Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān
Izza Rohman

Tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān

Sectarian Tendencies in al-Ṭabātabā’ī’s al-Mīzān
and al-Shanqīṭī’s Adwā’ al-Bayān
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PUBLISHER’S FOREWORD

It has been often stated that the development of Indonesian Muslim thinking has been largely overlooked in the study of Islam. Many scholars – perhaps already too numerous to mention – have, in various ways, repeatedly affirmed that Indonesian Muslim scholars’ works – due to varied reasons – have not yet received or attracted due attention from the Muslim world and beyond. For that reason, the publication of an Indonesian Muslim scholar’s work that is more accessible to larger audience abroad is tremendously important.

Al-Wasaṭ Publishing House is now committed to introducing Indonesian scholars’ works written in an international language to global audience. This book by Dr. Izza Rohman is the first for us to start with. His work, which is a refined version of his newly completed Ph.D. dissertation written in English, is a good example to show how Indonesian scholars are aware of the need to increasingly contribute to the academic conversation worldwide.

The topic of the book, i.e. the methodology of Qur’an interpretation, is another important reason for us to start with the work. For one thing, the discussion on Islamic reform during the last three decades by Muslim intellectuals has often focused on the way the Qur’an is approached. Therefore, this book is undoubtedly another contribution on the topic worthy of a closer look.

The author has discussed the interpretation of the Qur’an using the Qur’an (tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān) in an unprecedented manner. He has explored how sectarian bias (particularly Sunnism and Shi‘ism) can even interrupt a commitment to present a holistic reading of the Qur’an. By doing so, his study would surely serve as an invitation for other scholars to explore more areas in the future. On the other hand, it might also spark future discussions related to intra-Muslim dialogue.
Al-Wasaţ is pleased to present such a scholarly work, and invite future contributions from other scholars. We thank Dr. Izza Rohman for having put trust in al-Wasaţ to publish this work resulted from some years of study. We thank also those who have helped make this publication possible, particularly Dr. Abdul Mu'ti and Brother Dinan Hasbudin AR.

Tangerang Selatan, July 2016
Director

Faozan Amar
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Wa mā tawfīqī ʿillā bi Allāh.
NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION OF ARABIC WORDS

Throughout the text, I have followed the transliteration system of the *ALA-LC Romanization Tables*, with the exception of rule 6(a): the case of ِ (alif maqṣūrah) used in place of َ to represent the long vowel, which is here Romanized ā instead of ā (e.g. musammā). The Arabic words Qur’an, Sunnah, Tawrat, Injil, surah, tafsir, hadith, Imam, Sunni, Shi’a, Muhajirin and Ansar are treated as common English words and therefore are neither italicized nor fully transliterated. Arabic terms Ṣaḥābah, Ahl al-Bayt, Ahl al-Sunnah, Ahl al-Kitāb, and Ahl al-Kisā’, as well as the names of Qur’anic surahs, are (in most cases) treated as Arabic names and therefore are not italicized while fully transliterated. Unless otherwise indicated, translation of Qur’anic verses either comes from or is a modified version of Ṣaḥeeḥ International translation.
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Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

A. Background

What is the best way to interpret the Qur'an? One of the frequent answers for this frequently asked question in Qur’anic studies is that the Qur’an is best interpreted by reference to the Qur’an itself. Qur’anic parts are believed to interpret one another (al-Qur’an yufassiru ba’dhu ba’dan), and accordingly, an interpreter is expected to ‘let the Qur’an speak’.

This approach is traditionally called the interpretation of the Qur’an with the Qur’an (tafsīr al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an).1 Its significance has been widely acknowledged by both classical and contemporary scholars. Indeed, it might have become the most acclaimed way of Qur’an interpretation.2 It is extremely hard to find any scholar who disapproves the great importance of understanding the Qur’an through its internal relationships – which is regarded as “cannot be seriously challenged”.3 One could even easily find such statements on this method as: “it has to be followed and accepted without any doubt or any reserve.”4 As many have implied, there has been a wide consensus among Muslim scholars on that this method is not only a must but also the first thing to do or even the best, most authoritative and highest way in interpreting the Qur’an.5

1There are various ways of translating the term into English one could find in previous studies, most commonly: 1) tafsir of the Qur’an with the Qur’an; 2) tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an; 3) tafsir of the Qur’an through the Qur’an; and 4) tafsir of the Qur’an using the Qur’an. There are slight differences in connotation between these, but in this study I would use all of them interchangeably. Sometimes, I would use the transliterated Arabic version instead.
Partly thanks to the influence of Ibn Taymiyyah’s hermeneutics featured in his *Muqaddimah fi Usul al-Tafsir*, interpretation of the Qur’an by reference to the Qur’an itself has been often placed at the top of a hierarchical order of interpretation – usually, but not exclusively, in the context of what so-called *tafsir bi al-ma’thir* (tradition-based interpretation). It has been many times seen as the first necessary step, also the most important and fundamental one, in interpreting the Qur’an. Quite often, not only has it been regarded as the first necessary step to take on, but also the most correct way.

6Even though Ibn Taymiyyah does not explain why it should be placed at the top and considered to be the best nor explain how to put it into practice, placing this hermeneutical device at the topmost was a novel, interesting development we could find in his treatise, compared to earlier scholars’ hermeneutics. See Walid A. Saleh, “Ibn Taymiyya and the Rise of Radical Hermeneutics: An Analysis of An Introduction to the Foundations of Qur’anic Exegesis,” in Ibn Taymiyya and His Times: Studies in Islamic Philosophy, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed (Karachi: OUP Pakistan, 2010), 145. With regard to ways of interpreting the Qur’an, Ibn Taymiyyah firstly states, “The best method in it [tafsir] is that the Qur’an be interpreted by the Qur’an. Where the Qur’an sums up (a point), the same point is elaborated in another place. What is briefly mentioned in one place is explained in detail in another place.” See Ibn Taymiyyah, *Muqaddimah fi Usul al-Tafsir* (Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm, 1997), 84; also his *al-Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, n.d.), II, 231. Although these are the only brief statements on the importance of interpreting the Qur’an with the Qur’an available in the book, Ibn Taymiyyah has since then become the most oft-quoted scholar in great favor of the idea to interpret the Qur’an with the Qur’an. Ibn Taymiyyah’s theory of hermeneutics presented in the book, at least some of its main or first sentences, has often been incorporated (sometimes in toto), in later works, e.g. in Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim* (Cairo: Mu’assasah Qurtubah & Maktabat Awlad al-Shaykh li al-Turath, 2000), I, 6-19; al-Zarkashi, *al-Burhan fi Ulum al-Qur’an* (Cairo: Dar al-Turath, 1984), II, 175-6; al-Suyuti, *al-Itqan fi Ulum al-Qur’an* (Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 2006), IV, 455.

(aṣāḥh al-ṭuruq) or the best way (aḥsan al-ṭuruq) in it.8 As the best, most correct way, it is also believed to be safest from any deviation and distortion (aslam min al-inḥiráf wa al-i’wjāj),9 and arguably the most perfect method (al-manhaj al-akmal wa al-atamm).10 In al-Rāzī’s words, it is the closest way to truthfulness and correctness (aqrab al-ṭuruq ilā al-ṣidq wa al-ṣawāb),11 while others variably refer to it as “the strongest type of interpretation” (aqwā anwā’ al-tafṣīr),12 “among the most reliable interpretation” (min ablağh al-tafṣīr),13 part of “the highest type/rank of interpretation” (a’lā anwā’ al-tafṣīr or al-marāṭib al-tafṣīr),14 “the most reputable and highly regarded interpretation” (ashraf anwā’ al-tafṣīr wa ajalluhā),15 “the straight way pursued by the teachers of the Qur’an” (al-ṭarīq al-mustaqīm wa al-ṣīrāt al-sawīy alladhi salakhu mu’āllimū al-Qur‘ān),16 and “the oldest inherited way of interpretation” (aṣdam al-ṭuruq al-ma’tthurāb).17

If one takes a closer look at the underlying assumptions behind these claims, there are different reasons as to why what might be called ‘cross-referential hermeneutics’ is of great importance to an authoritative, credible Qur’an interpretation. The first is an assumption that any speaker understands his sayings better than anyone else.18 It is insisted that “there is no one who knows about the

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8This is the position of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Kathīr – among others. See Ibn Taymiyyah, Muqaddimah fī Uṣūl al-Tafṣīr, 84; Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm, I, 6.
9Tāhir Mahmūd, Asbāb al-Khatā’ fī al-Tafṣīr, 91.
14Al-Ṣābūnī, al-Tibyān, 93, 94.
15Al-Shaqqīṭī, Adwā’ al-Bayān, I, 8.
17Al-Ṭabāṭābā’ī, al-Mizān, I, 17.
18Al-Ṭayyār, Fusiṣl, 22; Musā’īd Sulaymān al-Ṭayyār, al-Tahrīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafṣīr (Jeddah: Markaz al-Dirāsāt wa al-Ma’lūmāt al-Qur’ānīyāt, Ma’had al-Imām al-Shāfi’ī, 2014), 44.
meaning of Allah’s Word more than Allah Himself.” It is Allah Himself that can be in the best position to explain His speech. It is seemingly assumed that interpreting the Qur’ān with the Qur’ān is not dissimilar to allowing God Himself (the author/speaker) explain His words.

The second is an assumption that “the Qur’ān is self-illuminating.” As an explanation to everything (tibyān lī kull shay‘), the Qur’ān also explains itself. Logically, if in the Qur’ān one can find exposition to everything, it must also serve as an explanation to itself. Moreover, as a guidance (hudā), a clear proof (bayyīnāh), a criterion (t MQ ̲ rān) and an illuminating light (nūr muḥīn), the Qur’ān must also be sufficient to guide people to comprehend it. Accordingly, there is nothing which could better explain the Qur’ān other than the Qur’ān itself. The Qur’ān is the best guide to understanding it. That is why for any interpretation to be valid it needs to be consistent with the Qur’ānic views. It is apparently assumed that interpreting the Qur’ān with the Qur’ān is like listening to what the Qur’ān (the text) says about what it means.

The third assumption is that it is the method that is sanctioned by the Qur’ān and the teachers (mu’āllimān) of the Qur’ān, i.e. the Prophet Muhammad and either the Imams (for Shi‘is) or the Companions and the Successors (for Sunnis). Such Qur’ānic concepts as tadabbūr (contemplation) and lā ikhtilāf fī al-Qur’ān (there is no contradiction in the Qur’ān), in addition to a number of Qur’ānic

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21This is the argument of al-Ṭāḥātābā’ī repeatedly explained in his Qur’ān dar Islām. Read al-Ṭābahābā?’ī, The Qur’an in Islam: Its Impact and Influence on the Life of Muslims, trans. Assadullah ad-Dhaakhir Yate (Blanco, USA: Zahra Publications, 1987), 27, 34, 52-5. See also al-Ṭabāṭābā’ī, al-Mīzān, I, 14; III, 99; al-Ḥasan, al-Manḥaj al-Tafsīrī, 33-5. A similar argument goes like this: since the Qur’ān is a kita’b la ya’ṭihi al-bāṭil (a scripture free from falsehood in the sense that it contains no contradiction), and is a kita’b mutashābih mathānī (a scripture consistent with itself and repeating its teaching), it must have explained and interpreted itself. See Ṣalāḥ al-Ḥasan, Manḥāj Tafsīr al-Qur’ān, 41-6.

22For al-Ṭabāṭābā’ī, tadabbūr (found four times in the Qur’ān in its verbal form) principally means to contemplate one verse after another (al-ta’ammul fī al-āyāh
verses on bayān al-Qur‘ān (explanation of the Qur’an) by God,23 a Qur’anic verse that warns those who tore the Qur’an into pieces,24 some narrated traditions in which practices of cross-referential Qur’an interpretation by the Prophet (and also the Infallible Imams [for Shi’is], the Companions and the Successors) are found,25 and the Companions’ and the Successors’ statement that the Qur’anic parts interpret one another,26 are thought to be indicating the high value of interpreting the Qur’an with the Qur’an. It is implicitly assumed that the Qur’an itself contains a manual on how its users could work it out,‘aqīb al-ayah), and its relationship with lā ikhtilāf fī al-Qur‘ān serves as the foundation for a more authentic approach to the Qur’an – that is Qur’an interpretation based on the Qur’an itself. See al-Tabātabā’ī, al-Mizān, V, 19-21. Al-Buraydī also highlights tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān as a door to tadburr. See al-Buraydī, “Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān,” 16.


25Those narrated traditions, particularly the ones reported from the Prophet, are in fact limited in number. There have been only two clear examples narrated from the Prophet mentioned by al-Suyūṭī while listing interpretations narrated from the Prophet in the last part of al-Itqān. The first is al-An‘ām [6]:82 which is explained by Luqman [31]:13, and the second is Ibrāhīm [14]:17 which is explained by Muhammad [40]:15 and al-Kahf [18]:29. (See al-Suyūṭī, al-Itqān, IV, 488-534). Other scholars indicate and give some more examples though. (See for instance al-Buraydī, “Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān,” 23-6). Albeit limited, these traditions are regarded as giving significant justification for Qur’an interpretation by reference to the Qur’an.

26The significance of interpreting a Qur’anic part by reference to another part is famously credited to ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Ibn ‘Abbās. Imam ‘Ali is for instance reported to say (in Nāhī al-Balāghah) that the Qur’an yantiq ba‘dahu ba‘dan wa yashhadu ba‘dahu ba‘dan (in another version, yantiq ba‘dahu bi ba‘da wa yashhadu ba‘dahu ‘alā ba‘da) speak for one another and testify to one another). The use of ‘Ali’s sayings to justify this approach could for instance be seen in al-Ṭabātabā’ī, al-Mizān, I, 15. Ibn ‘Abbās is reported to have a similar say, that the Qur’an yushbihu ba‘dahu ba‘dan wa yuraddu ba‘dahu ila ba‘d is comparable to one another and cross-referred to one another. A similar tradition is reported from a successor, Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr. See al-Suyūṭī, al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma‘thūr (Cairo: Markaz Hajr li al-Buḥūth wa al-Dirāsāt al-‘Arabiyah wa al-Islāmiyah, 2003), XII, 648. Another similar tradition (inna al-Qur‘ān layuṣaddiqu ba‘dahu ba‘dan) is also reportedly attributed to the Prophet in a Shi‘a source, ‘Alī al-Muttaqī’s Kanz al-‘Ummāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-A‘fāl, vol. 1, hadith no. 2861, as quoted by al-Ḥasan, Manāḥīj Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān, 41; and al-Ḥasan, al-Manhaj al-Tafsīrī, 35. A comparable tradition is also reported from Imam al-Ba‘qir (in Bihār al-Anwār) that there is nothing in the Qur’an except it has evidence from Allah in His book itself – evidence that people do not know. See al-Ḥasan, al-Manhaj al-Tafsīrī, 41.
and that the Prophet to whom it was revealed and who had the duty to explain it, as well as other ‘teachers of the Qur’an’ among the first audience of the Qur’an (as well as their great disciples) and the descendants of the Prophet or the Ahl al-Bayt, realized this existing manual and gave the examples of how to apply it.

The fourth assumption is that a cross-referential/intertextual approach is most appropriate for the distinctive nature of the Qur’anic structure/style itself. Unlike other texts, most of the time, the Qur’an addresses a certain topic not in a single place, but in numerous places – in different verses, in different chapters. In a particular place, a topic might be dealt with very briefly or in more general terms, while in another place, it might be much expounded or in more specific terms. For an interpreter to bring together all verses dealing with a given subject at first is, therefore, a must. Without taking this step, an interpreter is more likely to come up with incorrect conclusions, or at least find difficulties to get “a clear picture of the scope of the Qur’an’s treatment” of the issue at hand. What-so-called a synthetic approach to interpreting the Qur’an is regarded as the only way to provide “a genuine taste of the Qur’an.” On the other hand, an interpreter should also take into account the place of each verse and its connectedness with surrounding verses, and even with the whole surah where it exists, in order not to forget its textual/literary context, the harmony (munāsabah) between verses, and the thematic and structural unity of a surah (elaborated in such concepts as nazm, mihwar, ‘amīd, wihdat al-nasāq, gharaḍ and ruḥ al-tarkīb).

27 For instance Abdel Haleem, Understanding the Qur’an, chapter 12; Muhammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabi, al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 2000), I, 31.

28 This assumption is clearly indicated in Ṣaḥḥ al-Khaṭībī, Tārīq al-Darāsīn, 150-3, and al-Buraydī, “Tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān,” 16. Coming up with incorrect conclusions of the teachings of the Qur’an due to a lack of cross-referential approaches, has been seen – as Profesor Sukron Kamil and Profesor Bambang Pranowo ever reminded me during my work-in-progress exams – as becoming one of the causes of a major problem of today’s world since the so-called terrorists and radicals (as well as Islam haters) exploit some verses of the Qur’an at the expense of neglecting other verses. In this lies the social significance of tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān.


31 In practice, tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān might be, however, solely based either on collecting all relevant verses from all surahs to rely on the concept of the unity of the Qur’an (al-wīḥdhah al-Qur’ānīyah) and wuyūḥ wa nāṣa‘ir, or on examining
assumption seems to see a task of Qur’an interpretation as similar to working out a puzzle – that is why the best way to solve it is to take all available hints or clues into account. These clues might be very distant, being scattered in other surahs, and might be very close, hiding in a set of surrounding verses or in the verse under scrutiny itself.

Another assumption behind the claim that referring to the Qur’an is the best way to interpret it, is that an interpreter might be more able to avoid projecting any kind of sectarian bias and extra-Qur’anic ideas into Qur’an interpretation in that way. This approach enables us to let the Qur’an serve as a ‘judge’ (ḥākim) and not as something that is being judged (mahkūm) by extra-Qur’anic ideas. Such an approach might bring the interpreter to ‘the judgement of the Qur’an’ (ḥukm al-Qur’ān) over any existing exegetical opinion, and even to the originally intended meanings (al-ma‘āni al-aṣīlah) of the Qur’anic words and the originally intended Qur’anic principles (al-mabādi’ al-Qur’āniyyah al-aṣīlah). Moreover, it might also lead them to realize the rhetorical subtleties of the Qur’an. It seems to be assumed that interpreters would be able to minimize their bias if they are open to the Qur’an and thereby try to discover the intended meaning of its words. Even more than that, particularly when it is assumed that there is only one intended meaning, approaching Qur’anic verses in light of their parallels is believed to potentially close the door of difference and confrontation among sectarian groups. Adoption of such an

approach is supposed to allow the Qur’an serve as the criterion and deciding force on the confronting views.\textsuperscript{35}

Table 1.1. The Logic behind \textit{Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Illustrating Statement</th>
<th>Proponents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certainty/Validity</td>
<td>“God (the author) knows best. Reliance on His Speech is therefore the best possible way.”</td>
<td>al-Shanqīṭī, al-Ṣābūnī, al-Khālīfī, al-Ṭayyār</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiency</td>
<td>“The Qur’ān does not depend on anything external to it. Letting it speak allows it to be the best guide to itself.”</td>
<td>al-Ṭabātābī’ī, al-Farāhī, al-Ḥaydārī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy</td>
<td>“The method is sanctioned by the Qur’ān, the Prophet and the early Muslim generation.”</td>
<td>al-Ṭabātābī’ī, al-Ḥaydārī, Barlas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriateness</td>
<td>“The structure of the Qur’ān demands a cross-referential approach.”</td>
<td>al-Farāhī, Islāhī, Rahman, Abdel Haleem, al-Khālīfī, al-Alwānī, Saeed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With these assumptions, \textit{tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān} is a good place from where one could see what might differentiate an objectivist approach to a text from non-objectivist approaches, and how partiality could be avoided or minimized through, or otherwise creep into or interrupt, a pursuit of objectivity and an openness to the text.

There has been a continuous debate on whether or not finding or discovering the (most) objective meaning of a text is possible. As I would elaborate in the next chapter, some scholars believe in the

possibility, while others argue for subjectivity and partiality of any interpretation. Against the backdrop of this debate, examining how a basically textual connectivity-based approach to the Qur’an is applied by different interpreters of the Qur’an, I believe, might shed light on how the issue of ‘objectivity versus subjectivity’ in Qur’an interpretation – or any interpretation more broadly – could or should be better understood.

So far there have been a number of voluminous modern exegeses, which can be considered to be relying very much upon the methodology of tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an. They include: 1) Adwā’ al-Bayān by Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shanqīṭī; 2) al-Miṣān by Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī; 3) Ṭadabbur-i-Qur’an (an Urdu tafsir) by Amin Aḥsan Iṣlahī; and 4) al-Furqān by Muḥammad al-Ṣādiqī (al-Tihrānī). While tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an is usually an important element in a thematic Qur’an interpretation, the availability of these works makes such a research objective more viable. Adwā’ al-Bayān and al-Miṣān in particular, as I would detail the reasons later on, are of tremendous importance and thereby among the most appropriate tafsirs worthy of a closer look.

B. Questions and Objectives

If interpreting the Qur’an by reference to the Qur’an is the best or the most valid way of interpretation, should every interpretation based on this approach be necessarily accepted? The answer is (rather surprisingly) “no” according to many scholars. Why?

If interpreting the Qur’an by reference to the Qur’an is the most perfect interpretive method, does it alone suffice to understand most parts of the Qur’an? As implied by many scholars, the answer is

36 As al-Muṭayrī repeatedly stresses and proves in his work, tafsīr al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an could be correct and could be wrong, so it is not necessarily acceptable (lā yulzamu qabūluhū). Read Muḥsin Hāmid al-Muṭayrī, Tafsīr al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an: Taṣil wa Taqwīm (Riyad: Dār al-Tadmuriyyah, 1432/2011). Al-Buraydī is also of the opinion that the assertion that tafsīr al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an is the most valid way of interpretation does not mean that any interpretation derived from this method is acceptable since they are varied in terms of strength and might be put forward by people of the innovations (ahl al-bida’). See al-Buraydī, “Tafsīr al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an,” 18, 20-2. See also al-Tayyār, Fūṣūl, 22, 53; al-Tayyār, “Maṣādir al-Tafsīr (1),” 11; M. Quraisht Shihab, Kaidah Tafsir: Syarat, Ketentuan, dan Aturan yang Patut Anda Ketahui dalam Memahami Ayat-Ayat al-Qur’an (Tangerang Selatan: Lentera Hati, 2013), 352-3.
again “no” – unless reference to non-Qur’anic texts is considered as something required by the Qur’an itself.37 Why?

The reason would be primarily related to the fact that to interpret the Qur’an with the help of the Qur’an, most of the time, requires \textit{ijtihād} (scholarly creative, deep endeavour).38 The belief that the Qur’an is self-explanatory implies that there are intra-Qur’anic connections and parallels, i.e. internal links (\textit{irtibāt}) between Qur’anic passages in different parts – either close or distant. However, those links are not there ready for interpreters to immediately ponder on – rather for interpreters to discover at the first place. That is why to ‘find’ those links, in most cases, needs intellectual enterprise. Those connections would ‘emerge’ after the reader demands herself to read and re-read various parts of the Qur’an and decides to choose certain parts to navigate her understanding of a given passage. Alternatively, those connections might appear in a reader’s mind soon after her reading of a given verse due to her accumulated knowledge. Accordingly, interpreters might have different answers for ‘which verses interpret which verses’, before they might differ in understanding what the connection between those verses implies.

While \textit{ijtihād} is often meant to achieve correct understanding of the text, it might give rise to differences in opinion and might be inaccurate,39 given that there are so many variables deemed relevant to the interpretation of any Qur’anic passage. This means that differences and inaccuracies might also apply in the interpretation of the Qur’an with the Qur’an. In other words, this means that intra-Qur’anic connections – a common result of the application of the method – are only one among areas potentially contested by different interpreters, by different Muslim groups, or by different schools of thought.40

37 As Mattson notices, while “almost every scholar will say that the best \textit{tafsīr} of the Qur’an is the Qur’an itself... We cannot help but rely on external sources ... to understand the very meaning of the words of the Qur’an,” and “even if we took only the verses of the Qur’an as a source of Islamic norms, we would still be left with the difficulty of trying to reconcile apparently conflicting commands and prohibitions.” See Ingrid Mattson, \textit{The Story of the Qur’an}, 199-200. In Saeed’s words, “... there may be significant gaps. Exegetes of the Qur’an usually go to external sources to fill in these gaps.” Saeed, “Contextualizing,” 48.

38 Cf. Tāhir Mahmūd, \textit{Asbāb al-Khata’}, 96.


40 Read my previous work, “Intra-Quranic Connections in Sunni and Shi’i Tafsirs: A Meeting Point or Another Area of Contestation?” \textit{Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies} 3, no. 1 (June 2013): 73-95.
Indeed, it may not be difficult to find a debate or disagreement concerning a certain issue in which different scholars commonly use evidence from *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi al-Qurʾān.*

Hence, not to our surprise, every interpretation claimed to be based on *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi al-Qurʾān* would not be necessarily accepted as valid. Some would not accept on the basis of supposed more holistic reading of the Qurʾān, while others may not accept on the ground of supposed insufficiency of that method without referring to, for instance, reliable narrated traditions of the Prophet and linguistic analysis. One question remains: could interpreters reach an agreement, or at least arrive at very close positions, when they read the Qurʾān in equally more holistic fashion (possibly with certain rigorous standards) and simultaneously refer to valid traditions and established linguistic rules?

While to provide a convincing answer to this question requires a thorough study – and that is what this study is partly for, the answer – either yes or no – would require us to know more what is actually in play in interpreters’ *ijtihād* while seeking to interpret the Qurʾān with the Qurʾān. Is it merely led by unavoidable preconception? Could it – as expected – be purely driven by continuous pursuit of objectivity? Does it entail a set of subjective choices? Is there an interplay between a kind of openness to the text and a kind of faithfulness to one’s preconceived notion in that *ijtihād*? Finally, could *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi al-Qurʾān* minimize, or otherwise facilitate, an interpreter’s bias?

Since the assertion of the superiority of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi al-Qurʾān* is – as we notice earlier – largely based on the perceived certainty, validity and objectivity that it could secure, one might expect that it must be – at least to a certain degree – a way from which an interpreter of the Qurʾān could seek help to minimize or avoid biased projections onto the text – an adequate hermeneutical method by which subjectivity is put aside. Indeed, this method has often been considered to be the first trusted criterion to weigh and select the best among available opinions or possible meanings regarding a certain passage of the Qurʾān. It means that an opinion is regarded as most

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41 For instance there has been a debate among scholars concerning what the term *al-Kitāb* mentioned in al-An’ām [6]:38 (*... mā fīratnā fī al-kitāb min shay’...*) refers to. Some argue it means the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz*) based on al-An’ām [6]:59 and Hūd [11]:6, while others argue it means the Qurʾān based on Qurʾānic statements that the Qurʾān is *tibyān* and *tafsīl* to everything.

convincing when it is truly supported by, or properly derived from, interpretation of the Qur’an by the Qur’an. But, does this mean that, when appropriately pursued through deep *ijtihād*, it can be a method that leads an interpreter away from any creeping ideological coloration or theological preference?

One way to answer this question is by taking a closer look at commentaries of the Qur’an heavily relying on the method by highly respected exegetes from different theological backgrounds. This is what this study is mainly devoted to. My primary focus would be on questioning whether or not the way interpreters apply *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*, or more specifically their choice on Qur’anic parts they consult with while interpreting a particular verse, is dictated by their theological/ideological outlook – illustrating the influence of inter-sectarian dynamics.

After surveying earlier relevant studies, my choice is to pay a closer look at the practice of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* in two modern commentaries written by two exegetes from different theological schools, i.e. al-Shanqīṭī’s *Adwa’ al-Bayān* and al-Ṭabarānī’s *al-Mīzān*.

To be clear, the main question this study deals with is: to what extent does tafsīr of the Qur’an by the Qur’an, particularly when pursued in certain rigorous standards, as presented in Qur’anic commentaries heavily relying on it, can be colored by sectarian tendencies?

Seeking to answer the major question of this research by looking at two modern tafsirs, i.e. *al-Mīzān* by al-Ṭabarānī and *Adwa’ al-Bayān* by al-Shanqīṭī, I would deal with some important minor questions with regard to these two commentaries. The answer of each question is needed for making an argument that answers the main question. These questions are:

1. To what extent do *al-Mīzān* and *Adwa’ al-Bayān* contain the in-depth application of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*?
2. How does the application of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* in both tafsirs reflect the theological school of their respective author (Shi‘ism in the case of *al-Mīzān*, and Sunnism in the case of *Adwa’ al-Bayān*)?

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43 As a principle of assessment (*qā‘idat al-tarjiḥ*) says, “The opinion supported by Qur’anic verses is prioritized than the one not supported (*al-qawl alladhi tu‘ayyiduhu āyāt qur‘āniyyah muqaddam ‘alā mā ‘udima dhālika*.” See al-Ḥarbi, *Qawā‘id al-Tarjiḥ*, 1, 312.
3. What are choices of ideas by which each author navigates the text, which can explain the absence or otherwise the interruption of Shi‘ism in the application of *tafṣīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān* in *al-Mīzān*, and Sunnism in the application of *tafṣīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān* in *Adwā‘ al-Bayān*?

Relevant to the questions raised, the objectives of this study are:

1. To measure the level of holisticness of interpretation in *al-Mīzān* and *Adwā‘ al-Bayān*, particularly with regard to the interpretation of Qur‘ānic verses that have appeared in the arguments between Muslim groups.
2. To notice any interruption of Shi‘ism/Sunnism in the practice of *tafṣīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān* in both tafsirs.
3. To identify ideas chosen by al-Shanqīṭī and al-Ṭabāṭābā’ī to navigate the text.

C. Earlier Relevant Studies

It might be noticeable that in the last few years, Western academics have paid much attention to holistic, intratextual and coherence-related approaches to the Qur‘ān.\(^4^4\) Nevertheless, while those approaches are closely related to, and might be firmly associated with and even arguably included in, *tafṣīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān* (at least in its broader sense), their studies hardly frame those approaches as (part of) *tafṣīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān* or its development. One of the reasons is perhaps related to the fact, Islam Dayeh already noted, that “most (Western) contemporary scholars (still) assume” that the Qur‘ānic text is “a patchwork of miscellaneous texts,” rather than “a

This might explain that a great deal of recent Qur’anic studies in the West seem to have been more interested in the structure of the Qur’an (either to argue that it is disjointed or that it is coherent), rather than interpretive approaches to the Qur’an that are based on certain assumptions regarding that very structure. As far as such interpretive approaches are concerned, Andrew Rippin’s assertion in his recent essay in *Al-Bayān* journal is, however, much relevant to this study. Rippin, who is regarded as an advocate of literary analysis, argues that “an approach that looks at large literary units ... while making claims to objectivity, remains as subjective as any other approach that looks at smaller units of text.” Such an approach, he emphasizes, needs to be explained on the basis of the reader’s experience (reader response theory). However, Rippin is not concerned with explaining how this subjectivity evidently affects the result of such an act of reading – a room this study seeks to explore.

On the other hand, there have been a number of studies by non-Western authors on *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* published quite recently. A good introduction to this topic is made by ʿAḥmad al-Buraydī in his essay, “Tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān: Dirāsah Ta’ṣīliyyah,” published in the *Majallat Maʿhad al-Imām al-Shāṭibī li al-Dirāsāt al-Qurāniyyah* (1427 AH). While it covers a number of issues, his essay is basically an introduction.

A much more thorough study is Muhṣin al-Muṭayrī’s *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān: Taṣīl wa Taqwīm* (2011), initially the author’s dissertation entitled “al-Khaṭaʿ fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān.” His study focuses on elucidating the basic principles of a true *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*, providing normative judgment for wrong practices and inaccurate claims of the method, as well as identifying the causes of mistakes and flaws. In a way, al-Muṭayrī’s study in itself is an initial proof that the internal relationship within the Qur’an could possibly be another point of contention among Muslims. He himself identifies ‘wrong belief’ (*al-khaṭaʿ fī al-iʿtiqād*) and ‘fanaticism’ (*al-ta’assub*) as two of the factors leading to invalid *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*. While there is hardly an entire unanimity among Muslims over ‘which Muslim belief is wrong’ and ‘the limit of fanaticism’, this

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47Rippin, “Contemporary Scholarly Understandings of Qur’anic Coherence.”
conclusion might invite us to further examine *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* by respected exegetes from different major theological schools.

Even though there might be intersections in several areas between al-Muṭayrī’s study and that of mine, my study is significantly different. While al-Muṭayrī’s focus is on providing guidelines to distinguish between right and wrong practices of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*, my focus would be on identifying factors that lead celebrated exegetes of the Qur’an to different and differing conclusions although they commonly interpret the Qur’an with the help of the Qur’an itself so as to recognize any possible sectarian color in their tafsirs – to be more precise their *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*. While his study seems to be more concerned with *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* supporting ‘different’ beliefs and views, i.e. the ones different from those of mainstream Muslims, my study is to be more focused on examples of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* in famed Qur’anic commentaries written by highly respected exegetes from different theological backgrounds.

I have started to pay much attention to such comparative examples in my previous work, “Intra-Quranic Connections in Sunni and Shi‘i Tafsirs: A Meeting Point or Another Area of Contestation?” published in the *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* (2013). In this article, I use al-Shanqīṭī’s and al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s interpretation of *ahl al-bayt* as a main case in point. Having identified a number of factors that set their arguments apart, this article is a preliminary of a more comprehensive study on how intra-Qur’anic connections become a potentially contested area for different scholars and different schools of thought. While the case of *ahl al-bayt* debate, as well as al-Shanqīṭī’s and al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s exegeses – as I would explain later on – remain important to be included in this study, I revisit some of the arguments I point out in the essay.

Another relevant essay I have written is “*Aḍwā’ al-Bayān* Karya al-Shanqīṭī Sebagai Kitab *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*,” published in the *Journal of Qur’ān and Ḥadīth Studies* (2013) where I argue that al-Shanqīṭī’s *Aḍwā’ al-Bayān* is the Qur’anic commentary most relying on *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*. While this argument is also shared by some other scholars, it seems that the quantitative approach I take in comparing a number of Qur’anic commentaries in terms of their contribution to *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* and showing the level of al-Shanqīṭī’s reliance on the methodology, still

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provides rooms for advancement of the argument and needs a complementary qualitative approach. However, the argument helps me identify most relevant Qur’anic commentaries heavily relying on the methodology for the sake of this present study.

Another work also helpful for this identification is Louis Abraham Medoff’s dissertation, “Ijtihad and Renewal in Qur’anic Hermeneutics: An Analysis on Muhammad Ḥusayn Ṭabātabā’ī’s al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān,” (University of California, Berkeley, 2007). Despite its relative conciseness, this dissertation provides a separate chapter to strongly argue that al-Mīzān’s core methodology is tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān. It even argues that tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān in al-Mīzān is much more noticeable, ‘real’ and intensive than that in most (if not all) of preceding Qur’anic exegeses. While some important, relevant exegeses and exegetes are discussed in Medoff’s work to support the argument, it makes no mention of al-Shanqīṭī’s tafsīr at all.

Other studies which define tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān in a rather loose way might be helpful to elucidate the scholarly use of the term, but are less relevant to the main question of this study. One of the examples is Syed Rizwan Zamir’s article, “‘Tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi’l Qur’ān’: The Hermeneutics of Imitation and ‘Adab’ in Ibn ‘Arabi’s Interpretation of the Qur’an” published in Islamic Studies (2011), which argues that Ibn ‘Arabi’s writings – where he intends to imitate the Qur’an – might be regarded as “a unique example of ‘interpreting the Qur’an through the Qur’an itself’”.

Having reviewed recent studies on tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān and relevant studies that might be helpful for a study on the topic, now I would briefly review some recent studies that focus on linking the methodology of Qur’an interpretation and its interpreter’s possible ideological/sectarian tendency. Apart from my own study, “Intra-Quranic Connections in Sunni and Shi‘i Tafsirs,” and al-Muṭṭāyarī’s book, Tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān, both of which are already mentioned and respectively show how a perceived-highly objective approach might not settle a theological dispute and how that approach might be ill-implemented because of a sectarian tendency, studies of Abdul Rahim Afaki and Musolli share a similar viewpoint. Musolli reveals how Sunni ideology usurps Ibn ‘Ashūr’s tafsīr and Shi‘i ideology usurps al-Ṭabātabā’ī’s tafsīr in his study, “Hegemoni Ideologi dalam Penafsiran al-Qur’an: Studi Tafsir Syiah al-Mīzān dan Tafsir Sunni al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr,” a Ph.D. thesis at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (2014). Musolli’s interest is to
show how a sectarian ideology has an impact on the way an interpreter deals with the interpretation of a given Qur’anic verse, inspiring him what to do and not to do. However, Musolli barely makes an effort to see al-Ṭabâtabâ’ī’s and Ibn ʿĀshūr’s quasi-objectivism from their own perspective, putting a lack of balance in his study.

Afaki, meanwhile, shows the highly probable interruption of scholastic subjectivism in the midst of extreme linguistic objectivism relying on linguistic rules, integral relationship between the verses (coherence), and ʿilm al-bayān (art of achieving the richness and breadth of meaning) in his study on “Zamakhsharī’s Hermeneutical Approach to the Qurʾān” published in Transcendent Philosophy (2008). Afaki shows how a high commitment to linguisticity and coherence that is complemented by a hard effort to single the meaning out of several plausible statements of it, might not lower the degree of probability of the subjectivist imposition of meaning based on Muʿtazilite beliefs in the case of al-Zamakhsharī’s al-Kashshāf.49 As is the case with Musolli’s study, Afaki’s study hardly deals with ʿtafsīr al-Qurʾān bi al-Qurʾān, leaving a room for my own study to find a comparable subjectivist imposition in the rigorous application of this approach.

D. Methodology

1. Object of Research

In an effort to elucidate the relationship between the application of a method considered to be an objective approach, that is the method of interpreting the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān, and the theological background of scholars interpreting the Qurʾān, this study would examine well-known Qurʾānic commentaries relatively more dependent upon the method compared to most of works in the genre, which are authored by distinguished scholars from different major theological schools. This study primarily takes the cases of two modern Qurʾānic exegeses, which – I would argue – have not only been among the most intensive full-scale sequential tafsirs in terms of the application of the method of interpreting the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān to date, but also written by two ʿallāmahs of the same period coming from very different theological schools each of which has been largely

49 Afaki’s conclusion is similar to that of Ahmad Thib Raya’s study on al-Zamakhsharī’s application of ʿilm al-bayān in al-Kashshāf. See Ahmad Thib Raya, Rasionalitas Bahasa Al-Qur’an: Upaya Menafsirkan Al-Qur’an dengan Pendekatan Kebahasaan (Jakarta: Fikra, 2006).

Both tafsirs meet the following criteria needed to achieve the objective of this study. First of all, both tafsirs enjoy a high degree of acceptance and appreciation – the ones needed to explore the extent to which an objectivist approach to the Qur’an is (in)vulnerable to the influence of theological background. *Al-Mizān*, taking nearly 20 years to complete (from 1954 to 1972)⁵² and comprising 20 volumes, is said to be “one of the best interpretative works ever presented, not only in

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⁵⁰ For a recent adequate account on his biography, see Louis Abraham Medoff, “*Ijtihād* and Renewal in Qur’anic Hermeneutics: An Analysis on Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā‘ī’s *al-Mizān fi Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān*,” a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of California, Berkeley (2007), chapter one. Another work on his biography, on which Medoff’s account is in fact mainly based, is Hamid Algar, “Allāma Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā‘ī: Philosopher, Exegete, and Gnostic,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 17, no. 3 (2006): 326-51. Al-Ṭabāṭabā‘ī was born in Shahdabad (near Tabriz, Azerbaijan, northern part of today’s Iran) in 1904, Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā‘ī (together with his brother, Muḥammad Ḥasan) journeyed to Najaf (a centre of Islamic learning in Iraq) in 1925, studying under great scholars of the time, such as Miṟẓā Ḥusayn al-Nā‘īnī (*fiqh*), Abū al-Ḥasan al-Isfahānī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Kūmpānī, ‘Abbas al-Qummi (*ḥadīth*), Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Bādkūbā‘ī (philosophy, for six years), and Miṟẓā ‘Alī al-Ṭabāṭabā‘ī (known as ‘Allāmah Qādī, in *irtīān* and tafsīr). After a decade of study in Najaf, he returned to Tabriz, and then left it in 1946 to reside in Qum, teaching in its *ḥawzah*. Among his renowned students are ‘Abd Allāh al-Jawādī al-‘Amulī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shāhīd al-‘Aṣudī, Ḥasan Ḥasan al-Aḥmadī, and Kamāl al-Ḥaydārī. He passed away there in 1981. Al-Ṭabāṭabā‘ī wrote a large number of works mostly related to philosophy.

⁵¹ For a recent account on his biography, see my essay, “*Adwā‘ al-Bayān Karya al-Shanqīṭī Sebagai Kitab Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān*,” *Journal of Qur‘ān and Hadith Studies* 2, no. 2 (2013): 249. Al-Shanqīṭī was born in Shanqīt (Chinguetti), Mauritania, in 1907, al-Shanqīṭī’s longer name is Muḥammad al-‘Amin ibn Muḥammad al-Mukhtār ibn ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jakānī al-Shanqīṭī. He studied Islamic disciplines under some Mauritanian great scholars, such as Ahmad al-Afram ibn Muḥammad al-Mukhtār (in tafsīr) and Ahmad ibn Muḥammad Maḥmūd ibn ‘Umar (in *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *fiqh*). In his country, al-Shanqīṭī became a teacher, a judge and a muftī. In 1948, he moved to Saudi (with his brother, Muḥammad al-Mukhtār), teaching in Masjid al-Nabawī and then in several universities. While teaching in Madinah, many students followed his lectures, among them are: ‘Abd al-‘Aẓīz ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Bāz, Bakr Abū Zayd, ‘Aḥḥay Muḥammad Sālim, and Muḥammad Sāliḥ al-‘Uthaymīn. Al-Shanqīṭī passed away in Mecca in 1974. He wrote many books, most of them related to tafsīr, *‘uṣūl al-Qur‘ān* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*.

Shi‘ism but throughout the Muslim world," and even “the best tafsir in the history of Islam," that might “take 200 years for it to be fully appreciated.” Similarly, *Aḍwā’ al-Bayān*, taking also 20 years to complete (finished by al-Shanqīṭī in 1966) and comprising 9 volumes, is said to be “one of the best composed tafsirs in the past and the present.” It is safe to say that both tafsirs are widely circulated and studied. Each has been printed in different layouts by a number of publishers, translated into non-Arabic languages, uploaded online, and frequently researched by academics.

Secondly, both tafsirs have been equally argued to be among the works which rely most on tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an. It has been argued that one of the strengths of *Aḍwā’ al-Bayān* lies on its richness of *tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān*. *Aḍwā’ al-Bayān* is even regarded as the most popular book employing the method, and the best work on *tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān*. Moreover, I have argued elsewhere that *Aḍwā’ al-Bayān* is more intensive than other renowned tafsirs in terms of the application of tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an. An abridged version of the work in nearly 1500 pages, which removes al-Shanqīṭī’s discussions on legal issues, entitled *Tafsi>r al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān min Aḍwā’ al-Bayān*, edited by Sayyid Muḥammad Sādātī al-Shanqīṭī, might suffice to illustrate the richness

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54See Medoff, “*IJTIHĀD and Renewal*,” ii.

55See Medoff, “*IJTIHĀD and Renewal*,” ii.

56It should be noted that initially *Aḍwā’ al-Bayān* only consisted of seven volumes, ending with Sūrat al-Mu‘ājdilah. It is ‘Aṭīyah Muḥammad Sālīm, a disciple of al-Shanqīṭī, who commented on the rest chapters based on the latter’s methodology to add the last two volumes.


of Adwa’ al-Bayān in terms of tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an.61 Meanwhile, with respect to al-Mīzān, al-Awšī highlights tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān as its fundamental method (al-manhaj al-asās).62 In al-Mīzān, as Algar remarks, the Qur’an is “enabled to speak for itself, without the concepts, concerns and terminology of the various traditional disciplines being imposed upon it.”63 Medoff has even argued that prior to al-Mīzān, there was no Qur’ānic commentary seriously applying the method of tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān – not even tafsirs of Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Kathīr, al-Rāzī, and Shi’ī exegetes.64 Al-Mīzān is moreover regarded as representing “madrasat tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān” (the school of interpretation of the Qur’an by the Qur’an).65 All of these arguments affirm the stated intention of the authors of Adwa’ al-Bayān and al-Mīzān.66

Thirdly, both tafsirs are written by scholars each of whom is highly respected in a major theological school – Sunni and Shi’ī respectively. Al-Shanqīṭī is, for instance, regarded as the leader of exegetes (imām al-mufassirīn) in the 14th century (AH).67 Al-Ṭabāṭābā’ī, meanwhile, is considered to be a “consummate mujtahid”,68 who was at once one of the greatest of Qur’ānic commentators, a leading contemporary Islamic philosopher, and a

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68Medoff, “Ijtihād and Renewal,” chapter one.
gnostic. After all, both scholars are extremely prolific authors. As for their schools, Sunni is by far the majority within Islam, while Shi’a is the second largest. Al-Shanqīṭī might represent Salafism, a major current within Sunni, while al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī represents Twelver Shi’a, by far the majority within Shi’a.

By mainly addressing these two tafsirs, it does not mean that other tafsirs are thoroughly neglected in the study. In fact, a great number of tafsirs are also surveyed, particularly the ones relevant to the discussion of a certain issue regarding ṭafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān and/or the influence of Sunnism and Shi‘ism in tafsirs.

2. Approach and Framework

As indicated earlier, this study then would focus on the way the methodology of interpreting the Qur’an by the Qur’an is applied in each of the two tafsirs. It means that this study would not pay much attention to considerable parts of Ḍawwār al-Ṭayyān and al-Mīzān which do not represent their authors’ application of ṭafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān. In Ḍawwār al-Ṭayyān, one could find a great deal of discussion on āḥkām (religious laws) in addition to, of course, various issues and various complementary exegetical methods taking much smaller portion of the book, while in al-Mīzān, one could repeatedly find discussion on traditions, philosophy and other issues complementing the bayān (exposition) section which immediately follows a group of verses being commented and serve as the main part of this tafsir where ṭafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān is intensely demonstrated. Unless I find relevant to the application of the method, I would not take a close look at these parts of both tafsirs.

As also implied earlier, this study would give much more specific attention to the way a certain part of the Qur’an is linked with another. The reason is that linking Qur’anic parts is the most

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70 In addition to Ḍawwār al-Ṭayyān, al-Shanqīṭī wrote more than a dozen of works, mainly on Qur’anic sciences, tafsir, and uṣūl al-fiqh. Among them are: Daft al-Īdārāt ‘an Āyat al-Kitāb, Man’ Jawāz al-Majāz fi al-Munazzal li al-Ta’abbud wa al-Ijāz, Manhaj wa Dirāsāt li Āyat al-Asmā’ wa al-Ṣīḥāt, al-Iślām Dīn Kāmil, Mudhakkirāt fi Uṣūl al-Fiqh, al-Maṣāliḥ al-Mursalah, Manhaj al-Tashīrī al-Iṣlāmī wa Ḥikmatuhu, Natīr al-Wurūd, Adāb al-Baḥth wa al-Munāzarah, and Rihlat al-Haqq. Meanwhile, al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī also wrote a large number of works on a variety of topics in Persian and Arabic. In addition to al-Mīzān, he also wrote: Uṣūl-i Falsafay-i Riʿālīsm, Badāyiʿ al-Ḥikam, Nahāyat al-Ḥikam, Shīʿah dar Iṣlām, and Qur’ān dar Iṣlām.
fundamental task of any interpreter employing tafsir of the Qur’an by
the Qur’an – irrespective of their theoretical assumptions they have in
applying it. By doing so, this study could focus more on the question
of methodology and not be too concentrated on the conclusions al-
Ṭabāṭaba’ī and al-Shanqīṭī make based on their methodology – even
though both are interrelated and the latter is also important in the
context of this study. This would help us notice any possibility of the
methodology of tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān being used in a certain
fashion in both tafsirs only to support a particular sectarian doctrine.
Accordingly, we could identify any gap in the application of this
methodology that is more vulnerable to interpreters’ subjectivity.

Given the length of both works under scrutiny, where can we
start? Considering the objective of this study, I would start with, and
focus on, Qur’anic verses often invoked in Sunni-Shi’i dialectics.
While not all central points of dissent between (mainstream) Sunni
and (mainstream) Shi’a are closely related to Qur’an interpretation,
from a number of previous studies one could identify those oft-cited
verses most of which deal with the following topics:

1) The virtue and importance of utmost religious authorities,
either the People of the House (Ahl al-Bayt) or the
Companions, as well as the wives of the Prophet;
2) The concept of imamate (and the corresponding concept of
caliphate);
3) The issue of temporary marriage (mut’ah, plural form:
muta’) – and permanent marriage consequently;
4) The issue of dissimulation (taqiyyah); and
5) The issue of the return of the Imams (raj’ah).

Related to the first topic, i.e. the virtue and significance of
greatest religious authorities, verses that appear in the debates across
Sunni-Shi’i lines can be grouped into the following five categories of
sub-topics:

a. Ahl al-Bayt. Verses concerning it include: Q 33:33, known
as the verse of the purification (tathīr),71 Q 11:73 on

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71This verse is for instance discussed in Izza Rohman, “Intra-Quranic
Connections in Sunni and Shi’i Tafsirs: A Meeting Point or Another Area of
Contestation?” Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies 3, no. 1 (June 2013):
73-95; Arzina R. Lalani, Early Shi’i Thought: The Teachings of Imam Muhammad al-
dalam Penafsiran al-Qur’an,” 209-29; Steigerwald, “Twelver Shi’i Ta’wil,” 373; Ahlul
another *ahl al-bayt,* \(^{72}\) Q 42:23 on *mawaddah* (affection) toward *al-Qurba* (the relations);\(^ {73}\) and Q 3:61 on the contest of prayer (*mubâhalah*),\(^ {74}\) and Q 56:77-79 on the purified ones (*al-muṭlahharûn*).\(^ {75}\)

b. The Prophet’s wives. The relevant verses that appear include Q 33:6; \(^ {76}\) Q 33:30-3; \(^ {77}\) Q 24:26; \(^ {78}\) and Q 66:10-1.\(^ {79}\)

c. The Companions (as a group). The relevant verses include: Q 9:100 on *al-Sâbiqûn al-Awwalûn* and their followers;\(^ {80}\)
9:117 on the Muhajirin and the Ansar;\(^{81}\) Q 59:8-10 also on the Muhajirin and the Ansar;\(^{82}\) Q 9:19-22 on those who carried out *hijrah* and *jihād*;\(^{83}\) Q 8:72-5 also on those who carried out *hijrah* and *jihād*;\(^{84}\) Q 9:88-9 on the believers around the Prophet;\(^{85}\) Q 48:18 on the Companions involved in the Bay’at al-Riḍān in Hudaybiyah (*al-mubāyi’un tahta al-shajarah*, the allegiance-pledgers under the tree);\(^{86}\) Q 48:29 on the character of the Companions;\(^{87}\) Q 24:55 on believers and good-doers of the Prophet’s time promised with *istikhlaṣ* (succession to authority);\(^{88}\) Q 49:7-8 on the rightly guided to whom Allah has endeared the faith and has made it pleasing in their hearts;\(^{89}\) Q 2:143 on the Companions as ummatan wasatan (a justly balanced community);\(^{90}\) Q 3:110 on the Companions as *khayr ummah* (the best of peoples);\(^{91}\) Q 57:10 on the Companions promised with paradise (*al-ḥusna*);\(^{92}\) Q 2:151 on the Prophet’s education for the Companions.\(^{93}\) Verses involved

\(^{81}\) Al-Shaykh, ‘*Aqidat Ahl al-Sunnah*, 1141; Dimashqiyah, “Hiwār Hādi’,” 225.


\(^{83}\) Al-Shaykh, ‘*Aqidat Ahl al-Sunnah*, 1140.

\(^{84}\) Al-Ghāmīdī, *Hiwār Hādi’*, 13, 212-4.

\(^{85}\) Al-Shaykh, ‘*Aqidat Ahl al-Sunnah*, 1140.


\(^{93}\) Al-Ghāmīdī, *Hiwār Hādi’*, 240-1.
also include verses considered (particularly by Shi‘ites) to be pointing out the negative sides of some Companions: Q 3:104-6; Q 4:60; Q 5:54; Q 9:38-9; Q 9:74; Q 9:77; Q 9:97; Q 9:101-2; Q 47:38; Q 49:2; Q 57:16;\(^{94}\) Q 2:8-10;\(^{95}\) and Q 33:12; Q 9:45; Q 9:61; Q 3:154.\(^{96}\) Also, verses cited by Sunnis to argue for the distinction between the Companions and the hypocrites: Q 9:56; Q 9:64; Q 9:83-4; Q 9:94; Q 9:107; Q 33:60-1; Q 63:8;\(^{97}\) and that the Companions are still categorized as believers even though they were once in violent conflict: Q 49:9-10.\(^{98}\)

d. ‘Ali ibn Abi Ṭalib (individually). The relevant verses include: Q 2:207, known as the verse of the translocation;\(^{99}\) Q 13:43 on the one who has knowledge about the Book (\textit{man ‘indahu ‘ilm al-Kitab});\(^{100}\) and verses regarded as revealed concerning Imam ‘Ali, i.e. Q 2:274;\(^{101}\) Q 5:3;\(^{102}\) Q 7:46;\(^{103}\) Q 9:19;\(^{104}\) Q 13:7;\(^{105}\) Q 16:43;\(^{106}\) Q 32:18;\(^{107}\) Q 33:23;\(^{108}\) Q 69:12;\(^{109}\) Q 98:7.\(^{110}\)

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\(^{94}\) Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project Team, “A Shi‘ite View of the Companions.” Some of these verses might be argued by Sunnites as implying the positive sides of the Companions, such as Q 5:54. See for instance al-Shaykh, ‘\textit{Aqidat Ahl al-Sunnah}, 641, 1145; al-Ghāmidī, \textit{Ḥiwar Ḥadī’}, 244. Q 9:101-2 is also discussed in Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, \textit{Buku Putih Mazhab Syiah}, 53-4; and Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, \textit{Syiah Menurut Syiah}, 121-2, 138, 150.

\(^{95}\) Al-Ghāmidī, \textit{Ḥiwar Ḥadī’}, 204. Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project Team, “A Shi‘ite View of the Companions.”

\(^{96}\) Al-Ghāmidī, \textit{Ḥiwar Ḥadī’}, 106. Q 3:154 is also discussed in Ali-Agan, “Criticising the Critique,” 305.

\(^{97}\) Al-Ghāmidī, \textit{Ḥiwar Ḥadī’}, 80-1.


\(^{100}\) Kardan, \textit{Imanāt and Infallibility of Imams}.

\(^{101}\) Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, \textit{Buku Putih Mazhab Syiah}, 112.


\(^{103}\) Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, \textit{Buku Putih Mazhab Syiah}, 124.

\(^{104}\) Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, \textit{Buku Putih Mazhab Syiah}, 126.

\(^{105}\) Lalani, \textit{Early Shi‘ī Thought}, 65; Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, \textit{Buku Putih Mazhab Syiah}, 110-1.

\(^{106}\) Lalani, \textit{Early Shi‘ī Thought}, 65; Lawrence, \textit{The Qur’an}, 80; Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, \textit{Buku Putih Mazhab Syiah}, 113.

\(^{107}\) Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, \textit{Buku Putih Mazhab Syiah}, 126.

\(^{108}\) Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, \textit{Buku Putih Mazhab Syiah}, 125.
e. Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddiq (individually). The relevant verse is Q 9:40, known as the verse of the cave.¹¹¹

Concerning the second topic, i.e the issue of imamate, the relevant verses include: Q 2:124,¹¹² Q 21:73¹¹³ and Q 32:24¹¹⁴ on the existence of infallible and divinely appointed imams; Q 5:55, known as the verse of the mastership/guardianship (wałāyah);¹¹⁵ Q 5:67 on the right to leadership and imamate of ‘Aūlī ābī Tālib told by the Prophet;¹¹⁶ Q 4:59 on those who hold authority (īlū al-amr);¹¹⁷ Q 4:83

¹⁰⁹Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, Buku Puth Mazhab Syiah, 111.
¹¹⁰Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, Buku Puth Mazhab Syiah, 112-3; Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, Syiah Menurut Syiah, 274, 277; Abidin, Imamah dan Implikasinya, 107.
¹¹⁷See Steigerwald, “Twelver Shi‘i Ta’wil,” 373-4, 377, 383; Lalani, Early Shi‘i Thought, 63-4; al-Qaffārī, Usul Madhhab al-Shi‘ah, II, 670; Dimashiqiyah, “Ḥiwar Ḥādi‘,” 311; Kardan, Imamate and Infallibility of Imams, Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, Buku Puth Mazhab Syiah, 24-5; Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, Syiah Menurut Syiah, 148-9; Bin Adam, “The Concept of Khilāfah,” 247. The verse is connected by al-Bāqir also with the preceding verses, 4:51-8. See Lalani, Early Shi‘i Thought, 64-5.
also on ālū al-amr,\textsuperscript{118} Q 9:119 on the instruction to be with the truthful ones (al-ṣādiqūn);\textsuperscript{119} Q 17:71 on imams with whom people shall be called in the Hereafter;\textsuperscript{120} Q 43:28 on ‘a word remaining among the descendants of Ibrāhīm (kalimah bāqiyyah);\textsuperscript{121} Q 2:256 and 31:22 both on ‘the most trustworthy hand-hold’ (al-ʿurwah al-wuthqā) considered to refer to the ‘rope of īmāmah’;\textsuperscript{122} and Q 24:35 concerning the blessed olive tree said to symbolize the Imam.\textsuperscript{123}

Various verses regarded to refer to the imams could be also included, such as Q 3:7 on those who are firmly grounded in knowledge (al-rāṣikhūn fī al-ʿilm);\textsuperscript{124} Q 9:105 on the believers (al-muʾminūn) who can see people’s deeds;\textsuperscript{125} Q 22:77-8 on those named as ‘those who submitted’ (al-muslimīn) in the earlier scriptures;\textsuperscript{126} Q 29:49 on those endowed with knowledge (alladhīnā ʿūdū al-ʿilm);\textsuperscript{127} Q 35:32 on the chosen servants of God who have been given the Qur’an as an inherintance;\textsuperscript{128} Q 64:8 on the light of God (al-nūr);\textsuperscript{129} Q 33:6 on those of [blood] relationship (ūlū al-arhām);\textsuperscript{130} Q 3:103 on the cord of God (habl Allāh);\textsuperscript{131} Q 14:28 on the bounty of God (niʿmat Allāh);\textsuperscript{132} and Q 5:56 on the party of Allah (ḥizb Allāh) regarded as concerning the Imams and their followers.\textsuperscript{133}

Related to the issue of imamate, verses on caliphate, such as Q 2:30, Q

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{118} Lalani, \textit{Early Shiʿi Thought}, 64; Bin Adam, “The Concept of Khilāfah,”

\textsuperscript{119} Lalani, \textit{Early Shiʿi Thought}, 69; Kardan, \textit{Imamate and Infallibility of Imams}. Lawrence, \textit{The Qur’an}, 80. The verse is also argued as referring to the Companions. See al-Ghāmīdī, \textit{Hiwār Hādi'}, 220.

\textsuperscript{120} Lalani, \textit{Early Shiʿi Thought}, 69; Bin Adam, “The Concept of Khilāfah,”


\textsuperscript{122} Steigerwald, “Twelver Shiʿī Taʿwīl,” 374.

\textsuperscript{123} Steigerwald, “Twelver Shiʿī Taʿwīl” 374.


\textsuperscript{125} Lalani, \textit{Early Shiʿi Thought}, 65.

\textsuperscript{126} Lalani, \textit{Early Shiʿi Thought}, 65.

\textsuperscript{127} Lalani, \textit{Early Shiʿi Thought}, 65.

\textsuperscript{128} Lalani, \textit{Early Shiʿi Thought}, 65.

\textsuperscript{129} Lalani, \textit{Early Shiʿi Thought}, 67-8; Lawrence, \textit{The Qurʾān}, 81.

\textsuperscript{130} Lalani, \textit{Early Shiʿi Thought}, 68.

\textsuperscript{131} Lawrence, \textit{The Qurʾān}, 81.

\textsuperscript{132} Lawrence, \textit{The Qurʾān}, 81.

\textsuperscript{133} Lawrence, \textit{The Qurʾān}, 80.
\end{footnotes}
24:55 and Q 38:26,\textsuperscript{134} and verses perceived as legitimizing certain method of political leader election such as Q 6:57 and Q 3:159,\textsuperscript{135} could also be presumably included.

With regard to the third topic, i.e. the issue of temporary marriage (\textit{al-mutʿah}) and, consequently, permanent marriage, the relevant verses are mainly Q 4:24-25, but also include Q 23:5-7 or 70:29-31; Q 24:33; Q 4:3.\textsuperscript{136}

In relation to the fourth topic, i.e. the practice of dissimulation or \textit{taqiyah}, the pertinent verses are Q 3:28 and Q 16:106.\textsuperscript{137}

Concerning the last topic, i.e. the issue of the return of the Imams (\textit{rajʿah}), the relevant contested verses include Q 21:105;\textsuperscript{138} Q 27:83;\textsuperscript{139} Q 28:85;\textsuperscript{140} Q 32:21;\textsuperscript{141} Q 40:11.\textsuperscript{142}

This study is based on a look at how all of these identified verses concerning all of the topics have been interpreted, particularly in the two commentaries under scrutiny. While those verses are the ones often quoted in Sunni-Shiʿi dialectics, it should be noted that one

\textsuperscript{134}These verses are raised by al-Qurtubi to address the debate over caliphate and imamate. See his \textit{al-Jāmiʿ li Ahkām al-Qurʾān} (Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Risalah, 2006), I, 395-6. Q 2:30 is discussed in al-Haydarī, \textit{Madkhal ilā al-Imāmah}, 18, 22, 27-8. Q 24:55 is discussed in al-Ghāmī, \textit{Hiwar Ḥādīʿ}, 245-6.


\textsuperscript{138}Bayyūmī, \textit{Haqīqat al-Shīʿah}, 198.

\textsuperscript{139}Bayyūmī, \textit{Haqīqat al-Shīʿah}, 202.

\textsuperscript{140}Bayyūmī, \textit{Haqīqat al-Shīʿah}, 203-4.

\textsuperscript{141}Bayyūmī, \textit{Haqīqat al-Shīʿah}, 203.

\textsuperscript{142}Bayyūmī, \textit{Haqīqat al-Shīʿah}, 203.
could not expect that their commentaries are necessarily available, or lengthy enough, in *Adwa’ al-Bayān* and *al-Mīzān* as an exegete might pass by, or have a very short comment on, certain parts of the Qur’ān. This is common in tafsirs and is quite noticeable in *Adwa’ al-Bayān*—basically a less complete tafsir. However, one could still try to find a discussion on those topics in the commentaries of other relevant verses.

Likewise, one could not expect that available discussion on the topics in both tafsirs necessarily involve *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*. Even though the demonstration of the methodology is noticeable here and there in both tafsirs, there is no doubt that both tafsirs also resort to other methodologies and put forward additional discussions beyond the real interpretation. However, it is possible that a certain verse is cited or commented on when an interpreter discuss another relevant verse in another place—more noticeably in *Adwa’ al-Bayān*.

This study would thus focus primarily on verses (or parts of verses) that meet the following three criteria:

1) often contested by Shi‘i and Sunni scholars;
2) commented by both al-Ṭabāṭaba‘ī and al-Shanqīṭī (not just by one of them) in a way that is relevant to Sunni-Shi‘i dispute; and
3) connected by both al-Ṭabāṭaba‘ī and al-Shanqīṭī to other parts of the Qur‘an.

Therefore, while my survey is quite extensive, my analysis (in Chapter V and VI) would focus mainly on the verses that meet the abovementioned criteria. There are not less than 93 passages (verses and groups of verses) that meet the first criterion and are thereby surveyed. (See Table 1.2). However, the two other criteria have reduced the number into only seven verses: Q 33:33, 9:100, 2:124, 21:73, 3:7, 13:43, and 4:24. (See Appendix 1 to see which criterion other verses do not meet). This does not mean, though, that the interpretation of the other verses are completely neglected.

I hope it is already clear that this study would focus on analyzing how al-Shanqīṭī and al-Ṭabāṭaba‘ī apply tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān to the verses dealing with certain issues debated between Sunni and Shi‘a. In this regard, I would like to assess the depth of their application by identifying all of the types of intra-Qur‘ānic connections involved in the interpretation of a certain verse/phrase/word in each tafsir. This is based on the assumption that the more the types of intra-Qur‘ānic connections are involved, the more holistic the interpretation is. (I would elaborate more those types in Chapter III).

The degree of holisticness of an interpretation is here evaluated by questioning whether or not an interpreter – in his interpretation of a word/phrase/verse – takes into account the relationship (in meaning, theme, linguistic style, etc.) between Qur‘ānic parts on various levels: 1) within a verse; 2) within a set of consecutive verses; 3) within a surah; and 4) within the Qur‘ān as a whole. (Few exegetes, e.g. Sa‘īd Ḥawwā and Iṣlāḥī, may pay much attention to the relationship between a group of consecutive surahs, but this case is by far less common in tafsir tradition, and is therefore here included in the last level, i.e. ‘within the Qur‘ān as a whole’). Evaluating an interpreter’s attention/inattention to these relationships, I would try to distinguish between various levels of the holisticness (of interpretation of a verse): 1) not holistic; 2) least holistic; 3) moderately holistic; and 4) most holistic.
Table 1.2 Qur’anic Verses Surveyed in Accordance with the Order of Surahs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Surah</th>
<th>Verse(s)</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Surah</th>
<th>Verse(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>al-Baqarah</td>
<td>8-10, 30, 124, 143, 151, 207, 256, 274</td>
<td>65-7</td>
<td>al-Sajdah</td>
<td>18, 21, 24</td>
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<td>9-16</td>
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<td>68-72</td>
<td>al-Ahzāb</td>
<td>6, 12, 23, 30-3, 60-1</td>
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<tr>
<td>17-20</td>
<td>al-Nisā‘</td>
<td>3, 24-5, 59, 60</td>
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<tr>
<td>21-5</td>
<td>al-Mā‘idah</td>
<td>3, 54, 55, 56, 67</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Sād</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>al-An‘ām</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Ghāfir</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>al-A‘rāf</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>al-Shūra</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>28-46</td>
<td>al-Tawbah</td>
<td>19-22, 38-9, 40, 45, 56, 61, 64, 74, 77, 83-4, 97, 100, 101, 105, 107, 117, 119</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>al-Zukhruf</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>Hūd</td>
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<td>78</td>
<td>Muḥammad</td>
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<tr>
<td>48-9</td>
<td>al-Ra‘d</td>
<td>7, 43</td>
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<td>al-Fatḥ</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>Ibrāhīm</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>81-3</td>
<td>al-Ḥujūrat</td>
<td>2, 7, 9-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>51-2</td>
<td>al-Nahl</td>
<td>43, 106</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>al-Wāqī‘ah</td>
<td>77-9</td>
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<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>al-Isrā’</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>85-6</td>
<td>al-Ḥadīd</td>
<td>10, 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>54-5</td>
<td>al-Anbiyā‘</td>
<td>73, 105</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>al-Ḥashr</td>
<td>8-10</td>
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<td>56</td>
<td>al-Hajj</td>
<td>77-8</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>al-Munāfiqūn</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>al-Mu‘minūn</td>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>al-Taghābun</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>58-60</td>
<td>al-Nūr</td>
<td>26, 33, 55</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>al-Tahrim</td>
<td>10-1</td>
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<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>al-Naml</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>al-Ḥaqqah</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>al-Qaṣaṣ</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>al-Ma‘ārīj</td>
<td>29-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>al-‘Ankabūt</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>al-Bayyinah</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Luqmān</td>
<td>22</td>
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</table>
The analysis on such ‘level of holisticness’ is useful to see the extent to which both exegetes (i.e. al-Shanqīṭī and al-Ṭabarānī) have employed tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān quite rigorously – an essential part of my argument.

In the subsequent part of my analysis, I would like to take notice of the relationship between the way they employ the methodology (the art of their understanding) – including the resulting intra-Qur’anic connections and the ensuing conclusions they make – and the doctrines of their respective theological school. I would thus pose several questions:

a) whether or not al-Shanqīṭī – while interpreting a verse – argues against, or pays no attention to, a typically Shi‘i view, and al-Ṭabarānī argues against, or pays no attention to, a normally Sunni view;

b) whether or not al-Shanqīṭī makes a conclusion – with regard to an issue dealt with in a verse – that is exactly in line with Sunnism, common among Sunni exegetes, and alien to Shi‘i exegetes, while al-Ṭabarānī makes a conclusion that is exactly in line with Shi‘ism, common among Shi‘i exegetes, and alien to Sunni exegetes;

c) whether or not the intra-Qur’anic connections presented by al-Shanqīṭī can also be found in earlier Sunni tafsirs, but not in earlier Shi‘i tafsirs, while those presented by al-Ṭabarānī can also be found in earlier Shi‘i tafsirs, but not in earlier Sunni tafsirs;

d) whether or not the Qur’anic parts consulted by both exegetes are totally different;

e) whether or not the interpretive strategy applied by al-Shanqīṭī and al-Ṭabarānī toward the verses contested by Sunni and Shi‘a is consistent; and

f) whether or not the same interpretive strategy used by al-Shanqīṭī can be found in earlier Sunni tafsirs, and the same interpretive strategy used by al-Ṭabarānī can be found in earlier Shi‘i tafsirs.

By doing so, it might be already clear that this study is largely based upon an underlying assumption that knowledge could be traced to its human origins. In line with this assumption, intra-Qur’anic connections both exegetes put forward would be analyzed more in a perspective that – as Rippin puts it – “meaning is not simply ‘present’ in any text to be extracted; rather meaning is created anew through the
act of reading by each individual.” This act of reading is always for a purpose. Every person comes to a text carrying her own questions and expectations. A reader is an ‘active receiver’. Accordingly, how those connections are made can be much guided by the reader’s structure of expectations.

Assuming that such subjectivity leaves its traceable impact on interpretation (meaning construction), my primary focus would be on identifying a set of subjective choices – evident in the way they employ the method and draw conclusions – that lead both interpreters to certain positions. These choices of ideas by which the text is navigated, I hope I could well argue, explain the ideological preference interrupting an interpreter’s commitment to objectivity. Therefore, in my analysis, I would keep in mind the following questions:

a) what are the ideas that lead al-Shanqiṭī and al-Ṭabāṭabāʿī to different parts of the Qur’an (while commenting on a certain verse)?

b) what are the ideas that lead al-Shanqiṭī and al-Ṭabāṭabāʿī to different – or perhaps differing – conclusions?

c) what are the ideas that lead al-Shanqiṭī and al-Ṭabāṭabāʿī to different interpretive strategies?

While this study pays more attention to the subjectivity in the practice of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*, this is by no means an argument that objectivity is completely absent in the implementation of the method. As Gracia has argued, “objectivity is the counterpart of subjectivity.” The object is always taken into account in textual interpretations, and the objectivity of interpretations is a matter of degree.

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144 This resembles a theory of communication called active reception, which argues that the audiences (receivers, watchers, spectators, listeners, etc.) are indeed active, and that the source has not the ability to control the meanings it intends to communicate. I owe for this point to my supervisor, Prof. Andi Faisal Bakti, during consultation. See for instance Andi Faisal Bakti, “The Role of Islamic Media in the Globalization Era: Between Religious Principles and Values of Globalization, the Challenges and Opportunities,” http://www.andifaisalbakti.net/THE-ROLE-OF-ISLAMIC-MEDIA-IN-THE-GLOBALIZATION-ERA.pdf (downloaded December 12, 2015); Andi Faisal Bakti, *Communication and Family Planning in Islam in Indonesia: South Sulawesi Muslim Perceptions of a Global Development Program* (Leiden-Jakarta: INIS, 2004), 108-9.

Since this study deals with a shared interpretive approach considered by many to be objective – meaning that the approach operates in certain common understandings and that merely labeling it ‘subjective’ might not help explain anything about its nature and merit, it would be reasonable to remain open to the plausibility of resorting to hermeneutical theories which emphasize the co-operation of both objectivity and subjectivity in the act of interpretation. This study is, thus, based on a theory that any interpreter would oscillate between a certain kind of objectivity and subjectivity of any kind. His movement to swing from an objectivist orientation to a subjectivist orientation can – though not always – be shaped by his scholastic proclivity. Even when the object, i.e. the text, is continuously put into consideration, the way it is taken into account can be a room where subjective factors can play a role.

To put it differently, this study is based upon an assumption that even when a pursuit of objectivity in interpretation can be
acknowledged, the intervention or interruption of subjectivity is unavoidable. If an objectivist’s interpretive paradigm is to be simply affirmed, one can still see noticeable elements of subjectivity in the interpretation. Relevant to the case raised by this study, scholastic subjectivism is supposed to be able to interrupt even when the Qur’ān is allowed to speak.

E. Thesis Statement

This study suggests that the appearance of sectarian color in a relatively holistic reading of the Qur’ān is possible. Even an interpretive approach to the Qur’ān that is firmly based on, and conveniently exploit, the premise of interconnectedness of Qur’ānic parts could not be completely objective, but rather is filled with a set of subjective choices that might even reflect the influence of an exegete’s ideological tendency. When the Qur’ān is allowed to speak through the application of ṭafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān, scholastic subjectivism might easily interrupt.

F. Organization of the Study

This study is by and large a study on tafsīr methodology in relation to the question of objectivity/subjectivity in interpretation. Accordingly, in the chapter following this introductory chapter (Chapter II, “Objective Interpretive Approaches to the Qur’ān: Quests and Critiques”), I would discuss relevant contemporary debates among the community of academics on objective and subjective approaches to the Qur’ān. This would serve as a backdrop for, and hopefully reveal the significance of, an examination of tafsīr of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān.

Chapter III, “Tafsīr of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān: Origin, Conceptions and Its Hermeneutic Relevance,” is devoted to address the history, conceptions, conceptual foundations, functions, varieties, perceived hierarchy, and principles of ‘tafsīr of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān’ and its relevance with Western Hermeneutics. Al-Shanqīṭi’s and al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s concepts of ‘tafsīr of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān’ as elaborated in their own works would be also included to shed light on their similarities and differences with other scholars’ ideas. Both exegetes’ hermeneutics as a whole, demonstrated mainly in Aḍwā’ al-Bayān and al-Mīzān, would be, however, discussed in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter IV, “The Exegetical Methodology of Aḍwā’ al-Bayān and al-Mīzān,” analyzes the methodology of the two tafsīrs in a
number of ways: 1) in light of their authors’ stated intention and their own exegetical theories; 2) in light of the scale (length and depth) and organization of their interpretation; 3) in light of their reference to what-so-called maṣādir al-tafsīr (sources of tafsir); 4) in light of the extent of reliance on earlier commentators; 5) in light of the degree of textualism and contextualism of their interpretation; 6) in light of their attitude toward differences in opinion and fixity/flexibility of meaning; 7) in light of the ways by which each tafsīr employ tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān; 8) in light of a comparative perspective with other tafsirs in terms of the intensity of, and the level of dependency upon, the method of tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān; and 9) in light of the holisticness of each tafsir. In addition, this chapter would discuss briefly some of the roots of their methodology in both Sunni and Shi‘i history of tafsir, as well as the ‘color’ of Sunnism and Shi‘ism in each tafsir.

The next two chapters, Chapter V and Chapter VI, are commonly entitled “Tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an in Adwā’ al-Bayān and al-Mīzān” but with different subtitles. The two chapters consist of an analysis of al-Shanqīṭī’s and al-Ṭabāṭābā’ī’s interpretation of a number of verses often cited in Sunni-Shi‘i dialectics with special attention to the way both connect between Qur’anic parts, the holisticness of the presented connections, the way both make an argument and achieve a conclusion, and the similarities and differences between their conclusions and the positions popularly known in their respective theological school. It would seek to identify a number of factors – particularly in terms of exegetical methodology – that might have set both exegetes apart, and try to reasonably associate these factors with their respective ideological background. Chapter V and Chapter VI are resulted from an extensive survey of the interpretation of various verses related to a number of Sunni-Shi‘i issues in both tafsirs. Being selected based on certain criteria mentioned earlier, the verses examined, however, are related only to issues revolving around the scope of the Ahl al-Bayt and the meaning of their purification (tathīr), the pleasure (ridā) of Allah for the Companions and their followers, the legitimacy of mut‘ah, the meaning of imamate, the infallibility of the Imams, the Imams’ true knowledge of Qur’ān interpretation, and the signs of ‘Alī’s imamate. Chapter V examines the case of verses on Ahl al-Bayt, Ṣaḥābah, and mut‘ah, while Chapter VI examines the case of verses on imamate.

Finally, concluding remarks for the entire analysis is provided in Chapter VII, “Conclusion”.

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Chapter II
OBJECTIVE INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES TO THE QUR’AN:
QUESTS AND CRITIQUES

This chapter seeks to capture contemporary scholarly debate in Qur’anic studies concerning objectivity and objectivism in Qur’anic interpretation. The debate concerned here is the one that might resemble the well-known Gadamer-Hirsch debate in the arena of modern Western hermeneutics. The central issue of the debate highlighted here would be the possibility to arrive at objective meaning and its consequence on how to deal with a text. My objective here is to shed light on some perspectives and frameworks that can serve as a context for the argument I would make in the next chapters.

Contemporary Muslim intellectuals’ opinions on the problem are relatively polarised toward two positions: 1) those who put greater emphasis on the possibility of objective understanding of text (through adequate hermeneutical theories), and 2) those who put greater emphasis on the the unavoidability of subjectivity and the partiality of any interpretation. This is not to say that most scholars could be fittingly categorized in one of these two polars since there have been scholars whose hermeneutical ideas seem to operate between both positions, favoring objective interpretation though believe in the impossibility of complete objectivity, or emphasizing the co-operation of objectivity and subjectivity.

In this chapter, I would start with a brief summary of pre-modern debate over objectivity and subjectivity of Qur’an interpretation among classical Muslim scholars in order to provide a background for the contemporary debate here examined. I would then

1 ‘Objectivity’ is often defined in lexicons as ability to view, perceive or describe something without being influenced by personal emotions or prejudices, and the fact or quality of being accurate, unbiased, and independent of individual perceptions. ‘Objectivism’, meanwhile, might refer to belief in ‘mind-independent’ truths and belief in the possibility of individuals to view things objectively. In the context of interpretation, ‘objectivity’ might be understood as ability to interpret a text without being influenced by personal perceptions, prejudices and biases, while ‘objectivism’ is belief in the possibility of being objective in interpreting a text. It should be noted, however, the meaning of ‘objectivity’ and ‘objectivism’ in the debate on interpretation – and also in this study – might have slightly varying connotations.

2 Though employing pre-modern and modern distinction as a useful category, I am aware that to assume that there is a clear break between pre-modern and modern approaches to the Qur’an might be problematic. There has been considerable
continue with modern quests for objective approaches in Qur’ān interpretation, and subsequently the emerging critiques of what might be called ‘objectivism’ in the context of Qur’ān interpretation. In the second half of the chapter I would discuss ideas that seek to find ways between the promises of both objectivism and subjectivism, and ideas that put much emphasis on the necessity to be continuously faithful to the Qur’ān itself while interpreting it – that constitute a recent trend of what I call ‘Qur’ān-oriented approach’, which is noticeable mostly – but not exclusively – among objectivists.

A. Pre-Modern Discourse on Objectivity in Qur’ān Interpretation

It might be often argued that the hermeneutical theories of classical Muslim scholars seem to be by far dominated by author-centered and to a lesser extent text-centered approaches. Their aim of Qur’ān interpretation is largely to discover God’s will or intention. Adis Duderija, for instance, suggests that what he calls “the pre-modern approaches” are mostly based on the assumption that the reader of the text can discover its objective meaning and that the meaning is chiefly determined by the author for the reader to “simply and objectively retrieve.”

In line with it, interpreting the Qur’ān was seen for the most part as a work of piety, and an interpreter was expected to have no ideological interest and bias (seen as part of ḥawā or lowly desire) while doing it – not imposing his own subjective trend on the text. However, while this might be in a stark contrast with what numerous studies have shown regarding bias and subjectivism in traditional, pre-
modern tafsirs, the classical debate on interpretive approaches to the Qur’an is much more nuanced.

Classical scholars have indeed viewed the issue of objectivity in Qur’an interpretation differently. Their difference might be linked with or attributed to their debate on several interrelated issues: 1) what tafsir really means; 2) where ‘meaning’ lies; 3) what the nature of the Qur’an or Qur’anic text is; and 3) what kinds of tafsir are desirable or legitimate.

Renowned, influential scholars like al-Ṭabarī, al-Ghazālī and al-Suyūṭī – among others – define the aim of Qur’an interpretation as to clarify God’s intended message. For al-Ṭabarī and al-Ghazālī, ta’wil implies “retrieving God’s intended meaning” which is independent of the exegete. This intended meaning, whether correctly understood or not, whether clarified differently or not, is only one. That is why al-Ṭabarī in his Jāmi‘ al-Bayān (so far still considered as the first most encyclopaedic tafsir) always tried to come up with a conclusion as to which explanation of a verse’s meaning was correct. Al-Ṭabarī’s hermeneutics is closer to Hirsch’s hermeneutics.

However, there has been a recent analysis that thoughtfully calls al-Ṭabarī’s approach ‘multi-subjective’ and ‘quasi-objective’. His multi-subjectivism refers to the fact that his tafsir is mostly marked by the juxtaposition of numerous transmitted traditions (aḥār) narrated to him by different reporters without meticulous verification

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7Mårtensson, “Through the Lens of Modern Hermeneutics,” 32, 37, 41.


of their *matn* and *sanad*,\(^{10}\) while his quasi-objectivism refers to his way to single out the appropriate meaning of Qur’anic terms by turning toward linguistic conventions. Al-Ṭabarī’s approach is therefore neither entirely subjectivist nor entirely objectivist, rather it swings between multi-subjectivism and quasi-objectivism.

This analysis is plausible, but in terms of his view on ‘meaning’, al-Ṭabarī is arguably an objectivist or a quasi-objectivist. Furthermore, many pre-modern scholars’ position is in fact not far from that of al-Ṭabarī. Even in al-Zamakhsharī’s hermeneutics, which shows remarkable interruption of scholastic subjectivism, the underlying stated-commitment is basically to attain the objective meaning of Qur’anic verses.\(^{11}\) Indeed, pre-modern approaches to the Qur’an are seen as largely inspired by the belief in the objective existence of meaning in the mind of the author, the belief in the accessibility of that meaning in an objective fashion to the mind of the reader, the idea of fixity of meaning of the text, and the notion that there exists only one correct interpretation of a piece of text.\(^{12}\)

Objectivity was regarded as a must partly because of the serious consideration of a popular Prophetic tradition, “Whoever interprets the Qur’an according to his own *ra’y* (opinion or baseless opinion), should settle himself in his seat of fire.” The common emphasis on this hadith led many scholars to persistent reliance upon transmitted traditions (*riwāyat*) while commenting on the Qur’an. Some others, meanwhile, tried to find other equally legitimate ways.

As a matter of fact, there are two main currents in the classical scholars’ pursuit of objective interpretation with regard to ways they rely on to achieve it. The first is known as the school of *tafsīr bi al-ma’tūḥūr*, which sees reliance on *riwāyat* (*ahādith, akhbār* and *āthār*) as a guarantee of objectivity. Some of this traditionist school’s supporters are al-Ṭabarī, al-Baghwī, Ibn Taymiyah, Ibn Kathīr and al-Suyūṭī. The second mainly consists of the linguistic school (*al-madrasah al-lughawīyah*), which are highly committed to the linguisticality of the Qur’an. Among its supporters are al-Farrā’, al-Zajjāj, al-Zamakhsharī and Abū Ḥayyān.

Sufi hermeneutical theories are, however, largely different from these two dominant currents. Summarizing the difference

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\(^{10}\)For why such a *bi al-ma’tūḥūr* approach could be regarded as a unique form of subjectivism, see Afaki, “Multi-Subjectivism and Quasi-Objectivism,” 299.

\(^{11}\)Afaki, “Zamakhsharī’s Hermeneutical Approach.”

between the inner, subjective interpretive approach of Sufis and the
outer, objective interpretive approach of exoteric clerics, Maryam
Musharraf states that while for the clerics, interpretation is not a
personal matter, Sufis had a personal approach to the Qur’an. While
the former considers that the reader’s mind should not interfere with
how the text is interpreted, the latter consciously added an esoteric
dimension to Qur’an interpretation. While “exoteric knowledges
experts” seek to approach the meaning of the Qur’an in a purely
objective fashion by paying much attention to lexical and linguistic
issues of the Qur’an, its historical context, and objective references of
the apparent meaning of the verse, “Gnostics” seek to arrive at the
esoteric level by relying on personal and inward experiences.13

Personalizing interpretation, Gnostics seek to achieve greater
freedom and subjectivity in the realm of interpretation. What they rely
most is their piety that is believed to lead to divine inspirations
regarding the meaning. As a result, there is no fixed meaning since the
inner, hidden layer of meaning might vary based on the mystical
experience, even though they consider piety would prevent them from
their own unfounded personal opinion and keep them closer to the
truth. For them, meanings are in any way floating.

Since Sufi approaches to the Qur’an are consciously based on
subjective spiritual quest for a purified mind, their subjectivity is often
subject to criticism. However, such criticism is not exclusive for
mystical interpreters, but is also often directed toward those favoring
in objective approaches. Objections to al-Zamakhshari’s subjectivist-
inclined practice of linguistic objectivism are just a well-known
e xample.14

On the other hand, Sufi subjectivist approaches have been
g radually welcomed and even enjoyed considerable popularity in
mystical Islamic scholarship. Musharraf refers to the hermeneutic
theory of al-Tirmidhî and al-Jurjânî to explain why this could happen.
Al-Tirmidhî suggested that any word could possess multiple meanings,
while al-Jurjânî proposed the theory of semantic dimensions and
polysemy.15

In fact, the reception of subjectivist approaches might also be
partly attributed to the debate concerning what or who constructs

13Maryam Musharraf, “A Study on the Sufi Interpretation of Qur’an and the
Theory of Hermeneutic,” Al-Bayân 11, no. 1 (June 2013): 34.
14See for instance Afaki, “Zamakhshari’s Hermeneutical Approach,” 191-
204.
meaning. Classical scholars have been said to have four different views in this regard: 1) meaning is located within the words/text (argued by ‘Ubād ibn Sulaymān); 2) meaning is constructed by God/the author (by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī and Ibn Fawrak); 3) meaning is constructed by human beings/the reader (by Abū Ḥāšim); and 4) meaning is partly constructed by God and is partly constructed by human beings (by Ibn Isḥāq al-İsfarāyînî and others). This difference ensures that both objectivist and subjectivist approaches would always have their own supporters.

B. Modern Quests for Objective Interpretive Approaches

The quest for objective approaches in Qur’ān interpretation has continued in the modern period, in the midst of an oft-pronounced need to reinterpret the Qur’ān partly – some scholars would say mainly – due to contemporary world affairs and the influence of Western thought. It might be interesting to notice that some modern scholars are even determined to make efforts to come up with ‘newly more objective’ interpretive approaches than those living in the past. Some scholars – such as al-Farahī, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, Bint al-Shāṭi’ and even Fazlur Rahman – have argued for hermeneutical approaches that they hope can guarantee a higher degree of objectivity against the backdrop of their criticism to the common approaches of classical exegetes.

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18 Andrew Rippin has referred to such a phenomenon as “a rhetorical move by contemporary writers that serves to justify discarding the legacy of earlier times.” See Andrew Rippin, “Contemporary Scholarly Understandings of Qur’ānic Coherence.” Al-Bayān 11, no. 2 (December 2013): 4. A tendency to ‘delegitimize’ classical interpretive methodology while proposing a new approach is also commonly found in Indonesian scholars’ efforts of interpretive method renewal. See Izza Rohman, “New Approaches,” 212-5. It seems that this strategy is quite common among modern scholars more broadly. For criticism by al-Farahī, see for instance Hamid al-Din al-Farahī, Exordium to Coherence in the Qur’ān, trans. Tariq Mahmood Hashmi (Lahore: Al-Mawrid, n.d.). For criticism by al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, see for instance his introduction to al-Mīzān. For criticism by Fazlur Rahman see his introduction to Islam and
This is interesting because it might imply that the later a Qur'an interpreter live (i.e. the more distant he is from the era of revelation), the more objective the approach he might claim. Such an assumption might appear very problematic through the lens of those who see that the interpretation of the earliest generation (*al-salaf al-ṣālih*) is always the best.

To shed light on how modern scholars pursue (more) objective approaches to the Qur'an, here I would highlight the hermeneutics of four modern exegetes, namely Ḥāmid al-Dīn al-Faraḥī (1863-1930) and Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī (1906-1997) – both of which are often discussed together, Muḥammad Husayn al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī (1904-1981) and ‘Āʾishah ‘Abd al-Rahmān Bint al-Shāṭi’ (1913-1998), as well as two modern Muslim thinkers regarded as ‘quasi-objectivist modernists’, namely Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988) and Naṣr Ḥāmid Abu Zayd (1943-2010).

As it is argued by Abdul Rahim Afaki, al-Faraḥī’s hermeneutical approach to the Qur’an is clearly objectivist in nature. He believes in the value of making one’s opinion devoid of being subjectivist through the way of interpretation – which serves as the only way to make it. This way of interpretation, in al-Faraḥī’s hermeneutical scheme, should be rigorously based on a number of principles and rules in order to single out the meaning. Indeed, by

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19There has been a suggestion to include al-Shāṣhī’s tafsir theory in this chapter, but al-Shāṣhī himself rarely discusses his hermeneutic in his writings. This means that discussing his stated opposition toward subjectivism would be a very challenging task.

20See Sahiron Syamsuddin, “A Peaceful Message beyond the Permission of Warfare (Jihād): An Interpretation of Qur’an 22:39-40,” in *Un*Common Sounds: Songs of Peace and Reconciliation among Muslims and Christians, ed. Roberta R. King, Sooi Ling Tan (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014), 105. The difference between quasi-objectivist modernists and quasi-objectivist traditionalists is that the former regard original meaning as a starting point for interpretation and aspire to contextualization, while the latter regard the original meaning applicable to all times and places.


enunciating the view that the Qur’an possess structural and thematic coherence (known as the concept of the Qur’anic nazm). What al-Farāhī sought to find most seems to be a conceptual tool that can effectively lead a Qur’anic interpreter to an ‘objective’ result, that is the one definitive meaning implied by God (the author), instead of deriving multiple meanings. He even believes that once the nazm in a surah becomes clear to us, we could agree on an unvarying opinion and a common statement (kalimah sawā).

Reading every verse with the guiding light of nazm, al-Farāhī and Islāhī expect, would eliminate the possibility of wayward interpretations, and instead lead to a definitive, correct interpretation. Al-Farāhī is of the belief that the intended meanings of the Qur’an are clear, and it is only the lack of research of a verse that makes it seem subject to diverse interpretations.

Based on the notion that the whole structure of the Qur’an is thematic and that thematic structure is completely coherent, al-Farāhī and his most prominent pupil Islāhī suggest that the meaning of every verse is determined by the central, controlling idea (‘amūd, pillar) of the surah where the verse exists, which can be deciphered by deep reflection and meditation (tadabbur) on the surah in its totality. Therefore, an interpretation of a verse should not be in any way in

23It means that all of the verses of a Qur’anic surah are integrally related to each other to give rise to the major idea of the surah, and again all of the surahs in the Qur’an are interconnected with each other to constitute the major idea(s) of the Qur’an. As Mir notes, al-Farāhī is “the first Qur’anic exegete to have offered a detailed theoretical argument in support of the view that the Qur’an is marked by thematic and structural nazm.” Mir even argues that al-Farāhī-Islāhī view of Qur’anic nazm is more rigorous and systematic than any other author’s view. See Mustansir Mir, “Continuity, Context and Coherence in the Qur’an: A Brief Review of the Idea of Nazm in Tafsīr Literature,” Al-Bayan 11, no. 2 (December 2013): 24, 26. However, it seems that the discourse on nazm in the Sub-Continent had been quite popular before al-Farāhī introduced a systematic view on it. See Muhammad Abdullah, “Trends of Nazm-Al-Qurān in Tafsīr Literature in the Sub-Continent,” Al-Adwa 37, no. 27 (June 2012): 55-70.


26Al-Farāhī, Exordium to Coherence, 48.

contradiction with that ‘amūd to which it is organically linked. In al-Farāḥī’s theory, which is implemented by İslāhī, the ‘amūd is “the hub of a surah,” while all of the verses in the surah revolve around it.28

Further, the verse could be interpreted by referring to some other parts of the Qur’an – among them are verses in what they regard as spouse surah29 – where its meaning may be found in a clarified form. An interpreter is then recommended to bring into light a statement left abridged in the Qur’an as well as another statement recognized as its elaborated version by an interpretive approach that focuses on the nazm of the discourse to a point that the conformability (mutābaqa‘ah) between the statements can be substantiated. Once the conformability is enlightened, the interpreter is expected to take a closer look at the preceding and the following parts of each of the statements.30

By highlighting the need to establish the relationship between a verse and the ‘amūd of its surah, between a verse with another verse in another part of the Qur’an, as well as between a verse and its surrounding verses, al-Farāḥī and İslāhī seem to advocate a sophisticated form of ta’wil al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān (the term they use) that is not only novel but also very much limit the role of external sources – such as hadith and opinions of the past – in Qur’an interpretation – a tendency noticeably seen in many pre-modern Qur’an exegeses. Indeed, the external sources for them are secondary and theoretically dispensable. One may refer to these sources only to confirm or authenticate one’s interpretation derived from the method abovementioned.32 It is only within the parameters of Qur’anic text that a part of the Qur’an is to be interpreted. As İslāhī says, “the real

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28 Mir, Coherence in the Qur’an, 38. This is different from the traditional theory of nazm of a surah which is concerned with its linear connection. (See Mir, Coherence in the Qur’an, 63).

29 According to İslāhī, the vast majority of surahs (82 out of 114) are constituting pairs. On this, see Mir, Coherence in the Qur’an, chapter V; and a more recent and rigorous study, Raymond Farrin, Structure and Qur’anic Interpretation: A Study of Symmetry and Coherence in Islam’s Holy Text (Ashland: White Cloud Press, 2014).


32 Afaki, “Farāḥī’s Objectivist-Canonical Qur’anic Hermeneutics,” 240-1. İslāhī considers Qur’anic language, Qur’anic nazm and Qur’anic nazā‘iir (parallels), together with Sunnah mutawātirah, as the qar‘i (categorical) principles of exegesis, while the rest (hadith and āthār, asbāb al-nuzūl, earlier Qur’an commentaries, previous scriptures and ancient Arab history) as the żanī (non-categorical) principles. See Mir, Coherence in the Qur’an, 26.
source of the tafsir is the language of the Qur’an, the context and placement of its verses and parallels drawn from within its text.”

This is al-Farāḥī and Islāhī’s objectivist strategy in an effort to leave no room for subjectivism in Qur’anic interpretation that might creep into both tradition-based and extratradition-based interpretation.

In a case that a word has a variety of senses and significances, an interpreter needs to adopt the one that is closest to its contextual position (stiyyāq) and the major theme of the discourse (‘amūd al-kalām). This would also involve deep reflection on the Qur’anic naẓm related to the discourse. In this regard, a connotation is the least preferable when it requires to be interpreted through an expression external to the discourse. Further, connotations of the word are to be abandoned if they are not in accordance with the rest of its appearances throughout the Qur’an. Again, this would inevitably involve deep reflection on the naẓm.

An interpreter might need to adopt, based on his acquaintance with several exegetical remnants, one meaning out of many. This adoption of the best signification (ahsān al-wujūḥ) needs to be conformed with the fundamental canons of interpretation abovementioned, the clarity of mind, the nobility of morals, the conformity to the categorical meanings of the Qur’an, the firmness of belief in God and His Prophet, and the modality of Arabic language.

It is here that al-Farāḥī’s objectivist strategy is then enhanced with another principle that Qur’anic words need to be understood in their clear and pure meanings as they are used in Arabic language. Those words should not be interpreted in their anomalous meanings being opposite and incompatible to their established meanings. It is

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34 For Afaki, the Farahian-Islahian concept of the autonomy of Qur’anic discourse is comparable with Paul Ricoeur’s notion of the autonomy of text. The objectivist notion of the autonomy of Qur’anic discourse as a thematically coherent structure divinely revealed is comparable with Ricoeur’s objectivist view of text as a linguistic structure of ‘interplay of oppositions and combinations of signs’ being removed from worldly references. See Afaki, “Farahi’s Objectivist-Canonical Qur’anic Hermeneutics,” 246.


38 Afaki, “Farahi’s Objectivist-Canonical Qur’anic Hermeneutics,” 244.
the prevalent meaning (al-ma‘nā al-shā‘ī‘) that needs to be adopted. In this case, al-Farāḥī and Išlāḥī chose to refer to the historical-conventional facet of Arabic language as a source of interpretation, rather than the rules of grammar in this regard. They reject the latter, which is drawn primarily from the ancient Arabic poetry that according to al-Farāḥī has limited rhetorical features, because its sphere is extremely narrow with regard to the derivation of meaning of a divine discourse. Overlooking the technicalities of linguistics, al-Farāḥī refers to the life-language of the Arabs shared between the Prophet and his addressees. Išlāḥī argues that a deep knowledge of various cultural and conventional symbols of the Arab life-world during the Prophetic era is essential in the true understanding of the Quran.

We have seen that the notion of nazm is indispensable in what Afaki calls “the Farāḥīan school of Qur‘anic hermeneutics,” a notion that has later on been accomplished by Išlāḥī’s tafsīr, Tadabbur-i-Qur’an. Afaki regards this notion as a Muslim version of hermeneutical circle – the notion that the overall meaning of a text is determined by the integral relationship between the meanings of its parts and vice versa – known in the tradition of Western hermeneutics. While the notion of nazm is rooted in the tradition of Qur‘anic exegesis, al-Farāḥī and Išlāḥī have developed it with some novel connotation to a point that their effort might be regarded as revitalizing objectivist Qur‘an interpretation in the modern time. In a sense, both seek to promote an interpretive approach that is expected to come up with more objective interpretation. Both have been critical towards traditional approaches to the Qur‘an, and on the other hand, put forward a fresh way to objective interpretation.

Al-Farāḥī, as is the case with Schleiermacher in the Western hermeneutical thought, rejects all traits of subjective interpretation

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42Afaki, “Farāḥī’s Objectivist-Canonical Qur‘anic Hermeneutics,” 254, 256, 260. In addition, Afaki also compares al-Farāḥī and Išlāḥī’s relative emphasis on the in-depth grasping of the pre-Islamic literature as a background of the most appropriate interpretation of the meanings of the words used in the Qur’an, with Friedrich Ast’s idea of relating the text to the spirit (Geist) of the age (also called the outer context) through the medium of language that transmits the spirit in the text. See Afaki, “Farāḥī’s Objectivist-Canonical Qur‘anic Hermeneutics,” 256.
construed by the deliberate imposition of one’s bias to the meaning of the text – that al-Faráhí calls *tahríf* (distortion) of the text, comparable to what Schleiermacher calls ‘active misunderstanding’. By the notions of *nazm*, *tafsír al-Qur’áan bi al-Qur’áan*, life-language necessity, etc., al-Faráhí and İsláhí consolidate objectivism and seek to lessen the possibilities of subjectivist imposition of meanings on the Qur’ánic discourse.

Obtaining the objective meaning of Qur’ánic verses and avoiding any extraneous influences are also a crucial part of Bint al-Sháthí’s hermeneutical project. However, for that purpose, Bint al-Sháthí’ relies much upon analyzing the Qur’án from an intrinsic viewpoint by means of Arabic sciences, such as *‘ilm al-balághah* (rhetorical science) and *‘ilm al-náhww* (grammatical science), which happen to receive less emphasis in the hermeneutics of al-Faráhí and İsláhí.

Opposing the role of a reader’s subjectivity in coloring the interpretation, Bint al-Sháthí’, who approaches the Qur’án through literary methods partly built upon Amin al-Khúlí’s methodology, is obsessed with pursuing the original, intended meaning of the Qur’án by giving the Qur’án autonomy to speak for itself in the quest for an objective interpretation. Therefore, in her hermeneutical model, the involvement of all Qur’ánic verses which speak of the subject under discussion is greatly important.

To interpret a Qur’ánic word, according to Bint al-Sháthí’, it is imperative to perform a perfect induction (*istiqrá’ kámil*) related to how a word is used in the whole Qur’án. A word is to be understood in relation to its general/larger context (*al-siyyáq al-‘ámm*), i.e. its overall usage. However, another equally important step has to be done, that is to take into account its specific/immediate context (*al-siyyáq al-kháshs*) in a given verse, a set of verses or a chapter, i.e. the surrounding words which coexist with it. Such an approach, she believes, would allow us to determine the originally intended meaning of Qur’ánic words and avoid any extra-Qur’ánic projection or tendentious interpretation, and further might lead us to understand the rethorical subtleties of the Qur’án – whose words are believed to be irreplacable.

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In Bint al-Shāṭi’s view, a systematic cross-examination of the overall usage of a word in the Qur’ān would help us come up with the true meaning among lexical or metonymical possibilities. Any uncertainty about the meaning might be resolved by what she calls ‘the judgment of the Qur’ān’ (ḥukm al-Qur’ān), pursued through reading various contexts of a word usage in the Qur’ān, and paying attention to the thematic linkages between a verse and its surrounding verses or the chapter where it exists.46 This seeking of Qur’ānic judgment (al-iḥtikām ilā al-Qur’ān) serves as the core of Bint al-Shāṭi’s ‘thematic treatment’ (al-tanāwul al-mawdūʿ) of the Qur’ān.47

Another notable quest for more objective approaches is carried out by al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī. As Mohammad Hossein Mokhtari states, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī is “a defender of ‘objectivism,’” since he stresses the possibility of achieving true, objective and fixed understanding of the Qur’ān, and considers textual meaning independent of the interpreter and relevant to the author’s intention.48 Like Hirsch, a strong defender of objectivism in the modern West, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī also believes in the relationship between meaning and the speaker/author’s will and intention.49

His objectivist orientation is apparent from several points. Firstly, how he defines interpretation and its purpose, that is as discovering the authorial intention and stating the decisive and conclusive meaning of the word. With regard to Qur’ān interpretation,

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46Bint al-Shāṭi’, *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, I, 221-3. For this citation, I was led by Shuruq Naguib, “‘A’isha ‘Abd al-Rahmān (Bint al-Shāṭi’i)’ (d.1998) and Her Approach to *Tafsīr: The Journey of an Egyptian Exegete from Hermeneutics to Humanity*,” a working paper, Lancaster University, 2013, available online http://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/66191/1/BSfinaldraft_eprints_2.pdf (accessed February 25, 2015).

47Her thematic approach to the Qur’ān generally consists of six steps: 1) collecting all Qur’ānic verses related to the subject; 2) arranging all of these verses chronologically on the basis of their place and time of revelation; 3) studying the social and political circumstances of seventh-century Arabia; 4) studying the linguistic meaning of the words; 5) studying the usage of these words in the Qur’ān; and 6) paying attention to the specific context of the words as well as their general context. This is as a summary based on several sources in Yusuf Rahman, “The Hermeneutical Theory of Naṣr Hāmid Abū Zayd: An Analytical Study of His Method of Interpreting the Qur’ān,” a Ph.D. thesis at the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University (2001), 88-9.


unveiling God’s intention should have been the aim of every effort in interpreting the Qur’an. He considers some Qur’anic verses urging people to contemplate or reflect on its signs as some proofs that God’s intention is to be discerned so the right path can be achieved and the message can be implemented in their lives.  

Secondly, his belief in the understandability of the Qur’an. According to al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, all verses of the Qur’an are comprehensible and that there is no single verse therein which have a complicated meaning or is meaningless to hinder the mind of reader who seeks to understand it. The final understanding of the text is possible since the Qur’an presents us clear and decisive rules which apply to everything.

Thirdly, his belief in a fixed, intended meaning. Although al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī sees that Qur’anic verses have outer and inner meanings, and some different layers or levels of meaning exist, he still believes in one correct and definite meaning – the oneness of meaning and the unchanged, essential message. Qur’anic verses might have a series of hidden meanings in addition to their clearer, apparent meaning, but there will be no contradiction between them. However, not all different readings and interpretations are correct because a meaning is valid only when it corresponds to the author’s intention behind his choice of words.

Fourthly, his belief in the possibility of controlling presuppositions required for an interpretation to be free from the interpreter’s overwhelming voice. While seeing it as natural, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī believes that presupposition is not always able to prevent a reader from understanding and, instead, might help him attain the authorial intention. He objects to any approach to the Qur’an that lets a reader’s opinion overwhelm the Qur’an. Such an approach might represent or be closer to tafsīr bi al-ra’y or tafsīr bi ghayr ‘ilm condemned by the Prophet.

Last but not least, his belief in the achievability of God’s intention through certain interpretive principles, rules, criteria and

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53 Mokhtari, “The Exegesis of Tabatabaei,” 205, 244, 271.
strategies applied by qualified interpreters. Words in the Qur’an must have been used by the author (God) accurately, so the possibility to reach the accurate meaning of the words would just rely on the way the reader reads them. When they are read correctly (with some conditions and rules) by the reader, correct understanding becomes certainly possible.

Comparable to Hirsch’s method of understanding the text, that is understanding the text through itself, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s interpretive strategy is primarily based on the premise that the only correct way to interpret the Qur’an is through the Qur’an itself. His method of exegesis is to avoid what he regards as a common major defect of other exegetical methods: imposing preconceived views or the results of academic/philosophic arguments onto Qur’anic meanings, making the Qur’an conform to an extraneous idea. This view is akin to that of Bint al-Sha’tī abovementioned.

Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī does not agree with the underlying assumption behind common hermeneutics that the Qur’an needs others to act as a guide. Therefore, he argues for the necessity of istintāq (letting the Qur’an speak) and tadabbur (contemplation, i.e. contemplating one verse after another in his understanding) – both of which are sanctioned by the Qur’an itself. He states:

One interprets the Qur’an with the Qur’an, and explains the verse with the help of other relevant verses by contemplation – which is urged upon by the Qur’an itself – and identifies the individual person or thing by its particulars mentioned in the verse. Allah has said, “And We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything,” (16:89) Is it possible for such a book not to explain its own self? Also He has described the Qur’an in these words: “a guidance for mankind and clear evidences of guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong),” (2:185) and He has also said, “And We have sent down to you a manifest light.” (4:174) Is it imaginable that the Qur’an serves as a guidance, an evidence, a discrimination between right and wrong and a manifest light for the people to guide them aright in all their needs, but would not guide

55Mokhtari, “The Exegesis of Tabatabaei, ” 150.
56Mokhtari, “The Exegesis of Tabatabaei,” 268.
them aright in its own matter, while it is their most important need.\textsuperscript{60}

In such a way, the interpreter could allow the text answer the questions he poses to it and prevent himself from imposing personal ideas on the text. In al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī’s view, presuppositions might pave the way for questioning the text, but it is the text that could produce and organize the answer. An interpreter should not let his personal ideas based on his pre-understanding and pre-suppositions projected on to the meaning of the text unless he wants his interpretation unaccepted. The interpreter’s mentality might briefly interfere in the action of interpretation, but the interference is not always related to the content of the text in a way the interpreter intends to impose his personal perspective on it. It is assumed that an interpreter raises questions but does not answer his questions himself. Rather, it is the Qur’an that responds to the questions. The answers are not shaped by his interrogation.\textsuperscript{61} Once pre-judgment and uncertain knowledge intend to interfere in understanding with respect to content, to shape a meaning and impose itself on the text, the interpretation would be subjective and thereby unacceptabe.\textsuperscript{62}

For al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī, the difference between asking “what does the Qur’an say?” and “how can this verse be explained so as to fit into one’s belief?” is clear. The former means that we go where the Qur’an leads us, while the latter means that we already decide what to believe and find ways for Qur’anic verses to fit that belief. The latter is called adaptation (\textit{tatbīq}), rather than explanation (\textit{bayān}) or interpretation (\textit{tafsīr}).\textsuperscript{63} This distinction is important in al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī’s theory of hermeneutics.

Like other exegetes, al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī underlines the authority of apparent meaning of the Qur’anic verses (\textit{zāhir al-āyāt}) with which any hermeneutical view should be harmonious for it to be acceptable. Disregarding the apparent meaning means pursuing an invalid way to understanding. The apparent meaning needs to be protected in order to reach an understanding that can be justly attributed to the speaker/author. Al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī objects to any interpretive approach

\textsuperscript{61}Mokhtari, “The Exegesis of Tabatabaei,” 244, 271.
\textsuperscript{62}Mokhtari, “The Exegesis of Tabatabaei,” 60.
\textsuperscript{63}Al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī, \textit{al-Mizān}, 11; Mokhtari, “The Exegesis of Tabatabaei,” 43, 84; Medoff, “\textit{Ijtiḥād} and Renewal,” 30.
that lets the voice of the interpreter overwhelm the apparent meaning.\footnote{Medoff, “Ijtiḥād and Renewal,” 20.}

The notion that one should be committed to the apparent meaning is related to the fact that Qur’anic verses were revealed in clear Arabic language (‘arabī mubīn). The Qur’an does not contain perplexing puzzles and riddles in a way that it is against the clear dictate of Arabic language. It is, instead, understandable to common minds and may be pondered upon, as some Qur’anic verses, e.g. 4:82, imply.\footnote{Mokhtari, “The Exegesis of Tabatabaei,” 51-3.}

The apparent meaning is therefore a criterion one should rely on to verify exegetical ideas. Al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī himself presents plentiful instances in al-Mīzān. In his introduction, he has stated that, “We have never felt any need to interpret a verse against its apparent meaning.”\footnote{Al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī, al-Mīzān, 16.}

He believes that there is not a single verse in the Qur’an whose connotation is against its apparent meaning. Even a few verses that give such an impression, that is ‘ambiguous verses’, are to be linked with the decisive verses which could make their meanings clear.\footnote{Mokhtari, “The Exegesis of Tabatabaei,” 49.}

The idea of taṣfīr al-Qurān bi al-Qurān, that parts of the Qur’an should be understood with each other’s help, is thus very important in al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī’s objectivist hermeneutical framework. It could not be neglected if one wants to find no difference in the Qur’an while pondering over it as the verse 4:82 suggests.\footnote{Mokhtari, “The Exegesis of Tabatabaei,” 60.}

Further, al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī has been seen as arguing that “every hermeneutic other than taṣfīr of the Qur’an by the Qur’an falls outside the category of true taṣfīr and tends toward ra’y.”\footnote{Medoff, “Ijtiḥād and Renewal,” 37.}

Fazlur Rahman, who is renowned for his ‘double-movement’ theory and explicitly takes Betti’s side in the Gadamer-Betti controversy,\footnote{Rahman, Islam and Modernity, 8-11.} shares an objectivist orientation similar to that of Bint al-Shāṭī’ and al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī in his focus on a ‘non-atomistic’ approach to the Qur’an. Rahman criticizes traditional approaches which, in his view, have failed to understand the underlying internal unity of the Qur’an, and therefore unable to provide a unitary vision of the Qur’anic weltanschauung. With this failure, the incorporation of foreign ideas and materials in Qur’an interpretation would always lead...
to unsatisfactory results. According to Rahman, the reasons to understand the Qur’an as a unity is due to the fact that it has been rarely pursued, and that subjective interpretations have multiplied.\(^{71}\)

Criticizing a verse-by-verse approach in traditional exegeses, Rahman gives more preference to a thematic method which might be more helpful in accessing and providing the Qur’anic worldview and making Qur’anic messages more contextualized in today’s life.\(^{72}\) In line with this preference, he identified and elaborated the Qur’an’s key themes in his *Major Themes of the Qur’an*. Through a thematic method, he believes that one would not repeat the failure to “yield insight into the cohesive outlook on the universe and life which the Qur’an undoubtedly possesses.”\(^{73}\) Such a thematic approach focusing on Qur’anic worldview is seen as something that could control ideological biases.\(^{74}\)

While Rahman’s model puts much emphasis on abstracting general ethical principles and how these principles are to be translated into courses of action in the present context, it firstly requires a mental return to the original contexts (both macro- and micro-environmental contexts) of the Qur’anic formulations, which assumes the possibility of objective ascertaining of the past — something considered impossible from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics.\(^{75}\) Rahman – as Farid Esack underlines it – believes in the possibility to go beyond one’s self, arrive at objective meaning and access ‘the real truth’.\(^{76}\) Rahman himself firmly asserts:

> ... the meaning of a past text or precedent, the present situation, and the intervening tradition can be sufficiently objectively known and that the tradition can be fairly objectively brought under the judgment of the (normative) meaning of the past under whose impact


\(^{72}\)This idea of preferring a holistic or thematic approach, instead of atomism, has been quite influential among recent scholars. It is also used to justify new contributions to the literary study of the Qur’an. See for instance Mustansir Mir, “Some Figures of Speech in the Qur’an,” *Religion & Literature* 40, no. 3 (Autumn 2008): 31-2.


the tradition arose. It follows from this that tradition can be studied with adequate historical objectivity and separated not only from the present but also from the normative factors that are supposed to have generated it.\footnote{Rahman, \textit{Islam and Modernity}, 8.}

Rahman’s objectivist approach stresses the idea of taking the historicity of the Qur’an seriously for the sake of contextualizing its messages in today’s current context. Another notable contemporary search for a kind of objective interpretation which does not want to by any means overlook the historical dimension of the Qur’an, and pursues contextualization, is noticeable in Naṣr Abu Zayd’s hermeneutics which emphasizes the communicative character of the Qur’anic text. While in early stages of his career, Abū Zayd focused more on the Qur’an as a literary text (\textit{nass}), and in later stages on the Qur’an as a discourse (\textit{khittāb}) – or a series of discourses, his opposition toward ideologically tendentious interpretation (\textit{talwīn}) continued. His staunch opposition to any ‘ideological coloration’ allows us to place him in the objectivists’ camp, despite some assertions on inspirations he got from Hans-Georg Gadamer,\footnote{For a discussion on similarities between Abū Zayd’s hermeneutics and that of Gadamer, see Katharina Völker, “Quran and Reform: Rahman, Arkoun, Abu Zayd,” a Ph.D. thesis at the University of Otago (2011), 165-7. See another emphasis on Gadamer’s influence in Navid Kermani, “From Revelation to Interpretation: Naṣr Hamid Abū Zayd and the Literary Study of the Qur’an,” \textit{Modern Muslim Intellectuals and the Qur’an}, ed. Suha Taji-Farouki (London: Oxford & the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2004), 180-1.} and some studies that emphasize his pluralistic hermeneutics.\footnote{Kermani, “From Revelation to Interpretation,” for instance 181-2; Peter Matthews Wright, “Modern Qur’anic Hermeneutics,” a dissertation at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2008), for instance 123-4.} At least, in early studies on Abū Zayd, his non-ideological, non-subjective orientation is strikingly highlighted,\footnote{Read for instance Moch. Nur Ichwan, \textit{Meretas Kesarjanaan Kritis al-Qur’an: Teori Hermeneutika Naṣr Abū Zayd} (Jakarta: Teraju, 2003).} and Abū Zayd actually consulted not only with Gadamer but also with other hermeneuts, including Hirsch and Ricoeur.\footnote{Kusmana, “Hermeneutika Humanistik Naṣr Hamid Abū Zayd: Al-Qur’an sebagai Wacana,” \textit{Kanz Philosophia} 2, no. 2 (December 2012): 267.} Abū Zayd’s hermeneutical method is closer to that of Fazlur Rahman in the sense that both seek to, as M.J. Elmi puts it, “transcend the literal meaning of Qur’anic verses to fulfil
the demand of the new context on the one hand, and also objectively attribute the new modes of understanding to God, on the other.⁸²

Abū Zayd – similar to Rahman – is more inclined to insist on the humanity of the Qur’ān (bashariyyat al-nass), ⁸³ or what Sukidi calls ‘humanistic definitions of the Qur’ān,’ ⁸⁴ which may be seen as weakening the certainty of grasping the divine intention. ⁸⁵ Indeed, he sees neither can the meaning of the text signify the authorial intention, nor can it be left to the text to speak of its meaning. ⁸⁶ However, Abū Zayd suggests that this should not rule out the possibility of accessing a correct understanding. ⁸⁷ Even though Abū Zayd advocates a rational approach, promotes interpretational diversity (instead of supporting the idea to limit Islam into one valid interpretation), denies the existence of any absolutely binding claim to truth in the realm of interpretation, and argues for an individual perception of truth, ⁸⁸ he “does allow for the idea that some sort of truth in the understanding process is generated.” ⁸⁹

Abū Zayd does not see that the meaning of the text is constructed by the reader alone. For him, the text is not a silent object, so a reader could not carry it in any direction. The relation between the reader and the text is neither that of ikhdā‘ (forcing submission of the text) nor that of khudū‘ (submission), rather dialectical one. ⁹⁰

Still in line with this notion of dialectical relation, Abū Zayd emphasizes the importance of both ma’nā (meaning) and maghāzā (significance) – a Hirsch-inspired distinction. The former is the historical, original meaning of the text (as understood by the first addressees), which is fixed, while the latter is the recontextualized meaning, which is changeable as it is related to different persons or

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⁸⁹ Völker, “Quran and Reform,” 165.

situations.\textsuperscript{91} A reader should seek to first of all understand or reveal the firm ‘meaning’ and then find its varying ‘significance’.\textsuperscript{92} The latter should be firmly based on the first and rationally connected to it.\textsuperscript{93} For this reason, a reader, in his effort to recover the stable meaning, has to have adequate knowledge on socio-historical context of seventh-century Arabia during which the Qur’an was revealed – a suggestion also echoed in Rahman’s hermeneutical theory.

It is based on such a loyalty to the historical meaning that, in Abū Zayd’s view, one might distinguish between objective interpretation and non-objective interpretation. The former is the one that is in accordance with the understanding of the audience of revelation, as indicated by linguistic features available in the text, while the latter is the one that is not based on historical facts and linguistic analysis.\textsuperscript{94}

The awareness of the difference between the meaning and the significance, as well as the awareness of the necessity of that the latter should be firmly related to the former, for Abū Zayd, is a key to a (more) valid interpretation. An interpreter is supposed to always engage in a ‘recurring movement’ between the two interrelated dimensions of meaning and significance in order to bring about ‘productive reading’ (\textit{al-qirā’ah al-muntijah}). By setting up such methodological rules, Abū Zayd provides a way for contextualization, but at the same time impede any effort to jump to a certain ‘desired’ ideological conclusion.\textsuperscript{95}

On the other hand, Abū Zayd does not agree with any fixation of meaning in the sense that no one should consider his interpretation to be final. While such principles can lead to objectivity, Abū Zayd insists that it is not an absolute objectivity, rather a contextual/cultural objectivity, a kind of objectivity that applies only for specific contexts but not for all contexts.\textsuperscript{96} It seems that this position – aspiring to objectivity but objecting to fixation – might be explained by Abū Zayd’s criticism toward \textit{tahlīn} (biased, tendentious reading) exemplified by Islamists and some modernists. They tend to

\textsuperscript{91}Yusuf Rahman, “The Hermeneutical Theory,” 152.
\textsuperscript{93}Yusuf Rahman, “The Hermeneutical Theory,” 156, 159.
\textsuperscript{94}Kusmana, “Hermeneutika Humanistik Naṣr Hamid Abu Zayd,” 278.
\textsuperscript{96}Yusuf Rahman, “The Hermeneutical Theory,” 159.
ignore or distort the historical meaning of the text, if not – Islamists especially – deny the need for contextualization, for the sake of their ideological reading.\(^{97}\)

Abū Zayd seeks to free religious thought from power manipulation (whether political, social or religious) and constructs an “open, democratic humanistic hermeneutics,”\(^{98}\) but it is precisely consistent with this agenda that he frequently expresses his opposition to ideologization. Abū Zayd’s ‘discursive turn’ can in fact be explained by such an opposition as well. He suggests that if one sees the Qur’ān as a text, one would be easily trapped in the ideologization of the Qur’ān. He believes that viewing the Qur’ān as a discourse is very helpful for not making the Qur’ān a subject of ideologization. He says that approaching the Qur’ān as only a ‘text’ might increase “the possibilities of interpretation and reinterpretation” but at the same time paves the way for “the ideological manipulation not only of the meaning but also of the ‘structure’, following the pattern of polemic interpretation of theologians.”\(^{99}\)

Abū Zayd argues that without reinvoking the Qur’ān’s living status as a ‘discourse’, democratic hermeneutics is unachievable. As to why we need an open, democratic, humanistic hermeneutics, he explains that precisely the reason is to free religious thought from power manipulation “in order to return the formulation of ‘meaning’ back to the community of believers.”\(^{100}\)

However, Abū Zayd seeks to avoid any chaotic democracy of reading that might be implied by Gadamer’s theory. It is why he still emphasizes the importance of ‘method’, unlike Gadamer who rejects it,\(^{101}\) and considers the literary approach to the Qur’ān to be an adequate way to arrive at the ‘first meaning’ (\textit{ma'na}) at least.\(^{102}\) This literary reading is mainly aimed at grasping the use of language, metaphors, and symbolic expressions of the specific time of the emergence of the discourses.\(^{103}\) For Abū Zayd, treating the Qur’ān as a

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\(^{99}\)Abū Zayd, \textit{Rethinking the Qur’ān}, 10.
\(^{100}\)Abū Zayd, \textit{Rethinking the Qur’ān}, 11.
\(^{102}\)Völker, “Quran and Reform,” 157.
\(^{103}\)Völker, “Quran and Reform,” 158.
discourse means that we do not deal with *sūrah* or *āyah* as independent units, rather with the identified discourse.\(^{104}\)

Seeing the Qur’an as a discourse, for Abū Zayd, serves as a way out from ideologization made possible by the approach that treats the Qur’an as a text. Characterized by misappropriation and an effort to close the meaning, such ideologization is allowed by outward contradictions in the Qur’an. Those contradictions leave rooms for different schools of thought to dispute. By seeing the Qur’an as a set of discourses, we would not see those contradictions any longer, rather difference of discourse, difference of audience and difference of situation during the era of revelation. Once we realize these differences, we are exposed to open possibilities one of which the people could opt democratically.\(^{105}\)

Despite his suggestion on democratic hermeneutics, it seems that Abū Zayd sees no contradiction between this idea and his emphasis on a ‘scientific/academic’ (*‘ilmīyah*) understanding of the Qur’an. He sees *tafsīr* as a ‘science’ which requires certain qualifications, such as knowledge on linguistics, history and *‘ulūm al-Qur‘ān*.\(^{106}\) He aspires to a more scientific understanding of the Qur’an, and recommends a literary approach to achieve it as well as to unload layers of ideological interpretation.\(^{107}\)

### C. Contemporary Critiques of Objectivism

The emergence of postmodernism, which criticizes the tendency of modernism toward ways of thinking that put much emphasis on regularity, linearity and objectivity, has an impact on the rethinking of Islam.\(^{108}\) That is why, despite the continuing quest for objective approaches to the Qur’an, there have been many Muslim intellectuals criticizing the objectivists’ point of view. These critics emphasize the argument that an interpreter of the Qur’an – as is the case with an interpreter of any text – cannot approach the text without

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\(^{104}\)Völker, “Quran and Reform,” 158.


\(^{107}\)Kermani, “From Revelation to Interpretation,” 175-6.

\(^{108}\)The influence of postmodernist thinkers, such as Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998), Richard Rorty (1931-2007), and Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007), in Muslim discourses can be seen for instance in the projects of such Muslim scholars as Mohammed Arkoun (1928-2010), Akbar S. Ahmed (1943-), and Ziauddin Sardar (1951-) – just to name a few.
certain experiences, values, beliefs and presuppositions. How do the interpreter’s presuppositions and experiences ensure the subjectivity in interpretation?

Abdullah Saeed explains it as follows: The presuppositions and experiences of the interpreter can be reflected in – to mention only some examples: 1) the texts chosen for examination; 2) the framework employed to understand and interpret the texts; 3) the emphases given to certain segments of the text or shades of meaning (which may or may not be in agreement with the understandings of the text prevailing at the period of the revelation); and 4) certain values or viewpoints through which the texts are read.

In addition, the critics relate the unavoidability of subjectivity to the nature of text itself. As Saeed argues, “a high degree of subjectivity associated with the meaning of a text,” would remain as “many words are related to meanings that can be extremely difficult to clearly specify,” which makes sure that any effort to encompass all aspects of their meanings would be an intricate task.

Saeed adds that “the concept of indirect meaning further complicates the idea of a simple and objective meaning of the Qur’anic text.” In his view, any interpretation – whatever it could be given to the text – would never wholly encompass that text – however simple or familiar it might be.

Subjectivists also refer to broader concepts like history and tradition to emphasize that the meaning of words is always in process and never value free. Any interpreter cannot escape from tradition, history or language. No scripture, in Tracy’s words quoted by Esack, “emerges from a vacuum and comes to us unencumbered by the plural and ambiguous history of the effects of its own production and all its former receptions.”

Critics of objectivism emphasize the major role played by the interpreter in shaping the interpretation. Even if an interpreter claim to be loyal to the structure of the Qur’an, subjectivists tend to view it from the reader-response theory. In his criticism toward coherence-

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111 Saeed, Interpreting the Qur’an, 104.
112 Saeed, Interpreting the Qur’an, 105.
113 Esack, Qur’an, Liberation & Pluralism, 76.
114 Esack, Qur’an, Liberation & Pluralism, 77.
oriented approach to the Qur’an, Andrew Rippin for instance suggests that, since structures proposed by one scholar are different from those proposed by another scholar reading the very same text, these structures do not naturally “emerge” from the text, but are in fact imposed by the reader. Moreover, Rippin argues that such structures are readings of the text, which also miss an important part of any text: disruptions, namely “sections which disturb an easy reading, which do not fit, which break the language or the theme or the structure.” Rippin reminds that such sections tend to be downplayed rather than brought to light. In Rippin’s view, “such disruptions may also convey meaning through the very act of disruption; they may also act as disruptions to shake the reader to attention.”

Similarly, even if an interpreter believes that his method guarantees that no external factor influence his interpretation of the Qur’an, critics would not see it as something that could diminish the tremendous influence of the interpreter’s preconceptions. Abdolkarim Sorush’s criticism toward al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī’s method of interpretation is just an example. Sorush argues that al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī, just like other interpreters, had a specific cognitive interest. In the case of al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī’s tafsir, from Sorush’s point of view, that it is his acceptance of modern rationality that plays the decisive role. According to Sorush, an interpretation is overshadowed by the interpreting person and that all exegeses can be regarded as tafsīr bi al-ra’y (personal opinion-based interpretation). For him, it is totally natural for all exegetes to have a specific interest in interpreting and subsequently overwhelm the text with this interest. The substantial differences between Qur’an interpretations are proof that all interpretations are in fact bi al-ra’y. Sorush maintains the idea that “the sense humans make of Qur’anic text can never be taken to be one and the same as the text itself and its real intentions.”

The impossibility of the equation between the text and its interpretation is commonly stressed by critics of objectivism. In his proposal for a thematic method, Hasan Hanafi (Hassan Hanafi) asserts that “an accurate explanation of a text as a paraphrase according to linguistic principles is a mere tautology.” Adopting a Heideggero-

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Gadamerian approach, Ḥanafi insists that there is no single interpretation of a text, and there is no true or false interpretation, but “there are only different efforts to approach the text from different angles with different motivations.”

Like Esack’s and Sorush’s, Ḥanafi’s ‘liberative hermeneutics’ is based on the notion that no interpretation can escape from the interpreter’s interest. The conflict of interpretation is seen as a conflict of interest, and the text is seen as a vehicle for human interests. Inspired by Habermasian critical hermeneutics or a historical materialist approach, he suggests that “each interpretation expresses the socio-political commitment of the interpreter.” For Ḥanafi, interpretation functions as an “ideological weapon” exploited by different socio-political powers (from the conservative to the revolutionary) either to sustain or to change the status quo.

Ḥanafi’s approach is not concerned with the eternal meaning of the Qur’an. According to him, “an eternal meaning of the Qur’an is a hypothesis and a presupposition for which there is no proof,” and “it would be pretentious for the interpreter to claim that he knows the eternal meaning of the Qur’an.” In his view, the validity of an interpretation is proven by its power, and theoretical validity does not exist.

D. Moderate Claims to Objectivity

Some scholars – including some critics – have tried to find a seemingly middle way in the objectivist-subjectivist debate. While Rahman and Abū Zayd already discussed above might also be categorized as scholars promoting moderate claims to objectivity, here I would highlight scholars who put more emphasis on subjectivity but still welcome or aspire to some degree of objectivity.

Abdullah Saeed, who acknowledges the inherent element of subjectivity in any interpretation, emphasizes that there are limits to the meaning of the text and that some interpretations are more objective than others. He for instance suggests that, while all

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119 Ḥanafi, “Method of Thematic Interpretation,” 203.


121 Ḥanafi, “Method of Thematic Interpretation,” 210-1.
understanding is not free from the influence of pre-existing ideas and experiences, this does not mean that one should rule out the claim to knowledge: that some conclusions are more reliable and more likely to be accurate than others.\textsuperscript{122}

On the one hand, Saeed considers achieving a completely objective interpretation as impossible. On the other hand, he believes that some interpretations are more accurate and more reliable than others. On the one hand, he disagrees with the notion that the meaning of the text should be limited to one. On the other hand, he recognizes limits to the meaning of the text.\textsuperscript{123}

Saeed does not want to argue for total subjectivity and relativity. Rather, he is concerned with outlining necessary ways to “satisfactory,” “accurate,” “reliable” and “legitimate” interpretation. One of his recommendations for that purpose is to pay attention to the linguistic context that includes the “broader context” one of which is “the overall content of the Qur’an” and the “narrower context” (what comes before and after a given word/phrase/verse). Saeed still insists on the validity of method-based interpretation and disapproves “unrestricted imaginative leaps” (e.g. theological ‘leaps’) in interpretation.

Promoting a moderate claim to objectivity, Asma Barlas argues that, while “it is unrealistic to claim total objectivity,” a reading is not completely biased or illusory. A reading might never be entirely objective, but “subjectivity does not rule out the possibility of saying something that also is true.” Quoting Ricoeur, she understands subjectivity as “not so much what initiates understanding as what terminates it,” and suggests that ideally, “rather than imposing ourselves on the text, we ‘unrealize’ ourselves in front of it, ‘receiving from it an enlarged self.’”\textsuperscript{124}

Promoting a similar middle way, Nadim Macit argues for “an understanding which aims accessing at an objectivity on the base of critical rational tradition.”\textsuperscript{125} According to him, it is unfortunate that the ‘true meaning’ has been traditionally searched for between subject

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{123}Saeed, \textit{Interpreting the Qur’an}, chapter 9.
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and object, whereas it exists in “a view which exposes the totality of network between subject and object, which is aware of the impacts and which fits to the methodological criteria of sufficient understanding.”

Macit emphasizes that meaning is closely linked with the collective knowledge of an individual who is in fact understanding the Qur’an peculiar to him, but still regards interpretation as a pursuit to clarify the text’s ‘first meaning’. He regards ‘absolute objectivity’ as fantasy, but agrees with the notion – quoted from Naṣr Abū Zayd – that the objectivity that is possibly realized is a ‘cultural objectivity’ dependent upon space and time. Macit acknowledges obstacles – which include socio-cultural factors and beyond – to accessing the objective meaning of the Qur’an, but on the other hand still speaks of the awareness of these factors coupled with the use of various analyzing methods or deep contemplation as the unique way to achieve a relatively objective understanding and prevent excessive understandings. On the one hand, he is against what he calls ‘ideology of miserableness’ that provides no criterion for a true understanding of the text, and on the other hand, he refuses the extreme point of objective approach.

It might be to some extent reasonable to argue that Farid Esack also pursues a middle way, but in a different direction. While his approach is basically subjective and pragmatist or functionalist, Esack puts taqwā (an awareness of the presence of God) as the first key to understanding in his Qur’anic hermeneutic of liberation. Defining taqwā in this context as “protecting the interpreter from him or herself,” Esack seems to regard it as a more feasible alternative to ‘objective scholarship’. With taqwā, he argues, “there is still no guarantee of absolute meaning,” but it is “the most significant hermeneutical key to minimize the extent to which the text can be manipulated for narrow personal or ideological advantage.”

E. The De-emphasis of Extra-Qur’anic Sources in Tafsir

In the modern development of exegetical thought, the idea to let the Qur’an explain itself has become quite attractive. This idea for

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130Esack, Qur’ān, Liberation & Pluralism, 89-90.
some scholars would mean that the role of external interpretive devices traditionally considered to be important and most helpful needs to be revisited. This explains why the support for tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an, or any holistic approach to the Qur’an at large, is often accompanied with the de-emphasis of the role extra-Qur’anic sources can play in tafsir.

While reviewing the idea of nazm in tafsir literature, Mustansir Mir has once observed this phenomenon. In his view, there have been many modern Muslim scholars who “attach diminished importance to several traditionally important exegetical sources and have chosen to focus on the Qur’anic text itself.” Mir notices that in their study of the Qur’an – as an attempt to make it relevant to contemporary problems and challenges, “they tend to accord primacy to the Qur’anic text itself over the traditional repertoire of sources and devices for understanding that text.”

What Mir highlights might be called as a trend of ‘Qur’an-oriented approach’ in modern Qur’an interpretation, that is a tendency to put greater dependence upon the Qur’anic text itself throughout the course of interpretation, and consider external sources as at best secondary. This trend is marked by reliance on the Qur’an itself, which is considered to be the most legitimate way of tafsir, to a point that any imposition of extra-Qur’anic ideas into the Qur’an can thereby be avoided, and the role of external interpretive sources can be minimized on the basis of the idea that the Qur’an itself – and not external sources – should serve as the judge for multiple exegetical opinions and various meanings possibly derived from the text.

This trend could be more noticeably seen in the objectivist approaches of some modern exegetes and intellectuals. Scholars of this trend, such as al-Farahi, Ishâhi, al-Tabâtabâ’î, Bint al-Shâti and Rahman, argue that to interpret the Qur’an, one should not predominantly refer to external authorities like narrated traditions of the Prophet and the early generation, or the opinions of other exegetes. Instead, to interpret a Qur’anic word or verse, one’s primary reference should go to other parts of the Qur’an where the clarified meaning of it might be found. External sources – whether sound hadiths, established historical facts or perhaps the scriptures of the earlier nations – might be displayed in order to endorse one’s

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interpretation, but not to illuminate a verse and inject a meaning from outside. As al-Farahi puts it, “the hadith narratives work only as explanatory and non-categorical resource which must accord with the foundational one and may never override it.”

In these scholars’ paradigm, greater reliance on the narrations of earlier generations might even be regarded as “a concealed form of *tafsir bi al-ra’y*”. As mentioned earlier, al-Tabataba’i is said to have argued that “every hermeneutic other than tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an falls outside the category of true tafsir and tends toward *ra’y*.” He questions the notion that the Qur’an needs other things to act as a guide, whereas it declares itself as “a clear explanation to everything” (*tibyan li kull shay*) and “an illuminating light” (*nur mubin*). Scholars, like al-Farahi, who define tafsir *bi al-ra’y* differently, might also share this belief in the possibility and necessity of making the Qur’an the most reliable guide to itself. He clearly states that “the status of categorical resource of exegesis is exclusive for the Qur’an,” and it “does not depend on anything external to it ... in making its purport clear.” Similarly, as I already mentioned, Bint al-Sha’i’s interpretive methodology seeks to posit the Qur’an itself as the ‘judge’ (*hakim*) for available interpretive opinions and possibilities.

Even among modern progressive intellectuals, one can find continued efforts to free the Qur’an from perceived non-Qur’anic superimposed ideas and other texts. One could find such a strong emphasis on drawing ideas from within the Qur’an itself and not incorporating ideas from outside sources into the Qur’an, for instance, in Rahman’s hermeneutical projects as well as those of scholars following in his footsteps.

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These scholars emphasize the inequality in authority between the Qur’an and those secondary sources. This implies that greater reliance on secondary literature, such as hadith/sunnah and sirah, and limited reliance on the Qur’an itself in interpretation should be considered inappropriate.

While most of these scholars do not abandon those secondary sources at all, they share a similar basic claim to that of Ahl al-Qur’an (the Qur’anites/Qur’anists) in that the Qur’an is self-sufficient in explaining itself. While Ahl al-Qur’an has this claim on the basis of their disbelief in the authority of hadith and their view that the Qur’an is the sole source of religious guidance – something that makes them different, their interpretive approach to the Qur’an might be considered as representing an extreme form of ‘Qur’an-oriented approach’ in Qur’an interpretation. However, herein I would not confuse my reader with incorporating the controversial Ahl al-Qur’an in the discussion that follows. Their approach to the Qur’an is an inevitable consequence for their rejection of hadith, while in what I refer to as the ‘trend of Qur’an-oriented approach’ here, secondary sources have not been abandoned at all though their long-established central role has been seriously challenged.

If the debate on hermeneutics is seen from the question whether the Qur’an possesses clarity or not, scholars of this trend – al-Ṭabātabā’i and al-Farāhī are striking examples – would tend to view that the meaning of the Qur’an is clear, rather than that it can only be correctly understood with the aid of a tradition, that is pregiven judgments, interpretations and commentaries. They emphasize the sufficiency of the Qur’an and the immediacy of its meaning.

The dependence on external sources is now diminished and replaced by the exploration of various kinds of intra-Qur’anic connections: 1) the relationship between all parts available in a verse;
2) the relationship between a verse and its surrounding verses, both the preceding (al-sâbiq) and the succeeding (al-lâhiq); 3) the relationship between a statement with the textual context (siyâq) of a set of verses where it is located; 4) the relationship between a verse and the pillar/central theme (‘amâd) or the objective (gharîf hadîf) of the surah where it is located; 5) the relationship between a verse and another part of the Qur’an containing a similar message; 6) the relationship between a verse and another part of the Qur’an giving more detailed, clearer information; 7) the relationship between a verse and another part of the Qur’an possibly useful to clarify some possible meanings hinted at by the verse; 8) the relationship between a verse and other verses whose meaning seem to be in conflict; 9) the relationship between a verse and other verses having similar or different linguistic features; 10) the relationship between the use of a word or phrase in a verse and the entire usage of the word or phrase in the Qur’an; 11) the relationship between a conclusion derived from a verse and other Qur’anic verses; 12) the relationship between variant modes of reading (qirâ‘at); 13) the relationship between different sections of a surah; and 14) the relationship between two or more consecutive surahs. Most of these types of intra-Qur’anic connections would be later on explained in the next chapter.

In the trend of Qur’an-oriented interpretive approach, there has been a strong belief in the possibility of reading the most part of the Qur’an (if not the whole of it) in its own light, as well as its adequacy and its potentials to lead to promising results. While its possibility and sufficiency are beyond the question of my study, the question of its potential to curb scholastic subjectivism is the centre of attention in this study. Therefore, in what follows, I would mention some existing views – not necessarily from those scholars of this trend – concerning this question.

Al-Farâhî142 and Isľâhî143 are of the opinion that tafsîr al-Qur’ân bi al-Qur’ân might help us close the door of disputation among different sectarian groups since it, if properly applied (mainly through the deep reflection or tadabbur of the Qur’anic nazm), could remove the possibility of multiple interpretations. This implies that an interpreter would benefit from such an approach to go beyond his own sectarian subjectivism to arrive at a position where available confronting views are lifted or resolved.

142 Al-Farâhî, Exordium to Coherence, 29, 50.
143 Mir, Coherence in the Qur’an, 34, 36.
Muḥsin al-Muṭayrī would perhaps agree with such an opinion, but he shows that *tafsīr al-Qurʿān bi al-Qurʿān* has in fact been used by almost all sectarian schools. This use is very often a misuse or an abuse if seen from his Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah-rooted view. Al-Muṭayrī’s study implies that sectarian subjectivism has often overwhelmed or hijacked the practice of *tafsīr al-Qurʿān bi al-Qurʿān*. However, he assumes that, when properly applied in accordance with certain commonly acknowledged rules and standards, *tafsīr al-Qurʿān bi al-Qurʿān* would only lead to correct conclusions free from any bias.

Similarly, Khālid al-Sabt stresses the idea that the validity of *tafsīr al-Qurʿān bi al-Qurʿān* would depend much upon the *ijtihād* (in the sense of objective and rigorous scholarly endeavor) on the part of the interpreter. It would not guarantee a correct conclusion to which all would be led, but it still serves as the most important step in interpreting the Qurʾān. However, he does not see *ijtihād* as something that is necessarily influenced by the interpreter’s subjectivism. Al-Farāhī, Iṣlāḥī, al-Muṭayrī and al-Sabt – among others – seem to see interpretive *ijtihād* or *tadabbur* as an innocent way to pursue objectivity and minimize subjectivity. On the other hand, from the perspective of theories emphasizing the role of the reader in constructing texts, any interpretive *ijtihād*, *tadabbur* or any interpretation would be seen as naturally subjective. Taking a closer look at the nature of *ijtihād* or how it is practiced in *tafsīr al-Qurʿān bi al-Qurʿān* is therefore important to address the question of its potential to curb scholastic subjectivism.

So far, this chapter has outlined objectivists’ views as well as varying criticism to these views, and revealed that such an intertextual approach has become quite central in the objectivist approaches. The chapter shows that three different viewpoints exist: 1) that the Qurʾān could and should be approached in an objective manner (so that the interpretation would be reasonable, unideological and free from extraneous, subjective influence); 2) that Qurʾān interpretation could

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147 See for instance Rippin, “Contemporary Scholarly Understandings.”
not escape from subjectivity; and 3) that even though complete objectivity in Qur’an interpretation is not possible, some interpretations are more objective (accurate, reliable and not manipulative) than others. From these perspectives, one can have the following questions with regard to the subject of this study: 1) whether or not *tafsîr al-Qur’ân bi al-Qur’ân* is a truly objective way to approach the Qur’an; 2) whether or not *tafsîr al-Qur’ân bi al-Qur’ân* can be free from subjectivity; and 3) whether or not *tafsîr al-Qur’ân bi al-Qur’ân* can be a factor that makes an interpretation more objective than others. Addressing such questions would be the task of the remaining chapters.
Chapter III
TAFSIR OF THE QUR’ĀN BY THE QUR’ĀN: ORIGIN, CONCEPTIONS AND ITS HERMENEUTIC RELEVANCE

This chapter is mainly dedicated to provide a more detailed elaboration on how *tafsir al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* has been conceived by Muslim scholars. How its parameters are defined would be my particular attention as they would become a useful tool by which one can assess a Qur’an commentary. This is obviously important considering the need for proving that *al-Mizān* and *Adwā’ al-Bayān* are reasonably among the ones that intensively use *tafsir al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* methodology. Hence, while the first chapter has put forward such an argument based on some previous studies, this chapter would show a clearer framework by which one can be convinced that such a claim is plausible. In addition, the elaboration of *tafsir al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* in this chapter would make clear that the sphere where my study mostly operate – intra-Qur’ānic connections – is a crucial element of *tafsir al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*.

In the final part of this chapter, the value of *tafsir al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* would be seen from the perspective of Western hermeneutics so as to provide comparable parameters and simultaneously re-highlight its relevance with the larger objectivism-subjectivism debate.

A. Origin

1. History and Definition of the Term

Portraying al-Tābahā’ī’s view on *tafsir al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*, Medoff describes this method as “a new yet familiar hermeneutic”.¹ It is ‘new’ because the vast majority of exegetes have left it unpursued, but it is ‘familiar’ because its importance has been long highlighted and it has often appeared as a minor component in *tafsir bi al-ma’thūr* and beyond. In terms of the practice, it has been often implied that *tafsir al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* has been exemplified by the Prophet, the Companions, the Successors, and the Imams.²


Among the salaf, it is said that ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Zayd ibn Aslam (d. 798) is the one that was most concerned with tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān – noticeable from traditions narrated from him in al-Ṭabarānī’s tafsīr. The work of al-Ṭabarānī (d. 923) itself is regarded as one of (earliest) tafsīrs that often demonstrate tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān, as not only does al-Ṭabarānī mention the traditions narrated from the Companions and the Successors, which exemplify tafsīr of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān, but also put forward his own tafsīr of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān.

Nonetheless, the recognition of tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān as an important, necessary interpretive methodological step seemed to appear far much later. Even though al-Zamakhsharī (1075–1144) and al-Rāzī (1149–1209) once pointed out its value, it was Ibn Taymiyyah (1263–1328) who introduced it very clearly as the most important way in a Qur’ānic hermeneutic, through his work, Muqaddimah fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr – albeit in a brief statement. Walid Saleh argues that Ibn Taymiyyah’s placement of this interpretive step at the top of a hierarchical order was a novel development. In post-Ibn Taymiyyah

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6 With regard to the best way of interpreting the Qur’ān, Ibn Taymiyyah states, “The best method in it [tafsīr] is that the Qur’ān be interpreted by the Qur’ān. Where the Qur’ān sums up (a point), the same point is elaborated in another place. What is briefly mentioned in one place is explained in detail in another place.” See Ibn Taymiyyah, Muqaddimah fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1997), 84; also his al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, n.d.), II, 231.

books, its status as a most important interpretive device has been more often underlined. Moreover, it can be argued that Ibn Taymiyyah’s interpretive framework has a role in making Ibn Kathir’s tafsir one of (post-al-Tabari) tafsirs that show many instances of *tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an*.9

However, it is only quite recently, from the 18th century onwards, that some scholars (e.g. Muḥammad Ismā‘īl al-Ṣanʿānī [d. 1768],10 Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ismā‘īl al-Ṣanʿānī [d. 1798],11 Thānā‘ullāh al-Ṣan‘ānī, 12 al-Ṣan‘ānī, al-Ṭabāṭabā‘ī, Ḥaḍīth, and al-Ṣādiqī al-Tīrānī) seek to publish specific works on Qur’an interpretation primarily based on the Qur’an. While *tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an* has often been discussed by scholars, its definition is rarely given. According to al-Buraydi, there are two possible reasons for this: 1) scholars assume that providing some of its examples – without its definition – would be more than enough; 2) scholars regard it as a type of tafsir so giving its definition – just like *tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-sunnah* – is considered not urgent; the definition of tafsir would be enough.13

Some recent scholars have tried to define it in line with the definition of tafsir. Al-Buraydi, al-Ṭayyār and al-Ṭayyār定义*tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an* as elucidation (*bayān*) or disclosure (*kashf*) of the meaning of a Qur’anic verse with the help of another Qur’anic verse (from any angle, *min ayy wajh*).14

However, *tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an* has often been used in its broader sense to refer to any effort to link between Qur’anic parts – not necessarily the one that contains *bayān* – to include literatures on, for instance, *al-wujūḥ wa al-nazā‘ir* and *mutashabih al-Qur’an*.15 This term is also loosely used to refer to what is considered as its unique

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10His tafsir is entitled *Fatḥ al-Raḥmān fi Tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an*.
11His tafsir is entitled *Tafsir al-Qur’an bi Kalām al-Raḥmān*.
variation, like Ibn al-‘Arabī’s approach in which he seeks to imitate the Qur’ān, modeling the doctrine, the method of interpretation and the form in which the interpretation is presented after the Qur’ān itself.\footnote{Syed Rizwan Zamir, “‘Tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi’l Qur’ān’: The Hermeneutics of Imitation and ‘Adab’ in Ibn ‘Arabī’s Interpretation of the Qur’ān,” Islamic Studies 50, no. 1 (2011): 5-23.}

With its meaning broadened, one might find difficulty in distinguishing what is really a \textit{tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān} and what is not. That is why, based on whether or not it contains bayān, al-Ṭayyār distinguishes two models of \textit{tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān}: 1) the one that focuses on bayān (elucidation) or clear interpretation (\textit{al-tafsīr al-ṣarīḥ}); and 2) the one that presents no bayān.\footnote{Al-Ṭayyār, \textit{al-Tahār}, 42; al-Ṭayyār, “Maṣādir al-Tafsīr (1),” 3-4.} The first is \textit{tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān} in its narrower definition, while the second is \textit{tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān} in its broader definition. The use of the term in its broader sense is, however, not surprising. The term \textit{tafsīr} itself may be used to refer to any sort of commentary – regardless whether or not it focuses on presenting bayān.

While different scholars might have their own understanding of the scope of \textit{tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān}, and there has been a criticism of the extension of the term,\footnote{Ibn Taymiyyah, \textit{Muqaddimah fi Uṣul al-Tafsīr}, 84; Ibn Taymiyyah, \textit{al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr}, II, 231.} it is in its wide ranging modes that the rest of this study would most of the time mean by \textit{tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān}.\footnote{Al-Shanqīṭī, who follows Ibn Taymiyyah’s interpretive methodology, gives a large number of examples of \textit{ijmāl} (summation or abridgment) and bayān (elaboration),\footnote{Al-Shanqīṭī, \textit{Adwa’ al-Bayān fi Iḍāḥ al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān} (Mecca: Dār ‘Ālam al-Fawā’id, 1426 AH), I, 10-36.} necessitates an interpreter to be always aware of the possibility of finding a more elaborated or clearer version.

\section*{2. Conceptual Roots and Foundations}

Here I would highlight some concepts which have led scholars to the idea of \textit{tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān}. If one looks at the reason given by Ibn Taymiyyah and others for favoring the interpretation of the Qur’ān with the Qur’ān,\footnote{See Muhammad al-Amin al-Shanqīṭī, \textit{Adwā’ al-Bayān fi Iḍāḥ al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān} (Mecca: Dār ‘Ālam al-Fawā’id, 1426 AH), I, 10-36.} one finds that there is a simple conceptual basis for it: that some Qur’ānic parts give a more detailed statement related to a certain issue than others. The fact that the Qur’ān contains numerous kinds of \textit{ijmāl} (summation or abridgment) and bayān (elaboration), necessitates an interpreter to be always aware of the possibility of finding a more elaborated or clearer version.
for a Qur’anic statement/word he is dealing with. A verse possibly provides an abridged statement that is elaborated or clarified in another place in the Qur’an. In light of this concept, *tafṣīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* would mostly consist of *bayān al-ijmāl* (elucidation of the abridgment).

Broader than this concept of *ijmāl* and *bayān* is the classical exegetical dictum that *al-Qur’ān yufassīru ba’dūhu ba’dān* (different parts of the Qur’an interpret each other). This principle, that is often attributed to the Companions, mostly ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib for his statement in *Nahj al-Balāghah* that the Qur’ān *yanṭīqu ba’dūhu ba’dān wa yashḥadu ba’dūhu ba’dān* (parts of the Qur’ān speak and testify one another), requires an interpreter bring different parts of the Qur’an together to notice the way they elucidate each other. Concepts known in ‘*‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*, such as *mutashābih al-Qur’ān*, *al-wujūh wa al-nazā’ir*, *al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh*, and *al-muhkam wa al-mutashābih* are considered to be helpful for this sake.21

Another concept leading to *tafṣīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* is the concept of *naṣm*, which assumes that the Qur’ān possesses a structural and thematic coherence. With this notion, which is quite noticeable for instance in the hermeneutics of al-Farāhī and Islāhī, different parts of the Qur’an are brought together in order to find the coherence of the Qur’ān. In addition to attention to how two or more parts of the Qur’ān shed light on each other, this concept requires attention to *munāsabah* (harmonious linkage between preceding and succeeding verses), *siyāq* (context or framework of meaning of a cluster of verses), *ruḥ al-tarkīb* (spirit of composition), *wiḥdah mawdū’īyah* (thematic unity), *wiḥdah bina’īyah* (structural unity) or *wiḥdat al-nasaq* (unity of arrangement) of a surah or even the whole Qur’ān, and the relationship between a verse and the central theme or objective (known as ‘*‘ummūd*, *mihvar, gharāḍ* or *hadaf*) of a surah or a cluster of verses.

While the concepts of *ijmāl* and *bayān*, *al-Qur’ān yufassīru ba’dūhu ba’dān*, and *naṣm* are related to presuppositions of the text, there are also concepts more related to the interpretive act that supports the necessity of *tafṣīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*, such as the notion of *tadabbur* (contemplation; deep reflection) and *istiṇṭāq* (hearing) as we have seen in the hermeneutics of al-Ṭabarānī (see Chapter II).

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B. Conceptions and Expectations

1. Urgency

*Tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi al-Qur'ān* is considered to be imperative for at least two kinds of reasons. Some reasons might be seen as driven more by religious motivation while others driven more by methodological concern. Religious motivation is noticeable in the arguments highlighting Qur’anic statements and/or examples found in the Prophetic tradition.

Some Qur’anic verses clearly indicates that God explains His *āyāt* (signs/verses), e.g. Q 2:187, 2:221, 6:105 and 75:19. It is, for instance, stated in Q 75:19, “Then upon Us is its clarification (bayān).” Accordingly, a reader of the Qur’ān had better notice how Allah provides explanation of Qur’anic verses in the Qur’ān itself. This could be realized if one seeks to interpret the Qur’ān with the Qur’ān.

In addition, as obvious in some verses (Q 4:82, 38:29, 47:24, 23:68), the Qur’ān urges man to perform *tadabbur* over it. For al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, *tadabbur* means to contemplate one verse after another, exactly the way by which *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* can be realized. This means that performing *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* means putting a Qur’ānic injunction into practice. As al-Buraydī notes it, *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* is among the most important way to practice *tadabbur*.

On the other hand, the Qur’ān warns people not to break it into parts. Some scholars understand 15:89-93 as a basis for holistically reading the Qur’ān as a textual unity. These verses give a warning to those who divided the Scripture into arbitrary parts (*al-muqtasimūn*), who have made the Qur’ān into shreds (performing *ta’dīyah*). Therefore, *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* is undoubtedly urgent for us to avoid “reading it in a decontextualized, selective, and piecemeal way.”

Since some examples of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* can be found in the traditions of the Prophet and the early Muslim generation,
performing *tafsîr al-Qur’ân bi al-Qur’ân* is also seen as to mean following their interpretive tradition – a good tradition inherited from those considered to be the best interpreters of the Qur’an. Performing *tafsîr al-Qur’ân bi al-Qur’ân* means following an interpretive method of the Prophet to whom the Qur’an was revealed and who served as the teacher (*mu’allim*) and the elucidator (*mubayyîn*) of the Qur’an.

The significance of *tafsîr al-Qur’ân bi al-Qur’ân* is also explained by some methodological reasons – related to effectiveness and accuracy. It is often emphasized that when the intended meaning is really made clear by the Qur’an itself, one has no need for other interpretive steps. As al-Farahî emphasizes, the Qur’an is the common guide for all, the basic criterion as well as the deciding force. The Qur’an itself is therefore the most authoritative source to comprehend it.

It is also often stressed that many parts of the Qur’an could not be properly understood without being connected with other parts. Without taking this step, one is more likely to come up with inaccurate conclusions. At least, one would find difficulties to have a clear picture of how the Qur’an treats the issue at hand.

2. Identification

There has been disagreement concerning ‘to which category of tafsîr does *tafsîr al-Qur’ân bi al-Qur’ân* belong?’ There are at least four opinions with regard to whether *tafsîr al-Qur’ân bi al-Qur’ân* is part of what-so-called tradition-based tafsîr (*tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr*) or not.

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32 While this term (or the like, such as *tafsîr bi al-rîwâyât* and *tafsîr bi al-manqûl*) has been widely used as an analytical term in scholarly works, it is important to remember that the use of this term might be inadequate, overgeneralized and ideological. For a brief, critical reading of the history/genealogy of this term, see Walid A. Saleh, “Preliminary Remarks on the Historiography of *tafsîr* in Arabic: A History of the Book Approach,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 12 (2010): 21-37.
Many scholars are of the opinion that it can be grouped under the heading of tradition-based tafsir.\textsuperscript{33} It is grouped so given that the Qur’an could be identified as something transmitted from God (\textit{al-ma‘naqūl ‘an Allāh}), included in the ‘established transmission’ (\textit{naql thābit}) category.\textsuperscript{34} The involvement of \textit{ijtihād} in \textit{tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān} does not mean that it is not part of \textit{tafsīr bi al-ma‘thūr}, because \textit{ijtihād} is in fact involved in Qur’ān interpretation with transmitted traditions of any kind (the Prophet’s tradition, opinions of the Companions, opinions of the Successors, and language).\textsuperscript{35}

In another point of view, it is considered a non-tradition-based tafsir provided that the Qur’an is not the words of a human being, rather the words of God (\textit{kalām Allāh}), which does not need to be validated and verified – unlike the narrated reports attributed to the Prophet, the Companions and the Successors. Tradition-based tafsir is characterized by a constant need for verification, screening, reconciliation of contradictory reports, and elimination by comparison – none of them are needed in \textit{tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān}.\textsuperscript{36}

Another view distinguishes it from both tradition-based tafsir and reason-based tafsir (\textit{tafsīr bi al-ra’y}) for one of these two reasons: a) \textit{tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān} can possibly be derived from tradition and reason simultaneously; b) in a more heavily Qur’an-based tafsir, the role of traditions (\textit{riwāyāt}) and reason can be secondary or minimum. This view assumes that \textit{tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān} could be applied as a more independent and separate approach to the Qur’an.\textsuperscript{37}

A bit differently, the last opinion regards it as a method that could be included either in tradition-based tafsir or in reason-based tafsir. It is part of tradition-based tafsir if we give emphasis to the


\textsuperscript{34} Al-Sabt, \textit{Qawā‘id al-Ta‘fīsīr}, I, 107.

\textsuperscript{35} Al-Sabt, \textit{Qawā‘id al-Ta‘fīsīr}, I, 106-7.

\textsuperscript{36} Salāḥ al-Khālidī, \textit{Ta‘īf al-Dārisān}, 148, 200.

source being used to interpret the Qur’an (al-mufassar bihi) and the way it comes to us (tariq wusulihi ilayná), but it is part of reason-based tafsir (tafsir bi al-ra’y) if we give weight to the practice of interpretation which relies on comprehension and intellectual creativity (al-fahm wa al-ijtihad). It could be part of tradition-based tafsir when the interpreting verses (al-ayah al-mufassirah) are clearly known from the sequence of the Qur’an itself, or from a sound hadith/tradition (tariq al-naqfi), but it could be part of reason-based tafsir when the interpreting verses are based on personal opinion and intellectual creativity (tariq al-istidlal al-ra’y wa al-istinbad).38

In fact, when we take a closer look at Qur’anic commentaries, we could find tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an inherently used either in tradition-based tafsir methodology, or reason-based tafsir methodology, or separately used as a distinctive methodology. Tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an could be found displayed in Qur’anic commentaries heavily relying on traditions, such as Ibn Kathir’s Tafsir al-Qur’an al-Azim and al-Tabari’s Jami’ al-Bayan, in Qur’anic commentaries relying more on reason, such as al-Razi’s Mafatih al-Ghayb, al-Zamakhshari’s al-Kashshaf and Ibn ‘Ashur’s al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir, and in Qur’anic commentaries intentionally focusing more on the methodology, such as al-Shanqiti’s Adwa’ al-Bayan, al-Tabatatabi’s al-Mizan, Islahi’s Tadabbur-i-Qur’an and al-Sadiqi’s al-Furqan.

Qur’anic commentaries heavily relying on tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an – such as the last four tafsirs – cannot be easily grouped under the popular heading of tafsir bi al-ma’tthur or tafsir bi al-ra’y since they put tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an as the key and dominant part of their methodology.

3. Varieties

The most noticeable feature of tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an is the presence of other verses or parts in the interpretation of a certain Qur’anic verse or part. In most cases, tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an would consist of two main components: ‘the interpreted verse’ (al-ayah al-mufassarah or al-mufassar ‘alayhi) and ‘the interpreting verse’ (al-ayah al-mufassirah or al-mufassar bihi). However, as indicated in the definition, it actually covers a wide range of types.

Various classifications of the forms or types of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* have been introduced by numerous scholars, such as al-Shanqīṭī, al-Awṣī, al-Sabt, Āl Shalash, al-Muṭṭayrī, and al-Burayḍī. Al-Shanqīṭī, al-Sabt, and al-Burayḍī put forward longer lists of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*. Al-Shanqīṭī, in his introduction to *Aḍwā’ al-Bayān*, mentions not less than 22 representing forms as examples of the elucidation (*bayān*) he would give in the book, and suggests that the list could in fact be longer.39 Mainly building on al-Shanqīṭī’s framework, al-Burayḍī provides a list mentioning 19 most important forms, also indicating that the list could still be longer.40 Meanwhile, al-Sabt lists 10 types of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*, but some of the types have numerous sub-types.41

Given that these classifications are overlapping, I would only mention the classifications introduced by al-Awṣī, Al Shalash and al-Muṭṭayrī to illustrate various types of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* already recognized by scholars. In his study on al-Ṭābāṭaba’ī’s *al-Mīzān*, al-Awṣī mentions four ways of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* he found:

1) use of some verses to elucidate the ambiguous, abridged meaning of a verse;
2) use of clues (*qara’īn*) identifiable in a verse being interpreted or in other relevant verses to choose one among all possible meanings;
3) use of some verses to reemphasize the meaning and message of a verse being interpreted; and
4) use of Qur’ānic verses to explain a certain recurrent term mentioned in some verses (thematic approach).42

Meanwhile, Āl Shalash in his study on al-Shanqīṭī’s *Aḍwā’ al-Bayān* identifies nine types of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*:

1) analysis on a word’s entire usage in the Qur’ān;
2) clarification of what a word or phrase in a verse actually implies by showing another verse or some other relevant verses;

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42 Al-Awṣī, *al-Ṭābāṭaba’ī*, 131-8. Al-Awṣī’s remark is less comprehensive. As later implied in this chapter, there are still other ways that al-Ṭābāṭaba’ī uses in implementing the method.
3) explanation of an equivocal, general expression (*al-ijmāḥ*) by mentioning verses in other places;  
4) clarification of the apparent meaning of a verse (*ẓāhīr al-āyāh*) by other verses;  
5) exposition of a verse by mentioning other verses that re-emphasize its meaning (*al-iḥāl al-qur’āniyyah*);  
6) explanation of a verse by dividing its parts and mentioning relevant verses for each part;  
7) clarification of an inferred meaning of a verse by other verses supporting that meaning;  
8) discussion of all verses related to one topic (thematic approach); and  
9) clarification of seemingly contradictory verses in order to understand their correspondence.43

Differently, al-Muṭṭayrī mentions eight forms of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*:

1) interpretation using the Prophet’s interpretation of the Qur’ān with the Qur’ān (*tafsīr al-Nabi li al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*);  
2) interpretation using Qur’ān’s clear succeeding exposition of a preceding Qur’ānic part (*tafsīr al-Qur’ān li al-Qur’ān*);  
3) analysis on ‘the aggregated’ (*al-mujmāl*) and ‘the explained’ (*al-mubayyān*), ‘the absolute’ (*al-muḥlaq*), and ‘the qualified’ (*al-muqayyad*); ‘the general’ (*al-‘ȧmm*), and ‘the specific’ (*al-khāṣṣ*), ‘the ambiguous’ (*al-mutashābih*), and ‘the definite’ (*al-muḥkam*); the relationship between two or more words, and the relationship between different ways of recitation (*qirā’āt*);  
4) interpretation relying on the textual context (*al-siyāq*), i.e. a framework of meaning created by a set of verses;  
5) analysis on the variation of word usage (polysems/homonyms) and the common patterns/parallels/analogues (*al-wujūh wa al-naẓā’īr*);  
6) reconciliation of verses (*al-jam’ bayna al-āyāt*);  
7) identification of similarities between verses (*al-tanẓīr bayna al-āyāt*); and  
8) thematic approach to the Qur’ān building on collecting of verses.44


44.
While these classifications seem to be generally based on overlapping criteria, some scholars have tried to distinguish between different types of *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an* by using certain criteria. Al-Buraydi, for instance, uses three different criteria to classify the types. First, *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an* can be classified in terms of *tariqat al-wusul* (method of access) into: 1) *wahy*-based *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an*, and 2) *ra'y/ijtihad*-based *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an*, or in al-Ṭayyār’s terms: 1) *naql*-based *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an*, and *istidla*l-based *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an*; or in al-Ḩarbi’s terms: 1) *tawqi'fi* (decided by Allah and His Messenger), and 2) *ijtihādi* (open for scholarly reasoning).

Second, *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an* can be classified in terms of *masādir* (the source from whom interpretation is derived) into: 1) *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an* from the Prophet; 2) *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an* from the Companions; 3) *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an* from the Successors; and 4) *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an* from Qur’anic exegetes.

Third, *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an* can be classified in terms of the clarity of the connection made between parts of the Qur’an into: 1) *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an* based on clear connection, and 2) *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an* based on less clear connection.

Having realized these different criteria, one can now notice that the criteria possibly used by al-Awsi, Āl Shalash and al-Muṭayrī (to distinguish between different types) are mixed, but mostly are not based on the three criteria introduced by al-Buraydi, rather based on another criterion, that is the purpose of reference to Qur’anic parts (See Table 3.1).

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47 Al-Buraydī, “Tafṣīr al-Qurʾān bi al-Qurʾān,” 23. Some scholars, however, might include *tafsir al-Qurʾān bi al-Qurʾān* from the Qur’an itself (i.e. from its clear sequence) in the classification. Cf. al-Ṭayyār, *al-Tahrīr*, 46-7, who divides *tafsir al-Qurʾān bi al-Qurʾān* into: 1) the undisputed; 2) the one taken from the Prophet; 3) the one taken from Qur’anic exegetes.
Table 3.1  Types of Tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an as Identified by al-Awsi (A), Shalash (S) and al-Muțayri (M) and Their Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Criterion of Identification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elucidation of the ambiguous, abridged, or general expression [A, S]</td>
<td>Purpose (of reference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing a meaning by clues [A]</td>
<td>Purpose &amp; consulted Qur’anic part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Re)-emphasis of meaning and message [A, S]</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation of a recurrent term/topic [A, S, M]</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of word usage [S, M]</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification of a word’s meaning [S]</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification of the apparent meaning [S]</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification of an inferred meaning [S]</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification of seemingly contradictory verses [S, M]</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of the Prophet’s interpretation of the Qur’an with the Qur’an [M]</td>
<td>Source or method of access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Qur’an’s clear succeeding exposition of a preceding part [M]</td>
<td>Method of access or consulted Qur’anic part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis by main concepts of ‘ulu&gt;m al-Qur’a&gt;n [M]</td>
<td>Conceptual basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliance on siyāq [M]</td>
<td>Consulted Qur’anic part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of similarities [M]</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, partly building upon previous classifications, one can actually have a more consistent categorization that is based on the criterion of ‘purpose of reference’. Here I would put forward another categorization of *tafsîr al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’ân* based on in what purpose Qur’anic parts are cited in it. This can be a new helpful way to analyze and compare Qur’anic exegeses.

Paying attention to the objectives of reference to other Qur’anic parts in various tafsirs, one can find at least eight distinctive categories of *tafsîr al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’ân*. In what follows, I would mention a few examples for each category taken from various tafsirs.

First, emphasis-oriented cross-reference, i.e. reference to other Qur’anic verses only to re-emphasize the message of the verse being interpreted, or to let the readers know the place where the same message is available (either delivered with the same or similar expressions, or with different expressions, or in an abridged form). The followings are some of the examples:
a) Al-Shanqīṭī’s commentary on al-Fāṭiḥah [1]:5,

إِِِّكَِِّٓكََِٓٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔٔ unilateral516.0x729.0

“It is You we worship and You we ask for help.” Commenting on the verse, al-Shanqīṭī puts forward several verses that emphasize its meaning, i.e. Hud [11]:123,

فَآَعِبَدْهُ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَيْهِ

“so worship Him and rely upon Him,” then al-Tawbah [9]:129,

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ حَسَبِ اللَّهِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ

“say, ‘Sufficient for me is Allah; there is no deity except Him. On Him I have relied,’” then al-Muzzammil [73]:9,

وَإِلَّا هُوَ قَاتِجَهُ وَكِيلُهُ

“(He is) the Lord of the East and the West; there is no deity except Him, so take Him as Disposer of (your) affairs;” and then al-Mulk [67]:29,

فَلَنَّ هُوَ الْخَصْمُ أَمَّنَ بِهِ وَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ

“Say, ‘He is the Most Merciful; we have believed in Him, and upon Him we have relied.’”49

b) Ibn Kathīr’s and al-Qāsimī’s interpretation of al-Baqarah [2]:22,

الذِّي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فِي شَأْنٍ وَالشَّمَاءُ بِنَعَةً وَأَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَآءً فَأَخْرَجَهُ بِهِ مِنَ النَّمَرْدَ رَزْقًا لَكُمْ فَلاَ تَجَلَّلُوا لِلَّهِ أَنَاذًا وَأَنَّمِمْ نَعْلَمُونَ

---

49 Al-Shanqīṭī, Aḍwā’ al-Bayān, I, 50-1.
(He) who made for you the earth a bed (spread out) and the sky a ceiling and sent down from the sky, rain and brought forth thereby fruits as provision for you. So do not attribute to Allah equals while you know (that there is nothing similar to Him).

Emphasizing the meaning of the verse, Ibn Kathîr as well as al-Qâsimî cite Ghâfir [40]:64,

َلَهُمَا آلَّهُ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ قِرَاءًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بَيْنَاهَا وَصَوْرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَسْنَ صَوْرَكُمْ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِنْ آلهَتَكُمْ ذَلِكَ آلَّهُ رَبَّكُمْ فَنَبَارُكُ آلَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

It is Allah who made for you the earth a place of settlement and the sky a ceiling and formed you and perfected your forms and provided you with good things. That is Allah, your Lord; then blessed is Allah, Lord of the worlds.50

c) Ibn Kathîr’s commentary on al-Balad [90]:4,

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا آلَّهُمَا آلِهَتُكُمْ فِي كَبَابٍ

“We have certainly created man in kabad.”
While interpreting this verse, Ibn Kathîr emphasizes its meaning, particularly the literary meaning of kabad (as istiwa’ or istiqamah in the sense of being erect, stable and balanced),51 by citing al-Infiṭār [82]:6-7,

يَآ أَيُّهَا الْآلدِيْسِنَ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَكَآ أَلْكُرِيْمِ آلِهَتُكُمْ فَلُقِّنْكُمْ فَسَوَكُمْ فَعَذَّبُكُمْ

“O mankind, what has deceived you concerning your Lord, the Generous, who created you, proportioned you, and balanced you?” and al-Tîn [95]:4,

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا آلِهَتُكُمْ فِي أَحْسَنَ تَقَوْيمٍ

---
51Kabad is often translated as hardship or toil. However, despite some other opinions he also quotes, Ibn Kathîr associates its meaning with the creation of man as an erect being. In this case kabad is understood as intisâb or i’tidâl (being upright).
“We have certainly created man in the best of stature.”

Second, elucidation-oriented cross-reference, i.e. reference to other Qur’anic verses that are more detailed, clearer, more specific or have different context to elucidate the meaning of the verse/phrase/word being interpreted, or to add more information to it. Here are some of the examples:

a) Al-Shanqîti’s interpretation of al-Fātîhah [1]:2,

\[
\text{All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.}
\]

To elucidate the verse, al-Shanqîti cites some verses that add more information regarding when and where the praise occurs, i.e. al-Rûm [30]:18,

\[
\text{And to Him is (due all) praise throughout the heavens and the earth,} \]

then al-Qaṣaṣ [28]:70,

\[
\text{And He is Allah; there is no deity except Him. To Him is (due all) praise in the first (life) and the Hereafter,} \]

then Saba’ [34]:1,

\[
\text{and to Him belongs (all) praise in the Hereafter. And He is the Wise, the Acquainted.} \]

b) Some exegetes’ interpretation of in al-Fātîhah [1]:7.

To clarify the phrase \textit{alladhîna an’ama ‘alayhim} (those upon whom You have bestowed favor) in the verse, some exegetes refer to al-Nisâ’ [4]:69, in which God says,

\[
\text{Ibn Kathîr, \textit{Tafsîr al-Qur’ân al-‘Azîm}, XIV, 354.}
\]

\[
\text{Al-Shanqîti, \textit{Aḍwâ’ al-Bayân}, I, 32.}
\]
And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger – those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions.\(^{54}\)

c) Ibn Kathir’s and al-Qāsimi’s commentary on al-Baqarah [2]:65,

وَلَقَدْ عَلَّمْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَنْ كُنَّا لِيْمَ كُونُوا قَرْدَةً خَاصِبَينَ.

“And you had already known about those who transgressed among you concerning the sabbath, and We said to them, ‘Be apes, despised.’”

Commenting on the verse, both cite a more detailed verse, al-A’rāf [7]:163,\(^{55}\) which details the relevant story as Allah said,

وُسْلِمْنَمْ عَنْ الْقَرْنِيَّةِ الَّذِيَ كَانَتْ حَاضِرَةً الْبَحْرِ إِذْ تَأْتِيُّمُمْ جِنْتَانِ نَيَٰمَ يَوْمُ سَبِيلَهُمُ شَرَعَهَا وِيَوْمَ لَا يَسِيلُونَ لَا تَأْتِيُّمُمُ كَذَٰلِكَ نِيَٰلُهُمُ بِمَا كُانُوا يَفْسَفُونَ.

And ask them about the town that was by the sea – when they transgressed in (the matter of) the sabbath – when their fish came to them openly on their sabbath day, and the day they had no sabbath they did not come to them. Thus did We give them trial because they were defiantly disobedient.


Third, preponderance giving-oriented cross-reference, i.e. reference to other Qur’anic parts to select or prefer one meaning among some possible meanings hinted at by the verse being interpreted. I would mention three of its examples:

a) Al-Shanqīṭī’s commentary on al-Baqarah [2]:228,

وَمَلْتَلَّقَتْ بِمُرْضِنَانِ ثُلَاثَةَ فَرْوُء

“Divorced women remain in waiting for three qurū’.”

To clarify whether qurū’ (periods) mentioned in the verse refers to periods of pureness (tuhṛ) or periods of menstruation (hayd), al-Shanqīṭī cites al-Ṭalaq [65]:1,

فوَلَتْلَقُوهُنَّ لِعَدَّتٍ وَأَخْصُوا الْعَدَّةَ

“divorce them for (the commencement of) their waiting period and keep count of the waiting period,” to indicate that qurū’ is best understood as referring to pureness.56

b) Al-Shanqīṭī’s interpretation of Maryam [19]:71,

وَإِنْ مِنكُمْ إِلَّا وَارَّدَهَا كَانَ عَلَىٰ زَكَّ خَصْمَاً مَّفْضِبَٰٰ

“And there is none of you except he will come to it (wariduhā). This is upon your Lord an inevitability decreed.”

Al-Shanqīṭī argues that the best meaning of wariduhā in the verse is “to enter to the Fire” (defining wurūd in the sense of dukhul), rather than “to pass over it (by crossing the path)” or “to come to it (for closely watching)” or “to feel it (in this world for believers, and later on in the hereafter for disbelievers)”. In one of his arguments, al-Shanqīṭī cites the succeeding verse (Maryam [19]:72),

نَمَّا نُنَجِّي الْدِّينَانِ اِنْقَوَا وَنَذِّرُ الْخَالِقِينَ فِيهَا جَهِيْئًا

56 Al-Shanqīṭī, Aḍwā’ al-Bayān, I, 178.
“Then We will save those who feared Allah and leave the wrongdoers within it, on their knees.” The fact that the verse states that God will “leave the wrongdoers” and “save those who feared” is a clue that they would enter the Fire at first.\(^ {57}\) Therefore, the preceding verse would be best translated (in line with al-Shanqīṭi’s view) as, “And there is none of you except he will enter to it. This is upon your Lord an inevitability decreed.”

c) Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī interpretation of al-Kawthar [108]:1,

إِنَّا أُعْطِيْنَاهَا ٱلْكُونُرَ

Indeed, We have granted you, (O Muhammad), al-Kawthar.”

Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī connects this first verse of surah al-Kawthar with its last verse,

إِنَّ شَابَتُكَ هُوَ ٱلْأَبْنَاثُ

“Indeed it is your enemy who is without posterity,” to argue that among all available opinions, al-kawthar is best understood as referring to the large number of the Prophet Muhammad’s progeny.\(^ {58}\)

Fourth, word usage analysis-oriented cross-reference, i.e. reference to other Qur’anic parts (containing relevant vocabularies) to explain the usage of a word (mentioned in the verse being interpreted) in the rest of the Qur’an and/or to clarify the meaning of the word or another word mentioned in the verse. Some of its examples are as follows:

a) Al-Shanqīṭi’s interpretation of Āl ʿImrān [3]:7,

وَمَا يَعْلَمُ ۙ ۚنَآوِيْةٌ إِلَّآ ٱلْلَّهُ

“and no one knows its ta’wil except Allah.”

\(^ {57}\) Al-Shanqīṭi, Aḥwā’ al-Bayān, IV, 435-8.
\(^ {58}\) Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, al-Mizān, XX, 428-9.
When commenting on the phrase, al-Shanqīṭī cites some verses to show how the word *taʿwil* is predominantly used in the Qurʾan to indicate the truth about something being explained or interpreted or resulted.\(^\text{59}\) The verses he cites are:

“this is the explanation (*taʿwil*) of my vision of before” (Yūsuf [12]:100);

“Do they await except its result (*taʿwil*)? The Day its result (*taʿwil*) comes” (al-Aʿrāf [7]:53);

“Rather, they have denied that which they encompass not in knowledge and whose interpretation (*taʿwil*) has not yet come to them” (Yūnus [10]:39); and

“That is the best (way) and best in result (*taʿwil*)” (al-Nisāʾ [4]:59).\(^\text{60}\)

b) Aṭīyah Muḥammad Sālim’s commentary on al-Tin [95]:1,

“By the fig and the olive.”

While interpreting the word *al-zaytūn* in the verse, Sālim (who follows in the footsteps of al-Shanqīṭī in his


\(^{60}\) Al-Shanqīṭī might have regarded that it should suffice to just mention some representative verses using the word *taʿwil*, as there are indeed more verses that he does not mention, i.e. Yūsuf [12]:6, 21, 36, 37, 44, 45, 101; al-Isrāʾ [17]:35; and al-Kahf [18]:78, 82.
Tatimmat Aḍwā’ al-Bayān) shows how the word has been used in the Qur’an mostly to mean a certain kind of a blessed tree, namely olive (rather than something else like a certain place).61 He cites the following verses:

and (We produce) gardens of grapevines and olives and pomegranates, similar yet varied. Look at (each of) its fruit when it yields and (at) its ripening. Indeed in that are signs for a people who believe. (al-An‘ām [6]:99);

“And (We brought forth) a tree issuing from Mount Sinai which produces oil and food for those who eat” (al-Mu‘minu>n [23]:20);

“And caused to grow within it grain; and grapes and herbage; and olive and palm trees” (‘Abasa [80]:27-9);

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly (white) star lit from (the oil of) a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knowing of all things. (al-Nūr [24]:35).

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c) Bint al-Shaṭi’s interpretation of al-Takāthur [102]:8,

“Then you will surely be asked that Day about *al-Na‘īm*.”

While interpreting the last verse of surah al-Takāthur, Bint al-Shaṭi clarifies what *al-na‘īm* referred to by analyzing the entire usage of the word in the Qur’an to arrive at a new conclusion that – unlike what all previous commentators understand, she claims – it means the pleasure or favor of the hereafter (*na‘īm al-akhirah*). She argues that the word has always been used in this sense in the Qur’an, i.e., in the following verses:

- “Their Lord gives them good tidings of mercy from Him and approval and of gardens for them wherein is enduring pleasure” (al-Tawbah [9]:21);
- “Indeed, the righteous will be in gardens and pleasure” (al-Ṭūr [52]:17);
- “And if the deceased was of those brought near to Allah. Then (for him is) rest and bounty and a garden of pleasure” (al-Wāqī’ah [56]:88-9);
- “Does every person among them aspire to enter a garden of pleasure?” (al-Ma‘ārij [70]:38);

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“Indeed, the righteous will be in pleasure. And indeed, the wicked will be in Hellfire” (al-Infiṭār [82]:13-4);

“Indeed, the righteous will be in pleasure. On adorned couches, observing. You will recognize in their faces the radiance of pleasure” (al-Muṭṭaffifin [83]:22-4);

“And when you look there (in Paradise), you will see pleasure and great dominion” (al-Inṣān [76]:20);

“and We would have admitted them to Gardens of Pleasure” (al-Mā’idah [5]:65);

“beneath them rivers will flow in the Gardens of Pleasure” (Yūnus [10]:9);

“(All) sovereignty that Day is for Allah; He will judge between them. So they who believed and did righteous deeds will be in the Gardens of Pleasure” (al-Ḥajj [22]:56);

“(All) have a provision determined. Fruits; and they will be honored. In gardens of pleasure” (al-Ṣāfāt [37]:41-3);
Those are the ones brought near (to Allah). In the Gardens of Pleasure” (al-Wāqiah [56]:11-2);

“Indeed, those who believe and do righteous deeds – for them are the Gardens of Pleasure” (Luqman [31]:8);

“And place me among the inheritors of the Garden of Pleasure” (al-Shu’ara’ [26]:85);

“Indeed, for the righteous with their Lord are the Gardens of Pleasure” (al-Qalam [68]:34).

Fifth, coherence-oriented cross-reference, i.e. reference to nearby verses to show the harmony or the relationship between the verse being interpreted and the surrounding verses, or to clarify the context, the objective or the central theme of a set of verses or a surah in its entirety. The followings are some of the instances.

a) Islahi’s interpretation of al-Fil [105].

Islahi cites Quraysh [106]:3-4, “Hence, they should worship the Lord of the House, who fed them in hunger and provided them with peace in fear;” to show the central theme of surah al-Fil and the harmonious relationship between both surahs. Both surahs deal with the same topic: Bayt Allah (Ka’bah). Surah al-Fil tells an event in which Allah saved the House, while surah Quraysh reminds the Quraysh of the blessings of the House, which accounts for the favours of peace and sustenance.63

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b) Quraish Shihab’s interpretation of al-Ḍuḥā [93]:11,

وَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمٍ فَلَا تَعْفَرُ. وَأَمَّا السَّأْئِل فَلَا تَعْفَرُ.

“But as for the favor of your Lord, proclaim (it).”
Commenting on the verse, Shihab discusses the harmony between this last verse of surah al-Ḍuḥā and two preceding verses:

فَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمٍ فَلَا تَعْفَرُ. وَأَمَّا السَّأْئِل فَلَا تَعْفَرُ.

“So as for the orphan, do not oppress (him). And as for the petitioner, do not repel (him)” (Q 93:9-10). According to Shihab, these verses imply that the Prophet was being told that the core message of the religious teachings he brought is the protection of the weak (represented in the verses by al-yatīm and al-sā‘īl), and that it is this message (which represents ni’mat Rabbika) that he should convey to people (fahaddith).


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c) Yunan Yusuf’s comment on the last part of al-Ḥāshr [59]: 24,

يُسَيَّرُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْمَجِيدُ

“Whatever is in the heavens and earth is exalting Him. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.”

He shows the harmony between this end of al-Ḥāshr and and the first verse of the surah,

سَيَّرُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْمَجِيدُ

“Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth exalts Allah, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.”

Yunan Yusuf underlines that both the beginning and the end of surah al-Ḥāshr highlight the exaltation of Allah,
and are commonly ended with two of His names, *al-‘Azīz* and *al-Ḥakīm*.\(^{65}\)

*Sixth*, consistency-oriented cross-reference, i.e. reference to other Qur’anic verses to clarify the agreement between the verse being interpreted and other verses whose meanings seem to be in conflict, unlikely congruent or irreconcilable. Here are some of its instances.

a) Al-Shanqīṭī’s interpretation of al-Baqarah [2]:7,

> خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمَاعَتِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَنْصَارَهُمْ غَيْبَةً

“Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing, and over their vision is a veil.”

While commenting on the verse, al-Shanqīṭī cites some verses that seemingly imply the opposite, i.e. Fuṣṣilat [41]:17, al-Baqarah [2]:175, al-Kahf [18]:29, Al ‘Imrān [3]:182 and al-Mā‘idah [5]:80 in order to show the agreement between them. In these verses, it is implied that the disbelief of disbelievers is due to their own will – as Allah said:

> فَأُسْتَحْلَّوا اللَّهِ عَلَى الْبُدْرِ

“but they preferred blindness over guidance” (Q 41:17);

> أُولَٰئِكَ الْذِّينَ اشْتَرَأُوا الصَّلَاةَ بِالْبُدْرِ وَالْعَذَابَ بِالْغَفَآرِ

“Those are the ones who have exchanged guidance for error and forgiveness for punishment” (Q 2:175);

> فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيَكْفَرْ

“so whoever wills – let him believe; and whoever wills – let him disbelieve” (Q 18:29);

“That is for what your hands have put forth” (Q 3:182);

“How wretched is that which they have put forth for themselves” (Q 5:80). In Q 2:7, on the other hand, it is implied that their disbelief is because they are closed from any will to believe. Al-Shanqīṭī explains that the seal and the veil God sets on disbelievers is in fact a punishment for their disbelief that they act on their own will. Al-Shanqīṭī supports this explanation by a number of Quranic verses: al-Nisā’ [4]:155, al-Munāfiqūn [63]:3, al-Ān’ām [6]:110, al-Šaff [61]:5, al-Baqarah [2]:10, and al-Muṭaffifīn [83]:14.66

b) Quraish Shihab’s interpretation of al-Rahmān [55]:39,

“Then on that Day none will be asked about his sin among men or jinn.”

Shihab interprets the verse by citing al-Ḥijr [15]:92 and al-Šaffāt [37]:24 to clarify how to understand these seemingly contradictory verses. At first glance, the verse is seemingly in contrast with Q 15:92, which states,

“So by your Lord, We surely question them all,” as well as Q 37:24, which states,

66Muḥammad al-‘Amin al-Shanqīṭī, Dafʿ Ihām al-Ikṭārāb ‘an Āyāt al-Kitāb (Mecca: Dār ‘Ālam al-Fawā’id, 1426 AH), I, 12. In fact, this work is full of examples of this specific type of tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān.
“And stop them; indeed, they are to be questioned.” In Shihab’s view, these verses might mean that they would not be asked about their sin, but they would still be interrogated with questions through which their responsibility is requested. Alternatively, these verses might imply that the sinners would be left unquestioned in a certain phase (being neglected) and would be faced with uneasy interrogation in another phase.67

Seventh, justification-oriented cross-reference, i.e. reference to other Qur’anic parts to support a statement an exegete makes or an opinion he cites in his discussion of the topic of a certain verse, which is not directly related to the meaning of that verse. The examples are as follows:

a) Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s interpretation of al-[Fātihah [1]:6, “Guide us the straight way.”

While commenting on the verse, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī underlines a point that just as the straight path controls all the ways, the people of the straight path (aṣḥāb al-ṣirāt al-mustaqim) enjoy complete authority to guide the other servants of Allah, then he cites the end of al-Nisā’ [4]:69 (“... and excellent are these as companions”) and al-Mā’idah [5]:55 (“Verily, your only Master is Allah and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayer and pay zakah while they are bowing down”) to support this statement. In addition, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī also gives a statement that what makes the people of the straight path higher in rank than others is their knowledge, rather than their deeds, and then he cites al-Mujādilah [58]:11 (“Allah will exalt those of you who believe and those who are given knowledge in higher degrees”) and Fāṭir [35]:10 (“to Him do ascend the good words; and the good deed lifts them up”) to support this conclusion.68

67Shihab, Taṣṣīr Al-Mishbāh, XIII, 523. Cf. ‘Abd al-Rahmān Nāṣir al-Sa’dī, al-Qawā’id al-Ḥisān li Taṣṣīr al-Qur’ān (Riyad: Makttabat al-Rushd, 1999), 36-7. According to al-Sa’dī, Q 55:39 emphasizes the fact that Allah does not need to ask men and jinn to know about their sin, while verses suggesting the process of interrogation emphasizes the fact that people would be compelled to acknowledge their wrongdoings by such an interrogation.

68Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, al-Mīzān, I, 36, 40.
b) Ibn Taymiyyah’s interpretation of the same verse (Q 1:6).
As quoted by al-Qāsimi, Ibn Taymiyyah suggests that the supplication, “Guide us the straight path,” is actually an all-encompassing supplication as it would include asking for sustenance and help. Someone guided to the straight path would be among those who fear Allah and those who rely on Allah. Then he quotes al-Ṭalaq [65]:2-3,

> And whoever fears Allah – He will make for him a way out;  
> And will provide for him from where he does not expect.  
> And whoever relies upon Allah – then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allah will accomplish His purpose.  

Eighth, language analogue-oriented cross-reference, i.e. reference to other Qur’anic parts only to indicate similarities and/or differences between the verse being interpreted and these parts in terms of linguistic features and aspects, structure (uslāb) as well as textual context (siyāq) to be considered in understanding the verse. To make it clear, here are some of its examples.

a) Al-Mazhari’s commentary on al-Baqarah [2]:5,

> أولئك على هدى من رزقهم وأولئك هم الالفجرون

“Those are upon (right) guidance from their Lord, and it is those who are the successful.”

Al-Mazhari clarifies the use of wa (meaning “and”) before the second ula’ika (“those”) at the end of the verse by comparing it with the absence of wa before the second ula’ikat at the end of al-A’raf [7]:179:

> أولئك كالأنعام بل هم أضل أولئك هم الغافلون

“... Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless.”

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69 Al-Qāsimi, Maḥāsin al-Ta’wil, I, 234-5.
b) Ibn Āshūr’s interpretation of Luqmān [31]:6,

وَمِن الْعَلَّامَاتِ مِن يَشْتَرِي لُحْوَ الْخَبِيثِ لِيُضِلْهُ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ

“And of the people is he who buys the amusement of speech to mislead (others) from the way of Allah without knowledge and who takes it in ridicule.”

Ibn Āshūr cites al-Baqarah [2]:16 when commenting on the verse only to briefly compare the use of the word *ishtirā’* (*yashtārī* in the latter and *ishtārā* in the former). The word is used as a *kināyah* (implication) in Q 31:6, and is used in an *isti’ārah* (metaphor) in Q 2:16:

أَوَلَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوْا الصَّلَالِةَ بِالْبَدْنَى

“There are the ones who have purchased error (in exchange) for guidance.”


c) Ibn Kathīr’s interpretation of al-An’ām [6]:147,

فَإِنْ كَذَّبْكَ فَلَنْ رُكُّمْ ذُو رَحْفٍ وَاسِعٍ وَلَا يُرِدْ بَيْسَةً عَنْ أَلْقَؤَمِ الْمُجَرَّمِينَ

“So if they deny you, (O Muhammad), say, ‘Your Lord is the possessor of vast mercy; but His punishment cannot be repelled from the people who are criminals.’”

While interpreting the verse, Ibn Kathīr quotes some verses whose *ustūb* combine between *targhib* (enticement) and *tarḥīb* (intimidation), i.e. “Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty; but indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful.” (al-An’ām [6]:165); “And indeed, your Lord is full of forgiveness for the people despite their wrongdoing, and indeed, your Lord is severe in penalty.” (al-Ra’d [13]:6); “(O Muhammad), inform My servants that it is I who am the Forgiving, the Merciful. And that it is My punishment...
which is the painful punishment.” (al-Hijr [15]:49-50); “The forgiver of sin, acceptor of repentance, severe in punishment,” (Ghāfir [40]:3); “Indeed, the vengeance of your Lord is severe. Indeed, it is He who originates (creation) and repeats. And He is the Forgiving, the Affectionate” (al-Burūj [85]:12-4).

In addition to these eight categories, there are four more categories which display no reference to other Qur’anic verses, but they are generally considered to be parts of tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān: 1) reference to a clue (qarīnah) or indication (ishārah) available within the verse being interpreted itself to choose or give preference to one meaning among all possible meanings; 2) mere reference to the textual context (siyaq), without mentioning the relevant verses, to shed light on the meaning of a verse being interpreted; 3) mere reference to the central theme (‘āmūd or miḥwar) or the objective (gharaḍ or hadaf) of a surah to shed light on the meaning of a verse being interpreted; and 4) reference to other modes of readings (qirā‘āt) to support or make clear the meaning implied by a more common mode being the standard. Accordingly, from my observation, there are twelve types of tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān in total.

4. Perceived Hierarchy

Some scholars believe in a sort of hierarchy of tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān. According to al-Buraydī and al-Ṭayyār, tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān from the Prophet is higher than that from the Companions in terms of authoritative strength, while the Companions’ tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān is higher than that of the Successors; and the latter is higher than that of Qur’ān exegetes. However, tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān authentically narrated from the Prophet is considered to be the only type that is necessarily acceptable. Others are subject to arguments.

Similarly, al-Muṭayrī is of the opinion that the interpretation by the Prophet’s interpretation of the Qur’an with the Qur’an (tafsīr al-Nabī li al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān) is the highest type. This is when an interpreter, in linking a verse with another verse, just relies on an authentic report from the Prophet, which mentions that the verse is

72 Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-’Azīm, VI, 203.
understood in light of the other. Second to it is the interpretation using Qur’an’s clear succeeding exposition of a preceding Qur’anic part (tafsîr al-Qur’ân li al-Qur’ân). While in this type an interpreter seeks to rely on the sequence of the Qur’an, it is the interpreter himself who understands the connection at issue in a certain way. Other types, according to al-Muṭayrî, are lower than these two types in terms of the degree of certainty that one can have.⁷⁴

5. Principles, Rules and Standards of Application

Some scholars have outlined principles of the application of tafsîr al-Qur’ân bi al-Qur’ân. These principles deal with what interpreters need to do as well as things they need to consider in order to have a valid, acceptable tafsîr al-Qur’ân bi al-Qur’ân. Al-Buraydî suggests that everyone who wants to interpret the Qur’an with the Qur’an has to accomplish the followings: 1) bringing together all verses relevant to a topic; 2) paying attention to the context (siyāq) of a verse in order to reveal its meaning and purpose; and 3) getting familiar with established variant modes of readings (qîrā’at mutawâtirah) to anticipate any possibility of interpreting a reading with another reading.⁷⁵

Some scholars are concerned with how to be convinced with whether an interpretation resulting from tafsîr al-Qur’ân bi al-Qur’ân approach is acceptable or not. Al-Muṭayrî,⁷⁶ for instance, argues that there need to be standards by which tafsîr al-Qur’ân bi al-Qur’ân can be assessed. He himself proposes 13 criteria related to five aspects according to which any tafsîr al-Qur’ân bi al-Qur’ân can be accepted. Any interpreter need to have a commitment to pay attention to these criteria in order to avoid any mistake and misinterpretation.

The first two criteria are related to tradition (athâr): 1) no violation of the Prophet’s explicit interpretation of the Qur’an with the Qur’an; and 2) no violation of the consensus of the early Muslim generation (salaf) concerning a certain interpretation of the Qur’an with the Qur’an.

Next three criteria are related to finding clues (qara’in): 3) necessity of getting into details (luzûm al-tafsîh); 4) priority of more lucid interpretation of the Qur’an with the Qur’an; and 5) attribution of a verse to all reasonable meanings if each of them is supported by other Qur’anic verses.

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Three subsequent criteria are related to the context (siyāq): 6) consistent consideration of the siyāq of a verse; 7) priority of the view supported by available clues; and 8) priority of the view supported by relevant Qur’anic verses.

Three more standards are related to language: 9) no violation of language (lughah); 10) commitment to the apparent meaning (zāhir); and 11) adherence to the dominant usage (of a word) in the Qur’an.

The last two standards are concerned with qira’āt (recitations): 12) no denial upon an established qira’ah and its meaning; and 13) consideration of that qira’āt testify each other.

These criteria proposed by al-Muṭṭairī can be a useful means to verify a product of tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān. In terms of which aspect is verified, however, the criteria confuse three things: a) the consistency or harmony between the conclusion achieved and the established interpretations and approaches (mainly criteria number 1, 2, 9); b) the way tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān is applied to achieve the conclusion (mainly criteria number 3, 6, 10, 12, 13); and c) the way the conclusion is chosen from some possibilities of meaning (mainly criteria number 4, 5, 7, 8, 11).

Thus, al-Muṭṭairī’s criteria mix between the principles that a tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān must follow in order to be harmonious with other established interpretive approaches, the principles that a tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān must follow in order to be fittingly categorized as a real and convincingly holistic tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān, and the principles that a tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān must follow in order to result in a satisfying, acceptable conclusion in the presence of other meaning possibilities equally supported by a cross-referential approach.

Both al-Buraydī’s suggestion and al-Muṭṭairī’s criteria could not help much the assessment of what might be called ‘the level of holismness’ in the implementation of tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān. What I mean by the level of holismness here is the extent to which a certain interpretation of the Qur’an with the Qur’an can be considered as holistic and comprehensive. An interpretation of the Qur’an with reference to the Qur’an is not necessarily holistic. Some are indeed atomistic.

To assess its level of holismness, one can identify the types of intra-Qur’anic connections involved in an interpretation. There are at least 13 distinguishable types of intra-Qur’anic connections:
1. The internal relationship between all or some parts available in a verse.

2. The relationship between a verse and the immediate preceding verses (al-sābiq).

3. The relationship between a verse and the immediate succeeding verses (al-lāhiq).

4. The relationship between a word or a statement with the textual context (siyāq) of a group of verses where it is located.

5. The relationship between a verse and the pillar/central theme (‘amūd) or the objective (gharah hadaf) of the surah where it is located.

6. The relationship between a verse and a distant part of the Qur’an dealing with the same or relevant topic.

7. The relationship between a verse and a distant part of the Qur’an displaying a comparable linguistic feature.

8. The relationship between the use of a word or phrase in a verse and the entire/dominant usage of the word or phrase in the Qur’an.


10. The relationship between two or more consecutive groups of verses.

11. The relationship between different sections (the first, the middle and the last) of a surah.

12. The relationship between two or more consecutive surahs.

13. The relationship between a surah or a section in a surah and another distant surah or its section.

Since a Qur’ānic exegesis is predominantly filled with analyses of a word, a phrase or a verse, rather than a group of verses or a surah as a whole, the first nine types can be the ones to which an interpreter using ṭafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān methodology is expected to constantly pay attention. Hence, one can have a checklist of types of intra-Qur’ānic connections that one can use to see the level of holisticness of an interpretation – on the assumption that each type may account for an element of holistic reading. See the following figure.
Figure 3.1 Holisticness Checklist Form of Tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an

Types of Intra-Qur’anic Connection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship between (all) parts available in a verse.</td>
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<td>comparable linguistic feature/style.</td>
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<td>Relationship between the use of a word/phrase in a verse and the entire/</td>
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<td>dominant usage of the word/phrase in the Qur’an.</td>
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<td>Relationship between variant modes of reading (<em>if applicable</em>).</td>
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One can assume that the more the types of intra-Qur’anic connections involved in a *tafṣīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*, the more holistic that interpretation is. It is the above checklist that this study would use to assess the depth/holisticness of the application of *tafṣīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* in al-Ṭabaṭabā’ī’s *al-Mīzān* and al-Shanqīṭī’s *Aḍwā’ al-Bayān*.

Given that not all of the types are applicable in the interpretation of each Qur’anic verse, this study would use the following scale:

1) an interpretation involving no intra-Qur’anic connections is considered to be ‘not holistic’;
2) an interpretation using only one or two kinds of intra-Qur’anic connections is considered to be ‘least holistic’;
3) an interpretation involving three to four types of connections is regarded as ‘fairly holistic’ or ‘moderately holistic’; while
4) an interpretation with more than four kinds of connections is viewed as ‘most holistic’.
C. Tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an through the Lens of Western Hermeneutics

Basically an intertextual hermeneutics, *tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an* – in its variety – might have a great deal of significance when seen from the perspective of Western hermeneutical theories. First of all, it is very likely to involve some sort of openness to the interpreted text – arguably one among central ideas in Gadamer’s hermeneutics. Gadamer – among others – indicates the need to display openness to the text. A complete openness to the text is even considered to be the hermeneutic ideal or “the best kind of ‘objectivity’ of all” and the highest type of hermeneutical experience.

Gadamer’s hermeneutical circle necessitates a reader or interpreter continually open to the world of the text in order to achieve deeper understanding. Gadamer’s answer to the question of how interpreters can distinguish their preunderstanding and the message of the text is that “the valid interpretation is self-awareness of one’s own preunderstanding and openness to the claims of a text.”

Ricoeur, much influenced by Gadamer but also one of his critics, also argues for “an openness to the text which allows the interpreter to be enriched by receiving a new mode of being from the text itself.”

While the idea of openness to the text might be broader and more philosophical compared to most ideas of *tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an*, it entails a willingness to be addressed by the text, to continually ‘listen’ or open oneself to the text, refraining oneself not to jump to conclusions and thereby close oneself to the possibilities of understanding. This willingness is of course also crucial to *tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an* for it to be acceptable.

What might have been less emphasized in the ideas of *tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an* is that an openness to the text also entails commitment to the process of interpretation to a point where one must be prepared to sacrifice current conceptions, as well as awareness and repeated questioning of one’s own prejudices and ‘fore-understanding’, “so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus asserts

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its own truth against one’s own foremeanings.”

Openness implies some degree of alienation and self-criticism, but surely not the extinction of one’s self or ‘neutrality’. It basically involves an ability, that is to respond to what the word in the text says rather than to what we wish they said or came to the text expecting them to say. Openness requires approaching the text “in such a way that it has something to say to me”.

Secondly, from the perspective of Hirschian hermeneutics, *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an* can be a first, useful step in determining the author’s intended meaning. Focusing on validity in interpretation, Hirsch considers that the author’s intention should be the norm by which the validity is measured. To determine the author’s intended meaning, he suggests that the first useful step in corroborating one’s ‘intelligent guess’ of the author’s intention is to check it against other texts by the same author. This idea resembles the main purpose of *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an*, that is reference to other verses/surahs while dealing with a verse/surah in order to discover God’s intention – or in another expression, to show that a given reading is more ‘probable’ than others.

Following Hirsch’s logic of validation, Ricoeur offers the rule of ‘hermeneutic holism’ also as the first rule (out of three) for validating guesses of the meaning of a text. In Ricoeur’s view, for any understanding to be ‘mature’ it needs to entail validation of interpretations. He stresses the need to critically evaluate competing interpretations or to reconcile contradicting perspectives. Validation helps determine which interpretation among many is more ‘probable’. Ricoeur assumes that all interpretations are not equal. He for instance suggests that, “It is always possible to argue for or against an interpretation, to confront interpretations, to arbitrate between them, and to seek for an agreement, even if this agreement remains beyond our reach.”

According to Ricoeur, to eliminate inferior interpretations, a rational process of argumentation is needed since the acceptability of

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an interpretation would reside first in the arguments and evidence that support it, and ultimately in the consensus of knowledgeable people participating in the debate. He asserts, “There are criteria of relative superiority which may be easily derived from the logic of subjective probability.”

By hermeneutic holism, Ricoeur means that the meaning of the text is construed as a whole. The whole itself is understood in terms of the detail, and the detail is understood in terms of the whole. Therefore, “guessing the meaning of a work is always a circular process.” This is the first rule of validation.

Tafsîr al-Qur‘ân bi al-Qur‘ân is very much relevant to this idea of hermeneutic holism. It can be a good means for validating interpretations and thereby reaching ‘mature’ understanding. Tafsîr al-Qur‘ân bi al-Qur‘ân would be extremely helpful for such validation of interpretations since it has been widely accepted to be a first trusted method of tarjîh (giving preponderance to one evidence or opinion over another). An opinion supported by tafsîr al-Qur‘ân bi al-Qur‘ân is considered more reliable. There is also a belief that conflicting opinions existing in Qur‘anic exegeses can be resolved by tafsîr al-Qur‘ân bi al-Qur‘ân. Given the scholars’ acknowledgement, tafsîr al-Qur‘ân bi al-Qur‘ân is more likely to lead us to a relatively superior interpretation, or at least help decide the superiority or preferable of one interpretation over another.

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84 Ricoeur, From Text to Action, 160; Ricoeur, Interpretation Theory, 79.
86 See al-Ḥarîbî, Qawā’id al-Tarjîh, 312.
Chapter IV
THE EXEGETICAL METHODOLOGY OF Aḥwāʾ Al-Bayān
AND AL-MĪZĀN

This chapter will elaborate the hermeneutical thoughts of al-Shanqīṭī and al-Ṭābāṭābāʾī and the methodological features of their major tafsirs – Aḥwāʾ Al-Bayān and Al-Mīzān. The discussion of their hermeneutical thoughts derived from their works would mainly include their respective exegetical theories as well as their stated intention with regard to the writing of Aḥwāʾ Al-Bayān and Al-Mīzān. Tracing back their exegetical thoughts to those of their predecessors, here I would also discuss their respective root of exegetical tradition in order to shed light on their genealogy of thoughts.

A. Al-Shanqīṭī and His Exegetical Thought
Born in Shanqit (Chinguetti), Mauritania, in 1907, Muḥammad al-Amin ibn Muḥammad al-Mukhtar ibn ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jakani al-Shanqīṭī studied Islamic disciplines in madrasahs under some Mauritanian (great) scholars, such as Āḥmad al-Afram ibn Muḥammad al-Mukhtar (in tafsir) and Āḥmad ibn Muḥammad Maḥmūd ibn ‘Umar (in ḫalaf al-fiqh and fiqh). (However, no detailed record of the life of his teachers is accessible). After serving for years as a teacher, a judge and a mufti in his country, he then moved to Saudi in 1948 (with his brother, Muḥammad al-Mukhtar), just after performing hājij and receiving a request from the Saudi royal family to teach in Masjid al-Nabawī. While teaching tafsir in Medina, many students followed his lectures, among them are: ‘Ābd al-‘Aẓīz ibn ‘Abd Allāḥ ibn Bāz, Bakr Abū Zayd, ‘Alīyāḥ Muḥammad Sālim, and Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Uthaymīn. From 1951 to 1961, he taught tafsir and ḫalaf al-fiqh in several institutes in Riyadh, and then moved back to teach in the Medina Islamic University since its establishment. Since 1966 he also taught in the Higher Institute of the Judiciary in Riyadh opened that year. Also active in the Mecca-based Muslim World League, al-Shanqīṭī passed away in Mecca in January 1974 after performing another hājij, and left us many works most of which are related to tafsir, ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān and ḫalaf al-fiqh.

His experience as a mufti and his expertise on ḫalaf al-fiqh explain al-Shanqīṭī’s tendency toward legal matters in his Aḥwāʾ Al-Bayān. While discussion on ethico-legal content of the Qur’ān can be found here and there in Aḥwāʾ Al-Bayān, most often in a separate
section (entitled *tanbīḥāt* and the like) that come after the main interpretation, highlighting legal issues in the Qur’an is only the second aim of this tafsir. Al-Shanqīṭī’s first aim is to elucidate the Qur’an with the Qur’an itself.

One can see much continuity in al-Shanqīṭī’s hermeneutics with (Sunni) tafsir tradition at large, particularly the tradition of *tafsīr bi al-ma’tḥūr* in Ibn Taymiya interpretive paradigm. His preference on Ibn Taymiya’s thought is noticeable in his *Adwā’ al-Bayān* and other works. It is not surprising since it is reported that al-Shanqīṭī gave lectures on some Ibn Taymiya’s works.

However, there has been much contribution by al-Shanqīṭī to this tradition of *tafsīr bi al-ma’tḥūr* in terms of the application of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*. Al-Shanqīṭī has brought the practice of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* into a new, intensive level by his tafsir works, not only *Adwā’ al-Bayān*, but also *al-‘Adhb al-Namīr* (basically a record of his tafsir lectures), and *Daf‘ Iḥām al-Iḥtirāb*.

In *Adwā’ al-Bayān*, which is the final, most complete and most comprehensive work among his works, al-Shanqīṭī has focused very much on explanation of the Qur’an with the Qur’an to a point that the work seems to be dedicated mainly to demonstrate the method and not to repeat what has been written in previous commentaries. The striking fact that many verses are left uncommented in *Adwā’ al-Bayān* could be partly attributed to the author’s focus on demonstrating *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*.

Regarding his purpose of writing the tafsir, al-Shanqīṭī explicitly states that his first, foremost aim is *bayān al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* (explanation of the Qur’an with the help of the Qur’an itself). The stated reason for this is that because there has been a consensus (*ijmā‘*) among scholars that this kind of tafsir is the most respectable. Interpretation of the Qur’an with the Qur’an is significant, according to al-Shanqīṭī, because “no one knows better the meaning of Allah’s speech than Allah Himself.”

In practice, al-Shanqīṭī’s *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* focuses more on *bayān al-ijmā‘* (explanation of the abridgement). The main assumption of this concept is that some Qur’anic parts give a more detailed statement related to a certain issue than others. In the introduction to *Adwā’ al-Bayān*, he mentions a lot of examples of *ijmā‘* and corresponding *bayān* in the Qur’an. In this regard, it seems

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that al-Shanqīṭī follows Ibn Taymīyan notion of *tafsīr al-Qurʿān bi al-Qurʿān*. As I already mentioned in the preceding chapter, Ibn Taymīyah bases the urgent need for the interpretation of the Qur’ān with the Qur’ān on the idea that “some Qur’ānic parts give a more detailed statement related to a certain issue than others.”

While *bayān al-Qurʿān bi al-Qurʿān* has been al-Shanqīṭī’s main intention in writing *Aḍwāʿ al-Bayān*, he places the Sunnah as an important interpretive source. In his view, the use of the Sunnah in interpretation does not in fact violate the Qur’ānic statement that it contains explanation of everything. The significant role of the Sunnah as an interpretive tool, according to al-Shanqīṭī, is summarized in al-Hashr [59]:7, *wa mā ātākum al-Rasūl fakhudhu wa mā nahaḵum ‘anhu fantahū (“And whatever the Messenger has given you – take; and what he has forbidden you – refrain from”).* Indeed, al-Shanqīṭī seeks to rely on the Sunnah particularly in cases where the explanation from the Qur’ān itself needs the Sunnah for its message to be clear and where disagreement among scholars exists. Al-Shanqīṭī says that if an opposing argument is also supported by *tafsīr al-Qurʿān bi al-Qurʿān*, he would refer to an authentic Sunnah as another supporting evidence to show the invalidity of that argument. In the absence of authentic Sunnah, or in cases where an opposing argument is also supported by authentic Sunnah, he would then seek to explain the preponderance of his argument over another.

In practice, however, al-Shanqīṭī does not very much incorporate hadīth in his tafsīr, which is understandable given his intention, and in cases where he wants to argue against an opinion, he seems to have relied more often on the Qur’ān itself (*qarīnah*, *siyāq* etc.).

In his preface to *Aḍwāʿ al-Bayān*, al-Shanqīṭī does not say much about the opinions of the Companions and the Successors – traditionally considered important in *tafsīr bi al-maṭḥūr*. The citations of their opinions, however, do exist in the work, albeit quite limited – for instance while al-Shanqīṭī explains the meaning of *al-wasīlah* (literally: means) in Q 5:35, and the meaning of *al-sayyīʿah* (literally: evil deed) in Q 27:90.

Hence, while basically following the tradition of so-called *tafsīr bi al-maṭḥūr*, al-Shanqīṭī’s *Aḍwāʿ al-Bayān* features types of explanation that are strikingly different from what one can see in, for

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instance, Ibn Kathîr’s *Tafṣîr al-Qur’ân al-‘Azîm* and al-Suyûtî’s *al-Durr al-Manthûr*, both of which incorporate a large number of hadiths and exegetical opinions of the Companions and the Successors.

While in his preface to *Aḍwâ’ al-Bayân*, al-Shanqîṭi does not talk about the role of the opinions of the Companions and the Successors, he has concerns about *qirā‘ât* (variant modes of recitation) as an interpretive tool. Al-Shanqîṭi relies particularly on the seven recognized schools of Qur’an recitation (i.e. the schools of Ibn ‘Âmir [d. 736], Ibn Kathîr [d. 738], ‘Âsîm [d. 745], Abû ‘Amr [d. 771], Hâmzah [d. 773], Nâfî [d. 785], al-Kîsâ’î [d. 805]), and does not rely on any unpopular mode of reading (*qirā‘âh shâdhdhah*). He, however, does not consider the recitations of three additional standard schools of Abû Ja‘far (d. 747), Ya‘qûb (d. 821) and Khalaf (d. 844) as *shâdhdh*. What is considered to be *shâdhdh* is any mode of reading not affirmed by one of the ten standard recitations. Any *shâdhdh* mode could be referred to only to support the interpretation by the seven standard recitations.\(^4\)

In *Aḍwâ’ al-Bayân*, reference to *al-qawa‘îd al-usûliyyah* (rules of the foundation of Islamic jurisprudence) and Arabic poetry is also noticeable. *Aḍwâ’ al-Bayân* seems to be a blend of the author’s mastery of Arabic poetry, *usûl al-fiqh* and *tafsîr al-Qur’ân bi al-Qur’ân*, with the last being the most striking.

**B. Al-Ṭabarî and His Exegetical Thought**

Al-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn ibn al-Sayyid Muhammad ibn al-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn ibn al-Mîrznâ ‘Alî was born in Shahdabad (near Tabriz, in the northern part of today’s Iran) in March 1904. He journeyed to Najaf, Iraq in 1925, studying under great scholars of the time, such as al-Mîrzâ Husayn al-Nâ‘înî (*fiqh*), Abû al-Ḥasan al-Īṣfahânî, Muhammad Husayn al-Kumînî, ‘Abbâs al-Qummî (hadith), al-Sayyid Husayn al-Bâdkûbâ’î (philosophy, for six years), and al-Mîrzâ ‘Alî al-Ṭabarî (known as al-‘Allâmah al-Ḥaqî, in ‘îrfân and tafsîr). After a decade of study in Najaf, he returned to Tabriz for another ten years, and then left it in 1946 to reside in Qum, teaching in its *hawzah*. Among his renowned students are ‘Abd Allâh al-Jawâdi al-‘Âmulî, Muḥammad Miṣbâḥ al-Yazdi, Ḥasan Ḥasanzâdah al-‘Âmulî, and Kamâl al-Ḥaydârî. He passed away in Qum in November 1981. Al-Ṭabarî wrote a large number of works mostly related to philosophy.

While some discussions on al-Ṭabāṭaba‘ī’s objectivist hermeneutic have appeared in Chapter II, here I would highlight some most important points in his interpretive methodology in a rather different way. In my view, al-Ṭabāṭaba‘ī’s hermeneutical ideas could be summarized into the following five key points.

First, any imposition of personal ideas to the Qur’an has to be avoided. Al-Ṭabāṭabā‘ī would categorize any imposition of preconceived ideas to the Qur’an as a condemnable ‘personal opinion-based tafsir’ (tafsīr bi al-ra‘y) or ‘tafsir not based upon knowledge’ (tafsīr bi ghayr ‘ilm). To interpret the Qur’an, in his view, means to say “what does the Qur’an say?” and not to say “what idea must we impose on this verse?” Al-Ṭabāṭaba‘ī distinguishes between tafsīr or bayān (elucidation) and taṭbiq (application). Most dominant approaches to the Qur’an, most styles of tafsir (either theological, philosophical, mystical or scientific), unfortunately, easily fall into taṭbiq—imposing extraneous ideas to the Qur’an.

Second, tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an is the most legitimate and logical choice. It is illogical to say that the Qur’an needs others to act as guide. The Qur’an is a guide for people (hudan li al-naṣ), a perspicacious book (al-furqa’n), and exposition for everything (tibya’n li kull shay’). The Qur’an is an illuminating light (nūr mubīn), which illuminates other things and does not need others for it to be illuminated. In addition, Allah’s speech should not be compared with human speech since the discourse of God, which represent ‘true realities’, cannot be placed on the same semantic level as ordinary discourse.

On the other hand, the Qur’an itself, as well as the teachers of the Qur’an, urge us to interpret the Qur’an with the Qur’an. Al-Ṭabāṭabā‘ī sees that it is the oldest handed-down interpretive method, but in practice it had been neither properly executed nor intensively demonstrated in previous commentaries on the Qur’an. Citing Imam ‘Alī, the Qur’an ‘its one part speaks for another and one part attests another’. Tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an is the authentic tafsir, the real tafsir or ‘tafsir based upon firm knowledge’ (tafsīr bi al-‘ilm). Hermeneutics other than tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an, which rely most on external tools, tend towards ra‘y (baseless opinion) and could not be considered as true tafsir.

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With respect to al-Mizān, it could be regarded as founded upon strong opposition to tafsīr bi al-ra’y and firm endorsement of tafsīr al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an. Medoff, for instance, has noted that “the distinctive hermeneutics of al-Mizān ... can be viewed from the vantage point of the author’s expansive reading of tafsīr bi al-ra’y and why tafsīr al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an is the sure way to the desired goal of tafsīr bi al-‘ilm).”

While the idea of interpreting the Qur’an with the Qur’an has been broached by some classical scholars, al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī’s style of tafsīr al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an seems to be built more upon the influence of his teachers. According to a report from al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī himself, his tafsīr methodology of elucidating one ayah by another, owes very much to tafsīr lectures by his teacher during his ten years of study in Najaf, al-Mizā’ Alī al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī (1869-1947), popularly known as al-‘Allāmah al-Qādī. Al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī has been reported to have said that the lectures were in a special style, tafsīr of the Qur’an by the Qur’an. However, it cannot be clear in what ways al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī’s style was derived from al-Qādī’s in the absence of al-Qādī’s lectures.7

Third, tadabbur and istintāq are the key means of tafsīr of the Qur’an by the Qur’an. Tadabbur means contemplation of one verse after another by rational means (ijtihād), while istintāq means letting the Qur’an speak for itself, putting aside all preconceived ideas. By tadabbur, one can reveal the agreement, coherence and unity among Qur’anic verses, and show that there is no discrepancy (ikhtila’f) in the Qur’an. By istintāq, the interpreter could allow the Qur’an answer the questions he poses to it without the interference of pre-judgment and uncertain knowledge.

Fourth, riwāyat and other external interpretive tools should only occupy a supplementary role in the real tafsīr. In line with the notion that the Qur’an itself should be the primary guide in tafsīr, al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī consider the bulk of riwāyat (narrations of hadith, akhbār and aṯār), and the opinions of the lexicographers, grammarians, rhetoricians as secondary tools, which should not be the focus or the most reliable in tafsīr.5 With the exception of definite Sunnah, these

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8Medoff, “Ijtihād and Renewal,” 43.
tools could merely serve as supporting evidence (*shāhid, ta’yīd or ta’kid*) for the primary evidence obtained from *tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān.* According to al-Ṭabaṭaba’ī, the heavy reliance on *riwayāt,* as seen in many previous exegeses, could impede – rather than help – any effort to properly interpret the Qur’an, and be a concealed form of *tafsīr bi al-ra’y.*

Therefore, in *Mizān,* al-Ṭabaṭaba’ī (most of the time) provides a separate section after the main section of *bayān* to mention – with occasional remarks – relevant hadith and other kinds of *riwayāt,* i.e. a section headed *bahth riwa‘ī.* This is an indication that he de-emphasizes the role of *riwayāt* in tafsir and does not want to let *riwayāt* overwhelm the main body of his tafsir, in a stark contrast with many previous exegetes who place hadith as the actual pillar of their interpretive methodology and unconsciously abandon the Qur’an itself. *Tafsir bi al-riwayāt,* from al-Ṭabaṭaba’ī’s perspective, is an unbalanced methodology. Acquaintance with *riwayāt,* however, might be helpful in acquiring the ‘taste’ (*dhawq*) of tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an since the Prophet and his Ahl al-Bayt/the Imams exemplified this model of tafsir.

Fifth, the apparent meaning of Qur’anic verses (*zāhir al-āyāt*) should be the focal point. A proper tafsir must not violate the apparent meaning. Any methodology which fails to uncover the apparent meaning would lead to *ra’y* and thereby cannot be regarded as real interpretation. It is in fact ‘misinterpretation’.

When the apparent meaning does not serve the focal point, the result cannot be called tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an since it means that the voice of the exegete would overwhelm the apparent meaning. Tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an would not lead to any situation where we feel a need to interpret a verse against its apparent meaning. This does not mean that there is no such *bāṭin al-Qur‘ān* or the inner meaning of verses. The inner meaning is indeed the application of a verse’s surface meaning to particular circumstances not immediately related to its original context. The exposition of this *bāṭin* is often referred to in *Mizān* as *jary* (‘flow’; continued applicability) – a term adapted from traditions narrated from Imam al-Bāqir and Imam al-Ṣādiq, even though the term is sometimes used in

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9 Medoff, “’Ijtimā‘” and Renewal,” 22-3, 44-56.
10 Medoff, “’Ijtimā‘” and Renewal,” 27, 32.
al-Mızân also to refer to other kinds/areas of application (taṭbīq in its broader sense, which refers to the acceptable one, not in its narrower sense that is almost synonymous with tafsīr bi al-ra’y). While jary can be found here and there in al-Mızân, one should remember that it is, according to al-Ṭabāṭabā’i, basically outside the domain of tafsīr.

With all of these key points on which al-Mızân was founded, it has paved a way for an unprecedented trend in Qur’an interpretation. Al-Mızân marks a substantial change in the course of Shi’i tafsīr history, not only by incorporating Sunni works, but also focusing very much on tafsīr of the Qur’an by the Qur’an.

C. Methodological Aspects of Adwā’ al-Bayān and al-Mızân

1. Length, Depth and Format

Adwā’ al-Bayān and al-Mızân are both complete tafsīrs in the sense that both cover the interpretation of all surahs of the Qur’an. However, it should be noted that al-Shanqīṭī did not write by himself the interpretation of surahs after al-Mujādilah in Adwā’ al-Bayān. Rather, it is his disciple, ‘Aṭīyah Sālim, who wrote it by following in the footsteps of al-Shanqīṭī’s methodology. His stop at al-Mujādilah was apparently beyond al-Shanqīṭī’s initial intention since he several times (including in his introduction) suggested that he is likely to explain a certain issue while interpreting another surah (after al-Mujādilah) like al-Ḥashr and al-Takwīr.

Even though dealing with all surahs, like many other tafsīrs, both tafsīrs do not provide a commentary for every ayah available in every surah in the Qur’an. Sometimes exegetes just skip one or more verses, or ask the reader to refer to their interpretation of another verse or another surah, or even to their interpretation in another work. However, the absence of interpretation of verses is by far more noticeable in Adwā’ al-Bayān than in al-Mızân. For instance, out of 43 verses in al-Ra’d, al-Shanqīṭī interprets only 13 verses (30.2%), while al-Ṭabāṭabā’i interprets all of its verses (100%); out of 30 verses in al-Sajdah, al-Shanqīṭī interpretes only 11 verses (36.7%), while al-Ṭabāṭabā’i interprets 29 verses (96.7%); and out of 18 verses in al-Ḥujurāt, al-Shanqīṭī only comments on 10 verses (55.6%), while al-

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Ṭabāṭabā’ī comments on all verses (100%). The occurrence of mere cross-reference (where an author just ask the reader to refer to his interpretation in another place) is also by far more striking in Ḩdwa’ al-Bayān where the number of cross-references in the interpretation of a surah, more particularly in shorter surahs or the last volumes, can reach more than half of the number of verses being interpreted.

Why does al-Shanqiti quite often leave some verses? This might be partly attributed to his main intention in writing Ḩdwa’ al-Bayān, that is to explain the Qur’an with the Qur’an. This intention seems to have dictated his focus in Ḩdwa’ al-Bayān: mentioning verses that illuminate the meaning of a verse/phrase. With this focus, it is understandable that he provides commentaries not on every verse. Another explanation provided for this is that al-Shanqiti’s interpretive paradigm, being closer to Ibn Taymiyan paradigm, led him to leaving verses whose meaning is clear enough.

However, this does not mean that Ḩdwa’ al-Bayān is necessarily by far less deeper than al-Mizān. With regard to the verses interpreted, Ḩdwa’ al-Bayān sometimes spend more pages/lines than al-Mizān. As a statistical illustration, interpretation of 13 verses of al-Ra’d fills 33 pages (2.5 page per verse on average) in Ḩdwa’ al-Bayān, while that of 43 verses of al-Ra’d fills 107 pages (2.5 page per verse on average); interpretation of 11 verses of al-Sajdah takes 7 pages (0.6 page per verse on average) in Ḩdwa’ al-Bayān, while that of 29 verses of al-Sajdah takes 31 pages (nearly 1.1 page per verse on average) in al-Mizān; interpretation of 10 verses of al-Ḥujurat occupies 31 pages (3.1 page per verse on average) in Ḩdwa’ al-Bayān, while that of 18 verses of al-Ḥujurat occupies 32 pages (only about 1.8 page per verse on average) in al-Mizān.

Table 4.1 Comparison of the Length of Interpretation of Some Surahs in Ḩdwa’ al-Bayān (A) and al-Mizān (M)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>al-Ra’d</th>
<th>al-Sajdah</th>
<th>al-Ḥujurat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of verses interpreted</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of verses interpreted</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of pages spent</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of pages spent for each verse</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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In terms of their organization, *Aḍwa’ al-Bayān* and *al-Mizān* also display very different features. *Aḍwa’ al-Bayān* is by and large a verse-by-verse exegesis with a ‘straightforward’ style in the sense that it directly starts with one verse (or a phrase in a verse, or sometimes two or three short, consecutive verses – with a few exceptions) and then provides its commentary. Sometimes it appends additional discussion regarding relevant issues or notes, very often with a subtitle “mas’alāh” or “masā’il” (issues), “tanbīl” or “tanbīḥāl” (alerts) in which discussions on *āhkām* (Islamic laws) usually appear.\(^{13}\)

In contrast, *al-Mizān* generally separates a (long) surah into several bundles of verses (*maqāṣiḍ*). A bundle of verses might contain a single verse, some verses or some dozens of verses; it mainly depends on whether or not they are united by a single context (*siyāq*).\(^{14}\) Below each bundle of verses under discussion, there is always a section entitled “bayān” (elucidation) where al-Ṭabaṭabā’ī follows a verse-by-verse approach. In the beginning of a surah, the section might explain the key verse(s) (*ghurrah*/*ghurar*), the objective(s) (*gharaḍ*/*aghraḍ*) or the central theme(s) of the surah. This section is usually followed by “*baḥth riwā‘ī*” (presentation of relevant narrated traditions with occasional remarks) where he incorporate traditions from Sunni sources with those from Shi‘i sources. At times, after *baḥth riwā‘ī*, other additional discussions are attached. Among the frequent, supplementary sections are *baḥth falsafi* (philosophical discussion), *baḥth ‘ilmī* (scientific discussion), *baḥth tarikhi* (historical discussion) and *baḥth ijtima‘ī* (sociological discussion).

2. Interpretive Sources

As I argued elsewhere,\(^{16}\) in al-Shanqīṭī’s *Aḍwa’ al-Bayān*, reference to other parts of the Qur’ān occupies a quite central position. Most references go to other Qur’ānic verses. Taking al-Shanqīṭī’s interpretation of Yāsīn as a sample, I found that 87.6% of his citations


\(^{15}\) Medoff regards ‘the preeminent verses’ (*āya‘t al-ghurar*) as a new genre in tafsir that al-Ṭabaṭabā‘ī contributes. For a more comprehensive discussion on *āya‘t al-ghurar*, see Medoff, “Ijtihād and Renewal,” chapter 6.

\(^{16}\) Rohman, “*Aḍwa’ al-Bayān* Karya al-Shanqīṭi.”
are Qur’anic verses, compared to 4.4% for anonymous exegetes’ opinions, 4.4% for Arabic poetry, and 3.6% for other kinds.\(^{17}\)

Here I would take another sample, namely the interpretation of al-Ḥujurāt. While interpreting this surah, al-Shanqīṭī provides 88 citations (83%) of other verses, 6 citations (5.7%) of Arabic poetry, and 12 citations (11.3%) of other various kinds – ranging from variant modes of readings, hadith, *sabab nuzūl*, opinion of a Companion, to previous exegetes’ opinions.

It is therefore safe to say that in terms of ‘sources of interpretation’ (*maṣādīr al-tafsīr*), *Adwā’ al-Bayān* relies most on the Qur’an itself as the major source. The role of Arabic poetry and other sources is just a minor one.

With respect to previous tafsir works *Adwā’ al-Bayān* cites not less than twenty works. Among them, seven works are by far more frequently cited or discussed: al-Qurṭūbī’s *al-Jāmi’*, Ibn Kathīr’s *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, al-Zamakhsharī’s *al-Kashshāf*, al-Ṭabarī’s *Jāmi’ al-Bayān*, Abū Hayyān’s *al-Bahr al-Muḥīṭ*, al-Suyūṭī’s *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, and al-Rāzī’s *Mafāțiḥ al-Ghayb*. Citations from al-Qurṭūbī’s *al-Jāmi’* appear most, but quite many of them are in the context of the author’s disagreement with al-Qurṭūbī (e.g. his interpretation of Q 17:9; Q 23:105-6). Citations from *al-Kashshāf*, meanwhile, are normally related to linguistic concerns.

Citations from hadith works are less frequent but still noticeable. With regard to hadith works, *Adwā’ al-Bayān* cites mostly al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Abū Dawūd’s *Ṣunān*, and Mālik’s *al-Muwatṭa’*. Some commentaries on hadith works are also frequently used, particularly *Fatḥ al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Sharḥ al-Nawawī ‘alā Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.

In the case of *al-Mīzān*, citations from the Qur’an play a major role in *bayān* sections, and a minor one in other sections. The *bayān* section is the one that always appears in al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s interpretation of a set of verses. In general, *bayān* sections does not provide many citations, but when citations appear, they are mostly citations of Qur’anic verses. For example, in the *bayān* sections of al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s interpretation of Yāsīn, there are 92 citations; 58 of these citations (63%) are Qur’anic verses, 25 of them (27.2%) are opinions of anonymous exegetes, and 9 of them (9.8%) are from other sources (4 opinions of al-Rāghib al-İsfahānī, 2 al-Ṭabarī’s opinions, 1 al-Rāzī’s opinion, 1 hadith, and 1 Arabic poem).

\(^{17}\)Rohman, “*Adwā’ al-Bayān Karya al-Shanqīṭī*,” 260-1.
With regard to previous works on which *al-Mizān* relies most, al-Awṣī has mentioned that *al-Mizān* noticeably makes frequent use of al-Rāḥib al-Īṣfahānī’s *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur‘ān*, al-Ṭabarsi’s *Majma‘ al-Bayān*, al-Zamakhsharī’s *al-Kashshāf*, al-Ṭabari’s *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, al-Suyūṭī’s *al-Durr al-Manṭūr*, and al-Baydāwī’s *Anwār al-Tanzil*. In explaining Qur’anic vocabularies, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī owes very much to al-Rāḥib’s *al-Mufradāt*. Concerning the meaning of verses and Arabic linguistics, he often cites al-Zamakhsharī’s *al-Kashshāf* and al-Ṭabarsi’s *Majma‘ al-Bayān*. From al-Ṭabarsi, he also frequently takes narrated traditions of the Prophet, the Imams, the Companions and the Successors. For narrated traditions from Sunni sources, he often takes from al-Ṭabari’s *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān* and al-Suyūṭī’s *al-Durr al-Manṭūr*. As for traditions from Shi‘ī sources, he frequently cites from al-Bāhārī’s *al-Burḥān*. In addition to these works, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī often cites al-Rāzī’s *Mafātīh al-Ghayb*, al-Ālūsī’s *Rūḥ al-Ma‘āniََ*, as well as ‘Abduh and Riḍā’s *Tafṣīr al-Manār*. However, they are often quoted mostly to be criticized.\(^{18}\)

With respect to his discussion on riwayāt, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī uses a wide variety of sources. Al-Awṣī has listed 135 works – 99 of which are specific works on riwayāt – from which al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī cites narrated traditions.\(^{19}\) In addition to these works, there are still many other works al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī refers to during his discussion on philosophical, social and historical issues. On the whole, *al-Mizān* shows its author’s original thought as much as his acquaintance with many kinds of literature.

### 3. Degree of Textualism and Contextualism

Seeing *al-Mizān* and *Aḏwā‘ al-Bayān* from the perspective of textualist-contextualist distinction in the context of this study is perhaps less urgent, but it can still be another way to show the continuity and discontinuity of both tafsirs from preceding tafsir tradition.

Identifying modern approaches to the ethico-legal content of the Qur’ān, Abdullah Saeed introduces a textualist-contextualist classification based on two criteria: 1) the degree to which interpreters...

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\(^{18}\) Al-Awṣī, *al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī*, 59-75. As for an example of al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s critique toward al-Rāzī’s interpretation, see for instance his interpretation of Q 11:105. Also, see for instance his interpretation of Q 11:112 as an example of his critique toward al-Ālūsī’s interpretation, and his interpretation of Q 7:46 as an example of his critique toward Rashīd Riḍā’s interpretation.

\(^{19}\) Al-Awṣī, *al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī*, 76-83, 90-4.
of the Qur’an rely on (just) the text, tradition and linguistic criteria to
determine the meaning of the text; and 2) the degree to which
interpreters of the Qur’an take into account the socio-historical
context of the revelation and the contemporary social context.\textsuperscript{20}

Considering that Saeed’s distinction is largely inspired by
contemporary progressive Muslim scholars’ approaches to the Qur’an
emerging after al-Shanqīṭī and al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s era, one might
immediately guess that both \textit{Adwā’ al-Bayān} and \textit{al-Mīzān} would
represent more textualism than contextualism as they generally ignore
the socio-historical context of the Qur’an in interpretation and rely
more on linguistic criteria. While the hermeneutics of al-Shanqīṭī and
al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī abovementioned are also apparently more inclined
toward textualism,\textsuperscript{21} here I would make an attempt to find out some
contextualist sides in their tafsīrs. As Saeed himself notes it,
textualism ranges on a continuum from “hard textualism”, which
almost exclusively relies on the literal meaning to “soft textualism”,
which considers some contextual elements.\textsuperscript{22}

From contextualists’ point of view, there are two socio-
historical contexts need to be taken into account in interpretation: the
context of Qur’an revelation (macro context 1) and the contemporary
context of interpretation (macro context 2). With regard to the
attention to the first context, it is often said that traditional tafsīrs at
best pay attention to \textit{asbāb al-nuẓūl} (‘occasions of revelation’), which
is part of the micro context, and generally forget the macro level, that
is socio-historical settings of Arabia before and during Qur’an
revelation.\textsuperscript{23}

Even though al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī considers valuable the distinction
of Meccan verses and Medinan verses, and realizes the importance of
knowing \textit{asbāb al-nuẓūl}, he has been very critical toward \textit{asbāb al-
uẓūl} literature, questioning their authenticity and efficacy, and argues
that the goals of the Qur’an could not have been restricted by \textit{asbāb al-
uzūl}.\textsuperscript{24} That is why al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s inclusion of \textit{asbāb al-nuẓūl} is a bit

\textsuperscript{20}Abdullah Saeed, \textit{Interpreting the Qur’an: Towards a Contemporary

\textsuperscript{21}As for al-Shanqīṭī’s approach, I have examined elsewhere its textualist
nature. See Izza Rohman, “Salafi Tafsirs: Textualist and Authoritarian?” \textit{Journal of

\textsuperscript{22}Abdullah Saeed, \textit{Reading the Qur’an in the Twenty-first Century: A

\textsuperscript{23}See for instance Saeed, \textit{Interpreting the Qur’an}, 21, 107; Saeed, \textit{Reading
the Qur’an}, 5.

limited. When a sabab nuzul is referred to in al-Mizan, it is usually the authentic one and the one that is consistent with the result of tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an, or serves as another clue to the meaning of a verse. Al-Ṭabāṭabā’i would leave any riwayah on asbab al-nuzul which is inconsistent with the Qur’an or the textual context (siyāq) of Qur’anic verses at issue.

Similarly, al-Shanqīṭī makes use of asbab al-nuzul in a less striking fashion for his focus on tafsir al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an and less emphasis on providing riwayāt. Sometimes, he uses asbab al-nuzul to support the intra-Qur’anic connection he puts forward.

In relation to the second context, al-Awsī has highlighted the sociological tone of al-Mizan, making clear that in his tafsir, al-Ṭabāṭabā’i addresses various important contemporary social issues – such as women’s issues, social solidarity and freedom of religion. As for al-Shanqīṭī, his concerns over contemporary problems facing Muslims, either cultural, political or economic, can be found in numerous places in his Adwā’ al-Bayān. This means that al-Ṭabāṭabā’i and al-Shanqīṭī also on several occasions bring in mind the context of their contemporary time in interpreting the Qur’an.

However, from the contextualists’ perspective, the question is how this attention to contemporary social context affects the way al-Ṭabāṭabā’i and al-Shanqīṭī determine or elaborate the meaning of Qur’anic verses. This is what would remain to be questioned by contextualists as far as both exegetes’ hermeneutics are concerned.

4. Attitude toward Differences of Opinion

On many occasions, exegetes of the Qur’an have to deal with the differences of opinion. Some of them tend to merely document these differences in their tafsirs without arguing against or arguing in favor of one of the existing opinions. Some tend to debate or make arguments in favor of or against the opinions in order to show what is according to them the most reasonable or preferable opinion. Some

25For some examples, see al-Awsī, al-Ṭabāṭabā’i, 214-7.
28See for instance his concern over unislamic banking practices in his interpretation of Q 25:67 (al-Shanqīṭī, Adwā’ al-Bayān, VI, 390-4); his concern over Muslims’ social, cultural and political problems in his interpretation of Q 17:9 (al-Shanqīṭī, Adwā’ al-Bayān, III, 487-542).
tend to choose for the reader an opinion without mentioning other opinions. Others seek to avoid dwelling on cases where differences of opinion exist.

Al-Ṭabāṭabāʾi is among the ones who tend to criticize some existing opinions in order to show an opinion which is, according to him, closest to the apparent meaning, most consistent with the siyāq, or most preferable based on the conclusion he has derived from taṣīr al-Qurʾān bi al-Qurʾān. Readers of al-Mīzān would be able to see here and there how al-Ṭabāṭabāʾi accepts or refuses opinions – even when some of these opinions are based on certain (non-definite/mutawātir) riwāyāt.29

Concerning Qur’anic verses contested by Shiʿis and Sunnis, for instance, one can find that al-Ṭabāṭabāʾi tends to approach Shiʿi-Sunni exegetical differences in a way that is predominantly ‘competing’. His conclusions are mostly in line with typical Shiʿi views, and the way he arrives at the conclusions is quite often by arguing against views mostly existing in various Sunni exegeses. Al-Ṭabāṭabāʾi might even provide a very long discussion to make arguments against views commonly found in Sunni scholars’ works. For instance, while interpreting al-Ahzāb [33]:33, he seeks to show the inaccuracy of the view that Ahl al-Bayt in the verse encompasses only the wives of the Prophet, and then the inaccuracy of another view that Ahl al-Bayt refers to both the wives of the Prophet and the five personalities of Ahl al-Kisāʾ.30 When interpreting al-Baqarah [2]:124, al-Ṭabāṭabāʾi focuses on arguing against the opinion that imāmah is synonymous with nubūwah and other terms associated with it found in previous exegeses (taqaddum, muṭāḥiyah, khilāfah, wisāyah, riʿāsah and risālah).31 While interpreting al-Māʾidah [5]:55, his main attention is to argue against the understanding of wilāyah in the sense of nusrah (help, backing).32 Similarly, when interpreting al-Nisaʾ [4]:24, his main focus is to argue against the view associating the word istamtaʿtum with nikāḥ (in the sense of permanent marriage), the view that the verse merely emphasizes the law of dowry, and all views that the verse has been abrogated by another verse.33 It is interesting, however, to notice that while arguing against their exegetical opinions, al-Ṭabāṭabāʾi refers to Sunnis or Sunni scholars mostly not by

29See also Medoff, “Ijtiḥād and Renewal,” 15; al-Awṣī, al-Ṭabāṭabāʾi, 143.
31Al-Ṭabāṭabāʾi, al-Mīzān, I, 262-72.
32Al-Ṭabāṭabāʾi, al-Mīzān, VI, 6-15.
33Al-Ṭabāṭabāʾi, al-Mīzān, IV, 278-82.
mentioning the name of the group (Sunni or Ahl al-Sunnah) or the name of the scholars, rather by using expressions like “they”, “some of them”, “some exgetes”, “the people” (al-qawm), etc.

Al-Shanqīṭī, on the other hand, is an exgete of mixed style. While here and there in Ḳdważ Ḳal-Bayān, the readers can see how al-Shanqīṭī performs ṭarjīḥ (giving preponderance to one among a number of opinions), sometimes he does not indicate that other opinions are wrong. Quite often al-Shanqīṭī – who wrote a treatise on the ethics of discussion, [property] – dwells on each available opinion as if he is a supporter of the opinion, whereas in fact he finally prefers another.⁴ However, al-Shanqīṭī can be very strict towards those he considers as ‘innovators’ (mubtadi’ah).⁵

Regarding Qur’ānic verses central for Shi‘ism, al-Shanqīṭī quite often provides no comment on the verses. For instance, he leaves al-Mā‘īṣah [5]:55 (the wilāyah verse), Al ‘Imrān [3]:61 (the muḥāhalah verse); and al-Waqi‘ah [56]:77-9 (on al-muṭḥarūn allowed/able to ‘touch’ the Qur’an) uncommented in his tafsir. (For this study, this means that the number of relevant verses that can be highlighted in the next chapter would be limited). However, as elaborated later on, al-Shanqīṭī has made the interpretation of some verses, such as Q 1:7, Q 33:33 and Q 9:100, an opportunity to support Sunni beliefs.

5. Application and Intensity of Tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an

Both al-Mīzān and Ḳdważ Ḳal-Bayān rely very much on tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an. However, there are commonalities as well as differences in their application and intensity of the method.

Using my classification of the types of reference to Qur’ānic parts in tafsir al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān mentioned in Chapter III, one can find that the most frequent reference to Qur’ānic parts in Ḳdważ Ḳal-Bayān is of the second type, that is reference to other Qur’ānic verses that are more detailed, clearer, more specific or have different context to elucidate the meaning of the verse being interpreted, or to add more information to it.

Other types frequently found are: reference to other Qur’ānic parts (containing relevant vocabularies) to explain the usage of a word in the rest of the Qur’an and/or to clarify the meaning of the word

⁴See for instance his discussion on several legal matters concerning zinā (adultery) while interpreting Q 24:2 (al-Shanqīṭī, Ḳdważ Ḳal-Bayān, VI, 5-79).
⁵See for instance his discussion on an argument in favor of taking graves as masājid (mosques) while interpreting Q 15:80 (al-Shanqīṭī, Ḳdważ Ḳal-Bayān, III, 214-6).
mentioned in the verse being interpreted (the fourth type); reference to other Qur’anic parts to support a statement al-Shanqīṭī makes or an opinion he cites in his discussion of the topic of a certain verse, which is not directly related to the meaning of that verse (the seventh type); and reference to other Qur’anic parts to select or prefer one meaning among some possible meanings hinted at by the verse being interpreted (the third type).

One of the noticeably least frequent types is reference to other Qur’anic verses to clarify the agreement between the verse being interpreted and other verses whose meanings seem to be in conflict, unlikely congruent, or irreconcilable. This is not surprising since it has been al-Shanqīṭī’s main objective in his another work, Daf’ Ihām al-Iḍṭīrāb ‘an Āyāt al-Kitāb.

What is most unlikely to be found in Adwā’ al-Bayān is reference to the central theme or the main objective of a surah to shed light on the meaning of a verse being interpreted. This is also understandable because it has been outside al-Shanqīṭī’s hermeneutics, which put more emphasis on bayān al-ījmāl (explanation of the abridged).

In al-Mīzān, meanwhile, the most frequent reference to Qur’anic parts is of the seventh type, that is reference to other Qur’anic parts to support a statement or an opinion, which is related to the topic of a certain verse but is not directly related to the elucidation of the meaning of that verse. Qur’anic quotations displayed in al-Mīzān do not necessarily shed light on the meaning of the verse being interpreted, rather quite often merely justify a statement or a remark the author makes or cites while commenting on the verse; a statement which might be relevant to the topic but not to the verse itself. This could mean that al-Mīzān is closer to thematic interpretation in nature. While commenting on a set of verses, al-Ṭabarānī might dwell more on a relevant topic, rather than on the verses in isolation. Readers might notice that al-Ṭabarānī sometimes links several verses as if he is discussing a certain theme and not the verse being interpreted. In fact, sometimes al-Ṭabarānī adds a separate section on a relevant topic or question, in which he also displays many citations from the Qur’an. This partly explains why the seventh type could be the most frequent.

The second most frequent reference is of the fourth type, that is reference to other Qur’anic parts to explain the usage of a word in the rest of the Qur’an and/or to clarify the meaning of the word mentioned in the verse being interpreted. Paying a closer look at the
bayān sections, one could notice that al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī most of the time focuses on explaining the meaning of words available in the verses being interpreted. While explaining the meaning of the words, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī quote often refers to other Qur’anic verses.

Some other types do frequently appear in al-Mīzān, but much less than the previous two types. Other types frequently found include: reference to other Qur’anic verses to make clear or detail the scope of the verse being interpreted, or to add more information to it (the second type), reference to other Qur’anic parts to select or prefer one meaning among some possible meanings implied by the verse being interpreted (the third type), and reference to nearby verses to show the harmony or the relationship between the verse being interpreted and the surrounding verses, or to clarify the context, the objective or the key theme of a set of verses being interpreted (the fifth type).

With regard to the intensity of tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān in both tafsirs, I have argued elsewhere that Adwā’ al-Bayān is the most intensive tafsir in terms of the application of the method.36 There, based on a survey on the interpretation of three groups of verses totally consisting of 83 verses (i.e. al-ṣāliḥah [1]: 1-7, Tāhā [20]: 1-54, and al-Mujādilah [58]: 1-22), I found that al-Shanqīṭī’s Adwā’ al-Bayān is by and large more intensive compared to other four tafsirs under scrutiny, being always ranked 1st or 2nd in all (quantitative) aspects assessed. Other four tafsirs, namely al-Mīzān (al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī), Maḥāsin al-Ta’wil (al-Qāsimī), Maftāḥ al-Ghayb (al-Rāzī) and Tafṣīr al-Qur’ān al-ʾAzīm (Ibn Kathīr), have inconsistent ranks.

However, there I have not compared the five tafsirs to the rest. Therefore, I would try here to illustrate the intensity of tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān in both tafsirs compared to numerous tafsirs in order to give a snapshot to the difference between some tafsirs with greater orientation of tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān and the rest with lower orientation of this methodology.

To illustrate the intensity of tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān in both tafsirs compared to numerous tafsirs, I use two groups of verses consisting of ten verses as my samples: i) interpretation of Huḍ [11]:1-4; and ii) interpretation of al-Shūrā [42]:1-6.37 While these samples might be much less representative, but could already help previous

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36 Rohman, “Adwā’ al-Bayān Karya al-Shanqīṭī.”
37 The only inspiration I had to take these two samples was the fact that al-Shanqīṭī details his view on the mysterious, initial letters (ḥurūf muqattāʿāt) in the beginning of Surat Huḍ, while al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī details his view on the letters in the beginning of Surat al-Shūrā.
studies in identifying some tafsirs with striking appearance of *tafsir al-Qur’ân bi al-Qur’ân*. Counting only the number of references to ‘interpreting Qur’anic parts’, the result of my survey is as listed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2  Number of References to Interpreting Qur’anic Parts in the Interpretation of Q 11:1-4 and Q 42:1-6 in Various Tafsirs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tafsir</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>ii</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 <em>Adwā’ al-Bayān</em> (al-Shanqīṭī)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 <em>Tafsīr al-Sha'rawī</em> (al-Sha'rawī)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 <em>al-Furqān</em> (al-Sādiqī)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 <em>al-Mīzān</em> (al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 <em>Tafsīr al-Mishbah</em> (Qurashi Shihab)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7 <em>Maṭābih al-Ghayb</em> (al-Rāzi)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 <em>al-Tahīr wa al-Tanwīr</em> (Ibn ‘Āshūr)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 <em>al-Kashshāf</em> (al-Zamakhshārī)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 <em>al-Lubāb</em> (Ibn ‘Adil al-Ḥanfī)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 <em>Ta’wil</em> (al-Māturīdī)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 <em>al-Tafsīr al-Munīr</em> (al-Zuhārī)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 <em>Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī</em> (al-‘Alūsī)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-6 <em>Ruḥ al-Bayān</em> (Ismā‘il Haqqī)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Maḥāsin al-Ta’wil</em> (al-Qasīmī)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>al-Jāmi‘ li Ahkām al-Qur’ān</em> (al-Qurtūbī)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>al-Waṣīj</em> (Sayyid Ṭanṭāwī)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Faraḍ al-Qadīr</em> (al-Shawkānī)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-2 <em>al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz</em> (Ibn ‘Aflīyah)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>al-Bāḥr al-Muḥīj</em> (Abū Ḥayyān)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Madārik al-Tanzīl</em> (al-Nasāfī)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-4 <em>Zād al-Masūr</em> (Ibn al-Jawzī)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>al-Bāḥr al-Madīd</em> (Ibn ‘Aṣābih)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 <em>al-Kaṣf wa al-Bayān</em> (al-Tha‘labī)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-32 <em>Tafsīr al-Jilānī</em> (al-Jilānī); <em>Tafsīr al-Azhar</em> (Hamka)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Jāmi‘ al-Bayān</em> (al-Ṭabarī); <em>al-Nukat wa al-‘Uyūn</em> (al-Mawardi); <em>al-Jawāhir al-Hīsān</em> (al-Tha‘labī); <em>al-Durr al-Manthūr</em> (al-Suyūṭī); <em>Bayān al-Sa‘ādah</em> (al-Janābādī); <em>Anwār al-Tanzīl</em> (al-Baydāwī)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33-41 <em>Majnūn al-Bayān</em> (al-Ṭabarī); <em>al-Tibyān</em> (al-Tūṣī); <em>Lubāb al-Ta‘wil</em> (al-Khāzin); <em>‘Arā‘is al-Bayān</em> (Rūzbihān al-Baqī); <em>Aysar al-Tafsīr</em> (al-Jaza‘īrī); <em>Tafsīr al-Kātim al-Rahmān</em> (al-Sa‘dī); <em>Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān</em> (al-Fayruz‘ābādī); <em>Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān</em> (al-Qummi)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Based on the table, one might come up with at least a modest claim that ُAdwāʿ al-Bayān and al-Mīzān are obviously among a few tafsirs with most frequent appearance of intra-Qurʾanic cross-reference – strikingly different from most of Qurʾan exegeses. This might affirm the findings of previous studies.

The issue of holisticness is, however, another issue, since the number of appearance of intra-Qurʾanic cross-reference in a tafsir might not necessarily indicate its holisticness. If one is to compare ُAdwāʿ al-Bayān and al-Mīzān in interpreting Q 11:1-4 (Sample i), one would find that in general, both al-Shanqīṭī’s and al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī’s interpretations can be considered to be equally ‘fair’ in terms of their holisticness, but al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī’s holisticness is a bit more consistent than al-Shanqīṭī’s.

In the case of Q 11:1-4, al-Shanqīṭī pays attention to four types of intra-Qurʾanic connection while interpreting the first verse, but only two types for the second and the third verses, and none for the fourth verse. In total, he pays attention to six types. (See Figure 4.1).

**Figure 4.1  Holisticness Chart for al-Shanqīṭī’s Tafsir of Q 11:1-4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Intra-Qurʾanic Connection</th>
<th>Verse Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between parts available in a verse.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and preceding verses.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and succeeding verses.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a word/statement with the textual context of a group of verses where it exists.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and the central theme or the objective of the surah where it exists.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and a distant part of the Qurʾan dealing with the same or relevant topic.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and a distant part of the Qurʾan displaying a comparable linguistic feature/style.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between the use of a word/phrase in a verse and the entire/dominant usage of the word/phrase in the Qurʾan.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between variant modes of reading (if applicable).</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ☐ = available  ☐ = not available
The connections attracting al-Shanqīṭī’s attention most are the connection between parts available in a verse (when interpreting the first and third verses), and the connection between a verse and a distant part of the Qur’an dealing with the same or relevant topic (when interpreting the second and third verses).

Al-Ṭabāṭābā’ī, meanwhile, pays attention to four kinds of connections while interpreting the second and third verses, but only three for the first verse, and one for the fourth verse. Interestingly, he almost constantly pays attention to each of the four types. (See Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Holisticness Chart for al-Ṭabāṭābā’ī’s Tafsir of Q 11:1-4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Intra-Qur’anic Connection</th>
<th>Verse Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between parts available in a verse.</td>
<td>▢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and preceding verses.</td>
<td>▢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and succeeding verses.</td>
<td>▢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a word/statement with the textual context of a group of verses where it exists.</td>
<td>▢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and the central theme or the objective of the surah where it exists.</td>
<td>▢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and a distant part of the Qur’an dealing with the same or relevant topic.</td>
<td>▢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and a distant part of the Qur’an displaying a comparable linguistic feature/style.</td>
<td>▢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between the use of a word/phrase in a verse and the entire/dominant usage of the word/phrase in the Qur’an.</td>
<td>▢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between variant modes of reading (if applicable).</td>
<td>▢</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ▢ = available □ = not available

The comparison between their interpretations of Q 42:1-6 (Sample ii) also suggests a similar conclusion. While interpreting the verses, al-Shanqīṭī pays attention to five kinds of connection in total, ranging from one to four connections for each verse. Remarkably, al-Shanqīṭī consistently pays attention to the relationship between a verse and a distant part of the Qur’an dealing with the same or relevant topic. (See Figure 4.3).
Figure 4.3 Holisticness Chart for al-Shanqîtî’s Tafsir of Q 42:1-6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Intra-Qur'anic Connection</th>
<th>Verse Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between parts available in a verse.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and preceding verses.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and succeeding verses.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a word/statement with the textual context of a group of verses where it exists.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and the central theme or the objective of the surah where it exists.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and a distant part of the Qur’an dealing with the same or relevant topic.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and a distant part of the Qur’an displaying a comparable linguistic feature/style.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between the use of a word/phrase in a verse and the entire/dominant usage of the word/phrase in the Qur’an.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between variant modes of reading <em>(if applic.)</em>.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ☐ = available ☐ = not available

On the other hand, al-Ţabâtabâ’î pays attention to seven types in total, ranging from one to five for each verse. His interpretation of the fifth verse is most holistic, but that of the rest is least holistic. The connection attracting his attention most is that of between a verse and a distant part of the Qur’an dealing with the same or relevant topic. (See Figure 4.4).

My point here is that, while al-Shanqîtî’s number of references to other Qur’anic parts (with regard to the two samples) is far higher than al-Ţabâtabâ’î’s (76 compared to 27), the types of intra-Qur’anic connections that al-Shanqîtî uses are slightly less than those that al-Ţabâtabâ’î involves in Sample i (2 types per verse on average compared to 2.75 per verse on average) and are just the same in number in Sample ii (1.8 types per verse on average). Thus, in terms of the level of holisticness, al-Ţabâtabâ’î’s interpretation, which cites less verses, is not necessarily less than that of al-Shanqîtî, which cites more verses. One of the reasons for this is that al-Shanqîtî tends to merely list relevant Qur’anic verses, while al-Ţabâtabâ’î tends to discuss relevant verses in a fashion closer to thematic approach. Al-
Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s citation of Qur’anic verses quite often proceeds from one verse to another.

Figure 4.4 Holisticness Chart for al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s Tafsir of Q 42:1-6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Intra-Qur’anic Connection</th>
<th>Verse Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between parts available in a verse.</td>
<td>1   2  3  4  5  6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and preceding verses.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and succeeding verses.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a word/statement with the textual context of a group of verses where it exists.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and the central theme or the objective of the surah where it exists.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and a distant part of the Qur’an dealing with the same or relevant topic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and a distant part of the Qur’an displaying a comparable linguistic feature/style.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between the use of a word/phrase in a verse and the entire/dominant usage of the word/phrase in the Qur’an.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between variant modes of reading (if applic.).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: [ ] = available  [ ] = not available

6. Color of Sunnism and Shi’ism

Sunní color is remarkable in Adwā’ al-Bayān just as Shi’í color is strikingly noticeable in al-Mīzān. Readers of both tafsirs might not need to go to far pages to find the color of their authors’ respective theological school. The color is noticeable as early as in the introduction to both tafsirs and interpretation of al-Fātiḥah. Here I would like to mention three examples.

The introductory sentences in the beginning of the preface of each tafsir have hinted at the difference in theological outlook between the two authors. Al-Shanqīṭī starts his preface saying “Wa al-ṣalāt wa al-salām ‘alā ashraf al-mursafīn, nabīyinā Muḥammad – salla Allāh alayhi wa sallama – wa alā ‘alāhi wa ṣaḥbīhi, wa man tabī’ahum bi ʾiḥsān ilā yawm al-dīn” (May the blessing and peace be upon the Most Noble Messenger, our Prophet Muhammad – may Allah bless him and...
give him peace – as well as his Family, his Companions and those following them with good conduct until the Judgment Day).”\footnote{Al-Shanqīṭī, \textit{Adwā’ al-Bayān}, I, 5.} Al-Shanqīṭī includes the Companions and those following them in this prayer.

Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, meanwhile, starts his preface saying “\textit{Al-ḥamd li Allāh alladhi anzala al-furqān ‘alā ‘abdihi li yakūna li al-‘alamīna nadhīran, wa al-ṣalā ‘alā man ja’alahu shāhidan wa mubashshīran wa nadhīran, wa dā‘iyan ilā Allāh bi idhnihi wa sirājan munīrān, wa ‘alā ālihi alladhīna adhhaba ‘anhum al-rijs ahl al-bayt wa ṭahharahum tathīran} (All praise belongs to Allah who has sent down the Criterion to His servant that he may be a warner to all the nations, and may the blessing be upon the one whom He makes a witness, a bearer of good news, a warner, a summoner to Allah by His permission, and a radiant lamp, and upon his family, the Ahl al-Bayt, from whom He repels all impurity, and whom He purifies with a thorough purification).”\footnote{Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, \textit{al-Mīzān}, I, 7.} Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī does not include the Companions (and those following them), and instead highlights the People of the House (Ahl al-Bayt) among the Prophet’s Family in a phrase noticeably adapted from the \textit{tathīr} verse.

Secondly, in the introduction to \textit{Adwā’ al-Bayān}, al-Shanqīṭī mentions some examples of views regarding a Qur’anic verse which can be regarded as inaccurate based on a clue available in the verse. One of the four examples is the inaccuracy of the view that excludes the Prophet’s wives from the category of \textit{ahl al-bayt} mentioned in al-Ahzāb [33]:33. The context (\textit{siyāq}) of the verse, according to al-Shanqīṭī, necessitates the inclusion of the wives.\footnote{Al-Shanqīṭī, \textit{Adwā’ al-Bayān}, I, 19.} This is the opposite of the common view in Shi‘i thought, which excludes the wives. (More discussion would be in the next chapter).

Meanwhile, in the introduction to \textit{al-Mīzān}, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī refers to the Imams among the Prophet’s progeny (Ahl al-Bayt) as the teachers of the Qur’an—after, and appointed by, the Prophet himself—granted with the real knowledge of the Book. Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī puts forward two evidences: 1) an unanimously accepted tradition – known as \textit{ḥadīth al-thaqalayn} – in which the Prophet stated, “I am leaving behind among you two precious things; as long as you hold fast to them you will never go astray after me: The Book of Allah and my progeny (\textit{‘itrati}), my family members (\textit{ahl bayti}); and these two shall
never separate from each other until they reach me (on) the reservoir;” and 2) the *tatīr* verse of al-Ahzab [33]:33 linked to al-Waqi‘ah [56]:77-9 which makes mention of *al-mutahharūn* (the purified ones) as those who could ‘touch the Book’.41 The recognition of the Imams as the associates of the Qur’an (the ‘speaking Qur’an’) is alien to Sunni thought.

Thirdly, while commenting on *ṣirāt alladhīna an‘amta ‘alayhim* (al-Fātiḥah [1]:7), al-Shanqīṭī suggests that it is a proof of the legitimacy of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddiq’s caliphate, since the phrase is clarified in al-Nisā’ [4]:69 to include, among others, *al-ṣiddiqīn*, whereas Abū Bakr is – as the Prophet explained it – among the *ṣiddiqīn*.42 As is commonly known, the legitimacy of three caliphs prior to ‘Aṭī ibn Abī Ṭalib has been doubted and problematized by Shi‘ites.

On the other hand, while interpreting al-Fātiḥah [1]:6-7, al-Ṭābāṭābā‘ī includes al-Mā‘īdah [5]:55, a verse Shi‘ites believe to be a sanction of the virtue and the right of *wala‘yah* (leadership) of ‘Aṭī ibn Abī Ṭalib, to clarify the meaning of what he calls *aṣḥāb al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm* (those on the straight path, upon whom God has bestowed favor, who – as suggested in the end of al-Nisā’ [4]:69 – serve as excellent companions) who enjoy complete authority to guide the other servants of Allah.43

Both al-Shanqīṭī and al-Ṭābāṭābā‘ī might be regarded as also serving as ‘defenders’ of their respective theological school in their tafsirs.

Al-Awṣī has revealed the striking Shi‘i color in al-Mizān. Spending a great deal of space in the last part of his book to discuss al-Ṭābāṭābā‘ī’s view on Shi‘i core beliefs (*‘aqīdah*) – *al-tawḥīd, al-‘adl, al-nubūwah, al-imāmah wa al-‘ismah* and *al-ma‘ād*,44 al-Awṣī concludes that not only did al-Ṭābāṭābā‘ī strongly hold and never go beyond Imami doctrines, but also defended the doctrines by various interpretive strategies.45 Al-Awṣī implies that what al-Ṭābāṭābā‘ī did

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45 Al-Awṣī, *al-Ṭābāṭābā‘ī*, 257, 262, 266.
might resemble what al-Rāzī did in defending Ashʿarism and what al-Zamakshāri did in defending Muʿtazilism.46

Similarly, it is apparent that al-Shanqīṭī defends Sunnism/Salafism against Muʿtazilism and other theological groups concerning some theological issues.47

In what follows, we would see that this color (lawn) of Sunnism or Shiʿism has also been noticeable in various parts of their tafsīrs in the midst of their frequent practices of tafsīr al-Qurʿān bi al-Qurʿān.

46 Al-Awši, al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 266.
47 See for instance his opposition toward Muʿtazili views in al-Shanqīṭī, Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān, II, 364-5; IV, 53-4; and VI, 329-32.
Chapter V
TAFSIR OF THE QUR’AN BY THE QUR’AN IN ADWA’ AL-BAYÂN AND AL-MIZÂN: ON AHL AL-BAYT, ŞAḤĀBAḤ AND MUT’AH

The following two chapters focus mainly on examining how al-Ṭabātabā’ī and al-Shanqīṭī handle verses (or parts of verses) that meet all of the three criteria I mentioned earlier: 1) often contested by Shi’a and Sunni scholars; 2) commented by both al-Ṭabātabā’ī and al-Shanqīṭī (not just by one of them) in a way that is relevant to Sunni-Shi’i theological dispute; and 3) connected by both al-Ṭabātabā’ī and al-Shanqīṭī to other parts of the Qur’an (that is, both interpret it by employing tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān). Based on these three criteria, I have found a number of commented verses (or parts of verses) of the Qur’an at which one can pay a closer look in an attempt to know the extent to which a relatively holistic tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān can be shaped by the interpreter’s theological inclination. These parts of the Qur’an include: al-Aḥzāb [33]:33 the debate of which is primarily related to the scope and the purification of Ahl al-Bayt; al-Tawbah [9]:100 related to God’s pleasure for the Companions and their followers; al-Baqarah [2]:124 and al-Anbiya’ [21]:73 used to justify the doctrine around the existence of infallible Imams (among the Prophet Ibrahim’s progeny); A<l ‘Imra>n [3]:7 related to the only one(s) who have knowledge over the true interpretation (ta’wil) of the Qur’an; al-Ra’d [13]:43 pertaining to the one who has knowledge of the Book (which according to Shi’ites indicates the imamate of ‘Ali); and al-Nisā’ [4]:24 relevant to the issue of mut‘ah. Other verses (e.g. Q 2:30, Q 3:28, Q 3:61, Q 4:59, Q 5:3, Q 5:55, Q 5:56, Q 5:67, Q 13:7, Q 23:5-7, Q 27:83, Q 35:32, Q 42:23, Q 43:28, Q 59:8-9 and Q 66:10) might be equally important in our effort to deal with the issue (i.e. Shi’i/Sunni color in tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān) but are not highlighted here because they do not meet one of the criteria – though they are not thoroughly neglected.

Chapter V and Chapter VI would address how these parts of the Qur’an are treated in Adwa’ al-Bayān and al-Mizān, particularly how these parts are connected to other Qur’anic parts. In doing so, I would highlight, whenever possible, three important matters: 1) the depth/holisticness of the application of tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān to each verse; 2) the correlation between the authors’ interpretation and the doctrines of their respective theological school; and 3) a set of
identifiable, different (subjective) choices made by the exegetes to navigate the text and arrive at their respective position.

The discussion of this chapter is centered around two verses related to the status of Ahl al-Bayt and Ṣaḥābah, i.e. Q 33:33 and Q 9:100 respectively, and a verse concerning the issue of mutʿah, i.e. Q 4:24. While the last issue is more related to jurisprudence than theology, the reason of putting it in this chapter (and not in a separate chapter) is that the arguments in the debate on the legitimacy of mutʿah often involve certain conceptions on the authority of Ṣaḥābah and Ahl al-Bayt.

A. The Scope and the Purification of Ahl al-Bayt in Q 33:33

The scope of Ahl al-Bayt has been subject to varying interpretations, so is the case with the meaning or the implication of their state of purity. While varieties in the interpretation of Ahl al-Bayt can be found even within a theological school, one can notice the difference between typical Shiʿi positions and typical Sunni positions. Shiʿi scholars mostly believe that it refers exclusively to Ahl al-Kisāʾ (the People of the Cloak), namely ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, his wife (Fāṭimah al-Zahraʾ), and their sons (al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn), in addition to the Prophet Muḥammad himself. Some include the infallible Imams from the Prophet’s progeny in the definition. On the other hand, at least four different views can be commonly found in Sunni literatures (of tafsir and beyond): 1) that the Ahl al-Bayt consists of the Prophet and the household of ʿAlī (Ahl Kisāʾ); 2) that it just consists of the Prophet and his wives; 3) that it comprises the Ahl al-Kisāʾ and the Prophet’s wives; 4) that it includes the Ahl al-Kisāʾ, the wives of the Prophet as well as the Prophet’s relatives from Banū Muṭṭalib (such as ʿAqīl, Jaʿfar, and ʿAbd as well as their descendants).1

While a handful Sunni scholars may share the same view regarding the scope of Ahl al-Bayt (that it consists of the five members of Ahl al-Kisāʾ) just like most of Shiʿi scholars, generally

1See also Izza Rohman, “Intra-Quranic Connections in Sunni and Shiʿi Tafsirs: A Meeting Point or Another Area of Contestation?” Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies 3, no. 1 (June 2013): 85-7. In Sunni tafsir works, the third opinion is more prevalent, but beyond tafsir literature, the fourth opinion (that it includes those not allowed to receive zakāh, that is the Prophet’s wives, the Prophet’s descendants, as well as every Muslim from the descendants of the Prophet’s grandfather, i.e. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Ḥāshim) is quite common. See ‘Abd al-Muḥsin ibn Ḥanbal al-Tabar, Fadh Ahl al-Bayt wa ʿUllūw Makānatihim ʿinda Ahl al-Sunnah wal al-Jamāʿah (Riyadh: Dār Ibn al-Ṭibīr, 2001).
they differ in understanding the state of Ahl al-Bayt’s purity and its implication. Typically Shi‘i scholars regard their purity as indicating their infallibility (‘ismah) and a sign of imamate. Sunni scholars, meanwhile, traditionally view that their purity neither imply their infallibility nor become a sign of imamate.

The Qur’anic part in the centre of the debate on this issue is the last part of al-Ahzab [33]:33, which reads:

إِنَّمَا يَرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُهْلِكَ عَنْكُمُ الْجَنْسَ أَهْلِ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطَهِّيرًا.

This verse has been translated differently into English with slightly different emphases, particularly with regard to the meaning of al-rijs, but generally the translations do not very much reflect the Sunni-Shi‘i striking difference in the understanding of the verse. Some translations go as follows:

Allah intends only to remove from you the impurity [of sin], O people of the [Prophet’s] household, and to purify you with [extensive] purification.

– Saheeh International²

Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.

– Ali Quli Qarai³

Allah wishes only to remove ArRijs (evil deeds and sins, etc.) from you, O members of the family (of the Prophet SAW), and to purify you with a thorough purification.

– Hilali & Khan⁴

²The Qur’an: English Meanings; English Revised and Edited by Saheeh International (Jeddah: al-Muntada al-Islami, 2004), 411. The Saheeh International team consists of three female American converts: Amatullah J. Bantley (1966-), Umm Muhammad Aminah Assami (1940-), and Mary M. Kennedy (1965-), who respectively serve as the director, the translator and the editor.

³The Qur’an: With a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation, trans. by ‘Afi Quli Qarā’i (London: ICAS, 2005), 590. Qarai is a contemporary Shi‘i translator.

⁴The Noble Qur’an: English Translation of the meanings and commentary, trans. by Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali & Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Madinah: King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur’an, n.d.), 565. Muhammad Taqiy al-Din al-Hilālī (Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali) is a Moroccan, while Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Muhammad Muhsin Khan) is a Pakistani. Their translation has been sponsored and disseminated by the Saudi government.
O People of the house, Allah wants to remove all kinds of uncleanness from you and to purify you thoroughly.

– Muhammad Sarwar⁵

And God only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye Members of the Family, and to make you pure and spotless.

– Abdullah Yusuf Ali⁶

Al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī comments on this part of the verse in his interpretation of a group of eight verses from al-Ahzāb [33]:28 until al-Ahzāb [33]:35. Al-Shanqīṭī, meanwhile, comments on this part alone after his interpretation of al-Ahzāb [33]:31 and before his interpretation of al-Ahzāb [33]:37. However, interestingly, it is indeed al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī who argues for the independency of this second part of al-Ahzāb [33]:33, and it is al-Shanqīṭī who asserts its tight connection with surrounding verses.

While interpreting the verse, al-Shanqīṭī focuses mainly on arguing against the view (interestingly he calls “the opinion of one of the people of knowledge” [qawl ba’d ahl al-‘ilm]) that the Prophet’s wives are not included in his Ahl al-Bayt. In doing so, he also briefly deals with the meaning of al-rijs (uncleanness/impurity) and tāthīr (purification). At the end of his remarks, al-Shanqīṭī shortly raises a linguistic issue concerning the use of lām after the present/future verb of iراد (i.e. يرددُ ل ...). In both cases, al-Shanqīṭī applies tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān.

Al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī, meanwhile, mainly addresses the following issues: the scope of the limitation (ḥaṣr) implied in the verse, the scope of Ahl al-Bayt, and the meaning of al-rijs and tāthīr. In dealing with the last two issues, al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī also resorts to tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān.

To argue that the Prophet’s wives are included in the term Ahl al-Bayt mentioned in the verse, al-Shanqīṭī presents some intra-


Qur’anic connections. First, according to al-Shanqīṭī, the last part of al-Ahzāb [33]:33 could not be disconnected from its context (ṣiyāq) which clearly addresses the wives of the Prophet. The first part of the verse, the following verse, as well as some preceding verses (starting from al-Ahzāb [33]:28), all deal with the Prophet’s wives. Thus, the context clearly indicates that they are among the ones referred to as Ahl al-Bayt.

Second, al-Shanqīṭī mentions a Qur’anic parallel for the inclusion of wives in the term Ahl al-Bayt. The parallel can be found in Ḥūd [11]:73, which uses the expression ahl al-bayt to refer to the wife of Ibrāhīm being addressed (Ṣārah).

Third, to convince that the masculine plural pronoun used in the verse (kum) can be normally used to refer to someone’s wife(s), al-Shanqīṭī explains that it is common to refer to them as ahl in Arabic, and that is why a masculine plural pronoun is used to refer to them. Al-Shanqīṭī gives some examples from the Qur’an, that is from Ṭāḥā [20]:10 and al-Naml [27]:7, both of which cites Mūsā talking to his wife and referring to her with a masculine plural pronoun.

Figure 5.1 Al-Shanqīṭī’s Intra-Qur’anic Connections for the Taḥfīr Verse

Al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī presents different intra-Qur’anic connections in order to argue that the term Ahl al-Bayt must have been used to refer only to five personalities: the Prophet, ʿAlī, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, as stated in riwāyāt of sabab nuzūl of the verse. First, compared to what the preceding verses imply with regard to the Prophet’s wives, the content of the last part of al-Ahzāb [33]:33 noticeably imply different thing to different addressees. The shift of addressee is nothing strange in the Qur’an. Al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī insists that
the relationship between the second part of al-Ahzab [33]:33 and the first part of the verse is analogous to the relationship between a part in the middle of al-Ma'idah [5]:3 talking about the desperation of disbelievers (al-yawm ya'is a alladhina kafaru ...), and its beginning part talking about the prohibited animal foods (hurrimat 'alaykum al-maytat ...). The context of the tathbir verse therefore varies from that of the preceding and following verses.

Second, the use of a masculine plural pronoun (kum) — placed in a series of verses that repeatedly use a feminine plural pronoun (kunna) — is a clue that the term Ahl al-Bayt in the verse cannot have been applied exclusively to the Prophet’s wives, but applying the term to mean the wives as well as the Prophet would not match with the context of the surrounding verses, which implies the tightening of commission and multiplication of recompense (tashdid al-taklif wa tad'if al-jaza) as a way to achieve greater taqw, since the Prophet is infallible, guided by Allah’s protection. On the other hand, considering the removal of impurity and purification as applied to the wives would not match the context of the surrounding verses as well.

Third, al-rijs in the verse means inner uncleanness (of al-shirk, al-kufir and al-’amal al-sayyi’) as also implied in al-An’am [6]:125 and al-Tawbah [9]:125, and idhhab al-rijs can mean divine protection (al-‘ismah al-ilahiyyah) from any wrong belief and bad deed. This meaning of idhhab al-rijs as ‘ismah is emphasized by the phrase wayutahhirakum tathiran (“and purify you with thorough purifying”), which implies the removal of any remnant of al-rijs and its replacement by true belief. The meaning of iradah (will, i.e. will of Allah) in the verse is therefore ontological (takwiniyyah), rather than legislative (tashri’iyyah).

*Figure 5.2* Al-Tabataba’i’s Intra-Qur’anic Connections for the Tathbir Verse
Both al-Shanqīṭī and al-Ṭabāṭabāʿī present multiple intra-Qur’anic connections to interpret the *tathīr* verse. Both are aware of the importance of paying attention to the textual context (*siyāq*). Both seek to find clues from the verse and surrounding verses to support their respective argument. In addition, both connect the verse to some remote parts of the Qur’an. Further, both seek to see how an important word in the verse is used in the rest of the Qur’an, even though al-Shanqīṭī did it for the words *ahl* and *ahl al-bayt*, while al-Ṭabāṭabāʿī did it for the word *al-rijs*.

Given that both pay attention to a number of types of intra-Qur’anic connections, their interpretations of the last part of Q 33:33 can be regarded as equally ‘most holistic’. (See Figure 5.3)

![Holisticness Chart for al-Shanqīṭī’s (S) and al-Ṭabāṭabāʿī’s (T) Interpretations of Q 33:33](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Intra-Qur’anic Connection</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between parts available in a verse.</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and preceding verses.</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and succeeding verses.</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a word/statement with the textual context of a group of verses where it exists.</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and the central theme or the objective of the surah where it exists.</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and a distant part of the Qur’an dealing with the same or relevant topic.</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and a distant part of the Qur’an displaying a comparable linguistic feature/style.</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between the use of a word/phrase in a verse and the entire usage of the word/phrase in the Qur’an.</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between variant modes of reading (if applicable).</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ☑ = available  ☐ = not available

Both exegetes demonstrate a sort of *tadabbur*. Both pursue a logical analysis of the verse though in a different style. Also, both do not want to leave *riwāyāt* in the interpretation. Al-Ṭabāṭabāʿī has even relied very much upon the validity of popular *riwāyāt* to support the view that the verse was truly revealed in relation to the five persons of
Ahl al-Kisā’, and Ahl al-Bayt must comprise only these five persons. Al-Shanqīṭī, on the other hand, acknowledges the association of Ahl al-Bayt with Ahl al-Kisā’ based on riwa’yāt, and asserts the fact that the term can also include others (especially the Prophet’s wives) partly based on the availability of some riwa’yāt implying so.

Do we see Shi‘ism or Sunnism play a role in dictating the making and presentation of intra-Qur’anic connections in this case? Al-Ṭabātābā’ī’s argument is typically a Shi‘i argument. His view that the taṭhīr verse is independent and addresses different addressees can be traced back to earlier Shi‘i commentaries. This argument can also be found in the discussion of the verse by al-Ṭabarṣī10 and al-Kāshānī11 – among others. Al-Ṭabatābā’ī’s view that the wives of the Prophet are not addressed in the last part of the verse is also the conclusion made by al-Ṭabarṣī and most of Shi‘i scholars, including al-Qummi,12 al-Tūsī,13 al-Ṣādiqī,14 al-Sabzawārī,15 and early Zaydi exegetes like Furrā al-Kufī16 and al-Ḥibarī.17

Al-Shanqīṭī’s position is also a typical moderate-assertive Sunni view. Even though a significant number of Sunni exegetes merely mention the differences in opinion (among the Sāḥabah and later generations) with regard to the scope of Ahl al-Bayt (such as al-Ṭabarṣī,18 al-Tha’labī,19 al-Māwardī,20 al-Baghwā,21 Ibn ‘Aṭiyah,22 Ibn

9Relying on riwa’yāt to show established historical facts that can shed light on Qur’anic verses, is an interpretive strategy that can often be found in al-Ṭabatābā’ī’s arguments against Sunni scholars’ exegetical views. See for instance his interpretation of Q 5:55, 5:67 and 4:24.
11Muhṣin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, Tafsīr al-Ṣāfī (Tehran: Manshūrat Maktabat al-Ṣadr, 1415 AH), IV, 188.
al-Jawzi, Ibn ‘Ādil, and al-Suyūṭī), most of Sunni scholars (such as al-Baydawi, Abū Ḥayyan, Ibn Kathīr, al-Tha‘alibi, Ibn ‘Ajībah, al-Shawkānī, al-Ālūsī, al-Qāsimī, and Quraish Shihab) put forward a clearer stance, stating that Ahl al-Bayt consists of Ahl al-Kisa’ and the Prophet’s wives – the stance also hold by al-Shanquṭī. (See Figure 5.4).
Figure 5.4 Differences around Ahl al-Bayt among Sunni and Shi'i Exegetes

Shi‘i Views

Ahl al-Bayt: Muhammad, Fatimah, Infallible Imams

Ahl al-Bayt: all persons living closely with Muhammad

Ahl al-Bayt: Muhammad’s wives and other relatives (not specified)

Ahl al-Bayt: Muhammad’s wives

Sunni Views


al-Janabadi

al-Maraqhi

al-Razi

al-Maturidi

al-SA‘DQI

al-Sabzawari

al-Kufi

al-Hibari

al-Qummi

al-Tusi

al-Tabarsi

al-A’qam

al-Kashani

al-Tabataba’i

al-Sadiqi

al-Sabzawari

al-Samarqandi

al-Baqi

al-Khazin

al-Mahalli + al-Suyuti

Ibn Ashur

‘Izzat Darwazah

al-Jazii’ri

al-Maturidi

al-Sam’ani

al-Qurtubi

al-Baydawi

al-Jilani

al-Nisaburi

Abu Hayyan

Ibn Kathir

al-Tha‘alibi

Abu al-Su‘ud

Ismail al-Haqiqi

Ibn ‘Ajiibah

al-Shawkani

al-Alusi

al-Qasimi

al-Shanqiti

Quraish Shihab

Ma’mun Hanmush
Taking a closer look at *al-Mizān* and *Adwā’ al-Bayān*, one can identify a set of subjective choices that have noticeably navigated the interpretation of the purification verse in both tafsirs and set both exegetes’ conclusions apart. At least there are five choices differently made by al-Shanqīṭī and al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī.

First, the choice between sticking to the order/sequence of verses as in the corpus and relying on *riwayāt* on the *sabab nuzūl*. Al-Shanqīṭī puts more emphasis on the idea that the arrangement of verses in the corpus tells something about the coherence and interrelatedness of these verses even though they might consist of a number of parts revealed on different occasions. Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, meanwhile, relies more on sound, popular traditions regarding the *sabab nuzūl*, all of which just make mention of the second part of al-Aḥzāb [33]:33 without mentioning the surrounding verses, to argue that this part of the verse must be independent and directed toward different addressees. In the case of al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī in particular, this interpretive strategy – arguing for the independency of a verse or its part based on narrated traditions (found in Sunni and Shi’ī sources) – is perhaps fairly common as it can also be found in his interpretations of Q 5:55 (the *wilāyah* verse) and Q 5:67 (on the must-conveyed message), both of which are central to Shi’ī doctrines. Such an interpretive strategy, however, especially as far as his interpretation of the last part of Q 33:33 is concerned, does not prevent al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī from explaining the relationship between the part of the verse and its surrounding verses. In this regard, arguing for its disconnectedness and showing the logic behind the arrangement are two different things. Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī has done both while interpreting the *tathīr* verse.

Second, the choice between merely emphasizing the interconnectedness of verses on the basis of the placement of clauses or verses and seeking to find some differences among consecutive verses through a logical analysis toward the contents of the verses (in an attempt at finding a sort of disconnectedness). Al-Shanqīṭī prefers the former, while al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī demonstrates the latter.

Third, the choice between recognizing the complete connectedness of a part of a verse with surrounding statements, recognizing its partial shift (in terms of topic or addressee) from the surrounding discourse, and recognizing its complete shift (in topic and addressee) from the surrounding discourse. Al-Shanqīṭī implies that there is only a partial shift in the verse (i.e. from addressing the wives

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of the Prophet to addressing them and Ahl al-Kisā’, but the topic is still the same), while al-Ṭabāṭabā’i argues that there is a complete shift in Q 33:33 (i.e. from addressing the wives to addressing Ahl al-Kisā’, and from talking about Allah’s legislative will to talking about His ontological will).

Fourth, the choice between relying upon the Qur’an alone, a combination of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, and the Sunnah alone in determining the historical figures referred to in a verse. Al-Shanqīṭī relies on the Qur’an (siyāq nasṣīḥ) to include the Prophet’s wives in the definition of Ahl al-Bayt, and the Sunnah (siyāq tārīkhī) to include the household of ‘Aṭā’ī. On the other hand, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī lets the Sunnah have a final say in detailing the members of Ahl al-Bayt after arguing that the Qur’an (the verse) deals with those granted by divine protection and not those addressed in surrounding verses.

Fifth, the choice between relying on the common or entire usage of a word in the Qur’an as well as Arabic language, and relying on the specific context (siyāq) of the verse(s) in isolation. Al-Shanqīṭī refers to other remote verses to shed light on the meaning of Ahl al-Bayt and the use of a masculine plural pronoun in the verse. Al-Shanqīṭī also resorts to the consensus of Arabic linguists and an Arabic poetry to justify the use of the pronoun. Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, meanwhile, does not look at how the words ahl and ahl al-bayt as well as the pronoun are used in the Qur’an, and instead relies on clues available in the verse in isolation.

B. The Pleasure of Allah for the Companions and Their Followers in Q 9:100

Shi’ites generally have a more critical view towards the Ṣaḥābah, while Sunnites see themselves (more) as the defenders of the Ṣaḥābah and their legacy. Shi’ites insists that the Companions are not all the same. They can be distinguished into three categories: 1) those who believed in Allah and the Prophet, and did their best for the sake of Islam; 2) those who were Muslims but were not sincere in their acts; and 3) those who became apostate after the death of the Prophet, or those who did not believe in Allah and the Prophet but infiltrated the Islamic isles to be included among Muslims.36 Shi’ites basically argue

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that there is no need for us to have a strict allegiance toward the entire Šaḥābah.

Sunnites, on the other hand, emphasize the religious authority collectively held by the Šaḥābah. The Šaḥābah are those from whom we know the Qur’an and the life of the Prophet. Belittling any of them could mean casting some doubt on the Qur’an and the Prophetic traditions Muslims inherit. Following the path of the Šaḥābah is therefore an important part of religion.

One of the debates on Šaḥābah between Sunnites and Shi‘ites concerns with the scope of Šaḥābah, with whether the pleasure of Allah is continuously granted toward the entire Šaḥābah, and with the need to follow their path. Concerning these issues, there have been many Qur’anic verses and hadiths cited, but most are surely beyond the attention of this study.

One of the verses invoked in the debate, which is most relevant to this study, is al-Tawbah [9]:100, which reads:

وَالْمِهاجِرُونَ وَالْأُنصارُ وَالْأَوَلَيْنِ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ أَذْهَبْ مِنْهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَازْدُورُوهُمْ عَلَىٰ مَا كَانُواْ يَجْرِي فِيهِمْ عَلَىٰ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مَثْنَىٰ نَجْحَيْلَةَ وَلَدَى الْجَهْرِ بِالْعَظِيمِ

The English translations of the verse have slightly different emphases, most importantly in relation to the meaning of bi iḥsān. See the following translations to notice the difference:

And the first forerunners [in the faith] among the Muhajirin and the Ansar and those who followed them with good conduct – Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. That is the great attainment.

– Saheeh International

The early vanguard of the Emigrants and the Helpers and those who followed them in virtue—Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens with streams running in them, to remain in them forever. That is the great success.

– Qarai

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37 *The Qur’an: English Meanings*, 183.
And the first to embrace Islam of the Muhajirun (those who migrated from Makkah to Al-Madinah) and the Ansar (the citizens of Al-Madinah who helped and gave aid to the Muhajirun) and also those who followed them exactly (in Faith). Allah is well-pleased with them as they are well-pleased with Him. He has prepared for them Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise), to dwell therein forever. That is the supreme success.

– Hilali & Khan

Allah is well pleased with the foremost ones of those who left their homes for the cause of Allah, those who helped them after their arrival in Medina and those who nobly followed these two groups. He has prepared gardens for them wherein streams flow and wherein they will live forever. This certainly is the supreme triumph.

– Sarwar

The vanguard (of Islam)–the first of those who forsook (their homes) and of those who gave them aid, and (also) those who follow them in (all) good deeds, well-pleased is Allah with them, as are they with Him: for them hath He prepared gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein for ever: that is the supreme felicity.

– Yusuf Ali

Al-Shanqitti comments on this verse only in two paragraphs, but he does make a firm conclusion and connect the verse to some other verses. He suggests that this verse is a clear Qur’anic evidence that those who follow al-Sâbiqûn al-Awwalûn among the Muhajirin and the Ansar with good conduct are also granted with the pleasure of Allah and promised with paradises and great attainment, and those who vilify and hate them are deviant as they hate the people with whom Allah is pleased.

Al-Shanqitti suggests that the same message is explained in other Qur’anic parts, such as:

وَأَخْرَيْنِ مِنْهُمْ مَا يَلْحَفُوا ذَٰلِكَ مِنْهُمَّ

“And (to) others of them who have not yet joined them” (al-Jumu’ah [62]:3);

39 The Noble Qur’an: English Translation, 262.
41 The Holy Qur-an: Text, Translation and Commentary, 470-1.
And (there is a share for) those who came after them, saying, ‘Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith’ (al-Hashr [59]:10); and

And those who believed after (the initial emigration) and emigrated and fought with you – they are of you” (al-Anfal [8]:75). In this regard, the phrases wa ākhari naïna minhum lamma yalqañ bihim in Q 62:3, walladhina jâ’û min bâ’dihim in Q 59:10, and walladhina āmanû min ba’du in Q 8:75 are understood as encompassing the rest of Companions after the early ones.

Figure 5.5 Al-Shanqi’ti’s Intra-Qur’anic Connections for Q 9:100

Al-Ţabâtabâ’i, on the other hand, gives a long comment on the verse, dealing with a number of issues: 1) variants of reading related to how to read wa al-ansâr; 2) the meaning of al-sābiqûn al-awwalûn; 3) the meaning of alladhîna ittaba’ûhum bi ihṣâr; 4) the praise implied in the verse; 5) what the word min (in min al-muhâjirûn wa al-ansâr) means; 6) the requirement of belief and good deed implied in the verse; and 7) the meaning of ridâ.

In explaining the meaning of al-sâbiqûn al-awwalûn, al-Ţabâtabâ’i at first suggests that opinions specifying who they are (as those who experienced praying toward two directions [qiblatayn], those who joined the Hudadbiyah pledge, those who took part in the Badr battle as Muslims, or those who embraced Islam before Hijrah)
have no basis as long as the text of the verse is concerned. The text might imply that the migration (*hijrah*) and the assistance (*nusrah*) are the basic aspects indicated by the quality of *sabq* and *awwafiyah* (precedence and antecedence) implied in the term *al-sabiqun al-awwaliyn*.

Al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī then explains the meaning of *al-sabiqun* by citing *al-Hāshr* [59]:8-10, suggesting that it means those who had been the forerunners to faith. The meaning of the first forerunners is thus clear, referring to those who believed in the Prophet and had patience during the difficult Meccan period of torture and later migrated to Abyssinia and Medina, and those who believed and helped the Prophet in the beginning of Medinan period.

A reference to another part of the Qur’an is also made by al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī while arguing that the meaning of *al-ihsa*n fi al-ittiba’ (following with good conduct) essentially means following the truth, and that following *al-Sabiqun al-Awvalun* then means following them because of the presence of truth with them. The verse referred to is *al-Zumar* [39]:18,

> “Who listen to speech and follow the best of it; those are the ones Allah has guided ...”

In his final remarks on the verse, al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī emphasizes three implications derived from it. First, the verse praises the first two groups: *al-Sabiqun al-Awvalun* among the Muhajirin, and *al-Sabiqun al-Awvalun* among the Ansar.

Second, those constituting *al-Sabiqun al-Awvalun* are not all of the Muhajirin and all of the Ansar, since the Qur’an itself mentions that some of them had disease in their hearts, some of them were hypocrites, some of them were evildoers (*fasiq*), and some of them repudiated the Prophet. This is a typical Shi’i view on Ṣahābah aforementioned.

Third, the pleasure of Allah is bound with faith and good deeds, as indicated by the *siyaq* of the verse. All Qur’anic verses praising the believers indicate this. The examples are: al-Ḥāshr [59]:8-10; 44 *Ghāfir* [40]:7-8, 45 *al-Fath* [48]:29, 46 and al-Ṭūr [52]:21. 47 If the

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44 The verse reads: 
For the poor emigrants who were expelled from their homes and their properties, seeking bounty from Allah and [His] approval and
pleasure is not bound with faith and good deeds, it must contradict some Qur’anic verses: al-Tawbah [9]:96, “… indeed, Allah is not satisfied with a defiantly disobedient people;”; al-Tawbah [9]:80/al-Şaff [61]:5, “… and Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people;” Al ‘Imran [3]:57/140, “ … and Allah does not like the wrongdoers;” and other verses. He also cites al-Nisā’ [4]:123 to insist that even among believers, whoever does wrong will be recompensed supporting Allah and His Messenger, [there is also a share]. Those are the truthful. And [also for] those who were settled in al-Madinah and [adopted] the faith before them. They love those who emigrated to them and find not any want in their breasts of what the emigrants were given but give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in privation. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul – it is those who will be the successful. And [there is a share for] those who came after them, saying, “Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith and put not in our hearts [any] resentment toward those who have believed. Our Lord, indeed You are Kind and Merciful.”

45The verse reads:
... and ask forgiveness for those who have believed, [saying], “Our Lord, You have encompassed all things in mercy and knowledge, so forgive those who have repented and followed Your way and protect them from the punishment of Hellfire. Our Lord, and admit them to gardens of perpetual residence which You have promised them and whoever was righteous among their fathers, their spouses and their offspring ...”

46The verse reads:
Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating [in prayer], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] pleasure. Their mark is on their faces from the trace of prostration. That is their description in the Torah. And their description in the Gospel is as a plant which produces its offshoots and strengthens them so they grow firm and stand upon their stalks, delighting the sowers – so that Allah may enrage by them the disbelievers. Allah has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds among them forgiveness and a great reward.

47The verse reads:
And those who believed and whose descendants followed them in faith – We will join with them their descendants, and We will not deprive them of anything of their deeds. Every person, for what he earned, is retained.

48The verse reads:
Paradise is not [obtained] by your wishful thinking nor by that of the People of the Scripture. Whoever does a wrong will be recompensed for it, and he will not find besides Allah a protector or a helper.
for it. The verse does not indicate that any *muḥājir* or *ansārī* or *tābih* would be granted God’s satisfaction all the time and necessarily free from His anger, whether he does good deeds or bad deeds. His satisfaction is among His *awsāf fi‘tiyāh* (attributes related to His action) and not among His *awsāf dhātiyāh* (attributes related to His essence) not subject to change. However, the *siyāq* of the verse apparently refers to satisfaction without any subsequent anger, different from what is stated in al-Fath [48]:18,

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَيَاءُونَكَ تَحْتَ السَّجْرَةَ

“Certainly was Allah pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you, (O Muhammad), under the tree ...”

Figure 5.6   Al-Ṭabāṭabā’i’s Intra-Qur’anic Connections for Q 9:100

Again, both tafsirs present different intra-Qur’anic connections. However, in terms of its holisticness, al-Ṭabāṭabā’i’s interpretation of Q 9:100 can be regarded as ‘fairly holistic’, while al-Shanqīṭi’s is ‘least holistic’. Al-Ṭabāṭabā’i involves four types of intra-Qur’anic connections, while al-Shanqīṭi involves only one type, which is also presented by al-Ṭabāṭabā’i. (See Figure 5.7).
In terms of their content of interpretation, what is emphasized by al-Shanqiṭī is a typical, assertive-Sunni position, while al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s emphases are a typical Shi’i position with regard to God’s satisfaction to the Companions. Al-Shanqiṭī’s position is similar to that of some Sunni scholars (such as al-Māturīḍī, Abū Mansūr Muḥammad al-Māturīḍī, Taḥṣīl al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm al-Musammā Ta’wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risālah, 2004), II, 442; Al-Baghawi, Ma‘ālim al-Tanzil, IV, 89; ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Baghdāḍī al-Khāzīn, Taḥṣīl al-Khāzin al-Musammā Lubbāb al-Ta’wil fi Ma‘ānī al-Tanzil (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2004), II, 400; Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm, VII, 270; Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Ḥākim al-Mashhūr bi Ḩisn Taḥṣīl al-Manār (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1947), X, 16), who indicate or emphasize that the verse implies the prohibition to vilify, hate or curse the Companions – even only some of them. They seemingly mean this as a soft criticism toward practices found among Shi’ites (Rafidis).

Moreover, the three verses cited by al-Shanqiṭī to shed light on Q 9:100 are verses commonly cited in Sunni tafsirs. They exactly
the same verses reportedly quoted by Ubay ibn Ka‘b and re-cited by previous Sunni exegetes, such as al-Samarqandi, Abū al-Layth Nasr al-Samarqandi, Tafsīr al-Samarqandi al-Musammā Bahr al-‘Ulūm (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, n.d.), II, 70. 

Abū ‘Arif al-Tha‘labi, al-Kashf wa al-Bayān, V, 82. 


Abū Hayyān, al-Bahr al-Muhīr, V, 96. 


Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-‘Uqūr al-‘Aẓīm, VII, 270. 


Rashīd Riḍā, Tafsīr al-Manār, XI, 16.

While al-Shanqīṭi’s interpretation is focused on the implication of the phrase alladhīna ittaba‘ūhum bi ḫiṣān and ṭadīya Allāh ‘anhum seemingly to indicate the acceptability of the Sunni view concerning the Companions of the Prophet, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s reading of the verse is guided by an overview of Qur’anic verses pertaining to people surrounding the Prophet and Qur’anic verses on people detached from Allah’s satisfaction, guidance and love.

Here one can see how Shi‘ism and Sunnism could dictate interpreters of the Qur‘an in selecting the verses they consult with in their effort to interpret the Qur‘an with the help of the Qur‘an itself. Ideological proclivity and orientation might affect the way by which a reader of the Qur‘an approaches a verse in terms of its degree of isolation from or connection with surrounding verses. As we have noticed, while in the case of the ṭathīr verse, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī tends to look at the verse in isolation from surrounding verses and al-Shanqīṭi reads the verse in close connection with surrounding verses, here in the case of Q 9:100, al-Shanqīṭi tends to treat it in isolation from surrounding verses and al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī handles the verse in close connection with surrounding verses. The fact that al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī treats Q 5:55 and Q 5:67, which are crucial for Shi‘ism, in the same manner (i.e. in isolation from surrounding verses) could also reinforce this remark.

In the case of al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī in particular, historical facts (such as times and occasions of revelation) as found in (popular) narrated traditions (riwāyāt) has several times served as his justification of treating a verse in isolation. It is based on narrated traditions (usually the ones commonly found in Sunni and Shi‘i sources) that al-
Ṭabāṭaba’ī argues that the tathīr verse, the wilāyah verse, as well as the tablīgh verse Q 5:67 (⟨yā ayyuḥa al-rasūl ballīgh ma unzīla ilayka⟩...) are independent from their respective surrounding verses.

In the case of al-Shanqīṭī, however, the reason is not as clear as far as his interpretation of Q 9:100 is concerned. While for Shi’ites, Q 9:101-2 would be normally also taken into account in viewing the Companions,63 al-Shanqīṭī does not try to connect the verse with the succeeding verses. Al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī does not do it either (explicitly), but his position implies that he would probably agree that Q 9:101-2 talks about some of the people surrounding the Prophet, which is normally categorized as the Companions. In cases when Sunni exegetes link these verses, Q 9:101-2 is understood as an exception for alladhīna ittaba’ūhum (those following the Muhajirin and Ansar) mentioned in 9:100 that is beyond the category of Ṣahābah, rather hypocrites (munaḥfīqūn) and sinners (mudhīnūn).64

C. The Legitimacy of Mut‘ah in Q 4:24

While popular Sunni-Shi’i debates are mostly concerned with theological issues, mut‘ah is the only legal issue, which has become one of the most contentious in the debates between Sunni and Shi’a (particularly Twelver Shi’a). Despite some controversies among Shi’ites themselves,65 the discussion of mut‘ah frequently appears in Sunni-Shi’i dialectics.

The most oft-cited verse in the debate on mut‘ah is the last part of Q 4:24:

... So for whatever you enjoy [of marriage] from them, give them their due compensation as an obligation. And there is no blame upon you for what you mutually agree to beyond the obligation. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Wise.

– Saheeh International66

63 For instance Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, Syi’ah Menurut Syi’ah, 121-4, 138, 150.
66 The Qur’an: English Meanings, 73.
... Then as to such of them with whom you have mut‘ah, give them their dowries as appointed; and there is no blame on you about what you mutually agree after what is appointed; surely Allah is Knowing, Wise.

– Tawheed Institute Australia

While interpreting the verse, al-Shanqīṭī argues against the legitimacy of mut‘ah, which Shi‘i scholars normally justify by the verse. On the other hand, in his interpretation of that very verse, al-Ṭabāṭabā‘ī argues against the view that the verse does not deal with mut‘ah – a typically Sunni view.

In line with Sunnism, al-Shanqīṭī maintains that the verse addresses the question of dowry (mahr) in a marriage contract (‘aqd). To argue that the case is so, al-Shanqīṭī resorts to some Qur‘anic verses. Firstly, to argue that istimtā‘ meant in the verse is related to marriage contract and not mut‘ah, he cites Q 4:21:

وَكَيْفَ تَأخُذُونَهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَى بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ

“And how could you take it while you have gone in unto each other ...” In al-Shanqīṭī’s view, the fact that the husband and the wife have gone in unto each other is exactly what is referred to as istimtā‘ in the abovementioned verse. In addition, the message of the verse, according to al-Shanqīṭī, is the same message highlighted in Q 4:4:

وَأَنَّا الْمَآءَ صَدَقَاءِنِينَ يَتَّلَبُوهُ

“And give the women [upon marriage] their [bridal] gifts graciously ...;” and Q 2:229:

وَلاَ يَجِلُّ نَكُوحُ أن تَأخُذُوا مَمَّا أَتَيْحُوهُنَّ مَنْ صَدَقَاءُهُنَّ

“And it is not lawful for you to take anything of what you have given them ...”

Secondly, to argue against the notion that the word ujūr in the verse means the price (ujrah) in the temporary marriage, al-Shanqīṭī

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67 Visit their online translation of al-Mizān at www.almizan.org (last accessed July 22, 2016).
cites Q 4:25 and Q 5:5, both of which uses the word *ujūr* to mean dowries (*muhūr*).

Thirdly, to argue against the notion that another narrated version of recitation, where the verse is read “*famā istamtat tum bihi min hunna ilā ajalin musammā* (for the enjoyment you have had from them for an appointed term)” can support the argument that the verse is pertaining to *mutʿah*, al-Shanqiṭī resorts to both tradition-based logical reasoning and *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi al-Qurʾān*. According to al-Shanqiṭī, this version of recitation has not been established as part of the Qur’an, and accordingly is inauthentic, and contradicts numerous authentic hadiths on the prohibition of *mutʿah*. In addition, al-Shanqiṭī cites Q 23:6-7/70:30-1 to argue that the *mutʿah* is illegitimate. Allah told believers to guard their private parts “except from their wives or those their right hands possess,” (Q 23:6/70:30) and suggested that “whoever seeks beyond that, then they are the transgressors.” (Q 23:7/70:31). In al-Shanqiṭī’s view, the woman married temporarily in *mutʿah* can neither be categorized as “wive” (*zawjah*) nor “the possessed one” (*mamlūkah*), and therefore, those engaged in *mutʿah* are transgressors (*ʿaḍūn*).

Fourthly, al-Shanqiṭī insists that the *siyāq* (context) of the verse clearly shows that the part of verse deals with *ʿaqd* and not *mutʿah*. The preceding verse, i.e. Q 4:23, gives a list of the women with whom marriage is prohibited (*al-muhārāmat*), while the early part of Q 4:24 makes clear that other than those women are allowed through marriage (*nikāḥ*), and the second part of the verse (started by the particle *fa* that serves as a conjunction) seeks to suggest that the dowry should be given to the married woman.

Figure 5.8 Al-Shanqiṭī’s Intra-Qur’anic Connections for the Last Part of Q 4:24

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On the other hand, as common among Shi‘i scholars, al-Tabātabā’ī insists that the verse clearly talks about mut‘ah. Like al-Shanqīṭī, al-Tabātabā’ī makes use of tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān to support his conclusion (in addition to some logical reasoning-based arguments). First of all, to argue that the sentence, “fāmā istamta‘tum ...” branches out from the preceding talk, al-Tabātabā’ī maintains that such branching is very common in the Qur‘an, citing the following examples:

أيامًا معدودًا فمَن كان منكم مريضًا أو على سفر

“[Fasting for] a limited number of days. So whoever among you is ill or on a journey ...” (Q 2:184);

فإذا أثبتتم فمَن تمتَّع بالعَرْضَة إلى الحج

“... And when you are secure, then whoever performs ‘umrah [during the Hajj months] followed by Hajj ...” (Q 2:196);

لا إكراه في الدين فذَبَّين الرشد من الله فمَن يكفر بالطاغوت ويومن بالله

“There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah ...” (Q 2:256).

Secondly, to argue against the notion that the last part of Q 4:24 is aimed at putting emphasis on the law of dowry, al-Tabātabā’ī maintains that many verses, which were revealed before it, had fully established the obligatoriness of paying dowry, citing Q 4:4, Q 4:20-1, and Q 2:236-7 as the examples.

Thirdly, clarifying the relationship between Q 4:24 and Q 23:5-7 suggested by the opponents of mut‘ah, al-Tabātabā’ī insists that the former is of Medinite period, while the latter is of Meccan period. A Meccan verse cannot abrogate a Medinite one. Further, the claim that mut‘ah is not a marriage, or a woman married in mut‘ah is not a wife (a claim also made by al-Shanqīṭī), according to him, is undoubtedly unacceptable, since it was always called marriage in the wordings of the Prophet and early Muslims.

Fourthly, arguing against the notion that the verse (according to some of those who agree that it talks about mut‘ah) has been abrogated by the verses of inheritance (Q 4:12), waiting period after
divorce or death of husband (Q 65:1, Q 2:228), prohibition (Q 4:23), number of wives (Q 4:3), al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī maintains that the relation between these verses and the mutʿah verse is not that of abrogator (nāṣikh) and abrogated (mansūkh), rather that of general (ʿāmm) and particular (mukhassṣīṣ), or unrestricted (muṣlaq) and restricted (muqayyad).⁶⁹

Both al-Shanqīṭī and al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī link the mutʿah verse to multiple Qur’anic parts, some of which are just the same but they come up with strikingly different understanding. Both cite Q 4:4, Q 4:21, Q 4:23, the first half of Q 4:24, and Q 23:5-7, but to put forward different arguments on the legitimacy of mutʿah. Al-Shanqīṭī cites Q 4:4 and Q 4:21 to claim that the second half of Q 4:24 emphasizes its message on the obligatoriness of paying dowry, while al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī cites it to claim otherwise, that its message is not emphasized by the second half of Q 4:24 since the obligatoriness of paying dowry had been established by Q 4:4, Q 4:21 and some other verses before Q 4:24 was revealed. From this case, it may be argued that the choice between regarding a verse as emphasizing the message of another verse and regarding the verses as talking about two different issues, can be a room where ideological proclivity can possibly play a role.

⁶⁹Al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī, al-Mizān, IV, 278-82.
Al-Shanqīṭī cites Q 4:23 and the first part of Q 4:24 to argue that the second part of Q 4:24 is of the same context, still continuing the subject addressed in the preceding parts. Al-Shanqīṭī seeks to imply that there is no valid reason for arguing that it talks about *mutʿah* (something al-Ṭabarānī would not agree with). Al-Ṭabarānī, meanwhile, cites both verses while arguing against the notion that the *mutʿah* verse has been abrogated. In this regard, al-Ṭabarānī seems to imply that the verse is commonly understood as talking about a particular type of marriage, that is the temporary marriage (something al-Shanqīṭī would not agree with), but some scholars see it as already abrogated.

Similarly, al-Shanqīṭī cites Q 23:5-7 to argue for the illegitimacy of the *mutʿah*, seeking to imply that there is no reason for understanding the verse as dealing with the *mutʿah*. Al-Ṭabarānī, on the other hand, cites it to argue that the *mutʿah* cannot have been abrogated by Q 23:57, and that it does not contradict the message of the latter, again implying that the last part of Q 4:24 has been more commonly understood as dealing with the *mutʿah*.

In this regard, one can notice that the choice between understanding a Qur’anic word in its relation to its historical context (chosen by al-Ṭabarānī as he connects the word *istimtāʿ* with the common practice in the Prophet’s period) and understanding that word in its relation to another Qur’anic word (chosen by al-Shanqīṭī as he connects the word *istimtāʿ* with words like *ifdāʿ* in Q 4:21), can provide an opportunity for sectarian tendency to have an influence on an exegete’s choice between the options. This choice can have an impact on which Qur’anic parts an exegete would look at to consult with, and how he understands the connection between Q 4:24 and other Qur’anic parts.

Al-Shanqīṭī’s *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* on Q 4:24 is typically Sunni. Some facts may suffice to confirm this: a) some of the intra-Qur’anic connections presented by al-Shanqīṭī, especially the interpretation of Q 4:24 in light of Q 4:21, Q 4:4, and Q 2:229, can also be found in an earlier Sunni *tafsīr* of Ibn Kathīr;\(^{70}\) b) understanding Q 4:24 in connection with Q 23:5-7/Q 70:29-31, as al-Shanqīṭī did, was also done before by al-Ālusī;\(^{71}\) c) the connection of Q 4:24 with 4:4 and Q 23:5-7/Q 70:29-31 is also mentioned in al-

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\(^{71}\) Al-Ālusī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿāni*, III, 8.
Suyūṭī’s tafsir; and d) an argument against the other variant way of recitation, similar to al-Shanqiṭi’s, can also be found in al-Ṭabarī’s and Ibn Kathīr’s tafsirs.\footnote{Al-Suyūṭī, al-Durr al-Manthūr, IV, 327. See also al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi‘ al-Bayān, VI, 585, where Q 4:24 is also linked to Q 4:4.}

Al-Ṭabarānī’s tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān on Q 4:24 is, on the other hand, typically Shi‘i. The following facts confirm this: a) earlier Shi‘i tafsirs, such as the tafsirs of al-‘Ayyaṣhī,\footnote{Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi‘ al-Bayān, VI, 589; Ibn Kathīr, Tafṣīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm, III, 428-9.} al-Ṭabarṣī\footnote{Muhammad ibn Mas‘ūd al-‘Ayyaṣhī, al-Tafṣīr (Tehran: al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmiyāh al-Islāmiyāh, n.d.), I, 233-4.} and al-Ḥuwayzī,\footnote{Al-Ṭabarṣī, Majma‘ al-Bayān, III, 50-1} include the other variant mode of recitation (with additional ilā ajalin musammā) as one of the supporting pieces of evidence that the verse deals with mut‘ah – assuming that it, though not established as a part of the Qur’an, makes clear what the verse is about according to the early Muslim generation; b) al-Ṭabarānī’s view on the relationship between Q 4:24 and Q 23:5-7 (that is different from dominant Sunni understanding), is a view that can also be found in an earlier Shi‘i tafsīr of al-Ṭūsī.\footnote{Abd ʿAfī al-Ḥuwayzī, Tafṣīr Nūr al-Thaqalayn (Intishārāt Ismā‘īliyān, n.d.), I, 468.}

While al-Shanqiṭi’s and al-Ṭabarānī’s interpretations do not go beyond their theological background, their interpretations of the verse can be generally considered to be ‘most holistic’ as each pays attention to six different types of intra-Qur’ānic connection. (See Figure 5.10).
Figure 5.10  Holisticness Chart for al-Shanqīṭī’s (S) and al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s (T) Interpretations of Q 4:24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Intra-Qur’anic Connection</th>
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Chapter VI  
TAFSIR OF THE QUR’AN BY THE QUR’AN IN ADWĀ’ AL-BAYĀN AND AL-MĪZĀN: ON IMAMATE

This chapter examines the treatment of several verses concerning the issue of imamate in the two tafsirs under study. There are four verses around which the chapter is centered, i.e. Q 2:124, Q 21:73, Q 3:7 and Q 13:43. Each verse would be discussed in a separate subchapter with the exception of Q 21:73, which is discussed together with Q 2:124, due to the thematic closeness of these two verses and the fact that both are linked in both al-Mīzān and Adwā’ al-Bayān. In discussing the verses, I would proceed from the most disputed verse to the least disputed. (See Appendix 2 to know the verses disputed by Sunni and Shi‘a ranked based on popularity [in the literatures I surveyed]).

The discussion of the concept of imamate in Shi‘a and Sunni has been of course often linked to the concept of caliphate. However, the discussion of verses around caliphate in the two tafsirs has not met the criteria applied in this study for them to be closely looked at. (See Appendix 1).

A. The Meaning and the Infallibility of the Imams in Q 2:124 and Q 21:73

The doctrine of imamate has been quite central to Shi‘i belief. Shi‘ites believe in the existence of (theophanic) infallible Imams divinely appointed after the Prophet Muḥammad, being his ‘successors’ extending his prophetic existence as well as the associates of the Qur‘ān – though different sects within Shi‘a disagree around their number and the existence of the “hidden Imam”. The concept of imamate is closely related to the concept of prophethood (nubūwah), but īmām is a status different from nābi even though a nābi can also be an īmām and both nubūwah and īmāmah are equally divine ranks (mansāb ilāhī). The Imams are not recipients of wahy (direct revelation), but they are recipients of the true and full knowledge of the prophetic revelations.1 Sunnites, however, do not acknowledge

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such a concept of infallible Imams. Many Sunnites consider this belief as heretical. Indeed, this belief has been seen as the main sectarian difference between Sunni and Shi’a.²

Among the verses used to justify the existence of divinely appointed Imams are al-Baqarah [2]:124 and al-Anbiyā’ [21]:73. In al-Baqarah [2]:124, Allah said:

وَإِذْ آتَنَّى إِبْرَاهِيمَ رُزُقَ يَكْلِمَتْهُ فَاٰتَمِينَ فَاٰتَمِينَ فَاٰتَمِينَ فَإِنَّ الشَّيْئَ مَنِيَ إِنْ تُقِيمْنَ فِي نَارٍ فَلَا يَنَالُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْبَاشَةٌ

The word of imām in the verse has been translated differently in English translations of the Qur’an to mean “leader”, “imam” or “leader in the sense of prophet”. Here are some of the available translations of the verse:

And [mention, O Muhammad], when Abraham was tried by his Lord with commands and he fulfilled them. [Allah] said, “Indeed, I will make you a leader for the people.” [Abraham] said, “And of my descendants?” [Allah] said, “My covenant does not include the wrongdoers.”

– Saheeh International³

When his Lord tested Abraham with certain words and he fulfilled them, He said, “I am making you the Imam of mankind.” Said he, “And from among my descendants?” He said, “My pledge does not extend to the unjust.”

– Qarai⁴

And (remember) when the Lord of Ibrahim (Abraham) [i.e. Allah] tried him with (certain) Commands, which he fulfilled. He (Allah) said (to him), “Verily, I am going to make you an Imam (a leader) of mankind.” [Ibrahim (Abraham)] said, “And of my offspring (to make leaders).” (Allah) said, “My Covenant (Prophethood) includes not Zalimun (polytheists and wrong-doers).”

– Hilali & Khan⁵

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³*The Qur’an: English Meanings; English Revised and Edited by Šaheeh International* (Jeddah: Al-Muntada Al-Islami, 2004), 17.

“And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain Commands, which he fulfilled: He said: “I will make thee an Imam to the Nations.” He pleaded: “And also (Imams) from my offspring!” He answered: “But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers.”

– Yusuf Ali

In al-Anbiyā’ [21]:73, Allah said:

And We made them leaders guiding by Our command. And We inspired to them the doing of good deeds, establishment of prayer, and giving of zakah; and they were worshippers of Us.

– Saheeh International

We made them imams, guiding by Our command, and We revealed to them (concerning) the performance of good deeds, the maintenance of prayers, and the giving of zakah, and they used to worship Us.

– Qarai

And We made them leaders, guiding (mankind) by Our Command, and We revealed to them the doing of good deeds, performing Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat), and the giving of Zakat and of Us (Alone) they were the worshippers.

– Hilali & Khan

7 The Qur’an: English Meanings, 313.
9 The Noble Qur’an: English Translation, 436.
And We made them leaders, guiding (men) by Our Command, and We sent them inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers, and to practise regular charity; and they constantly served Us (and Us only).

– Yusuf Ali

While shortly dealing with al-Baqarah [2]:124, al-Shanqīṭī pays attention only to the last part of the verse (qāla lā yanālu ʿahdī al-zālimīn), highlighting that among the progeny of Ibrāhīm, there are those who are transgressors and those who are not, as also implied in al-Ṣāffāt [37]:113 (wa min dhurriyatihimā mubīnun wa zālimin li naṣīhi mubīn) and al-Zukhruf [43]:28 (wa jaʿalāhā kalimatan bāqiyatan fī ʿaqībihi). A similar emphasis he gives while interpreting al-Zukhruf [43]:28, but there he cites some additional verses, namely al-Zukhruf [43]:29-30 (bal mattaʿtu haʾulaʾ... wa lammā jaʾa hum al-ḥaqq qalū hadhā siḥrūn wa innā bihi kāfirūn), al-Nīṣāʾ [4]:54-55 (... fāminhum man aṣma bihi wa minhum man ṣaddaʾ anhu) and al-Ḥādīd [57]:26 (... fāminhum muhtadīn wa kathīrun minhum fāṣiqūn).

While commenting on al-Anbiyāʾ [21]:73, al-Shanqīṭī gives another similar emphasis, citing al-Baqarah [2]:124 to suggest that the former mentions the answer for Ibrāhīm’s prayer told in the latter in order for Allah make his descendants to be imāns, and that the latter implies that among them are the transgressors to whom Allah’s promise of imāmah does not apply and among them are those to whom it applies, as supported by al-Ṣāffāt [37]:113, while al-Anbiyāʾ [21]:73 implies that Išāq and Yaʿqūb are among the ones appointed to be imāns.

Al-Shanqīṭī does not discuss the meaning of imām in a way that it can be distinguished from the prophethood. In fact, while explaining the meaning, he underlines a different issue that the word can be used either to refer to an imām of the good as implied in the verse, or to an imām of the evil as implied in al-Qaṣṣāṣ [28]:41.

While al-Shanqīṭī’s discussion of both verses is quite brief, al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī provides a very long comment on both. Interpreting al-Baqarah [2]:124 that he separates from the preceding and succeeding

10 The Holy Qur-an: Text, Translation and Commentary, 838.
groups of verses, at first he makes an argument that the occasion when Ibrahim was given the imamah as told in the verse happened during the end period of his life – when he had become very old, after Ismāʿīl and Ishaq had been born, and he had brought Ismāʿīl and his mother to reside in Mecca. In doing so, he cites al-Ḥijr [15]:51-55, Hūd [11]:71-73, al-Ṣaffāt [37]:102-106, and Ibrahim [14]:39 to explain the chronology.

Al-Ṭabaṭaba’ī then explains the meaning of ibtilā, which implies a trial or a test through action, citing al-Qalam [68]:17, “Surely We have tried them as We tried the owners of the garden ...”; and al-Baqarah [2]:249, “Surely Allah will try you with a river ...” He consequently clarifies the association of ibtilā with kalimat (words) in the verse that it must be related to an action, similar to what is implied by al-Baqarah [2]:83 (wa qūlū lī al-nās ḥusnān). He then explains what is meant by kalimat in the Qur’an, citing numerous verses:

a) Al ʿImrān [3]:45 (yubashshiruki bi kalimatin minhu ismuhu al-masih), which is connected to Al ʿImrān [3]:59 (inna mathala ʿĪsā ʿinda Allāh kamathali Ādam, khalaqahu min turābin thumma ṣāla lahu kun fayakūn);
b) al-Anʿām [6]:34 (wa lā mubaddila lī kalimat Allāh);
c) Yūnus [10]:64 (lā tabdīla lī kalimat Allāh);
d) al-Anfāl [8]:7 (wa yurūdu Allāh an yuhīqqa al-ḥaq bi kalimatīhi);
e) Yūnus [10]:96 (inna alladhīna ḥaqqat al-ayhim kalimat Rabbika lā yūʾmīnūn);
f) al-Zumar [39]:71 (walakīn ḥaqqat kalimat al-ʿadhāb ʿalā al-kāfirīn);
g) Ghāfir [40]:6 (wa kadhālika ḥaqqat kalimat Rabbika ʿalā alladhīna kafaru annahum aṣḥāb al-nār);
h) al-Shūrā [42]:14 (wa law lā kalimatun sabaqat min Rabbika ilā ajalin musamman laqūdiya baynahum);
i) al-Tawbah [9]:40 (wa kalimat Allāh hiya al-ʿulāyā);
j) Sād [38]:84 (qāla fa al-ḥaqq wa al-ḥaqq aqūl);
k) al-Nāḥīl [16]:40 (inmanā qawli ala lishayʿin idhā aradnāhu an naqīla lāhu kun fayakūn);
l) al-Anʿām [6]:115 (wa tammat kalimat Rabbika ṣidqan wa ʿadān lā mubaddila likalimatīhi); and

Citing these verses, al-Ṭabaṭaba’ī argues that Allah’s word and Allah’s action are not two different things.

Al-Ṭabaṭaba’ī further explains the meaning of ʿimām and argues that it is not meant to imply prophethood (nubūwah). He argues that the use of ʿilūka (literally, maker of you) implies present or future tense, whereas Ibrāhīm had been a prophet at that time. Ibrāhīm was a prophet and a messenger before being given a promise to be an ʿimām. He then clarifies the difference between ʿimāmah and other similar terms: nubūwah (prophethood), risālah (messengership), mutāʾiyah/ītārah (authority), khilāfah (successorship), wīsāyah (successorship), and riʿāsah (headship). The ʿimāmah means that a man has an inherent quality because of which people should follow him faithfully, making their words and deeds to conform to his words and deeds; but none of these terms could represent this meaning.

Al-Ṭabaṭaba’ī subsequently shows that the use of ʿimāmah in the Qur’an is commonly linked with ʿidāyah (guidance) emanating from the command (ʿamr) of Allah, such as in al-Anbiya’ [21]:73 abovementioned and al-Sajdah [32]:24 (wa jaʿalnā minhum aʿimmatan yahḍūna bi amrinā lammā šabarū). The reality of that command itself is described in Yāsīn [36]:82-83 (innamā amruhu idhā arāda shayʾan ...) and al-Qamar [54]:50 (wa mā amruna illā wāḥidatun ka lamḥin bi al-bāṣar). While interpreting al-Anbiya’ [21]:73,15 al-Ṭabaṭaba’ī again makes it clear that the Command of Allah referred to here is not legal command (al-ʿamr al-tashriʿi), rather ontological (takwīnī) as mentioned in Yāsīn [36]:82-83, and that the revelation (wahy) mentioned in the verse is not the one concerning legal matters, rather the revelation by which the action of good emanates from the imams, as indicated by the use of maṣdar form of ṭiʿ, as well as by the last statement in the verse that they had been the worshippers of Allah before (wa kānū lanā ʿābidīn).

Thus, ʿimām is a leader who guides by a Divine Command, which is closely associated with him. His guidance is different from the one that only shows the way – usually done by the prophets, messengers and believers who guide the people towards Allah – which is mentioned in Ibrāhīm [14]:4;16 Ghāfir [40]:3817 and al-Tawbah [9]:122.18

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16 The verse reads:
The reason why *imāmah* is given can be found in al-Sajdah [32]:24, which mentions two criteria: patience (*lammā sabāra*) and absolute certainty (*wa kānū bi āyatinā yūqīnūn*). The certainty (faith) itself is bestowed concomitant of looking at the *malakūt* (heavenly kingdom), as mentioned in al-An‘ām [6]:75, al-Takāthur [102]:5-6, and al-Muṭaffifin [83]:14-21. An imam is then a man of absolute certainty, who sees the world of the ‘kingdom’ of Allah, which is based on the ‘words’ of Allah. Al-Anbiya’ [21]:73 and al-Sajdah [32]:24 clearly proves that the imam has the vision of the inner reality of hearts and deeds. The imam, as mentioned in al-Isrā’ [17]:71 (*yawma nad‘ū kullā unāsīn bi imāmiḥim*), is the one who shall lead the people to Allah on the day when hidden things shall be tried (*yawma tublā al-sarā‘ir*), as he leads them to Him in the manifest and esoteric lives of this world. The imam, as indicated in al-Isrā’ [17]:71, is available in all periods of time, since there cannot be a single moment without an imam.

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17. The verse reads: “And he who believed (i.e. the believer from the family of Pharaoh) said: ‘0 my people! follow me, I will guide you to the right course’” (Tawheed Institute Australia).

18. The verse reads: “Why should not then a company from every party from among them go forth that they may acquire (proper) understanding in religion, and that they may warn their people when they come back to them, so that they may be cautious?” (Tawheed Institute Australia).

19. The verse reads: “And thus did We show Ibrahim the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and so that he might be of those who are sure” (Tawheed Institute Australia).

20. The verse reads: “Nay! if you had known with a knowledge of certainty, you should most certainly have seen the hell” (Tawheed Institute Australia).

21. The verse reads: “Nay! rather, what they used to do has become (like) rust upon their hearts. Nay! most surely they shall on that day be shut out away from their Lord ... Nay! most surely the record of the righteous shall be in the ‘illiyyin. And what will make you know what ‘illiyyin is? It is a written book; see it those who are near (to Allah).” (Tawheed Institute Australia).
Al-Ṭabāṭabaʻi then explains the infallibility/sinlessness of imam. Citing Yūnus [10]:35, he argues that imāmah cannot be given except to one who is extremely virtuous by his own self, who can guide to the truth as he is rightly guided by himself. He also argues that al-Anbiyā’ [21]:73 shows that all the deeds of the imam are good, and he is guided to them on his own by Divine help (wa awhaynā ilayhim fi’l al-khayrāt).

Whoever is not ma‘ṣūm (sinless) can never be an imam. In this light, al-Ṭabāṭabaʻi understands the phrase la yana’lu ‘ahdi al-zālimin (My Covenant will not include the unjust) as covering everyone who might have done any injustice (zulm), for example polytheism, idol-worship or any other sin, in any period of his life, even if he may have repented and been morally good afterwards. Unlike al-Shanqīṭī who regards the phrase as implying something (a fact) related to the offspring of Ibrahim, al-Ṭabāṭabaʻi understands the phrase as implying a meaning related to imams.

Finally, al-Ṭabāṭabaʻi seeks to clarify the objection put against the interpretation of the imāmah with nubūwāh. He argues that Qur’anic verses has not shown that whoever is rightly guided by Allah should also be a guide to Allah. Citing al-An’ām [6]:86-90, he argues that it is not necessary that every prophet should be called an imam.

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22 The verse reads: Afaman yahdi ila al-ḥaqiq ahqaq an yuttaba’a amman la yahiddi illa an yuḥdā (“Is he then who guides to the truth more worthy to be followed, or he who himself does not go right unless he is guided?”) (Tawheed Institute Australia).

23 The verse reads:

And We gave to him (i.e. Ibrahim) Ishaq and Ya’qub; each did We guide, and Nuh did We guide before, and of his descendants, Dawud and Sulayman and ’Ayyub and Yusuf and Harun; and thus do We reward those who do good; and Zakariyya and Yahya and ‘Isa and Ilyas; every one was of the righteous (ones) and Isma‘il and Ilyasa’ and Yunus and Lut; and every one We did exalt over the worlds; and from among their fathers and their descendants and their brethren; and We chose them and guided them to the straight path. This is Allah’s guidance, He guides thereby whom He pleases of His servants; and if they had set up others (with Him), certainly what they did would have become ineffectual for them. These are they to whom We gave the book and the wisdom and the prophethood; therefore if these disbelieve in it, We have (already) entrusted with it a people who are not disbelievers in it. These are they whom Allah guided, therefore follow their guidance. Say: “I do not ask you for any reward for it; it is but a reminder to the worlds.”

– Tawheed Institute Australia
The context of these verses indicates that Divine Guidance will continue in this *ummah* even after the Prophet Muhammad. It will remain confined within the progeny of Ibrāhīm as implied by the verses 43:26-28, where Allah said that He made this Divine Guidance “a word to continue” (*kalimah bāqiyah*) in Ibrāhīm’s posterity. Al-Ṭabaṭaba’ī also argues that the last part of al-Baqarah [2]:124 points to this fact.

It is clear that both al-Shanqīṭī and al-Ṭabaṭaba’ī involve various intra-Qur’anic connections in interpreting the two verses at issue. Al-Ṭabaṭaba’ī, however, presents much more verses and more complicated intra-Qur’anic connections. This is understandable given the centrality of both verses for Shi’i religious doctrines. This is consistent with al-Ṭabaṭaba’ī’s overall treatment of Quranic verses contested by Sunni and Shi’a, where he consistently dwells on the verses in an attempt at convincing his readers of the defensibility of the Imami Shi’i understanding.

In sum, the intra-Qur’anic connections around al-Baqarah [2]:124 and al-Anbiyā’ [21]:73 presented in *Aḍwā’ al-Bayān* and *al-Mizān* differ significantly. Al-Shanqīṭī’s less-extensive intra-Qur’anic connections are centered around the issue of Allah’s answer to Ibrahim’s prayer. (See Figure 6.1).

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**Figure 6.1** Al-Shanqīṭī’s Intra-Qur’anic Connections for Q 2:124 and Q 21:73

![Diagram of intra-Qur’anic connections](image-url)
On the other hand, intra-Qur’anic connections extensively displayed by al-Ṭabaṭaba‘ī deal with various issues: the trial (ibtilā‘), the words (kalimāt), the inauguration of Ibrahim’s imamate, the meaning of imamate, the infallibility of imams and God’s guidance bestowed to imams. (See Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2 Al-Ṭabaṭaba‘ī’s Intra-Qur’anic Connections for Q 2:124 and Q 21:73
In terms of its holisticness, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s interpretation of Q 2:124 and Q 21:73 (taken together) can be regarded as ‘fairly holistic’, while al-Shanqīṭī’s is ‘least holistic’. The former involves four types of intra-Qur’ānic connections, while the latter involves only two. (See Figure 6.3).

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Note: □ = available  ■ = not available

It is noticeable that both exegetes have consulted different parts of the Qur’ān due to the different implication or idea they want to emphasize. For instance, regarding the phrase lā yanālu ‘ahdī al-zālimin, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī (apparently dictated by his Shi‘ism) emphasizes that it implies the infallibility of Imams. An imam is someone that have never done any sort of zulm throughout his life. He understands the phrase as explaining the word or status of imām in the verse (Q 2:124). Al-Shanqīṭī, meanwhile, puts a very different emphasis; his Sunnism obviously makes him far from having such a conclusion. He emphasizes that it implies the existence of evil-doers and disbelievers among Ibrahim’s descendants. Instead of linking the phrase to the word imām, al-Shanqīṭī links it to verses more explicitly suggesting
the fact (i.e. al-Ṣaffāt [37]:113, al-Zukhruf [43]:28-30, al-Nisā’ [4]:54-55, and al-Hadīd [57]:26). Both interpreters choose different implied meanings for a single short statement. While al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī regards the phrase as implying a meaning for the word *imām* mentioned in the verse, al-Shanqīṭi suggests that the phrase implies a fact about the descendants of Ibrahim also highlighted in other parts of the Qur’an.

The verses with which both exegetes consult in their discussion of the word *imām* has been also noticeably dictated by their theological background. While al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī puts more emphasis on its theological, noble sense and cites numerous verses associating it with the guidance and command of God, patience, absolute faith, knowledge of hidden realities, and true devotion, al-Shanqīṭi does not discuss the word *imām* in such a glorified sense, rather highlight its general usage (that it can be used to refer to either a leader of the good or a leader of the evil), and cites only the verse using the word in its negative sense (Q 28:41, *a’immatan yad’ūna ilā al-nār*). This might be seen as a tacit suggestion that its case differs from the word *nabī* and *rasūl*.

**B. Those Firmly Rooted in Knowledge in Q 3:7**

The infallible Imams are seen by Shi’is as the associates of the Qur’an – both being the two inseparable ‘weights’ (*al-thaqalayn*) as indicated in a popular hadith of the Prophet. The former is even regarded as the ‘speaking Qur’an’ while the latter as the ‘silent Qur’an’.

The true and full meaning of the Qur’an (and even all hidden knowledge) is accessible to the Imams – and the purified ones (*al-mutahharun*) at large. Such an idea is, however, lacking among Sunnis.

One of the Qur’anic parts most popularly contested by Sunnis and Shi’is relevant to their debate on this subject is the last part of Al-‘Imrān [3]:7:

> وَمَا يَعْلَمُ َّنَّ أَوَلَّيْةَ إِلاَّ اللَّهُ وَالْحَسَنُونِ فِي َّالْعِلْمِ يَفْكُولُونَ آمِنًا بِهِ كَلّٰا مِّنْ عَنْدِ رَبِّيَّ وَمَا يَذَكَّرُ إِلّا أَوَلُو َّالْكَبَّارِ

The debates surrounding the verses are centered on two issues: 1) the function of “*wa*” preceding “*al-rāṣikhūn fī al-‘ilm*”; and 2) the

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ones referred to as *al-rāṣikhūn fī al-‘ilm* (those firmly rooted in knowledge) in the verse. Most of Shi‘i scholars argue that the “wa” is a conjunctive (*‘atf*) and identify *al-rāṣikhūn fī al-‘ilm* as the purified ones or the infallible Imams. Some Sunni scholars argue that the “wa” functions not as a conjunction, rather a resumption or a start of a new sentence (*isti’na‘f*). Some others argue that it is a conjunction, but identify *al-rāṣikhūn fī al-‘ilm* as anyone among Muslim scholars who have certain characteristics of being rooted in knowledge.

The English translations of the verse somehow reflect this (Sunni-Shi‘i) difference in understanding the verse – most noticeably around the first issue. See the following translations:

... And no one knows its [true] interpretation except Allah. But those firm in knowledge say, “We believe in it. All [of it] is from our Lord.” And no one will be reminded except those of understanding.

– Saheeh International\(^{25}\)

... but no one knows its hidden meanings except God. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: “We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord:” and none will grasp the Message except men of understanding.

– Yusuf Ali\(^{26}\)

... but none knows its hidden meanings save Allah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: “We believe in it; the whole of it (clear and unclear Verses) are from our Lord.” And none receive admonition except men of understanding.

– Hilali & Khan\(^{27}\)

... But no one knows its interpretation except Allah and those firmly grounded in knowledge; they say, “We believe in it; all of it is from our Lord.” And none takes admonition except those who possess intellect.

– Qarai\(^{28}\)

... And none knows its interpretation save Allah, and those firmly rooted in knowledge. They say: We believe in it, it is all from our Lord. And none mind except men of understanding.

– Maulana Muhammad Ali\(^{29}\)

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\(^{25}\) *The Qur’an: English Meanings*, 45.

\(^{26}\) *The Holy Qur’an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, 123.

\(^{27}\) *The Noble Qur’an: English Translation*, 68.

\(^{28}\) *The Qur’an: With a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation*, 70.
No one knows its true interpretations except Allah, and those who have a firm grounding in knowledge say, “We believe in it. All its verses are from our Lord.” No one can grasp this fact except the people of reason.

— Sarwar

Both al-Shanqīṭī and al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī dwell on Q 3:7, particularly the abovementioned part of the verse, spending a large number of pages. While interpreting the verse (the first verse of Al ‘Imrān he comments on), al-Shanqīṭī highlights some issues: 1) the meaning of ta’wīl; 2) the linguistic function of “wa”; 3) the implication of that only God who knows the ta’wīl of the mutashābih. Al-Shanqīṭī cites a number of Qur’anic verses while discussing each issue.

Al-Shanqīṭī defines ta’wīl in the verse as “the reality to which the thing refers” and argue that the word is predominantly used in the Qur’an in this sense. Then al-Shanqīṭī gives some examples by citing Yūsuf [12]:100, al-A’rāf [7]:53, Yūnus [10]:39 and al-Nisa’ [4]:59 (as I already mentioned in Chapter III).

Al-Shanqīṭī is more inclined to the opinion that the “wa” is isti’na>fīyah, rather than ʿātifah (a conjunction), even though each is possible (muhtamalah). However, al-Shanqīṭī seeks to do justice toward the opinion that it is a conjunction by explaining all possible reasons for it. Several times he shows that an argument against it is baseless by referring to the linguistic style the Qur’an variably uses.

Among the arguments al-Shanqīṭī puts forward in favor of the function of the “wa” as isti’nāfiyah is the phrase yaqūluʾna ʾāmānā bihi kullun min ‘indi Rabbīna> ([they] say, ‘We believe in it, all is from our Lord’). The phrase would be more appropriately read as wa yaqūluʾna ʾāmānā bihi kullun min ‘indi Rabbīna> (with an additional “wa”) if the “wa” at issue was a conjunction – because to consider it as a ḥāl (circumstantial clause) is linguistically problematic. Further, the statement ‘all is from our Lord’ would be meaningless if the “wa” is regarded as conjunctive.

Another argument is that the context of the verse is a denunciation of those pursuing taʾwīl, as clear from the preceding part.

30 The Holy Qurʾān: Arabic Text With English Translation, by Muhammad Sarwar (Singapore: The Islamic Seminary & Sajjad Foundation, 2011), 44.
31 Al-Shanqīṭī, ʿAdwāʾ al-Bayān, I, 316-23.
of the verse, \( \text{fa amma alladhîna fi qulûbihim zayghun fayattabi`ûna mā tashababa minhu ibtighâa al-fitnah wa ibtighâa ta`wilîh (as for those in whose hearts there is perversity, they will follow that of it which is unspecific, seeking discord and seeking an interpretation [suitable to them]). If the ta`wil at issue is known to the ones deeply rooted in knowledge, then pursuing it would be a praiseworthy thing. Moreover, their statement that “we believe in it and all is from our Lord” gives a sense of submissive reliance on Allah (tafwîd or taslim) on matters they do not know, an attitude which differentiates and contrasts them from those whose hearts suffer from a deviation from truth (alladhîna fi qulûbihim zaygh).}

Another supporting Qur’anic argument proposed by al-Shanqîti is that it is quite common in the Qur’an that whenever God denies his creatures of something and attributes it to Himself, there would be no partner mentioned in this attribution. Al-Shanqîti gives some examples by citing al-Naml [27]: 65 (“Say, ‘None in the heavens and earth knows the unseen except Allah’”), al-A’râf [7]: 187 (“None will reveal its time except Him”), and al-Qaṣaṣ [28]: 88 (“Everything will be destroyed except His Face”).

While suggesting that the exception in the verse goes only to Allah, it seems that al-Shanqîti does not want to give an impression that this would imply that the guidance of (some parts of) the Qur’an is meaningless (since only God who knows its true interpretation and thereby its true interpretation is inaccessible). In addition to highlighting the meaning of \( \text{ta`wil} \) mentioned in the verse, al-Shanqîti underlines in his final remarks the fact that there are things in the Qur’an that are known only by Allah, and there are things also known by those firmly rooted in knowledge. The first is implied in such Qur’anic verses as al-Isrâ’ [17]:85, al-An`âm [6]:59, Luqman [31]:34, and al-Sajdah [32]:17. The second is like things related to the harmony between al-Hîjr [15]:92-3 or al-A’râf [7]:6 (on the questioning of all humans in the hereafter) and al-Rahmân [55]:39 or al-Qaṣaṣ [28]:78 (on the absence of investigation of sins in the hereafter), and the meaning of \( \text{ruh minhu (ruh from Allah)} \) in al-Nisâ’ [4]:171.

On the other hand, in \( \text{al-Mizân}, \) al-Ṭabâtabâ’î highlights more issues concerning Q 3:7 in its \( \text{bayân} \) section: 1) the diction of \( \text{inzâl} \) (rather than \( \text{tanzil} \)) in the beginning of the verse (\( \text{Huwa alladhî anzala ‘alayka al-Kitâb} \)); 2) the meaning of \( \text{mu`kamât} \) (decisive verses) and \( \text{mutashâbîhât} \) (ambiguous verses); 3) the meaning of \( \text{zaygh} \) (deviation from the true path); 4) the meaning of \( \text{al-fitnah} \) (mischief); 5) the meaning of ‘following the ambiguous’; 6) the meaning of \( \text{ta`wil} \)
exception meant in the verse (mainly related to the function of “wa”); 8) the meaning of rusūkh; 9) the meaning of tadhakkur; and 10) the meaning of Ṽūl al-albāh. In a separate, thematic discussion after the bayān section, al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī further discusses: 1) the debates around muḥkamāt and mutashābihāt as well as the relationship between the two; 2) the position of the muḥkamāt as umm al-Kitāb; 3) debates around the accurate meaning of ta’wil; 4) the knowledge of the Qur’an by anyone other than Allah; and 5) the reason why the Qur’an contains ambiguous verses. While most of the time, al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī cites other verses in discussing these issues, here I would just highlight issues around the meaning of ta’wil, the function of “wa”, and the knowledge of the Qur’an by anyone other than Allah, which are most relevant to our discussion on the last part of the verse.

Like al-Shanqīṭī, al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī regards the understanding of ta’wil in the verse as (general) ‘interpretation’ or ‘exegesis’ (tafsīr) is less accurate. Al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī also disagrees with the association of ta’wil with the meaning that is against the apparent meaning of the word, and even with the meaning of words (madā'llī al-alfāz) or the happening or cause to which a verse refers. Fairly similar to al-Shanqīṭī, he understands ta’wil here as the reality (al-ḥaqīqah al-wāqī‘īyah) to which a verse refers. Al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī describes ta’wil as real facts existing outside imagination (al-umūr al-khārījīyah al-‘aynīyah) on which the speech (Qur’anic verses) is based, and the meaning of the verse has the same relation with it as a proverb (mathal) has with its purpose and purport. However, while it is not crystal clear whether al-Shanqīṭī embraces the idea that ta’wil (mentioned in the verse) is only related to the ambiguous verses, al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī understands it as more possibly pertaining to the ambiguous verses (as the context suggests), even though ta’wil itself is not a peculiarity of the ambiguous verses (al-mutashābihāt). He argues that decisive verses have their ta’wil, as do the ambiguous ones. Suggesting that the Qur’an uses ta’wil only in the sense he explains, al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī cites numerous verses in his explanation of the meaning of ta’wil: Yūnūs [10]:37-9; al-A’rāf [7]:52-3; al-Kahf [18]:78, 82; Yūsuf [12]:4, 21, 36, 41, 43-8, 61, 100-1; and al-Isrā’ [17]:35.32

Regarding the function of wa, al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī is most inclined to the view that it is not a conjunctive, rather a resumption (isti'nāf), even though he underlines that the other view (that it is a conjunctive) is possible, and that considering the exception goes only to Allah does

not mean arguing that there are no human beings who can know its ta’wil; the Prophet and those firmly grounded in knowledge are those who possess the true knowledge of the Qur’an other than Allah. This is similar to the case of knowledge of the hidden (‘ilm al-ghayb), where many verses suggest that only Allah knows it, but in al-Jinn [72]:26-7 is stated, “[He is] Knower of the unseen, and He does not disclose His [knowledge of the] unseen to anyone. Except to a messenger He has approved of...”\(^\text{33}\)

While suggesting that the verse does not really prove the possibility of the knowledge of ta’wil to someone other than Allah, al-Ṭabāṭaba’i emphasizes that the Qur’an proves the possibility. According to al-Ṭabāṭaba’i, so far as the verse is concerned, the knowledge of the Qur’an’s ta’wil is reserved for Allah. In his view, the main point the verse seeks to deliver is that the Qur’an is divided in the decisive and the ambiguous, and the people are divided in a group which, because of perversity of hearts, seeks to follow the ambiguous verses; and another group that is firmly rooted in knowledge and follows the decisive verses and believes in the ambiguous ones. So, the discussion of al-rasikhūn fi al-‘ilm here is primarily to contrast them with those in whose hearts there is perversity. Whether or not there is someone, other than Allah, may be knowing the ta’wil, is not really addressed in the verse. However, taking instances in which an absolute restriction of one verse has been qualified by another (like the knowledge of the unseen addressed in Q 27:65; Q 10:20; and Q 6:59, which has been qualified by Q 72:26-7) as an indication of the possibility, al-Ṭabāṭaba’i shows that Q 56:77-9 (“Most surely it is an honored Qur’an, in a Book that is hidden; none do touch it save the purified ones”) prove that it is possible for someone, other than Allah, to have the knowledge of the ta’wil of the Qur’an. The word “touch” here is understood as “know and understand”. Meanwhile, the purified ones (al-mutahharūn) include the ones referred to in the last part of Q 33:33 (“Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O People of the House! And to purify you a (thorough) purifying”).\(^\text{34}\)

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\(^{33}\) Al-Ṭabāṭaba’i, al-Mızān, III, 32-3.

\(^{34}\) Interpreting Q 56:79, al-Ṭabāṭaba’i states that al-mutahharūn consists of the noble angels and some human beings Allah has purified such as the ones referred to in the last part of Q 33:33. See al-Ṭabāṭaba’i, al-Mızān, XIX, 142. On the connection between Q 56:79 and Q 33:33, see also al-Mızān, I, 14-5.
beliefs, without any doubt or confusion; and this makes it fully committed to following and acting upon that true belief and knowledge, obeying Allah’s commandments, without deviating to the path of desire, without breaking the covenant of knowledge (mithaq al-’ilm). It is this, he insists, that is meant by al-rusūkh fī al-‘ilm (the state of being firmly rooted in knowledge).  

While arguing that the purified ones know the ta ’wil and it is a concomitant of their purity that they are also firmly rooted in knowledge, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī does not want to imply that the knowledge of ta ’wil is given to them because of their being firmly rooted in knowledge. Rather, al-rāsikhūn fī al-‘ilm, as used in Q 4:162, can possibly refer to a broader category; al-mutahharūn are firmly rooted in knowledge, but the term al-rāsikhūn fī al-‘ilm can include others.

Both al-Shanqīṭī and al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī present multiple intra-Qur’anic connections while interpreting a part of Q 3:7 under discussion. Despite some similarities, they generally consult different parts of the Qur’an to interpret the verse. The crucial point lies on the meaning of the exception in the verse. Al-Shanqīṭī understands the exception in light of Q 7:187, Q 27:65 and Q 28:88. (See Figure 6.4).

Figure 6.4 Al-Shanqīṭī’s Intra-Qur’anic Connections for the Last Part of Q 3:7

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35 Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, al-Mizān, III, 57-64.
36 Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, al-Mizān, III, 64-5.
Al-Ṭabatābā’ī understands the exception in light of similar verses: Q 6:59, Q 10:20, Q 27:65. However, he also puts forward Q 72:26-7 to justify that the exception in the verse needs to be linked with Q 56:77-9 and then Q 33:33. (See Figure 6.5).

Figure 6.5  Al-Ṭabatābā’ī’s Intra-Qur’anic Connections for the Last Part of Q 3:7

While consulting different parts of the Qur’an, each of both exegetes’ interpretations of the last part of Q 3:7 can be considered to be equally moderately holistic as each pays attention to three or four types of intra-Qur’anic connections. Both pay attention to the intra-verse connection, the relationship between the verse and a distant part of the Qur’an dealing with a relevant topic, as well as the relationship between the use of a word, i.e. *ta’wil*, and its usage in the rest of the Qur’an. (See Figure 6.6).
In the case of a part of Q 3:7 under discussion, one can see that not only do both al-Shanqiti and al-Tabataba’i have similar understanding of the meaning of *ta’wil*, but also prefer the opinion that the “*wa*” is used to begin a new sentence and therefore the exception mentioned in the verse goes only to Allah. Al-Shanqiti’s position is similar to most of Sunni scholars, despite the fact that he does not explicitly (rather implicitly) specify the meaning of “those firmly rooted in knowledge”. Al-Tabataba’i, interestingly, does not have the same view as most Shi’i scholars. However, al-Tabataba’i is of the same belief as most Shi’i scholars that the purified human beings (identified most of the time as Ahl al-Kisâ’ and infallible Imams) have an access to the *ta’wil* of the Qur’an. What differs from al-Tabataba’i, compared to most of Shi’i scholars, is merely in that the verse does not address this question; meaning that it is not the most appropriate one to support the notion that the true knowledge of the Qur’an is accessible to *al-mutahharu>n*. Thus, one can still notice the influence of Shi’ism on al-Tabataba’i’s understanding of the issue of *ta’wil*.
Most of Shi‘i scholars (such as al-‘Ayyāshī, al-Kāshānī, al-Ḥuwayzi and al-Janabdī) identify al-rāsikhu>n fi al-‘ilm (mentioned in the verse) as comprising Ahl al-Bayt/Imams, while most of Sunni scholars (such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Baghwī, al-Bayḍāwī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Shawkānī, al-Qāsimī, al-Zuḥaylī and al-Sha‘rāwī) define al-rāsikhu>n fi al-‘ilm in its general sense as encompassing religious scholars deeply rooted and entrenched in knowledge (see Figure 6.7), despite the fact that most of Sunni exegetes consider both the stop at Allāh and the stop at al-rāsikhu>n fi al-‘ilm are possible.

The idea to link Q 3:7 with Q 56:79 and Q 33:33, as al-Ṭaba’tabā‘ī did, is understandable given his Shi‘i background, but is alien to Sunni scholars. Quraish Shihab has made this case an example of how a result of tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān is not necessarily acceptable to most scholars. To al-Ṭaba’tabā‘ī, however, such an idea is not only reasonable, but also justified by instances in the Qur‘ān in which an absolute restriction of one verse has been qualified by

39 Ṣultān Muḥammad al-Janabdī, Tafsīr Bayān al-Sa‘ādah fī Maqāmāt al-‘Ībādah (Beirut: Da‘īr Tāybah, 1409 AH), II, 10.
another. This of course helps lead us to a conclusion that the way a holistic approach to the Qur'an is applied can still be vulnerable to a certain degree of ideological bias.

**Figure 6.7** Differences around the Question of *Ta’wil* in Q 3:7 among Sunni and Shi’i Exegetes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shi’i Views</th>
<th>Sunni Views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None knows its <em>ta’wil</em> save Allah and <em>al-rāsikhūn fi al-‘ilm</em> (the Prophet and Ahl al-Bayt/the Imams).</td>
<td>None entirely knows its <em>ta’wil</em> save Allah, but <em>al-rāsikhūn fi al-‘ilm</em> partially know; the Prophet and Ahl al-Bayt are those who know most.</td>
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<tr>
<td>None knows its <em>ta’wil</em> save Allah, but other Qur’anic evidences suggest: <em>al-rāsikhūn fi al-‘ilm</em> (the purified human beings) know the <em>ta’wil</em>.</td>
<td>None knows its <em>ta’wil</em> save Allah, and <em>al-rāsikhūn fi al-‘ilm</em> those firmly rooted in esoteric knowledge (al-‘ilm al-ladunni).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>al-‘Ayyāshī</th>
<th>al-Ṣādiqī</th>
<th>al-Baqfī</th>
<th>Ibn ‘Ajjabah</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>al-Kaṣhārī</td>
<td>al-Bahrānī</td>
<td>al-Huwayzī</td>
<td>al-Sabzawārī</td>
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<tr>
<td>al-Ṭabāṭābā’ī</td>
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<tr>
<th>al-Ṭabarānī</th>
<th>al-Mahallī</th>
<th>al-Suyūṭī</th>
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<tr>
<td>al-Shawkānī</td>
<td>al-Qāsimī</td>
<td>al-Shanqīṭī</td>
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<td>al-Jazā’irī</td>
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| al-Jilānī |

C. The One who Has Knowledge of the Book in Q 13:43

One of the signs of the imamate of ‘Ali, Shi’ites argue, can be found in al-Ra’d[13]:43, which reads as follows:

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ أَنْتُمْ مُرْسَلِينَ ﻓَلْ كَفَىٰ بِاللهِ شَهِيدًا بَيِّنًا وَبَيِّنَكُمْ وَمَنْ عَنًى عَلَّمَ أَلْكِتَابِ

The phrase wa man ‘indahu ‘ilm al-Kitāb (other recitation versions: wa min ‘indihi ‘ilm al-Kitāb and wa min ‘indihi ‘ulima al-Kitāb) has been subject to different interpretation. The different understanding around the phrase has had an impact on how the phrase is translated into English. Some Shi‘i translators translate the verse as follows:

And those who disbelieve say: “You are not a messenger.” Say: “Allah is sufficient as a witness between me and you and he with whom is the knowledge of the Book.”

– Sayyid Abbas Sadr’ameli

The faithless say, “You have not been sent (by Allah).” Say, “Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book.”

– Qarai

(Muhammad), the unbelievers say, “You are not a Messenger.” Say, “Allah and those who have the knowledge of the Book are sufficient witness (to my prophet-hood).”

– Sarwar

Some non-Shi‘i translators, meanwhile, translate the verse as follows (to mention only some representative cases):


52 The Qur’an: With a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation, 350.

53 The Holy Quran: Arabic Text With English Translation, 228.
They say, “You have not been sent.” Say, “God is sufficient witness between me and you: all knowledge of the Scripture comes from Him.”

– M.A.S. Abdel Haleem\(^54\)

And those who have disbelieved say, “You are not a messenger.” Say, (O Muhammad), “Sufficient is Allah as Witness between me and you, and (the witness of) whoever has knowledge of the Scripture.”

– Saheeh International\(^55\)

And those who disbelieved, say: “You (O Muhammad SAW) are not a Messenger.” Say: “Sufficient as a witness between me and you is Allah and those too who have knowledge of the Scripture (such as Abdullah bin Salam and other Jews and Christians who embraced Islam).”

– Hilali & Khan\(^56\)

According to Shi’ites, the phrase *man ‘indahu ‘ilm al-Kitāb* (who possesses knowledge of the Book) refers to ‘Alî ibn Abî Ţalîb, indicating one of his great virtues. It is assumed that the Book refers to the Qur’an. Most of Sunni literatures, however, regard it as referring to those who possess knowledge of the Tawrat and the Injil, without specifically identify their names.

Indeed, some Sunni exegeses as well as a few Shi’i exegeses merely mention a number of opinions regarding the phrase. However, one of the oft-cited opinions in these Sunni exegeses is the opinion that names ‘Abd Allâh ibn Salâm, Salman al-Fârisî and Tâmîm al-Dârî as the ones with which the verse is concerned, an opinion that is rarely cited in Shi’i exegeses; while the most oft-cited opinion in the Shi’i exegeses with no fixed conclusion (regarding the phrase) is the one that names Imam ‘Alî, an opinion which is not prevalent in Sunni exegeses.

According to al-Shanqîṭî, the phrase refers to those who have knowledge of the Tawrat and the Injil (*ahl al-‘ilm bi al-Tawrâh wa al-Injîl*) based on evidences in the Qur’an. He mentions three verses as the evidences and indicates the availability of other supporting verses he does not mention. The verses are: “Allah witnesses that there is no


\(^{55}\) *The Qur’an: English Meanings*, 234.

\(^{56}\) *The Noble Qur’an: English Translation*, 327.
deity except Him, and (so do) the angels and those of knowledge (ūlū al-‘ilm),” (Āl ‘Imrān [3]:18) “So if you are in doubt, (O Muhammad), about that which We have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the Book before you (alladhīna yaqra‘ūna al-Kitāb min qablika),” (Yūnus [10]:94) and “Question the people of the Remembrance (ahl al-dhikr), if it should be that you do not know.” (al-Nahl [16]:43)57 Al-Shanqīṭī regards the terms ūlū al-‘ilm, alladhīna yaqra‘ūna al-Kitāb min qablika, ahl al-dhikr and man ‘indahu ‘ilm al-Kitāb are synonymous, referring to Ahl al-Kitāb.

57 Al-Shanqīṭī, Āfdwā’ al-Bayān, III, 121.
In the beginning of the surah, it is stated, “... and what has been revealed to you from your Lord is the truth, but most of the people do not believe,” and in the middle, it is insisted, “Then is he who knows that what has been revealed to you from your Lord is the truth like one who is blind? It is only people of understanding who pay heed.” In addition, understanding al-Kitāb here as the Qur’ān is also consistent with the need to answer the challenge of disbelievers repeatedly mentioned in verse 7, verse 27 and verse 43 itself. Verse 7 states, “Those who refused to believe in you say: ‘Why has no (miraculous) sign been sent down upon him from his Lord?’ ...” Verse 27 states, “Those who have rejected (the message of Muhammad) say: ‘Why has no sign been sent down upon him from his Lord?’ ...”

Third, riwāyāt from the Imams suggest that the verse was revealed on Imam ‘Alī. This is understandable since among those who believed in the Prophet at that time, ‘Alī was the most knowledgeable about the Qur’ān, as suggested by many narrated traditions (riwāyāt).

One can see how both al-Shanqīṭī and al-Ṭabarānī employ tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān in interpreting the last verse of al-Ra‘d. Both link the verse to several other Qur’anic parts. However, the Qur’anic parts both cite are completely different. While al-Shanqīṭī focuses on verses and phrases considered to deliver a similar message, al-Ṭabarānī focuses on the coherence of the surah. It is interesting that, as readers might still remember, al-Ṭabarānī argues for the independency of Q 33:33, Q 5:55 and Q 5:67, but here he connects Q 13:43 with preceding verses and even the objective of the whole surah.

Figure 6.9 Al-Ṭabarānī’s Intra-Qur’anic Connections for Man ‘Indahu ‘Ilm al-Kitāb in Q 13:43

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Nonetheless, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s and al-Shanqīṭī’s _tafṣīr al-Qur‘ān bi al-Qur‘ān_ of the verse can be regarded as equally ‘least holistic’. Both even do not seek to link the verse with nearby verses. (See Figure 6.10).

**Figure 6.10** Holisticness Chart for al-Shanqīṭī’s (S) and al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s (T) Interpretations of Q 13:43

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Intra-Qur’anic Connection</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>T</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between parts available in a verse.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and preceding verses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and succeeding verses.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a word/statement with the textual context of a group of verses where it exists.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and the central theme or the objective of the surah where it exists.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and a distant part of the Qur’an dealing with the same or relevant topic.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between a verse and a distant part of the Qur’an displaying a comparable linguistic feature/style.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between the use of a word/phrase in a verse and the entire usage of the word/phrase in the Qur’an.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship between variant modes of reading (<em>if applicable</em>).</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** ■ = available  □ = not available

The difference of the verses with which both exegetes consult is apparently parallel with their different conclusions. It is quite clear that al-Shanqīṭī’s position is a typical Sunni position, while al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’ position is a typical Shi‘i position. Even though most of Sunni exegetes (such as al-Ṭabarī,\(^{59}\) al-Māwardī\(^{60}\) and al-Suyūṭī\(^{61}\)) merely mention the differences in opinion regarding “the one(s) with whom is the knowledge of the Book”, a significant number of Sunni

\(^{59}\)Al-Ṭabarī, _Ja‘mī‘ al-Bayān_, XIII, 582-6.


exegetes (such as al-Baghwī,62 al-Qurṭubī,63 Ibn Kathīr,64 Ibn Ṭabīʿa,65 and Hamka66) are of the opinion that the phrase man ‘indahu ‘ilm al-Kitāb refers to the scholars of Ahl al-Kitāb, those who have knowledge of the Tawrat and the Injil, or believers among Ahl al-Kitāb. (See Figure 6.11).

In their interpretation of the phrase, al-Ṣanqīṭī and al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī make use of different methodological options. In his brief comment, al-Ṣanqīṭī cites only Qur’anic verses to support his view. It seems that he regards the verses as quite clear in pointing out that the phrase refers to those who have knowledge of the divine Scriptures before the Qur’an.

Al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, meanwhile, uses also riwaʿāt and logical reasoning. The riwaʿāt al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī relies upon are those available in Shiʿi sources, given that riwaʿāt in Sunni sources mostly mention names other than ʿAfi. Al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī himself cites one of the narrated traditions naming ʿAbd Allāh ibn Salām common in Sunni exegeses taken from al-Durr al-Manṭūr in his baḥth riwaʿī. However, he also puts forward some narrated traditions that oppose the validity of the statement.

This case is thus another illustration of how Sunnism and Shiʿism can have an impact on how Qur’anic verses are linked. It turns out that there are gateways from where an ideological orientation can play a role in making an interpretation different from another.

62Al-Baghwī, Maʿālim al-Tanzīl, IV, 328.
64Ibn Kathīr, Taṣfīr al-Qurʿān al-ʿAzīm, VIII, 172.
66Hamka, Taṣfīr Al-Azhar (Singapore: Pustaka Nasional, 2001), V, 3777.
Figure 6.11 Differences around *Man ‘indahu ‘Ilm al-Kitāb* among Sunni and Shi‘i Exegetes

**Shi‘i Views**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Man ‘indahu ‘Ilm al-Kitāb</em></th>
<th><em>Man ‘indahu ‘Ilm al-Kitāb</em></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>= Imam ‘Ali</td>
<td>= those who have knowledge of the Qur’an (all Infallible Imams) and those who know the prophecies of Muhammad in the Tawrat and the Injil.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sunni Views**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Man ‘indahu ‘Ilm al-Kitāb</em></th>
<th><em>Man ‘indahu ‘Ilm al-Kitāb</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>= those who have deep knowledge of the Qur’an (not specified)</td>
<td>= scholars of Ahl al-Kitāb, those who have knowledge of the Tawrat and the Injil, or believers among Ahl al-Kitāb.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Authors of *al-Muntakhab*:

- al-Ṣādiqī
- al-Ǧilānī
- al-Baghawi
- al-Qurtubi
- Ibn Kathir
- al-Mahalîlî + al-Suyūṭī
- al-Sa‘dî
- Ibn Ashūr
- ʿIzzat Darwazah
- al-Shanqīṭī
- Hamka
- al-Jazā‘īrī
- Sayyid Ṭaṭāwī
- al-Ṣâbūnî
- Ma‘mūn Ḥammush
Chapter VII
CONCLUSION

A. Conclusions

Tafsir of the Qur’an with reference to the Qur’an itself has been regarded as the best interpretive tool for several reasons: its perceived validity, its theoretical sufficiency, its legitimacy, its appropriateness to the nature of the text, as well as the objective result it promises. However, the acceptability and the sufficiency of tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an in practice have not been guaranteed. The fact that most of its implementations require *ijtihād*, allows us to question whether or not tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an can be free enough from any interrupting ideological narratives; whether any subjectivism would not interrupt whenever a reader lets the Qur’an speak.

This study might have reminded the readers of the notion that any interpretation is vulnerable to a certain degree of the interpreter’s projection of bias onto the text. Even an interpretive approach to the Qur’an that is based on, and exploit, the premise of interconnectedness of Qur’anic parts and stresses a continued openness to the text or a pursuit of ‘well-educated guess’ of the author’s intention, could sometimes facilitate – rather than minimize – denominational subjectivity of an exegete – despite some potential measure of its efficacy in the act of communication.

The choice of ideas by which the text is navigated really matters. Even when an exegete seeks to be committed to interpreting the Qur’an with the Qur’an, there are not only a large number of verses he may consult with to shed light on a verse, but also numerous (other) ideas he can choose to steer the way he employs this methodology. For one thing, he would deal with the problem of how to define the scope and limit of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* in the availability of other interpretative devices. It is in this choice of ideas that the interpreter’s subjectivity can interrupt his commitment to objectivity he seeks to pursue through *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*.

Tafsir of the Qur’an by the Qur’an might give confidence to an interpreter of the Qur’an to claim at least a certain degree of objectivity or to claim that he has arrived at a certain degree of certainty. However, such an approach remains subjective and can be explained on the basis of the reader’s experience (reader response theory). One has to recognize a degree of indeterminacy and
complexity in meaning, which ensures subjectivity become an inherent element of Qur’an interpretation. Even when an exegete seeks to pay much attention to both the broader and narrower contexts of the verse being interpreted, his theological preference might possibly shape his interpretation.

This study shows that the intrusion of sectarian color in a (fairly) holistic reading of the Qur’an is possible. This has been supported by the following findings:

1) Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī in his al-Mīzān and al-Shanqīṭī in his Adwā’ al-Bayān generally approach Qur’anic verses in equally a moderately holistic fashion even though samples surveyed in this study imply that the holistiveness of al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s interpretations is slightly more stable than those of al-Shanqīṭī’s. Sometimes their interpretation can be very holistic. In two cases, i.e. the interpretations of the ṭabīr verse and the mut‘ah verse, each of the two exegetes involves six out of nine types of intra-Qur’anic connections largely applicable in the “interpretation of verses”.

2) The way al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī employs tafsīr al-Qurān bi al-Qurān is sometimes noticeably dictated by his Shi‘ism, while al-Shanqīṭī’s practice of the methodology is also sometimes apparently influenced by his Sunnism. Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s Shi‘i background and al-Shanqīṭī’s Sunni background explain the parts of a given verse each emphasizes, the verses each consults, the way each understands the connection of the verses, the interpretive strategy each pursues, and the conclusion each achieves while interpreting Q 33:33, Q 9:100, Q 2:124, Q 21:73, Q 3:7, Q 13:43, and Q 4:24 – verses related to the issue of Ahl al-Bayt, Ṣahābah, imāmah, and mut‘ah. These verses might have been crucial points of contention between Shi‘ism and Sunnism. In fact, they are so crucial so that, while interpreting Q 33:33, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī argues that Ahl al-Bayt must consist only of Ahl al-Kisā’, while al-Shanqīṭī argues that it also includes the wives of the Prophet. When interpreting Q 9:100, the former emphasizes that al-Sābiqūn al-Awwalūn does not include all of the Muhajirin and the Ansar, while the latter emphasizes that vilifying and hating some of the Companions is a deviant practice. In commenting on Q 2:124, 21:73, 3:7, and 13:43, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī argues for the existence of imamate, the
infallibility of the Imams and their possession of true knowledge of the Qur’an, while al-Shanqīṭī does not recognize such notions. In the interpretation of Q 2:24, the former argues in favor of the legitimacy of *mut’ah*, while the latter argues against it. Both have done these always by connecting a verse with other parts of the Qur’an.

3) Shaped by their respective theological outlook, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī and al-Shanqīṭī have come up with different (subjective) choices of ideas in dealing with the verses through *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*. The different choices they made to navigate the text include:
   a. the choice between giving a priority to the meaning implied by the order/sequence of verses as written in the corpus over the meaning implied by *riwayāt* on the *sabab nuzūl* or the Prophet’s use of a Qur’anic expression, and the other way around.
   b. the choice between merely emphasizing the interconnectedness or unity of verses on the basis of the placement of clauses or verses and seeking to find some differences among consecutive verses through a logical analysis toward the contents of the verses (in an attempt at finding a sort of disconnectedness).
   c. the choice between relying upon the Qur’an alone, a combination of the Qur’an and the Sunnah/riwayāt, and the Sunnah/riwayāt alone in determining the historical figures referred to in a verse.
   d. the choice between relying on the common or entire usage of a word in the Qur’an as well as Arabic language, and relying on the specific context (*siyāq*) of the verse(s) in isolation.
   e. the choice between giving a priority to surrounding verses or another section in the same surah to consult with over verses in another surah, and vice versa.
   f. the choice of whether a Qur’anic verse/statement shifts the topic dealt with in the preceding verse/statement or not.
g. the choice of which Qur’anic statement is more central.

h. the choice of which (possible) implied meaning (mathūm) is being emphasized in a given statement.

Given the availability of choices seen as methodologically-justified, different interpreters would possibly come up with different choices, and in their process of choosing ideas to navigate the text, partiality (some of which would be shaped by their theological school) can possibly intervene. The similarity in the interpretive methodology, i.e. *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*, would not guarantee the similarity of their interpretation due to this need for choosing ideas by which an interpreter can navigate the text.

**B. Research Implications**

On the one hand, this study is another piece of evidence that Qur’an interpretation has been an arena of contestation for different religious groups within Islam, particularly Sunnites and Shi‘ites. More specifically, this study suggests that even *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* has been another ground of contestation between Sunni and Shi‘i scholars. Different verses of the Qur’an have been brought by Sunni and Shi‘i scholars to shed light on a certain verse in order for the verse to be in line with their sectarian doctrines (regarding Ahl al-Bayt, Ṣahābah, *imāmah*, etc.).

With the meaning of Qur’anic verses being contested between different theological groups, writing the interpretation of the Qur’an might have been as important as (or perhaps more important than) writing history. As is the case with tafsīr, how history is told can also be vulnerable to ideological contestation. The writing of history is also subject to bias. To quote Chase Robinson, “organizations of knowledge are never neutral or natural.”1 From historiography, one can know that Muslim history has been told differently by Shi‘is and Sunnis (as well as other groups) in line with their theological preference. For instance, with regard to who the first male Muslim (after the Prophet Muhammad) was, the death of the Prophet and its aftermath, as well as the rule of the first three caliphs (among many

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other topics), Sunni and Shi‘i historians have brought different narratives.2

On the other hand, this study reinforces the notion that any interpretation is (partly) shaped by a subjective factor in the choice of ideas with which the text is navigated. *Ijtihād* involved in the process of interpretation – even when it involves the Qur’an itself as a main source to consult with – is not an innocent way to pursue objectivity and minimize subjectivity.

With such a conclusion, this study strengthens several arguments: that subjectivity is an inherent element of Qur’an interpretation (e.g. Saeed, 2006); that subjectivity can interrupt a strong commitment to objectivity (Afaki, 2008); that a coherence-oriented approach to the Qur’an is also subjective in nature (Rippin, 2013); that sectarian bias can intrude *tafsīr al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an* (al-Muṭṭārī, 2011); and that both Sunnism and Shi‘ism have an impact on the way Qur’anic verses are interpreted (Musolli, 2014). At the same time, it puts some doubts on the belief that *tafsīr al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an* could help us remove the possibility of multiple interpretations (al-Farāhi; al-Īṣāḥi) and the belief that the approach helps the reader avoid projecting extra-Qur’anic ideas (e.g. Bint al-Shāṭi; al-Ṭābāṭābā’i).

Nonetheless, one might need to remember that if the way *tafsīr al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’an* is implemented can be shaped by Shi‘ism and Sunnism, it could also perhaps be dictated by a Sunni-Shi‘i rapprochement ‘ideology’, which (especially in the modern period) has started to become (globally) noticeable since the 20th century,3 albeit in its fluctuative development. There have been very limited efforts on dealing with exegetical issues with a perspective of Sunni-Shi‘i

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2I owe to Prof. Atho Mudzhar for this point. For a discussion on the disparity between Sunni and Shi‘i historiographies, see Elisheva Machlis, *Shi‘i Sectarianism in the Middle East: Modernisation and the Quest for Islamic Universalism* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), chapter 2. For a summary of the debate among Muslim historians on the first Muslim, see for instance Akram Diyā’ al-‘Umarī, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyah al-Sabīhah* (Madinah: Maktabat al-‘Ulūm wa al-Ḥikam, 1994), 133-40. It can be found in various tafsirs as well. See for instance the interpretations of Q 9:100 in al-Tha‘labī’s *al-Kashf wa al-Bayān*, al-Khaṣīn’s *Lubāb al-Ta‘wil* and Ibn ‘Adil’s *al-Lubāb*.

rapprochement, but tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi al-Qurʾān with a Sunni-Shiʿi rapprochement ‘twist’ would probably be an opportunity as well as a great challenge for Muslims ‘to have a better (Muslim) world’ in the future. *Wa Allāh aʾlam.*

Another option for us is not to be bothered by Sunni-Shiʿi issues altogether (given that, compared to the total number of Qur’anic verses, there is only a very limited percentage of verses recurrently disputed between the two groups) and instead focus on developing the methodology of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi al-Qurʾān* with a great care for it to be implemented in a most holistic fashion. The readers might have noticed that al-Shanqīṭi’s interpretation as well as al-Ṭabāṭabā’i’s interpretation, as far as the verses under study are concerned, deal only with some of the types of intra-Qur’anic connections, making their interpretations very often just below the ‘most holistic’ level. This is an opportunity, as well as a challenge, for future interpreters of the Qurʾān to bring forward tafsīr of the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān that is consistently most holistic in the hope of increasing the probability that our interpretive guesses are correct. In this regard, this study has identified various types of intra-Qur’anic connections that can be helpful in measuring the holisticness of an interpretation, and can thereby be helpful for any effort to interpret the Qurʾān with the Qurʾān more holistically. While such an approach would still not escape from any element of subjectivity, it would be a ‘response’ of a reader of the Qurʾān that is (more) compatible with any effort to bring Muslims into unity. *Wa al-ʾilm ʿinda Allāh.*

With these types of intra-Qur’anic connections being identified, one can offer a new paradigm of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi al-Qurʾān* for it to be more holistic. In this paradigm, an interpretation of the Qurʾān can be considered really holistic if it pays attention to all types of intra-Qur’anic connections (from the relationship between parts within a verse to that between large units of the text).

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4One of rapprochement-friendly initiatives has been launched by the Jordanian-based Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, whose website, namely www.altafsir.com (as well as its sister site, www.greataltafsirs.com by The Prince Ghazi Trust for Qur’anic Thought), displays a large number of tafsīr books across sectarian lines (general Sunnism, Sunni-Sufism, Sunni-Salafism, modernist-Sunnism, Twelver Shiʿism, Zaydī Shiʿism, Ibadism and Muʿtazilism). Compare the ideological variety of the tafsīr books displayed in this site with those provided in www.waqfeya.com (which displays mostly Sunni tafsīrs) and www.narjes-library.com (which displays Shiʿi tafsīrs).
This can boost our hope that today’s Muslim intellectuals
would be able to interpret the Qur’an in a rigorously more holistic
fashion. Indeed, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* has been developed by
al-Shanqīṭī, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, Iṣlāḥī, al-Ṣādiqī and others in their
respective exegeses, in addition to those working on thematic
commentaries. Thus, there have been quite numerous works upon
which one can build a more holistic Qur’an interpretation – that could
perhaps (be expected to) go beyond division among Muslims, i.e. those
who share the *tawhīd* faith (as some supporters of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi
al-Qur’ān* expected). *Wa ‘ala Allāh falyatawakkal al-mu’mīnu’n.*

C. Research Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations from which future studies
may be derived:

1) It focuses mainly on recognizing sectarian color,
particularly Sunnism and Shi‘ism, in the employment of
*tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*. Future research might try to
focus on finding how *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* possibly
helps Qur’an exegetes have a shifted view different from
his own school, or appreciate different views. Future
research might also try to take a closer look at different
currents within Sunnism, such as Salafism and Ash‘arism,
and also perhaps within Shi‘ism, such as Twelver, Sevener
and Fiver Shi‘ism. Future research might also pay
attention to sectarian color beyond Sunnism and Shi‘ism,
or beyond classical categories of Muslim theology (such as
between modernists and traditionalists).

2) It pays much attention to areas or verses contested by
different theological schools, particularly Sunni and Shi‘a.
Future studies might take a closer look at the
implementation of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* around
verses relatively free from theological contestation, such
as verses on *akhlaq*, meaning of life, key of happiness, and
certain past stories. Future studies could also address *tafsīr
al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* in relation to points of contention
among legal schools of thought, or among Sufis, or topics
debated by Muslim jurists and Sufis.

3) It examines only two modern commentaries: *al-Mīzān* and
*Adwā’ al-Bayān*. Future research might deal with different
commentaries of the Qur’an equally relying upon *tafsīr al-
*Qur’an bi al-Qur’an*, such as Iṣlāḥī’s *Tadabbur-i-Qur’an* and al-Ṣadiqi’s *al-Furqān*.

4) It examines *al-Mizān* and *Adwā’ al-Bayān* relatively in isolation from other works of their respective author. This is a room that other studies can explore.

5) It focuses on verses that both al-Shanqīṭī and al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī interpret in a way relevant to Sunni-Shī‘i theological dispute. Future studies can pay deeper attention to (subjectivity/bias in) each exegete’s interpretation in isolation, involving more Qur’ānic verses that each interprets in a way that reflects the influence of Sunnism or Shi‘ism.

6) It deals with verses contested by Sunni and Shi‘a as identified or found in a number of works within my reach. Other researchers might have better access to more extensive resources.

7) This study deals with verses debated by Sunni and Shi‘a relatively in isolation from their debates on hadiths and history that are relevant to the understanding of the verses and of the topic concerned. Future studies can have it as a challenge to provide a well-integrated interdisciplinary perspective.

8) It has not yet very much explored in great detail the reasons as to why a (fairly) holistic reading of the Qur’an can be intervened by a sectarian orientation, and the possibility of having a most holistic approach that is less vulnerable to any bias, as well as the question of whether or not a biased interpretation can only be avoided through a most holistic approach.

9) Last but not least, while suggesting the possibility and importance of future implementation *tafsīr al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’ān* that is more constantly ‘most holistic’, this study has not yet tried to give examples of how this can be done. It does provide a tool to measure the holisticness of an interpretation, but it would be more beneficial if used not only to examine the holisticness of previous interpretations, but also write a fresh one or help organize the structure of a comprehensive index of *tafsīr al-Qur’an bi al-Qur’ān* (Qur’ānic verses annotated with relevant Qur’ānic parts). *Wa mā tawfīqī illā bī Allāh.*
WORKS CITED

Books and Book Chapters


**Dissertations and Academic Papers**


**E-Books, Online Books and Online Articles**


Journal Articles


Appendix 1

Checklist of Qur’anic Verses Initially Surveyed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Available</th>
<th>Relevant to Sunni-Shi'i debate</th>
<th>Connected to Other Qur’anic Parts</th>
<th>Available</th>
<th>Relevant to Sunni-Shi'i debate</th>
<th>Connected to Other Qur’anic Parts</th>
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= YES  = NOT
## Qur'anic Parts Most Popularly Contested by Sunni and Shi'a

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Your guardian is only Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakat while bowing down. (Qarai)

Verily, your Wali (Protector or Helper) is Allah, His Messenger, and the believers—those who perform As-Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat), and give Zakat, and they bow down (submit themselves with obedience to Allah in prayer). (Hilali & Khan)
O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message, and Allah shall protect you from the people. Indeed Allah does not guide the faithless lot. (Qarai)

O Messenger (Muhammad SAW)! Proclaim (the Message) which has been sent down to you from your Lord. And if you do not, then you have not conveyed His Message. Allah will protect you from mankind. Verily, Allah guides not the people who disbelieve. (Hilali & Khan)

And (remember) when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words, then he fulfilled them. He said: “Surely I am going to make you an Imam for men” (Ibrahim) said: “And of my offspring?” He said: “My covenant will not include the unjust.” (Tawheed Institute Australia)

And (remember) when the Lord of Ibrahim (Abraham) [i.e. Allah] tried him with (certain)
Commands, which he fulfilled. He (Allah) said (to him), “Verily, I am going to make you a leader (Prophet) of mankind.” [Ibrahim (Abraham)] said, “And of my offspring (to make leaders).” (Allah) said, “My Covenant (Prophethood, etc.) includes not Zalimun (polytheists and wrong-doers).” (Hilali & Khan)

... But no one knows its interpretation except Allah and those firmly grounded in knowledge; they say, ‘We believe in it; all of it is from our Lord’ ... (Qarai)

... but none knows its hidden meanings save Allah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: “We believe in it; the whole of it (clear and unclear Verses) are from our Lord”... (Hilali & Khan)

The early vanguard of the Emigrants and the Helpers and those who followed them in virtue—Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens with streams running in them, to remain in them forever. That is the great success. (Qarai)

And the first to embrace Islam of the Muhajirun (those who migrated from Makkah to Al-Madinah) and the Ansar (the citizens of Al-Madinah who helped and gave aid to the Muhajirun) and also those who followed them exactly (in Faith). Allah is well-pleased with them as they are well-pleased with Him. He has prepared for them Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise), to dwell therein forever. That is the supreme success. (Hilali & Khan)
... Say, ‘I do not ask you any reward for it except the love of [my] relatives’ ... (Qarai)

... Say (O Muhammad SAW): ‘No reward do I ask of you for this except to be kind to me for my kinship with you’ ... (Hilali & Khan)

... Today the faithless have despaired of your religion. So do not fear them, but fear Me. Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion ... (Qarai)

... This day, those who disbelieved have given up all hope of your religion, so fear them not, but fear Me. This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion ... (Hilali & Khan)

Let not the believers take the disbelievers as Auliya (supporters, helpers, etc.) instead of the believers, and whoever does that will never be helped by Allah in any way, except if you indeed fear a danger from them. And Allah warns you against Himself (His Punishment), and to Allah is the final return. (Hilali & Khan)
Excepting someone who is compelled [to recant his faith] while his heart is at rest in it, those who disbelieve in Allah after [affirming] their faith and open up their breasts to unfaith, Allah’s wrath shall be upon them and there is a great punishment for them. (Qarai)

Whoever disbelieved in Allah after his belief, except him who is forced thereto and whose heart is at rest with Faith but such as open their breasts to disbelief, on them is wrath from Allah, and theirs will be a great torment. (Hilali & Khan)

Allah was certainly pleased with the faithful when they swore allegiance to you under the tree. He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down composure on them, and requited them with a victory near at hand. (Qarai)

Indeed, Allah was pleased with the believers when they gave their Bai’a (pledge) to you (O Muhammad SAW) under the tree, He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down As-Sakinah (calmness and tranquillity) upon them, and He rewarded them with a near victory. (Hilali & Khan)

Should anyone argue with you concerning him, after the knowledge that has come to you, say, ‘Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our souls and your souls, then let us pray earnestly, and call down Allah’s curse upon the liars.’ (Qarai)
Then whoever disputes with you concerning him [‘Iesa (Jesus)] after (all this) knowledge that has come to you, [i.e. ‘Iesa (Jesus)] being a slave of Allah, and having no share in Divinity) say: (O Muhammad SAW) “Come, let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves - then we pray and invoke (sincerely) the Curse of Allah upon those who lie.” (Hilali & Khan)

Muhammad, the Apostle of Allah, and those who are with him are hard against the faithless and merciful amongst themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating [in worship], seeking Allah’s grace, and [His] pleasure ... (Qarai)

Muhammad (SAW) is the Messenger of Allah, and those who are with him are severe against disbelievers, and merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and falling down prostrate (in prayer), seeking Bounty from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure ... (Hilali & Khan)

O you who have faith! Be wary of Allah, and be with the Truthful. (Qarai)

O you who believe! Be afraid of Allah, and be with those who are true (in words and deeds). (Hilali & Khan)

We did not send [any apostles] before you except as men to whom We revealed. Ask the People of the Reminder if you do not know. (Qarai)

And We sent not (as Our Messengers) before you (O Muhammad SAW) any but men, whom We inspired, (to preach and invite mankind to believe in the
Oneness of Allah). So ask of those who know the Scripture [learned men of the Taurat (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel)], if you know not. (Hilali & Khan)

18 98:7

إِنَّ الْذِّينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ، أُولٌمَكُ هُمْ خَيْرُ الْبَيْتِ

Indeed those who have faith and do righteous deeds—it is they who are the best of creatures. (Qarai)

Verily, those who believe [in the Oneness of Allah, and in His Messenger Muhammad (Peace be upon him) including all obligations ordered by Islam] and do righteous good deeds, they are the best of creatures. (Hilali & Khan)

19 59:8-10

لِلْفِقراء الْهَاجِرِينَ الْذِّينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَأَمْوَاهُمْ يَتَفْعَلونَ فِضْلًا مِنْ اللَّهِ وَرَضْوَانًا وَنِصْرَانَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولُهُ 
أُولَٰكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ، وَالْذِّينَ نَفْسُوا الدَّارَ وَالإِيْمَانَ وَفَلَيْمَ يُجْبَتُونَ مِنْ هَاجِرَتِهِمْ وَلَا يُجَذَّبُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ 
خَصَاَصَةً مَّنْ أُولَٰئِكَ وَقَوْيُونَ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلُوْلَاءٌ كَانَ يَهْمَ

[They are also] for the poor Emigrants who have been expelled from their homes and [wrested of] their possessions, who seek grace from Allah and [His] pleasure and help Allah and His Apostle. It is they who are the truthful. [They are as well] for those who were settled in the land and [abided] in faith before them, who love those who migrate toward them, and do not find in their breasts any privation for that which is given to them, but prefer [the Immigrants] to themselves, though poverty be their own lot. And those who are saved from their own greed—it is they who are the felicitous. And [also for] those who came in after them, who say, ‘Our Lord, forgive us and our brethren who were our forerunners in the faith, and do not put any rancour in our hearts toward the faithful. Our Lord, You are indeed most kind and merciful.’ (Qarai)
(And there is also a share in this booty) for the poor emigrants, who were expelled from their homes and their property, seeking Bounties from Allah and to please Him. And helping Allah (i.e. helping His religion) and His Messenger (Muhammad SAW). Such are indeed the truthful (to what they say); And those who, before them, had homes (in Al-Madinah) and had adopted the Faith, love those who emigrate to them, and have no jealousy in their breasts for that which they have been given (from the booty of Bani An-Nadir), and give them (emigrants) preference over themselves, even though they were in need of that. And whosoever is saved from his own covetousness, such are they who will be the successful. And those who came after them say: “Our Lord! Forgive us and our brethren who have preceded us in Faith, and put not in our hearts any hatred against those who have believed. Our Lord! You are indeed full of kindness, Most Merciful.”

Thus We have made you a middle nation that you may be witnesses to the people, and that the Apostle may be a witness to you ... (Qarai)

Thus We have made you [true Muslims – real believers of Islamic Monotheism, true followers of Prophet Muhammad SAW and his Sunnah (legal ways)], a Wasat (just) (and the best) nation, that you be witnesses over mankind and the Messenger (Muhammad SAW) be a witness over you ... (Hilali & Khan)

There are hypocrites among the Bedouins around you and among the townspeople of Madinah, steeped
in hypocrisy. You do not know them; We know them, and We will punish them twice, then they shall be consigned to a great punishment. [There are] others who have confessed to their sins, having mixed up righteous conduct with other that was evil. Maybe Allah will accept their repentance. Indeed Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful. (Qarai)

And among the bedouins round about you, some are hypocrites, and so are some among the people of Al-Madinah, they exaggerate and persist in hypocrisy, you (O Muhammad SAW) know them not, We know them. We shall punish them twice, and thereafter they shall be brought back to a great (horrible) torment. And (there are) others who have acknowledged their sins, they have mixed a deed that was righteous with another that was evil. Perhaps Allah will turn unto them in forgiveness. Surely, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Hilali & Khan)

O you who have faith! Should any of you desert his religion, Allah will soon bring a people whom He loves and who love Him, [who will be] humble towards the faithful, stern towards the faithless, waging jihad in the way of Allah, not fearing the blame of any blamer ... (Qarai)

O you who believe! Whoever from among you turns back from his religion (Islam), Allah will bring a people whom He will love and they will love Him; humble towards the believers, stern towards the disbelievers, fighting in the Way of Allah, and never afraid of the blame of the blamers ... (Hilali & Khan)

Thus, have faith in God, His Messenger and the Light which We have revealed. God is Well-Aware of what you do. (Sarwar)

Therefore, believe in Allah and His Messenger
(Muhammad SAW), and in the Light (this Quran) which We have sent down. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do. (Hilali & Khan)

If you do not help him, then Allah certainly helped him when the faithless expelled him, as one of two [refugees], when the two of them were in the cave, he said to his companion, 'Do not grieve; Allah is indeed with us.' Then Allah sent down His composure upon him, and strengthened him with hosts you did not see ... (Qarai)

If you help him (Muhammad SAW) not (it does not matter), for Allah did indeed help him when the disbelievers drove him out, the second of two, when they (Muhammad SAW and Abu Bakr) were in the cave, and he (SAW) said to his companion (Abu Bakr): "Be not sad (or afraid), surely Allah is with us." Then Allah sent down His Sakinah (calmness, tranquillity, peace, etc.) upon him, and strengthened him with forces (angels) which you saw not ... (Hilali & Khan)

They said, ‘Are you amazed at Allah’s dispensation? [That is] Allah’s mercy and His blessings upon you, members of the household. Indeed He is all-laudable, all-glorious.’ (Qarai)

They said: “Do you wonder at the Decree of Allah? The Mercy of Allah and His Blessings be on you, O the family [of Ibrahim (Abraham)]. Surely, He (Allah) is All-Praiseworthy, All-Glorious.” (Hilali & Khan)

... You are only a warner, and to every people there is a guide. (Qarai)
... You are only a warner, and to every people there is a guide. (Hilali & Khan)

Certainly Allah turned clemently to the Prophet and the Emigrants and the Helpers, who followed him in the hour of difficulty, after the hearts of a part of them were about to swerve. Then He turned clemently to them—indeed, He is most kind and merciful to them. (Qarai)

Allah has forgiven the Prophet (SAW), the Muhajirun (Muslim emigrants who left their homes and came to Al-Madinah) and the Ansar (Muslims of Al-Madinah) who followed him (Muhammad SAW) in the time of distress (Tabuk expedition, etc.), after the hearts of a party of them had nearly deviated (from the Right Path), but He accepted their repentance. Certainly, He is unto them full of Kindness, Most Merciful. (Hilali & Khan)

We made them imams, guiding by Our command, and We revealed to them [concerning] the performance of good deeds, the maintenance of prayers, and the giving of zakat, and they used to worship Us. (Qarai)

And We made them leaders, guiding (mankind) by Our Command, and We inspired in them the doing of good deeds, performing Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat), and the giving of Zakat and of Us (Alone) they were worshippers. (Hilali & Khan)

The day We shall summon every group of people along with their imam ... (Qarai)
(And remember) the Day when We shall call together all human beings with their (respective) Imam [their Prophets, or their records of good and bad deeds, or their Holy Books like the Quran, the Taurat (Torah), the Injeel (Gospel), etc] ... (Hilali & Khan)

When a report of safety or alarm comes to them, they immediately broadcast it; but had they referred it to the Apostle or to those vested with authority among them, those of them who investigate would have ascertained it. And were it not for Allah’s grace upon you and His mercy, you would have surely followed Satan, [all] except a few. (Qarai)

When there comes to them some matter touching (public) safety or fear, they make it known (among the people), if only they had referred it to the Messenger or to those charged with authority among them, the proper investigators would have understood it from them (directly). Had it not been for the Grace and Mercy of Allah upon you, you would have followed Shaitan (Satan), save a few of you. (Hilali & Khan)

The Prophet is closer to the faithful than their own souls, and his wives are their mothers ... (Qarai)

The Prophet is closer to the believers than their ownselves, and his wives are their (believers’) mothers (as regards respect and marriage) ... (Hilali & Khan)
... Those of you who spent [their means] and fought before the victory are not equal [to others]. They are greater in rank than those who have spent and fought afterwards. Yet Allah has promised the best reward to each ... (Qarai)

... Not equal among you are those who spent and fought before the conquering (of Makkah) (with those among you who did so later). Such are higher in degree than those who spent and fought afterwards. But to all, Allah has promised the best (reward) ... (Hilali & Khan)

Allah has promised those of you who have faith and do righteous deeds that He will surely make them successors in the earth, just as He made those who were before them successors, and He will surely establish for them their religion which He has approved for them, and that He will surely change their state to security after their fear, while they worship Me, not ascribing any partners to Me ... (Qarai)

Allah has promised those among you who believe, and do righteous good deeds, that He will certainly grant them succession to (the present rulers) in the earth, as He granted it to those before them, and that He will grant them the authority to practise their religion, that which He has chosen for them (i.e. Islam). And He will surely give them in exchange a safe security after their fear (provided) they (believers) worship Me and do not associate anything (in worship) with Me ... (Hilali & Khan)
Then He sent down to you safety after grief—a
drowsiness that came over a group of you—while
another group, anxious only about themselves,
entertained false notions about Allah, notions of
[pagan] ignorance. They say, ‘Do we have any role in
the matter?’ Say, ‘Indeed the matter belongs totally
to Allah.’ They hide in their hearts what they do not
disclose to you ... (Qarai)

Then after the distress, He sent down security for
you. Slumber overtook a party of you, while another
party was thinking about themselves (as how to save
their own selves, ignoring the others and the Prophet
SAW) and thought wrongly of Allah - the thought of
ignorance. They said, "Have we any part in the
affair?" Say you (O Muhammad SAW): "Indeed the
affair belongs wholly to Allah." They hide within
themselves what they dare not reveal to you ...
(Hilali & Khan)

Among the people are those who say, ‘We have faith
in Allah and the Last Day,’ but they have no faith.
They seek to deceive Allah and those who believe,
yet they deceive no one but themselves, but they are
not aware. There is a sickness in their hearts; then
Allah increased their sickness, and there is a painful
punishment for them because of the lies they used to
tell. (Qarai)

And of mankind, there are some (hypocrites) who
say: "We believe in Allah and the Last Day" while in
fact they believe not. They (think to) deceive Allah
and those who believe, while they only deceive
themselves, and perceive (it) not! In their hearts is a
disease (of doubt and hypocrisy) and Allah has
increased their disease. A painful torment is theirs
because they used to tell lies. (Hilali & Khan)
You are the best nation [ever] brought forth for mankind: you bid what is right and forbid what is wrong, and have faith in Allah ... (Qarai)

You [true believers in Islamic Monotheism, and real followers of Prophet Muhammad SAW and his Sunnah (legal ways, etc.)] are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind; you enjoin Al-Ma'ruf (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam has ordained) and forbid Al-Munkar (polytheism, disbelief and all that Islam has forbidden), and you believe in Allah. (Hilali & Khan)

Know that the Apostle of Allah is among you. Should he comply with you in many matters, you would surely suffer. But Allah has endeared faith to you and made it appealing in your hearts, and He has made hateful to you faithlessness, transgression and disobedience. It is such who are the right-minded—a grace and blessing from Allah, and Allah is all-knowing, all-wise. (Qarai)

And know that, among you there is the Messenger of Allah (SAW). If he were to obey you (i.e. follow your opinions and desires) in much of the matter, you would surely be in trouble, but Allah has endeared the Faith to you and has beautified it in your hearts, and has made disbelief, wickedness and disobedience (to Allah and His Messenger SAW) hateful to you. These! They are the rightly guided ones, (This is) a Grace from Allah and His Favour. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. (Hilali & Khan)

When they had been patient and had conviction in Our signs, We appointed amongst them imams to
guide [the people] by Our command. (Qarai)

And We made from among them (Children of Israel), leaders, giving guidance under Our Command, when they were patient and used to believe with certainty in Our Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.). (Hilali & Khan)

He made it a lasting word among his posterity so that they may come back [to the right path]. (Qarai)

And he made it [i.e. La ilaha ill-Allah (none has the right to be worshipped but Allah Alone)] a Word lasting among his offspring (True Monotheism), that they may turn back (i.e. to repent to Allah or receive admonition). (Hilali & Khan)
GLOSSARY

ahādīth Plural noun of ḥadīth, accounts of what the Prophet said, did or approved.

ahl al-bayt People of the House of the Prophet (understood differently either as referring to all members of the family of the Prophet or to certain personalities in his household). Among Shi‘is, it is understood as referring only to Ahl al-Kisā’ (the Prophet, ‘Alī, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn) or also all of the Imams. Among Sunnis, it is understood as also comprising the wives of the Prophet, or even all descendants of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib (the Prophet’s grandfather).


ahl al-kitāb People of the Book (any people given a Divine Book; mostly understood as Jews and Christians).

ahl al-qur‘ān Qur’anites/Qur’anists, who reject the authority of ḥadīth.

akhbār Stories; traditions.

‘allāmah Great scholar.

‘amal sayyi’ Bad deed.

‘amūd Central theme, pillar or hub of a surah.

aņṣār Citizens of Medina who provided assistance for Muslim immigrants who migrated from Mecca in 622 CE.

asbāb al-nuzūl Occasions of the revelation of Qur’anic verses; traditions about the context and circumstances in which the verses were revealed. Its singular form is sabab nuzūl.

āṭhār Traditions.

bayān Exposition; explanation.

gharād Aim or purpose (of Qur’anic surahs).

ḥadīth An account/report of a saying, an act or a decision of the Prophet.

ḥajj Pilgrimage to the Holy Mecca.

ḥawā Lowly desire of the self.

ḥawzah Islamic learning institution, especially in Iran.

ḥijrah Migration (of the Prophet, from Mecca to Medina)

ijmāl Abridgment (of Qur’anic statement).

ijtiḥād Intellectual exercise to arrive at a conclusion on a religious matter.
**imāmah** Imamate; (spiritual) authority/leadership for the community of believers. As a term, *imāmah* is a concept central to Shi‘i theology, being one of the pillars of faith. It is understood as a divine status granted to some of the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, believed to be infallible and extending the religious and political authority of the Prophet.

**‘ismah** Infallibility (of Prophets or Imams; also angels); impeccability or immunity from sin. For Sunnis, it is associated with prophets; the Prophets are immune from telling lies, of being infidel before or after their assignment. For Shi‘is, it is also attributed to Ahl al-Bayt and the Imams; they are divinely bestowed free from error and sin.

**istīnṭāq** Letting the Qur’an speak.

**jiḥād** Struggle; a religious duty to tirelessly maintain faith by all legitimate means.

**kalimah sawā’** Common statement; common word/message (of the unity of God).

**kufr** Disbelief (in Allah, His Messenger, etc.).

**madrasah** Islamic learning institutions (often traditional); school introducing Islamic disciplines as the main part of its curricula.

**matn** Text of a tradition (*ḥadīth*).

**miḥwar** Axis of a surah; its thematic and semantic unity.

**muhājirūn** Migrants from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE.

**munaṣṣabah** Structural coherence (of Qur’anic surahs or verses).

**al-muḥkam wa al-muṭashābih** Clear and ambiguous verses; a science of clear/definite verses and ambiguous/allegorical verses in the Qur’an.

**müṭashābih al-qur’ān** A science of the similar expressions in the Qur’an.

**al-nāṣikh wa al-mansūkh** Abbrogating and abrogated verses; a science of the abrogating and the abrogated verses in the Qur’an.

**nazm** Thematic and structural coherence of the Qur’an.

**nubūwah** Prophethood.

**qarīnah** Indication; clue (in the text).

**qirā’āt** Variants of recitation of the Qur’an.

**ra’y** Reason; (baseless) opinion.

**riwāyāt** Narrations; transmitted traditions.

**rūḥ al-tarkīb** Essence of composition (of the Qur’an).
**al-sābiqūn al-awwalūn**  The first and foremost in faith and good deeds.

**ṣaḥābah** Companions of the Prophet.

**salaf; al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ** Pious, early generations of Muslims.

**sanad** Chain of transmitters of a tradition.

**shirk** Polytheistic belief.

**ṣahih** Literature of the Prophet’s biography.

**siyāq** Context; contextual position (of Qur’anic verses).

**sunnah** Tradition of the Prophet.

**ta’wil** Interpretation of the Qur’an in a deeper sense; search for the esoteric meaning; true interpretation.

**tadabbur** Deep reflection or contemplation (of Qur’anic verses).

**tafsīr al-qur’ān bi al-qur’ān** Interpretation of the Qur’an with reference to the Qur’an itself.

**tafsīr bi al-ma’thūr** Interpretation based on traditions.

**tafsīr bi al-ra’y** Interpretation based on reason.

**taqwa** Fear of Allah (that motivates a believer to be in total obedience).

**tatbiq** Application of the meaning of verses.

**tatḥīr** Purification (of Ahl al-Bayt). For Shi‘is, this purification is a divine will, which makes Ahl al-Bayt or the Imams infallible.

**tawḥīd** Faith in one God (Allah).

**wahy** Revelation (to the Prophets).

**wīḥdah bīna‘īyah** Structural unity (of the Qur’an).

**wīḥdah mawḍū‘īyah** Thematic unity (of the Qur’ān).

**wīḥdat al-nasāq** Unity of arrangement (of the Qur’an).

**wilāyah; walāyah** Guardianship; mastership; authority. For Shi‘is, being closely associated with īmānah, it means the allegiance to Ahl al-Bayt or the Imams; loving them, following them and obeying them.

**al-wūjūh wa al-nāzā’ir** Polyesms and analogues; a science of polysems/homonyms and synonyms/analogues in the Qur’an.

**zāhir al-āyāt** Apparent meaning of verses.

**zulm** Evildoing.
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Moreover, he has translated some Arabic and English works into Bahasa Indonesia. His published translations include:

- Agar Rezeki yang Mencarimu, Bukan Kau yang Mencarinya: Cara Bersyukur Supaya Nikmat Terus Terulur, Petuah 8 Ulama-Psikolog Klasik, translated from 11 selected Sufi classical writings (Jakarta: Zaman, 2014)
- Ikhlas Tanpa Batas: Belajar Hidup Tulus dan Wajar kepada 10 Ulama-Psikolog Klasik, translated from 15 selected Sufi classical writings (Jakarta: Zaman, 2010).
Izza Rohman (Nahrowi) was for years a book editor at Serambi Publishing House and some other publishers, a deputy program director at the Centre for Dialogue and Cooperation among Civilizations, and a translation consultant at the Common Ground News Service (run by the Washington-based Search for Common Ground).

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