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[117] Muḥammad Ibn Yazīd Ibn Māja was one of the authors of the famous six books knows as al-Kutub al-Sitta in the science of ḥadīth. He is considered as an "Imām in ḥadīth" (leader or master in ḥadīth). See al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 13: 277-9.

[118] 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Tamīmī al-Rāzī was a famous critic of ḥadīth. Among his works are Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dīl, 'Ilal al-Ḥadīth. Al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 1: 468

[119] Al-Ḥusayn Ibn Dāwūd al- Masīsī known as Sunayd. He was described as "al-Ḥāfiẓ", a man with a strong memory that is to say he memorized a great number of ḥadīth. See Ibn Taymiyya, Muqaddima, pp. 78-80.

[120] Ibid, p.79.

[121] Muḥammad Ibn Muslim Ibn Qutayba was a famous theologian, linguistic who critically engaged in theological arguments with mainly Mu'tazilities ". Ibn Qutayba was described as a " Khatīb " (Orator) of the traditionalists. Among his well known works, Mushkil al-Qur'ān, Ta'wīl Mukhtalif Ḥadīth. See, al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 5: 359.

[122] Al-Suyūṭī, al-Itqān, 1: 244.

[123] Andrew Rippin described the Gharīb works as " These texts are the closest to the Modern sense of lexicography; 'dictionaaries of difficult words' Rippin, AHIQ, p.160.

methodology and approach distinct from his contemporaries. Al-Ṭabarī's *tafsīr*, *Jāmiʻ al-Bayān ʻan Taʼwīl Āy al Qurʼān*, is generally acknowledged to be the most comprehensive work of *tafsīr* by Muslim and non-Muslim scholars including Noeldeke.[124] One of the main reasons, he said, for writing his text was to "please God", another was to provide the reader with a text so complete that there would be no need to read any other work of *tafsīr*.[125] This claim of al-Ṭabarī has not been challenged, rather we find that scholars like al-Dhahabī, al-Nawawī, al-Suyūṭī and others, have affirmed the claim made by al-Ṭabarī. Ibn Ḥazm is the only scholar I have found so far that has challenged that claim.[126]

Important Developments after al-Ṭabarī and the Fourth Century A.H.

After the fourth century A.H., three main developments occurred in the field of Qurʼānic commentary. Al-Suyūṭī described them as the age of *"Ikhtiṣār al-asānīd"* (the shortening of the chains of narration) accompanied by the quoting of unverified statements, the age of specialization, and the emergence of *bidʻa tafsīr*.[127]

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[124] Goldziher, *Die Richtungen*, pp. 85-86: "Were this book to have reached us, we could have not needed to read any later generation's work in *tafsīr*."

[125] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʻ al-Bayān* 1: 6-7.

[126] Ibn Ḥazm has claimed that the tafsīr of Baqī Ibn Makhlad Ibn Yazīd [d. 273/889] exceeded al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmiʻ al-Bayān*. He further stated that no tafsīr can be compared with Bāqī's. See Ibn Bashkuwal, *Kitāb al-Ṣila* (Cairo: Al-Dār al-Miṣriyya li al-Taʼlīf wa al-Tarjama, 1966). p. 116. Al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 2: 29. Al-Suyūṭī, *Tabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*, ed. ʻAlī Muḥammad ʻUmar (Maktabat Wahba, 1976-1396, 1st ed). p. 89.

[127] The word specialization as used here should not be understood in its modern context. It should be rather understood as a reference to the most dominant element appearing in the work from the begining to end. The extent to which a particular element dominates the work, determines its specialization.

Ikhtisār al-Asānīd and the Use of Unreliable Information

Instead of repeating the name of each teacher or reporter in an *isnād*--the precursor of scholarly Western citation and documentation--Muslim scholars began to omit the full *isnād*. This went against the grain of Muslim scholarship. It did not allow for the verification of the sources of information. Hence, it was common and easy to quote or claim information from nonexistnat or unreliable, sources. Consequently, many texts were written with such poor scholarship that writers made no distinction between inaccurate and correct data, in addition, authors did not distinguish which interpretations were scholarly.[128]

A major *tafsīr* that is representative of others concerning *ikhtisār asānīd* and the use of unverified information is the one by the historian al-Tha'ālibī [d. 427-1032], *Tafsīr al-Kashf wa al-Bayān 'an Tafsīr al Qur'ān*.[129] This work mostly used detailed accounts of stories, but without paying any attention to whether the information within them was true or false. In addition, al-Tha'ālibī narrated authentic ḥadīth along with the weak and fabricated without distinguishing one from the other.[130] Al-Tha'ālibī claimed to have gathered his information from one hundred books and statements that he received from about three hundred scholars.

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[128] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 419. See also, al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 2: 32-3.

[129] The work has not yet been published. Some part of it is still sitting in al-Azhar University Library. See, al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr*, 1: 229.

[130] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, p. 76, Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 419.

In his introduction, al-Thaʿālibī indicated that he wrote his *tafsīr* in response to a request from some people for him to do so. He wanted, therefore, to write a comprehensive, authentic, brief, understandable, and well-organized book of *tafsīr* as opposed to the exegesis by al-Ṭabarī, which al-Thaʿālibī criticized along with others for their repetition of various narrations and long, unnecessary lines of transmitters. Nonetheless, al-Thaʿālibī himself included a significant number of stories and *Isrāīliyyāt*, in addition to judicial issues, grammatical discussions, and traditions emanating from the Prophets, Companions and *Tābiʿūn*.[131] Consequently, Ibn Qayyim [d. 701-1350.] criticized al-Thaʿālibī for narrating weak traditions and produced an edited version of al-Thaʿālibī's *tafsīr*.[132]

The Age of Specialization

Grammatical *Tafsīr*. Al-Suyūṭī and others considered this period as the age of specialization because experts wrote Qurʾānic exegesis from the perspective of their specialty only.[133] Representative of the grammatical exegesis were *"Maʿāni al-Qurʾān* by al-Zajjāj [d. 316-928],[134] *al-Wasīt*, and *al-Wajīz* by al-Wāḥidī [d. 468-1076],[135] and *al-*

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[131] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, p. 76.

[132] The Encyclopedia of Islam. 7: 735-6. Al-Dhahabī, *al- Tafsīr*, 1: 228.

[133] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 419.

[134] Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm Ibn Sārī Ibn Sahl known as al-Zajjāj. See Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Najdī (Riyadh: Muʾassasāt al-Kutub, n.d). 12:147

[135] ʿAlī Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī Abū al-Ḥasan al-Wāḥidī al-Nīsābūrī. See, al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 125.

Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ by Abū Ḥayyān [d. 745-1344]. The discussion which follows focuses

upon the latter because it was considered to have been the first comprehensive

grammatical *tafsīr* and the most important.[136]

Abū Ḥayyān began writing his *tafsīr* at the age of fifty-seven. He stated that he

wrote it to please God.[137] His methodology and approach was to first explain each verse

word by word followed by a grammatical and linguistic discussion. When a verse had

more than one meaning, he would mention it, and then proceed to discuss the occasion

upon which the verse was revealed. This would be followed by a presentation of both the

accepted and rejected variant readings of a passage including a grammatical discussion of

them. (A textual reading was considered rejected if it contradicted the canonical text put

forth by the Caliph 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān or was contrary to accepted Arabic language

use.)[138] Finally, he would quote the late generation. When a passage pertained to judicial

matters, he repeated the opinion of each of the heads of four Sunni legal schools of

thought: Imāms Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik Ibn Anas, al-Shāfiʿī, and Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal.[139]

Juristic *Tafsīr* Representative of juridical exegesis are three texts with the same

title, *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān* by Abū Bakr Ibn 'Alī al-Rāzī known as al-Jaṣṣāṣ [d. 370-980],[140]

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[136] The book was published in eight volumes by Dār al-Kutub in Egypt. The work was considered the first grammatical *tafsir* in the sense of covering the whole Qurʾān. See, al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr*, 1:139-8

[137] Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr* 1: 318.

[138] 'Atar, Ḥasan Diyaʾ al-Dīn, *al-Aḥruf al-Sab' wa Manzilat al-Qirāʾāt minhā* (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyya,1988-1409, 1st ed). pp. 317-20.

[139] Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr*, 1: 5.

Imād al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn Muḥammad Ibn 'Alī al-Ṭabarī, known as al-Kiyā al-Hurast [d. 504-1110], and al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd Allāh Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad known as Ibn al-'Arabī [d. 543/1148].[141] Although the authors deal generally with every chapter of the Qur'ān, they give an explanation of only those verses which pertain to legal aspects.[142]

Another commonality was that the authors were accused of being biased toward their particular school of thought; al-Jaṣṣāṣ was a *ḥanafī*, Kiyā was a Shāfi'ī and Ibn al-'Arabī was a Mālikī.[143] Again, each of their works contained some of the traditions emanating from the Prophet Muḥammad, *Ṣaḥāba* and *Tābi'ūn*, as well as some grammatical and linguistic discussion. The approach of al-Jaṣṣāṣ was to arrange his work according to the usual form of *fiqh* 'juristic' literature. Each issue was discussed under a separate *faṣl* or *bāb* 'chapter'. He included other parts of the Qur'ān to explain Qur'ānic verses and also ḥadīth to support his school of thought.

Ibn al-'Arabī, on the other hand, mentioned the name of the chapter he intended to explain, followed by the total number of verses in the chapter which are related to the juristic matter. He then numbered the legal matters pertaining to some verses by saying, for example, there are five problems in the first verse, and ten juristic matters in the second

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[140] Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr*, 2: 428-9

[141] Kiyā Hurast's text has not yet been published. The manuscript is in Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-miṣriyya. See al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr*, 2: 429.

[142] *Ibid*, 2: 416-20.

[143] Musā'id, *Athar*, p. 175.

verse etc. Similarly, he used passages of the Qur'ān to explain other Qur'ānic verses as al-Jaṣṣāṣ did.[144]

Another prominent exegesis worthy of mention in this regard is al-Jāmiʻ li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān[145] by the jurist Abū ʻAbd Allāh Muḥammad al-Qurṭubī [d. 671-1273].[146] Al-Dhahabī wrote that al-Qurṭubī was an encyclopedia and that his work was one of the greatest exegeses from which the common person could benefit.[147] It was well organized and extremely usable.[148] Modern scholars have classified his commentary under the heading of jurisprudence.[149] We observe that sometimes al-Qurṭubī occupied himself with legal issues so much so that he discussed problems that were not relevant to the explained verse. On the other hand, he stated in his introduction that he decided to occupy the rest of his life with exegesis and to exhaust all his strength on writing a tafsīr that included linguistics, variant readings, and grammar; and that he would rebut the opinions of

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[144] Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn ʻAbd Allāh al-Maʻrūf bi Ibn al-ʻArabī al-Andalusī, Aḥkām al-Qur'ān. ed. ʻAlī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-ʻArabiyya- ʻĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1975, 1st ed). 8-14.

[145] The complet title of the book is al-Jāmiʻ li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān al-Mubayyin li-ma Taḍammanahu min al-Sunna wa Āy al-Furqān. See al-Qurṭubī, al-Jāmiʻ, 1: 3 The Work was published in Cairo by Dār al-Kutub in twenty volumes

[146] Abū ʻAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī is one of the outstaanding mufaassir and jurist. Among his works al-Jāmiʻ li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān al-Mubayyin li-ma Taḍammanahu min al-Sunna wa Āy al-Furqān, al-Tadhkira bi Umūr al-Ākhira, Kitāb sharḥ al-Taqaṣṣī see, Ibn Farhūn al-Mālikī, al-Dībāj al-Mudhahhab fī Maʻrifat Aʻyān ʻUlamā al-Madhāhib, ed. Muḥammad al-Aḥmadī Abū al-Nūr (Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-Qur'ān,n.d). 2: 308

[147] Al-Dāwūdī, Muḥammad Ibn ʻAlī, Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 1972). 2: 65

[148] Al-Dawūdī, Ṭabaqāt, 2: 66.

[149] Musāʻid, Athar, p. 188.

perverse men who are in a [moral and Isāmic] state of perishing.[150] He added that he would present many hadīth to prove his position on judicial issues; and that he would quote the Ṣaḥāba and Tābi'ūn.

Tafsīr on Philosophy and Logic. The foremost comprehensive work and representative of a tafsīr written from the perspective of philosophy and logic was Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb by Muḥammad Ibn 'Umar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī [d. 606/1209], a jurist, theologian and exegete.[151] The work gave a detailed account of philosophical arguments including discussions on the issues of the relationships (al-tanāsub) between Qur'ānic verses as well as between chapters with other chapters. The author gave thorough discussions of theological propositions and arguments and touched upon judicial matters while employing grammatical and linguistic information, Prophetic hadīth, and traditions from the Companions and the Tābi'ūn.[152]

It is generally believed that al-Rāzī died before completing his exegesis and that it was completed by a student of his works, Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Abī al-Ḥazm al-Makkī Najm al-Dīn al-Makhzūmī al-Qummī [d. 727/1327].[153] He followed his master's methodology and style so faithfully that it is impossible to distinguish between the two. A

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[150] Al-Qurṭubī, Al-Jāmi', 1: 2-3.

[151] The work was translated in Tehran by Dār al-Kutub in thirty two volumes.

[152] Muḥammad Basyūnī Fūdā, al-Tafsīr fī Ḍaw' al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyya (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Amāna, 1977-1397). pp. 62-3.

[153] Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, al-Durar al-Kāmina fī A'ayān al-Mi'a al-Thānī. ed. Muḥammad Sayyid Jād al-Ḥaqq. (Cairo: Maṭba' al-Madanī, n.d).1: 342. See, al-Dāwūdī, Ṭabaqat, 2: 214.

third person may have been involved in completing the *tafsīr*. His name was Shihāb al-Dīn Ibn Khalīl al-Khawayī al-Dimashqī [d. 639/1241].

Although the work has won praise because of its importance in the field of Qur'ānic exegesis, Abū Ḥayyān, al-Suyūṭī and others have criticized al-Rāzī's commentary. They believe that it had too many philosophical arguments and other things such that a reader may find everything in it but exegesis.[154] This view in our opinion is an exaggeration. One finds in al-Rāzī's *tafsīr* all the elements of *tafsīr* that al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-Bayān* and Ibn Kathīr's work contain.

Tafsīr Variations

This is the third of al-Suyūṭī's categories; we chose to designate it as *Tafsīr* Variations' instead of using his terminology, 'heretical *tafsīr'* in his category. Since the assassination of 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān, the third caliph, there are three main groups: the *Alids* (supporters of 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭalib), Umayyads (the supporters) of Mu'āwiya Ibn Abī Sufyān, and the Kharijites. Those outside of these groups notwithstanding, the three parties mutually accuse each other of being false Muslims. This on-going issue is reflected in the texts of the protagonists in general and in *tafsīr* in particular. Al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-Bayān* is one of the *tafsīr*s that represents the Sunnī points of view. Sunnī scholars such as al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Taymiyya, al-Ghazālī, al-Suyūṭī, and others have classified most, if not all of the *tafsīr* written by the Shī'a, the Mu'tazilites and the Ṣūfis as *tafsīr bid'a* (having no Islāmic precedence in the Qur'ān or more particularly, in the Sunna of the Prophet) even

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[154] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān,*. 2: 419.

though al-Ghazālī himself has been considered a Ṣūfī.[155] On the other hand, al-Qāḍī ʿAbd

al-Jabbār (d. 410-919), al-Zamakhsharī, and others have retaliated by claiming that such

Sunnis were unintelligent, and, inreality, non-Muslims and hypocrites.[156]

The *Shīʿa*

The Shīʿa *tafsīr* developed parallel to that of *tafsīr* by the Sunnis. There are two

major distinctions between the two. First, the Shīʿa believed that the Qurʾān primarily

spoke to their Imām ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib and his eleven descendants, for, as part of the Shīʿa

belief, it is they who have inherited the knowledge of the Prophet Muḥammad and

previous Prophets. Sunnis, on the other hand, believe that the Qurʾān was addressed to

mankind in general.

Secondly, the Shiʿa believed or considered the twelve Imāms to be the only

legitimate authorities on the Qurʾān after the Prophet. The Sunnis believed that the

Prophet and Ṣaḥāba and any qualified Muslim are legitimate authorities.[157]

Maḥmmad Ayoub noted that the *tafsīr* of Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī Ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn

Hāshim al-Qummī [d. 328-939], *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, is an example of an early Shīʿa work

representing the Shīʿa point of view.[158] Al-Qummī's text, says a partisan Sunni

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[155] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, pp. 90-1. Al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 30

[156] Aḥmad ʿAlī Al-Sālūs, *Bayn al-Shīʿa wa al-Sunna: Dirāsa Muqārana fī al-Tafsīr wa Uṣūlih; Tafsīr al-Rasūl wa al-Ṣaḥāba wa Mā Nusiba li A'immat al-Ithnay 'Ishriyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Iʿtiṣām,1989). p. 178.

[157] Muḥammad Ayoub, *The Qurʾān and Its Interpretation.* (Albany State University of New York,1984). 1: 36. See, Al-Sālūs, Muḥammad ʿAli. *Bayn al-Shīʿa wa al-Sunna*, p. 178.

[158] Printed in Najf in 1386 H.

monograph, frequently accused the Ṣaḥāba and the Sunnis of literally altering the text of

the Qur'ān. For this and other reasons he labled them as non-Muslims, unbelievers,

hypocrites, etc.[159] Nonetheless, the Shī'a, in general, have regarded al-Qummī as a

reliable and trustworthy authority.

Ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī's approach. Abū 'Alī al-Faḍl Ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī's

[d. 548-1153] *Majma' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* took a liberal approach to moderate

the Shī'a position relative to the Sunnis. He quoted ḥadīth from the Sunnī al-Bukhārī

ḥadīth collections, a text that the Shī'a in general have rejected, and he used the narrations

from both those Ṣaḥāba who were praised by the Shī'a and those who were not.

Sometimes, he even preferred someone else's opinion over that of 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib. For

example, concerning Q. 57:10 والسابقون السابقون (those foremost (in faith) will be

foremost (in the hereafter),[160] al-Ṭabarsī mentioned that 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib stated that the

"foremost" referred to those who are first in the congregations to say the canonical five

daily prayers. Others, said al-Ṭabarsī, have said that the "foremost" are Muslims who are

foremost in the various good things that Islām calls for them to do. Hence, the foremost

are not limited to being the best in everything, but the best in at least one thing. Al-

Ṭabarsī stated that this latter meaning is the best, and even better than that which Imām

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[159] Al-Salūs, *Bayn al-Shī'a Wa al-Sunna*, p. 178.

'Alī has said because it includes all the various categories of good deeds and people that have been mentioned in the Qur'ān.[161]

In his introduction, al-Ṭabarsī indicated that he wrote his *tafsīr* because the Sunni scholars alone have written comprehensive and intellectual *tafsīrs* and have elucidated the deep, and the hidden meanings of the Qur'ān. He described Shi'a *tafsīrs* as very simple and brief without the full lines of transmission, and lacking detailed discussion. The only exception was Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsi's [d. 460-1068] *al-Tibyān al-Jāmi' li Kull 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*. But this book, according to al-Ṭabarsī, suffered from linguistic and grammatical errors, a lack of reliable information and poor organization. Al-Ṭūsi's book did not help one to have understanding of Qur'ān better. His *tafsīr* said al-Ṭabarsī's, failed to win the appreciation of the intellectuals.[162]

Al-Ṭabarsī's approach was to explain the whole Qur'ān word by word in chronological order of the Qur'ānic revelation. Before explaining each chapter, he clearly states to which of the two Qur'ānic phases - Meccan or Medinan - that the chapter belonges. If the whole chapter or part of it, however, was a Meccan or Medinan, he indicates that. Then he follows with the traditions of the Prophet, Ṣaḥāba and Tābi'ūn, and mentions the virtue of the chapter in general. Then he presents the *qirā'āt* 'variant readings' and begins to interpret the verse applying his linguistic skills and pointing out the grammatical impact on the meaning. After that, he mentions the circumstances in which

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[161] Abū 'Alī al-Faḍi Ibn Ḥasan Al-Ṭabarsī, *Majmu' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1954-1957, 2nd ed). 1:112-3 See also, Fūda, *Tafsīr*, p. 13.

[162] Al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-Bayān*. 1: 75-7.

the verse was revealed and the relationship between the previous and later verses. When

he comes across a verse pertaining to judicial matters, he frequently mentions the opinion

of the Shī'a Imāmiyya (the major Shī'a sect), trying to support their viewpoints.

Sometimes, he quotes the Sunni perspective.

Tafsīr of the Mu'tazilites

The *tafsīr* of the Mu'tazilites as we previously mentioned was branded by the

traditionalists as *bid'a* because they believed that the Mu'tazilites twisted the words of the

Qur'ān to support or to fit their own perspectives. We mentioned, for instance, Q.75:22-3

وجوه يومئذناضرة إلى ربها ناظرة (Some faces will be radiant on that day looking toward

their Lord). wherein it is believed that Muslims will literally see God with their own eyes

in paradise, although the Mu'tazilites said that this verse means that Muslims will be

expecting a reward from God. Verses relating to the attributes of God are interpreted

contrary to the traditional *tafsīr* of the Prophet and his Companions.[163]

The Mu'tazilites, however, wrote many *tafsīr* books expressing, their point of view

and, thereby, exposing the mistakes of the traditionalists. Mu'tazilites view that the

traditionists misunderstood them or misinterpreted them. For example, a great scholar of

Mu'tazilites, al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār wrote his *tafsīr* entitled *Tanzīh al-Qur'ān 'an al-*

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[163] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmu' Fatāvā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya,* ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Qāsim al-'Aṣimī al-Najdī al-Ḥanbalī (Mecca: Maṭba'at al-Nahḍa al-Ḥādītha, 1404). 3; 384- 386.

Maṭāʿin to elaborate on the distinction between *muḥkam* and *mutashābihāt* to point out the mistakes of the traditionalists.[164]

Maḥmūd Ibn Muḥammad al-Zamakhsharī. The most comprehensive existing *tafsīr* in which the *Muʿtazilites* doctrine is brilliantly demonstrated is *al-Kashshāf* by al-Zamakhsharī [d. 538/1144].[165] The work was highly praised as much as it was bitterly criticized. In his introduction, al-Zamakhsharī mentioned three reasons for writing his *tafsīr*.[166]

1) He was asked by a group of Muʿtazilites who admired his knowledge to write a *tafsīr* for them. They were so emphatic about the need for him to offer a course that they asked some dignitaries to intercede for them with al-Zamakhsharī.

2) The amīr of Mecca, Imām Sharīf Abū al-Ḥasan Ibn Ḥamza, who belongs to the Prophet's family, also asked him to write a *tafsīr*.

3) He, al-Zamakhsharī, wanted to please God so that he would be saved from the hell fire. It took him a little over two years and two or three months to finish writing his *al-Kashshāf*, and he described his *tafsīr* in the following poem:

Verily, there are countless works of *tafsīr* in this world;

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[164] Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār Ibn Aḥmad Ḥamadānī was known as one of the champion scholars of Muʿtazilites. Among his famous works are: *Tanzīh al-Qurʾān ʿan al-Maṭāʿin, Tathbīt dalāʾil nubuwwat Sayyidinā Muḥammad, Mutashābah al-Quʾānn*. Al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 234. Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr*, 1: 393. Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār Ibn Aḥmad Ḥamadānī, *Mutashābah al-Quʾānn* ed. ʿAdnān Muḥammad Zurzūr (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1969, 1st ed). pp. 25-26.

[165] Al-Zamakhsharī Khwārizmī was a recognized scholar of Arabic language and *tafsīr*. Of his well known works are: *Al-Kashsāaf ʿan Haqāʾiq al-Tanzīl wa ʿUyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Taʾwīl, al-Asās, al-Fāʾiq*. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān*, 4: 255.

[166] Al-Zamaksharī, Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd Ibn ʿUmar. *Al-Kashshāf ʿan Haqāʾiq al-Tanzīl wa ʿUyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Taʾwīl* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Awlāduh, 1966). 1: 3

> but you cannot find one like *al-Kashshāf*.
> If you are looking for guidance, you have to persist in reading it.
> Ignorance is just like sickness, and *al-Kashshāf* is like a cure."[167]

Muslim scholars have both praised and condemned *al-Kashshāf*. Abū Ḥayyān stated that

Ibn Bashkuwāl believed *al-Kashshāf* to be very precise and deep, but that its author

twisted the meaning of some verses in favor of his Muʿtazilite doctrine.[168] Abū Ḥayyān

expressed a great appreciation of the *tafsīr*.[169] Ibn Khaldūn said it was one of the best

*tafsīr*s as far as linguistic and literary aspects are concerned.[170] Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī [d.

735-1334] stated that *al-Kashshāf* was a great book in its field, and its author was a

leading scholar (Imām) in his field, but he is surely an innovator *(mubtadiʿ)* who publicly

declared his *bidʿa*.

Al-Zamakhsharī's approach.

Al-Zamakhsharī's approach was not unique for his time; he used the same

method as his contemporaries. For the most part, at the beginning of chapters he stated

one of the two Qurʾānic phases; Meccan or Medinan, that the chapter belonged.

Occasionally, he followed this with a discussion on Qurʾān and its ways of recitation. He

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[167] Hājjī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-Zunūn ʿan Asāmī al-Kutub wa al-Funūn*. ed. Muḥammad Sharaf al-Dīn. (Turkey: Wakālat al-Maʿārif al-Jalīla wa al-Maṭbaʿat al-Bahiyya, 1941). 2: 610.

[168] Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr*, !: 4

[169] *Ibid*, 1; 4.

[170] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn* (Beirut: Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, n.d, 4th ed). 3: 998.

then proceedes with a detailed, grammatical, linguistic and rhetorical discussion.[171] When

he came across the verses pertaining to judicial issues, he briefly touched upon them, and

sometimes mentiones the jurists' point of view, and other times quoted the traditions of

the Prophet, his Companions and *Tābi'ūn*. Also, when he cames to the verses that relates

to theological proposition, he clearly presentes various arguments applying his language

skill to support the Mu'tazilites' perspective. For example, the traditional interpretation of

Q. 75:23

وجوه يومئذ ناضرة :إلى ربها ناظرة (Some faces will be radiant on that day, looking towards

their Lord) is that the Muslim shall see God with their material eyes in paradise.[172] The

Mu'tazilites believe, however, that God can never and will not be seen no matter, the

promise of God to reward believers with a place in heaven notwithstanding.[173] Al-

Zamakhsharī interpretes الى ربها ناظرة (looking towards their Lord)' as "an inclusive special

looking", because, according to him, it is impossible, physically speaking, to ever see

God.[174] Because of such an interpretation Goldziher, Musā'id and others imitated the

traditionalists and considered al-Zamakhsharī's *tafsīr* as both *bid'a* and one of the best

representative of the Mu'tazilite point of view.[175]

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[171] Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 4: 270. See also, Musā'id, *Athar*, p. 176.

[172] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 30: 345. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 3: 475

[173] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 3: 475.

[174] Al-Zamaksharī, *al-Kashshāf* 4: 192.

[175] Musā'id, *Athar*, p. 149. Goldziher, *Mudhhab*, p. 89.

Despite al-Zamakhsharī's putting forth a Muʿtazilite point of view, he discussed the Qurʾān from the grammatical, linguistic and rhetorical perspectives. He did it so well that Ibn Khaldūn, Abū Ḥayyān and others declared *al-Kashshāf* to be one of the best *tafsīr* for linguistic, rhetorical, and grammatical interpretation.[176]

The *Tafsīr* of the Ṣūfis

The Ṣūfis' *tafsīr* is mystical in nature and heavily influenced by philosophical thought. The Ṣūfis believed that the Qurʾān has two meanings: apparent meaning '*ẓāhir*', and an 'inner' meaning '*bāṭin*.' They assert that common people know only the outer meaning, while the inner meaning is only known by the Ṣūfis. Thus, much of the Ṣūfis' *tafsīr* clearly contradicts both the plain meaning of the language and the meaning given by the Prophet, the Companions, the Successors and the Traditionalists. One example is Q. 55:19-20:   مرج البحرين يلتقيان بينهما برزخ لايبغيان

(He has loosed two seas that come together. Between them lies a barrier which neither tries to cross.). The two seas to most, if not all of the Sunni Muslims, are the salt water ocean and the fresh water that meets it.[177] Ibn ʿArabī [d. 638/1240], the Shaykh of Ṣūfis, interpreted the two seas to be the soul and body of a person.[178] Another example, concerns Q.73:8: واذكراسم ربك وتبتل إليه تبتيلا (Mention your Lord's name and devote yourself to Him utterly). Ibn ʿArabī said that it means "remember the name of your Lord,

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[176] Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima* 3: 398.

[177] Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ*, 17: 162.

[178] Al-Dhahabi, *al-Tafsīr*, 2: 240.

for He is you."[179] The latter clause of his account is a clear counterstatement to sura *al-Ikhlās*, the verse of *al-kursī* (Q. 2:255)112 and other parts of the Qur'ān, including the Qur'ānic theme that it is only from the devil himself (Q. 2:168-9) that statements about God emanates when they are not couched in true knowledge. Due to such interpretations, scholars as al-Dhahabī, Ibn Taymiyya and al-Suyūṭī have regarded the Ṣūfi *tafsīr* as heresy.[180]

Another *tafsīr* which represents the Ṣūfi perspective is *Ḥaqā'iq al-Tafsīr* by Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan Ibn al-Azdī, known as al-Sulamī [d. 412-1021].[181] The work of al-Sulamī was very controversial. Some scholars bitterly criticized it, while others praised it.[182] The late modern Egyptian scholar of *tafsīr*, Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, read the manuscript and found it consisted of whole chapters of the Qur'ān, but it did not cover all the verses. He also pointed out that al-Sulamī did no more than to compile the Ṣūfi statements by those known as *"ahl al-Ḥaqīqa"* 'people of realities'.[183] Based on al-Dāwūdī's report in his *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*, one can say with assurance that *Ḥaqā'iq al-Tafsīr* was solely of the Ṣūfi point of view. To substantiate this

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[179] *Ibid*, 2: 240.

[180] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkira*, 3: 249. Al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 31.

[181] Al-Sulamī was the Shaykh of the Ṣūfis in Khurāsān. He was described as a man of knowledge. See, al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 31.

[182] Al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2: 138-9.

[183] Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr*, 2: 385.

assumption, let me quote what al-Dhahabī presented as an example of al-Sulamī's *tafsīr*:

Q. 4: 66   و لو أنا كتبنا عليهم أن اقتلواأنفسهم

أو اخرجوامن ديارهم ما فعلوه   إلاقليل منهم (And if we had prescribed for them "let

yourselves be killed or expelled from your homes only a few of them would have done so).

Al-Sulamī said that this verse is an order for Muslims to kill themselves (or their souls) to

prevent them from loving this world.[184] Another example is in Q.13: 3

وهو الذى مدالأرض وجعل فيها رواسى وأنهارا (And He is the one who has spread the earth

out and placed headlands and rivers on it). Al-Sulamī said that the firm mountains are the

devoted servants of God and the dignitaries are the *Sūfī* leaders upon whom the refuge

and salvation of others depend.[185] Consequently, some Muslim scholar such as al-Wāhidī

[d. 468-1076] said, "If al-Sulamī believes that Ḥaqā'iq *tafsīr* is exegesis, *"faqad kafar"*,

then he has become a non-Muslim.[186]

Abū Bakr Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn 'Arabī Ibn Muḥammad [d. 638-1240]

was regarded in his time until this day by many as the epitome and greatest of the Ṣūfīs.

He was given the title *Shaykh al-Akbar* 'the greatest master' and *al-'Ārif bi-Allāh* 'the

knower of God'. He remains the most controversial Ṣūfī figure. It was popularly believed

that he wrote the famous *tafsīr* work known as *Tafsīr Ibn 'Arabī*. However, Muḥammad

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[184] *Ibid*, 2: 385.

[185] *Ibid*, 2: 388-9.

[186] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 237.

'Abduh the late Egyptian scholar, believed *tafsīr Ibn 'Arabī* to be a work of 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qashānī al-Bāṭinī. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī supported Muḥammad 'Abduh in this and later argued based on the manuscript available in Cairo, that the work was by al-Qashānī.[187] Certain scholars have said that it is now proved beyond doubt that it is not written by Ibn 'Arabī.

Ibn Taymiyya and al-Dhahabī were among scholars who bitterly criticized Ibn 'Arabī, while scholars like Muḥammad Ibn Ya'qūb al-Shī Rāzī al-Fayrūzābādī [d. 812 A.H.] and al-Suyūṭī were among the scholars who defended him.

Although the real *tafsīr* of Ibn 'Arabī did not reach us, some of his Qur'ānic interpretations were in some of his published works, such as *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* and *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*.[188] For example, consider the following: Q. 71: 28

رب اغفرلي ولوا لدي ولمن دخل بيتى مؤمنا وللمؤ منين والمؤمنات

(My Lord forgive me and my parents, as well as anyone who enters my home as a believer, along with believing men and believing women). Ibn 'Arabī interpreted 'parents' as intellect and nature, 'house' as his heart, 'believing men' as intellect, and 'believing women' as soul.[189]

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[187] Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm al-Shahīr bi Tafsīr al-Mannār* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d). 2: 400-1.

[188] In *Kashf al-Zunūn*, there was a report indicating that Ibn 'Arabī had written a massive tafsīr based on Ṣūfī's point of view. See, Ḥājjī Khalīfah, *Kashf al-Zunūn*, p. 2240.

[189] Ibn 'Arabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. Al-*Futūḥāt al-Makkiya Waṣāyā* (Beirut: Mu'assasāt al-I'lami li al-Maṭbū'āt, 1973). 2: 432.

Another example concerns Q. 22: 33 ثم محلها إلى البيت العتيق لكم فيها منافع

إلى أجل مسمى (You have advantage in them (cattle offered for sacrifice) for a fixed

period, then their place shall be at the ancient house 'the sacred territory of Mecca city'.

In *al-Futūhāt*, Ibn ‘Arabī interpreted the ancient house as the house of *Īmān* 'belief'.[190]

No Ṣūfi, apparently, has said that these statements are contrary to the Ṣūfi belief.

Allegorical *Tafsīr: Al-Tafsīr al-Ishārī*

This method of exegesis is termed *al-tafsīr al-ishārī* (exegesis by allegory, or

literary allusions); that is, interpretation of the Qur'ān beyond its outer meanings or with

meanings that are not visible to anyone but to those whose heart God has opened, as

asserted by its practioners.[191] They base their exegesis, upon certain *tafsīr* of the

Companions of the Prophet. One frequently given example in this respect is the *tafsīr* of

Ibn ‘Abbās of Q:110.103 إذا جاء نصرالله والفتح ورأيت الناس يدخلون في دين الله أفواجا

فسبح بحمدربك واستغفره إنه كان توابا (When God's support comes as well as victory and

you see mankind entering God's religion in droves, then sing your Lord's praises and beg

him for forgiveness, since He is Relenting)[192] Since, Ibn ‘Abbās interpreted the verse as a

special indication of the Prophet's death and because it is regarded both as an accurate

exegesis of the text by mainstream Muslims and as an interpretation that obviously is not

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[190] *Ibid*, 2: 463.

[191] Al-Zurqāni, *Manāhil*, 2: 78.

[192] Ibn Kathīr, *Mukhtasar*, 3: 486

an 'outer meaning', it has become a supporting proposition for the legitimacy of allegorical exegesis.

Another reference for this type of *tafsīr* is 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb understanding of Q. 5 :3 اليوم أكملت لكم دينكم وأتممت عليكم نعمتى ورضيت لكم الأسلام دينا (Today, I have perfected your religion for you, and completed my favor towards you and have consented to grant you [Islām] as a religion). Because 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb understood the verse as an indication for the start of the decline of the quality of Islām as practiced by its adherents[193] in addition to the obvious meaning of the verse, some use this as another justification for allegorical *tafsīr*.

A third example is from al-Alūsī concerning the meaning of Q: 11 106: يوم يأت لاتكلم نفس إلابإ ذنه فمنهم شقى وسعيد فأما الذين شقوا فى النار . The literal meaning of the verse is (the day it arrives no soul shall speak except by His leave. Of those [gathered] some will be wretched and some will be blessed. Those who are wretched shall be in the fire). Al-A lūsī said that 'shall be in the fire' is *"nār al-ḥirmān 'an al-murād"* (the fire of being denied a goal, desire or want). Al-Alūsī said that the 'fire' in this verse is not the fire of Hell, but rather "adhāb al-nafs" (punishment of self)[194].

Al-Qushayrī presented *al-tafsīr al-ishārī* in his interpretation of Q; 64: 3: وصوركمفأحسنصوركم (He (God) has given you shape and made your shapes beautiful). Al-

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[193] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Byān*, 4: 104. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 1: 347.

[194] Shihāb al-Dīn al-Sayyid Maḥmūd al-Alūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Aẓīm wa al-Sab' al-Mathānī* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, n.d). 12: 168

Qushayrī stated that this verse concerns a person's rise from base morality or the lowest of the low to a level of high morality or obedience to God, for God created man from a base and despicable fluid and caused him to rise to the highest level of dignity[195]

Scholars have differed as to legality of *al-tafsīr al-ishārī*. Some scholars have rejected it on the ground that it is based on mere opinion.[196] Others, like Ibn Qayyim accepted it providing that five principles are adhered to:[197]

1) That there is no disagreement with the obvious meaning of the verse.

2) That it is a sound meaning in itself.

3) That in the wording there is some indication to warrant it.

4) That there are close connections between it and the obvious meaning.

5) That it should not be claimed that the meaning is the only intended meaning.

Al-Zarkashī stated that a*l-tafsīr al-ishārī* was not a matter of *tafsīr* that one acquires or learns how to do, rather it is a mystical meaning that one feels while reciting the Qur'ān.[198]

Tafsīr Laṭā'if al-Ishārat. The exegesis by 'Abd al-Karīm Ibn Hawāzin Ibn 'Abd al-Mālik Ibn Ṭalha Ibn Muḥammad al-Nīsābūrī, known as al-Qushayrī [d. 465/1073], is named *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*. It is considered the best example of allegorical *tafsīr*. Al-

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[195] Al-Qushayrī, *Laṭā'if*. 6;:240

[196] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*,. 2: 174.

[197] Al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 2: 81. See Von Denffer, *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, p. 134.

[198] Al- Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 1: 16.

Qushayrī· was regarded as the *Shaykh* of Ṣūfīs of his time, and a moderate Ṣūfī. He never

claimed to have received knowledge from the unseen or believed in exegesis devoid of

traditional or linguistic substantiation.[199] He mastered the traditional Muslim fields of

religious learning such as ḥadīth and *fiqh*, as was understood by the non-Ṣūfī scholars.

Other Ṣūfīs considered him a scholar of mystical science. Because he did not write

material that was considered extreme, his *tafsir* was the only Ṣūfī *tafsīr* that escaped

stinging criticism. Indeed, *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt* was praised by both traditionists and Ṣūfīs.

The Approach of al-Qushayrī. The work of al-Qushayrī is a complete *tafsīr*. It

discussed each chapter as a unit in addition to explaining all of the verses of the whole

Qur'ān. Each chapter of the Qur'ān with the exception of chapter nine which begins with

بسم الله الرحمان الرحيم ('In the Name of God, the Most Merciful and Compassionate'), is

treated. Al-Qushairī did not consider the phrase to be an independent introduction to each

chapter but rather a part of the chapter itself. In addition, al-Qushayrī believed that each

بسم الله الرحمان الرحيم had a meaning different from the others, and each had a significant

mystical implication.[200] He began each chapter at the beginning, by explaining the unique

meaning of بسم الله الرحمان الرحيم. He then, explained each verse individually, sentence

by sentence. In doing this, he presented first the apparent meaning or as it was understood

by the traditionists. He followed this with its mystical meaning according to moderate

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[199] Al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1: 7

[200] Al-Qushayrī, *Laṭā'if*, 1:.57.

Ṣūfis. This sequence was not rigidly followed. He sometimes mixed while clearly distinguishing one from the other both the traditional and mystical interpretations. Typical of moderate *Ṣūfī* works, al-Qushayrī sometimes touched slightly on grammatical issues and totally ignored judicial issues.[201]

An example of his exegesis of Q.1:1 بسم الله الرحمان الرحيم (In he Name of God, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful) concerns al-Qushayrī's view of the Arabic term *al-ism* 'the name'. He believed that the term indicates that the reader should strive to characterize himself with an effort particular to those who have elevated themselves to the status of *al-mushāhadāt* 'witnesses (of the truth)'. Al-Qushayrī added that whoever did not strive to elevate himself would not feel the sweetness that one should feel upon reciting the verse. The reader would fail to honor the purity of the relationship that is inherent between the state of the reciter/witness of truth and the verse.[202]

Reaction of the Orthodox to the Variations of Exegesis

The emergence of the *tafsīr* variations was strongly criticized by traditionalists such as Ibn Taymiyya, al-Dhahabī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Suyūṭi and others. They believed that such interpretations by what they called the *'mubtadi''* 'practioners of unIslāmic innovation,' were nothing but distortions of the exegesis of the Prophet, his Companions and the successors. Thus, they launched uncompromising attacks on *tafsīr* variations. In addition, they have advocated that Muslims should write and read traditional *tafsīr* only

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[201] Al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 2: 18.

[202] Al-Qushayrī, *Laṭā'if*, 1: 57.

and warned against *ra'y* that does not have any basis in sound Arabic usage. They used four different sources to substantiate their views: 1) The Qur'ān, 2) *ḥadīth*, 3) Sayings of the *Ṣaḥāba*, 4) Saying of the *Tābiʿūn*.

Among the Qur'ānic verses quoted to support their position is Q.7:3

قل إنما حرم ربى الفواحش ماظهر منهاومابطن والأثم والبغى بغير الحق

وأن تشركوابالله مالم ينزل به سلطاناوأن تقولواعلى الله ما لاتعلمون

(Say (O Muḥammad) "Indeed, those things (especially) that my Lord has forbidden are great evil sins whether committed openly or secretly, sins (of all kinds), unrighteous oppression, joining partners with God for which he has given no authority, and saying things about God of which you have no knowledge).

The traditionalists say that the structure and clear meanings of the verse indicate that saying things about Allāh without having the correct and necessary knowledge as great a sin as the sins mentioned at the beginning of the verse. Any exegesis, therefore, without information from the Prophet is prohibited.[203]

Substantiating this position, they claim, is the verse Q. 16:44: وأنزلناإليك الذكر

تبيين للناس ما نزل إليهم (And We have sent down unto you (O Muḥammad) the reminder(the Qur'ān) that you may explain clearly to men what is sent down to them, and that they may give thought. The idea here, as understood by the traditionalists, is that the Prophet Muḥammad was the only person who has been given authority by God to explain the Qur'ān. Thus, no one can give *tafsīr* by their own independent opinion.

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[203] Jūda Muḥammad Muḥammad MahdI, *al-Wāḥidī wa Manhajuhu fī al-Tafsīr* (Cairo: Al-Majlis al-A'lā li al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyya, 1979). p. 152

The orthodox frequently quoted the following hadith to support their view: "whoever explains the Qur'ān according to his personal opinion shall take his place in hell."[204] In another narration, "Whoever said anything about the Qur'ān by his own opinion, even if its correct, he is wrong."[205] They quoted Abū Bakr al-Siddīq's well known remark "What earth will bear me and what sky will shadow me if I say anything by my opinion when explaining the Qur'ān?" They also cited Sa'īd Ibn al-Musayyib [d. 443-105] who said, whenever he was asked about *tafsīr*, "We do not say anything about the Qur'ān."[206] Masrūq Ibn al-Ajda'a said: "Abstain from *tafsīr (ittaqū al-tafsīr)*. Verily, it is a narration about God."[207] Some proponents of the traditional *tafsīr* have claimed that the Qur'ān cannot be understood without the Prophetic hadith.[208] The call for traditional exegesis exclusively and against all use of *ra'y*, which in their view is not intellectually justifiable.

Certain jurists, grammarians, and theologians including al-Ghazālī, Ibn 'Aṭiyya, al-Qurṭubī, and Abū Ḥayyān challenged the traditionalists and came up with uncompromising, sharp, and forceful responses using the same sources employed by their

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[204] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 395. Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, p. 105.

[205] Alūsi, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 1: 1.

[206] Sa'īd Ibn al-Musayyib was known as the jurist of Medina. His contemporaries unanimously described him as one of the most knowledgeable Tābi'ī. He said about himself. No one knows better than me the judgment of the Prophet, Abū Bakr and 'Umar. See al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkira*, 1: 54-7. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 1: 7.

[207] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 1: 7.

[208] Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr*, 1: 4-5.

opponents. In regards to Qur'ān 16:44, which the traditionalists quoted, Ibn 'Aṭiyya was

that although the Prophet was given responsibility to explain the Qur'ān, his

interpretation was made according to the necessity of the time for the people of that

particular time. After the death of the Prophet, further explanation might be needed to

clarify generalities in the Prophet interpretation. Thus, the argument goes, there is a need

for *ra'y* and it is permissible provided the basic rules of *tafsīr* are applied.[209]

Al-Bayhaqī [d.458-107] questiones the authenticity of the ḥadīth "Whoever

explained the Qur'ān by his own opinion, he shall take his seat in the hell fire." He added

If the the ḥadīth is authentic, it could be a prohibition only on opinions that do not adhere

to the basic rules of *tafsīr*.[210]

Al-Ghazālī stated that the ḥadīth has two probable meanings or indications. Either

it limited the *tafsīr* to the Prophet only, which he believed was not the case because the

Prophet did not explain the whole Qur'ān, or it might mean something else. Furthermore,

he added that if the first assumption were correct, then the verse of Q.4:83 should be

referred to: ولو ردوه إلى الله وإ لى الر سول لعلمه الذين يستنبطونه منهم (If they would only

refer it to the messenger and those among them who hold command, those of them who

investigate matter would have known about it). According to this verse, contended al-

Ghazālī, proper investigation cannot be done without using *ra'y*.[211] As for the statement

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[209] Mahdi, *al-Wāḥidī*, p. 153. al- Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 2: 162.

[210] Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 2: 162.

by Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, "What earth will bear me and what sky will overshadow me if I say anything by my opinion when explaining the Qur'ān?", Ibn 'Aṭiyya allowed for two posibilities, either that Abū Bakr said this at the very beginning of his *khilāfa* (Caliphate) to prevent Muslims from engaging in *tafsīr* haphazardly; or that Abū Bakr, thought that *tafsīr* should not be made by opinion alone when he first became caliph, and then found as time passed, that use of *ra'y* was unavoidable in *tafsīr*. Thus, when he was asked about the meaning of ﺀﻼﻛ *"kalāla"*, which is a part of Q. 4:12, he said, "I answer by my own *ra'y*. If it is correct, thanks be to God. If it is wrong, however, it is from me and Satan, and God is innocent of it.[212]

As for the abstaining by some *Tābi'ūn* from *tafsīr*, al-Zarkashī said that certain eminent *Ṣaḥāba*, such as Zubayr Ibn 'Awwām, 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān , and Ṭalḥa Ibn 'Ubayd Allāh avoided narrating ḥadīth or ascribing sayings to the Prophet not to avoid independent opinion, but for reasons of piety only. The same could be said of the abstaining of the *Tābi'ūn* from *tafsīr*.[213]

The defenders of the use of *ra'y* in exegesis also used the Qur'ān and ḥadīth to substantiate their position. Among the frequent examples quoted were Qur'ān. 38: 29

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[211] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, n.d). 1: 29. Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi',*. 1: 33.

[212] 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Ibn Ghālib Ibn 'Aṭiyya, *Muqaddimatān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Khāniji, 1972). pp. 186-7.

[213] Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*. 2: 162..

كتاب أنزلناه مبارك ليدبروا آياته وليتذكر أولواالألباب (We have sent down a book to you that is

blessed, so prudent men may ponder over its verses and thereby be reminded). They also

quote Q. 47: 24أفلايتدبرون القرآن (Will they not meditate on the Qur'ān?) The point made

here is that if using opinion in understanding the Qur'ān was prohibited, there would be no

purpose for the revelation of these verses.[214]

The proponents of *ra'y* cited the famous hadith in which the Prophet obviously

encouraged making *ijtihād*: "whoever makes *ijtihād* and he is right, will earn two rewards.

If, however, he is wrong, he will earn only one".[215]

As a result of these arguments between traditionalists and theologian-jurists, the

classical *tafsīr* was divided into two major categories: *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* and al-

Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y. Naturally, the *tafsīr* literature was also divided into two.

The Major Categorizations of Tafsīr

Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr

The word *ma'thūr* is a passive participle derived from the root *athr* to trace, to

mark. The verb *athara* means to transmit, to report, to pass along, etc. Thus, *ma'thūr*

means that which is transmitted, handed down. *Al-tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* is, generally

speaking, understood to be the exegesis of the Prophet, Companions and successors.

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[214] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 384-5

[215] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, p. 52.

The major *tafsīr* books considered as the representatives of *al-tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* are:[216]

1) *Jāmi' al-Bayān* by al-Ṭabarī

2) *Al-Muḥarrir al-Wajīz fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-'Azīz*, by Ibn 'Aṭiyya.[217]

3) *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl* by al-Baghawī [d. 510-116].

4) *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* by Ibn Kathīr.

5) *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, by al-Suyūṭī.

6) *Baḥr al-'Ulūm* known as *Tafsīr Abī Layth al-Samarqandī*, by Naṣr Ibn Muḥammad Abū Layth al-Samarqandī.[218]

Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y

The word *ra'y* is a verbal noun which means opinion, belief, analogy, and exertion. Technically, it is independent opinion, that is, it is used to denote the interpretation of the Qur'ān by exerting the mind in understanding the word of God in the absence of any tradition from the Prophet, but it is based on the sound knowledge of the Arabic language

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[216] These works have been considered to be *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr's* major books because of their heavy dependence on transmission reports.

[217] 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Ibn Ghālib Ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn 'Aṭiyya, was one of the famous Andalusian Scholars of tafsīr, jurisprudence, ḥadīth and linguistics. According to Ibn Khaldūn, Ibn 'Aṭiyya's tafsīr was more popular than any tafsīr in North Africa Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, 3: 323. Al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 247.

[218] Naṣr Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Samarqandī was a great jurist and interpreter. Al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2: 139.

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and the implementation of the principles of *tafsīr*.[219] This type of *tafsīr*, however, is divided into two parts:

1) *al-ra'y al-maḥmūd* or *al-mamdūh* 'praiseworthy'.

2) *al-ra'y al-madhmūm* 'blameworthy'.

Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y al-Maḥmūd or al-Mamdūh

Al-ra'y al-maḥmūd is independent opinion that is based on the principles of *tafsīr* and Arabic language, provided that the resulting exegesis does not conflict with the tradition of the Prophet or the general fundamentals of Islamic thought.[220]

Al-*Ra'y al-Madhmūm* is independent opinion that is neither based on the principles of Arabic nor the ḥadīth and Sunna of the Prophet, Ṣaḥāba, and Tābi'ūn. Al-ra'y al-madhmūm is called this because both (traditionalists and traditionists) believed that the purpose of producing such *tafsīr* was to promote *bid'a*.[221] *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* by al-Rāzī and *Anwār al-Tanzīl* by al-Bayḍāwī [d. 685-1286][222] are among the important *tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-mamdūh*.

In his introduction, al-Bayḍāwī indicated that the science of *tafsīr* is the highest and most honorable type of knowledge. Therefore, it is not proper for anyone to practice

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[219] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*. 1: 292. Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*. 1: 32.

[220] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 403.

[221] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, 1: 292. Al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 2: 49.

[222] Nāsir al-Dīn Abū al-Khayr 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Umar Ibn Muḥammad Ibn 'Alī, al-Bayḍāwī, was a Chief Justice of Shirāz. He was highly praised by the scholars of his time. See al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2: 102-3. Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr*, 1: 297.

it without mastering all of the Islāmic sciences and being well-versed in Arabic and the
literary sciences. He hesitated to write a *tafsīr*, believing that he lacked the proper
knowledge. He wrote his *tafsīr* to include the traditions of the prominent Ṣaḥāba and
Tābi'ūn, linguistic and grammatical issues, and the variant Qur'ānic readings.[223] The work
has been seen as a summary of al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Kashshāf*, but al-Baydāwī deleted all
Mu'tazilīte views.[224]

Other important works of *tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-mamdūh* include *Irshād al-'Aql al-
Salīm ilā Mazāyā al-Kitāb al-Karīm* by Abū al-Su'ūd,[225] *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* by Abū
Hayyān and *Madārik al-Tanzīl wa Haqā'iq al-Ta'wīl* by al-Nasafī (d.701-1302).[226] In his
introduction, al-Nasafī mentioned that someone whom he respected asked him to write a
tafsīr discussing grammatical, literary part of the Qur'ān and and aspect of its recitation.
The same person also asked him to embellish his exegesis with the sayings of the
traditionists, but without *bid'a* viewpoints. Also, his text should not be long, boring, or
defective in any way. Thus, he wrote his *tafsīr* in a very short period.

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[223] Al-Baydāwī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1946). 1: 2.

[224] Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr*, 1: 297.

[225] Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Muṣṭafā al-'Imād was one of the outstaanding Imām of his timc. His tafsīr was one of the best exegesis in relating to literary and lingustic aspects. Sec, al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr*, 1: 345.

[226] Nasafī's Madārik is a summaary of both *al-Kashshāf and Anwār al-Tanzīl*. Hājjī Khalīfa, *kashf al-Zunūn*, 2: 248.

Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y al-Madhmūm

The *tafsīr* texts mentioned previously in the section concerning *tafsīr* variations are considered to be *tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-madhmūm* by traditionalists and some jurists, such as Ibn Taymiyya, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Kathīr and others. They believed that those exegeses had ignored the background knowledge of linguistic facts, the Prophet, his Companions and the successors' interpretations. They further believed that the authors of such texts were too educated to be unaware that they were misapplying and misinterpreting Qur'ānic verses. They simply desired Qur'ānic justification for the teaching of dogma they wished to stress.[227] *Al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* and *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y* continued to be the two major categories of the science of *tafsīr* until our modern time, when other trends and methodology in *tafsīr* emerged due to the new social structure, new laws, and new system of government of the modern world.

Trends in Modern Qur'ānic Exegesis

From 1750 until the middle of the 20th century, almost the entire Islamic world was under Western occupation or influence, mainly by the British and the French. Since then, the influence of the West began to affect Islāmic, Arab and Indo-Pakistan cultures. In the beginning of the 20th century, the impact of the West became more intensive and penetrated all aspects of Muslim life, socially, politically, educationally, culturally, and economically.

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[227] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, pp. 91-2. Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, 1: 28-9.

Toward the end of the 19th and during the early 20th centuries, Islāmic reformation and revivalism emerged in the Islāmic world, mainly in India and Egypt. The purpose of this movement was to liberate Muslims from foreign influence and to establish the Islāmic identity in all aspects of Muslim life. This was the exact goal of the Islāmic movement in Egypt.

In India and Indo-Pakistan, the movement's approach was to reform the Muslim society in the light of Western civilization. This was the reason that Sir Aḥmad Khan Bahadar [1817 - 1896] established Aligarh University.[228] Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh, a student of Shaykh Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, became the most prominent advocate of Islāmic revivalism after the death of his teacher.

In order for these movements to achieve their goals, they took rational, intellectual and scientific approaches to interpreting Islām. New trends thus appeared in Islāmic literature in general and *tafsīr* in particular. Our discussion will explain the six major aspects of these trends: 1. Intellectual. 2. Scientific. 3. Rhetorical (Moral Suasion [*adabiy*]) 4. Philological. 5. Traditional. 6. Natural History.

Jansen accurately observed that no modern exegete has produced a work devoted exclusively to one particular aspect. He, however, divided the modern exegetical field into three—not six—categories: scientific, traditional, and day-to day Muslim affairs.[229]

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[228] Goldziher, *Madhhab*, p. 342.

[229] J. G. Jansen, *the Interpretation of Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974) pp. 7-8.

Intellectual Exegesis

This approach by reformers aims at awaking Muslims to realize that the Qur'ān was revealed first and foremost to guide mankind and to educate them how to achieve success in this life and the Hereafter. Thus, the Qur'ān is the answer to mankind's problems. Muslims must seek solution to their problems—in every sphere: social, economic, political, etc.—from the Qur'ān only. According to this approach, Muslims must understand the Qur'ān as a book of guidance to be used according to how Muslims perceive their problems within the modern world. This is contrary to relying on classical Qur'ānic exegesis. This perspective holds that classical interpretations, although correct for those of the past eras, are not necessarily applicable for Muslims of the present day.[230]

Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm. The most popular representative of this trend is *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm*, popularly known as *Tafsīr al-Manār*. The work is actually a combination of the works of Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh and his student, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā. 'Abduh delivered a series of lectures on *tafsīr* in al-Azhar University for a period of six years. He began lecturing from 1317 A.H. up to 1323 A.H., the year he died. He only gave the interpretation of the first 4 suras (chapters)[231]

Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, the most outstanding student of 'Abduh, published his own notes and his teacher's lectures in *al-Mannār Journal*. Subsequently, he compiled all

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[230] Riḍā, *Tafsīr*, 1: 24-6.

[231] 'Abduh has written a little book of *tafsīr* known as " *Tafsīr Juz' 'Amma.*". *Juz' 'Amma* represents one thirtieth of the thirty Juz' of the entire Qur'ān. In addition to that, he delivered many lectures on *tafsīr* in Beirut and Algeria.

of his lecture notes with some of his own comments and exegesis. These covered twelve suras. 'Abduh approved suras one to four before he died. Rashīd Riḍā continued alone after the death of his master from sura 4:125 to 12:107. Riḍā faithfully indicated the parts for which he and his master were jointly responsible, and where 'Abduh's words ended and where his own additions began.[232] The work was published in Beirut by Dār al-Fikr, in twelve volumes.[233]

Shaykh 'Abuh's purpose for producing the exegesis was to make Muslims aware that the Qur'ān is a religious book that essentially was revealed to guide mankind to that which will enable Muslims to achieve success and the best life in this world as well as in the next world.[234]

Furthermore, Rashīd Riḍā explained in detail the wishes that his teacher desired to accomplish through his teaching and exegesis. He stated that there is nothing in our religion that is in conflict with present modernization -- except in some usury issues. "Surely" 'Abduh said, according to Rashīd Riḍā, "I am ready to establish harmony between the true Islām and whatever the Ottoman Empire might need to elevate itself to reach the standard of the civilization achieved by the West, through the process followed

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[232] Riḍā, *Tafsīr*. 1:15-16 see " *Islāmic Studies presented to Chareles J. Adams.* " ed. Wael, B. Hallaq and Donald, P. Little, E.J Brill (Leiden: N.Y.Kobenhavnkoln,1990). p. 22.

[233] Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr*, 2: 528. See also, Manna' Khalil Qaṭṭān, *Mabāhith fī Ulūm al-Qur'ān.* (Beirut: Dār al-Malayīn, 1981.) p. 372.

[234] Riḍā, *Tafsīr*, 1: 17. 4: 43.

by the West. I will do that through the instruction of the Qur'ān and the authentic

tradition of the Prophet, not through a particular school of thought in Islām."[235]

The characteristics and methodology of 'Abduh in his exegesis. In his *Islām*

and Modernism in Egypt, Adams has excellently described the character of Abduh's

commentary as follows. "He placed the primary emphasis upon the guidance of the

Qur'ān, in a manner which agrees with the verse which describes it, and the warnings and

good tidings and guidance and correction for which it was sent down, at the same time

giving care to the requirements of the present day conditions with respect to acceptability

of phrasing, and having regard for the capacity of different classes of readers and

understanding."[236] The following statement from 'Abduh provides a clear image of his

exegesis: "Today, *tafsīr* is in the eyes of our people -- and before today is nothing more

than imitating the classical scholars, although those works (of scholars) may deviate from

the main purpose of the Qur'ān. God will not ask (anybody) on the Day of Judgment

about what was previously understood (by others) rather He will ask, what did you

understand about His book? Did you ponder over the meaning of the book that was given

to you?"[237] In view of this, 'Abduh based his exegesis on his own personal opinion in

understanding Qur'ān. As a result, he rejected or interpreted some established principles

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[235] *Ibid,.* 1: 239. See also , Goldziher, *Madhhab*, p. 353.

[236] Charles Adam, *Islam and Modernism In Egypt* (London,Oxford University Press Humpherey Milford,1933). p,111

[237] Riḍā, *Tafsīr*, 2: 25-6.

differently from the understanding of the majority of Muslim scholars, such as his

interpretation of Angels, Satan, and the Qur'ānic story about flight of birds طير أبابيل [238]

Finally, *Tafsīr al-Manār* contains a variety of interpretations and propositions

ranging from the Prophet's exegesis, that of his Companions, immediate successors to

linguistic considerations such as rhetoric, quotations from Jewish and Christian sources,

and judicial issues.

The work, generally speaking, has been well received by the Muslim world.

However, some scholars, such as Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ, Fahd 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Rūmī and

others, have been critical of *Manār*.[239] These criticisms focused mainly on those ideas that

rejected the established principles that we have mentioned. Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā's

contribution to the exegesis consists of opinions which differ little from those of his

teacher, with the exception of a few concepts concerning application of ḥadīth, where

Rashīd Riḍā seemed to adhere more to the classical thinking than did his his teacher.

Scientific Approach

Because of the scientific and other advances of the modern world, this approach

insists that the Qur'ān must be understood in the light of modern science, rather than that

of a jurisprudential approach. One of the representatives of this trend is *al-Jawāhir fī*

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[238] 'Abd al-Majīd 'Abd al-Salām Al-Muhtasibī, *Ittijāhāt al-Tafsīr fī al-'Aṣr al-Rāhin* (Jordan: Jam'iyyat Ummāl al-Maṭābi' al-Ta'āwuniyya,1982-1402, 2nd ed). pp. 157, pp.183-5. See al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr,* 2: 543.

[239] Fahd 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Rūmī, *Manhaj al-Madrasat al-'Aqliyya al-Ḥadītha fī al-Tafsīr* (Beirut: Mu'assasa al-Risāla,1981). 1: pp. 149-54. Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ, *Mabāhith fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Malayīn, 1986, 2nd ed.) p. 297.

Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm by Shaykh Jawharī Ṭanṭāwī [d.1940]. Ṭanṭāwī was a lecturer at Dār al- 'Ulūm in Cairo. While lecturing in the aforementioned institute, he taught some exegesis and published *tafsīr* in a magazine called *"Majalla al-Malāji'ī al-'Abbāsiyya"*. Subsequently, he compiled these lectures and writings into twenty-five volumes which were published in Cairo.

In his introductory statement, Ṭanṭāwī stated the reason for writing his work. He said, "When I examined the Muslim community, I found most of the Muslim intellectuals ignored the importance of physical science. Only a very few of them thought about it. Thus, I intended to write a Qur'ānic exegesis. Hopefully, it would inspire Muslims to study the physical science, medicine, mathematics, engineering, astronomy and other sciences."

Ṭanṭāwī was strongly convinced that the interpretation of Qur'ān in the twentieth century by a scientific approach was more important than classical interpretation. He declared that scientific exegesis is incumbent upon individuals whereas jurisprudence is not.[240] Thus, he openly attacked the jurists when he stated "The knowledge that we incorporated in Qur'ānic exegesis is the knowledge that the small jurists of Islām ignored. This is the time of revolution. This is the time in which the realities come out."[241]

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[240] Jawharī Shaykh Ṭanṭāwī, *Al-Jawāhir fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Maṭba'at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Awlādih, 1951). 1: 2

[241] *Ibid*, 1: 116.

He begins each of his explanations by elucidating a particular pasages of the Qur'ānic word by word. He then follows with various of elaboration. For example, when a verse was related to a branch of modern science, he gave a detailed discussion on the subject, quoting Western sciences. He uses pictures, plants and other things in his book for purposes of illustration. Ṭanṭāwī also used Jewish and Christian sources, such as the Gospel of Barnabas.[242]

Contemporary scholars did not warmly embrace this *tafsīr*. Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ, Jansen, and others criticized it. They believed that it had too many scientific considerations and other ideas, so much that the work was not a true exegesis.[243] Abū Ḥayyān and others had made similar statements about al-Rāzī's *Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb*. In our view, such statements or opinions are acceptable only if the understanding and the concept of *tafsīr* were restricted to judicial issues. However, modern Muslim claim that the Qur'ān has the answer for the Muslims' problems in particular and mankind in general, hence, the appearance of *tafsīr*s such as that of Ṭanṭāwī.

Rhetorical (Moral Suasion 'adabī'.

The style of this approach is rhetorical. Much attention is given to literary considerations. The objectives of this trend are the same as those of Muḥammad 'Abduh's work. The representative of the approach is *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān* by Sayyid Quṭb, which was published in Cairo in eight volumes. Sayyid Quṭb's educational background was

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[242] Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr*, 2: 487.

[243] Al-Ṣāliḥ, *Mabahith fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, p. 297.

Arabic literature and sociology. He was an active member of the Muslim Brotherhood, the most powerful Islāmic movement in Egypt. In his introductory statement, Sayyid Quṭb stated that the solution of the Muslim community and mankind's problems lies in the teaching and practicing of the Qur'ān only, simply because the Qur'ān was a book revealed primarily to guide mankind to achieve peace and happiness.[244]

The method of *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān* is to give a general overview of the whole sura (chapter), and to state its purpose and ultimate goal. Sayyid then discusses the text, verse by verse. *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān* does not explain word by word as many classical works have done. If there is any ḥadīth from the Prophet concerning the meaning of a particular verse, Sayyid Quṭb mentions it. At the end of the sura, he usually gives a brief summary pointing out the relationship between the chapter and the next.

Although the dominant style of the *tafsīr* is rhetorical, Sayyid Quṭb refers his reader to Islāmic legal literature stating that juristic matters are not the purpose of his *tafsīr*. He gives theological arguments very little attention. The *tafsīr* has been overwhelmingly acclaimed by Muslims simply because it focuses on the social problems of Muslims of his time. Muḥammad Ayoub has rightly pointed out that *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān* has a wide reception in both Sunnī and Shī'a communities.[245]

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[244] Sayid Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1982-1400, 10th ed) 1: 11-16

[245] Ayoub, *The Qur'ān*, 1: 39.

Philological Exegesis and historical Commentary .

This approach advocates that the Qur'ān must be understood through the Arabic

language because the Qur'ān is in Arabic. According to this approach, one must know the

chronological order of the Qur'ān and the circumstances of time and place at the

revelation of the text. There is no complete work of *tafsīr* which represents this trend, but

there is an incomplete two volume *tafsīr* by 'Ā'isha Bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Shāṭī', known

best as Bint al-Shāṭī'; the *tafsīr* is *Tafsīr al-Bayān li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm.*

The concept of this trend was initiated by Amīn al-Khūlī [d.1967], who never

published a Qur'ānic commentary. He taught Qur'ānic exegesis at al-Jāmi'a al-Miṣriyya

(Egyptian University) in Giza. For Amīn al- Khūlī, the ideal *tafsīr* should be divided into

two parts. First, the study of the background of the Qur'ān, the history of its genesis, the

Arab society at the time of the revelation, the Arabic language, etc. Second, the

interpretation of the verses of the Qur'ān in the light of preliminary studies.[246] Bint al-

Shāṭī, a student of Amīn al- Khūlī who became his wife later, was exposed to this method

by her husband and became very enthusiastic about it. She began to advocate it in 1964

and gave many lectures on the subject matter.[247] More interestingly, she summarized the

principles of the trends as expanded or articulated by her husband in his work *"Manāhij*

al-Tajdīd" under the following four headings:

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[246] Jansen, *The Interpretation*, p. 65.

[247] Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Sharīf, *Ittijāhāt al-Tajdīd fī al-Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* fī Miṣr (Cairo; Dār al-Turāth, 1982). p. 597. See also Issa Boullata, *"Modern Qur'ān Exegesis"*, *A study of Bint al-Shāṭī's Method. The Muslim World, 64,* 1979, p. 104.

1). The basis of the method is the objective treatment of what is to be understood of the Qur'ān and it begins by the collection of all suras and verses of the topics to be studied.

2). To understand a particular Qur'ānic notion, in context, verses on it are placed in the chronological order of their revelation so that circumstances of time and place may be known. Traditional reports on the "occasions of revelations" are taken into consideration only as far as those occasions are the contextual circumstances associated with the revelation of a verse. They are not its purpose or cause *sine que non*. The significance lies in the generality of words, not the specificity of the occasion.

3). To understand the meanings of words—since Arabic is the language of the Qur'ān—the original linguistic meaning is sought which gives the sense of feeling for the Arabic word in its various material and figurative uses. The Qur'ānic meaning is then noted by collecting all forms of the work in the Qur'ān and studying their particular context in specific verses and suras and their general context in the Qur'ān as a whole.

4). To understand the subtleties of expression, the text in its Qur'ānic setting for what it may mean, both the letter and the spirit of the text being considered. The sayings of exegetes are then examined in relation of the text studied, and only what agrees with the text may be accepted. To be avoided are all sectarian interpretations and all instructive *Isrā'iliyyāt* (Jewish-Christian materials) that were forced on the books of *tafsīr*. In the same manner, grammatical and rhetorical usage in the Qur'ān is to be considered the criterion by which the rules of grammarians and rhetoricians are judged, not vice versa, since most of these were people for whom Arabic was acquired and not natural.[248]

As far as the methodology of Bint al-Shāṭi' and some of her important findings and details are concerned, see Muhammad Sharīf and Boullata.[249]

Bint al-Shāṭi' 's *tafsīr* was described by Mannā' Qaṭṭān as an acceptable effort. However, he expressed some concern about deficiency toward this method concerning certain aspects of the Qur'ānic sciences including miracles associated with the Qur'ān,

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[248] Boullata, " *Modern Qur'ān Exegesi*", *M.W*, pp. 104-105.

[249] Sharīf, *Itijāhāt al-Tajdīd*, pp. 595-610. Boullata, "*Modern Qur'ān Exegesi*", *M.W*, pp. 105-12.

Qur'ānic laws and basic principles. Muḥammad Sharīf had reservations similar to those of

Mannā' Qaṭṭān.[250]

The Traditional Approach

This approach relies heavily on classical *tafsīr* and literature. Nevertheless, it also

addresses some issues of modern time. One of the representatives of this trend is *Maḥāsin*

al-Ta'wīl by Shaykh Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī [1866 - 1914]. The work was

published in 17 Volumes. Al-Qāsimī stated in his introductory statement the reason for

writing his *tafsīr*: "... after spending half of my life in studying the deep meaning of the

Qur'ān, I made my intention to write a book in *tafsīr* so that I will be recognized among

the prominent exegetes."[251] Al-Qāsimī's methodology is typically classical. He is greatly

concerned with the *qirā'āt* (different ways of reciting the Qur'ān), ḥadīth of the Prophet,

the Companions and the successors. When he deals with the verses pertaining to

theological matters, he always stands with the traditionists' position. He heavily quoted

from Ibn Kathīr. Al-Qāsimī was, however, influenced to a small extent by Shaykh

Abduh's methodology.

Natural History

This trend is described by al-Dhahabī as one that is preferred or used by mulḥid

'renegade' while Jansen termed it as a natural history approach.[252] Al-Dhahabī, as a

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[250] Qaṭṭān, *Mabāḥith*, p. 375.

[251] Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn al- Qāsimī, Tafsīr al-Qāsimī, known also as *Maḥāsin Ta'wīl* (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā'is, 1994). 1: 1-5.

Muslim, was concerned with the contents of such works as *tafsīr* while Jansen looked at them from a Western scholar's viewpoint. This trend believes that all *tafsīr* literature is useless and it rejects some of the established principles of the Qur'ān and hadīth, and the miracles of the Prophet Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Solomon, etc. This approach claims to be a new method to understand the Qur'ān. One of the outstanding representatives of this trend is *al-Hidāya wa al-'Irfān* by Muḥammad Abū Zayd. The book was confiscated by al-Azhar University which also issued a *fatwā* rejecting the contents of the book and declaring the author to be an apostate.[253]

Summary and Comments

Qur'ānic exegesis has a long history. It began with the Prophet's simple and clear explanations. After the Prophet's death the Companions took it upon themselves as a divine obligation to teach and explain the Qur'ān to the second generation of Muslims. During the time of the Ṣaḥāba four major schools of Qur'ānic exegesis emerged and were named after the areas in which they became prominent: Mecca, Iraq, Medina and Syria. Each of these schools produced a number of highly regarded authorities in exegesis. In the period of the Successors, the method and nature of exegesis were not much different from earlier *tafsīrs*. In general, the nature of the *tafsīr* was simple and brief. *Tafsīrs* were a combination of narration and *ra'y*.

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[252] Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr*, 1: 500. Jansen, *The Interpretation*, p. 35.

[253] Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr* 2: 500-9.

By the end of the second century of Islām and the beginning of the third century, new elements began to appear. Some exegetes and scholars began to focus on explanations of the difficult words of the Qur'ān and their meanings so that both the Arab who had lost the sense of the language and the newly converted non-Arab could understand the Qur'ān. Moreover, scholars ceased limiting their works to one particular specialty or concern. The ḥadīth scholars brought together into one work ḥadīths that dealt with a variety of subjects, not just *fiqh*, *tawḥīd* (Islāmic monotheism), etc. The *Musnad* of Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal is an example.

Western scholars of Islām believe that no works of *tafsīr* were produced during the period of the Companions or the successors. Our contention, to be discussed in chapter six, is that *tafsīr* not only existed but was taught and passed along, primarily through oral transmission.

At the beginning of the fourth century, Al-Ṭabarī's work appeared, establishing a turning point of history of *tafsīr*. His comprehensive text was unique in both methodology and contents. It contained both previous approaches, not only the lines of transmission and linguistic consideration, but also legal and theological issues.

After al-Ṭabarī, most, if not all, exegetes discontinued reporting full *isnāds* and many began using unqualified information; unscholarly texts became widespread. In addition, the exegetes began to write *tafsīr* from the perspective of their specialty only. *Tafsīr* remained, however, divided into the two major types: *Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* and *Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y*. They remained as such until modern times where the purpose and goals for producing exegesis changed. The purpose of the classical exegetes was to explain the

words of the text so that any reader could understand the Qur'ān. The modern exegetes wrote to inspire Muslims through their exegesis to adhere to the Qur'ān and teaching of Islām in general, and to make Muslims aware that their success in this life is based on the Qur'ān.

CHAPTER III

TAFSĪR BI AL-RA'Y

Terms and Definitions

According to Arabic lexicons, the word *ra'y*, is a verbal noun. It has a variety of

meanings, rendered as to see with eyes, with mind, to reflect, to suppose.[254] Muslim

grammarians, and linguists, such as Ibn Hishām al-Anṣārī and Ibn Mālik stated that the

word رأى *ra'ā* is derived from *ra'y*, and is a transitive verb which takes one or two direct

objects. If it refers to one direct object, it means to see with the eyes; if, however, it takes

two direct objects, it means to see with the mind or to suppose.[255] Thus, when one says

"*ra'aytu Zayd*" (I saw Zayd), this means I saw Zayd literally with (my) eyes. In the

phrase "*ra'aytu Allāh akbar min kulli shay'*." (literally I saw God greater than everything

or I believed that God is greater than everything.), the verb رأى means to believe because

it takes two direct objects.

In the Qur'ān, we find the term "*ra'y*" is used in different forms (past, present, and

verbal noun) to denote the same lexical senses. For example, in Q. 6:76 فلما جن عليه

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[254] Ibn Manẓur, Muḥammad Ibn Mukarram. *Lisān al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dār Sādir, n.d). 14: 299-300

[255] Jamāl al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd Allāh Ibn Yūsuf Ibn Hishām al-Anṣārī, *al-Taṣrīḥ 'alā al-Tawḍīḥ*, ed. Majmū'a min al-'Ulamā' (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.) 1: 26.

اليل رأى كوكبا (when the night covered him over with darkness he saw a star) the term

ra'y is used in the verse to mean sighting with the eye.[256] In another passage of Q. 8:48:

إ نى أرى ما لا ترون

Verily, I see what you see not), *ra'y* is used here as mental insight. In the ḥadīth of the

Prophet, we find that *ra'y* is used in two senses. One, as personal opinion and two, as an

equivalent to *ijtihād* (self exertion). The reference to the first, is a report from Ibn Isḥāq

[d.213 or 218] when he narrated that during the battle of *Badr*,[257] the Prophet assigned

his Companions to camp at a specific place before the battle. Ḥabbāb Ibn Mundhir asked

the Prophet "Has Allāh inspired you to camp here or it is just *ra'y* and a war stratagem

and the matter of consultation? The Prophet answered it is a *ra'y* and a war stratagem."[258]

The reference for the second sense is the well known ḥadīth of Muʿādh Ibn Jabal,

when the Prophet delegated him to Yemen to invite people to Islām. The Prophet asked

Muʿādh, "By what would you judge people?" He replied, "By the book of God. If I find

no answer, I will consult the Prophet's tradition. If still I find no answer, then, I will exert

my mind (*ajtahid bi ra'yi*)."[259] Using personal opinion is used here in conjunction with

ijtihād. At the time of the Companions, the term *ra'y* was also used in two different

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[256] Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr*, 3: 178.

[257] Badr was the first war took place in Islām between Muslims and non-Muslims in the third yrar of Hijra.

[258] Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Mālik Ibn Hishām, Sīrat al-Nabī, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d). 2: 259. See Safi-Ur-Rahman Mubarakapuri *al-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm*, (Saudi Arabia, UK,USA, Pakistan, Maktaba Dār al-Salām 1915, 1st ed). 1:435.

[259] Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Iḥkām*, 6: 26.

ijtihād. At the time of the Companions, the term *ra'y* was also used in two different meanings. First, as an independent personal opinion in the absence of a clear indication from the Qur'ān or the Prophet's tradition. Second, as an equivalent to "*qiyās*" (analogical deduction). In his *I'lām al-Muwaqqi'īn*, Ibn Qayyim reported that, 'Abd Allāh Ibn Mas'ūd said: "If a legal issue is brought before you, and you do not find answers for it in the book of God, in the tradition of the Prophet, or in the statements of his Companions, then use your own personal opinion.[260]

A similar statement has been attributed to 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb.[261] In his letter of instructions to Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, he said: "When a case is presented before your, and you find no clear answer to it from the Qur'ān, or the tradition of the Prophet, then use your mind and analogy and weigh the case against them."[262] In this statement, *ra'y* is used as equivalent to "*qiyās*".

During the period of the *Tābi'ūn*, due to the emergence of various political-theological groups[263] in Islām, the term *ra'y* began to connote exegesis that was sectarian or *bid'a* . Hence, exegesis bi al-ra'y eventually came to denote Qur'ānic interpretation that had no basis in the tradition of the Prophet or his Companions. Thus, *ra'y* became a term of disparagement concerning exegesis. For example, a man accused Mujāhid of

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[260] Ibn Qayyim, *I'lām*, 1: 63.

[261] Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb* , 1: 43-44.

[262] *Ibid*, 3: 395

[263] The account on these sects would be given later in this chapter.

using *ra'y* in interpreting Qur'ān, Mujāhid rejected the accusation and literally cried

saying, "I cannot dare do that; I have learned Qur'ānic exegesis from about nineteen

Companions of the Prophet."[264]

'Ubayd Allāh, a grandson of 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, was asked about his opinion

concerning Zayd Ibn Aslam (an outstanding successor exegete of Medina). He answered:

"I do not find anything wrong with him, except that he interprets the Qur'ān by his

personal opinion.[265] 'Ikrima al-Barbarī and al-Ḍaḥḥāk Ibn Muzāhim, both were accused

by al-Naẓẓām Ibn Yassār [d.450-1165] (an outstanding Mu'tazilite) of using *ra'y*. In

leveling this charge, Ibn Yassār at the same time warning people against their exegeses.[266]

Qatāda Ibn Du'āma and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, both were also accused of using *ra'y* to

support Qadarites' perspectives (the notion that man is responsible for his action, not

God).[267]

During this period, the phrase "*fulān min ahl al-ra'y*" 'so and so is given to the

use of *ra'y* is used to depict anyone who believes in the Khārijīs' doctrine[268] (which holds

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[264] Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 8: 351-356.

[265] *Ibid*, 3:397-7.

[266] 'Amr Ibn Baḥr Ibn Maḥbūb al-Jāḥiz, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Khāniji, n.d.), 1: 168-7. The use of the term ra'y with a negative connotation was not limited only to the circle of theologians, it was also extended to include diffrent schools of the jurisprudence. Generally speaking, the Ḥanafi school was described as a school of ra'y while the Māliki school was belived to be a school of 'Athar' 'tradition'.

[267] 'Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr*, 1: 347-9 Al-Ghazālī. *Ihyā'*, 1: 292. See Al-Qurtubī. *al-Jami* ', 1: 32

[268] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* 14: 300.

professed only by the radical wing of the Khārijites). Due to the above meanings of *ra'y*, both literal ones and those extant at the time of the Prophet and his Companions, we conclude that the term *ra'y*, generally speaking, had been used to mean *ijtihād*, personal opinion, qiyās and belief (*i'tiqād*).

Having stated the meanings of *ra'y*, literally and traditionally, let us now proceed to define the term *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y* technically. *Al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y* is used to denote the exegesis of the Qur'ānic text, exerting the mind in understanding the word of God in the absence of a tradition of the Prophet, but based on the sound knowledge of Arabic language and the implementation of the principles of *tafsīr*.[269] Any Qur'ānic exegesis that conforms to this definition is said to be *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-maḥmūd or al-mamdūḥ*, i.e., 'praiseworthy exegesis'. However, any Qur'ānic exegesis that does not conform to this definition is technically called *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-madhmūm* 'blameworthy exegesis'.[270] Thus, *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-madhmūm*, is defined as exegesis done without proper knowledge of the sources of *tafsīr*, the *Sharī'a* 'Islāmic Law' and sound knowledge of Arabic. Thus, Islāmically speaking, *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y* is divided into: *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-maḥmūd and al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-madhmūm*. Generally speaking, the former is accepted by the majority of the Sunni traditionalists, jurists, prominent theologians and Sūfis. On the other hand, the latter is rejected by all those Sunni traditionalists, jurists and

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[269] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, 1: 292

[270] *Ibid*, 1: 292

theologians.[271] Before discussing the principles upon which the Sunnī scholars based
their rejection of *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-madhmūm*, it might be useful to examine the view
of three prominent scholars who have elaborated on the issue: al-Ṭabarī, al-Ghazālī, and
Ibn Taymiyya.

Scholars' Concepts of Exegesis

Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī

In his *Jāmi ʻ. al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabarī stated that the interpretation of the Qur'ān can be
only attained through four ways. First, there are some verses that can be understood only
through the explanation of the Prophet. This pertains to the ritual aspects of Islām, such
as how to perform the Prayer, Ḥajj (Pilgrimage).etc., and to various modes of the
Prophet's commands. Second, is the interpretation of some verses whose understanding
God preserved for Himself. This, al-Ṭabarī. said, concerns information about future dates
and time, such as the time when the hour of resurrection will begin, when Jesus, the son of
Mary will return etc. Third, understanding those verses about which ignorance is not
allowed or excused. This applies to very clear verses, as, for example, Q. 2:11.

وإذا قيل لهم لاتفسدوا فى الأرض قالوا إنما نحن مصلحون ألا إنهم هم المفسدون ولكن لايشعرون

(And when it is said to them make not mischief on earth. They say we are only peace
makers. Verily, they are the ones who make mischief, but they perceive, not.) The

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[271] Muḥammad ʻAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn ʻAbd al-Raḥīm Mubārakafūrī, *Tuḥfat al-Ahwadhī bi Sharḥ al-Jāmiʻ al-Tirmidh*,. ed ʻAbd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad ʻUthmān. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d). 1. 279-280.

meaning of this verse is very clear, al-Ṭabarī said, everyone knows the meaning of making

mischief. The fourth is interpretation of some verses which only scholars know.[272]

These are al-Ṭabarī four instances *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-madhmūm*. In the light of

this, it is obvious that al-Ṭabarī held that only one type of Qur'ānic exegesis can be used

by one who speaks or understands Arabic. Another type is comprehended by scholars

only. Thus, al-Ṭabarī concluded, any attempt to interpret the meaning of the verses that

are the sole prerogative of God is wrong and censurable, because his interpretation would

be nothing more than guess and surmise. Hence, God forbade his servants to do such a

thing when He said in Q. 7:33:

قل إنـما حرم ربى الفواحش ما ظهر منها وما بطن والأثم والبغى بغير الحق

وأن تشركوابالله ما لم ينزل به سلطاناوأن تقولواعلى الله ما لاتعلمون

(Say (O Muḥammad) but the things that my Lord has forbidden are "*al-fawāhish*"
(great evil sins, every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse, etc.). Whether committed
openly or secretly, sins (of all kinds) unrighteous oppression, joining partners (in worship)
with God about which no authority has been given, and saying things about God of which
you have no knowledge.)

Since there are some verses that cannot be understood without the explanation of

the Prophet, then any effort to interpret such verses, according to al-Ṭabarī, is

blameworthy. Again, al-Ṭabarī held that, any exegesis which disagrees with the exegesis

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[272] Ibn Taymiyya, *Fatāwā*, 13: 471..

of the Prophet, his Companions, Successors, or is not attained from sound Arabic

language knowledge is blameworthy.[273]

This being the case, al-Ṭabarī rejected the interpretation of Mujāhid concerning Q.

2:65   فقلنا لهم كونوا قردة خاسئين (We said to them. Be monkeys [and] despised)[274]

Abū Ḥāmīd Muḥammad al-Ghazālī

Being a theologian and a Ṣūfī, al-Ghazālī believed that the Qur'ān contains hidden

meanings which could be misunderstood if one relies solely on the literal Arabic. Yet one

who does not understand the literal Arabic would be using personal opinion in any attempt

he made to explain the hidden meanings. Hence, ḥadīth are neccessary to understand and

explain the literal meaning of the Qur'ān. The proper and thorough interpretation of the

hidden meanings can begin only when the ẓāhir (literal) meaning has been properly

understood with the aid of ḥadīth. [275]

The above-cited statement indicates that al-Ghazālī accepts the exegesis of the

Qur'ān by ra'y, but he admits only al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y maḥmūd. As for al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y

madhmūm, al-Ghazālī views it as the interpretation of the Qur'ān by one who has a

particular notion in his mind, then interprets the Qur'ān according to his opinion in order

that he may adduce an argument in favor of his purpose. If he did not have that opinion

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[273] Al-Ṭabarī , Jāmi' al-Bayān, 1: 79

[274] Ibid, 1: 80

[275] Al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā', 1: 292-5

and that fancy, that meaning would not appear to him from the Qur'ān. More interestingly, al-Ghazālī went to explain how three of the ways in which this happen:

1. Sometimes it happens despite knowledge, as in the case of a man who adduces an argument from a certain verse for advocating his *bid'a* knowing very well that this is not intended in the verse.

2. Sometimes it happens to a person ignorant of the basic principles of *sharī'a*, but since a Qur'ānic verse can be interpreted from two or more perspectives, his understanding inclines to that perspective which suits his purpose.[276] Therefore, it turns out that, he has explained the verse with his personal opinion. If either his personal opinion or the perspective which suits his purpose did not exist, then any other perspective would not carry much weight with him.

3. Sometimes a man might have a valid purpose for which he seeks an evidence or proof from the Qur'ān, and adduces a proof for that purpose with a verse in which, he knows, his own purpose is not intended. One of the examples given by al-Ghazālī is Q. 79:17: اذهب إلى فرعون إنه طغى. (Go to Pharaoh, verily he has transgressed). Here al-Ghazālī rejects the claim made by some that Moses was ordered to "Go to the heart of Pharaoh. Such interpretation, al-Ghazālī said, is sometimes used by some religious preachers for good purpose as embellishment to their sermons and motivate their audience, but this is forbidden. On the other hand, some sects, mainly the *bāṭinī*tes (a sect of *Shī'a*), al-

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[276] *Ibid*, 1: 292

Ghazālī said, employed this kind of interpretation for a corrupt purpose in order to deceive people and draw them to their false of thought and practices; they souhgt to support their corrupt opinion by twisting the meaning of the Qur'ān, even though they knew better.[277]

Abū al-'Abbās 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya

Ibn Taymiyya was one of the leading figures of the *salafiyyas* (a group of Muslims who claim to follow or believe in following the Qur'ān and the sunna in the same manner as the Companions of the Prophet and the faithful Muslims of the two succeeding generations).

Thus, he openly declared, "Whoever adopts a different method than that of the Companions and the Successors in interpreting the Qur'ān, or differs with them, even if he is a *mujtàhid* (a person who qualifies to deduce a sound judgment from the Qur'ān and sunna), is absolutely wrong in his exegesis; moreover, he is a *mubtadi'*.[278] This strong statement from Ibn Taymiyya suggests that he rejects all types of *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y*, whether it is *al-maḥmūd* or al-*madhmūm*. Yet in another statement in the *Muqaddima*, he appears to accept *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-maḥmūd*.

Ibn Taymiyya, however, considered *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-madhmūm* to be the interpretation of the Qur'ān that has two kinds of errors. One, the error in the meaning, and the other, the error in the words. The error in the meaning is to have a particular

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[277] *Ibid*, 1: 292

[278] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, p.89

dogma in mind, and try to find justification for it in the Qur'ān by twisting the meaning to suit a particular purpose, despite being aware that real meaning of the verse is not applicable or suitable to the task. The error in the words arises through dependence on the literal meaning without considering the intended meaning by God, nor considering the understanding of the first recipient of the Qur'ān. Thus, the first category was wrong in both word and meaning, and the second category was wrong only in the words.[279] Under the first category, Ibn Taymiyya listed the Kharijites[280] the Rafidites,[281] the Jahmites,[282] the Mu'tazilites,[283] the Qadarites,[284] and the Murji'ites[285]

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[279] *Ibid.* 91

[280] Ibid, 81.

[281] Rafidites is an extremist sect of Shī'a. They believe that Abū Bakr and 'Umar have deprived 'Alī from being *khalīfa* 'Caliph' just after the death of the Prophet. The title " *Rawāfiḍ* " was given to them by Zayd Ibn 'Alī Zayn al-'Ābidīn (d.122-740) when he approved the caliphate of Abū Bakr and 'Umar-- though he believed in his grandfather's right 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib to the caliphate--and his followers rejected that. Hence he labelled them *"Rawāfiḍ "* (rejecters) Abū Zahra, *Tārikh al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyya fī al-Siyāsa wa al- 'Aqā'id, (*Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n. *d).* p. 245

[282] Jahmites are the followers of Jahm Ibn Ṣafwān. Jahm was a faithful student of Ja'd Ibn Dirham. Ja'd was executed in 736, by the Umayyad governor Khālid Ibn 'Abd Allāh, because he preached free will and the absence of destiny. Jahmites believed that man has no free will and is absolutely determined. They interpreted *īmān* 'faith' as the knowledge of God only and involves no action. Abū Zahra, al- 'Aqā'id. See Abū Amīna, Bilāl Philips, *The Fundamentals of Tawhīd,* (Riyadh: Islamic Monotheism: Tawheed Publication, 1990-1410.) p. 4

[283] Mu'tazilites believed in five principles. one can never be considerd as a mu'tazili (sing of Mu' tazilites) without believing in those principles. They are: *Tawḥīd* (unification of God), *'adl* (justics), *wa' d* (promise of paradise for those who are truly believers), *wa' īd* (warning against disobeying God), *manzila bayn manzilatayn* (intermidiate state), and *amr bi al-ma' rūf wa nahy 'an al-munkar*, (enjoining what is right and forbiding what The alleged founder of the Mu'tazilites was Wāṣil Ibn 'Aṭa' [d.131]. The reason for branding them 'Mu'tazilites goes as follows. One day Wāṣil was sitting in al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's learning circle, the issue regarding the position of muslim who commits a major sin was raised,Wāṣil said that he is neither a muslim nor a non-muslim he is between belief and dsibelief. Al-Ḥasan the teacher, however, did not welcome Wāṣil's answer and stated (a muslim sinner) is a hypocrite. Thus, Wāṣil ' *I' tazal* ' (stayed away) from al-Ḥasan's class. See Abū al-Ḥasan al- Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa Ikhtilāf al-Muṣalīn* (Cairo: Maṭabat al-Nahda al-Miṣriyya, 1969-1389, 1st ed). 235-45.

The exegesis of all these parties or sects are considered by Ibn Taymiyya as *bid'a* as well as *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-madhmūm*.[286]

An example of the interpretation of this first category (the Rafidites) concerning و إذ قال موسى لقو مه إن الله يأمركم أن تذبحوا بقرة :Q. 2:67 (And [remember] when (Prophet) Moses said to his people, verily God commands you to slaughter a cow.). The Rafidites said that the cow in the verse, as none other than a human being--'Ā'isha, the wife of the Prophet![287] Another example concerns their explanation of Q. 55:19: مرج البحرين يلتقيان (He has let loose the two seas [the salt and the sweet] meeting together.) The Rafidites said that the two seas are 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (the cousin of the Prophet) and Fāṭima (the daughter of the Prophet). Such exegesis has been rejected by all

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[284] Qadarites..This sect believed that the actions emanate from man who is responsible. It is generally believed that , the first Muslim to profess the position of man's free will and the absence of destiny was the Iraqian Ma'bad al-Juhanī. Ma'bad was a student of Sausan, another Iraqi chrisitan converted to Islām but later reverted to to christianity. Ma'bad was executed by the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Mālik Ibn Marwān [d.705] in 700. Abd al-Qāhir *Ṭāhir* al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, (Cairo: 'Alī Muḥammad Ṣubayḥ, 1964). See, Abū Amīna, *Tawhīd, p. 3.*

[285] The Murji'ites are the extreme opponents of the Kharijities. They believed that *īmān* is nothing but knowledge and that one does not lose his *īmān* regardless how grave a sin that he might commit.They believe, furthermore, that the question of punishing a sinner in the hell fire is left to the will and mercy of God. The extremists among them believed that given faith, sin will cause no harm in the hereafter. The issue of the evolution of the theological schools of thought in Islām is not clear cut. A person might have a combination of tenets from various sects of belief. For example, one might be a shī'ī (sing of Shī'a) at the same time that he is a Mu'tazilī; or one might be a Sunni and a Murji' at the same time, etc. For detailed accounts on the sects, one can refer to al-Shahrastānī's *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, ed. Muḥammad Ibn Fath Allāh Badrān (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Azhar, n.d). Ṭāhir al-Baghdādī's *al-Farq bayn al-Firāq*, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī's *Maqalāt al-Islāmiyyin*, *M. Geijbels, An Introduction To Islām: Muslim Beliefs and Practicces*. Part Three. Goldziher's *Introduction to Islāmic Theology and Law*. Translated Andras and Ruth Hamori. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

[286] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, pp. 82-84.

[287] *Ibid*, 82.

Sunni traditionists, jurists, theologians and moderate Sūfis.[288] Under the second category,

Ibn Taymiyya mentioned the exegesis of many Sūfis, preachers, and jurists.

To summarize the foregoing opinions of the three prominent scholars, the basic

principles of their rejection of *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-madhmūm* is that such exegesis

exacerbates *bid'a,* disagrees with the exegesis of the Prophetic, the Companions, and the

Successors, and does not adhere either to the principles of Arabic language or of the

Islāamic *sharī'a.*

The question to be answered now is, what is the position of the Sunni scholars in

regard to the legality of *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-maḥmūd?* Are Muslim scholars unanimous

on the legality of *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-maḥmūd?*

The Question of the Legality of *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y al Maḥmūd*

The debate of the legality of *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y* is theological in nature. It was

the outcome of a political and intellectual conflict that took place early in Islāmic history,

after the assassination of 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān [d. 35H].

The Prophet Muḥammad died without appointing a successor. Thus, his

Companions were about to fall into divisions among themselves in terms of who should

succeed him in ruling Islāmic states. After a contentious debate that apparently ended

amicably for all except 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, Abū Bakr Ibn Abī Quḥāfa [d. 13H], became the

first Caliph. After two years and a few months, Abū Bakr died, but not before appointing

'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb as the second caliph on his death bed. After ten years, 'Umar died

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[288] *Ibid,* 82,

and 'Uthmān was elected as the third caliph . After twelve years of 'Uthmān's leadership,

Islāmic unity began to falter. Subsequently, 'Uthmān was assassinated after thirteen years

of rule.

'Alī then became the fourth Caliph by unanimous agreement of all the Muslims

governors except Mu'āwiya Ibn Abī Sufyān [d.60], the Governor of Syria. He disagreed

with 'Alī on how to deal with the 'Uthmān's assassins, which led to the political struggle

between them. After that Islāmic unity and the Muslim states were shaken by political

unrest. As a result, Muslims became divided into four major groups. The Alids,

(supporters of 'Alī), pro-Umayyad (the supporters of Mu'āwiya), the Kharijites and the

Shukkāk (doubters) as Ibn 'Asākir called them[289] (those who did not take any side in that

political-religious tussle). Subsequently, many different sects evolved from the

aforementioned groups. The most popular known are: The Sunni, the Shi'a, the

Muurji'ites, the Jabarites, the Qadirites, and the Mu'tazilites. These have been

relentlessly confronted for compromising Islāmic theology and the Prophet's practice by a

group of Muslim traditionists, jurists, and theologians called "*salaf*" (predecessors), or,

alternatively, "*ahl al-sunna wa al-jamā*'a (Those who adhere to the tradition of the

Prophet, Companions, and Successors).

Each group, however, advocates strongly its dogma and philosophy using the

Qur'ān and ḥadīth to prove and justify its position. As a result, all the sects, including the

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[289] Abū Zahra, *al 'Aqā'id*, p. 67

Sunni, have quoted both reliable and unreliable hadīth and presented weak arguments and far-fetched exegeses. For example, to justify the position taken by each sect in that political-religious conflict among the Muslims, the Kharijites set forth the following hadīth. "Carry your sword on your shoulders, and kill disbelievers;[290] and there will be a group of people who will still adhere to the truth and without harm from anyone who disagrees with them,"[291] Because the Kharijites considered themselves as the group that adhered to the truth, they beleived that it was their duty to kill anyone who became, according to their criteria, a disbeliever.

The Shī'a stated that the Prophet said, "A people will be prevented [on the day of judgment] from drinking the river that God blessed the Prophet with, and the Prophet will say 'O God, they are my Companions' God will say to the Prophet, 'You do not know what they did after your death.'"[292] The Shī'a believed that these people are the Sunnī because they betrayed the Prophet when they chose Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthmān as caliphs over 'Alī.

On the other hand, the Sunnis quoted the Prophet who is reported to have said, "Follow Abū Bakr and 'Umar after me, for God, His Prophet, and Muslims will refuse

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[290] This hadīth has no Isnād, thus, is rejected. See Muhammad 'Abd al-Rahīm al-Sakhāwī, *al-Maqāṣid al-Ḥasana* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khaniji, 1956). p. 85.

[291] Abū 'Abd Allāh Muhammad Ibn Muslim Ibn Qutayba,, *Kitāb Mukhtalaf al-Ḥadīth* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabia n.d). p.4.

[292] *Ibid*, p.5

(anyone to be a Caliph), but Abū Bakr; verily, Abū Bakr is the best one of this community after the Prophet."[293]

The Murji'ites cited the ḥadīth "Whoever professed the phrase "*lā ilāha illā Allāh*" will enter the paradise (*janna*), even if he has committed illegal sexual intercourse and stolen."[294] The Qadarites maintained that the Prophet said, "every child is born as a Muslim, but his parents make him a Jew or a Christian."[295]

Below are examples of far-fetched Qur'ānic exegeses that the groups mutually accused one another of using. The Rafidites claimed that Q. 111:1

تبت يدا أبى لهب وتب (Perish the two hands of Abū Lahab)[296] refers to Abū Bakr and

'Umar. Similarly, they claimed that concerning the second verse in Q. 78:1-2 "What are they asking? about the great news?" they claimed that 'Alī is "the great news".[297]

On the other hand, some Sunnis claimed that in Q. 3:17 الصابرين والصادقين والقانتين

والمنفقين والمستغفرين بالاسحار. (Those who are patient, Those who are true and obedient with sincere devotion in worship to God, Those who spend [give the Zakā obligatory charity'] alms in the way of God, and Those who pray and beg God's pardon in the last

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[293] Muḥammad 'Ajjāj al-Khaṭīb, *al-Sunna Qabl al-Tadwīn* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1971; 2nd ed). p. 236.

[294] *Ibid*, p.5

[295] Ibn Taymiyya, An *Introduction to the Principles of Tafseer*. Translated by Muḥammad 'Abdul Ḥaqq Ansārī (London: Al-Hidāya Publishing, 1414 A H, 1st ed.) p. 47.

[296] Abū Lahab is one of the Prophet Muḥammad's uncle who became one of his greatest enemies.

[297] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddim*p.76

hour of the night), each of the five Arabic phrases corresponding in the English translation

to the five relative clauses refer in a one to one correspondence to the Prophet, Abū Bakr;

'Umar; 'Uthmān, and 'Alī.[298]

Certain Sunnis also claimed that Q. 48:29, محمدرسول‌الله والذين معه أشداء على الكفا

رحماء بينهم تراهم ركعاسجـدا. (Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, and those who are

with him are severe against disbelievers, and merciful among themselves. You see them

bowing and falling down prostrate in prayer) "those who are with him" refers to Abū

Bakr, "severe against disbelievers" refers to 'Umar, "mercy among themselves" refers to

'Uthmān, and "you see them bowing and falling prostrate" refers to 'Alī. Ibn Taymiyya

described such interpretations as nonsense, "khurāfāt".[299]

During a theological debate, which took place between a Qadarite, a Jabarite,

and a Sunni, the Qadarite quoted Q 4:79:

ما أ صا بك من حسنة فمن الله وما أصابك من سيئة فمن نفسك (Whatever good reaches you

is from God, but, whatever of evil befalls you is from yourself). The apparent meaning of

the verse is that man is responsible for creating his own evil actions. The Jabrite, opposed

this and said that the phrase "فمن نفسك" (from yourself) actually refers to a hidden

interrogative that implies a negation of such an apparent meaning. Thus, he claimed, the

phrase should be read "أفمن نفسك؟" The meaning then would be that both good and evil

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[298] *Ibid*, p. 79

[299] *Ibid*, 81

actions are from God.[300] Hence, man is not responsible for his actions, this corroborates

the *Jabarite* belief.

Upon hearing this, the Sunni declared both notions wrong, citing Q. 4:78.

وإن تصبهم حسنة يقولواهذه من عندالله وإن تصبهم سيئة يقولوا هذه من عندك قل كل من.عند الله

(And if some good reaches them, they say, "This is from God" but if some evil befalls

them, they say, "This is from you" (O, Muḥammad). Say all things are from God.) The

difference between Jabarites and the Sunnī on this issue is that Jabarites believed that man

is not responsible for his actions, and therfore that God will not punish someone who

does not have a choice between doing good or bad.[301] The Sunni believed that man was

given the choice to do both good and bad, but his choice is not absolute; if his choice

were absolute, that would mean that God does not have absolute power.[302] The Sunnis,

at other times, attributed all good--but not evil--to God, in order to preserve the idea of

the goodness of God and on the other hand to make man a responsible being, particularly

for his evil deeds. Actually the above issue between the Sunnis and *Jabarites* is a very

crucial in Islāmic theology. It is not easy to convince someone or to resolve the matter; it

is more or less a matter of belief.

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[300] Ibn Qutayba, *Mukhtalaf*, p.159.

[301] *Ibid*, p.137.

[302] *Ibid*, pp. 137-9. Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Fiṣal fī al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* (Cairo: Maktabat wa Matbaʿat Muḥammad ʿAli Ṣābiḥ, n.d). 1: 56.

According to the Muʿtazilite doctrine, God can never been seen with physical eyes. They based this on Q. 6:103 لاتدركه الأبصاروهويدرك الأبصار (No vision can grasp him, but His grasp is over all vision). On the other hand, the Sunnis believe that God will eventually be seen, based on Q. 83:15 كلاإنهم عن ربهم يومئذلمحجوبون (Nay! Surely they [evil doers] will be veiled from seeing their Lord that day). The Sunnis deduced from this, since evil doers will be veiled from seeing God, Muslims will not be veiled from seeing God. They further supported this assumption with ḥadīth of the Prophet which stated clearly that Muslims will see God as clearly as they see the full moon.[303]

Arguments concerning *Ra'y*

The aforementioned interpretations and arguments were one of the reasons that some Sunni scholars questioned the soundness and legality of using *ra'y*, both *al-ra'y al-mamdūḥ* and *al-ra'y madhmūm*, in Qur'ānic exegesis. Hence, a group of theologians and exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Ghazālī, Ibn ʿAṭiyya, al-Qurṭubī and others came in conflict with those opponents of *ra'y* who differentiated between acceptable and unacceptable ra'y, without rejecting it entirely.

The sources describing this conflict supplied the arguments without mentioning the names of those who rejected the use of al-*ra'y* in exegesis, [304] making frequent use of

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[303] Ibn Taymiyya, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Khalīl Harrās (Riyadh: Dār al-Hijra li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi ʿ, 1955; 3rd ed.) pp. 107-9 Ibn Qutayba, *Mukhtalaf,* pp. 13-8.

[304] This attitude is against Islāmic scholarship. Traditionally speaking, refrence shuold be given when you quote some one.

indefinite terminology such as some people say, or those who reject *ra'y*, etc. This is presumably done for one of three reasons:

1. The opponents of *ra'y* are known, so there is no need to mention their names.

2. To avoid fermenting hatred between Sunni Muslims.

3. There are some prominent successors who directly and indirectly rejected or expressed caution in regard to the using of *ra'y*, such as Salīm Ibn 'Abd Allāh, al-Qāsim Ibn Muḥammad, and Sa'īd Ibn Musayyib. This latter is more likely because subsequent generations of Muslims in general gave weight to the opinion and attitude of the first and second generations because of the praise that both received from the Qur'ān and ḥadīth. Hence, I will present most of their arguments in general terms, except in the case where the reference is made to a specific individual, or where an individual is known for rejecting *ra'y* in his works, such as Ibn Ḥazm.

Opponents of Ra'y and their Arguments

The arguments set forth by this group can be discussed under four headings. The Qur'ān, Ḥadīth, Sayings of the *Ṣaḥāba*, and Statements of the Successors.

The Qur'ān. There are mainly three verses, (1): Q. 4:59 فَإِن تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِى شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللهِ ورسوله (And if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to God and is Messenger). The significance of the verse for this argument is that God has commanded Muslims who differ among themselves to refer to God and His Messenger only as the final

judgment; not to do so is disobedient to divine command. Furthermore, anyone's opinion is rejected.[305]

In (2) Q. 16:44 وأنزلنا إليك الذكر لتبيـن للنـاس مانزل إليهم (And we have sent down unto you [O, Muḥammad] the reminder [the Qur'ān] that you may explain clearly to mankind what is sent down to them). The point made here is that God has stated clearly that He has charged the Prophet only with explaining the Qur'ān text to mankind; thus, any attempt for anyone else to elucidate the Qur'ān using his own opinion in unnecessary at best.

In (3)Q. 17:36 قل إنـما حرم ربـى الفواحش ماظهر منها ومابطن والاثم والبغى بغير الحق (Say (O, Muḥammad) (but) the things that my Lord has forbidden "al-fawāḥish" (great evil sins) whether committed openly or secretly, sins [of all kinds] unrighteous, oppression, joining partners [in worship] with God for which he has given no authority, and saying things about God of which you have no knowledge). Proponents say that the structure of this verse makes saying things about Allāh without having the correct and necessary knowledge as great a sin as the sins mentioned at the beginning of the verse. Any exegesis, therefore, without information from the Prophet, is prohibited.[306]

The Ḥadīth. There are mainly three ḥadīths quoted to support the foregoing opinions. The first is the well-known ḥadīth narrated by Ibn 'Abbās that the Prophet said,

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[305] Al-Āmidī, al-Iḥkām, 4: 149.

[306] Ibn Taymiyya, Muqaddima, pp.112-113.

"Whoever explains the Qur'ān according to his personal opinion, shall take his place in Hell." The idea here is that the ḥadīth did not differentiate between *al-ra'y al-maḥmūd* and *al-ra-y madhmūm*. Therefore, both opinions are wrong.

The second is on the authority of Jandub Ibn 'Abd Allāh, that the Prophet said, "Whoever says anything about the Qur'ān by his own opinion, even if what he says is correct, is wrong." Al-Qurṭubī said al-Razīn added "Whoever says anything about the Qur'ān, by his own opinion, becomes a disbeliever." It is not clear from al-Qurṭubī's quotation whether or not al-Razīn[307] attributed that to the Prophet or whether it is his own idea. However, the ḥadīth of Jundub has been described by al-Tirmidhī and others as an unsound one because of the less than excellent reliabilty of Suhayl Ibn Abī Ḥazm (one of the narrators of the ḥadīth). Both Imām Aḥmad and al-Bukhārī have disregarded Suhayl's ḥadīths).[308]

The third ḥadīth emanates from 'Ā'isha (the wife of the Prophet). She said that the Prophet used not to comment on anything from the Qur'ān except a few verses, which the Angel Jabrīl taught him.[309] The point here is that the Prophet himself did not interpret the Qur'ān by his own opinions; it was the angel Jibrīl 'Gabriel' who inspired him.

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[307] There are three individuals recognized by name al-Razīn. Al-Razīn Ibn Suleymān al-Aḥmarī, al-Razīn Ibn 'Uqba, and al-Razīn al-Kūfī al-A'amā. The first two are *majhūlūn* , that is the background information about them is too scanty to classify as reliable narrators. and the third is matrūk 'a narrator whose ḥadīths are not to be used for any purpose. Therefore, to quote him in supporting your argument is worthless. See, al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān*, 1: 48-49. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 3: 247

[308] Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, 1: 32. Al-Tirmidhī, Abū 'Īsā Muḥammad Ibn 'Isā, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1964-1384; 1st ed). 4: 386.

[309] *Ibid,* 1: 111

Sayings of the Ṣaḥāba. When Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq was asked to give the meaning of a specific word or words, he expressed his fear by saying "What earth shall bear me, and what heaven shall shelter me if I speak what I know not concerning the Qur'ān."?[310]

It is reported that 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb cited Q. 80: 31 وفاكهة و أبا (and fruit and herbage, etc.) and said, "We know what the fruits are, but what is "أبا؟ " Then, 'Umar said, "It is unnecessary to know that this is "*takalluf*." 'constraint'. The point in both statements is that Abū Bakr and 'Umar refrained from exercising *ra'y* because they knew its was prohibited.

Ibn 'Abbās was asked about a verse and refused to comment on it. Because Muslims knew or believed that he had been given a specific gift from God for Qur'ānic knowledge as a result of a prayer to Him by the Prophet, it became assumed that Ibn 'Abbās refused to answer because he knew that utilizing *ra'y* was prohibited.[311]).

Statements of the Successors. 'Ubayd Allāh Ibn 'Umar [d.140] stated that he found the learned men at Medina, including Sālim Ibn 'Abd Allāh, al-Qāsim Ibn Muḥammad and Nāfi', abstained from making comments on the Qur'ān by their own opinion.[312] Hishām Ibn 'Urwa [d.146] said, "I never heard my father interpret the Qur'ān by his opinion."[313] Sa'īd Ibn Musayyib, was the most knowledgeable figure of his time.

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[310] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 1:183

[311] Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, 1, p.33.

[312] Abul-Qāsim Muḥammad. *The Recitation and Interpretation of al-Ghazālī's Theory.* (KPI. London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley, n.d). pp. 90-92

Whenever his students asked him anything about the Qur'ān he kept silent, as if he did not hear them. Whenever he was asked about exegesis, he said, "We do not say anything about the Qur'ān.[314]

Partisans of *Ra'y* and their Responses to their Opponents

Among the verses the supporters of *ra'y* have quoted for their argument is Q.4:59. فإن تنازعتم فى شئ 'فردوه إلى الله ورسوله (If you differ in anything among yourselves refer it to God and his Messenger). Al-Quṛṭubī and others did not accept this as a statement of proof against the prohibition of exegesis by *ra'y* for it limits exegesis to only two possibilities: to confine the exegesis to the transmitted tradition (*al-naql*), and that which is heard from the authority (*al-masmū'*) and in so doing, one must refrain from deducing or eliciting the meanings from the Qur'ān; moreover, the prohibition of other types of exegesis might mean that there should be no exegesis at all, lest the meaning of the verse(s) be something other than what was heard from on authority. Hence, al-Quṛṭubī concluded that it is insufficient to use only tafsir from the traditions of the Prophet. Furthermore, he argued that the Companions themselves used their own opinions in interpreting the Qur'ānic text. Had that not been the case, the Prophet's prayer to Ibn 'Abbās, "O God, grant him the knowledge of Islām and teach him the meaning of the Qur'ān [*wa 'allimhu at-Ta'wīl]*, would have served no purpose[315]).

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[313] Ibn 'Aṭiyya, Muqaddimatān p.187. Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 2: 12.

[314] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi'al-Bayān*, 1, p 88

[315] *Ibid*, 1, pp.33.

Al-Ghazālī seems to be more against the notion of using *al-naql* and *al-masmū‘* exclusively for exegesis. He stated "...these were intended either to confine the understanding of the Qur'ān to the transmission of ḥadīth and to that which is heard from the authorities. [however] it is wrong to accept that the purpose was to limit our understanding of the Qur'ān to the words of authorities.[316])

In respect to the second argument, the proponents of *ra'y*, including Ibn ‘Aṭiyya, al-Zarkashī, and others, said that no one disputed the fact that the Prophet had been given the responsibility of explaining the Qur'ān to mankind, but his interpretation was made according to the necessity of the time, and for the people of that particular time; but, after the death of the Prophet, the need for more explanation of the Qur'ān arose, simply because the Prophet's interpretations, though possibly clear to his Companions, would not necessarily be clear to subsequent generations. Thus, *ra'y* is permissible, provided the basic rules of *tafsīr* are applied.[317]

Al-Ṭabarī added that the verses that the partisans set forth for their arguments need careful explanation. He agreed that there are some verses whose meanings cannot be understood without the explanation of the Prophet.[318] He remarked that Q, 7: 36 (Saying anything about God of which you have no knowledge).

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[316] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, 1: 292.

[317] Ibn ‘Aṭiyya, *Muqaddimatān*, 186.

[318] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, p. 93.

refers to the exegesis that can only be attained based on the Prophet's explanations, as opposed to what can be obtained through sound Arabic usage.[319]

Concerning ḥadiths, al-Ṭabarī and al-Qurṭubī responded to the ḥadīth of Ibn 'Abbās by stating that the ra'y which the ḥadīth prohibited is that which pertains to the "mutashābihāt" ' verses whose meanings are known only to God', such as those mentioning the time Jesus will return to the world, or difficult passages of the Qur'ān which require the explanation from the Prophet. Using ra'y in such situations, they said, is prohibited.[320]. Al-Qurṭubī further added that this prohibition does not pertain to the exegesis of grammarians, linguists and jurists, because their interpretation is based on knowledge.[321]

With respect to the Companions' statements and attitudes, Ibn 'Aṭiyya responded to Abū Bakr's statement by presenting some probable answers. He said that Abū Bakr might have said this at the very beginning of his Caliphate, to prevent Muslims from engaging in exegesis haphazardly or perhaps because at the beginning of his caliphate he was of the opinion that exegesis should not be made by mere opinion. As time passed, he realized that independent opinion in exegesis was inevitable. Thus, when asked about the meaning of the Qur'ānic word kalāla [Q.4:12], he said, "I say (regarding the meaning of kalāla) by my opinion, if it is correct, thanks be to God. If it is wrong, it is from Satan,

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[319] Ibid, p. 190

[320] Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi' al-Bayān, 1: p. 89.

[321] Al-Qurṭubī, al-Jāmi', 1: 35.

and God is innocent from it. A Similar case is the issue of codifying the Qur'ān into one book. When 'Umar suggested to Abū Bakr that the Qur'an be compiled and codified into one book, Abū Bakr initially hesitated and refused, but later he found that codification was unavoidable. Thus, he submitted to the opinion.[322]

'Umar's attitude toward the meaning of Q.80:31 وأبا وفاكهة has been interpreted as a kind of discipline. ''Umar wanted Muslims to avoid using unnecessary opinion in unnecessary things. In regard to Ibn 'Abbās' behavior, it was thought that he refused to interpret one of the verses that was left to Him alone to interpret.

In regard to the refraining of both the Companions and the Successors from exegesis, al-Ṭabarī stated, "The attitude or actions of those who did abstain from exegesis was similar to the actions of those of them who refrained from giving legal opinions concerning particular events and occurrences, that is, they believed that God did not cause His Prophet to die until after he had perfected his religion to His servants, and they knew that God had a judgment in a text or through an indication for every event, but perhaps, they had to search it out. Otherwise, they would be denying that God's judgment for these events existed among them. Finally, they could have feared that by their own effort (*ijtihād*) they were not able to carry out the charge God had entrusted to the learned among his servants. It was the same with the learned among the pious predecessors who refrained from speaking about the interpretation and exegesis of the Qur'ān; they did so

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[322] Ibn 'Aṭiyya, *Muqaddimatān*, pp.185.

out of caution, least they should fail to accomplish the objective of speaking correctly--not because the interpretation of (these verses) was veiled from the men of knowledge in the community and did not exist among them.[323]

Ibn 'Aityya seems displeased with al-Ṭabarī's conclusion, that the main reason those learned Companions and the Successors refrained from interpretation and exegesis was piety. Ibn 'Aṭiyya simply stated "too many of the prominent predecessors *(salaf)* who were merely concerned or sympathetic with Muslims interpreted the Qur'ān.[324] After the proponents of *ra'y* refuted the arguments of the opponents of using *al-ra'y*, they set forth the following evidence: Q. 38 :29: كتاب أنزلناه اليك مبارك ليدبروا آياته وليتذكر أولوا الألباب

(This is) a book (the Qur'ān) which we have sent down to you, full of blessings that they may reflect over its verses, ليدددبروا آياته and that those gifted of understanding may take heed). The significance of these two verses, for the partisans of *ra'y*, was the fact that the word "*li yatadabbarū*" (to ponder), said Ibn Aṭiyya, originally meant the final end of something. Thus, one who ponders over the meanings of verses is the one who can arrive at an understanding of the meaning. Then Ibn 'Aṭiyya concluded that to ponder over something is nothing other than *ra'y*. Were using *ra'y* not permissible, these verses would serve no purpose.[325]

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[323] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 1: 290

[324] *Ibid*, 1: 290

[325] Ibn Aṭiyya, *Muqaddimatān*, p.185.

Another popular verse in this regard is Q.4:83 ولو ردوه إلى الله و إلى الرسول و إلى

أولى الأمر منهم لعلمه الذين يستنبطو نه منهم (If they had only referred it to the God and

the Messenger and those charged with authority among them, the proper investigators

would have understood it from them directly). Al-Ghazālī held that this verse constituted

the use of al-*ra'y* because God affirmed the validity of *istinbāṭ* 'inference' by men of

learning. And it is unquestionable that, *istinbāṭ* is something beyond *al-masmū* '.[326]

Al-Ṭabarī elaborated further on these verses by arguing that God's

encouragement to believers to ponder over the Qur'ānic verses is an indication that

understanding of the Qur'ānic verses by *ra'y* is possible, and must be further pursued to

present logical argument. He said, "It is impossible to say to someone who does not

comprehend that which is being said to him, "Take admonition!" *i'tabir!*', unless he

understands and reasons concerning what is being said to him. Otherwise, it would be

useless to do so. It is likwise impossible, al-Ṭabarī said, to say to some non-Arabs who do

not understand Arabic to take admonition from Arabic poems, proverbs and wise

speeches. Similarly, God would not command people to ponder over the verses, unless

there were some indications which would lead to the meanings. Thus, to interpret the

verses which are not the sole prerogative of God is permissible.[327]

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[326] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 1: 83.

[327] *Ibid*, 1: 290

Concerning the proof from ḥadīth presented by the proponents of *ra'y*, namely, the

ḥadīth of Ibn 'Abbās: "O God, (the Prophet said) grant him the knowledge of al-Islām,

and teach him the knowledge of the interpretation." *wa 'allimhu al-ta'wīl.* The point

made by al-Ghazālī and al-Qurṭubī is that if the interpretation of the Qur'ān is confined

only to the tradition of the Prophet, then his prayer for Ibn 'Abbās to be bestowed with

understanding of the Qur'ān would be useless).

Another well known ḥadīth is that of Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal, in which the Prophet

approved the using of *ijtihād, idhā ijtahad al-ḥākim fa-akhṭa' fa lahū ajr wa in ijtahad*

fa aṣāb fa-lahū ajrān [328] (whosever does *ijtihād* and errs therein shall have one reward.

And whosoever performs *ijtihād* and is correct shall have a double reward)

In regard to the Companions' statements, they quoted the questions someone

asked Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib "Did the Prophet single you out with special knowledge

concerning the knowledge of the Qur'ān? [329] he replied 'No' except that God bestows

upon a servant the understanding of the Qur'ān." Al-Ghazālī asked "If there is no

meaning other than the transmission of the interpretation of the authority, what is the

meaning of the understanding that God bestows upon a servant ?"[330]

Al-Ṭabarī reported that both Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās used to give

comprehensive interpretations of the Qur'ān and that Ibn Mas'ūd took an entire day to

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[328] Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Iḥkām*, 6: 35.

[329] *Ibid*, 1: 81

[330] Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥazm: Hayātuh wa 'Asruh wa Fiqhuh* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, n.d). p. 382.

explain a chapter.[331] The remarkable thing here is that the Prophet never gave a such long interpretation of any chapter. Thus, such detailed interpretation must have come from their own opinions. As for the respect given to the Successors' statements, again, al-Tabari quoted Sa'id Ibn Jubayr who said, "Who reads the Qur'ān and cannot explain it, (did not understand), is just like a blind person or a bedouin.[332]

Nonetheless, Abū Muhammad Ibn Hazm rejects the using of all kinds of personal opinion in Islām in general and in the Qur'ān particular. To him, no one, including the Companions, has any right or authority to utilize his own opinion in Islām. Whoever uses his opinion in deducing the law or meaning of the Qur'ān, and assumes that such is the meaning that God meant by the verse or ascribes that to God, is a liar.[333] Ibn Hazm based his rejection on the following verses: Q.6:38 مافرطنا فى الكتاب من شئ (We have neglected nothing in the book; the Qur'ān.) and Q.7:3 اتبعوا ما أنزل إليكم من ربكم (Say (O Muhammad) follow what has been sent down unto you).[334] The point made by Ibn Hazm concernig these verses is that , God has stated clearly that he did not leave anything out. Thus, the Qur'ān contains all of what needs to be known in Islām, therefore, there is no need for anyone's opinion. The second verse commands mankind to follow the revelation, not someone else's opinion.

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[331] For many verses presented by Ibn Hazm to support his position , see Ibn Hazm, *al-Ihkām* , 5: 36-100.

[332] Ibn Hazm, *al-Ihkām*, 5: 36.

[333] *Ibid*, 5: 21-22

[334] *Ibid* 5: 35.

The first of the two strongest arguments of the proponents of *ra'y* is Q.4:83

ولو ردوه إلى الله و إلى الرسول أولى الأمر منهم لعلمه الذين يستنبطو نه منهم (If they had only

referred to the Messenger or to those charged with the authority among them, the proper

investigators would have understood it from them directly). The other is the popular

ḥadīth of Muʿādh Ibn Jabal in which the Prophet approved of using *ijtihād*. Ibn Ḥazm

bitterly refuted the claim made therein. He wondered how the proponents of *ra'y* could

justify by quoting the cited verse. He argued the point linguistically by saying that the

particle لو "Law" in Q.4:83

ولو ردوه الى الله و إلى الرسول is a preventive particle which indicates that whatever is

mentioned after it (law) does not occur. Therefore, the reference to "...would have

understood it" did not occur. He added, that if the reference had occurred, those proper

investigators or who those who have knowledge could only refer to the Prophetic

tradition, not to people's opinions.[335]

In regard to the ḥadīth of Muʿādh, Ibn Ḥazm said the ḥadīth is invalid because of

al-Ḥārith Ibn ʿUmar, who is (*majhūl*) 'unknown' and according to Ibn Ḥazm, al-Bukhārī,

also rejected the ḥadīth.[336]

In view of the aforementioned exegetical arguments, it appears that these

theological debates were the reasons for the objections raised concerning both al-*tafsīr bi*

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[335] *Ibid*, 2: 400-1

[336] Ibid, 2: 400-1

al-ra'y al-maḥmūd, and *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-madhmūm.* As a result, a new element,

namely , prerequisites of *mufassir* 'exegate'was developed and added to the science of the

Qur'ānic exegesis. In relation to prerequisites, there were some guidelines given by some

Companions and the subsequent generations before scholars such as al-Zarkashī and al-

Suyūṭī codified them in their works. In *al-Itqān,* al-Suyūṭī reported that 'Alī Ibn Abī

Ṭālib witnessed a story teller speaking about Qur'ānic exegesis and asked him, "Do you

know about abrogating and abrogated (verses)."? He (the story teller) replied, "No."

Then, 'Alī said, "You destroyed (yourself) and destroyed others."[337] Ibn 'Abbās stated

that one part of the Qur'ānic exegesis can be obtained through the mere knowledge of

Arabic language, a part can be understood by scholars through their *ijtihād,* and a portion

can be only known through the Prophet explanation. All these aspects have been

incorporated into the conditions of exegesis.

Al-Bayhaqī, quoted Imām Mālik Ibn Anas as having said "No man who interprets

the Qur'ān without knowledge of Arabic would be brought before me without my

inflicting punishment on him."[338] Al-Suyūṭī listed the prerequisits in his work. They are

fifteen. Here, we have categorized them under six headings.

1. Ḥadīth of the Prophet: one must be well verses in this science.

2. Arabic Language: one must master all aspects of Arabic language.

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[337] Al- Zarkashī, *al- Burhān,* 1: 18.

[338] *Ibid,* 1: 129.

3. Islāmic Jurisprudence: one must be very knowledgeable and exposed to the different opinions of the various legal scholars in all aspects of Islāmic law.

4. One must have a pure belief (opposite of heresy) and clear perspective in the theological issues and understand them as the Companions, the Successors and the Sunni scholars did.

5. One must know of abrogating and abrogated verses, and the occasions of revelations.

6. One must be gifted with a special knowledge ('ilm al-mawhiba).

In our discussion of al-tafsir bi al-ra'y al-mahmūd and al-madhmūm, the work of Muqātil Ibn Sulaymān is also worthy of consideration.

Muqātil Ibn Sulaymān's al-Wujūh wa al-Naẓā'ir

This work is generally believed to be the first complete book of al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y.[339] The book and the author were controversial. Some scholars, like al-Shāfi'ī highly praised Muqātil's knowledge of exegesis. He stated "All people are in debt to Muqātil in tafsīr." 'Ubāda Ibn Kathīr claimed that no one lives in the world today [world of their time] who is more knowledgeable in the book of God than Muqātil.[340] While these scholars praised Muqātil on one hand, on the other hand, we find some prominent critics of hadīth such as al-Bukhārī, Yahyā Ibn Ma'īn [d.274], al-Dhahabī and others portrayed Muqātil as a liar, and a mujassima 'anthropomorhists'.[341] However, Muqātil

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[339] Al-Dhahabī, Tadhkira, 1: 174.

[340] Rippin, AHIQ, p. 167.

[341] Ibid, p.168.

was considered to be the first exegete who used *ra'y*, simply because he was living in the era which exegesis was being taught by narration and giving full account of transmission (*isnād*), but Muqātil deleted the *asānīd* throughout his work and depended on his own personal opinions.

Muqātil's *al-Wujūh wa al-Naẓā'ir* goes under a variety of names, the following two titles being the popular ones: *Kitāb al-Wujūh wa al-Naẓā'ir*, and *al-Ashbāh wa al-Naẓā'ir*.[342] *Al-Wujūh wa al-Naẓā'ir* deals basically with *mushtarak* (words written and pronounced in the same manner, but having different or opposite meanings).

The category *Mushtarak* corresponds to semantic lexicology.[343] The methodology that Muqātil adopted in his *tafsīr* is of two kinds. The conceptual, and the general method the Sunnis employed in their interpretations of the text,which was to explain the text by referring to its background, or to interpret the *ṣifāt* verses (the verses of attributes of God) without negating or twisting their obvious meaning. Consider the following: Q. 48 :10 إن الذين يبايعونك إنـما يبايعون الله يدالله فوق أيديهم (Verily, those who gave *bay'a* (pledge) to you [Muhammad], are giving *bay'a* to Allāh. The hand of Allāh is over their hands). Muqātil said, "Those who gave the loyalty pledge under the tree in the sacred territory of Mecca,was called *bay'at al-riḍwān*[344], and the number of the Muslims that day was one thousand and four hundred."

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[342] Ahmad 'Umar 'Abd Allāh al- Ghānī *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y Mā Lahū wa Mā 'Alayh* (Medina: Al-Jāmi'at al-Islāmiyya, 1980) p.138.

[343] Abbott, *Studies*, pp. 92-3.

Regarding: Q.20:45 لا تخافا اننى معكما أسمع وأرى (He (Allāh) said: 'Fear not, verily, I am with you both.) Muqātil said, "Do not be afraid of being killed. I will protect you."

Concerning Q.28:35 قال سنشدعضدك بأخيك ونجعل

(لكما سلطانا فلايصلون إليكما بآياتنا أنتما ومن اتبعكما الغالبون God said:We will certainly strengthen thy arm through thy brother and invest you both with authority, so they shall not able to touch you with our signs. Both You and those who follw you will prevail). Muqātil interpreted this verse literally.

The second type of Muqātil's methodology is conceptual. The following will illustrate this. The word "kufr" is been mentioned several times in the Qur'ān. It has different meanings in each of the passages. Muqātil compiled the words and explained the meaning of kufr in each verse. He said that one aspect of kufr is to reject the oneness of Allah, as is in Q.2: 7 إن الذين كفروا سواء عليهم أآنذرتهم أم لم تنذرهم

لايؤمنون. (Verily, those who كفروا (disbelieve) , it is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe). A second aspect of kufr is to be ungrateful to Allāh, as in Q. 27: 40, ومن شكر فإنما يشكر لنفسه ومن كفر فان ربى غنى كريم

(And if any is truly grateful, his gratitude is for his own soul but if any is ungrateful,truly My Lord is free of all needs Supreme, and Honour). The third aspect says Muqātil is to

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[344] Al- Ghānī, *Tafsīr*, p. 137.

declare oneself free, separate, and different as in Q. 29: 25: ثم يوم القيامة يكفر بعضهم بعضا.

(on the day of resurrection you shall disown (يكفر) each other).[345]

Summary and Comments

In the light of this discussion, *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y* can be defined as exegesis by independent opinion that does not conflict with the Prophet's explanation of the Qur'ān, or an established principle of Islām, and does conform with the sound Arabic usage and grammar

At the time of the Prophet and the first two caliphs, Abū Bakr and 'Umar, the term '*ra'y*' did not contain any negative connotations. It was understood as personal opinion and analogy. After the assassination of 'Uthmān, the third caliph, Muslims divided among themselves into groups. Generally speaking, each group including the supporters of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, used the Qur'ān to support their own notion. The Sunni and the *Shī'a* in particular distorted some verses and supplied far-fetched exegeses utilizing fabricated ḥadīth to confirm their point of view. As a result, some prominent scholars such as Sa'īd Ibn Musayyib, Sālim Ibn 'Abd Allāh , al-Qāsim Ibn Muḥammad and others abstained totally from *tafsīr*. Subsequently, the term *ra'y* became identified with sectarianism. The above-mentioned theological political schools continued to spread in the Muslim world of that day. Their exegeses became polemic in nature until *tafsīr bi al-Ra'y* was finally

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[345] Abbott, *Studies*, pp. 92-3

divided into two: *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-maḥmūd* and *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-madhmūm*.

Also, there evolved qualifications for a *mufassir* to save the integrity of *tafsīr*

Nonetheless, when the different schools of thought evolved as a result of

theological or political differences, polemics became the dominant element, therefore,

objectivity was lost. Mujāhid, for instance, interpreted Q.20:22-3 ناظرة إلى ربها يومئذناضرة

وجوه (Some faces that day will beam looking towards their Lord) not only differently from

the Prophet's explanation and that of his Companions, but he also in contradicted them.

His *tafsīr* is not labeled *'bid'a'*, although the Mu'tazilites interpreted the same way as

Mujāhid did, and they were accused of *bid'a*.

A critical look at the arguments of both the opponents of using *ra'y* and the

proponents of *ra'y* reveal that some of those arguments need more support while others

are irrelevant. For example, the opponents of *ra'y* quoted Q.16:44

وأنزلنا إليك الذكرلتبين للناس ما نزل إليهم (We have sent down to you the Qu.ʾ ... [lit., the

remembrance] that you may explain to people that which is sent for them) as one of their

arguments for the prohibition against *ra'y*. In our view, this argument is weak because,

practically speaking, the Prophet did not explain the whole Qur'ān nor even most of it,

and his Companion consequently used their own opinion in explaining some verses.

Other examples concern their interpretations of the Qur'an is Q.7:36

قل إنما حرم ربى الفواحش ما ظهر منها وما بطن والاثم والبغى بغير الحق

وأن تشركوا بالله ما لم ينزل به سلطانا وأن تقولواعلى الله ما لاتعلمون

(Say (O, Muhammad) (but) the things that my Lord has forbidden "*al-fawāḥish*"
(great evil sins) whether committed openly or secretly, sins (of all kinds) unrighteous,

oppression, joining partners (in worship) with God for which he has given no authority, and saying thing about God which you have no knowledge).

Those who opposed *ra'y* assumed that for God mentioning "saying thing about God which you have no knowledge" also in another verse the sin of joining partners (in worship) with God, for which He has given no authority, meant that both are the sins of the same magnitude. This assumption in our view is incorrect because explaining the Qur'ān based on sound Arabic language usage is not mere opinion. Indeed, the Qur'ān called upon Arab pagans to ponder in its meaning even without referring to the Prophetic explanation.

Concerning Q. 4: 83 ولو ردوه إلى الله وإلى الرسول وإلى أولى الأمر منهم

لعلمه الذين يستنبطونه منهم (If they had only referred it to the God abd the Messenger and those charged with authority among them, the proper investigators would have understood it from them directly), the proponents of *ra'y* presented it as an important evidence supporting their position, but in our view the verse is irrelevant. According to *Saḥīḥ Muslim* and Ibn Kathīr's report, the verse was revealed when a rumor spread that the Prophet had divorced his wives. None of his Companions dared to ask him about it until ʿUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb did so.[346] This report helps us to understand that the verse does not have anything to do with *tafsīr*; it is rather a guide for Muslims on how to deal with the issue of rumor. Perhaps al-Ghazālī and those who agreed with him concerning

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[346] Abū Zakariyāʾ Yaḥyā Ibn Sharaf Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Saḥīḥ Muslim* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d). 10:

this verse and its implications were thrown off by the word *"yastanbiṭūnahū"* (to deduce).

The term *istinbāṭ* was originally developed in the science of *uṣūl al-fiqh* to denote the

deduction of law from the Qur'ān and ḥadīth. Hence, they applied the verse without

considering the context. Ibn Ḥazm consumed considerable energy in rejecting the

application of this verse as evidence supporting the use of *ra'y*. He maintained that the

verse opposes the utilization of *ra'y* because *"ulī al-amr min-kum"* (those charged with

authority among them) refered to the Prophet. We disagreed with that, for the Prophet

was mentioned immediately before *ulī al-amr* in the very same verse.

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82. Ibn kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 1: 416.

CHAPTER IV

AL-TAFSĪR BI AL-MA'THŪR

The Concept and Definition of *Ma'thūr*

The word *"ma'thūr"* is a passive participle derived from the verbal noun *"athar"*. According to the Arabic lexicon, *athar* has a variety of meanings, ranging from 'to trace, to mark, to report, to transmit'. Thus, the phrase *"athara khuff al-ba'īr"* means "He made an incision in the foot of the camel in order to know and trace the footprint."[347] The Qur'ān used the term in different forms to indicate different meanings. In Q. 48:29: سيماهم فى وجوههم من أثرالسجود (Their signs [show] on their faces from the traces of bowing down.). The word *athar* in this verse is used as 'trace'. The meaning 'trace' is also found in : Q. 36:12: إنا نحن نحى الموتى ونكتب ما قدموا وآثارهم (We revive the dead and write down whatever they have sent on ahead and [left] as traces.).

In the Ḥadīth of the Prophet, the term *athar* is also used as in the lexical meaning. The Prophet said, *"inna ummatī yud 'awna yawma al-qiyāma...min athar al-wuḍū',"* (On the Day of Judgment, my followers will be called... from the traces of ablution."[348]

At the time of Ṣaḥāba, the term was used to mean Ḥadith of the Prophet. For example, Ibn Mas'ūd was asked about the situation of a woman whose husband died

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[347] Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1: 232 Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, 1: 6.

[348] Aḥmad Muḥsin Khān, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. Arabic -English* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr). 6: 102.

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without having any conjugal relation and while the dowry was not decided. He said, "Ask

Ṣaḥāba if any *athar have been* handed down in the matter."[349]

In his advice to the Muslims, Ibn 'Abbās said, "Stick with the right path and

athar."[350] In the time of *Tābi' ūn,* the *muḥaddithūn* (traditionists) and jurists employed the

term in two senses: that which is related to the Prophet and his Companions, and

whatever is ascribed only to the Companions.[351]

In the science of *tasīr,* the term *athar* is technically understood in four different

ways:

1.) The Qur'ānic exegesis that has been handed down from the Prophet and Ṣaḥāba.[352]

2.) The Qur'ānic exegesis that can be traced back to the Prophet, and also to some extent

which pertains to the occasions of the revelation *"asbāb al-nuzūl.")*[353]

3.) The explanation of the Qur'ān given in the Qur'ān itself, by the Prophet, and by his

Companions.[354]

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[349] Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Iḥkām,* 6: 47.

[350] Ibn Qayyim, *I'lām,* 4: 151.

[351] Al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb al-Rāwī fī Taqrīb al-Nawawī* ed. 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Abd al-Laṭīf (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1966). 1: 185. See also, al-Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth* (Medina: Al-Maṭba' al-Salafiyya, n.d). 1: 103.

[352] Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān,* 2: 157. See Goldziher, *Die Richtugen,* p. 63.

[353] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima,* p. 128.

[354] Al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil,* 2: 12.

4.) The explanation of the Qur'ān by other Qur'ānic verses, by the Prophet, his Companions, and Successors.[355]

Al-Ḥākim, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and others considered the *tafsīr* of the Companions as *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* only if what the Companions narrated pertained to *asbāb al-nuzūl*. It is possible that they—unlike others—classified *asbāb al-nuzūl* as exegesis rather than just a useful tool to aid in understanding a verse in its immediate circumstance or context. Such knowledge is prerequisite for a competent *mufassir*. On the other hand, Ibn Taymiyya and others agreed that *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* can include the use of one part of the Qur'ān to explain another. They failed to distinguish this from *ra'y*—for they opposed *ra'y*—but using the Qur'ān to explain the Qur'ān without injecting anything from the Prophet appears to be *ra'y* or *ijtihād*; there is no clear statement in the Qur'ān that certain verses are to be used to explain other verses.

In the light of these definitions, one can see that the Companions' exegesis is included in three definitions, and the exegesis of the Successors is included in the fourth definition only. The question here is, what was the reason for including exegesis of the Companions and Successors, along with the Prophet, under the definition concerning *athar*? The reason is connected with the notion of *ḥujja*.

Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Qayyim and others believed that the exegesis of the Companion is equal in authority to the exegesis of the Prophet.[356] They considered both as *al-Tafsīr*

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[355] Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr*, 1: 153.

[356] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, p. 105 Ibn Qayyim, *I'lām*, 4: 153.

bi al-Ma'thūr. Others like al-Ḥākim al-Nīsāburī,[d.405] and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ viewed the exegesis of the Companions differently. They regarded it as *ḥujja* only when it concerned *asbāb al-nuzūl*.[357] A third group, reportedly including Ibn Qayyim,[358] held that the exegesis of a Successor is equal in authority to the Prophet and the Companions. The arguments of each group will be presented in detail where the exegesis of the Prophet, Companions and the Successors will be discussed individually.

Having stated the meaning of *ma'thūr*, we will now discuss the Prophet's hadīth or sunna in relation to Qur'ānic exegesis.

The Substance of *Athar* and *Ma'thūr*: Ḥadīth

In Arabic, the term hadīth literally means 'new' as opposed to 'old', and it refers to 'report, story, communication, conversation', etc., i.e., "news". The Qur'ān uses the word to denote the linguistic meaning normally of 'story', 'communication' and 'conversation'. The Qur'ān uses the word to mean 'story', in Q. 79:15:

هل أتاك حديث موسى (Has Moses' story [حديث] ever come to you.). The term 'hadīth' here denotes 'story'.

In Q 68: 44: فذرني ومن يكذب بهذاالحديث (Hence, leave me alone with such as give the lie to this tiding [hadīth].) 'Hadīth' in this passage refers to 'communication' of the Qur'ān. In Q. 6:68: وإذا رأيت الذين يخوضون في آياتنا فأعرض عنهم حتى يخوضوا في حديث

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[357] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima Ibn Ṣalāḥ*, p. 128.

[358] 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin Al-Turkī, *Uṣūl Madhhhab al-Imām Aḥmad: Dirāsa Uṣūliyya Muqārana* (Riyadh: Maṭba'at al-Riyadh, 1977-1397.) pp. 179-80

غيره (When you see those who speculate about our signs, avoid them until they speculate about some other topic of conversation.). 'Ḥadīth' is used here to mean general 'conversation'.

The definition of Ḥadīth in the Sayings of the Prophet

The Prophet used the term ḥadīth as it has been used both in the linguistic sense and in the Qur'ān. In *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, we read thefollowing ḥadīth. "The best ḥadīth' is the book of Allāh."[359] Another report from al-Bukhārī, narrates "Whoever tries to eavesdrop on the ḥadīth of people when they dislike his doing so...." Ḥadīth' as it is used here denotes conversation.[360]

The term ḥadīth in theUsage of the *Muḥddithūn*

The *muḥaddithūn* (scholars of ḥadīth) used the term to denote that which was transmitted from or about the Prophet concerning his deeds, sayings, tacit approval or descriptions of his *ṣifāt* (physical appearance). The *fuqahā'* (the jurists) adhered to the same definition as the *muḥaddithūn*, but they excluded the description of *ṣifāt* from the definition. It is reasonable to believe that the jurists excluded *ṣifāt* because its value does not fall into their sphere. Muslims are commanded by the Qur'ān to follow the Prophet without reservation and to regard him as an example to be imitated; this means obeying him and following his behavior. This lies outside of the domain of description.

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[359] Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī* (Cairo: Al-Maṭba'at al-Salafiyya, n.d). 1: 70.

[360] *Ibid*, 1: 45.

Ḥadīth and Sunna

Sunna is literally a way, rule, or manner, whether good or bad. The Qur'ān uses the term in the linguistic terms. We read in Q. 3:137

قد خلت من قبلكم سنن فسيروا فى الأرض فانظروا كيف كان عاقبة المكذبين

(Many ways of life have passed away before your time. Go then, about the earth and behold what happened in the end to those who gave the lie to the truth.) In his *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn*, al-Nawawī reported that the Prophet said: "Whoever introduces sunna *ḥasana* a 'good sunna'...and whoever introduces an evil sunna...." In this ḥadīth the word sunna is used to indicate both good 'ways' and bad ones. Sunna as an Islāmic term, or in the usage of subsequent generations is, according to al-Shāfiʿī, restricted to the sunna of the Prophet.[361]

However, the terms ḥadīth and sunna were used interchangeably by *Ṣaḥāba*. Ibn Qayyim stated that ʿUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb had said, "The companion of *al raʾy* (that is, of those who used their opinion while the ḥadīth of the Prophet were available) is the enemy of the sunna. It is hard for them to memorize ḥadīth. Hence, [because they cannot do this], they are not able to understand [ḥadīth]. They could not bring themselves to say 'I do not know' whenever they were asked [about certain matters]. In this manner, they rejected the Sunna."[362] For our purpose, and to avoid confusion, we will use both words

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[361] Ibn Qayyim, *Iʿlām*, 1: 55.

[362] *Ibid*, 1: 55.

interchangeably since such has been the practice of the classical and contemporary Muslim scholars.

Western Islamicists and ḥadīth

Generally speaking, Western scholars of Islām have one of two attitudes concerning the documentation and authenticity of ḥadīth: there are those who totally reject ḥadīth, while others like Goldziher believed that most ḥadīth are fabrications.[363] There are three principals for the rejections.[364]

Goldziher generalized from the fabrication of the ḥadīth that took place on a large scale after the *fitna* of 'Uthmān and the war between 'Alī and Mu'āwiya. Both parties had fabricated ḥadīth to support their interests, since the legitimization of actions can only come from the Qur'ān--which was by then codified--or from the Prophetic ḥadīth, which had not been codified.

According to Goldziher, When the scholars who opposed the Umayyads, the partisans of 'Alī, began to compile ḥadīth and sunna of the Prophet, they found a dearth of ḥadīth to suit their purpose. Consequently, they fabricated ḥadīth'. They made up ḥadīths to praise *ahl al-Bayt* 'the family of the Prophet'. The Umayyads exploited certain scholars to fabricate ḥadīth for which they, in turn, received favors. Goldziher, cites as an example Imām al-Zuhrī, [d.124-741], who was asked or encouraged to fabricate ḥadīth in

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[363] Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, Translated form German by C.R. Berber and S.M. Stern (Chicago: Aldine, New York, Altherton, n.d, 2nd ed). 2: 43.

[364] *Ibid*, pp. 28-88.

favor of the Umayyads. One of these ḥadīth, Goldziher said, is "There are [only] three

mosques to which people should [especially] journey: the one in Mecca, Medina, or

Jerusalem."[365] Muslims familiar with the science of ḥadīth authentication know that this

ḥadīth is found in the six major collections of ḥadīth (al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim,

Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī, Sunan al-Nasāʾī and Sunan Ibn Māja) as meeting

the standards of accurate qualification.[366]

Secondly, Goldziher described Umayyad society as irreligious, one that did not

encourage religious spirit. Thus, throughout the first Islāmic century up to the second

century, the predominant literature was profane, not Islāmic.[367] Goldziher gave ample

examples to show that the Umayyad dynasty was full of ignorant Muslims, innovation and

changing forms of ritual Muslim worship. He said that in Syria, for example, the people

did not know that there were only five obligatory prayers a day; and that, as an another

example, the tribe of Banū ʿAbd al-Ashhal were unable to find anyone among themselves

to lead the prayer except a slave. In al-Baṣra (Iraq), the people did not know about "zakāt

al-fiṭr" 'charity Muslims give after the fasting of the month of Ramaḍān'.[368]

Additional evidence cited by Goldziher pertaining to the ignorance of the

Umayyads concerned their use of a pulpit with many steps, unlike to the Prophet's pulpit

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[365] *Ibid*, pp. 44-5.

[366] Al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2: 186 al-Nawawī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 3: 245.

[367] Goldziher, *Muslm Studies*. 2: 45.

[368] *Ibid*, p. 39.

of no more than three. In addition, the Umayyads began giving the sermon of the *'Īd* service after the prayer instead of before it, as was the Prophetic tradition.[369]

The third basis for Goldziher's rejection of most ḥadīth is the verbal testimony of some specialists in the field of ḥadīth. Goldziher mentioned, 'Āṣim al-Nabīl [d. 212 aged 90] who said: "I have come to the conclusion that a pious man is never so ready to lie as in a matter of the ḥadīth." The same utterance has also been said by his Egyptian contemporary, Yaḥyā Ibn Sa'īd Qaṭṭān [d. 192].

The three aforementioned elements and others caused Goldziher to reject most of the ḥadīth of the first century up to the third century. Again, due to the contradictions which appeared in some collections of the second and third century scholars, Goldziher rejected some works generally accepted by the Muslim scholars, such as those by Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī [d. 188], Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, and 'Abd al-Mālik Ibn Jurayj [d. 150]. He viewed them as books of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) rather than the collections of ḥadīth.[370] In his *Studies in Early Ḥadīth Literature*, Azami argues against and appears to have refuted Goldziher's claim.[371]

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[369] There are two '*Īd* (Annual Festival Prayer) in Islām. *'Īd Al-Fiṭr*, it occurs on the first day of the tenth month of Islāmic calendar. The second is *'Īd Al-Aḍḥā*, it comes on the tenth day of the twelve month of the Islamic calendar.

[370] Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 2, p 49. Some of Goldziher's opinion concerning the ḥadīth has been challenged by both Western Islāmicist scholars and Muslims. Among the Western Islamicists, William Muir and Aloyes Spranger. See William Muir, "The Life of Mohamed (London: Smith Elderso Col., 185.) 1, p. 32. Aloyes Springer, " Über das Tradionswesen bei den Arabern, Zomg, 10, 1856, pp. 1-17. Among the Muslims who criticized him, Azami, in his work Studies in Early ḥadīth Literature, pp.8-17 and Muṣṭafā Sibā'ī, in his book *al-Sunna wa Mukānatuhā* (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1973, 4th ed)

The Total Rejection of the ḥadīth

D. S. Margoliouth was among the first Western scholars of Islām to reject all Ḥadīth. In his *The Early Development of Muḥammadanism*, he held that the Prophet did not leave any guidance to the Muslims other than Qur'ān. According to him, the way of life that *Saḥāba* and *Tābi' ūn* led after the Prophet was nothing other than the pre-Islāmic Arabian culture as it stood and as modified through the Qur'ān. [372] Furthermore, he stated that the later generation of Muslims in the second century developed the concept of the sunna and forged the mechanism of the ḥadīth in order to secure the pre-Islāmic Arabian culture.

This idea of Margoliouth was later developed by Joseph Schacht in his *The Origins of Muḥammadan Jurisprudence*. One of the conclusions of Schacht was that al-Shāfi'ī was the first scholar to develop the concept of sunna. Azami has written a full thesis to counter Schacht's theory. Again, we refer our reader to Azami's work. [373] The question of ḥadīth in relation to *al-tafsīr* remains as generally problem that confronting Western scholarship. The confusion [according to McAuliffe] lies in the lack of textural evidence or sufficient textual evidence of the early period. [374] Thus, Fred Leemhuis

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[371] Azami, M.M. *Studies in Early Ḥadīth literature* (Beirut: al- maktaba al-Islāmī, 1992, 3rd ed) pp. 8-17

[372] D.S. Margoliouth, The Early Development of Muḥammedanism (London: Williams and Norgate, 1914). pp.65-85.

[373] Azami, *Studies in Early Ḥadīth)*

[374] McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians*, p. 26. Fred Leemhuis "Origins of Tafsīr Tradition" in *AHIQ*, p. 14

declared "So reconstruction of early history of *tafsīr* are all based on a preliminary assumption..."[375]

On the other hand, McAuliffe stated Scholarship in this area (the formative period of Qur'ānic *Tafsīr*) will continue to be a matter of individual interpretation or an augumentum ex silentio."[376]

More light will be shed on this subject in Chapter six. We will pursue our discussion of the Prophet's ḥadīth explaining the Qur'ān, based on the literature produced mostly after the second century and upward.

The Authority of the Qur'ān versus the Authority of Prophetic Ḥadīth and Sunna

In this section, we are concerned with the tradition (ḥadīth and sunna) [377] of the Prophet, as related to understanding divine revelation (the Qur'ān). From this perspective, we would like to briefly review the position Muslim scholars have adopted regarding the relationship between the sunna and the Qur'ān, and their status in Islām. Despite the fact that most Muslim Scholars[378] regard the sunna as being the second source of Islāmic Law,

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[375] Fred Lemhuis, Origins of Tafsīr Tradition, in *AHIQ*, p. 14..

[376] McAuliffe, QC, p. 26.

[377] Some scholars do not make distinction between *ḥadīth* and *sunna*, while others do distinguish between the two by defining the first as the saying of the Prophet and the latter as the action of the Prophet. For further discussion on the subject, see Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ, *Mabāḥith fī 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth*, p. 3-7. Rif'at Fawzī 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, *Tawthīq al-Sunna fī al-Qarn al-Thānī: Uṣūluhu wa Ittijāhātuh* (Cairo: Maṭaba' al-Khāniji, 1981, ist, ed), pp.9-17. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 2, pp. 18-31.

[378] The exemption to this are: Rafidites maintain that neither *mutawātir* nor *ḥadīth āḥād* are satisfactory enough to confirm with certainty or *ẓann* (conjecture) that such traditions are truly those of the Prophet. See 'Abd Al-Ghani, *Ḥujjiyya*, pp. 246-52. There are some contemporary scholars who feel the same way about *sunna*. In his article entitled "al-Islām is the only Qur'ān" published in *al-Manār* periodical, Muḥammad Tawfīq Al-Ṣiddīq argues that the only source in Islām is the Qur'ān for the

practically all of them have considered the Prophetic traditions which fall into the ḥadīth

mutawātir category (ḥadīth which has been reported overwhelmingly through several

chains as opposed to *āḥād*, one reported through a single chain) to be on the same level of

authority as the Qur'ān. Thus, Ibn Ḥazm, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Shāfi'ī, in support of

their arguments in this regard, cite the following Qur'ānic verses among others as textural

evidence (Q. 8:20):

يا أيها الذين آمنوا أطيعوا الله ورسوله ولاتولواعنه وأنتم تسمعون (O you who believe, obey God

and His messenger do not turn away from Him when you hear [him speak]); (Q. 53:3-4)

وما ينطق عن الهوى إن هو وحى يوحى (He does not speak from whim, it is solely inspiration.)

The idea here is that if God has commanded us in the Qur'ān to obey the Prophet

without any reservation, and if on the other hand, there is a command which we know

with certainty to have been issued by the Prophet, then failing to observe that command

would be failing to obey the Prophet and consequently failing to obey the command in the

Qur'ān.[379] Some prominent scholars, such as Makhūl Ibn Abī Muslim [d. 112-730],

extended this concept: *"al-Qur'ān aḥwaj ilā al-sunna min al-sunna ilā al-Qurān."* 'The

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following reasons: (1) According to the Q. 6:38, nothing has been left out of it, (2) According to Q. 16:89, also God embodied in it the explanation of all issues, (3) That had the *sunna* been authority, the Prophet would have ordered it to be written as he did in the case of the Qur'ān, and *Ṣaḥāba* and *Tābi'ūn* would have followed suite. Also it should be mentioned that some Shī'a, mainly Imāmites, believed that the existing Qur'ān which the Sunni believed to be the authentic copy of the Qur'ānic text written and unaltered from the time of the Prophet to the recent was changed and distorted. See Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal fī al-Milal* 4: 182. As for *ḥadīth*, they only accept that which is narrated by the family of the Prophet and a very few *Ṣaḥāba*, mainly Salmān al-Fārisī, Abū Dharr, and Miqdād Ibn al-Aswad. See Ashraf Ibn al-Mas'ūd 'Abd al-Raḥīm, *Jināyat al-Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghazālī 'alā al-Ḥadīth wa Ahli-h* (Cairo: Al-Dār As-Salafiyya, 1989). p. 281.

[379] Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Iḥkām, 4*, pp. 98-100. Also Ibn Qayyim *'I'lām, 1*, pp. 29-30.

Qur'ān needs the sunna more than the sunna needs the Qur'ān'.[380] A similar saying that

was popular among certain scholars was *"al-sunna qāḍin 'alā al-Qur'ān wa lā al-'aks."*

(The sunna is the judge of the Qur'ān and not vice versa).[381]

When Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal was asked about such statements, he replied: "I do not

dare to say that, but, rather, I say the sunna explains and elucidates the Qur'ān."[382] Mālik

Ibn Anas and Ibn Qayyim, moreover, best summed up the case in question in the following

statements: The relationship between the sunna and the Qur'ān is on three levels: on one

level, the sunna comes to echo the Qur'ān; on the second level, the sunna elucidates the

Qur'ān; and on the third level, the sunna adds and abrogates some imperative legal issues

that the Qur'ān is silent about. This level, [the last level] according to Ibn Qayyim, refers

to *naskh;*[383] it is not without controversy. There are mainly two opinions concerning the

question of sunna's authority to abrogate the Qur'ān.

First, the opinion of al-Shāfi'ī and others. These scholars believed that the sunna

of the Prophet has no authority to abrogate the Qur'ān. In support of this, they cited the

following Qur'ānic verses as evidence: Q. 10:15:

وقال الذين لايرجون لقانا ائت بقرآن غير هذا أو بدله قل ما يكون لى أن أبدله

من تلقا. نفسى إن أتبع إلا مايوحى إلى

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[380] Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, 1: 39.

[381] Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 2: 31.

[382] Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jami'*, 1: 39.

[383] Ibn Qayyim, *I'lān*, 1: 188-9.

(and those who do not expect to meet Us say, bring some other reading [lit. Another Qur'ān] than this, or change this; [You] say, it is not up to me to change it of my own accord; because of whatever I may encounter in it on my own. I only follow what is revealed to me). Hence, al- Shāfi'ī's argument is that God has commanded the Prophet to follow the revelation and he was not given authority to change from this.[384] Furthermore, al-Shāfi'ī maintained, since in Qur'ān 2:106, ما ننسخ من آية أو ننسها نأت بخير منها أومثلها God says (None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten but We substitute something better or similar), then God has clearly pointed out that He abrogates a verse with another that is better or similar.[385] Hence, this could not be the sunna, for it is not Qur'ān or similar to it.

Let us examine how al- Shāfi'ī arrived at this apparent contradiction. Al- Shāfi'ī believed strongly that the Prophet should be obeyed without any reservation because God imposed this upon Muslims. Therefore, the obedience to the Prophet is as important as the obedience due to God. More interestingly, al-Shāfi'ī accepted that the sunna has authority of *takhṣīṣ al-'āmm* (applying a general [Qur'ānic] dictum only to a limited or specific circumstance).[386] This is not an outright abrogation, but surely it is a de facto modification. Since, al- Shāfi'ī believed that the Prophet and his sunna have such

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[384] Al- Shāfi'ī, *al-Risāla*, pp. 106-7.

[385] *Ibid*, p. 108.

[386] *Ibid*, p. 65.

authority, it appears to be inconsistent for him not to formally accept the authority of the sunna to abrogate the Qur'ān.

In his *al-Jāmi' li aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, al-Qurṭubī quoted some jurists who appear to be consistent. He puts forth their arguments stating that there is no proof either from the sunna or from a logical point of view that the sunna can abrogate text from the Qur'ān. These people say that the sunna cannot be better than the Qur'ān or similar to it. Furthermore, no reward from God is promised to one who recites the sunna, unlike one who recites the Qur'ān. Finally, they say that the Qur'ān is *mu'jiz* 'inimitable', while the sunna is not.[387]

Second, some scholars, such as Ibn Ḥazm, claim that the Qur'ān can be abrogated even by ḥadīth *āḥād* (a ḥadīth which is reported by a single person at one of the links of transmission). This position of his is based on the idea that obedience to the Prophet is compulsory. He maintains that both *mutawātir* and authentic *āḥād* equally express the will of the Prophet, who does not speak of his own desire. Therefore, he must be obeyed.[388]

The Prophet's Exegesis

It is natural to make this our starting point not only because the Prophet is the only direct connection with God as Muslims claim, but also because the sunna is the second authoritative source on all aspects of the Muslim faith. Muslims assert that the Prophet

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[387] Al-Quṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, 1: 37.

[388] Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Iḥkām*, 4: 107.

was divinely commanded to explain the Qur'ān to mankind. Not by his own reasoning, but through the words which the angel Gabriel brought to him from God

Three of the Qur'ānic texts that were commonly cited to substantiate this position were: Q.16: 44 وأنزلنا إليك الذكر لتبين للناس ما نزل إليهم (And Upon thee [too] have We bestowed from on high this reminder, so that thou might make clear unto mankind all that has ever been thus bestowed upon them.); Q.75:17-19 إن علينا جمعه وقرآنه فاذا قرأناه فاتبع قرآنه ثم إن علينا بيانه (It is for Us to collect as well as[to teach you how] to recite it. So whenever We have recited it, follow in its recital; it is then We Who must explain it.); and وما ينطق عن الهوى إن هو إلا وحى يوحى Q.53:3-4 (He does not speak from whim, it is solely inspiration.)

These and other verses indicate that the Prophet must be the first exegete of the Qur'ān. Did he provide exegesis for the whole Qur'ān or not? There are three different opinions in respect to the answer to this question. First, there are those who hold that the Prophet explained the whole Qur'ān. In his *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn*, al-Dhahabī stated that certain prominent scholars as Ibn Taymiyya believed that the Prophet explained every single word of the Qur'ān.[389] In *Fatāwā*, he stated the phrase "لتبين للناس"(so that thou might make clear unto mankind) includes the command to communicate the words as well as explanations of the meanings. These scholars also maintained that the Companions of the Prophet did not go on to learn any additional portion of the Qur'ān before

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[389] Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr*, 1:149.

comprehending the full meaning of what they had already received from the Prophet. Hence, scholars such as Ibn Taymiya believed that this is evidence that the Prophet had revealed the meaning of all the Qur'ān to his Companions.[390] They also cited the tradition ascribed to 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb in which he says: "Among the last verses revealed was the verse of *ribā* (usury). However, the Prophet died before explaining it." From this, they said, we can infer that the Prophet used to explain every single verse to the Companions. Otherwise, specifically mentioning that the Prophet was unable to explain the verse because of his death serves no purpose.[391] Finally, they maintained that people naturally try to comprehend important books and science. How then could they have memorized the Qur'ān without understanding it in full, which to them was far more important than anything else including important books and science.[392]

Second, there are those such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Suyūṭī, al-Shāṭibī and others who believe that the Prophet gave the exegesis of only a few verses of the Qur'ān. In support of this they cited the statement of the Prophet's wife, 'Ā'isha: "The Prophet did not explain but a few verses that the angel Gabriel had taught him."[393] Scholars of this opinion maintained that if it is true that the Prophet did explain the whole Qur'ān, then his singling out of Ibn 'Abbās for God to bless him with *ta'wīl* (understanding) of the Qur'ān

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[390] *Ibid*, 1: 49-51.

[391] *Ibid* 1: 50.

[392] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, p. 37.

[393] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi 'al-Bayān*, 1: 38

would have been superfluous.[394] Al-Suyūṭī challenged those who disputed this opinion by presenting a list of the verses that he believed that were actually explained by the Prophet.[395] Finally, the supporters of this opinion argued that it is impossible that God would have ordered the Prophet to explain every verse in the Qur'ān because this would leave no room for human reflection on the Qur'ān, something which God has urged Muslims to do.[396]

Third, there are those such as al-Zarkashī's disciples who believe that the Qur'ānic verses which the Prophet explained were numerous. Unlike al-Suyūṭī, however they did not list the verses which were explained by the Prophet;[397] hence, they failed to substantiate their claim with any concrete evidence.

A quick glance at the arguments which each side presented to support their conclusion gives the allusion that the questions are hopelessly confusing. But closer examination of the arguments reveals otherwise. To begin with, the Qur'ānic phrase Ibn Taymiyya brought forth to support his argument does not necessarily imply the totality; it more likely implies the explanation of the problematic verses as well as the verses that cannot be comprehended through Arabic, such as the verses on the fasting, pilgrimage, etc. The same also can be said about the tradition related about the Companions' way of

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[394] Al-Qurṭubī, al-Jāmi', 1: 33.

[395] Al-Suyūṭī, al-Itqān, 2: 430-453.

[396] Al-Shāṭibī, al-Muwāfaqāt, 1: 255.

[397] Al-Zarkashī, al-Burhān, 1: 16.

learning the Qur'ān. Even though they were careful to comprehend the meaning of the portion they memorized, such comprehension could come through private discussion among themselves or through individual meditation and reflection on the Qur'ān. In fact, Muslims are urged more than once in the Qur'ān and hadīth to reflect on the Qur'ān as a way of understanding the Qur'ān, as in Q. 38:29.

كتاب أنزلناه مبارك ليدبروا آ ياته وليذكر أولوا الألباب (We have sent down a book to you that is blessed, so prudent men may ponder over its verses and thereby be reminded). In his *Matn al-Arba'īn al-Nawawiyya*, al-Nawawī reported the Prophet to have said: "No people gather in one of the houses of Allāh reciting the Book of Allāh and studying it among themselves, without tranquillity descending upon them, mercy enveloping them, the angels surrounding them, and Allāh making mention of them amongst those who are with Him."[398] Moreover, it cannot be inferred from what 'Umar has said concerning the verse of *ribā* that the Prophet used to explain every single verse of the Qur'ān. Rather it gives the impression that this verse was somewhat confusing to 'Umar himself and would have been made clear by the Prophet had he not died shortly afterward. In fact, 'Umar himself on other occasions expressed difficulty in understanding some verses of the Qur'ān such as the verse of *kalāla* 'one who dies and leaves neither ascendants nor descendants'.[399]

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[398] Al-Nawawī, *Matn al 'Arba'īn al-Nawawiyya*, Arabic and English, translated Ezzeddīn Ibrāhīm and Denys Jhonson-Davies (Damascus, 1977). p. 45

[399] 'Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad Ibn Shu'ayb Ibn 'Alī al-Nasā'ī, *Tafsīr al-Nasā'ī*, ed. 'Abd al-Khāliq al-Sharīf and Sa'īd Ibn 'Abbās al-Julaynī (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sunna, 1990). pp. 422-3.

It is noteworthy that in his *Fath al-Bārī*, a commentary on al-Bukhārī's *al-Jāmi'*

al-Ṣaḥīḥ, Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī counted 548 ḥadīth in the chapter that discuss *tafsīr*.[400]

Of these 548, only 100 ḥadīth are not [from a technical point of view] repetitions or

mu'allaq.[401]

It is worth mentioning here that even these 100 ḥadīth which Ibn Ḥajar al-

'Asqalānī talked about are not exclusively Qur'ānic exegesis. Some of them contain *asbāb*

al-nuzūl. In his concise excellent studies of the *tafsīr* literature in the six authoritative

collections, R. Marston Speight gave an account of 475 ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī's chapter--

not counting repetitions. He also listed 393 reports which *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī* contains in

regard to *tafsīr*. In the four books, he did not give a specific statistic, but he sufficiently

explained the attitude of each book towards the function of ḥadīth as commentary on the

Qur'ān and what pertains to it, such as *asbāb al-nuzūl, al-aḥruf al-Sab'* 'the seven

versions' etc.[402] In the table below for chapters two to ten of the Qur'ān are listed the

verses--on the far right--about which there exists Prophetic exegesis as mentioned in the

· texts listed at the left along with their authors[403].

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[400] Ibn Ḥajar 'Asqalānī, *Fatḥ*, 8: 743.

[401] *Mu'allaq* is a ḥadīth lacking the name of its first narrator or the names of all the narrators. For example, if Mālik Ibn Anas narrated that 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Umar said so and so without mentioning any narrators' name before 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Umar, such a ḥadīth is called Mu'allaq, because Mālik was not a comtemporary of 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Umar. See Muḥammad Adib Ṣāliḥ, *Lamaḥat fī Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth* (Beirut: Al-Maktab Al-Islāmī, 1988). pp. 280-1.

[402] Speight, The Function of ḥadīth, pp. 72-9, in *AHIQ*

[403] I chose these nine chapters because lengthy as they are, they should be sufficient to give the readers an idea of the portion of the *tafsīr* tradition in ḥadīth literature. However, the list given here is representative

Author	Book	Chapters	Verses
Ibn Athīr	*Jāmi' al-Uṣūl*	2,3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,9,10	2, 1,1, 3,1, 1, 3
Ibn Ḥanbal	*Musnad*	2,3,4, 5, 6,7, 8,9, 10	6,3,2,-3,1, 1,1,2
Al-Nasā'ī	*Tafsīr Nasā'ī*	2,3, 4, 5 6, 7, 8,9,10	7, 5,1, 4, 4,1,3,2,2
Al-Nawawī	Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim	2,3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,9,10	
Al-Suyūṭī	*Al-Itqān*	2,3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,9,10	10,7,1,3,5,3,3,2,3,1
Al-Tirmidhī	*Jāhi' al-Tirmidhī*	2, 3,4, 5, 6, 7, 8,9,10	9, 4,1,5,5,2,2,5,2

In the light of this, there are only two possibilities as to why the number of the verses explained by the Prophet were so few compared to the total number of the verses of the Qur'ān (6,236). Either the bulk of the exegeses were lost, which is an unlikely possibility given the vast amount that we have of the Prophetic tradition, or else the Prophet engaged in *tafsīr* only as the occasion arose, such as if the revelation were somewhat problematic for his Companions, as we have mentioned in Chapter One. The latter is the more likely of the two, for although some verses might be more difficult to understand than the others, the Qur'ān was revealed to the Arabs, firstly, in Arabic. The people, by and large, understood their own language.

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of the Prophetic *Tafsīr*. It does not include *tafsīr of Ṣaḥāba* and *asbāb al-nuzūl*. It is noteworthy that there are some Prophetic explanation of the Qur'ān in various parts of the books of *ḥadīth* and elsewhere.

Ibn 'Abbās best illustrated this opinion when he said, "The meaning of the Qur'ān falls into four categories; that which is known through the knowledge of Arabic, that which is so common place that there is no excuse for anyone not to know; that which is known only to the *'Ulamā'* (scholars); and that meaning about which God has reserved for Himself."[404] Thus, we see that no matter which authorities claim that the Prophet explained the Qur'ān in full to his Companions, statistics, as well as textual evidence from the authentic Prophetic ḥadīth, indicate otherwise. The contribution of the Prophet's traditions can be summed up in the five following subsections:

Tafsīr Mujmal. This is 'exegesis that details that which is ambivalent'. There are many verses in the Qur'ān which have come as brief statements that in themselves give the readers no specific information or instructions regarding the implementation of the subject matter. The Prophet, therefore, provided the details. For example, in various verses, the Qur'ān commands Muslims to perform prayer, *Ḥajj* (Pilgrimage) and to give alms, etc., but these verses did not explain how to perform such rituals or what amount of money one should possess in order to be eligible for giving alms, and how much should he give. The tradition of the Prophet detailed all that.[405]

Takhṣīṣ al-'Āmm. Muslims regard the sunna of the Prophet as not only binding, but also as the living example of the Qur'ānic text. Hence, *takhṣīṣ al-'āmm* (applying a

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[404] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 1: 39.

[405] Al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Risāla*, p. 31. See also Muhammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, *Ṣifāt al-Ṣalāt al-Nabī* (Damascus: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 6th ed 1391). p. 10.

general [Qur'ānic] dictum only to a limited or specific circumstance) refers to those

Prophetic ḥadīth that exempts some Muslims, while specifying others to carry out or use

the information from the Qur'ānic text. For example, in Q.4:11

يوصيكم الله فى أولادكم للذكر مثل حظ الأنثيينفان كن نساء فوق اثنتين فلهن ثلثا ما ترك

وان كانت واحدة فلهاالنصف ولأبويه لكل واحد منهما السدس ما ترك ان كان له ولد

(God instruct you as concerning your children's ' [inheritance]: a son should have a share equivalent to that of two daughters. If the women [left behind] are ,more than two, then two-thirds of whatever he leaves belongs to them; yet if there is only one her share is a half. For parents, a sixth share of the inheritance to each if the deceased has left children...) It is clear from this verse that fathers and mothers are among the heirs of their children. The Prophet, however, excluded them from inheriting from their children if the parents were slaves, non-Muslims or convicted murderers..[406]

Taqyīd al-Muṭlaq. This term refers to *tafsīr* or rulings that restricts or limits

Qur'ānic text that was conveyed in absolute or unspecified terms. Hence, the Islāmic

scholars' phrase *taqyīd* 'restricting', *al-muṭlaq* 'the absolute' to limit that which is neither

qualified not limited in its application. Consider the following example: Q. 5:38

والسارق والسارقة فاقطعوا أيديهما (As to the thief male and female cut off his or her hands.)

As we can see, the verse does not tell how much of the hand should be cut off. The only

source from which Muslim jurists learned that the hand should be cut off from the wrist

was from the Prophetic tradition.[407]

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[406] Muḥammad Ibn Idrīs Al-Shāfiʻī, *al-Risāla* ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Maṭbaʻat Dār al-Turāth, 1979-1399). pp. 64-5.

[407] Abū Muḥammad ʻAbd Allāh Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdasī, *al-Mughnī* (Riyadh: Maṭbaʻat al-Riyadh, n.d). 1: 260. Muḥammad ʻAlī al-Sabūnī, al-*Rawā ʻi al-Bayān min Tafsīr Āyāt al-Aḥkām min al-Qur'ān* (Damascus: Maktabat al-Ghazālī, 1971-1391,1st ed). p. 121.

Ta'yīn al-murād bi al-fāẓ wa al-'ibārāt allatī taḥtamil akthar min ma'nā. This literally means to specify the intended meaning in the case of a word or expression that can be understood in more than one way. Hence, the fourth type of Prophetic *tafsīr* makes specific the meaning of a word or expression that otherwise could be understood in more than one way. Here it refers to the use of Prophetic ḥadīth in *tafsīr* clarifying of textually ambivalent words and phrases, metaphors, figurative speech and other forms of rhetoric found in the Qur'ān. For example, consider the word *"tankiḥa"* in Q.2:230:

فان طلقها فلاتحل له من بعد حتى تنكح زوجا غيره (If he [finally] divorces her, [his wife 'irrevocably] she is not allowed [to marry] him afterwards until she marries some husband other than him.)

This verse refers to the irrevocable divorce. The husband is allowed to pronounce divorce, but can resume marital relations with his wife only after the first two pronouncements and before the end of three menstrual cycles. After each pronouncement. After a third pronouncement, the divorce is termed irrevocable; he cannot continue relations with her, nor can he remarry her until she marries someone else, has conjugal relations with him, and them becomes single again via a legitimate and sincere marriage followed by divorce or widowing.[408]

The word *tankiḥa* which means "she marries". According to its Arabic understanding, it could mean a marriage with or without conjugal relations. The term is

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[408] Abū Zahra, Muḥammad, *al-Shāfi'ī Ḥayātuh wa 'Aṣruh wa Ārā'uh wa Fiqhuhu* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, n.d). p. 156.

textually ambivalent in Islāmic Law. The proper concept is found in a Prophetic ḥadīth. A woman was divorced three times and married another man. She became divorced again and wanted to return to her first husband. She had not had coitus with the second husband, however. The Prophet commanded that she cannot remarry her first husband until she has had coitus within a marriage to another. Hence, the Prophet made specific the application of a word that could have been understood in more than one way.[409]

Another example is found in the verse that reads: وكلوا واشربوا حتى يتبين لكم الخيط الأبيض من الخيط الأسودمن الفجر (And eat and drink until the white streak [of dawn] can be distinguished by you from the black thread of [night] at daybreak.) It is narrated in a Prophetic ḥadīth that the phrase '*ḥattā yatabayyana lakum al-khayṭ al-abyaḍ min al-khayṭ al-aswad min al fajr*' (until white thread appears to you distinct from the black thread of dawn), was literally understood by 'Adī Ibn Ḥātam. He asked the Prophet whether or not the white and black thread mentioned therein are real. The Prophet said that the word thread refers to the brightness of a new day on the horizon contrasting with the darkness of the receding night.[410] Thus, the word *khayṭ* had at least two meanings but the Prophetic ḥadīth relates the metaphorical concept as the one that was meant by the Qur'ānic text.

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[409] Abū Bakr Aḥmad Ibn 'Alī Ibn Thābit al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb Kifāya fī 'Ilm al-Riwāya*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥalīm 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ḥasan Maḥmūd (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Hādītha, n.d). 1: 46.

[410] *Ibid*, 1: 279.

Tawḍīḥ al-Mubham. Here we refer to removing obscurity. In some Qur'ānic verses, we find that even though the language is clear, the Companions were unable to grasp the real sense of the verse because of ambiguity. In Q. 10:63-4 الذين آمنوا وكانوا يتقون لهم البشرى فى الحياة الدنيا والآخرة (Those who believe and who had God-consciousness will have good news concerning worldly life as well as about the Hereafter). The meaning of the word البشرى (good news) was known to Abū Dharr and others, but its meaning was not clear to them concerning good tidings in both this world and the next; thus, Abū Dharr asked the Prophet about its meaning. The Prophet replied by saying: "It is the good dream seen by a believer or seen for him."[411]

The Methodology of the Prophet's Exegesis

The Prophet did not leave any written work behind where he laid down a methodology for the exegesis of the Qur'ān. By referring to the authentic ḥadīth literature, his methodology can be distinguished. One, he explained Qur'ānic verses via other Qur'ānic verses. For example, Q.6:82 reads: الذين آمنوا ولم يلبسوا إيمانهم بظلم أولئك لهم الأمن وهم مهتدون (Those who believe and do not cloak their faith in wrongdoing will feel more secure and will be [better] guided. The Companions of the Prophet understood the meaning of the word ظلم (*ẓulm*) linguistically, to mean injustice. The Prophet used another Qur'ānic verse to explain to them the intended meaning of the word in this

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[411] Majd al-Dīn Abū al-Saʿādāt al-Mubārak Ibn al-Athīr al-Jazarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl fī aḥādīth al-Rasūl*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Arnaʾūt (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ḥalwānī, n.d). 2: 191

particular verse. This is the verse the Prophet utilized to explain the meaning of *ẓulm*

Q.31:13. إن الشرك لظلم عظيم (indeed shirk is a great injustice).

The second method the Prophet used to explain the Qur'ān was dialectic dialogue;

he questioned his Companions about a certain matter but gave the answer himself by citing

a particular verse. One Prophetic ḥadīth relates that the Prophet recited Q.99:4-5

يومئذ تحدث أخبارها بأن ربك أوحى لها (On that day she[the earth] will report her news.)

The Prophet asked: "Do you know what is 'her news'?" After his Companions answered

that they did not know, the Prophet said, "The earth will be a witness for each person

about what he or she did on it."[412]

Third, very often we find the Prophet making statements regarding certain issues,

and then for furhter reference telling his audience to read the Qur'ān by saying: "Read if

you will 'a particular part of the Qur'ān'". Abū Hurayra cites the Prophet to have said:

"God said I prepared for my righteous servants that which never the eyes have been seen

nor the ears have heard nor have come across a human mind. Read if you will. Q.32:17.

فلاتعلم نفس ما أخفى لهم من قرة أعين جزاء بما كانوا يعملون (No soul knows what comfort is

hidden from their eyes as a reward for what they have been done).[413]

Another example, on the authority of Abū Hurayra, the Prophet said: "If the

servant commits a sin, a black spot is placed on his heart; if he repents to God, then the

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[412] Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi' al-Uṣūl*, 2: 191. See al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qādīr*, 5: 480.

[413] The whole story is cited from Ibn Ḥajar al'Asqalānī, *Fatḥ*, 8: 541.

heart would be purified from that black spot. If, however, he did not repent and continues to disobey God, all his heart would be covered by black spots; Then the Prophet referred to Q. 83.14 by saying,: كلا بل ران على قلوبهم ما كانوا يكسبون (Nay! But their hearts are corroded by all the evil that they were wont to do).[414]

Of the four different methods of exegesis mentioned above, we observed that the most common was the second. A careful examination of the exegetical aspect of the Prophetic tradition reveals certain unique characteristics as discussed below.

Characteristics of the Prophetic *tafsīr*

The first characteristic is that the exegesis is derived from God himself as in Q.53: وما ينطق عن الهوى إن هو إلا وحى يوحى 3-4 (He does not speak from whim, it is merely inspiration).

Another characteristic that is equally unique to the Prophetic exegesis is that it is the only one that has authority to restrict or to specify that which is general.

Third, technically speaking, the Prophetic *tafsīr* utilizes the linguistic aspect, explaining the vocabulary of the Qur'ānic text, very little. Scarcely do we find the Prophet explaining vocabulary. This, I suggest, is because his immediate audience was well versed in Arabic. Finally, the Prophet never relied on quotations from poetry.

Although the poets enjoyed a special prestige and privilege in ancient Arab society, the Arabs, in general, claimed to be endowed with eloquence. Eloquence was one of the

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[414] Al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, 5: 398.

outstanding parts of their pride. Poetry, however, was one of the two weapons Arabs used to fight among themselves throughout their history. The other weapon was the sword. They used to hold an annual poetic contest in *"sūq 'ukkāz"* near Mecca. The Prophet himself used poets.

The poets played various important roles in ancient Arab society ranging from propagating the honor of the tribes, clans, etc., to inciting the tribes to fight and spreading the news of a battle victory. For such a role that a poet played, if a tribe was blessed with a young man who could compose beautiful poems and poetry, the tribe hold a big celebration.[415]

Due to the aforementioned reasons, in addition to exaggerations made by poets, including outright lies, the Qur'ān strongly rejected the accusation that the Prophet was a poet and that the Qur'ān was. Among the Qur'ānic verses which rejected such an accusation was Q. 36: 70 وما علمناه الشعر وما ينبغى له إن هو إلا ذكر وقرآن مبين (We have not tought him [the Prophet] any poetry nor would it be fitting for him. It is merely a reminder and a clear reading.)

Summary and Comments

According to the Qur'ān, the Prophet was divinely commanded to explain the Qur'ān to mankind. From the Islāmic point of view, therefore, the Prophet was the first and foremost exegete of the Qur'ān. However, he did not explain each and every word of

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[415] Al-Ḥasan Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawānī, *al-'Umda fī Mahāsin al-Shu'arā'* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1988, 1st ed). 1: 40-43.

the Qur'ān, simply because the Qur'ān was revealed in Arabic and his Companions were Arabs who, by and large as the speakers of their mother tongue, understood their own language. Thus, he interpreted to them only what was not understodd through the Arabic language. Such verses pertained mainly to the ritual aspects of Islām and some to laws.

Generally speaking, Muslim scholars consider the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth to have equal status, on the grounds of Q. 53:3, namely, وما ينطق عن الهوى (He does not speak from whim); and the ḥadīths in which the Prophet said, "Certainly, I have come with the Qur'ān and its like (the sunna) and they will never be separated right down to the day of judgment."[416]

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[416] Al-Bānī, *The Status of Sunnah in Islām*, translated A.R.M. Zerruque. (Kuwait: Dār Ihya al-Turāth, n.d). pp. 28-9.

CHAPTER V

TAFSĪR OF THE SAḤĀBA AND THEIR FATWĀS

This chapter will first discuss the word "Ṣāḥib" and then proceed to the arguments concerning the Islamic authority and precedence of the views and opinions of the Companions in relationship to the authority of other Muslims and their sources.

Definition of Ṣāḥib and Ṣaḥāba

'The Arabic word Ṣāḥib (adjective) is derived from the verbal noun (maṣdar), ṣuḥba, which has many meanings, all denoting the notion of companionship or submission. Thus, when Arabs say "wa aṣḥabtuhū al-shay' " the meaning to be understood is 'I made something to be his companion'.[417]

On the other hand, the phrase "fa aṣḥabtuhū al-nāqa" which is a part of ḥadīth, means, according to Ibn Manẓūr 'The camel submitted and followed her owner.'[418] Ṣāḥib as an Islamic technical term meaning a contemporary of the Prophet who believed in him as a Prophet, kept his company and died as such. Traditionists and jurists each have their own definition of this term. Traditionists, including Ibn Ḥajar, Ibn Kathīr and others, define a Ṣāḥib or Ṣaḥābī as anyone who both met the Prophet in reality (as opposed to

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[417] Ibn Manẓūr, Lisān, 1:520.

[418] Ibid, 1: 520.

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seeing him in a dream) after he became a Prophet, and died as a believer in him, even if he or she did not transmit a single ḥadīth from him.[419]

This definition does not seem to have satisfied the critical mentality of the jurists. To them, a Ṣaḥābī is not only someone who met the Prophet, but also is someone who accompanied the Prophet over a long period of time,[420] met with him frequently during that period with submission as a disciple, and learned from him.[421] Accordingly, the jurists excluded from the rank of Ṣaḥāba many people whom the traditionists considered to be Ṣaḥāba, especially those people who saw the Prophet once during the only one pilgrimage he made to Mecca.

This difference between the two opinions was for mainly two reasons. First, the notion of 'adāla[422] 'honesty, uprightness' made it necessary for the jurists to be more reserved in their consideration of the term more than the traditionists because the former were concerned with the legal ramifications of the term more than the latter, who were

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[419] Ibn Ḥajar, Iṣāba, 2: 83

[420] The length of the companionship is debated. Some of the scholars restricted it to a minimum of six months while others extended it to a one year period. Still others, however, have correctly pointed out that the arbitraters in this questions is "usage" since no clear proof otherwise can be founded in either the language or Islām. See Iyād Kubaysī, Ṣaḥābat Rasūl Allāh, fī al-Qur'ān wa al-Sunna (Damascus: Dār al-Qur'ān, 1986, 1st ed). p. 60.

[421] Ibid, p.62.

[422] The word 'adāla signifies the quality of a witness such as is termed 'adl. It is an explanation as being a quality the regard of which necessitates the guarding against what falls short of the requirement of mainly virtue or moral goodness, habitually and evidently which falling short thereof is not effected by small instance lapses or fall into wrongdoing. See Lane, Lexicon, 5: 1975.

concerned with hadith transmission. Second, the traditionists did not go beyond the

literal sense of the word while the jurists went deeper to examine its application in *'urf*

Arguments concerning the *Ḥujja* of a Companion's Exegesis and *Fatwā*

Praise for the Ṣaḥāba in the Qur'ān and hadith made Muslims of later generations

hold Ṣaḥāba in high esteem, although in various degrees, ranging from absolute authority

that puts their opinion as an equal footing with that of the Prophet, to mere reverence that

is limited to honoring their pioneering role in Islām and their Companionship with the

Prophet: This lack of consensus among Muslims regarding the legal status of the Ṣaḥāba,

to be elaborated later in this chapter, had some impact on Qur'ānic exegesis, and Islāmic

law. The Ṣaḥāba, whether during the Prophet's life or thereafter, had at times used their

own opinion in the absence of the Qur'ān or hadith injunction. This effort on their part

came to be known as *madhhab Ṣaḥābī, or ra'y Ṣāḥib* or saying of *Ṣaḥābī or fatwā sahābī*

[423] and was the question of the authority which became the subject of controversy among

the Muslim scholars. In his *Principles of Islāmic Jurisprudence*, Muḥammad Hāshim

Kamālī has correctly presented the arguments in precise form as follows "The Sunni

scholars are unanimously agreed on the Companions ' *'ijmā'* ' as a binding proof and the

most authoritative form of *ijmā'*. The question arises as to whether the *fatwā* of a single

Ṣāḥib should also be recognized as a binding proof and therefore be given precedence

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[423] Al-Āmidī, *al-Iḥkām*, 4: 140- 145. See 'Abbās Mutawwalī Ḥamāda,. *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*
(Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍa, 1965-1385, 1st ed). P. 330 . Al-Turkī, *Uṣūl*, pp. 392, 401.

over evidence such as *qiyās* 'analogical reasoning' or the *fatwā* of another *mujtahid* [424] a person qualified to give authoratative opinions in religious jurisprudence'.

There are four primary views in relation to the *ḥujja* of a Companion's exegesis and *fatwā*.

1. The opinion that holds that the saying of a Companion or his *tafsīr* is an absolute binding authority that takes priority over *qiyās* and everyone else's *tafsīr*. Among the proponents of this view were Imām Mālik, Imām, Aḥmad, Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Qayyim and others. [425]

2. The opinion of the scholars who believe that the saying of a Companion is a binding authority only if it pertains to the occasions of the revelation or to that which cannot be subjectively discussed *mā lā majāla li al-ra'y fīh*. Among the supporters of this notion were Abū Ḥanīfa; al-Ḥakim al-Nīsābūrī and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ. The example usually given for the latter, *mā lā majāla li al-ra'y fīh*, was the saying of Anas Ibn Mālik that the minimum days of a woman's monthly period is three days and the maximum is ten days. [426]

3. The view that maintains that the saying of the four prominent caliphs is the only absolute authority, this has been narrowed down even further to include only the first two caliphs. [427]

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[424] Muḥammad Hāshim Kamālī, *Principles of Islāmic Jurisprundence*. (Cambridge: Islāmic Text Society, 1991). P. 249. The scholars also unanimously agreed that the opinion of a Ṣaḥābī is not a binding on the other Ṣaḥābī.

[425] Badrān Abū al'Aynan, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr,1976, 1st ed.)* p.149.

[426] Al-Sarkhasī, *Uṣūl*, 1: 110.

4. The view that believes that the saying of a Companion is not a binding proof. This is the view of many jurists and theologians including al-Ghazālī, Ibn Ḥazm, al-Āmidī, al-Shawkānī and others.[428]

Let us proceed now to present the arguments of the four groups. Among the first group's arguments is Q. 9:100: والسابقون الأولون من المهاجرين والأنصار والذين اتبعوهم بإحسان رضى الله عنهم (The first emigrants and supporters, as well as those who follow them by doing good, God is pleased with them, and they are pleased with them).

The importance of this verse is that God has praised the Companions, those who followed them, individually or as a group, therfore if one differs with one of them or does not accept his opinion, he will be excluded from the blessing of God. Thus, everyone must follow their judgments or opinions. In other words, the Companions' opinion is an absolute a binding authority within Islāmic law.[429]

Another verse is Q. 3:110 كنتم خيرأمة أخرجت للناس (You are the best people, raised for the good of mankind). The point made here by the proponents of this opinion is that God described the Companions as the best people ever raised up for mankind, thereby suggesting that their judgments and opinions are the best and should be accepted.[430]

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[427] Al-Ghazālī, al-Mustasfā, 1: 616.

[428] Ibid, 1: 616–621.

[429] Ibn Qayyim, I'lām, 4: 126-31.

[430] Al-Āmidī, al-Iḥkāṁ, 4: 152.

The Proponents of this view referred to several ḥadīth. One of them is *aṣḥābī ka-al-nujūm bi ayyihim iqtadaytum ihtadaytum* (My Companions are like stars, whoever you follow among them you will be guided the right path).[431] Another ḥadīth is (The best generation is mine, then the following generation; then generation that follows).[432] These two ḥadīth, mainly the latter, indicate very clearly that anyone who follows any Companion is guided. This demonstrates the authority of the *Ṣaḥāba's* opinion. One of the strongest arguments used by supporters of this view was that God has blessed the *Ṣaḥāba* with the companionship of the Prophet; they learned the whole Qur'ān from the Prophet directly; they witnessed the revelation, and understood the circumstances in which it was sent. Furthermore, they understood well the Prophet's methodology and mastered the Arabic language, which is the Qur'ān's language.[433]

The two most outstanding proponents of this notion were Ibn Taymiyya and his faithful student Ibn Qayyim, who seriously challenged the opponents of this idea and defended their own position by presenting about forty six arguments from the Qur'ān, hadīth, the sayings of the *Ṣaḥāba* and logic.

Further Qur'ānic evidence for this group includes Q. 27:59

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[431] Al Sarkhaṣī, *Uṣūl*, 1, pp. 107-9 this ḥadīth is described as fabricated because of Salām Salīm and al-Ḥārith Ibn Ḥusayn. The fist was qualified as a liar, who narrated forged aḥādīth. Ther latter was *majhūl* (unknown) See Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Iḥkām*, 6: 82 and Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Jāmi' al-'Ulūm*, 2: 91.

[432] Ibn Qayyim, *I'lām*, 4: 151

[433] Ibn Taymiyya, *Fatāwā*, 13: 364. See 'Umar Fārūq 'Abd Allāh, *Mālik's concept of 'Amal in the light of Mālikī legal theory.* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1978-1398). 1:162.

وقل الحمدلله الذى اصطفى على عباده

(Say, praise be to God and peace on those servants of His whom he has selected.) Ibn

'Abbās said the selected servants were the Companions of the Prophet. Ibn Qayyim said:

"The actual implication of the word *istifā'* is purification from impurity which includes

mistakes (*akdar*). Thus, the Ṣaḥāba are purified. He further added: that although the

Ṣaḥāba differed on some issues, this neither contradicts their purity nor affects their

claims, for no one can have true understanding of Islām better than them.[434]

Additional textual support includes. Q. 47:16 حتى إذا خرجوا من عندك قالوا للذين

أوتواالعلم ماذاقال آنفا؟ (until once they have left your presence, they tell those who have

been given knowledge: 'What did he say now?') and Q. 58.11 يرفع الله الذين آمنوا منكم

والذين أوتواالعلم درجات (God will raise those of you who believe, in rank, as well as the

once who are given knowledge). Ibn Qayyim claimed that the article *al* in the word *al-*

'ilm in these verses stands for *al-'ahd* which indicates that it was something specifically

known to the audience. Ibn Qayyim interpreted this knowledge as the Qur'ān. Thus, he

concluded that if the Ṣaḥāba were given such knowledge, they must be followed (in all

what they said or decided).[435]

A third piece of Qur'ānic evidence is Q. 2:143 وكذلك جعلناكم أمة وسطا

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[434] Ibn Qayyim, *I'lām*, 4: 137.

[435] *Ibid*, 4: 131.

لتكونوا شهداء على الناس ويكون الرسول عليكم شهيدا (Thus, We have set you up as a moderate

nation so you may act as witness for mankind.) The point that Ibn Qayyim made here is

that Allāh has made the *Ṣaḥāba* the chosen and upright people by making them to be the

witnesses for the people on the day of judgment. The witness that Allāh accepts is the one

which is based on knowledge and thus confirms the soundness of the knowledge of the

Ṣaḥāba. Therefore, the truth or real understanding never escapes their circle. Hence, he

concluded 'We say to whoever's opinion disagrees with the *Ṣaḥāba*'s that if their opinions

(those who disagree with the *Ṣaḥāba*) carry any good, they could not attain it before the

Ṣaḥāba.[436]

Ibn Qayyim and those who agreed with him set forth the ḥadīth "The similitude of

my Companions in regard to my community is like salt in the food: food does not taste

delicious without salt." Thus, he concluded that if it will be possible that the *Ṣaḥāba* will

make a mistake and no one in their time will realize it and correct it, then, the next

generation could have been that salt. Of course, this is impossible, Ibn Qayyim stated.[437]

The Second ḥadīth they used is: "Do not insult my Companions. Were any one of

you to give gold (for the sake of God) as big as the mountain of Uḥud (a big mountain

outside of Medina) you still would not be able to reach what they have done, nay, not

even its half." Ibn Qayyim commented on this ḥadīth by saying "If the reach of

Companion is better in the sight of God than gold as big as the mountain of Uḥud, how

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[436] *Ibid*, 4: 132.

[437] *Ibid*, 4: 137.

then, could Allāh not have inspired them with a correct understanding in their *fatwās*, and instead inspire one of the next generation with such knowledge? This is obviously impossible."[438]

The third ḥadīth they used is: "Verily, Allāh has selected or chosen me *(ikhtārani)* and selected Companions for me. Some of them he made my ministers, helpers, and in-laws." Therefore, says Ibn Qayyim, it is impossible that Allāh will take away the right opinion from the people that Allāh has chosen as ministers, helpers and in-laws for his Prophet, and, instead, give to the the next generation authority to make decisions about anything over them in any kind of thing.[439]

This first group utilized evidence from the sayings of the *Saḥāba* such as ʻAbd Allāh Ibn Masʻūd stating "Whoever is looking for models to follow should follow the Companions of the Prophet, because they were the best good hearted people of this community, deeper in knowledge, less involved in unnecessary things, more guided and in a better condition. Allāh chose them to accompany his Prophet and to establish Islām. You should recognize their virtue and follow their footsteps *(āthārahum)*, verily, they were on the right path." Iby Qayyim commented on this as he did in his previous comments.[440]

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[438] *Ibid*, 4: 138.

[439] *Ibid*, 4: 138.

[440] *Ibid*., 2, p.139.

A second saying is from Hudhayfa Ibn al-Yamān, who said to a group of *al-qurrā'* (Qur'ān reciters) "O you group of Qur'ān reciters, follow the path of those who were before you. I swear by Allāh that if you stand straight (stick with Islām), you will go far, and if you abandon the path of your predecessors, you will go extremely astray." [441]

Third was the incident that took place in the house of a Companion, Jundub Ibn ᶜAbd Allāh. A group of Muslims (who Ibn Qayyim described as *kharijites*) came to Jundub and said to him. "We are inviting you to Allāh's book." He said, "You!" They said, "Yes." He repeated, "You!" They said, "Yes." Then he said: "O you the most evil among the creatures of Allāh, are you choosing to follow evil or to follow our sunna in which you find guidance?" Ibn Qayyim stated that, it is known that any one who thinks that the Ṣaḥāba can possibly make mistakes, and thereby disagreeing with them in their *fatwā*, has not followed their sunna.[442]

In regard to his logical arguments he stated that because the Ṣaḥāba witnessed the revelation and learned the meaning of the Qur'ān from the Prophet, they have better understanding than those who did not witness the revelation and never saw the Prophet.

Second, when a Ṣaḥābi says something or gives a *fatwā*, we might share the same opinion with him or we might not, but we have to realize that not all of what the Ṣaḥāba heard from the Prophet was reported. To substantiate his point, Ibn Qayyim asked, Where are the ḥadīth that Abū Bakr and the prominent Companions narrated? Abū Bakr

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[441] *Ibid.,* 4: 138.

[442] *Ibid,* 4, p138.

accompanied the Prophet from the time he became a Prophet until he died. But the number of the hadith narrated by Abū Bakr does not exceed one hundred. Thus, whatever they said concerning Islām is most likely what they heard from the Prophet. Furthering his arguements, he presented six categories under which a *fatwā* or opinion of a Companion may fall:

1. He might have heard from the Prophet, but did not ascribe anything to him lest he misquote the Prophet.

2. He might have heard it from a *Ṣaḥābī* who heard it from the Prophet.

3. He might have understood it from the Qur'ān, although it was unclear to others.

4. He might have said something which the majority of the *Ṣaḥāba* agreed upon, although it was not narrated to us except the statement of one person who initiated a particular opinion.

5. Since the *Ṣaḥāba* understood their language very well, understood the ultimate purpose of Islām, observed the behavior of the Prophet in dealing with different issues, they were thereby qualified to understand what the next generation could not understand and their opinions and *fatwās* are binding proof which must be followed.[443]

6. He might have misunderstood the saying of the Prophet, although this, said Ibn Qayyim, is not possible or realistic.[444]

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[443] *Ibid.*, 4: 139.

[444] *Ibid*, 4: 148.

The second argument supporting the idea that a Companion's exegesis or *fatwā* constitutes binding proof is that the occasions of revelation cannot be told by mere opinion. Thus, whatever the Companions related in this regard must be based on eye witness accounts or something heard that from the Prophet.[445]

The third group based its argument on the ḥadīth "stick with my sunna and the sunna of the four guided caliphs." A similar ḥadīth says, "Imitate these two people after me; Abū Bakr and 'Umar."[446]

Those who held the fourth opinion supported it by quoting many verses; the first of two of them is Q: 4: 59 فإن تنا زعتم فى شى ـ فردوه إلى الله والرسول (If you should quarrel over anything refer it to God and His messenger.) The point made here is that, God told Muslims who have differences of opinions to refer only to God and His messenger. Hence, according to this view, were the opinion of a Ṣaḥābī a matter of ḥujja, God would have mentioned it.[447] The second verse is Q: 47: 25 أفلا يتدبرون القرآن "do they not then think deeply in the Qur'ān?" In this verse, God has ordered Muslims to ponder over the verses of the Qur'ān. It is therefore argued that to

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[445] Al- Anṣārī, *Kitāb Fawātiḥ al-Rahmūt, wa ma'ahū al-Mustasfā min 'Ilm Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Beirut: Dār al-Arqam Ibn Abī al-Arqam li al-Ṭiba' wa al-Nashr,1994-1414). 2:187-8.

[446] Al-Shawkānī, *Irshād al-Fuḥūl*, p. 83

[447] Al-Āmidī, *al-Iḥkām*, 4: 149.

consider the opinion of a Companion as *ḥujja* would be a violation of this divine

injunction.[448]

Arguments against the Idea that a Companion's Exegesis and *Fatwā* are *Ḥujja*

Al-Ghazālī seemed to be the most insistent in rejecting the opinion of a Companion

as *ḥujja*. He totally rejected it. He even rejected the idea that if the four known Caliphs

were unanimous on an issue it becomes *ḥujja*. He believed this (viewpoint) was without

any worth or use *"wa-al-kull bāṭil 'indanā."* [449] He added, any person who is subject to

making mistakes cannot be infallible. Furthermore, he asked, How can two people, each

rendering an infallible opinion, differ on the same issue? He added that the Ṣaḥāba

differed on many issues to the extent that their opinion cannot be harmonized in any

fashion. Hence, how could two *ḥujjas* be contradictory on the same issue?[450] He argued

that the Ṣaḥāba recognized that their own opinions were not binding proof. If they

believed their opinions were *ḥujja*, they would not have allowed themselves to differ.[451]

Scholars who support this opinion said that considering a Companion's *tafsīr* or *fatwā* as

binding proof is a killing of the intellect.[452]

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[448] *Ibid.*, 4: 150

[449] Al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustaṣfā*, 1: 261.

[450] *Ibid*, 1: 261. See al-Āmidī, *al-Iḥkām*, 4: 151.

[451] Āmidī, *al-Iḥkām*, 4: 150.

[452] *Ibid*, 4: 150.

Finally, the implication of these theological arguments has two dimensions, one is religious, the other is intellectual. Al-Ghazālī stated in regard to the religious dimension that, if the opinion of a Companion is a binding proof, then it becomes one of the basic principles of Islām. For this to occur, their *ḥujja* must be established as the other basic principles of Islām were established, through proof and argument from the Qur'ān and ḥadīth.[453]

Another dimension is that if the opinion of a Companion is a binding proof, then it has authority to restrict the general implication of the Qur'ān. The *Ḥanbalī* jurists, al-Qāḍī Abū Ya'lā and Abū Barakāt, both stated that since the opinion of a Companion is *ḥujja*, it can restrict the general implication of the Qur'ān.[454] Al-Shāṭibī holds similar opinion with minor differences. According to al-Shāṭibī, when a Companion restricts the general implication of the Qur'ān or singles out some individual from absolute implication of the Qur'ān, if none of the Companions has raised no objection, then, it becomes *ḥujja*, on the ground or assumption that the Companion has heard of that restriction from the Prophet. But, it is not so if any objection was raised by any Companion.[455]

The intellectual implication concerns restricted thinking. Al-Ghazālī and al-Āmidī stated that, if one accepts the opinion of a Companion as a binding proof, then this

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[453] Al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā*, 1:621.

[454] Al-Turkī, *Uṣūl*, p. 401.

[455] Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm Ibn Mūsā al-Lakhmī Al-Shāṭibī, *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Makhlūf (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d). 3: 195.

conforms to *taqlīd* 'to follow and to accept a legal conclusion without examining the premises. This they say is contrary to Qur'ānic injunction. (Do they not ponder over the Qur'ān?) that is a duty for Muslims to think and analyze information, even that which is revelation from God.[456] Thus, a scholarly implication concerning whether or not an opinion of a Companion is *ḥujja* involves intellectual inquiry.

Abū Ḥayyān raised another scholarly issue when he said, "If it were true that the Qur'ān can be understood only by referring to the *tafsīr* of the Companions and *Tābi'ūn* , then there would be no use for exegeses of those who have come after them". [457]

Companions' Qur'ānic Exegesis

There are ample verses in the Qur'ān and many ḥadīths of the Prophet which command Muslims to seek knowledge and teach it. Based on this command, the Companions got involved in *tafsīr*. Despite the involvement of the Companions in Qur'ānic exegesis, they did not interpret the whole Qur'ān, nor leave behind a written book. This, was for four main reasons. First, it was not common for ordinary Arab to write. Hence, ge trusted his memory. Secondly, at the beginning of his caliphate, 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb discouraged writing anything other than the Qur'ān for religious purpses, including the traditions of the Prophet, in order to prevent confusion between the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth. Thirdly, the Companions understood their language. Fourthly, they dedicated their lives to propagating their religion; thus, most of their lives were spent in

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[456] Al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā*, 1: 285. See al-Āmidī, *al-Iḥkām*, 4: 154.

[457] Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr*, 1: 5

wars with their neighbors. However, the number of those Companions who actually engaged themselves in *tafsīr* was very few. The same also was true concerning giving *fatwā*. In his *al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, Ibn Ḥazm mentioned the number of the Companions, both male and female, who issued *fatwā*. The number is between one hundred and thirty three to one hundred and thirty nine.[458]

Generally speaking, according to the existing sources, the prominent exegetes among the Companions were ten: the four caliphs (Abū Bakr, 'Umar, Uthmān and 'Alī), 'Abd Allāh Ibn Mas'ūd, 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Abbās, Ubay Ibn Ka'b, Zayd Ibn Thābit, Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī and 'Abd Allāh Ibn Zubayr.[459] The others who are recognized for their ability of producing exegesis are Anas Ibn Mālik, 'Ā'isha Bint Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, the wife of the Prophet, Abū Hurayra, 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Umar, Jābir Ibn 'Abd Allāh, and 'Umr Ibn al-'Ās.[460]

The exegesis which the first three caliphs produced was little compared to what 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās produced. Al-Suyūṭī asserted that the reasons for the small amount of *tafsīr* from the first three caliphs was that they died earlier than 'Alī and other exegetes. He also noted that even thouh Abū Bakr was the closest Companion to the Prophet and the first man to accept Islām he narrated very little

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[458] Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Iḥkām*, 5: 92.

[459] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 412. See, al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 2; 14.

[460] Al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 2: 16.

tafsīr from the Prophet, [461] perhaps for reasons associated for piety. It is also possible, but unlikely, that his exegesis was lost; he died shortly after the Prophet. However, Abū Bakr's well-known statement "What heavens shall shade me, and what earth shall shelter me, if I say concerning the Qur'ān that which I have no knowledge" suggests that the first assumption was the most likely reason. In spite of the fact that the exegesis of the three caliphs was very little, they were still considered by the Muslim scholars to be among the prominent exegetes, if not the first and foremost. This is because Muslims hold the Companions in high esteem in general and the four caliphs in particular, for they were extolled in the Qur'ān and by the Prophet.

Let us now present the exegesis of some of the Companions: the four Caliphs, Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Alī; and four prominent Companions who are highly acclaimed for their Qur'ānic commentary: Ibn Mas'ūd, Ubay Ibn Ka'b, 'Ā'isha and Ibn 'Abbās .

Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq.

Abū Bakr noticed that some Companions abstaining from enjoining good and prohibitig evil based on their understanding of Q. 5:105

يا أيها الذين آمنواعليكم أنفسكم لايضركم من ضل إذا اهتديتم (You who believe, your souls are in your own care. No one who goes astray will harm you.) This verse does not mean that people should just worry about themselves and leave others who may be doing wrong. Thus, Abū Bakr corrected them by saying "O you people, you recite this verse (Q.

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[461] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*; 2: 412.

5:105) and misinterpret it. I heard the Prophet say, "If people see corruption taking place and do not do anything to stop it, then God will cover them with His punishment."[462]

Abū Bakr was asked about the meaning of *kalāla*, a word from the Qur'ān. He said, "I say (in regard to its meaning) based on my opinion that it refers to anyone who is legally eligible to inherit from the deceased except father and son". [463]

Sa'īd Ibn 'Imrān (a Companion) recited to Abū Bakr Q. 41: 30

إن الذين قالوا ربنا الله ثم استقاموا (The ones who say : "Our Lord is God [Alone] ; then stand religiously upright.) Abū Bakr explained it to him the meaning by saying "They are those who do not associate anything with Allāh."[464]

In light of these three verses, we find that Abū Bakr :

A. Referred to the Prophet's ḥadīth in explaining the meaning of the text;

B. Depended on his own opinion.

C. Did not refer to the Prophet, nor did he state clearly his opinion as he did in the case of *kalāla*. Perhaps, he deduced that from the Prophet's explanation of the verse which was "People said: Our Lord is Allāh then most of them became disbelievers. Whoever says it until his death, he has stood upright."[465]

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[462] Ibn Kathīr, *Mukhtaṣar*, 1: 557.

[463] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ*, 8: 268.

[464] Ibn Kathīr, *Mukhtaṣar*, 3: 262

[465] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ* , 27: 457

'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb

According to our reading, 'Umar appears to be one of those Companions who took more time pondering the deepest meanings of the Qur'ān and was inclined to get the Companions involved in exercising intellect in understanding the Qur'ān. This can be inferred from the following incidents. When the Q. 5:3 was revealed اليوم أكملت عليكم دينكم وأتممت عليكم نعمتى ورضيت لكم الأسلام دينا (Today I have perfected your religion for you, and perfected My favor towards you, and have consented to grant you Islām as a religion), 'Umar was crying while the rest of the Companions were delighted. The Prophet asked 'Umar "What makes you cry?" He said, "Nothing has never been perfected but that afterwards it decreases." The Prophet supported what 'Umar said by saying "You are correct"[466]

Al-Bukhārī narrated that, one day 'Umar asked the Companions concerning the meaning of Q. 2: 266 أيود أحدكم أن تكون له جنة من نخيل وأعناب تجرى من تحتها الأنهار فيها من كل الثمرات وأصا به الكبروله ذرية ضعفاء فأصابه اعصار فيه نار فاحترقت Would any of you wish to have a garden with date palms and vines, with rivers flowing underneath and all kinds of fruits for him therein, while he is stricken with old age, and his children are weak, then it is struck with a fiery whirlwind so that it is burnt? They said, "Allāh knows best." 'Umar became angry and said, "Say we know or we do not know." Upon hearing this, Ibn 'Abbās said: "O the commander of the believers" I have something in mind.

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[466] Ibn Kathīr, *Mukhtaṣar*, 1: 482.

'Umar said: "O son of my brother, do not underestimate yourself." Ibn 'Abbās said: "(The verse) has set up an example for 'deeds'." 'Umar said, "What deeds?" Ibn 'Abbās repeated "for a deed." 'Umar said: "This is an example of a rich man who does good deeds out of obedience to Allāh, and then Allāh sends him Satan whereupon he commits sins till his good deeds are lost."

On similar occasion to this, 'Umar asked the Companions in regard to their understanding of Q. 110:1-3 اذا جاء نصر الله والفتح ورأيت الناس يدخلون ف دين الله أفواجا (فسبح بحمد ربك واستغفره انه كان توابا When God's support comes as well as victory, and you see mankind entering God's religion in droves then glorify your Lord's praises and beg him for forgiveness, since He is so Relenting). Some of them said: We are commanded to praise Allāh and ask him forgiveness when he blessed us with victory. Some were quiet. Then 'Umar said: Ibn 'Abbās. "Do you agree with their interpretation?" Ibn 'Abbās answered " No." I say: "It is an indication of the death of the Prophet."[467]

Again, we find 'Umar interpreting the word *"istaqāmū"* in Q. 41: 30 ان الذين قالوا ربنا الله ثم استقاموا "I swear by Allāh, then they were up right for Allāh by obedience to Him and did not swerve as foxes do."[468]

In the light of this presentation, we conclude that 'Umar utilized his reasoning in understanding the text. He seems not to depend on the obvious meaning of the Qur'ān.

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[467] Ibid., 3 : 735.

[468] Ibn Kathīr, *Mukhtasar*, 3: 262.

'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān

'Uthmān is considered among the caliphs who have produced very little exegesis. I hardly found mention of him in my sources. The little exegesis that I found attributed to him will be discussed in this chapter, where the differences of the Companions in exegesis will be presented.

'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib

Among the four calphs, 'Alī has been the most prolific exegete. 'Alī seems to be strongly trusted in his knowledge of the Qur'ān. He openly declared "Ask me, I swear by Allāh, you ask me nothing but I answer you. Ask me about the book of Allāh. I swear by Allāh, no verse was revealed but I know whether it was revealed at night or daytime, on level ground or on a mountain."[469] The Caliph 'Uthmān ordered a woman to be killed because she delivered a baby in six months. He thought that she committed fornication before she got married. When 'Alī heard about the story, he quickly came to the Caliph 'Uthmān saying "O 'Uthmān, do not you read the Qur'ān Q. 31:14

ووصينا الأنسان بوالديه حملته أمه وهناعلى وهن وحمله وفصاله في عامين (We have commissioned [every] man to [look after] his parents: his mother bears him with one fainting spell after another fainting spell, while his weaning takes two years.) and Q. 2:233

والوالدات يرضعن أولادهن حولين كاملين لمن أراد أ ن يتم الرضاعة (mothers should breast feed their children two full years provided they want to complete the nursing.) The point Alī

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[469] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 412.

made here was that if you subtract twenty four months of suckling period from thirty

months, it would remain six months, therefore, it is possible to conceive and have a baby

at the end of the six months.[470]

In regard to the meaning of increasing of faith and its decreasing in Q. 9:124

وإذا ما أنزلت سورة فمنهم من يقول أيكم زادته هذه ايمانا (Whenever a chapter is sent down,

some of them say: Which of you has this increased in faith increased?) 'Alī interpreted the

verse by saying "Faith appears as a small white spot in the heart. Whenever it increases,

the white spot also increases until the whole heart becomes white. (On the other hand)

hypocrisy appears as a small black spot in the heart. Whenever it increases, the black spot

also increases..."[471]

'Alī interpreted complettion of *ni'ma* in Q. 2:150 ولأتم نعمتى عليكم ولعلكم تهتدون

(And so that I may complete My blessing [*ni'matī*] on you and that you may be guided).

to mean that one should die in the state of Islām. Furthermore, he added that *ni'ma*

included al-Islām, al-Qur'ān, the Prophet, covering someone's sin or shortcoming, good

health and being self sufficient.[472]

In 'Alī's exegesis, we find that he used the Qur'ān to explain other Qur'ānic verses.

This led Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Sharīf to assume that 'Alī was the first exegete to break

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[470] Ibn Kathīr, *Mukhtaṣar*, 3: 319.

[471] Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn Ibn Mas'ūd al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl* (Multan: Idārat Talifāt Ishrāfiyya,1988). 1: 373.

[472] Al- Wāḥdī, *al-Basīṭ fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Majīd.* ed. a group of 'Ulamā' (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al- 'Ilmiyya, 1992,1st ed). 1: 240.

ground concerning the conceptual approach of *tafsīr*, known in modern times as *"al-tafsīr al-mawḍū'ī".*[473]

Thus, we have seen that 'Alī used examples to illustrate Qur'ānic meaning as he expanded the meaning of a word to include six different meanings.

'Abd Allāh Ibn Mas'ūd

Al-Suyūṭī stated that the Qur'ānic exegesis that has been received from Ibn Mas'ūd was more than that which has been received from 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib. According to Ibn Mas'ūd's biography; it seems that he went over the meaning of the Qur'ān thoroughly.[474] This assumption was implied by Ibn Mas'ūd's observation when he stated: The most comprehensive verse in regard to good and bad morals in the Qur'ān is Q. 16: 90

God) ان الله يأمركم بالعدل والاحسان وايتاء ذى القربى وينهى عن الفحشاء والمنكر والبغى commands justice, kindness and giving [their due] to near relatives, while He forbids sexual misconduct, debauchery and insolence.)[475] If he had not studied the Qur'ān comprehensively, how could Ibn Mas'ūd have made such a statement?

Ibn Mas'ūd explained the Qur'ānic phrase الذين آتينا هم الكتاب يتلونه حق تلاوته

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[473] Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Sharīf, *Buḥūth fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān: Tārīkhu, Ittijāhātuh, Manāhijuh (Cairo: Jāmi'at al-Qāhira, n.d).* p. 96.

[474] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān,* 14: 163

[475] Ibn Kathīr, *Mukhtaṣar,* 2: 343.

(Those whom we have brought the book, recite it in the way it should be recited.), as those who legalized that which the book of God legalized and abstained from that which the book of God prohibited, and did not distort it.[476]

Masrūq said: "I asked Ibn Mas'ūd about the injustice in judgment" then, he recited Q. 5: 44, 5, 7 ومن لم يحكم بما أنزل الله فأولئك هم الكافرون (Those who do not judge by what God has sent down are disbelievers). By refering to these verses, we conclude that Ibn Mas'ūd interpreted the failing to judge by what Allāh has revealed as injustice, that is, disbelief, wrong, and rebellion.

Concerning the meaning of Q. 44: 10 فارتقب يوم تأتى السماء بدخان مبين يغشى الناس هذاعذاب أليم (Watch out for the day when the sky will bring obvious smoke to envelope mankind; this will mean painful torment.) We find Ibn Mas'ūd using the historical background of the verse to elaborate on the meaning. He said, "When the Quraysh made troubled and stood against the Prophet, he said, "O Allāh! Help me against them by afflicting them with seven years of famine like the seven years of Joseph". So they were stricken with a year of famine during which they ate bones and dead animals. They said, "Our Lord remove the torment from us, really we are believers." And then it was said to the Prophet if we remove it from them, they will revert to their ways. So the Prophet invoked his Lord who removed the punishment from them. But later they

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[476] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr*, 1: 347

reverted where upon Allāh punished them on the day of the battle of Badr, and that is what Allāh's statement indicates".

In the light of the exegesis of Ibn Mas'ūd, we observe that he used his own opinion in understanding the text, as in the case of Q. 2: 121, and went beyond the obvious meaning to make a notable remark. Furthermore, we observe that he was influenced by one of the Prophet's methods in exegesis, as in the case of Q. 44:10. Finally, he used historical background in explaining the meaning.

Ubay Ibn Ka'b

Ubay was one of the best reciters of the Qur'ān and the principal teacher of Medinan school of *tafsīr*. He had a Jewish background; hence, it is expected to see some of his background reflected in his exegesis, as it was in the case of other converted Jewish scholars, such as Ka'b al-Aḥbār, and 'Abd Allāh Ibn Salām. Of the exegesis of Ubay is Q. 2:213 كان الناس أمة واحدة (Mankind was [once] one single nation.) This verse has been understood in so many different ways. Some understood nation as Adam and Eve, some said, the verse referred to Nūḥ and the people who were in the Ark with him. Still others assumed that the meaning is mankind in general were disbelievers, etc.[477] Ubay interpreted the verse as mankind was only once one single nation, or community, that is to say when mankind was in the loins of Adam. Then he referred his audience to the Q. 7:172

وإذ أخذ ربك من بنى آدم من ظهورهم ذريتهم واشهدهم على أنفسهم ألست. بربكم

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[477] Al- Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qādir*, 1: 213.

قالوا بلى (When your Lord took their offspring from the children of Adam's loins and made them bear witness about themselves : am I not your Lord?.They said: of course, we testify to it).[478]

Mus'ab Ibn Sa'd asked Ubay about the meaning of Q. 107:5 الذين هم عن صلاتهم ساهون (Who are neglectful of their prayers) whether or not it means thinking about oneself while praying. Ubay said no, all of us do so, but it means neglecting praying on time.[479] Again, a man came to Ubay saying: "a verse in the Qur'ān made me unpleasant." He said: "what is it?" The man recited Q. 4: 123. ولا أمانى أهل الكتاب من يعمل سوءا يجزبه ليس بامانيكم (It is not accord with your wishful thinking -nor with wishful thinking of the followers of earlier revelation-[that] he who does evil shall be requited). Ubay said, "The verse means when a calamity befalls on a believer, and he patiently tolerated for the sake of Allāh, he would have all his sins wiped out.[480]

Ubay's methodology does not differ from his contemporaries. He used the Qur'ān to explain the other Qur'ānic verses and he depended on his own opinion in explaining the meaning of the text.

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[478] Al-Wāhidī, *al-Basīt*, 1: 129.

[479] Sharīf, *Buhūth*, p. 110.

[480] *Ibid*, p. 110.

'Ā'isha Bint Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq

Among the wives of the Prophet, 'Ā'isha was the most knowledgeable. She was

listed third in terms of narrating the Prophet's ḥadīth. Her nephew, 'Urwa Ibn Zubayr,

narrated many of her exegeses. He sought clarification from her concerning Q. 2:158

ان الصفا والمروة من شعائر الله فمن حج البيت أو اعتمر فلاجناح‌عليه أن يطوف بهما

(behold, Al-Ṣafā and Al-Marwa are among the symbols set up by God; and thus, no

wrong does he who, having come to the house on pilgrimage or perform 'Umra, to around

the two). Narrated 'Urwa Ibn Zubayr "I said to 'Ā'isha: How do you interpret the

statement of Allāh Q. 2:158? Does it means that no sin for the one who performs the *Ḥajj*

to the house of Allāh or performs the *'Umra*, to make *ṭawāf* 'circumambulation' between

them? In my opinion it is not sinful for one not to make *ṭawāf* between them". 'Ā'isha

said: Your interpretation is wrong. For as you say, the verse should have been:

فلاجناح‌عليه أن‌لا يطوف بهما It is, therefore, no sin for one (who performing the Ḥajj or

'Umra) not to make *ṭawāf* between them. This verse was revealed in connection with the

al-Anṣār[481] who (during the pre-Islāmic period) used to visit Manāt (i.e., an idol) after

assuming their *iḥrām* (making their intention to perform 'Umra); it was situated near

Qudayd (i.e., a place at Mecca). They used to regard it as sinful to circumambulate al-

Ṣafā and Marwa after embracing Islām.[482]

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[481] Al-Anṣār are the people of Medina who helped the Prophet and the Muslims of Mecca when they migrated to Medina. The Muslims of Mecca who migrated to Medina are Islamically called al-Muhājirūn.

[482] Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fatḥ*, 8: 175 See Khān, *al-Bukhārī*, Arabic-English, VI, pp. 19-20.

It is related in al-Bukhārī that 'Urwa Ibn Zubayr asked 'Ā'isha ' about the

meaning of the Qur'ānic phrase Q. 12:110 حتى إذا استيأس الرسل وظنوا

أنهم قد كذبوا) [Until] when those apostles had lost all and saw themselves branded as

liars.) 'Urwa said: "Did [the apostles mentioned in the verse] suspect that they were

betrayed (by Allāh) or that they were treated as liars by their people?" 'Ā'isha said: "

They suspected that they were treated as liars by their people". I said: "But they were

sure that their people treated them as liars and it was a matter of suspicion." She said:

"Yes, *(la 'amrī)* 'upon my life' they were sure about it." I said to her "So they (apostles)

suspected that they were betrayed (by Allāh)." She said, "Allāh forbid! The apostles never

suspected their Lord of such a thing." I said, "What about this verse then?" She said, "It

is about the apostles' followers who believed in their Lord and trusted their apostles, but

the period of trials was prolonged and victory was delayed until the apostles gave up all

hope of converting those of the people who disbelieved them and the apostles thought that

their followers treated them as liars. Thereupon Allāh's help came to them.[483]

Again, 'Urwa narrated that 'Ā'isha interpreted Q. 4:127 ويستفتونك فى النساء

قل الله يفتيكم فيهن وما يتلى عليكم فى الكتاب فى يتامى النساء اللاتى لاتؤتونهن ماكتب

لهن وترغبون أن تنكحوهن (And they ask thee to enlighten them about the laws concerning

women. Say: God [himself] enlightens you about the laws concerning them- for [His will

is shown] in what is being conveyed unto you through this divine writ about orphan

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[483] *Ibid*, 8, pp. 367-8. Khān, *al-Bukhārī*, VI, pp. 179-80.

women [in your charge], to whom-because you yourself may be desirous of marrying them.) 'Ā'isha said: "These verses have been revealed regarding the case of a man who has an orphan girl under his care, who shares with him all his property, even a date palm (garden), but he dislikes to marry her and dislikes to give her in marriage to somebody else, who would share with her the portion of the property due to her for this reason that guardian prevents that orphan girl from marriage[484]

In the light of this brief presentation we conclude that 'Ā'isha used three different methods in her exegesis. One, the language skill, as you can see in her correcting 'Urwa's understanding of Q. 2:158. When she said, if what you have said is correct, the verse should have been "فلاجناح عليه أن يطوف بهما" In the first phrase, there is "*lā*" which stands for negation whereas in the later the *lā* is not mentioned. Two, she used the knowledge of traditional Arab culture as in the case of Q. 2:156. Third, she used her knowledge of occasions of the revelation, as you may note in her explanation of Q. 4:127.

Ibn 'Abbās

When the Prophet died Ibn 'Abbās was about fourteen years old, however; he has been generally recognized as the most prominent exegete among the *Sahāba*. Muslim scholars believed that this was due to the well-known prayer of the Prophet: "O, God, grant him the knowledge of this religion (Islām) and teach him the interpretation of the Qur'ān."[485] As a result of his exegesis, Ibn 'Abbās received praise from various

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[484] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ*, 8: 265. Khān, *al-Bukhārī*, 6, p. 99.

contemporaries of the Prophet who called him *tarjumān al-Qur'ān*, 'The best interpreter of the Qur'ān', *ra's al-mufassirīn*, 'the leader of the exegetes *ḥabr ḥādhhī al-umma*, 'the scholar of the Muslim community', etc.[486] A negative consequence of the popularity of Ibn 'Abbās as an authority has been the false ascription to him of numerous ḥadīth and exegetical texts. Al-Suyūṭī said there were countless numbers of these.[487] *mā lā yuḥsā kathra*. Al-Shāfi'ī stated that "No more than one hundred ḥadīth have come authentically from Ibn 'Abbās."[488]

In his *al-Tafsīr* wa *al-Mufassirūn*, al-Dhahabī mentioned that the reason for the attribution of fabricated *tafsīr* to Ibn 'Abbās was that he was a member of the Prophet's house, and that he was related to those whom people wanted to carry favor. Because of the reasons stated above, a complete book entitled *"Tanwīr al-Miqbās"* was attributed to him The work was compiled by Abū Ṭāhir Muḥammad Ibn Ya'qūb al-Fayrūsābādī al-Shīrāzī [d.817]. The book was published several times in Egypt and Pakistan by al-Maktabāt al-Fāruqiyya. The state of the *tafsīr* of Ibn 'Abbās in al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, al-Bukhārī's *al-Jāmi' al- Ṣaḥīḥ, Ibn Kathīr's Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, and other sources is different from the alleged *tafsīr* of Ibn 'Abbās in *Tanwīr al-Miqbās*. Thus, we conclude that *Tanwīr al-Miqbās* cannot possibly represent the *tafsīr* of Ibn 'Abbās. For

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[485] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 1: 78. See Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, p. 89. Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 413.

[486] Ibn sa'd. *Ṭabaqāt*, 2: 119.

[487] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2; 414.

[488] *Ibid*, 2: 417.

example,.the phrase بسم الله الرحمان الرحيم (In the Name of Allāh, The Most Merciful

and Compassionate) begins each chapter of the Qur'ān except one.[489] However, we do

not find any interpretation referred to Ibn 'Abbās converning the meaning of

بسم الله الرحمان الرحيم except in " *Tanwīr*" which is ascribed to Ibn 'Abbās. We

read in that Ibn 'Abbās interpreted the concerned verse as follows. The letter *"bi"* stands

for *"bahā' 'Allāh, bahjatuh; balā'uh, barakātuh* 'Magnificence of God, His delight, His

trials, and blessings.' The letter *"sīn"* stands for *"sanā'uh, sumuwwuh, and ibtidā'u-*

ismihi al-samī' 'God's shines, highness and the beginning of His name *al-Samī'* "all

hearing'; and the letter *"mīm"* stands for *"mulkuh, majduh, minnatuh 'alā 'ibādih...*

'God's dominion, His glory, and His favors to His servants'.[490]

Interpretations of such verses were not mentioned in any sources which are

considered major works of *tafsīr*. In his *Fath al-Qadīr*, al-Shawkānī mentioned a weak

hadīth of a Companion called Abū Sa'īd al-Khudurī [d.16] who narrated that, the Prophet

said that, the mother of Jesus sent him (Jesus) to a school to learn. The teacher said to

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[489] The only exception is Chapter Nine *"al-Tawba"*. There are two main different
opinions regarding the reason for that. When the Sahāba were writing the Qur'ān, they
were not certain whether the previous chapter *"al-Anfāl"* and *"al-Tawba"* were one
chapter. Thus, they separated between the two by drawing a line. The other idea held
that, God.revealed the chapter in the state of anger. According to the Arab custom,
when someone wants to express his anger or seriousness by speech, he does not follow
the format procedure of speech, but he rather gets straight to the point. The purpose of
the chapter, Muslim scholars say, was the declaration of immunity from God and His
messenger, and to dissolve treaty obligation with them. See: Ibn Hājar al-Asqalānī,
Fath, 8: 314.

[490] Abū Tāhir Muhammad Ibn Ya'qūb Fayrūz ābadī, *Tanwīr al-Miqbas* (Tasīr Ibn
'Abbās.) Pakistan: Al-Maktaba al-Fārūqiyya Malkān,n.d.) p.2

him write down *bism Allāh*... and Jesus asked what is *bism Allāh*? The teacher responded "I do not know." Then Jesus said the letter *"ba"* stands for *bahā' Allāh* 'Magnificence of God', the letter *"sīn"* stands for *sana'uh* 'God's Shining' and the letter *"mīm"* stands for *malakūtuh* 'God's kingdom'[491] These interpretations are representative of the *Sūfīs*, *al-ta'wīlāt* or allegorical interpretation.[492] Such allegorical interpretation was presented in *Tanwīr al-Miqbās*, at the beginning of most chapters which start with *"al-ḥurūf al-Muqaṭṭa'a"* (abbreviated letters).[493] However, al-Ṭabarī, al-Shawkānī and others mentioned that Ibn 'Abbās had stated in regard to the meanings of the abbreviated letters that they are the greatest names of God. When he was asked about their meanings he did not give any specific interpretation.[494]

An analysis of *Tanwīr al-Miqbās* reveals that all the narrations go back to Muḥammad Ibn Marwān[495] [d.186], al-Kalbī,[496] and Ṣāliḥ.[497] This chain of narration is

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[491] Al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, 1: 18. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 1: 17.

[492] See, for example, al-Qushayrī's *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*, 1: 57.

[493] The scholars have differed in the meanings of these *al-Ḥurūf*. Some held that only God knows their meanings. Others believed that they are the names of the Qur'ānic Sūras, some maintained that they are the names of God, still others assumed that they represent one fo the aspects of the Qur'ānic miracles. See al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 1: 4   Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, 1: 47 .

[494] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 1:79   Al- Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, 1: 29.

[495] Muḥammad Ibn Marwān al-Suddi al-Ṣaghīr was described by ḥadīth critics, such as Yaḥyā Ibn Ma'īn, Ibn Ḥibbān, as a liar. Ibn Ḥajar *Tahdhīb*, 9: 436.

[496] Muḥammad ibn Sa'ib al-Kalbī was criticized by Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and others. Imām Aḥmad said: Al-Kalbī's tafsīr is worthless. See Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 4: 309. .

technically known as *"silsilat al-kadhib"* (the fabricated chain).[498] Due to the rejection of

this chain, one can say that *Tanwīr al-Miqbās* is not from Ibn ʿAbbās. Up to this point,

the question arises: If the work was falsely attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās, who was the

originator of the work? Why did he ascribe it to Ibn ʿAbbās? More importantly, what was

the purpose behind attributing the work to Ibn ʿAbbās?

In respect to the first question, I could not find the answer or a clue to it. Perhaps

the original author of the work might be Abū Ṭāhir al-Fayrūzābādī himself. Concerning

the second question, I assume the reason was to enhance the excellent reputation that Ibn

ʿAbbās earned as the most prominent exegete, and the wide recognition he received from

the Companions. The purpose behind ascribing the work to Ibn ʿAbbās was to give the

text more credence

Another *tafsīr* which was ascribed to Ibn ʿAbbās was *"Masāʾil Nāfiʿ"*[499] (The

Questions of Nāfiʿ) *Masāʾil Nāfiʿ* consists of about two hundred questions which Nāfiʿ

allegedly asked Ibn ʿAbbās. The story goes as follows: while Ibn ʿAbbās was sitting in

the sacred Mosque of Mecca, surrounded by people asking the meaning of various

portions of the Qurʾān, Nāfiʿ and his friend Najda Ibn ʿUwaymir came to him. Nāfiʿ

impolitely said: "We came to ask you about some meanings of the Qurʾān, but we want

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[497] Abū Ṣāliḥ was criticized by scholars af ḥadīth as unworthy. Al-kalbī Said : "the
tafsīr that I narrated from Abū Ṣāliḥ is a lie. I did not hear what I narrated from him."
Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 4: 309

[498] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 435   Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ, *ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth* , p. 367.

[499] Nāfiʿ Ibn Al-Azraq was one of the head of Kharijites who terrified Umayyad
Dynasty. See al-Dhahabī, *Lisān al-Mīzān*, 6: 114-5.

the answers to be supported by Arabic poetry." He asked Ibn 'Abbās two hundred questions, Ibn 'Abbās answered all the questions quoting verses from poetry to support the meaning..

This story has been generally accepted by scholars such as Mubarrid [d. 285/], Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, al-Suyūṭī, Fu'ād Sezgin, and Egyptian modern scholar 'Ā'isha 'Abd al-Raḥmān[500] who read the different manuscripts of Masā'il and compared them. She recognized the problems involved in the text and its *isnād* (transmission). Nevertheless, she seems to be convinced that the text is genuine from Ibn 'Abbās. She stated "The answer of Ibn 'Abbās (to Ibn al-Azraq) was presented in the linguistic exegetical literature and in the comprehensive works on the Qur'ānic sciences". She concluded her studies which the following note: "The Purpose of presenting *Masā'il Ibn al-Azraq* here, as I mentioned previously, is to address the issue of the Qur'ānic miracle 'inimitability' via the narration from Ibn 'Abbās of his interpretation of the Qur'ānic words in the *Masā'il Ibn al-Azraq*."[501]

On the other hand, Western scholars such as Goldziher, Wansbrough and Andrew Rippin considered the *Masā'il* to be legend or fabrication. Goldziher, who did not present a critical analysis supporting his rejection, described the *Masā'il* as " *ein lehrreiche legende angesetzt*" 'a scholarly legend.'[502] Wansbrough believed that *Masā'il* was forged

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[500] 'Ā'isha 'Abd al-Raḥmān Bint al-Shāṭi', *I 'jāz al-Bayāni li-al-Qur'ān wa Masā'il Ibn al-Azraq*, pp. 289-96.

[501] *Ibid.* p. 305.

and skillfully attributed to Ibn 'Abbās. To support his point of view, Wansbrough

consulted certain Islāmic sources, such as *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Sunan al-*

Tirmidhī, and al-Itqān. He found that poetry was only occasionally cited for lexical

explanation. In al-Bukhārī's *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Tafsīr* only one line of poetry

was cited, for *"la-awwah"* (tender-hearted) in Q. 9:114. In *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, a single verse

was adduced, at Q.7:31, and in *al-Tirmidhī,* none in an exegetical sense.

He concluded that *Masā'il* exhibits an exegetical method considerably inferior to

the activity of Ibn 'Abbās.[503] Rippin relied on Wansbrough's conclusion and declared

Masā'il as a fiction designed to give the so-called Ibn 'Abbās *tafsīr* more credence.[504]

I would like to add to the analysis of Wansbrough the following: Al-Mubarrid

noted that Nāfi' questioned Ibn 'Abbās at length, until his patience was exhausted. At this

point, the famous poet 'Umar Ibn Abī Rabī'a, arrived, greeted. Ibn 'Abbās and sat

down. Ibn 'Abbās asked him to recite some of his poems. He recited about eighty verses.

Nāfi' became angry and said, "O, God. O, Ibn 'Abbās, we came from a distance to ask

you about Islām and you turned your face away listening to foolishness from this young

Qurayshī?" Ibn 'Abbās replied "By God, I did not listen to the foolishness." Nāfi' said,

"Did not he ('Umar) say: *"ra'at rajul ammā idha al-shams a'rādat fa yakhzā wa ammā*

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[502] Goldziher, *Die Richtugun.* P. 372

[503] John Wansbrough, *Qur'ānic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptual Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). p. 216-17.

[504] Andrew Rippin. *School of Orientatal and African Studies,* Vol. XLV Part 1184. pp. 24-5.

bi al-'ashī fa yakhsar. " 'She saw a man, when the sun appears, he becomes ignominious and as for at night, he suffers.'

Ibn 'Abbās said: "No" he did not say *fa-yakhzā*" 'to abash' He said, "*fa yadhā wa bi al-'ashī fa yakhsar'.* Then Nāfi' asked in amazement, "Did you memorize all of the verses.?" "Yes," Ibn 'Abbās responded and added "If you would like to hear all of them I would recite it." Nāfi' said, "I would." Then Ibn 'Abbās recited all the eighty verses.[505]

The number of the questions, which is two hundred, and the manner in which Nāfi' was asked makes one very cautious in accepting the story. The story might be sound if:

A. Nāfi' was well versed in *tafsīr* and Arabic language.

B. Nāfi' memorized the whole Qur'ān or a large portion of it.

C. Nāfi' had in advance prepared the two hundred questions.[506]

D. Nāfi' had a strong memory, which I believe he did not, because he failed to repeat exactly the last verse of 'Umar Ibn Abī Rabī'a which reads: *ra'a rajul ammā idha al-shams a 'radat fa yadhā wa amma bi-al-'ashī fa-yakhsara.*

Nāfi' recited "*fa yakhzā*" instead of *fa yadhā.* Furthermore, al-Mubarrid mentioned that Nāfi' plagiarized the verses or the *istishhādāt* of Ibn 'Abbās.

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[505] Abū al-'Abbās Muḥammad ibn Yazīd al-Mubarrid, *al-Kāmil* (Beirut: Mu'assat al-Risāla, 1986, 1st ed). 3:1144-55. Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 1: 225. Fu'ād Sizgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-'Arabī*, p. 65.

[506] Ibn Ḥajar stated that Nāfi' had had written his questions on two pages and read the questions from the two pages. Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ*, 8: 557.

If what al-Mubarrid said is true, then Nāfi‘ must have memorized all two hundred

verses at the time Ibn ‘Abbās recited them, because he (Nāfi‘) did not write them. If Nāfi‘

could not memorize perfectly the eighty verses of ‘Umar, as we mentioned previously,

how could he memorize two hundred verses ?. Hence, we are inclined to doubt the

authenticity of the story. Thus; we conclude that the *Masā'il* seems to be a fiction

designed to give more credence to Ibn ‘Abbās' exegesis.

We now present some of Ibn ‘Abbās's exegesis as it has been documented in

some major works of *tafsīr* and ḥadīth.

In *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, a man[507] said to Ibn ‘Abbās "I find in the Qur'ān certain things

which seem to me contradictory. For example, Allah says in Q. 23:102

فادا نفخ فى الصور فلا أنساب بينهم يومتذولايتسا.لون

(then, when the trumpet [of resurrection] is blown no ties of kinship will on that day

prevail among them, and neither they ask about one another.), yet Allāh says in Q. 37:27

وأقبل بعضهم على بعض يتسا.لون (And they will turn to one another and question one other.);

and in Q. 4:42 يومتذ يود الذين كفروا وعصوا الرسول لوتـسوى بهم الأرض ولايكتمون الله حديث

(On that day those who disbelieved the Messenger will wish that the earth were made level

with them, and they will not be able to hide anything from God.). Yet, we read in Q. 6: 24

والله ربنا ما كنا مشركين (By Lord, we were not idolaters). According to this verse, they

[idolaters] will hide some facts. In addition, there is in Q. 79:27 أشدخلقا أم السما. بناها

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[507] According to Ibn Ḥajar, the man was Nafi'. *Fatḥ*, 8: 557.

أَأَنْتُم (Are ye more the difficult to create than [or is] the heaven which He has built.?.)

wherein God mentions the creation of the heavens before the creation of the earth. Then

He says in Q. 41:9.

قل أئنكم لتكفرون بالذى خلق الأرض فى يومين وتجعلون له أندادا ذلك رب العالمين

وجعل فيها رواسى من فوقها وبارك فيها وقدر فيها أقواتها فى أربعة أيام سواء للسائلين

(Say, "would you indeed deny Him who has created the earth in two days? And do you

claim that there is any power that could rival Him" [that is] the Sustainer of all the

worlds? For He [it is who, after creating the earth,] placed firm mountains on it, above its

surface, and bestowed blessing on it, and equitably appointed its means of sustenance to

all who would seek it: [and all this He created] in four days.). Hence, He mentions in this

verse the creation of the earth before the sky. and He says in Q. 4: 56 (Verily God is All

Mighty, All Wise). إن الله كان عزيزا حكيما While in Q. 4: 23, He says, (Verily God is Oft-

forgiving, Most Merciful. إن الله كان غفورا رحيما and in.Q. 4: 58 (Verily, God is all hearing

all - seeing.) إن الله كان سميعا بصيرا

The man said, "This seems to be something that was and has passed". Then, Ibn

'Abbās answered: As to the Qur'ānic passage Q.2:10 There will be no relationship

between them." That is on the first blowing of the trumpet. So the trumpet will be blown

whereupon all that is in the heavens and in the earth will swoon except those whom Allāh

will exempt. Then there will be no relationship between them, and at that time one will

ask another. Then, when the trumpet is blown for the second time, they will turn to one

another and question. In regards to the statement "We never worshipped others besides Allāh, and they can hide no facts from Allāh", Allāh will forgive the sins of those who were sincere in their worship, whereupon the pagans will say (to each other) come, let's say we never worshipped others besides Allāh. But their mouths will be sealed and their hands will speak (the truth). At that time it will be evident that no speech can be concealed from Allāh and those who disbelieved (and disobeyed the Apostle) will wish that they were level with the ground, for they will not be able to hide facts from Allāh

Concerning the idea that Allāh created the earth in two days, and then created the heavens, then He turned towards the heaven and perfected it in two days; then He spread the earth, [well] the spreading means the bringing of water and pasture out of it. He then created the mountains, the camels and the hills, and whatever is between them. Hence, (the earth and the heaven) came in two (other) days. Ibn 'Abbās said that the meaning of Allāh's saying "He spread it." and His saying "And He created the earth in two days" is that, earth and whatever is one it was created in two days. Concerning His saying "And Allāh was Oft-forgiving." He named Himself this, but the contents of His saying is still valid; for if Allāh ever wants to do something, He surely fulfills what He wants. So you should not see contradiction in the Qur'ān for all of it is from Allāh.[508]

A man asked Ibn 'Abbās about the meaning of the Qur'ānic word *zanīm*. Ibn 'Abbās said it means a bastard. Then he supported that meaning by quoting a verse *zanīm tadā'aho al-rijāl ziyāda* 'A bastard that men claimed to be their child.'

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[508] Khān,· *al-Bukhārī*, 6: 321-324.

According to al-Ṭabarī, Ibn ʿAbbās wrote to a Muslim who was formerly Jewish

known as Abū Jalad. He asked him about that which God mentioned in Q. 2:35

ولا تقربا هذه الشجرة 'Approach not this tree.' Abū Jalad wrote back to Ibn ʿAbbās

claiming the tree is 'ear'.[509] Ibn ʿAbbās also used to ask Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, a converted Jew,

about some meanings of the Qurʾān such as *Umm al-kitāb* 'the Mother of the Book', and

al-marjān 'coral'.[510]

The utilization of the sources of the people of the book in explaining some Islāmic

concepts in general and *tafsīr* in particular, however, is allowed in Islām. The reference

for the permissibility of quoting Jewish and Cheistian sources can be made based on the

following ḥadīth: *balligū ʿannī wa law āya, wa ḥaddithū ʿan banī Isrāʾīl wa lā ḥaraj.*

'Transmit to others what you know or hear from me, even though it is only a word, and

there is no harm in quoting from Banī Isrāʾīl.'[511]

It is obvious that the ḥadīth allows Muslims to quote from the people of the book.

I believe this permission is given for two reasons, one that Judaism, Christianity, and

Islām share some commonalties such as belief in God, Prophets, Day of Judgment, heaven

and other things; and two, during the lifetime of the Prophet, he (the Prophet) had agreed

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[509] *Ibid*, 1: 203

[510] Ibn ʿAbbās was not the only Ṣaḥābi who used the sources of the people of the book in explaining some Qurʾānic verses, among the few names to be mentioned in this regard, ʿAbd Allāh Ibn ʿUmar, and ʿAbd Allāh Ibn ʿUmr Ibn al-ʿĀṣ. See, Naʿnāʿ, Ramzī, *al-Isrāʾīliyyāt wa Ātharuhā fī Kutub al-Tafsīr* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1970-1390,1st ed). pp: 78-89

[511] Al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmiʿ al Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1: 331.

with some of what the people of the book quoted from their scriptures. More importantly,

he acknowledged the mistakes that were made by his Companions and corrected by Jews.

For example, in *Fath al-Bāri*, "a Jewish Rabbi came to the Prophet of God and said: O,

Muḥammad! We find that in (the Torah) God will put all the heavens on one finger, and

the earth on one finger, and the trees on one finger, and the water and the dust on one

finger, and all the other created beings on one finger. Then He will say "I am the King."

Thereupon the Prophet smiled so that his premolar teeth became visible. Then the

Prophet recited "No just estimate have they made of God such as is due him."[512]

In *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, the Prophet told the Companions to inform them that a

converted Christian, Tamīm al-Dārī, has told him something that he, the Prophet, had

previously explained, namely, *al-masīḥ al-dajjāl* 'the liar messiah or anti-Christ'

[according to Christian theology].[513] In *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, a Jew reported to the Prophet

that some Muslims were guilty of *shirk* 'polytheism' when they said: *mā shā Allāh wa*

shi't 'How wonderful that Allāh and you have willed it.' and *wa al-kaʿba* 'I swear by the

kaʿba'.[514] Hence, the Prophet commanded the Companions to swear, instead, by the

Lord of the Kaʿba and to say *mā shā Allāh thumma shi't* 'How wonderful that Allāh has

willed and then that you willed'.[515]

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[512] Inb Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fath*, 8: 550-1.

[513] Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Saḥīḥ Muslim*, 18: 214

[514] The sacred house of Muslims located in Mecca.

[515] Al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Ḥasan Āl-al-Shaykh, *Fath al-Majīd*, (Riyadh, Dār al-Iftā.) pp. 379-80.

The point that the Jew made here is that, the letter *waw* in the phrase *mā shā*

Allāh wa shi't, is a letter of conjunction used to indicate the involvement of more than one

party in an action, it does not necessarily determine which of the parties does the action

first. Thus, to say *mā shā Allāh wa shi't* might mean or be understood that the will of

the Prophet comes even before the will of God, which is contradictory to the Islāmic

concept of *tawḥīd* as in Q. 76:30 وماتشاؤون إلا أن يشا۔ الله (But you will not will

except when Allāh wills), that is, God wills first before anyone else. Due to the

misconception that the letter *waw* might lead to, the Prophet commanded the Companions

to replace the *waw* with *thumma* 'then', which shows the chronology of the action taking

place between two parties. The action mentioned before *thumma* occurs first, the verb or

name mentioned after *thumma* occurs later. Thus, the phrase *mā shā Allāh wa shi't* is

rephrased as "*mā shā Allāh thumma sh't* ' God willed, then you willed' .[516]

Having presented the exegesis of the most prominent exegetes among the Ṣaḥāba,

it might be worth mentioning that the Ṣaḥāba have some differences in understanding the

Qur'ān and its interpretation. These pertain mainly to juridical, theological, historical,

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[516] The position which Muslim scholars adopted concerning Isrā'iliyyāt can be
classified into three categories:
  1. Acceptable one. That which is agreed with Qur'ān or ḥadīth.
  2. Rejected One. That which is contradictory with Qur'ān or ḥadīth.
  3. Natural. That which falls neither in the first category nor in the second and the Qur'ān and ḥadīth are silent about it. For example, Ibn 'Abbās said "Children of Isrā'īl asked the Prophet Moses: Does your Lord sleep? He said: Fear God. Then his Lord called Him, O, Moses, they asked you does your Lord sleep? Take two bottles or bowls full of watwer and hold them for the whole night. After midnight, the Prophet Moses was taken by slumber and the two bottles broke. Then God said: O, Moses, if I had to sleep, the heavens and the earth would fall perish like the two bottles." Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir* , 1: 230.

and linguistic issues. Ibn Taymiyya claimed that the Companions' differences are differences of variation rather than of contradiction and are broadly of two kinds: expression and illustration.

In regard to the first, Ibn Taymiyya stated that the Companions may express one idea in different words, such that one of them brings out one aspect of the meaning while the other mentions the other aspect, even though both refer to the same thing. For example, Ibn 'Abbās interpreted the Qur'ānic pharase *al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm* 'the straight path' as the religion of God, while Ibn Mas'ūd interpreted it as the book of God. Each of these two prominent exegetes have described the phrase using two different meanings, but they mean or imply one thing. Because both the religion of God and the book of God are called the straight path.[517]

Concerning the second type of difference, Ibn Taymiyya indicated that when the Companions explained a general term of the Qur'ān, they may speak about another general term by way of illustration to draw the attention of their audience to the type of the first instead of giving a definition in terms of its genus and difference. For example, in ثم أورثنا الذين اصطفينا من عبا دنا فمنهم ظالم لنفسه ومنهم مقتصد ومنهم سا بق بالخيرات Q.35: 32. (Then We have given the book for inheritance to such of Our servants as We have chosen; But there are among them some who wrong their own souls; some who follow a middle course; and some who are, by Allāh's leave, foremost in good deeds.)

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[517] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, pp. 41-3. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr* 1: 23. Al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, 1: 24.

Ibn Taymiyya stated that previous generations have explained these verses with reference to one or more acts of obedience to God. Some said the *sābiq* is the one who offers prayers at the earliest prescribed time, the *muqtaṣid* is the one who offers prayers late, but on time, and the *ẓālim* is the one who defers, for instance, the evening prayer till the sun starts to set. Others said that the *sābiqs* are the generous ones who give money in charity over and above meeting their obligations, the *ẓālims* are those who take usury or fail to pay *Zakka* 'obligatory alms', and the *muqtaṣids* are those who pay *zakka* as well as refrain from taking usury, and so on.[518]

Having stated Ibn Taymiyya's opinion concerning the Companions' differences, let us now present some examples of their differences in four different areas: *fiqh*, theology, Qur'ānic historical personages, and linguistics. These examples will show whether or not Ibn Taymiyya's claim stands unchallenged.

Differences in the Companions' Qur'ānic Interpretations

Issues Pertaining to *Fiqh*

This refers to those verses about which the Companions differed in their interpretations and implications due to their own understanding of the verse or lack of the knowledge of Prophet's ḥadīth in the subject matter. For instance, God stated in Q. 5: 5

اليوم أحل لكم الطيبات وطعام الذين أوتوا الكتاب حل لكم وطعامكم

أحل لهم والمحصنات من المؤمنات والمحصنات من الذين أوتوا الكتاب من قبلكم

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[518] Ibn Taymiyya, *Introduction to the Principles of Tafseer.* pp. 20-1.

(Today, all the good things of life have been made lawful to you and the food of those who have been vouchsafed revelation aforetime is lawful to you, and your food is lawful to them. And [lawful to you are], in wedlock women from among those who believe and. women who have been vouchsafed revelation before your time.) Based on this verse almost all the Ṣaḥāba declared the permissibility of marriage between "Muslim men and Jewish or Christian women." 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Umar, however, held a different opinion. He quoted Q. 2: 221 ولا تنكحوا المشركات حتى يؤمن (And do not marry idolatrous women until they believe (become Muslims).) He stated, "God has forbidden Muslims to marry idolaters, I do not know anything greater than *shirk* 'to associate something with God' and there is no sin greater than to say Jesus is my Lord."[519]

Another example is concerning the *'idda* 'prescribed period' of a pregnant widow. Q. 65:4, reads, وأولات الأحمال أجلهن أن يضعن حملهن (And for those who are pregnant, their *'idda* (in case of divorce) is until they deliver their burden). 'Abd Allāh Ibn Mas'ūd understood the verse in its general sense, as he was aware of the ḥadīth of Subay'a al-Aslamiyya the wife of Sa'd Ibn Khawla. When Sa'd died she was a pregnant. Immediately after she delivered, the Prophet informed her that her *'idda* had been ended by the delivery. Being aware of this ḥadīth, Ibn Mas'ūd declared that the end of the *'idda* of a pregnant widow is when she delivers her baby. On the other hand, 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib and Ibn 'Abbās held that the *'idda* of the above

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[519] Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Abū Bakr Aḥmad Ibn 'Alī. *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Istanbūl: Maktabat al-Awqāf al-Islāmiyya, 1916-1335). 1: 332.

mentioned woman is the longest one of the two *'iddas*. To explain this is to say:

according to Islāmic Law, when a husband dies, his widow has to be in *'idda* for four

months and ten days. Thereafter, she can marry whomever she wants. The reference for

this law is Q. 2: 234

والذين يتوفون منكم ويذرون أزواجا يتربصن بأنفسهن أربعة أشهروعشرا

(And if any of you die and leave wives behind, they shall undergo, without remarrying, a

waiting period of four months and ten days.) 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib and Ibn 'Abbās combined

the above verse and Q. 65: 4.([Now] as for such of your women as are beyond the age of

monthly courses, as well as for such as do not have any courses, their waiting period -if

you have any doubt about it shall be three [calendar] months; and as for those who are

with child, the end of their waiting term shall come when they deliver their burden). 'Alī

and Ibn 'Abbās deduced from both verses that the *'idda* of a pregnant widow, if she is

eight months pregnant is four months and ten days. If she is two months preganant, the

'idda is seven months. This is what 'Alī and Ibn 'Abbās meant by the phrase: *ab'ad al-*

ajalayn 'the longest period of the two *'idda*s. Apparently, both 'Alī and Ibn 'Abbās had

no knowledge of the ḥadīth of Fāṭima Bint Qays.

Qur'ānic Historical Personages and Places

The Ṣaḥāba differed about the exact historical personalities and places of certain

Qur'ānic verses. For example, Q. 37: 102 فلمابلغ معه السعى قال يا بنى انى أرى أنى أذبحك

فانظر ماذا ترى (And when (his son) was old enough to walk with him (the Prophet

Abraham) said: 'O my son, I have seen in a dream that I must sacrifice you. So look what

you think?' He said: 'O my father! Do that which you are commanded.) According to

this verse, God commanded[520] the Prophet Abraham to slaughter his son. But which of

his sons? Ismā'īl or Isḥāq? Ibn Kathīr reported that some Companions, including Ibn

'Abbās, held that the son was Isaac, while 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib and

other believed that the son was Ismā'īl.[521]

In Q. 9:108, God says: : لا تقم فيه أبدا لمسجدأسس على التقوى من أول يوم أحق

أن تقوم فيه (Never stand you therein. Verily, the Mosque whose foundation was laid

from the first day on piety.) Which Mosque was that? Where was it located? 'Umar Ibn

al-Khaṭṭāb, Zayd Ibn Thābit and others believed the Mosque to be the Prophet's Mosque

in Medina while Ibn 'Abbās and others believed it to be the *Qubā'* Mosque, which the

Prophet built upon his arrival in *Qubā'*. [522]

Theology

The Companions had varying theological views as a result of the lack of not being

aware of a ḥadīth or explicit ḥadīth from the Prophet on the subject matter. Thus, each

one depended on his own understanding of the verse. For example Q. 17: 1

سبحان الذى أسرى بعبده ليلا من المسجدالحرام الى المسجدالأقصى الذى باركنا حوله

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[520] According to Islāmic belief, a dream of a Prophet is true. It is just like revelation.
See Ibn Qayyim, *Zād al-Ma'ād* (Cairo: Al-Maṭba'at al-Miṣriyya, n,d). 2: 48.

[521] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 3: 186.

[522] *Ibid*, 2; 170.

(Glory be to Him Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the distant Mosque, the environs of which We have blessed). The Ṣaḥāba differed about this journey. Did the Prophet go on this journey physically or did he go by his soul only?

Ibn 'Abbās, Anas Ibn Mālik and others who had the knowledge of the ḥadīth in this regard believed that the Prophet did go on the journey physically. On the other hand, 'Ā'isha, the wife of the Prophet and Mu'āwiya Ibn Abī Sufyān believed that the journey did not physically take place, but was taken by the soul of the Prophet.[523]

Another example, is in Q53:7-9. و هو بالأفق الأعلى ثم دنا فتدلى (Appearing in the horizon's loftiest part and then drew near, and came close) Ibn Mas'ūd and 'Ā'isha said the verse refers to the angel Gabriel in the highest of the horizon and that he came closer to a distance of two bow-lengths or nearer to the Prophet. Thus, did God convey the revelation to Muḥammad. through the Angel Gabriel. Ibn 'Abbās, on the other hand, said the verse refers to the Prophet coming closer to his Lord by a distance of two bow-lengths or nearer, and that he saw his Lord by with his heart, not eyes.[524]

Linguistic Matters

The individual vocabularies of the Companions led them to interpret certain Qur'ānic passages differently. More interestingly, the different interpretations are ascribed

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[523] Ibn Qayyim, *Zad al-Ma'ād*, 2, p. 48. 'Al-Ṭabarī, *Jami'al-Bayān*, 27, p. 289 Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr* 2, p. 363-4.

[524] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 3: 398. Al- Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, 5: 110.

to a *saḥābī* such as Ibn 'Abbās. Consider the following examples: in Q. 77: 1 والمرسلات

"*al-mursalāt.*" Abū Hurayra explained this term to mean angels, while Ibn Mas'ūd

interpreted it as winds.[525] Concerning the Qur'ānic words وشاهد ومشهود in Q. 85: 3 (By

one that witnesses, and the subject of the witness), Abū Hurayra interpreted the first

shāhid as Friday 'the congregational weekly prayer day of Muslims' and the second

mashhūd as the day of 'arafāt.[526] On the other hand, Ibn 'Abbās interpreted *shāhid* as the

Prophet Muḥammad and *mashhūd* as the day of judgment. Furthermore, al-Ḥasan Ibn

'Alī, the grand son of the Prophet, supported his Uncle Ibn 'Abbās's view by quoting Q. 4:

41. which read شهيدا هؤلاء على بك وجئنا بشهيد أمة كل من جئنا اذا فكيف (How then, when

we bring from each nation a witness and we bring you (O Muḥammad) as a witness

against these people). The point al-Ḥasan made here was that in this verse of Q. 4:41, the

Qur'ān has clearly described the Prophet as *shāhid* 'a witness' Thus, *shāhid* in Q. 85:3

refers to the Prophet.[527] Concerning the Qur'ānic word والعاديات in Q. 100:1, Alī Ibn Abī

Ṭālib interpreted it as camels, while Ibn 'Abbās interpreted it as horses.[528] Concerning the

Qur'ānic word والشفع والوتر 'by the even and the odd' in Q. 89: 3 Ibn 'Abbās interpreted

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[525] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 3: 623.

[526] Day of 'Arafāt is the 9th day of Dhul Ḥijja; the 12th month of Islāmic calendar. It
is the greatest day of Ḥajj (Muslim pilgrimage).

[527] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 3: 623-4.

[528] *Ibid*, 3; 668.

al-shaf' as the first day of *'īd al-adhā*[529] and the latter *al-witr* as the day of *'arafāt*. Another report from Ibn Kathīr said Ibn 'Abbās interpreted *al-witr* as Allāh (God) and *al-shaf* as mankind.

These examples of exegetical differences of the Ṣaḥāba are irreconcilable. Thus, the claim that the differences of the Companions in *tafsīr* are differences of variation rather than of contradictions remains unproved.

Having presented the different opinions concerning the exegesis of the Companions and giving some examples, we would now examine their sources and methodology.

Principle Characteristics of the Tafsīr, of the Sāḥāba, their Sources, and Methodology

In the light of our presentation and the sources which we consulted concerning the exegesis of the Ṣaḥāba, we find that the Companions did not interpret the whole Qur'ān. Nevertheless, they did explain many verses that included judicial, theological and linguistic considerations. Poetry was occasionally used in explaining the Qur'ānic meanings, and the meaning of individual words were occasionally explained linguistically.

The sources which the Ṣaḥāba utilized in their exegesis were, fisrt of all, the Qur'ān. They sometimes used Qur'ānic verses to explain other verses, as noted in Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib's *tafsīr*.[530] Two, sometimes they quoted ḥadīth to explain or to support the

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[529] The tenth day of Zual-Ḥijja, that is the day of the Muslim annual festival.

[530] See, pp. 162-3

meaning of the Qur'ān as in the example given concerning Abū Bakr's *tafsīr*.[531] Three, the Companions used their own opinion in interpreting the Qur'ān, since the Prophet did not explain the whole Qur'ān before his death. In addition, the Qur'ān encourages Muslims to ponder the meaning of verses. Four, sometimes the *Ṣaḥāba* quoted the People of the book, that is, Jewish and Christian sources, to support the meaning of some verses. As noted in Ibn 'Abbās's *tafsīr*.[532]

The Companions used different approaches in their *tafsīr*. They sometimes let the Qur'ān explain itself--verses were illuminated by other Qur'ānic verses. Occasionally; they explained meanings by means of illustration. The Companions used linguistic skills, as well as *asbāb al-nuzūl* and knowledge associated with pre-Islāmic religious culture.

Summary and Comments

Scholars are divided into two groups in relation to the binding authority of the exegesis of the *Ṣaḥāba*. One group, among them, Imām Mālik, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Taymiyya and his student Ibn Qayyim, believed that the exegesis of the *Ṣaḥāba* is binding. They based their arguments mainly on the virtuousity and the merits of the Companions, for they were praised both in the Qur'ān and ḥadīth and they were the witnesses to the revelation. In addition, they mastered the language of the Qur'ān.

A second group, that includes al-Ghazālī and Abū Ḥayyān, believe that the *tafsīr* of the *Ṣaḥāba* is not binding. They focused their arguments on the practicality of the

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[531] See, p. 158

[532] See, p.177

exegesis of the Ṣaḥāba; for they found some irreconcilable condradictions among them. Furthermore, they believed that both the religious and intellectual consideration in accepting exegesis from one of the Prophet companions as binding proof should not be overlooked. Practically speaking, accepting the *tafsīr* of the Companions with their irreconcilable differences would place one in the state of perplexity and confusion. Which binding proof should one accept? How can two binding proofs contradict one another.?

CHAPTER VI

THE *TAFSĪR* OF THE *TĀBI'ŪN* AND THEIR *FATWĀS*

Our primary concern here, is the legal status of the exegesis of the *Tābi'ūn*,

whether it is binding or otherwise. A second concern is determining the characteristic

nature of the *tafsīr* of the *Tābi'ūn*. The different opinions of Muslim scholars and their

arguments related to the authority of the *tafsīr* of the *Tābi'ūn* is not as extensive as the

historical materials devoted to the similar discussion concerning the Companions. That is

because scholars such as al-Ghazālī, Ibn Ḥazm and others, who believed that the exegesis

by the Prophet's Companions was not automatically and almost absolutely, binding, did

not have any interest in discussing the authority of exegesis by the *Tābi'ūn*'. Even scholars

such as Ibn Qayyim, who upheld the exegesis by the Prophet's Successors as binding

proof, failed to elaborate much on the position of this exegesi.

In order to elaborate on the nature of the exegesis of the *Tābi'ūn*, it will be helpful

to give examples of their *tafsīr*. Before doing so, we would like first to define the word

Tābi'ūn, linguistically and Islāmically.

Tābi' Defined and the Relationship to *Ḥujja*

Tābi'ūn is a plural of *tābi'*. The word *tābi'*, an active participle is derived from the

verbal noun *taba' ' following*. Thus, *tābi'* means a successor. Technically, *tābi'* is a

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Muslim who did not see the Prophet Muḥammad, but met one of his Companions and died as a Muslim.[533] However, the *Tābi'ūn* are considered the second generation in Islām.

The majority of Sunni scholars have agreed upon the fact that the *ijmā'* 'consensus' of the Successors is a binding proof. The question arises as to whether the exegesis or religious decrees of a single Successor should also be recognized as *ḥujja*. Here, as usual, scholars are divided into two groups concerning this proposition.

The first group, which includes Abū Ḥanīfa, believed that the exegesis of the Successors and the religious decrees are not binding, simply because they have not been blessed with the virtue of seeing the Prophet or witnessing the revelation. Abū Ḥanīfa stated his position very clearly when he said, "Whatever comes to us from God and the Prophet we accept it without any reservation, but whatever ideas come to us from the Tābi'ūn [then we recognize that] they are men as we are [and, hence, can make mistakes]."[534] Ibn Taymiyya quoted Shu'ba Ibn al-'Ajjāj [160-778][535] to have said, "If the opinion of the *Tābi'ūn* in the secondary matters (i.e. judicial issues.) is not *ḥujja*, how then it can be *ḥujja* in *tafsīr* ? Ibn Taymiyya supported this opinion by saying *"Wa hādha*

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[533] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bā'ith al-Hathīth fī Ikhtiṣār 'Ulūm al-Hadīth* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1967l). p. 78.

[534] Al-Sarkhasī, *Uṣūl*, 1: 114

[535] Shu'ba Ibn al-'Ajjāj Ibn al-Ward is considered as a trustworthy with a strong memory. He was described as "Amīr al-Mu'minīn in ḥadīth." He was the first scholar to scrinizethe Isnād (chain) of ḥadīth in Iraq. See Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb* , 1: 351.

ṣaḥīḥ."[536] 'This is correct'. Abū Ḥayyān believed that accepting *Tābi'ūn's* exegesis is intellectual or scholarly suicide.[537]

The second group includes, according to some reports, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, and some *Mālikī* jurists, who believed that the exegesis by the immediate Successors are binding.[538] However, a modern Ḥanbalī jurist, 'Abd Allāh Ibn Muḥsin al-Turkī, stated that most of the Ḥanbalī jurists seemed to believe that the most authentic report from Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal is that the opinions of the *Tābi'ūn* are not binding.[539]

In his *al-Sawā'iq al-Mursala*, Ibn Qayyim has articulated his conviction about the binding authority of the *Tābi'ūn*. He argued that the Companions had learned the full meaning and text of the Qur'ān from the Prophet, and then the Successors learned the meaning and the words from the Companions, Therefore, the exegesis of both the Companions and the Successors are equally binding.[540]

Al-Zarkashī pointed out that although scholars like Shu'ba Ibn al-'Ajjāj and others viewed the exegesis by the *Tābi'ūn* as being non-binding, their own exegeses and those of other commentators on Qur'ānic exegesis seemed contrary to that notion because they

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[536] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, p.105. Secondry matters are issues that do not concern whether or not a person's opinion places him out of Islām. One example of a secondry matter are Muslims different legal opinions about where to place the hands in prayer. i.e should one place his hands on the chest or below his naval?

[537] Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr*, 1: 4.

[538] Abū Zahra, *Mu'jiza*, p. 513.

[539] Al-Turkī, *Uṣūl*, p. 180.

[540] Ibn Qayyim, *al-Sawā'iq al-Mursala* (Riyadh: Dār al-Hijra, n.d). 2: 345-6.

relied heavily on the opinions of the *Tābi'ūn* and depended on them simply because they believed that the *Tābi'ūn* received most of their *tafsīr* from the *Ṣaḥāba*.[541]

Prominent *Tābi'ūn* and *Tafsīr*

Muslims believe that God has commanded them to seek knowledge and teach it. Thus, in Islām, learning and teaching are equally important and inseparable. Reference can be made to the Qur'ān passage: Q. 9: 122

وما كان المؤمنون لينفروا كافة   فلو لا نفر من كل فرقة طائفة ليتفقهوا فى الدين

ولينذروا قومهم إذارجعوا اليهم لعلهم يحذرون

(It is not desirable that all of the believers take the field [in time of war]. From within every group, some shall refrain from going forth to war, and shall devote themselves[instead] to acquiring deeper knowledge of the faith, and admonish the people when they return to them, so that they might guard themselves against evil).

A popular ḥadīth relevant to this matter is *khayrukum man ta'allama al-Qur'ān wa 'allama* .. (The best of you are those who have learned the Qur'ān and teach it (to others). From this perspective, the *Tābi'ūn*'s commitment is clear.

Having stated a possible reason for the involvement of the *Tābi'ūn* in exegesis, it is appropriate at this point to present examples of the *tafsīr* of some of the most prominent among them..

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[541] Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 1: 24.

Mujāhid Ibn Jabr (d.104-722)

Mujāhid was one of the most outstanding students of Ibn 'Abbās. He claimed to have gone thoroughly over the Qur'ān with Ibn 'Abbās three times.[542] Despite this claim, one can easily observe by reading al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi ' al-Bayān*, Ibn Kathīr's *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, and the alleged *Tafsīr of Mujāhid* (recently printed), that Mujāhid made much less use of Ibn 'Abbās' commentary than did his other students such as 'Ikrima al-Barbari, Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr, and al-Ḍaḥḥāk Ibn Muzāhim.[543]

Mujāhid seems to be more dependent on his own opinion. Hence, he disagreed with the Companions' interpretation of some verses. One example concerns Q. 2: 30 " واذقال ربك للملائكة انى جاعل فى الأرض

خليفة قا لوا أتجعل فيها من يفسدفبها ويسفك الدما ونحن نسبح بحمدك ونقدس لك

(When thy Lord said unto the angels: Behold, I am about to establish upon earth a vicegerent. They said: Wilt Thou place on it such as will spread corruption thereon and shed blood?-whereas it is we who extol Thy limitless glory and praise Thee, and hallow Thy name.) Mujāhid explained this as *mu'aẓẓimuk wa nukabbiruk* 'We aggrandize and magnify You.'[544]

Similar was his explanation of Q. 75:22-23 وجوه يومئذناضرة الى ربها ناظرة

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[542] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2: 418.

[543] Al-Nawawī, *Riyāḍ*, al-Ṣāliḥīn, 2; 126..

[544] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi ' al-Bayān*, 2, p. 490. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 1; 124.

(Some faces that day will beam looking towards their Lord). Ibn Kathīr stated that the

Ṣaḥāba and the Tābi'ūn are unanimously agreed that those who will be the dwellers of

Janna 'Paradise' will see God with their eyes. This verse was one of the verses they

quoted in this regard to support their opinion.[545] Mujāhid interpreted the verse as

"Muslims will be looking forward to the reward from God." He considered the letter ilā

as a singular of ala 'bounties,' favors, etc." [546] not "to" as the term was read by most

scholars.

An example of his tafsīr by using the Qur'ān is his interpretation of Q. 2: 108

أم تريدون أن تسألوا رسولكم كما سئل موسى من قبل (Would you, perchance ask the Apostle

who has been sent unto you [like] was asked aforetime of Moses?). He explained this

verse by using Qur'ānic verse Q. 4: 153 فقدسأ لوا موسى أكبر فقالو أرناالله جهرة (They [the

Jews] asked Moses for something even greater for they said: show us God clearly [for the

naked eye to see].) He also said this when the Quraysh (the tribe of the Prophet

Muḥammad) asked Muḥammad to make the mountain of al-Ṣafā to turn into gold.[547]

Tafsīr of Mujāhid .

Finally, according to Muslim sources presenting Mujāhid's biography, he had

written an exegesis of the entire Qur'ān.

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[545] Other verse is Q. 10:26; and Q. 83:15 and the popular ḥadīth in both *al-Bukhārī* and *Muslim* "You will see your Lord as your see this moon." Al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmi' al- Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4; 146.

[546] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 28: 320   Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 7: 171.

[547] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr* 1, p. 267.

Recently, the alleged manuscript of Mujāhid was twice published under the title

"Tafsīr Mujāhid" by 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Surtī, a member of *"Majma' al-Buhūth al-*

Islāmiyya" (The Islāmic Research Institute) of Pakistan. He was the first scholar to edit

the manuscript which was published for the first time in 1976/1396. Muhammed 'Abd al-

Salām Muhammad 'Alī chose the manuscript of *Mujāhid* to be his Ph.D. thesis at Dār al-

'Ulūm University in Cairo. He published his work in 1989/1410.

Both scholars depended on the manuscript of Dār al-Kutub al-Misriyya.

Muhammad 'Abd al-Salām claimed that his work was more scholarly and accurate. He

recognized the effort of al-Surtī, but he found many mistakes in al-Surtī's work.[548]

On the other hand, Western scholars such as Fred Leemhuis, and Wansborough

expressed their doubts about or totally rejected the authenticity of any work attributed not

only to Mujāhid but to any first Islāmic century scholar or *'ālim*. Wansborough made a

comparison of the Cairo manuscript of Mujāhid and the opinion of Mujāhid in al-Tabarī's

Jāmi' al-Bayān. In addition to that, he examined Mujāhid's method in the context of his

own work. He found two things that made him reject the authenticity of the alleged work

of Mujāhid . The First was the presence of a defective chain of transmission; the second

was a conflicting judgment based on a single authority.[549] Leemhuis seemed to be more

critical in this respect than Wansborough. Leemhuis and his colleagues have carefully

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[548] Muhammad 'Abd al-Salām 'Abū al-nīl,. *Tafsīr al-Imām Mujāhid Ibn Jubayr* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-Hāditha, 1989, 1st ed.). pp.2-15.

[549] Wanborough, *Qur'ānic Studies*, pp. 120-139.

examined the Cairo manuscript. Their analysis led them to find that the narration of Abū

Najīḥ, the immediate narrator from Mujāhid, must have taken place around the middle of

the second century A.H. Leemhuis stated, "These findings were based on the chain of

transmission as well as textual analyses of the different Mujāhid transmissions.[550]

Leemhuis undertook this serious examination of Mujāhid's work seemingly to refute or

challenge Sezgin's assertion that al-Ṭabarī's work can be used as a proof of early written

works of the first century because of its dependency on the first century works such as

that of the *tafsīr of Mujāhid*.

Saʿīd Ibn Jubayr [d. 95-714]

Saʿīd was one of the most outstanding students of Ibn ʿAbbās. Ibn ʿAbbās used to

refer some of the people who asked him to issue religious decree to Saʿīd. This

recognition of Saʿīd by Ibn ʿAbbās has caused scholars to hold Saʿīd in very high esteem.

According to Ibn Khallikān's report, Saʿīd disliked writing exegeses. A man who admired

Saʿīd's knowledge of Qurʾān asked him to write a book on exegeses. Saʿīd became very

angry and said, *"la-an yasquṭ shiqqī aḥabb ilayya min dhālik."* (I would rather lose a part

of my body than to do that.)

Saʿīd used to refer to Ibn ʿAbbās in understanding the meaning of the Qurʾān and

the knowledge of the occasions of revelation, as for example, concerning the occasion on

which the verse of Q. 8:1 يسألونك عن الأنفال (They [will] ask you about Booty.) was

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[550] Fred Leemhuis "Origins and Early Development of the Tafsīr Tradition" In *AHIQ*, pp. 19-21.

revealed. Sa'īd said: "I asked Ibn 'Abbās about the incident about which the verse was revealed." He answered (the following): This verse referred to the booty the Muslims gained after defeating the Meccans in the battle of Badr[551]

Another example is in regard to Q. 2:243 ألم ترَ إلى الذين خرجوا من ديارهم

وهم ألوف حذر الموت وقال الله لهم موتوا ثم أحيا هم (Have you not seen those who have left their homes? They were thousands of them risking death. God told them: "Die", then He revived them.) According to Sa'īd, Ibn 'Abbās stated that the number of people referred to in the verse is four thousands. They left their homes out of fear of plague, but when they reached a certain place, God took their souls.[552]

An example of Sa'īd exercising independent exegesis involves his commentary of Q. 2:178 ياأيهاالذين آمنوا كتب عليكم القصاص في القتلى الحر بالحر والعبدبالعبدوالأنثى بالأنثى (O you who believe, compensation for the murdered victim has been prescribed for you: the freeman for the free, the slave for the slave, and the female for the female.) Sa'īd stated that the *qiṣāṣ* 'victim retribution' is applied only in the case of intentional murder. Furthermore, he gave an account of the background of the verse. He stated that "It concerned two Arab tribes who shortly before Islām fought with each other." Many innocent individuals, including women and slaves, had been killed. Both tribes failed to

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[551] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 3: 273.

[552] *Ibid*, 1: 242

settle their dispute and one of them kept threatening the other, even after all had converted to Islām; thus, God revealed the verse of *al qiṣāṣ.*

'Ikrima al-Barbarī (d.105-723)

'Ikrima was one of the students of Ibn 'Abbās who claimed that there was no verse in the Qur'ān whose meaning he did not know. He transmitted a considerable portion of Ibn 'Abbās's knowledge.[553] Following are Qur'ānic interpretations of three verses showing 'Ikrima's relationship to Ibn 'Abbās.

The first concerns Q. 2:198 وإذا أفضتم من عرفات فاذكروا الله عندالمشعر الحرام (When you stream forth from Mount 'Arafāt remember God at the Hallowed Monument.) 'Ikrima narrated that Ibn 'Abbās stated a specific time that Muslims should depart from 'Arafāt to *Muzdalifa"*[554] (a sacred monument). 'Ikrima attributed to Ibn 'Abbās the following statement: "During the days of *Jāhiliyya* 'pre-Islām days'[555] the people of *al-Jāhiliyya* used to stand at 'Arafāt until the sun was about to set, then they departed."[556]

He also narrated that Ibn 'Abbās indicated the number of the people of the cave in Q. 18: 22 although, the Qur'ān is silent about it; قل ربى أعلم بعدتهم مايعلمهم

الاقليل ولاتستفت فيهم منهم أحدا (Say: My Lord is quite Aware as to how many they were. Only a few know about them.) 'Ikrima reported that Ibn 'Abbās said, "I am one of those

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[553] Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb*, 1: 42-4. Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr*, 1: 111.

[554] A sacred place for Muslims in Mecca when they spend a night during Ḥajj.

[555] Muslim scholars considered the period before the advance of Islām as days of ignorance.

[556] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 1: 427.

few who know the exact number of those people of the cave" *(ana min al-qalīl, kānū sab‘a)*. Ibn Kathīr commented that the transmission from Ibn ‘Abbās in this regard was authentic.[557]

In regards to the meaning of Q. 65:1 يا أيها النبى اذا طلقتم النساء فطلقوهن لعدتهن

(O Prophet, Whenever you [and other Muslims] divorce women, send them away according to their ‘idda). ‘Ikrima commented on this by saying *al-‘idda* is *ṭuhr* purification (when a woman finishes her monthly period). He further elaborated by saying: One should divorce his wife when her pregnancy is obvious. He should not divorce her after he has had intercourse with her until she has had her monthly period or until her pregnancy is clear without doubt."[558]

Qatāda Ibn Du‘āma al-Sadūsī (d.110-728)

Qatāda was one of the most outstanding exegete among the immediate Succussors . Ibn Kathīr has heavily quoted Qatāda in his *tafsīr*; his name is almost on every page in *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm*. It seems that Qatāda relied more on his own opinion than those of the Prophet's Companions. His mastery of the Arabic language was reflected in his exegesis. For example, we find him using in his explanation of some Qur’ānic passages the terms *taqdīm* ‘preposition’ and *ta’khīr* ‘a subject placed in a delayed position’.[559]

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[557] *Ibid*, 4: 378.

[558] *Ibid*, 7: 34. Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma’thūr* (Beirut: Dār al-M‘ārif, n.d). 4: 218.

[559] See for example ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, *Dalā’il al-I‘jāz* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī,1967). p. 42-8.

These are terms or concepts which have been developed by later generations, mainly by 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, and used as one of the tools to illustrate *i'jāz al-Qur'ān* 'the inimitability of the Qur'ān'.

An example of this is in regard to Q. 9: 55 فلاتعجبك أموالهم ولا أولادهم انما يريدالله أن يعذبهم بها فىالدنيا (Do not let not their wealth nor children astonish you; God wants only to punish them by means of them during worldly life.) Qatāda explained the verse by stating that there is *taqdīm* and *ta'khīr* in the verse. He rephrased the verse as: فلاتعجبك أموالهم ولاأولادهم فىالدنيا انما يريدالله أن يعذبهم بها "Do not let not their wealth nor children in worldly life. God wants only to punish them by means of them."[560]

Qatāda also occasionally referred to the Arab metaphorical expression to support the meaning of the Qur'ānic word that he intended to explain. For example, concerning Q. 56:4 وثيابك فاطهر (And your garments keep free from stain). Qatāda said, *"wa kānat al-'Arab tusammī al-rajul idhā nakatha wa lam yafī bi-'ahd Allāh innahū ladānis al-thiyāb."* (Arabs brand a person who violates his oath and does not fulfill the covenant of God as a person with a dirty garment).[561]

Concerning Q. 2:37 فتلقى آدم من ربه كلمات فتاب عليه (Adam received words (*kalimāt*) [of inspiration] from his Lord and He [forgave him] turned towards him). Qatāda quoted another Qur'ānic passage to explain the meaning of *kalimāt*: Q. 7:23

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[560] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 3: 267.

[561] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jami', al-Bayān*, 1: 546. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsir*, 7, p. 154.

قالا ربنا إنا ظلمنا أنفسنا وإن لم تغفرلنا وترحمنا لنكونن من الخاسرين

(They said our Lord we have harmed ourselves. If You do not forgive us and grant us mercy, we'll be losers).[562]

Qatāda and other Successors to the Prophet sometimes made a comment concerning the meaning or implication of the verse without interpreting it. For example, Q. 43: 5 states أفنضرب عنكم الذكر صفحا أن كنتم قوما مسرفين

(Should We take away the reminder (al-Qur'ān) from you since you have been such a transgressing folk). Qatāda said: *wa Allāhi law anna hādha al-Qur'ān rufi' hīna Raddat-ho awā'il hādhī al-umma lahalakū wa lakinna Allāh Ta'ālā 'adā bi- Rahmatihī fa-karrarahū 'alayhim wa da'āhum ilayh 'ishrīna sana.* (I swear, had God turned away His book when the first few of this community rejected it, they could have been perished., but Allāh, The Exalted, out of His mercy, did not do so, instead He called them to it for the period of twenty years).[563]

Masrūq al-Ajda' (d.63-681)

Masūuq was one of the recognized scholars of the Iraqī school of *tafsīr* and *fiqh*. He studied under several Companions of the Prophet. He stated that he found that knowledge of the Companions was like a river '*Ka al-Ikhādh*'. "A river quenches one man's thirst, a river quenches two men's thirst, a river quenches ten men's thirst, a river

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[562] Ibn Kathīr *Tafsīr* 1: 141.

[563] *Ibid,* 6: 217.

quenches a hundred men's thirst, and a river can quench the thirst of the whole mankind 'that is Ibn Mas'ūd' ".[564]

After establishing his position as a student under 'Abd Allāh Ibn Mas'ūd, he said , 'Abd Allāh used to take a whole day to explain to us a chapter 'of the Qur'ān'.[565] Ibn 'Abbās was one of those about whose *tafsīr* Masrūq commented. One of the verses about which Ibn 'Abbās commented on for Masrūq concerned a verse discussed in Ibn 'Abbās exegesis, which mentions someone whose God bless with knowledge of signs,[Āyāt], however, the person did not use the knowledge. The verse was Q. 7:175

واتل علیهم نبأ الذی آتیناه من آیاتنا فانسلخ منها (Recite news to them about someone to whom We gave Our signs. He slipped away from them, so Satan followed him and he became misguided.) Masrūq quoted Ibn 'Abbās naming the person, although the Qur'ān and hadīth are silent about his name. The name of the person according to Masrūq's narration is Bal'am Ibn Na'tira'.[566]

Masrūq also narrated from 'Ā'isha, the wife of the Prophet. An example concerns the prohibition of selling alcohol, Q. 2:275 الذین یأکلون الربا لایقومون

إلاكما یقوم الذی یتخبطه الشیطان من المس ذلك بأنهم قالوا انماالبیع مثل الربا وأحل الله البیع

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[564] Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb*, 10: 109-111.

[565] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr* 3: 109-111. Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr*, 1: 345.

[566] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 3: 258 Bal'am was one of the Prophet Moses's deciple..

وحرم الربا (Those who live off the interest on loans will never stand up, except in the way those whom Satan knocks down with a fit rise. That because they say: Trading is just like interest. Yet God has permitted trading and forbidden taking interest). The Prophet went to the Mosque where he read the verse to his Companions. Then, He forbade the selling of alcohol.[567]

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī [d.110-728]

Al-Ḥasan was known as an influential preacher. He was pious, trustworthy and knowledgeable in both the Qur'ān and the sunna of the Prophet. Abū Jaʿfar al-Bāqir described his speech to be just like the Prophet's.[568] Al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr and other *mufassirūn* depended immensely on his *tafsīr*. Like his contemporaries, al-Ḥasan seemed to use much of his own opinion in his tafsīr. For example, in interpreting Q. 25: 63

وعباد الرحمان الذين يمشون على الأرض هونا وإذا خاطبهم الجاهلون قالوا سلاما

(And the mercy-giving servants who walk modestly on earth and peacefully say: "Peace" when ignorant men address them). Al-Ḥasan said that: When Islām came to the Believers (the Companions) from God, they believed in it and certainly took it into their hearts; thus, their hearts, their bodies, and their eyes became humble. I swear, when I saw them, it seemed to me that I had actually seen that the description of the verse matched them. I swear by God they were not argumentative people nor corrupt. When the command of

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[567] *Ibid*, 1: 582.

[568] Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalāni, *Tahdhīb*, 2; 263-270.

God came to them, they accepted it and applied it As a result, God identified them with a beautiful description. If the ignorant people addressed them foolishly, they were very gentle. In the morning, they accompanied the servants of God. At night, they spent most of the time praying, crying out of the fear of God".[569]

Other examples: one day al-Ḥasan was asked about the meaning of Q. 78:23 لابثين فيها أحقابا (will dwell therein for ages.) He answered *"ammā maʻnā al-aḥqāb fa laysa lahū ʻ idda illā al-khulūd fī al-nār."* (As for the meaning of aḥqāb, it does not have a specific period of time except dwelling in hell fire forever). In relation to the meaning of Q 2:30 (Behold, thy Lord said to the angels I will create a vicegerent on Earth, they said: 'Wilt thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood).? Al-Ḥasan interpreted merely this verse using his own opinion. He said, "Since God said to the angels I will create a vicegerent on Earth that means he informed them about it and inspired them to predict that mankind will make mischief therein and shed blood because there already had been Jinn on Earth before. They actually had made mischief and shed blood."

Thus, the angels said or asked "Will Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?" We also find al-Ḥasan, like many 'Tābiʻūn, giving an account[570] on the occasions of a revelation without making any reference to his source. For example, concerning the context of the revelation of Q. 31:6

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[569] Al-Ghānī, *Tafsīr*, pp. 72-3

[570] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 7: 199.

ومن الناس من يشترى لهو الحديث ليضل عن سبيل الله بغير علم

(Some men purchase idle tales to mislead [others] from God's way without having any knowledge). Al-Ḥasan indicated that the verse was revealed concerning music and the flute).

Zayd Ibn Aslam [d 136-754]

Zayd was an outstanding exegete of the Medinan school of *tafsīr*. His reputation was that he heavily relied on his independent *ra'y* in his *tafsīr*. This notion was documented in major books containing his biography.[571] but when one reads major works of exegesis such as al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, Ibn Kathīr's *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, al-Rāzī's *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, al-Qurṭubī's *al-Jami' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, and others, we find comparatively fewer quotations from Zayd. I found Zayd's son, 'Abd al-Raḥmān, mentioned more than his father in Ibn Kathīr. Does that mean Zayd's exegeses were lost? Or was it that they were so brief? Or was it that his students did not quote extensively from his *tafsīr*? Perhaps the last assumption is the most likely.

Nevertheless, Zayd was considered as one of the leading exegetes of the *Tābi'ūn*. In one of his interpretations, Zayd stated that in regard to meaning of Q. 2:195 وأنفقوا فى سبيل الله ولاتلقوا بأيديكم إلى التهلكة (And spend for God's sake, yet do not expose yourselves to ruin through your own hands), that there was a group of men in the army of

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[571] See for example, Ibn Sad, *Tabaqāt*, 4: 412. *Al-Dhahabī*, *Mīzān*, 1:313. Ibn Ḥajar, al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb*, 3: 397-95.

the Prophet Muḥammad who did not spend anything from their own wealth. Hence, God

commanded them to spend their money for the *Jihād*."[572] In this comment, as you can

see, Zayd mentioned the background of the verse, without mentioning his source. In

relation to the meaning of Q. 6:65 قل هو القادرعلى أن يبعث عليكم عذابا من فوقكم (Say:

He is Able to send torment down upon you.) Zayd quoted the Prophet Muḥammad to

have stated that in regard to the meaning of the verse, *"lā tarjiʻū baʻdī kuffār yaḍrib*

baʻḍukum riqāb baʻḍ bi al-sayf." (Do not become after my death disbelievers, some of

you killing others with swords."[573]

Needless to say Zayd never met the Prophet, therefore, he should have mentioned

his source of information. This type of transmission is technically called ḥadīth *mursal*[574]

More light on Zayd's interpretations will be shed along with those of other *Tābiʻūn* to the

Prophet when their different opinions in their exegeses are discussed.

Rāfiʻ Ibn Mahram Abū al-ʻĀliya [d.90-708.]

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Abū al-ʻĀliya[575] appeared to depend massively

in his exegesis on the narrations of others, especially on Ubay Ibn Kaʻb, who was one of

his teachers. Abū al-ʻĀliya quoted from Ubay concerning the *tafsīr* of Q. 7:172

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[572] Al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, 1: 193.

[573] Ibid, *Tafsīr*, 3:.42.

[574] Ḥadīth Mursal is a ḥadīth that one of the tābiʻ(sing of the tābiʻūn) ascribed directly to the the Prophet without mentioning any of the Companions names. Such ḥadīth is generally classified as weak ḥadīth.See al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Muslim*, 1: 131-2.

وإذأخذربك من بنى آدم من ظهورهم ذريتهم وأشهدهم على أنفسهم ألست بربكم ؟ قالوابلى

(When your Lord drew forth their offspring from the loins of the children of Adam, and made them bear witness about themselves: "Am I not your Lord?" They said: "of course we testify to it"). Ubay said, "[Before this life] God gathered all the children of Adam that will be on the Earth until the Day of Judgment and created them in their physical nature.[and asked them the question as in the verse]."

Concerning the meaning of calamities in Q. 6:65 قل هو القادرعلى أن يبعث عليكم عذابا

من فوقكم (Say: He is Able to send torment down upon you.), Abū al-'Āliya quoted Ubay, who said: There are four calamities. Two of them have already occurred after twenty five years of the death of the Prophet and others will undoubtedly happen. The (two that have not yet occurred) are *al-rajm* 'stoning from the heaven' and *al-khasf* 'swallowing up by the Earth'.[576]

Despite his heavily dependence on the transmission from the Companions, Abū al-'Āliya utilized his own opinion in interpreting some Qur'ānic passages For example, Abū al-'Āliya commented on the Q. 2: 27 الذين ينقضون عهدالله من بعد ميثاقه ويقطعون ما أمرالله

به أن يوصل (Those who break God's Covenant after they have pledged to keep it, and who sunder what God has ordered to be joined.). He said: " This verse referred to the hypocrites. He further stated that there are six types of hypocritical behaviors which the

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[575] Abū al-'Aliya is one of the outstanding exegete of Medina school of *tafsīr*. He has been described by scholars of ḥadīth as "thiqa" 'trustworthy' See Ibn Ḥajar al'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb*, 3, pp. 284-5. Al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān*, p. 429.

[576] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 3; 40.

hypocrites display when they are victorious: when they talk they lie; when they promise they do not fulfill it; when they are entrusted with something they practice betrayal; they break God's Covenant; they sunder what God commands to join together; and cause mischief on the Earth". He further added "If they [the hypocrites] are defeated, they demonstrate three characteristics: when they talk they lie, when they promise they break it, and when they are entrusted they betray."[577]

Having presented some work of the prominent exegetes among the *Tābi'ūn*, we will now examine of their differences in five areas: *fiqh*, theology, Qur'ānic historical personages, linguistic, and Qur'ānic phrases

Differences in the Qur'ānic Interpretations of the *Tābi'ūn*

Issues Pertaining to *Fiqh*

Differences among the *Tābi'ūn* about the legal implications of verses may have been caused by differing understandings of the implication of those verses, a lack of knowledge of the Prophet's sayings concerning related issues or dependence on weak hadīth.

One example of lack of knowledge of the Prophet's saying on a specific issue concerns Q. 2:196

وأتمواالحج والعمرة لله وإن أحصرتم فمااستيسر من الهدى ولا تحلقوا رؤوسكم حتى يبلغ الكتاب أجله

(And Accomplish the *Ḥajj* and the *'Umra*" [578]

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[577] *Ibid,* 1: 125.

[578] The Ḥajj and the'Umra are physical forms of worship performed in Mecca. However, the Ḥajj is performed in a specific month (12th month of Islamic calendar from 8 days of the above-mentioned month

in the service of God. If you are prevented from doing so, then make some offering available. And do not shave your heads until after the offering has reached its destination.).

The Prophet has specified in ḥadīth how many days one should fast and how many poor people one shquld feed when one is prevented from performing *Ḥajj or 'Umra,* However, we find the *Tābi'ūn* differed about the number of the days one should fast and how many poor people one should feed. Mujāhid adhered to the saying of the Prophet which is to fast three days and feed six poor people, while al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and 'Ikrima stated one should fast ten days and feed ten poor people.[579] Perhaps both al-Ḥasan and 'Ikrima did not have the knowledge of the Prophet's ḥadīth in this regard or they were confused with the case of one who is performing the *Ḥajj,* but cannot afford to offer a sacrifice. In such a situation one must fast ten days.

Another example involving lack of knowledge of certain ḥadīth concerns Q. 2:158

(Al-Ṣafa and al- إن الصفاوالمروة من شعائرالله فمن حج البيت أواعتمر فلاجناحعليه أن يطوف بهما

Marwa are some of God's symbols. Any one who goes on pilgrimage to the House or visits [it] will not be blamed if he runs along between them). The majority of the *Tābi'ūn* believed that compassing around al-*Ṣafā* and al-*Marwa* is one of the principles of performing annual pilgrimage. If one fails to circumambulate them , his pilgrimage is invalid. They supported their understanding of the verse with many ḥadīths. Among them

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to 13). It is one of the principle pillars of Islām. 'Umra the unscheduled pilgrimage is performed in Mecca in any month and on any day. In regard to its legal status, some scholars believe that it is an obligatory a duty as the Ḥajj. On the other hand, others hold that it is only highly recommended.

[579] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr,* 1: 412-13.

is "*Is 'aw fa inna Allāh kataba 'Alaykum al-Sa'y.*" ' Walk between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa'

because the *sa'y* ' the special runnnig movement' is prescribed for you'.[580] Mujāhid, al-

Ḥasan, and Qatāda held that *al-sa'y* is not obligatory. To support their opinion, they

quoted Q. 2: 158 فلاجناحعليه أن يطوف بهما

(there is no blame on him who circumambulahces them *(al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa)*, and if he

does so voluntarily, it is better for him.. They said God did not say: you must

circumbulate them, but He stated that there is no blame on you should yōu do so.[581]

Qur'ānic Historical Personages and Places

These are Qur'ānic references to individual personalities whose actual names are

not given in the Qur'ān. However, the *Tābi 'ūn*, in one way or another [probably in the

Torah and the New Testament] found the names of those individuals, but the names they

found differ from orle scholar to another. An example of this concerns Q. 2:246

ألم تر إلى الملأمن بنى إسرائيل من بعدموسى إذقالوا لنبى لهم ابعث لنا ملكا

(Hast thou not turned thy vision to the chiefs of the children of Israel after the time of

Moses. They said to a prophet that was among them. Appoint for us a king). The Qur'ān

actually did not mention the name of this prophet of Israel, but of the *Tābi 'ūn* Successors,

like Mujāhid, Qatāda, al-Suddī and others, believed they knew the name. Mujāhid stated

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[580] *Ibid,* 1; 350.

[581] See for detailed disçussion on this matter, Muḥammad al-Amīn Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Mukhtār al-Jakanī al-Shingīṭī, *Aḍwā' al-Bayān fī Idāḥ al-Qur'ān bi al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutāb, n.d). 5: 231-247.

that the name of the prophet was *Shamwīl Ibn Bāli*. According to Qatāda, his name was

Yūsha' Ibn Nūn, while al- Suddī gave his name as *Sham'ūn*.[582]

Another such example is Q. 27:39

قال عفريت من الجن أنا آتيك به قبل أن تقوم من مقامك وإ نى لقوى أمين

(An *'ifrīt* among the Jinns said: "I will bring it [a throne] to you before you rise from your

place. I am strong enough to be entrusted with it). The Qur'ān did not state the name of

the *'Ifrīt* who offered to bring the throne of the Queen of *Sheba* to the Prophet Solomon

but Qatāda indicated that his name was *Asif* or *Balkh*, while Mujāhid stated his name was

Astom.[583]

Theology

This aspect of exegetical variance refers to the *Tābi'ūn's* own understanding of a

Qur'ānic verse and their interpretation without depending on a ḥadīth or a statement from

the *Saḥāba*. An example is their interpretation of Q. 4:159

وإن من أهل الكتاب إلاليؤمنن به قبل موته

(And there is none of the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) but must believe in

him [Jesus] before his death.) The *ḍamīr 'pronoun' (hi)* 'his' in the phrase *qabla*

mawtih 'before his death' can refer to an individual of the People of the Book or to Jesus.

If the pronoun "he" refers to an individual of the People of the Book, the meaning of the

verse would be that all of the People of the Book must certainly believe in Jesus as a

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[582] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 1: 533.

[583] *Ibid*, 4:. 237.

Messenger of God before he (the individual among the People of Book) dies. If, however, the pronoun refers to Jesus, then the meaning would be "none of the people of the scripture, but will certainly believe in Jesus before the death of Jesus".

Qatāda and Mujāhid held the first opinion, while al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī restricted the People of the Book to Negus (the king of Abyssinia) and his people. 'Ikrima, however, interpreted the verse to mean each of the People of the Book must believe in the Prophet Muḥammad before he dies. *(lā yamūt al-naṣrānī wa lā-al-yahūdī ḥattā yū'min bi-Muḥammad)*. Both al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr argued against the opinion of al-Ḥasan and 'Ikrima and confirmed Qatāda's opinion.[584]

Another difference of interpretation is in relation to the meaning of Q. 6:103 لاتدركه الأبصار وهويدرك الأبصار (No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision). 'Ikrima interpreted this to mean that one can see God (in the Hereafter), but one cannot grasp Him; [the concept is] similar to the fact that one can see the sky, but does not grasp it. Al-Suddī, however, stated that nothing or no one can see God. That was also Mujāhid's opinion.[585] Another example of their differences in theological issues is in Q. 13: 39 يمحوالله ما يشاويثبت (God erases and consolidates whatever He wishes.). Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr used another Qur'ānic verse to explain the meaning. He stated that the Qur'ānic verse. 13: 39 was explained by Q. 2:284 يغفر لمن يشاء ويعذب من يشاء

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[584] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 4: 249.

[585] *Ibid*, 7: 74-5.

(He forgives anyone He wishes and punishes anyone He wishes).[586] On the other hand,

Qatāda indicated that Q. 13: 39 is similar to Q. 2:106 ما ننسخ من آية أو ننسها نأت بخير

منها أومثلها (We do not conceal any verse nor let it be forgotten unless We bring something

better than it or else something similar).[587] Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī commented on the verse by

saying *"man jā'ajaluh yadhhab wa yathbut alladhī huwa hayī yajrī ilā ajalih"*

'Whosoever reaches his end, would die, and he who is alive proceeds toward his

destiny'[588]

Linguistic Matters

Differences in linguistic matters are individual words or terms the *Tābi'ūn*

understood differently according to their own varying linguistic backgrounds. More

interestingly, they also differed in terms of the origin of some Qur'ānic words derived

from foreign languages,.

For example, the word *al-Ṣamad* in Q. 112-2: قل هوالله أحد. الله الصمد

was interpreted by Zayd Ibn Aslam as *al-Sayyid* 'the Master'. Qatāda understood it as *Al-*

Bāqī ba'd khalqih ' The one who outlasts His creation.'. 'Ikrima explained it as *alladhī*

lam yakhruj minhu shay' wa- lā- yuṭ'am (The one that does not need to release waste or

be fed).[589] Al-Rabī' Ibn Anas stated that it means *alladhī lam yalid wa lam yūlad* (He

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[586] *Ibid*, 5: 423.

[587] *Ibid*, 4: 304.

[588] *Ibid*,, 2: 304.

[589] *Ibid*,, 7: 412.

who begets not, nor was He begotten).[590]   Mujāhid, Saʿīd Ibn Jubayr, al-Suddī, al-Ḍaḥḥak and others interpreted it as *alladhī lā jawfa lah* (The One with no Viscera or belly).' ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Burayda said that, *al-Ṣamad* is *nūr yatalaʾla'* (a light that shines).[591]

Another example is Q: 36 1 يس *Yā-Sīn*. ʿIkrima, al-Ḍaḥḥāk and al-Ḥasan explained it as *Yā Insān* 'O, man'. Saʿīd Ibn Jubayr a man of Abyssinian background confirmed this meaning by saying *huwa kadhālika fī lughat al-Ḥabashiyya* (It is so in the language of Abysinia). On the other hand, Zayd Ibn Aslam indicated that it is *Ism min Asmāʾ Allāh Taʿālā* ' It is one of Allāh's names.'[592]

As to the word *al-zaytūn* in Q. 95:1 والتين والزيتون Kaʿb al-Aḥbār and Qatāda believed it referred to the Sacred Mosque in Jerusalem, while Mujāhid and ʿIkrima indicated that it is 'the olive that is known'.[593]

Concerning the meaning and the linguistic origin of the Qurʾānic phrase هيت لك in Q. 12: 23, Mujāhid and others said it means 'seduction'. ʿIkrima, al-Ḥasan, and Qatāda stated that it is of the Syrian dialect or language and means *aʿlayka* 'come on' Al- Suddī

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[590] *Ibid.,* 7: 412.

[591] *Ibid,* 7: 412.

[592] Ibid, 5: 600.

[593] *Ibid,* 7: 476

mentioned that it is from the Coptic language and means "come on."[594] Al-Bukhārī

attributed to 'Ikrima the idea that it means 'come on' in the language of the *Huran*.[595]

Qur'ānic phrases. This category is for those terms in the Qur'ān which the

Tābi' ūn have interpreted differently due to a lack of the knowledge of ḥadīth that mention

the meaning of those phrases or because there were no ḥadīth concerning difficult phrases.

Thus, each individual used his own opinion in explaining the meaning. The phrase in Q.

15:87 ولقدآتيناك سبعا من المثانى والقرآن العظيم (We have brought you the Seven Oft-

repeated [verses] plus the Mighty Qur'ān) was said to mean 'the seven longest chapters of

the Qur'an by the students of Ibn 'Abbās, mainly Mujāhid, Saʿīd Ibn Jubayr and al-

Ḍaḥḥak, along with their teacher Ibn 'Abbās.

On the other hand, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Qatāda, and also Mujāhid (who was among

the scholars who once held the first above-cited meaning), along with the Companions all

mentioned that *al-sabʿal-mathānī* means *al-fātiḥa*, the first chapter of the Qur'ān only.

They quoted a ḥadīth which is in *al-Bukhārī*[596] to support their interpretation, while the

first group did not refer to a ḥadīth. Ibn Kathīr supported the latter interpretation, when

he stated after quoting the ḥadīth in *al-Bukhārī* in regards to the meaning of *al-sabʿ al-*

mathānī "*hādhā naṣṣ fī anna al-fātiḥa al-sabʿ al-mathānī wa al-Qur'ān al-ʿAẓīm*".

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[594] Al-Ṭabari, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 8: 432

[595] Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ*, 8: 463.

[596] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4: 356.

'This is a clear statement that *al-fātiḥa*, the first chapter, is the *al-sab' al-mathānī* and the Grand Qur'ān.'[597]

Al-Ḍaḥḥāk explained the meaning of Q. 75:29 والتفت الساق بالساق) [And] while one shin will twist around the other shin). as "two things that come together for someone deceased, namely, people preparing his body for burial and the angels preparing his soul.[598] On the other hand, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī interpreted it literally. He said: *humā sāqāka idhā iltafatā* (They are your legs when they are joined). In other narrations, al-Ḥasan said: "They are your two legs when they are wrapped in the sheet."[599] 'Ikrima said that it is like the meaning of the verse, *al-Amr al-'Aẓīm bi al-amr al-'Aẓīm* 'A significant matter is joined with another significant matter'. As for Mujāhid, the verse means: calamity joined with another calamity.[600]

Having introduced some of the interpretations and exegeses of the *Tābi'ūn*, including their differences, we now turn to the characteristics, sources, and methodology of their exegeses.

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[597] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 4: 173-2.
Having realized the contradiction between the two interpretations, Ibn Kathīr said "But this does not mean that other Qur'ānic verses cannot be described as al-Sab' al-Mathānī." He further stated that the whole chapters of the Qur'ān can be qualified as al-Sab' al-Mathānī.

[598] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 7: 173.

[599] *Ibid*, 7: 173.

[600] *Ibid* 7: 173.

Principle Characteristics of the *Tābi'ūn*'s *Tafsīr*, their Sources, and Methodology

Despite the claims that some *Tābi'ūn* such as Mujāhid, Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr and others wrote exegeses, their texts did not cover all the verses of the Qur'ān. Generally speaking, the *tafsīr* of *Tābi'ūn* was simple and clear. It includes very few quotation from poetry to support the definition of Qur'ānic text. Grammatical analyses are lacking, but some of them, such as Qatāda did provide rhetorical and linguistic observations for some verses. They also explained a considerable number of individual words (the scope and purposes of which lie outside of the purposes of this research.).[601]

The *Tābi'ūn* primarily used three sources for their exegesis. One was the Qur'ān. Sometimes they used Qur'ānic verses to explain other Qur'ānic verses, as was pointed out earlier in Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr's and Qatāda's interpretation of Q. 13:39, and Q. 2:37.[602]

The second was the *Ṣaḥāba*, to whom the Successors referred extensively in their exegeses. All the ḥadīth they employed came from the Prophet's Companions, and almost all of their *tafsīr* qouted the *Ṣaḥāba*.

The third source the Successors used was independent opinion. Although they relied heavily on the Companions for their *tafsīr*, they used their own independent opinions as well. This is obvious from our presentation of their *tafsīr*.[603] Because they use their own opinions, they differed in their understanding of some verses.

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[601] See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4: 123-70.

[602] See Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr and Qatāda in this chapter, pp. 192-6.

[603] See Mujāhid, Qatāda and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī in this chapter, pp. 209-212, 216-218, 220-222.

One other source of their interpretation of the Qur'ān is *Isrā'iliyyāt*. Sources,

which were especially utilized by the students of Ibn 'Abbās. In his *Fajr al-Islām*, Aḥmad

Amīn stated that the *tafsīr* of the *Tābi'ūn* was especially influenced by *Isrā'iliyyāt*.[604] Al-

Dhahabī and 'Adnān Na'na'[605] listed the most prominent sources of *Isrā'iliyyāt* at the time

of *Ṣaḥāba and the Tābi'ūn*: Ka'b al-Aḥbār, a man of Jewish origin, and Wahb Ibn

Munabih who had a Christian background.

In many cases, the *Tābi'ūn* did not mention their sources when discussing *asbāb*

al-nuzūl. Islāmic methodology requires that sources of information be stated. This was

particularly important for the generation of the *Tābi'ūn*, a generation that was dependent

on narratives and cautious about their authenticity. This caution was necessary due to the

heavy fabrication in ḥadīth which took place after the assassination of the third Caliph

'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān. The *Tābi'ūn* sometimes used Qur'ānic verses to explain other

Qur'ānic verses and they used ḥadīth as a support in explaining the Qur'ānic verses. They

also quoted their teachers and the Companions, although, they occasionaly differed with

their teachers' interpretations.

Comments and Summary

Realistically speaking, it is not easy to give a true concept or picture of the

exegetical works of the *Tābi'ūn*, because of the absence of examples. The existing works

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[604] Amīn, *Fajr*, p. 205.

[605] Al-Dhahabī, *al-Isrā'iliyyāt fī al-Tafsīr wa al-Ḥadīth* (Cairo: Majma' al-Buḥūth al-Islāmiyya, 1963), pp. 76-85. and Na 'na ', *Isrā'iliyyāt*, pp. 78-92

of some individuals, like that of the *tafsīr* of Mujāhid, are still questionable. Thus, the

exegeses of the *Tābi'ūn* found in the classical works of *tafsir*, such as al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-*

Bayān, Ibn Kathīr's *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* were never critically analyzed to determine

their authenticity. Such is the case with the *tafsīr* of the *Ṣaḥāba*. This is why one finds

two contradictory reports or interpretations ascribed to the same exegete.[606] It is readily

apparent that much of the exegeses by the Successors is similar to that of their teachers'.

Muslim scholars are divided into two groups in terms of the binding

authority of the *Tābi'ūn*'s exegesis. Most believed that their exegesis was not *ḥujja*

because they did not meet with the Prophet or witness the circumstances sorrounding the

revelation. Others held that exegetical works by the *Tābi'ūn* based on the knowledge they

acquired from the *Ṣaḥāba'* and thus have equal standing with the work of the Companions

as binding proof, because whatever knowledge the Tābi'ūn acquired was the same as that

of their teachers. The justifications and reasons given by both sides are not scholastic

ones. They are based solely on the merit and virtue of living at the time and of the

Prophet and having contact with him.

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[606] See for example, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's interpretation of Q. 75: 29 , in this chapter under "Phrase",

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The objective of this dissertation was to expound upon the idea that *al-Tafsīr bi-al-Ma'thūr* should be a designation applied only to the Qur'ānic exegesis of the Prophet of Islām, Muḥammad. This preserves the concept that the term is a designation for exgesis that should be accepted as incontestably correct or as *ḥujja* 'a binding proof'. This allows other exegeses to retain an authoratative status according to their various protagonists, while acknowledging the unamnimity of all Muslims that the command proceeding directly from God that they must "take what the messenger [of Allāh, Muḥammad] gives you".[607] And all that Muḥammad the Prophet says concerning religion, in general and the Qur'ān, in particular, is true, because it is from God, not from himself. Although the transparent definition of *al-Tafsīr bi-al Ma'thūr* is exegesis by transmission, Muslim scholars have differed about whose exegesis can be accepted as "exegisis by transmission" and whether or not the term includes exegesis of the Qur'ān by other parts of the Qur'ān.

A second matter of contention among Muslim scholars has been the concept of authority inherent in the exegetical designation of *al-Tafsīr bi al- Ma'thūr*. This type of exegesis has been considered more authoritative than other types, particularly its well-

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[607] See for example, Q. 57: 7

known counterpart, *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y*. This issue is complex, since there have been different ideas among the scholars as to what constitutes *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* including the reality that this exegesis includes Qur'ānic explanations that are *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y*. To clarify the problems associated with *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*, the evolution of the use and meanings associated with exegesis were described. We found that it was not until the latter part of the first century of Islām that the term *tafsīr* came into use. Previous to this, the term *ta'wīl* was used but with a variety of meanings and consequent implications. These varieties were not distilled or distinguished but, rather, all used in association with the term *tafsīr* that emerged as the denotative term for exegesis. Hence, this was the foundation for perpetual conflict and eventual misnomered exegesis as *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* and *al Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y*.

We then presented a history of Qur'ānic exegesis begining with the Prophet Muḥammad, who Muslims consider as the first exegete. The most distinct periods and trends after him included the *tafsīr* of prominent companions of the Prophet and distinguished Muslim of early Islām who became identified with four diffrent divisions of exegesis: the schools of Mecca, Iraq, Medina and Syria. It was during this time that *ra'y* came into use denoting exegesis that was contrary to that of the Prophet and his Companions or which was considered by certain noted Muslims scholars as sectarian and, therefore, blameworthy. In addition, *tafsīr* literature began to include exegesis according to grammatical and linguistic analysis, thus making the field distinct from ḥadīth, that is,

transmission from earlier exegetes that include *isnāds*, the predecessor of the Western style of report documentation.

Aside from the development of *ikhtiṣār al-asānīd*, exegetical works came into existence emphasizing particular scholastic specialities, notably grammar, jurisprudence, philosophy and logic. All of these exegeses are still popularly regarded as *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*, however. Hence, the conflict among scholars concerning applicatoin of the term. Particularly all other works were deemed by the great majority of the Muslim world, the Sunnis, to be *al- Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y* being praiseworthy, *al-ra'y al-maḥmūd* or its opposite, *al-ra'y madhmūm*, blameworthy. Examples of the former are *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* by al-Rāzī and *Anwār al-Tanzīl* by al-Baydāwī. The scholars of the Sunni Muslims would consider most if not all works by the Ṣūfīs, the Mu'tazilites, and the Shī'a to be blameworthy.

Some of the major Sunni exegetes are Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Ibn 'Aṭiyya, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Suyūṭī. Major authors of more recent times are Muḥammad 'Abduh and his student, Muḥammad Rāshid Riḍā, al-Qāsimī, and Sayyid Qutb. These and other works fall into six modern exegetical trends: intellectual, scientific, rhetorial, philosophical, traditional, and works that reject religious miracles and other traditional religious dogma.

In chapter III; *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y*, we see that the conflict over its definition brings out the conflict concerning *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*.

In defining his concept of acceptable exegesis, Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī named four methodologies: *tafsīr* using the Qur'ān itself; *tafsīr* so crucial to the Muslims

or so clear that all Muslims should understand the Qur'ānic text; exegesis that is left to the skills of a scholar; and exegesis of the Qur'ān that Allāh preserve for Himself, that is, whose exegesis no one not only does not know, but also no one should even attempt to explain. This last category, al-Ṭabarī consideres blameworthy. Such a designation he applied also to any exegesis which disagrees with the exegesis of the Prophet, his Companions, Successors, or is not attained from sound Arabic language knowledge.

Al-Ghazālī said that Qur'ānic meanings are of two kinds: *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* (manifest and hidden.) The former includes Prophetic exegesis, and the explanation of the Qur'ān based on sound knowledge of Arabic language. The latter has hidden meanings that require superior insight and knowledge including mastering of the *ẓāhir*.

Ibn Taymiyya rejected as blameworthy innovations all exegeses that employ methods other than those complying with that of the scholars of the first two generations.

All of these three scholars, al-Ṭabarī, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Taymiyya, reject some exegetical statements that can be considered *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-madhmūm*, however their criterias for rejection are not uniform and reflect to a large extent, the controversy over acceptance and the non-acceptance of *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y*. The themes of rejection concern what is *bid'a*; allowances or not of exegesis that disagrees with *tafsīr* by the Prophet, Companions, or Successors; and transgressions of Arabic or Islāmic principles and Sharī'a, 'Islāmic Law'.

Since all scholars agree that there is a rejected *ra'y*, namely exegesis without the proper knowledge of the sources of *tafsīr*, Sharī'a, and sound knowledge of Arabic

language, then there is a conflict that shall remain about what constitutes *al-tafsir bi al-ra'y al-maḥmūd*: ijtihād 'using a sound knowledge of Arabic and implementing acceptable principle of exegetical analysis'. Hence, despite the designation by some that the term *ra'y* connotes unacceptability, *al-Tafsir bi al-Ra'y* is not automatically inferior to the tafsir that is customarily called *al-Tafsir bi al-Ma'thūr*. In additon, it is impossible to have an exegesis of the total Qur'ān without employing *ra'y*. Hence, texts labeled as *al-Tafsir bi al-Ma'thūr* are not totally *al-Tafsir bi al-Ma'thūr*. If my contention is accepted, namely that *al-Tafsir bi al-Ma'thūr* should be a term exclusively for Qur'āni cexegesis from the Prophet of Islām, then this is a step in the right dierction to resolving the aforementioned conflict.

However, the larger problem in *tafsir* is that the concept associated with the term *al-Tafsir bi al-Ma'thūr* goes beyond the transparent meaning of the term and into its theological authority as a *ḥujja*. During the time of the *Ṣaḥāba*, *athar*, and by extension, *ma'thūr* were used to mean ḥadīth of the Prophet. Here is where the connotation of *ḥujja* was probably first associated with *athar* and *ma'thūr* as in *al-Tafsir bi al-Ma'thūr* In the time of the *Tābi'ūn*, the *muḥaddithūn* 'traditionists' and jurists employed *athar* to mean that which is related by either the Prophet or his Companions. Subsequently, *athar*, in the science of *tafsir* came to be understood with four different meanings: Exegesis from the Prophet and the *Ṣaḥāba*; if the latter relates *asbāb al-nuzūl*; and from the Prophet, his Companions, and exegesis employing parts of the Qur'ān exlpaining other parts. The fourth meaning is the same as the third with the addition of exegesis from the Successors.

Nonetheless, the connotation of *hujja* never became disassociated with the term *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*. Hence, although the Muslim scholars have never wavered from considering the Prophetic law at least as equal to the Qur'ānic law, consideration of other texts and opinions as *hujja* like the aforementioned has always generated controversy.

Since the three definitions of *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* included the *Sahāba*, we explain the various opinions about their authoritative status: our objective was to examine whether or not their exegetical views fit the concept of *hujja* associated with *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*

Scholars are divided into two groups in relation to the incontestable authority of the exegesis of the *Sahāba*. Those who agreed with Imām Mālik, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Qayyim, believe that the *tafsīr* of anyone *Sahāba* is *hujja*. The second group, that includes al-Ghazālī and Abū Ḥayyān, believe that *tafsīr* of anyone including *Sahāba* is not binding.

The most compelling propositions are those against the argument of the first group and for the second group. They were presented by al-Ghazālī. He argued that Allāh has not made anyone infallibe in religion and religious verdicts after the Prohet Muḥammad. Hence, any person who is subject to making mistakes cannot be infallible. Furthermore, he questioned: how can two people each rendering infallible opinion if the Companions were such, differ on the same issue? The *Sahāba* differed on many issues to the extent that their opinions cannot be harmonized in any fashion. Thus, how could two *hujjas* be contradictory on the same issue? He argued that, the *Sahāba* recognized that their own

opinions were not *hujja*. If they believe their opinions were *hujja*, they would not have allowed themselves to differ. For the opinion of a Companion to be a *hujja*, it must be established as the other basic principles of Islām were established, namely, through proofs and arguments fron the Qur'ān and hadīth. Finally, al-Ghazālī and al-Āmidī stated that if one accepts the opinion of a Companion as a binding proof, this confirms *taqlīd*, this, they say is contrary to the Qur'ānic injuction to ponder over the Qur'ān.

Since it is unanimously understood by scholars that the definition of *hujja* is an incontestable statement that demands obedience or adoption in authority over all other statements pertaining to the same issue, then it was understood that the concept of *hujja* is not a principle that makes null and void other positions on other issues or even on the same issue when the matter concerns elaboration, amplification,etc. Hence, since the definition of *hujja* denotes absolute acceptance and connotes infallibility, then it must be noted that Muslims scholars are unanimous that only two types of texts are *hujja*. The first is Allāh's words, the second is the Prophet words [authentic hadīth]. Only these types demand absolute acceptance and are infallible. Since the term *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* also denotes *hujja*, then only exegesis by the Prophet meets all the conditions for *hujja* and enjoys Muslim unanimity on this issue.

The clash of classical Muslim scholars over the difference concerning the definitions of *hujja* led to the four definitions of *al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*. It is the contention of this thesis that since Islāmic dogma and Qur'ānic text give the exegesis of the Prophet a divine authentication, it is qualitatively different from a Muslim point of

view, and from all other exegeses including that of the Ṣaḥāba and the Tābi'ūn. Hence, tafsīr by the Prophet should have its own categorical designation and al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr should be redefined to reflect this.

Our proposal is that al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr should designate only the Prophetic explanation of the Qur'ān. This satisfies the notion that al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr should consist only of text that is ḥujja. Muslim jurists, theologians, and traditionists have unanimously agreed that Prophetic exegesis is part of prophetic ḥadīth.

The Prophet, as mentioned in the Qur'ān and as unanimously accepted by all Muslims is always correct whenever he speaks on religion. Since the Prophet has divine endorsement, his tafsīr is considered ḥujja. The tafsīr of the Ṣaḥāba and the Tābi'ūn do not have this divine endorsement for being invariably correct. Hence, according to al-Ghazālī, Ibn Ḥazm and others the tafsīrs and fatwās of the Ṣaḥāba and the Tābi'ūn are not on the same level as that of the Prophet. Their tafsīrs are not ḥujja.[608] Hence, a more precise term for their exegesis is proposed: al-Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y or bi al-ijtihād.

Having stated this, the contribution of this thesis in the field of tafsīr is clear. This dissertation justifies not only the reason why al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr should be redefined but also produces a new proposal for the new definition. Al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr no longer [according to our new definition] includes either the exegesis of the Companions or the exegesis of the Tābi'ūn. Thus, the only tafsīr that should be considered to be "ḥujja" is

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[608] Al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā', 1: 291. See, al-Ghazālī, al-Mustaṣfā, 1: 616. Ibn Ḥazm, al-Iḥkām, 5, p: 78. Al-Āmidī, al-Iḥkām, 4: 150.

the *tafsīr* of the Prophet Muḥammad. The basis for our position can be summarized as follows:

1. In its many passages, the Qur'ān commands Muslims to accept without any reservation whatever the Prophet Muḥammad brought or said to them. Thus, Muslims unanimously agreed that God and His messenger were the ultimate authority. Therefore, their statements or commands are *ḥujja*. This is the significance of *"Lā ilāha illā Allāh, Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh."*

2. The Companions themselves explicitly indicated that their independent opinions were not *ḥujja* .

3. Practically speaking, the Ṣaḥāba differed in understanding and interpreting some verses. The differences in some cases are irreconcilable. They pertain to jurisprudence, historical personalities and places, theology and linguistic differences.

Hopefully, the approach in this thesis will be an encouragement for others to critically examine the background and implications of other Islāmic terms and topics within the science of *tafsīr* such as *al-Aḥruf al-Sab'a, al-Qirā'āt al- Sab'a,* and the impact of *Isrā'īliyyāt* on *Tafsīr* literature.

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