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Intraquranic Hermeneutics:  
Theories and Methods in *Tafsīr* of  
the Qurʾān through the Qurʾān

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Abstract

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

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

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

0.1 – Anatomy of a Concept and Approach

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

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

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

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

3 Articles in Boullata (ed.), Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qurʾān are indicative of this trend. Chapter 1 below contains a discussion of the Egyptian “literary school” of exegesis, albeit limited to its use of intraqurānian citations. See also El-Awa, Textual Relations in the Qurʾān: Relevance, Coherence and
and Garry Wills’ recent title *What the Qur’an Meant* illustrate the fact that interpreting the Qurʾān is not merely a confessional practice. As long as exegesis remains a living activity and concern, there will be debates over which theories and methods produce the most authentic and fruitful understandings of the text.⁴

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

- **Chapter 1:** How have Muslim scholars theorised about intraquranic methods of exegesis, and what value and role have they afforded this approach in the broader scheme of hermeneutics?
- **Chapter 2:** How have exegetes who gave importance to *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* employed Quranic citations in practice, and what can be inferred about their hermeneutical approaches?
- **Chapter 3:** What theories are relevant to this exegetical practice, either because they are necessary assumptions underpinning TQQ and making it possible, or because they present a challenge to its validity and value?
- **Chapter 4:** How can resources in scholastic literature on the Qurʾān beyond the immediate genre of *tafsīr* and its *uṣūl* be employed in further theoretical and methodological development of intraquranic hermeneutics?⁶

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

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

⁶ Gregor Schwarb observes: “a proper appreciation of the hermeneutical principles underlying scriptural exegesis must look beyond the *tafsīr genre*” (‘Capturing the Meanings of God’s Speech,’ p. 114).
In this way, the first half concerns how TQQ has been theorised and practised, and the final two chapters look at underlying “principles” and “methods”, respectively, organised in novel categories. The thesis is, therefore, both descriptive and constructive.

0.2 – Tafsīr Studies in West and East

0.2.1 – The Western Academy

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

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

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

9 Fudge, ‘Qurʾānic Exegesis in Medieval Islam and Modern Orientalism,’ p. 115 (I am not citing from the Shah volume). Fudge’s observation concerning the discord between Ḥājjī Khalīfa’s laudatory description of the field of tafsīr as “the noblest of sciences” and his remarks on its actual pitiful state (ibid, pp. 123–124), foreshadow the inconsistency I have noted between claims of TQQ as the “best method” and the realities of its theory and practice.
highlighting the particular importance of *uṣūl al-fiqh* in collecting “methodological metadiscourses”.\(^{10}\) The third volume studies a range of commentaries, and the fourth focuses on particular themes in classical and modern exegesis.

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

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

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10 Schworb, ‘Capturing,’ p. 113.

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

12 Görke and Pink (eds.), pp. 1–2.

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

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

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

\textbf{0.2.2 – Developments in the Muslim World}

Recent publications and conferences in countries such as Morocco and Saudi Arabia have drawn attention to underdevelopment in uṣūl al-tafsīr and presented steps towards remedying this situation. Mawlāy Ḥammād’s book 'Ilm Uṣūl al-Tafsīr: Muḥāwala fī l-Binā\textsuperscript{17} proceeds from “the assumption that [this field] has an independent existence in every sense” and yet it remains “in pressing need of sustained efforts to clarify its aspects, define it and develop it” in accordance with its acknowledged importance in service of the Qurān.\textsuperscript{18} Among the contemporary scholars he cites is his mentor al-Shāhid al-Būshākhī (1945–), who argues that the project should proceed along three stages:
1. Produce reliable scholarly editions of *tafsīr* works, noting historical developments.¹⁹

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

3. Construct an integrated theory (which he called ‘ilm bayān al-Qur‘ān) based on categorisation, analysis, evaluation and updating of the aforementioned.²⁰

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

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

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


²¹ Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī related from some teachers the following assessment of the relative state of various Islamic sciences: “There are three classes of science: that which has matured (nada‘a) but not reached its peak (*ḥawāya*}, namely *usūl* and *naḥa‘*; that which has neither matured nor reached its peak, namely *bayān* and *tafsīr*; and that which has matured and reached its peak, namely *fiqh* and *hadīth*” (See Sabt, *Qaṣṣād al-Tafsīr*, 1/6). The two aspects of this metaphor (literally: cooking and scorching) refer to development of the branches of the science, and its issues being analysed extensively such as to leave virtually nothing further to investigate.

²² Ṭūfī, *Al-Iksīr*, pp. 41 and 56.

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

### 0.3 – Methodology

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

#### 0.3.1 – Hermeneutical Assumptions

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

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

25 Sulaymān et al, *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr fi Ārā’ al-Mutakhassīsīn*, pp. 88–90. Respondents tended to agree on the importance of Ibn Taymiyya’s *Maqaddima* along with the recent contributions of Musā’id al-Tāyyār, a leading figure in Markaz Tafsīr. They also tended to emphasise the significance of Zarkashi and Suyūṭī in the ‘ʿulūm al-Qurʾān genre, along with the introduction to Tabarî’s exegesis. Among Tāyyār’s works are commentaries upon Tabarî, Ibn Taymiyya and Suyūṭī.

26 See 3.3 below for what I have termed the Principle of Interpretability.
concerned, the only appearance of the word *tafsīr* in its pages (Q 25:33) is to describe
divine responses to contentions directed at the Prophet. On this basis, I consider it
appropriate to use this term similarly for human answers to well-meaning questions:
hence the exegete’s task is to attain clarity by resolving questions which he or she
either receives or conceives.

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

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

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

28 *Istinbāṭ* is the process of deducing rulings (legal or otherwise) from the text. *Tadabbur*, often translated
as “reflection”, can refer to the various parts of the exegetical process (as used by some of the authors
discussed below), or to reflection on the reality and message of the Qurʾān. Both believers and unbelievers
are exhort ed in the following verses to do *tadabbur*: Q 38:29, 4:82 and 47:24. Recent years
have seen a proliferation of books, projects and organisations aiming to promote *tadabbur* among Muslim
populations.
is an ongoing activity rather than something settled in the distant past. There should be no objection to renewal (tajdīd) even in the methods of exegesis insofar as such novel readings do not impute to the earliest Muslims a fundamental inability to decipher the Qurʾān. However, even for believers who assume the eternal relevance of the Quranic message, a nuanced approach is required when establishing links and comparisons between present day concerns and the “socio-historical context” of the scripture.

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

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

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

30 This point is made by Abdullah Saeed, Interpreting the Qurʾān, pp. 116–125.
steps and considerations: why can such not be found in books of usūl al-tafsīr, ready for implementation? I have since come to see the desideratum as more complex than a linear process, yet still subject to the kind of systematisation which can empower the exegete to take all relevant factors into consideration. Moreover, though I began with a sense that TQQ was one source or step in a process, I have come to appreciate that it is both multifaceted and connected within a wider tafsīr system which I hope to explore further in future. The individual exegetes, therefore, may be seen as giving more weight to specific parts of that system, such as transmitted opinions (maʿīn), or sūra structure and flow (nasm). It may prove to be the case that approaches to interpreting the Qurʾān are not all commensurable, in that they stem from differing theologies and commitments; yet I see potential in bringing different approaches ‘face to face’, even if that is only achieved in this thesis to a limited extent.

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

0.3.2 – Sources and Treatment

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

31 See the summary of “levels of text relations” in 4.4.3 below.
reasonable to propose solutions to “lacunae” observed by scholars operating within a
traditional framework, and for those solutions to be made consonant with that tradition.
In practice, this can be manifested in the suggestion that a certain classical scholar
could have argued a little differently than he did in fact, and that modern-day exegetes
operating within that scholar’s paradigm can adapt those ideas and conclusions without
having to abandon all his methods and convictions. The utility of this approach should
be clear, given that over a billion people today belong to a faith community in which
the Qurʾān is no mere historical artifact and for whom meanings and interpretations
are far more than a matter of academic interest. Despite the disconnect which may
exist between various Muslims populations on one hand, and both the scripture and
the scholarly class on the other, I suggest that it is more effective for any future
interpretive enterprises to be constructed on deep-rooted and recognisable foundations.

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

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

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

\textsuperscript{33} Rather than discrediting the authors – who are nevertheless human and fallible – a ‘creative conflict’
mentality (see 4.3.2 below) can pave the way to improving on their contributions.
material under this broad genre, much of which remains largely unexplored in studies of this type, the main response to this concern can be found in the above-quoted descriptions of tafsīr as a “catch-all” genre and the likes of al-Burhān and al-Itqān as “summas” of classical Quranic sciences. Not only do these works gather the discussions of linguists, theologians, traditionists, jurists and the like, but their authors were linguists, theologians, traditionists and jurists. That being so, I am confident that the selected approach allows for the best insights to be gleaned from the breadth of Islamic scholarship pertaining to the Qurʾān. Nevertheless, certain discussions below (e.g. theories in Chapter 3) draw from major scholars outside the realm of exegesis, and I have directed particular attention to the field of usūl al-fiqh (see 4.1), which itself has a noted relationship with ʿilm al-kalām.

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

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

0.3.3 – Original Contributions

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

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

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

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

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

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34 See 1.4 below regarding recent works on intraquranic methods and usūl al-tafsīr more broadly.
Chapter 1
The Ḫūṣūl Literature

1.0 – Introduction

This chapter assesses the theoretical and methodological approaches of Muslim scholarship to ṭafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān, i.e. exegesis of the Qurʾān (TQQ), with reference to the hermeneutical (uṣūl al-ṭafsīr) literature. In order to achieve the most complete picture, I am employing a broad definition and have included at least three distinct genres in the sections below, spanning classical and modern periods. The fourth section looks at recent studies of TQQ within a confessional Muslim context, to summarise where the field has reached at the present time. Therefore, unlike the recent survey publication ʿUṣūl al-Ṭafsīr fī l-Muʿallafāt (Markaz Tafsīr, Riyadh), I have not restricted my focus to works incorporating this key term in their title; the researchers identified only four pre-modern works meeting this criterion, then a large spike in publications in the last decade with considerable overlap in content.¹ As noted in the introduction, contemporary specialists consider the term uṣūl al-ṭafsīr to be poorly defined and its parameters only vaguely delineated.

The various usages include, as Mawlāy Ḣammād summarises them: the primary sources (masādir) referred to by an exegete; axioms (qawāʿid) which ought to be observed; and benefits (fawāʾid) to be borne in mind.² I have, therefore, considered uṣūl and qawāʿid works to be the same genre in effect, even though the latter – especially more recent works – may be structured more clearly according to axioms.

Beyond the specificity of the genre as defined by that title, the term occupying the next level of relevance is ʿulūm al-Qurʾān, i.e. Quranic sciences. Indeed, Mustafa Shah³ translates the term as “Qurʾānic hermeneutics” and cites the astonishment of the author of Al-Burhān⁴ that such a comprehensive work had not been compiled

¹ Sulaymān et al, Uṣūl al-Ṭafsīr fī l-Muʿallafāt, pp. 161, 299. See also the bibliography in Uṣūl al-Ṭafsīr fī Arāʾ al-Mutakhaṣṣīn, p. 95 ff.
² Ḣammād, ʿIlm Uṣūl al-Ṭafsīr, pp. 46–52. The author illustrates the latter usage with reference to Dihlawī’s al-Fawz al-Kabīr; the edition I am using has “nakāt” (p. 10). Both terms denote salient points and subtleties which are less systematic than axioms.
³ Shah, Tafsīr, 1/51.
previously, as with the case of hadīth sciences. However, a survey of the forty-seven chapters of this work (labelled by the author as anwā’, “types”) and others in the ‘ulūm literature shows that it encompasses various concerns – such as the history of the Qur’ān and some of its non-linguistic features – that do not serve exegesis. As such, I take the view that ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān is in fact broader than uṣūl al-tafsīr. 5 My initial focus is upon chapters dealing with methods of exegesis and prerequisites of the exegete. However, many other chapters pertain to exegesis in one way or another, and those relevant to TQQ will form part of subsequent discussions.

The third type of work is based on inference from exegetical works – the premise of Chapter 2 of this study. The uṣūl (i.e. sources and methods) employed by a particular exegete can be taken either from his own account of it, usually within an introduction, or from statements and application within the exegesis itself. This can be observed in works addressing manāhij al-mufassirîn, including those which constitute historiography of tafsīr. I have not drawn from these secondary works unless, as in the case of Dhahabî’s Al-Tafsîr wa-l-Mufassirîn, they include a distinct focus upon exegetical theory. However, I did include exegetes’ introductions as part of the theoretical literature. As such, I examined the introductions of Muḥammad b. Jarîr al-Ṭabarî (d. 310/923), ’Alî b. Aḥmad al-Wāḥidî (d. 468/1075)6, al-Ḥakîm al-Jishumî (d. 494/1101)7, al-Râghib ibn Isfahânî (d. 502/1108), ’Abd al-Ḥaqq Ibn ’Atîyya (d. 541/1146) and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubî (d. 671/1273) and found that none made any direct reference to this approach to exegesis. I did find relevant passages in the introductions of Muqāṭîl b. Sulayman and Ibn Juzayy al-Kalbî, which I discuss below.8

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

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6 See Saleh’s edition of the introduction to Al-Basîr in Bauer (ed.), Aims, Methods and Contexts, pp. 67–100. Wāḥidî’s emphasis in this introduction is on lexicology and grammar.
7 See Mourad’s edition in Bauer (ed.), pp. 101–137. This introduction contains an early mention of nasrî, referring to the arrangement of ayāt and suwar.
8 See section 1.3. Ḥaqqî’s Īlām al-Qur’ān min khilal Muqaddimât al-Tafṣîr provides useful summaries of many. See also Bauer, ‘Justifying the Genre’ in Bauer (ed.), pp. 39–65.
I have not paid great attention to scattered statements in tafsīr works to the effect that passages of the Qurʾān explain each other. The fact that the practice of TQQ was present in early exegesis is also not the concern of this chapter, but will become very clear in Chapter 2, with examples from Muqātil and Ṭabarī especially.

1.1 – Principles (Uṣūl) and Axioms (Qawāʿid)

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

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9 In this connection, brief remarks are found in the commentaries of Zamakhshārī (d. 538/1143): “The most correct meanings are those denoted by the Qurʾān [itself]” and Rāzī (d. 604/1210): “The verses of the Qurʾān explain each other” – see Muḥāyri, Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān, pp. 53–55 for these as well as some post-Taymiyyan quotes. For an earlier attestation of this idea attributed to Saʿīd b. Juhayr (d. 95/714), see Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, 9/7063, explaining the term muḥāsabī in Q 39:23.

10 See Muḥāyri, Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān, pp. 94–100 for examples from the early generations. See also Ghazālī, Uṣūl al-Tafsīr ʿinda Ibn ʿAbbās, pp. 93–99, and Nawfāl,Muḥākāt al-Mufassār ʿaṣr-l-Tafsīr, pp. 371–373. On Zamakhshārī’s application of the TQQ principle, see Lane, A Traditional Muʿazzīte Commentary, pp. 118–121, in which he illustrates how an exegete may select explanatory verses to suit the point he wishes to make (the links being occasionally “arbitrary” and the application “careless”). On Rāzī, see Kafrawī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s Methodology, pp. 73–79; the author describes this approach, somewhat anachronistically, as tafsīr mawdūʿī.

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

12 See Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Aẓīm, 1/26, in which a lengthy passage from the Muqaddima is reproduced without attribution. Ḥaqqī (Ulūm al-Qurʾān, 2/43) suggests that this was in line with common practice, especially if the source was direct and clear enough for the intended readership. Roy Curtis makes the intriguing suggestion that Ibn Taymiyya’s treatise was written for Ibn Kathîr, making him the very questioner (qâl) alluded to in the beginning of the excerpt (Curtis, Authentic Interpretation of Classical Islamic
“If one should ask concerning the best methods (ḥasan ṭurūq) of exegesis, then the answer is that the most correct (asāḥh) method is for the Qurʾān to be explained using the Qurʾān; what is left unclear in one place has been explained in another, and what has been made brief in one place has been expanded in another. If you do not find such, then make recourse to the Sunna, for it explains and clarifies the Qurʾān…”

Ibn Taymiyya is thus explicit in granting TQQ prime position among methods of ṭafṣīr. However, as Saleh notes, the lack of examples renders the rule “ineffectual and vague”. Regarding the ordered scheme of exegesis outlined here, I shall discuss below what may be intended by that; however, it should be noted that Saleh considers the “novelty” of placing TQQ first to be overshadowed by the treatise’s greater project which gives the whole stage to explanations explained from the Prophet and earliest generations. In the context of the next step, i.e. exegesis from the Sunna, Ibn Taymiyya quotes Muhammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfī’ī (d. 204/820) as saying that “Everything that God’s Messenger ruled came from what he understood from the Qurʾān”. This claim is interesting in the light of some scholars’ characterisation of TQQ as “the prophetic method”, discussed further in Chapter 3. While Ibn Taymiyya’s own theoretical emphasis is clearly upon the use of ḥadīths for exegesis rather than the Qurʾān itself, Ibn Kathīr – inheritor of his teacher’s “radical hermeneutics” – did incorporate TQQ into his exegesis. As for Suyūṭī’s later work Al-Durr al-Manthūr fī Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassārīn, 1/212. Saleh argues that Ibn Kathīr’s adoption of “radical hermeneutics” was incomplete (‘Ibn Taymiyya’, p. 153); an alternative would be to say that his work is one demonstration of the theory in action, while still retaining the features of a full exegesis. See also...
the author’s 22 weak a the passage discussed previously from Suyūṭī to challenge some of the approaches expressed by Ibn Taymiyya and implemented by Ibn Kathīr. See Shabir Ally, many aspects of traditional exegesis, and for which was based on Suyūṭī’s Mufradāt al-Qurʾān wa Taʾwīl al-Tafsīr (ibid, pp. 60–61). Ally argues that Suyūṭī used Al-Durr to challenge some of the approaches expressed by Ibn Taymiyya and implemented by Ibn Kathīr (ibid, pp. 7–10).

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


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

22 In Rasāʾīl al-Imām al-Farāḥī, pp. 214, 225, 234. Al-Takmil has been published in this volume along with the author’s Dalāʾīl al-Nizām, Asālah al-Qurʾān and miscellaneous notes.
As such, a single passage can have only one correct interpretation, and that can be derived by applying a sound method based on structural coherence. The following quote illustrates his approach to TQQ as an established discipline in the ṭafsīr tradition:

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

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

a. The Qurʾān, being divine speech, does not contradict itself, so it should be interpreted in that light.

b. The Qurʾān is explicit that its equivocal (mutashābih) texts should be referred to the univocal (muḥkam), so whatever is established with certainty is made a definitive basis.

c. We derive our principles (uṣūl) from reason and the Qurʾān – this is the supreme principle.

d. We do not diverge from the apparent meanings (ẓāhir) of the Qurʾān based on weak evidence; rather, the apparent meaning is considered a proof.

e. Where there are multiple possibilities, we opt for the best and most suited to the structure (nizām) and central theme (ʿamūd [lit: pillar]).

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23 See Mir, Coherence, p. 29.


25 Rasā īl, p. 242. This is one aim of Chapter 4 below, including its section on “comparative methods”.


27 Rasā īl, p. 266.

28 Rasā īl, p. 225.

29 Cf. his definitions of these terms in his exegesis of Q 3:7 (Nizām al-Qurʾān, 1/344).
While studying works of Farāhī such as *Al-Takmīl* and his exegesis itself, it is both evident and disappointing that they were published without being completed by the author. However, the mantle of his hermeneutical school was taken on by Amīn Aḥṣān Iṣlāḥī (d. 1997) who compiled a complete Urdu exegesis entitled *Tadabbur-i-Qurʾān*, which he prefaced with a detailed introduction expounding and adapting his teacher’s methodology. Dividing his sources of exegesis into internal and external, the former is said to consist of: (a) Quranic Arabic as conveyed in pre-Islamic poetry; (b) “coherence” (*naẓm*), upon which he elaborates; (c) explaining the Qurʾān through the Qurʾān. Adding Quranic evidence for the latter, Iṣlāḥī cites Q 39:23 concerning the book’s arrangement and style of repetition, as well as the concept of *tasrīf* (see e.g. Q 17:41, 89 for this term) i.e. variation as opposed to vain repetition. According to Iṣlāḥī, “A subject rehearsed frequently in the Qurʾān is, in each case, placed in a different background and context. In each case, the textual sequence, bearings and circumstance are different, conveying a unique sense in its particular textual environment.” Concerning questions of vocabulary and style, he states that his commentary depends primarily upon the Qurʾān, being “the most reliable authority on the linguistic, literary and grammatical features surrounding its text,” adding that “all eminent scholars, past and present, admit this”.

Coming back to the Taymiyyan strand, Khalid ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-‘Akk’s (d. 1999) *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr wa Qawā’iduh* reproduces Ibn Taymiyya’s scheme without attribution, together with the claim of *ijmāʿ* (consensus). He then says (like Dḥahabī,
see below) that an exegete must look carefully and analytically to gather and compare all verses upon a theme; if he does not do so, then he would be guilty of interpreting according to his opinion (ra’y). Elsewhere, he notes that the Prophet himself explained the Qur’an through the Qur’an, making TQQ “the most worthy method of tafsīr”. A later section seems to depend even more upon Dhahabi’s presentation and examples, except that on the matter of multiple readings (qirāʾāt), the author refers the reader to Al-Kashf by Makkī b. Abī Ṭālib al-Qaysī (d. 437/1045) and thus limits the focus to canonical readings. Although ‘Akk does not distinguish clearly between ḫadīths, his treatment of the latter shows clear influence of ṣūl al-fiqh categories.

1.2 – Quranic Sciences (ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān)

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

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

38 Ṣūl al-Tafsīr, p. 33 note 1. This idea (“al-nahy al-nabawi”) is also promoted by Quraḍāwī, Ḳayfa Nataʾīnal maʾal-Qurʾān, p. 221.


40 See Ṣūl al-Tafsīr, p. 265 ff.

41 See Shah (ed.), Tafsīr, Introduction 1/51–52. See also Haqqī, ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān, 1/147–164 for discussion of claims regarding the first work in ʿulūm al-Qurʾān, which the author concludes to be Muḥāṣibī’s Fāhī al-Qurʾān.

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

43 Al-Burhān, pp. 335–339.
account, which may lead us to question Zarkashi’s own commitment to the idea as expressed in those terms.⁴⁴

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

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

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

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

d. Comparing passages lest their interpretations contradict.⁵⁰

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

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

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⁴⁴ The same observation is made by Oztürk, ‘Kur’an’ın Kur’an’la Tefsiri: Bir Mahiyet Soruşturusu’, p. 4; I am grateful to Dr Nimet Seker for this reference.

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

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

⁴⁷ Al-Burhān, pp. 353–354.

⁴⁸ Al-Burhān, p. 362.


⁵⁰ Al-Burhān, pp. 356–357.

⁵¹ Al-Burhān, p. 355.

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

⁵³ Haydar, Ulūm al-Qurʾān bayna l-Burhān wa-l-Itqān, p. 293.
is a lengthy quotation from Ibn Taymiyya’s *Muqaddima* in Chapter 78: *Maʿrifat Shurūṭ al-Mufassir wa Ādābih* (Prerequisites and Proper Conduct of the Exegete). However, the very opening of this chapter attributes Ibn Taymiyya’s brief account of TQQ opaquely to “the ‘ulamā’”, perhaps implying a broad acceptance of this exegetical hierarchy. Furthermore, Suyūṭī bolsters the literal sense of the schema by rewording it and inserting the word *awwalan*: “Whoever seeks to perform *tafsīr* of the Mighty Book should seek it first from the Qurʾān”.

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

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

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

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54 *Al-Itqān*, 6/2274.

55 The editors of *Al-Ẓiyāḍa wa-l-Iḥṣān* (7/410, note 3) have identified this as *Tafsīr al-Beṣān fi Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, which is apparently unpublished.

56 *Al-Itqān*, 6/2294–2297. The list can be found similarly structured in Kāṭībī, *Al-Tafsīr fi Qawāʾid Ibn al-Tafsīr*, pp. 50–51, as well as scattered in other sources including Ṭālḥī’s *tafsīr* introduction and Zarkashī’s *Burhān*.

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

58 See 2.5 and 4.3.3 below.
meaning – would constitute TQQ. This applies to the later exegetical practice of harmonising the variant readings of a single verse as far as possible with a pluralist or reductionist strategy. It can also apply to the early process of arguing (iḥtijāj) for a particular reading with reference to parallels (naẓāʾir) in the rest of the Qurʾān.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

60 See 3.3.1.

61 See 4.1.2.

62 See 2.4 and 3.2.2.
48: *Mūhim al-Ikhtilāf* (seeming contradictions). Resolving the tension between various verses is undoubtedly a form of TQQ, particularly when the understanding of each verse is affected by awareness of the other.

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

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

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

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

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63 See 2.3.6 and 4.3.2.

64 See 4.1.3.

65 See 4.4.

66 See 4.3.1. This term is more commonly given as “*mutashabīḥāt*”.

67 Saleh, ‘Historiography,’ pp. 34–35. Zurqānī attributed this phrase to unidentified predecessors (*“baʿīdhum”*), stating that they divided exegesis into three types: *bi-l-rīaḍyā*/*bi-l-maʿbūr*, *bi-l-danīya*/*bi-l-nayq*, and *bi-l-isyār*, i.e. mystical allusions *(Manāhil al-ʿIrfa n, 2/387)*. Re: the latter, see 4.4.1 below.
He means, and the most truthful speech is God’s book.”⁶⁸ I shall discuss this claim and supporting arguments below. However, the author appears to forget this most authoritative method (or both of them) when enumerating the three categories of “praiseworthy tafsīr”, namely (a) explanations of the Companions and Followers; (b) exegeses depending solely upon authentic narrations from them; (c) exegeses which combine narrations with sound opinions derived from reason, most common in the modern era.⁶⁹

Following in the Azharite trend, the historiography by Muḥammad Ḫusayn al-Dhahabī (d. 1977) entitled Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn took the ideas of Manāhil al-‘Ir ĭn and made them even more in line with Ibn Taymiyya, as Saleh argues.⁷⁰ Dhahabī presents TQQ in the context of sources (maṣādir) relied upon by the Companions in their interpretations, namely the Qurʿān, the Prophet, their reasoning, and the People of the Book.⁷¹ Elaborating on the first, he starts by pointing out that the style of the Qurʿān includes scattered verses which explain or expand upon each other, or restrict and qualify each other. As such, the indispensable first step taken by an exegete is to gather and compare all verses upon a theme, before moving onto other stages of tafsīr.

The author justifies this with a general statement in the spirit of Zurqānī’s above: “The speaker is most knowledgeable of the meanings of his speech”.⁷² He then provides examples from each of the types listed, namely mūjaz (concise references), mujmal, muṭlaq and ʿāmm – the latter three being categories in uṣūl al-fiqh. It is noteworthy in the case of interpreting unqualified (muṭlaq) texts in the light of the qualified that he refers to the opinion of “most Shāfiʿī scholars” who fully accept this manoeuvre, because there is a well-known disagreement between the juristic schools on the issue.⁷³

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⁶⁸ Manāhil al-‘Ir ĭn, 2/387–388.
⁶⁹ Manāhil al-‘Ir ĭn, 2/404.
⁷⁰ Saleh, ‘Historiography,’ p. 35. I have chosen to discuss this work at this point because of its relationship to Zurqānī’s.
⁷¹ In so doing, he has conflated the historical discussion with one on methods, as though TQQ was the earliest method historically. The same occurs elsewhere, such as the work of the same title by Faḍl ‘Abbās (Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn, 1/123). In his introduction, ‘Abbās underlines the seminal nature of Dhahabī’s book and some of the criticisms it has received (ibid, 1/17–25).
⁷² Dhahabī, Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn, 1/37. Another influential Azharite, Ibrāhīm Khalīfā (d. 2013) added to these reasons: that the Qurʿān is the primary epistemic source in Islam, so that should apply similarly to exegesis; that the Qurʿān instructs its readers to refer to it, e.g. in Q 4:59; and that a rational person would not prefer a lesser source over a greater one (Al-Dakhil fī l-Tafsīr, pp. 24–25).
⁷³ Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn, 1/37-39. See 4.1.3 below.
Such debates within *uṣūl al-fiqh* would naturally impact upon any attempt to develop a generalised hermeneutics on its basis.

Dhahabī then speaks briefly about reconciling verses which appear to conflict, such as the various accounts of the material from which Adam was created. Finally, he discusses the use of *qirāʿāt*, but all the examples he provides are of non-canonical recitations and therefore not considered Qurʾān by Muslim consensus; as such, their inclusion in the discussion of TQQ is erroneous. This is underlined by his conclusion that such alternative words and additional phrases were written by the Companions alongside the Qurʾān by way of *tafsīr*, and later confused for narrations of recitation.

He does not discuss the role of canonical (i.e. *mutawātir*) recitations. As Zurqānī before him, Dhahabī presents TQQ as the first type of “*al-tafsīr al-maʾthūr*” and goes on to say that such exegesis – along with that based on authentic Sunna – ought to be “universally accepted, because such cannot be affected by weakness or doubt.” This is in stark contrast to his earlier description of TQQ as a specialist activity: “It is not an automated process devoid of the need for thought; rather, it is an action built upon a large measure of reflection and reasoning.”

*Mabāḥīth fi ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* by Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ (d. 1986) has a sub-chapter entitled: “Parts of the Qurʾān Explain Each Other”, a feature which Ṣāliḥ says is integral to Quranic stylistics and reflects the scripture’s “precision and comprehensiveness”. The aspects he discusses – *manṭūq/mafḥūm*, ṣāmm/khāṣṣ, mujmal/mubayyan, nass/zāhir – come from *uṣūl* but the author insists that they are not the preserve of the *uṣūl* or the *kalām* scholars but may be studied from a

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

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

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

77 *Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirīn*, 1/140.

78 *Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirīn*, 1/40. Muhammad Abū Zahra noted that while Ibn Taymiyya forbade exegesis using opinion (*raʾy*), his first stage of exegesis (i.e. TQQ) “most certainly is a type of *raʾy* and *ijtihād*” (*Al-MuṣJaʿa al-Kubrā*, p. 598). Abū Zahra himself placed Prophetic ḥadīth at the top of his hierarchy (ibid, p. 586).
linguistic and literary perspective. As for the work by Mannāʾ al-Qaṭṭān (d. 1999) by the same title, he counts “starting first with the Qurʾān” as one of the conditions of an exegete, and goes on to insist that al-tafsīr bi-l-maʿthūr is the only type acceptable.

1.3 – Exegetes’ Introductions

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

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

In the Qurʾān there is… equivocal (mutashābih) and univocal (muḥkam); explicated (muḥassar) and vague (muḥbham); implicit (iḍmār) and explicit (tamām); otiose (ṣīlāt) parts of speech; abrogating (nāṣīkh) and abrogated (mansūkh); that which is brought forward (taqḏīm) or delayed (taʾkīr); polysemes (ashbāh) with many aspects of meaning (wujūh); and a response [to a question etc., found] in another sūra.

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79 Sāliḥ, Mabāḥith fi ‘Ulam al-Qurʾān, pp. 299–300. Not all the juristic categories he mentions under this heading are directly relevant to TQQ.
80 Qaṭṭān, Mabāḥith fi ‘Ulam al-Qurʾān, p. 301. His wording appears to be Ibn Taymiyya’s via Suyūṭī.
81 Qaṭṭān, Mabāḥith, p. 320.
82 Goldfeld takes this to mean “connection between [nonsequential] sentences”, and his interpretation varies from mine in several other ways (‘Development of Theory,’ pp. 23–26). He numbers the rules provided here as thirty-two, stating that Muqātil adopted twenty of these from Jewish precepts. He compares the notion of “jawāb fi su‘atīn ukhraj” (which he translates: “continuation in different chapter”) with Rabbi Eli’ezer’s “complementation of Tora verse by other Biblical verse” (p. 26; see also p. 8). I suggest the concept of jawāb is more evocative of the Quranic verse 25:33, which, in its context, implies that responses to the unbelievers may be scattered in the scripture, and thus even separated from the citation of their questions and challenges.
83 Tafsīr Muqātil, 1/22.
It was noted previously that Ibn Kathîr incorporated a significant portion from Ibn Taymiyya’s *Muqaddima* into his own exegetical introduction, including the description of TQQ as “best”. A comparable passage from an Andalusian contemporary of Ibn Taymiyya is found in the introduction to *Al-Tas-hîl li-‘Ulûm al-Tanzîl* by Ibn Juzayy al-Kalbî (d. 741/1357). He describes the process by which some earlier exegetical opinions are made preponderant over others (*tarjîh*)\(^{84}\), placing at the head of this list:

> To explain parts of the Qur’ân with reference to others: hence, if one juncture indicates the intended meaning at another, we interpret it accordingly and take the corresponding opinion as preponderant over others.\(^{85}\)

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

Another significant introduction is provided by Burhân al-Dîn al-Biqâ’î (d. 885/1480) to his unique work *Naẓm al-Durâr*, which focuses on the contextual flow and relevance (*munâsabât*) between phrases, verses and sûras.\(^{88}\) As noted previously, the appeal to co-textual cues is, *prima facie*, a way of using the Qur’ân to interpret the Qur’ân; however, it is less clear as a form of TQQ when the exegete’s reasoning remains implicit. Rather, the process is often reduced to justifying the juxtaposition of

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\(^{84}\) Some recent works have focused on these processes, adding another sub-genre to *uṣûl al-tafsîr*. One such study has shown that Râzî used the TQQ principle extensively when adjudicating between exegetical opinions (*Rûmî, Dirâsât fi Qawâ'id al-Tarjîh*, pp. 314–370).

\(^{85}\) *Al-Tas-hîl li-‘Ulûm al-Tanzîl*, p. 10.

\(^{86}\) *Al-Tas-hîl*, p. 11.

\(^{87}\) *Al-Tas-hîl*, pp. 7–8. See Schwarb, ‘Capturing,’ pp. 115–117.

\(^{88}\) I did not include Biqâ’î in the case study of Chapter 2 because he does not use cross-references extensively: see Khan, *Understanding the Qur’ân*, p. 158.
meanings in the sequence of verses.\textsuperscript{89} Biqāʾī makes reference to the critique which was levelled against this process by ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām (d. 660/1262).\textsuperscript{90}

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

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

The following authors are exegetes of the twentieth century. The first, Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shinqīṭī (d. 1972 CE), took TQQ as his explicit methodology without proposing a novel theory. In his introduction to ʿAdwāʾ al-Bayān, he cites “the scholarly consensus” that TQQ is the best form of exegesis and echoes Zurqānī by stating: “None better knows the meaning of the book of God than God.”\textsuperscript{92}

The following is summarised and rearranged from Shinqīṭī’s detailed account of the types of ājmāl for which the Quranic bayān is presented in his book; the list appears to be a description after the fact of his exegesis, but could provide a basis to develop aspects of methodology.\textsuperscript{93}

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

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{89} This criticism applies more to the likes of Rāzī than Biqāʾī, for whom the connections have a greater bearing on understanding the intent of each verse. Farāhī made a distinction between the concept of tanāsāb and the broader theory of naẓm: see Mir, Coherence, pp. 32–33.
\item \textsuperscript{90} Naẓm al-Durar, 1/6. The exegete Shawkānī later made a similar critique with specific reference to Biqāʾī: see Abdul-Raof, Consonance in the Qurʾān, p. 28.
\item \textsuperscript{91} See Zarkashī, Al-Burhān, p. 42. The term “al-kitāb al-maknūn” alludes to Q 56:78; see Chapter 3 for discussion of this and related verses.
\item \textsuperscript{92} ʿAdwāʾ al-Bayān, p. 6.
\item \textsuperscript{93} ʿAdwāʾ al-Bayān, pp. 7–15.
\end{itemize}
question and answer occurring elsewhere; or ruling out a word’s apparent meaning due to context or other verses.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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94 ʿAdwāʾ al-Bayān, 12.
95 ʿAdwāʾ al-Bayān, 15.
96 ʿAdwāʾ al-Bayān, 13.
scholars, jurists, theologians, philosophers and mystics. Since the Qurʾān describes itself as “a clarification (tīḥyān) of all things” (16:89), he argues, it is necessarily the best resource for its own explication. To strengthen this point, Ṭabāṭabā’ī repurposes the maʾthūr/raʾy dichotomy in a subtle fashion. First, he claims that all or most exegesis narrated from the Prophet and the Shiʿite imāms was of the intraquranic type, describing this as “the oldest inherited (maʾthūr) approach”. Later, he provides a definition for tafsīr bi-l-raʾy which encompasses everything that departs from the apparent sense (zāhīr) of the Qurʾān by drawing on external sources. After discussing the various narrations from Prophet Muḥammad prohibiting the use of raʾy in interpreting the Qurʾān, Ṭabāṭabā’ī concludes:

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

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

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98 Al-Mīzān, 1/8–10.
99 Ali Quli Qaraʾi translation. The author gathers more verses upon this meaning in his discussion of Q 3:7 – see Al-Mīzān 3/37–79 for his thorough study of its concepts.
100 Al-Mīzān, 1/14–15. Ṭabāṭabā’ī also insists that the opinions of fallible Companions of the Prophet are both contradictory and unauthoritative in principle (ibid, p. 16).
101 Al-Mīzān, 1/17, and see Medoff, p. 49.
102 Al-Mīzān, 3/87–89. The translation is adapted from Medoff, pp. 41–42.
103 See Medoff, p. 22.
104 See Medoff, p. 23; see also 3.2 below for further discussion of this verse, given here in the Qaraʾi translation.
effect that: “Its one part speaks for another (yaṣṭiqū baʿḍahu bi-baʿd) and one part testifies (yashhadu) to another.”

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

1. Thematic analysis (al-tanāwul al-mawḍūʿ) which starts with gathering verses containing the word or expression under study. These Quranic usages are then studied both in their “local context of āya and sūra” and “the broad context of the whole Qurʾān”. A key word which appears several times in Bint al-Shāṭi’ s introductions is istiqrāʿ, implying a comprehensive survey of relevant verses.

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105 Medoff, p. 24.

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

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


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

110 Cf. Naguib, ‘Bint al-Shāṭi’ s Approach,’ p. 61, where the term is read similarly to Ṭabāṭabāʾī’s istiqāq.
2. The sequence and social circumstances of revelation are studied in order to appreciate the context, described as “what surrounds the text” (mā ḥawl al-nāṣṣ). The ḥashāb literature is part of this examination.\textsuperscript{111}

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

4. To appreciation the subtleties of its phraseology (asrār al-taʿbir), appeal is made to the “text and spirit” of the Qurʾān as a whole.\textsuperscript{114}

A central concern for Bint al-Shāṭiʿ is to give full authority to the Quranic text and adjudicate (iḥṭikām) the grammatical, exegetical and juristic opinions of the scholars in light of this authority.\textsuperscript{115}

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

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{111} See Naguib, ‘Bint al-Shāṭiʿ’s Approach,’ pp. 46–48 regarding the historicism inherent to the literary school and its roots in Muḥammad ʿAbduh’s ideas on the transformative effects of the Qurʾān.
\item \textsuperscript{112} These expressions are in Al-Tafṣīr al-Bayānī Vol. 1, p. 17.
\item \textsuperscript{113} Al-Tafṣīr al-Bayānī Vol. 2, p. 8.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Al-Tafṣīr al-Bayānī Vol. 1, p. 11. The method could be applied to determine the connotations of words for their first hearers, which would have been affected by how the Qurʾān had used these words in prior revelations. This chronological aspect is missing from her reductionist argument based on observing that the form naʿām is used in the Qurʾān exclusively for delights of the Hereafter: the majority of her fifteen references (ibid, pp. 214–215) are from later revelations, as she accepts that Sūrat al-Ṭakāḥthur was the sixteenth to be revealed (ibid, p. 195). See also Naguib, ‘Bint al-Shāṭiʿ’s Approach,’ pp. 54–55.
\item \textsuperscript{115} See Naguib, ‘Bint al-Shāṭiʿ’s Approach,’ pp. 59–60.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Ibn ʿĀshūr’s exegesis is highly praised by contemporary ʿulamāʾ of different persuasions; it is seen as a modern work in classical style and bolstered by the personal authority of the writer as imām of the Zaytūna in Tunisia. My interest in him is as a critical traditionalist, like Muḥammad al-Ṭāṣaṣ in the previous century. The work has a particularly linguistic (or bayānī) focus with extensive reference to classical scholars. It was published between 1956 and 1970 (see Naʿīf, ‘Ṭāhir ibn ʿĀshūr,’ p. 17) and the absence of Rashīd Riḍā and Sayyid Quṭb among his sources has been noted with surprise by one researcher (Abū Ḥasan, Tafṣīr al-Tafṣīr wa-l-Tanwīr 1/152–160).\
\end{itemize}
discourse in the light of others”. Referring to a quote from Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī (d. 377/987) to the effect that the Qurʾān is a single unit in which a question (etc.) and its answer may appear separately, he remarks:

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

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

1.4 – Recent Studies

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

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

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117 Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tawārīkh, 1/27. ʿAdnān Zarzūr argues in a similar vein that TQQ represents a stage prior to exegesis which he terms “al-bayān al-Qurʾān” (ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān wa Ijzah, p. 338).

118 See Ibn Hishām, Mağāni t-Labīb ʿan Kūtub al-Aʿārīb, p. 207. The quote pertains to one explanation for “Lā uṣīmū” (Q 75:1); the example given is Q 15:6, which is “answered” by Q 68:2. Cf. the term jawāb used by Muqāṭīl, and the related points under (c) in the summary of Shināṭī’s account of Quranic bayān, above. See also 3.1 below.

119 Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tawārīkh, 1/27. Pluralistic and reductionist approaches are explored in Chapter 4.
This work also represents a modern effort to distinguish between *uṣūl* and *qawāʿid*, at least in terms of presentation. In his discussion of TQQ, Sabt notes that not every interpretation stemming from this method is definitely correct, “because it [involves] reasoning (*ijtihad*) on the part of the exegete, who may be wrong or right. The method is correct in principle, but he could err in the application.” However, he considers such an interpretation to be certainly true if it came from the Prophet or a Companion (without contrary opinions being known), or if it is a matter of consensus. It is remarkable that no *qawāʿid* were actually provided in this section, but the relevance of numerous rules scattered throughout the book – especially those dealt with in *uṣūl al-fiqh* – is evident. Here are some examples, taken from different chapters and thus addressing various aspects in no particular order:

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

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120 Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr, 1/7–9.
121 Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr, 1/127. See 3.4.1 below.
122 Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr, 1/102.
123 Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr, 2/140.
124 Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr, 2/168.
125 Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr, 2/201.
126 Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr, 2/212.
127 Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr, 2/240.
128 Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr, 2/256.
- There is no variation in wordings except [to indicate] variation in meanings.  
- Abrogation is not established without conclusive evidence.

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

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

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129 *Qawāʾid al-Tafsīr*, 2/265.
130 *Qawāʾid al-Tafsīr*, 2/292.
131 These two figures represent the trends in Morocco and Saudi Arabia which I mentioned in the Introduction. Ḥammād and Ṭayyār are leading figures in MUBDI and Markaz Tafsīr, respectively.
132 *ʿIlm Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, pp. 72–77. The author goes on to discuss the role of multiple readings (*qirāʾāt*) and Quranic orthography (*raṣm*), though the relevance of the latter is unclear.
133 *Al-Taḥrīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, p. 42. This narrow definition of *tafsīr* also excludes much of the content of traditional works, including what I have described in the Introduction as ‘post-text’ analysis.
134 *Al-Taḥrīr*, pp. 44–45.
135 *Al-Taḥrīr*, pp. 49–50.
136 *Al-Taḥrīr*, pp. 51–52.
parallels with no explanatory purpose. In Chapter 3, I discuss Ṭayyār’s contribution to the question of TQQ’s relative authority (ḥujjīyya), as well as various aspects of TQQ theory which he has taken for granted along with other authors.

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

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137 Al-Tabrīr, pp. 51–53. See also Mūtāyrī, Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān, pp. 34–39 concerning broad and narrow definitions of TQQ, and pp. 49–51 for the distinction between istidālād and istishhād.

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

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


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

142 He proposes a third stage of study, which is to gather all the TQQ references in mushaf order, excluding non-TQQ material. My research for Chapter 2 (see the Appendix especially) may be taken as a step towards achieving such a goal.
or in separate chapters of the ‘ulūm al-Qurʾān compendia, Qajawī proposes to gather these discussions into a cohesive account. Although I have not seen the results of his project, my own contribution to this goal is found in Chapter 4 below.

## 1.5 – Analysis

### 1.5.1 – General Observations

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

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

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

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143 See also Muṭṭayrī, Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān, pp. 106–110.

144 See Ḥammād, Ḥ. Usūl al-Tafsīr, p. 71, and Ṭayyār in Al-Ṭūsī, 1/474. Muṭṭayrī states that TQQ exegetes engaged in “tamhīl rather than taṣṣīl” (Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān, p. 19), but it would be more apt to describe their activity as taṣḥīḥ before tanẓīr (i.e. implementation before theory).
explanation of each verse of the Qurʾān, which is *raʿy* and *ijtihād*.

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

1.5.2 – Questioning the Consensus

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

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

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

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


147 See Hammād, *Ibn Usūl al-Tafsīr*, pp. 68 and 70 for this and other quotes of modern scholars.
3. I have not seen any list of the exegete’s qualifications that has included Qurʾān memorisation, except for one obscure attribution in a modern work. This indicates that priority was being given in theory to sciences external to the Qurʾān.

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

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

It seems, therefore, that TQQ has not received the attention and application that would be expected for a method universally accepted as “best”. Could it be that the exeges did not agree with this claim on a practical level? Despite not providing extensive arguments for his contentions, Ibn Taymiyya made it difficult to disagree when he provided an apparent mirror image to his scheme in the form of the hadith of Muʿādh.

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

149 Hammād, Ibn Usūl al-Tafṣīr, pp. 82–85; the author makes mention of lost works by Ibn al-Jawzī (mentioned in note 80 above) and Ibn Daqīq al-Īd (or an earlier scholar), but these have been lost. See also Muṣṭafī, Tafṣīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān p. 40 and note 3; and Tasyār, Al-Tahrīr, p. 50. Another of the works Tasyār claims to be rich in TQQ content is that of Muṣṭafī; this was one reason for selecting it for the case study in Chapter 2.

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

151 The report is considered weak by hadīth authorities. See Al-Jāmi`, 1/451 (inc. footnote) and 1/463, in which an appeal on behalf of the report – or Ibn Taymiyya’s claim that it has “a good chain” – is made to scholars’ acceptance and narration of this report in the light of its agreement with established principles of the religion. Curtis argues unconvincingly that Ibn Kathīr felt the need to support this hadīth with a Quranic verse, namely Q 49:1 which forbids believers from putting themselves (hence their
established hierarchy in fiqh, thereby making his theory “almost impossible to unseat as long as one also upholds the rules of the Sunni juristic practices”. This may explain why later scholars did not oppose his hierarchical presentation explicitly, even when the practicalities of exegesis – or their personal preferences and priorities – led them to adopt a methodology which was not primarily intraquranic.

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

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

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

The theoretical assumptions and underpinnings of the enterprise and very possibility of TQQ remain to be explored, with statements of the authors cited above providing a helpful starting point for our discussion in Chapter 3. Before that, it is pertinent to examine the ways in which TQQ was applied by those exegetes who gave it particular focus, in order to consider what methodological principles and practical issues can be inferred from their works.
Chapter 2
Case Study: TQQ of Sūrat al-An‘ām

2.0 – Introduction

2.0.1 – Aims and Sūra Choice

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

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

\(^1\) Cf. Sinai, ‘Reading Sūrat al-An‘ām with Muhammad Rashīd Rīdā and Sayyid Qutb’ which studies the introductions to the sūrah; and Neuwirth’s structural study which I summarise in 2.8 below.
The sūra is generally classed as Meccan, even as a single-occasion revelation, though some authorities have argued for some of its verses being added later. The fact that this sūra is thought to be the fifty-fifth to be revealed means that it is almost precisely in the middle of that sequence; hence explanatory citations are situated both in earlier and later passages. However, since this study focuses on the exegetes’ engagement with the sūra, my attention to chronology here is only as extensive as theirs. The exegetes took a mostly synchronic approach to Quranic passages which can be cited evidentially: whether they should be classed as prior context or subsequent clarification is beside the point for them. The reader will also find me taking a synchronic approach to the exegetical texts, in that my central concern is the range and function of citations – and diversity thereof – rather than the progression of this approach and method over time.

2.0.2 – Exegetes

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

(a) Main Group

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

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2 Ālūsī, Rūh al-Muʿānī, 8/5. See Sinai, ‘Reading Sūrat al-Anʿām,’ pp. 139–143, 149.
3 Ibn ʿAshūr, Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Tanwīr, 7/121–123.
4 In contrast, Nicolai Sinai analyses the Quranic text without the mufassirs’ lens in order to focus on exegesis performed, as it were, by the Qurʾān itself (see 3.1.3 below): this is inevitably restricted to subsequent passages. These, in turn, are of two types: “interpretively motivated secondary expansion and revision” within a single sūra, and “interpretive backreferencing” in separate sūras – see Sinai, ‘Two Types of Inner-Qurʾānic Interpretation’ p. 254.
**Rahmān** (“Exegesis of the Qur’ān Through the Speech of the Lord of Mercy”) by Thanā’-Allāh Amristsārī⁵, and the far better-known *Adwā’ al-Bayān fī Ḭārīd al-Qur’ān bi-l-Qur’ān* (“Lights of Clarity: Elucidating the Qur’ān through the Qur’ān”) by Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shīrāzī. Both of these express their purpose in the very title; Amristsārī provides little insight into his approach in his introduction, unlike Shīrāzī.⁶ Both exegetes were influenced by Salafī theology, but Amristsārī initially included Ṣaḥāraḥīdī opinions in his work for which he was chastised by fellow Ahl-i-Ḥadīth scholars in India and Saudi Arabia.⁷ In the beginning of the exegesis, he reproduces an extensive passage from Dihlawī’s *Al-Fawz al-Kabīr* outlining problems with over-reliance upon revelatory contexts (the *asbāb* literature) – I summarise this content in Chapter 3.

Belonging to a similar time-period are Ḥāmīd al-Dīn Farāhī and Amīn Ahṣan Iṣlāḥī, representing the *naẓm* (“coherence”) school of India. The former did not leave behind a full commentary on al-An’ām, but his personal notes in Arabic have been published under the title *Ta’līqāt fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*.⁸ His student’s complete Urdu exegesis, *Tadabbur-i-Qur’ān*, builds on Farāhī’s methodology with extensive

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

⁶ See 1.3 above on Shīrāzī’s introduction. Regarding his theological background and apparent shift after moving to Riyadh, see ‘Abbās, *Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mujassirün*, 3/83–86. It should be noted that the unfinished portion of the *Adwā*’ (from Q 29 onwards) was written after Shīrāzī’s death by his student, ‘Atiyya Sālim (Adwā’ al-Bayān, publisher’s note p. 3). The edition I used (Dar al-Kutub al-‘Imāmīya, 2011) is unusual in being in a single, condensed volume, to which two further works by Shīrāzī (Darf Ithām al-Iṣṭirāb and Man ‘Jawāz al-Majāz) are appended.

⁷ This is described in a foreword by Sa‘īd al-Rahmān Mubārakpurī in the Saudi edition upon which I have relied (Dar al-Salām, 2002, pp. 17–21). By way of example, his “controversial” explanation of Q 7:54 has been replaced by a two-page-long footnote reproducing the views of Ibn Taymiyya and “the way of the Ṣaḥīf”, apparently penned by Amristsari himself (ibid., pp. 228–229). For more details and context see Riezinger, ‘A Conflict Among the Ahl-i-Ḥadīth in British India,’ pp. 502–513.

⁸ These have been compiled in two volumes; the first covers until the end of Sūrat al-Nūr (Q 24). The publication could provide for rich study, including comparison with the author’s completed commentaries on specific *sūras* as found in *Nizām al-Qur’ān*. We are informed in the preface to the *Ta’līqāt* (pp. 4–6) that most of this content was copied from notes Farāhī kept in several *muṣāfah* which were kept by Iṣlāḥī after his mentor’s death. Naturally, such cannot be assumed as the author’s final opinion. He often provides cross-references, but the purpose of citation is not always discernible. Additional content was included by the editor from some of Farāhī’s completed works.
original insights. As described previously, the *naẓm* approach is based upon the primacy of “internal” evidence, hence the importance of intraquranic relationships; after the immediate context, this applies to citations from other sūras. As noted, these two aspects are reflected in the title of Farāhī’s exegesis, *Nizām al-Qur’ān wa Ta’wil al-Furqān bi-l-Furqān*. It is important to note that both exegesists considered Sūrat al-Anʿām to be the first in a “group” of four sūras (Q 6–9), with Iṣlāhī adding that it is “paired” with Q7, Sūrat al-Aʿrāf. The unifying theme (ʿamūd) is “Islam as the religion of Abraham”, with al-Anʿām serving the role of “invitation” to the unbelieving Quraysh, before the others which represent “warning”, “preparation” and “war”, in succession.

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

In order to capture something of earlier TQQ practice, I incorporated two of the earliest exegeses into the Group: those of Muqātil b. Sulaymān and Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī. The former is deemed to be the earliest complete tafsīr work extant. Ṭayyār’s observation that it is rich in TQQ content has not been borne out by my case study,
however.\textsuperscript{13} The choice of Tabari was to draw not only on his own TQQ explanations, but also on the various early authorities whom he cites with his chain of narration.\textsuperscript{14} Although both have incorporated other hermeneutical methods, there are instances of TQQ explanations advanced or quoted by these authors which do not appear in subsequent TQQ-focused works. One might have expected later exegetes to gather citations from earlier works, but they seem to have preferred independent reflection for the most part. In any case, this fact invites further exploration of \textit{tafsi\̱r} works from early and later periods in search of individual TQQ-based opinions and original insights.

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

\textsuperscript{13} Tayy\animate{ar}, \textit{Al-Tab\animate{hi}r}, p. 50. It should be noted that Muq\animate{at}il has a work on Quranic polysem\animate{y}, \textit{Al-Waj\animate{ik} wa-l-Naz\animate{ar}} – see 4.2.2 for related discussion.

\textsuperscript{14} Tabari cites TQQ opinions in this \textit{sima} most frequently from ‘Abd al-Rahm\animate{an} b. Zayd (five times), followed by ‘Abd-Allah b. ‘Abb\animate{as} (three), al-Dahhak b. Muz\animate{ah}im, Mujahid b. Jabr and al-Suddi (twice each), and one each from ‘At\animate{a}’ b. Abi Rab\animate{ah}, al-Rabi’ b. Anas and ‘Abd-Allah b. ‘Amr. There are plentiful studies of Tabari’s exegetical methodology, particularly in the Arabic language. A recent work has studied it in terms of his methods of supporting his interpretations and evaluating existing opinions; the researcher concludes that Tabari cites the Qur\animate{an} to this end 124 times in his whole work, accounting for 1.1% of evidential manoeuvers (including reasoning); see Zahr\animate{ani}, \textit{Al-Istidlal fi l-Tafsir}, pp. 115–117 (and pp. 185–211 for details).

\textsuperscript{15} Mu\textit{qaddima}, p. 90. Ibn Taymiyya counts Tabari’s to be among “al-tafsi\̱r al-\textit{ma\underline{h}war}”, which is most likely to be a forerunner of the later classification into \textit{ma\underline{h}war} vs. \textit{ma\underline{y}} exegesis. However, his description is of Tabari’s narration from the \textit{S\animate{alaf}}, and so there is no reason to suppose that Ibn Taymiyya counted TQQ to be a form of \textit{ma\underline{h}war} exegesis as categorised by some later scholars.

\textsuperscript{16} As noted previously, the same can be said of Ibn Taymiyya’s own collected commentaries. The snippets pertaining to al-An‘am were not substantial enough to include in the study (\textit{Majmu‘ al-Fat\animate{aw}a}, 14/273–279).
Here follows a brief description of each work in terms of style/structure and method of citation. Muqātil adopted an in-line commentary style. Ṭabarī’s commentary is far more extensive, and TQQ citations can be found in his own portions as well as his listed narrations. Ibn Kathīr generally quotes parallels at the beginning of his explanation of each verse, as well as evidentiary citations in the course of his explanation. Amritsārī also adopted the in-line style, citing Quranic parallels or evidences frequently. Shinqṭī takes a verse-by-verse approach, though not comprehensive (he explains only forty-nine verses of al-An’ām’s hundred and sixty-five), with more elaboration on certain points, especially juristic issues – even if TQQ does not feature in those discussions. Farāhī’s Ta’līqāt frequently contain citations of other verses using a quotation or number reference (a system not common before the modern era, and still not employed frequently in published Arabic texts). The same applies to Islāhī’s commentary; I concerned myself with these explicit citations/references, as the use of context is outside the central scope of this chapter. Finally, Ṭabāṭabā’ī in his Bayān sections employs a more discursive style, similar to Ibn Kathīr but with a greater proportion of intraquranic citations. I took his thematic discussions into account, wherever these were not too extensive.

(b) Supplements

In addition to the eight just mentioned, I consulted a further seven commentaries for the whole of al-An’ām, along with various other supplemental resources. Two of these belong to self-professed ‘Quranists’ (or similar descriptors) who reject hadīth as a source of exegesis and law, allowing only for language, reason and science as external resources to interpret the scripture – these are the English translation-commentaries by Shabbir Ahmed17 and Edip Yüksel et al18. In 3.4.3 below, I discuss some of the Quranist thinkers who influenced these authors.

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

18 Edip Yüksel, Layth Saleh al-Shaiban and Martha Schulte-Nafeh, The Qurʾān: A Reformist Translation. The first two worked on the translation, but the commentary (including cross-references) belongs to Yüksel (see 3.4.3 below).
Two further sources are by authors whose stances are close to the Quranists’ in some respects. Before his death in 2016, the Iraqi scholar Ṭāḥā al-ʿAlwānī had released one commentary from an intended series of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, which happens to be of Sūrat al-Anʿām. Its sparsity of Quranic citations, together with tangents of tenuous relevance to the verse under discussion, make this work, in my assessment, an example of using the claimed objectivity of TQQ as a cover to advance the author’s personal theories about religion. Another recent commentary is *Al-Bayān* by Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, a Pakistani intellectual who studied under Iḥlāḥī and is now perhaps the leading proponent of his shaikhī school. I consulted this for further understanding of the perspectives of Farāḥī and Iḥlāḥī.

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

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

20 Cf. Muḥayyir’s assessment (*Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, pp. 59–61) of Ṭāh ṭūb’s *Al-Tafsīr al-Qurʾānī bi-l-Qurʾān* and Abū Zayd al-Dāmanhūrī’s *Al-Ḥadīyya wa-l-ʾIṣāfān fi Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*. Ṭāhūn’s detailed perspective on Sunna can be found in Ṭāhūn, *Ishkāliyyat al-Taʿīnal maʿa l-Sunnah* (IITT, 2014). Similar points are raised in the introduction to his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Anʿām*, which he concludes by saying: “The Qurʾān itself suffices [the reader] from the *tafsīr*, many of which are corrupted with *īṣā liḥyāt* and narrations which are inauthentic in terms of chain and text. They have gone outside the authentic, connected reports in which the Messenger (peace be upon him) outlined the Islamically accepted method of exegesis, which is *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*” (*Tafsīr Sūrat al-Anʿām*, p. 34). I address the issue of *ḥadīths* and “Prophetic method” in 3.4.2 below.

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

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

2.1.1 – Purposes and Usages

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

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

2.1.2 – Nature and Results of Survey

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

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23 On occasion, Muqāṭīl also connects some verses in terms of sabab, saying “fihi/fihih naẓalat…” (i.e. the other verse was revealed concerning the same person/situation).

24 Points here are expanded in 4.2.1 below.

25 In my aggregated citation table (see Appendix), I have considered such overlaps to be evidentiary, and reserved the designation of “parallel” for those which serve no other explicit function.
demonstrate that an interpretation which the author is advancing is present elsewhere in the Qurʾān, perhaps in a clearer expression. This may be described as istishhād or isti′nās – the appropriateness of this procedure depends on the obscurity of the interpretation. As for the mere citation of parallels (as frequently in Ibn Kathīr), I suggest that this be interpreted as an early form of concordance work, which was intended as a resource for the interested reader and researcher.

**Aggregated Citations Table**

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

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

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

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\(^{26}\) Since it spans seventeen pages, I have placed this table in the Appendix for the benefit of researchers.

\(^{27}\) See 3.1.3 and 4.4.3 below.
between works that would be expected to correspond due to intellectual lineage. One explanation is that a certain verse may have many parallels, and when each exegete selected one or a few from these possibilities, these overlapped minimally or not at all. A broader conclusion that can be drawn from this lack of consistency in citations (both in the Parallels and Evidence columns) is that TQQ did not develop its own citation corpus in the way that scholarly works frequently link specific hadiths or poetic citations with verses of the Qurʼān.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Parallels</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1672</td>
<td>61.35:8</td>
<td>61.35:8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1676</td>
<td>61.35:8</td>
<td>61.35:8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1678</td>
<td>61.35:8</td>
<td>61.35:8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1680</td>
<td>61.35:8</td>
<td>61.35:8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1682</td>
<td>61.35:8</td>
<td>61.35:8</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1684</td>
<td>61.35:8</td>
<td>61.35:8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1686</td>
<td>61.35:8</td>
<td>61.35:8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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28 The most obvious lineage is between Farāḥī–Islāhī, but it is not always the case that their citations coincide. Another thread is Tabarī–Ibn Kathīr–Sha‘ṣīṭī: in practice, the greatest correspondence was between the latter two. In some cases, Sha‘ṣīṭī reproduces Ibn Kathīr’s citations without attribution (as under 6:88), but he occasionally critiques those citations (e.g. under 6:130).

29 For hadiths, this can be observed in the Tafsīr chapters of the hadith compendium, and later in the development of Suwūr’s Al-Durar al-Manhūr and the recent Mawsī‘ al-Tafsīr al-Maḥbūr. This is in addition to works on asbāb al-muẓāl particularly.
possibilities which they overlooked or left on purpose. However, it is certainly not the case that these supplemental resources – despite being later, and sometimes having far superior technology at their disposal – incorporated all the citations provided by the Group, even in the Parallels column.

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

**General Observations**

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

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

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

31 See 4.3.1 below, especially Figure 6 which aggregates Ibn al-Zubayr’s citations from al-An‘ām, providing a markedly different list under the relevant verses. The issue is addressed minimally in the present chapter in terms of “tensions”; see 2.3.6.
A final point which I have explored minimally is the question of chronology. While categorising all these citations into earlier (most of the Meccan corpus) and later (the Medinan) would have been an unwieldy process, it is clear that reference is being made in both directions. A verse may be explained either with reference to an earlier principle, or to a later revelation which is relevant to it. Whereas most of these citations treat the Qurʾān synchronically, there are some which demand more attention to chronology. The clearest example here is the Quranic cross-reference which appears in this sūra: “Why should you not eat such animals when God has already fully explained what He has forbidden you…?” (6:119)\(^{32}\) Ṭabarī takes this to be a reference to the list of prohibited items in Sūrat al-Māʾūna (5:3); Shinqīṭī points out that this popular view among exegetes is mistaken because al-Māʾūna is a later revelation. However, his own citation of 6:145 (a verse appearing later in al-Anʿām itself)\(^{34}\) raises its own chronological questions which he does not address. Another solution is offered by Ṭabāṭabāʾī, who refers to a passage in Sūrat al-Naḥl, which he states was an earlier Meccan revelation: “He has forbidden you only these things: carrion, blood, pig’s meat, and animals over which any name other than God’s has been invoked. But if anyone is forced by hunger, neither desiring it nor exceeding their immediate need, God is forgiving and merciful” (16:115).\(^{35}\)

### 2.2 – Evidentiary Citations

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

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\(^{32}\) I indicate the verse under study, or the relevant phrase from it, using **bold** text to distinguish this from explanatory citations. While Abdel Haleem’s translation is my default, I use Ali Quli Qaraʾī’s wherever that better fits the literal sense or the intended sense of the exegete.

\(^{33}\) Ḥāmiʿ al-Bayān, 4/3321.

\(^{34}\) Ḡaḍāʾ al-Bayān, p. 254. Amrisarī (Tafsīr al-Qurʿān, p. 208) cites the same.

\(^{35}\) Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Af-Mīzān*, 7/343; Islāḥī says similar, pointing also within al-Anʿām (Taḥādib, 3/154). However, this creates another problem because 16:118 (shortly after the verse cited in al-Naḥl) makes explicit reference to a prohibition upon the Jews which “We recounted to you earlier” – and commentators generally link this back to al-Anʿām (6:146). Ṭabāṭabāʾī seems to accept this identification in his commentary on al-Naḥl, stating that al-Anʿām was “unproblematically” revealed before al-Naḥl (*Af-Mīzān*, 12/366). Ibn ʿAshūr argues that al-Naḥl was revealed in various stages, and that 16:118 came after al-Anʿām, such that it could indeed refer back to it (*Al-Tahrīr wa-l-Tawwūr, 14/93*). Alūsī mentions some alternative interpretations of the clause “*min qabl*” in 16:118 (see Rūḥ al-Maʿānī, 14/333).
different types of citation, some of which are treated under separate headings below. An exegete may cite a verse because it functions as elaboration or clarification of the verse under study. Two or more verses may be concerned with a shared subject matter – and may even have aspects of tension or contradiction – in which case it is necessary to gather them in order to discuss that subject comprehensively; I have classed such citations as thematic and addressed them in the next section.

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

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

### 2.2.1 – Explaining Words and References

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

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36 *Aḏwāʾ al-Bayān*, p. 7.
which he cites two verses: “Even so, there are some who choose to worship others besides God as rivals (andād) to Him, loving them with the love due to God” (2:165) and “When we made you equal (nusawwīkum) with the Lord of the Worlds” (26:98).\(^{37}\) Importantly, neither of these contains the same key word or root; but they demonstrate the existence of this meaning in other verses.

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

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

\(^{37}\) Ḍawāʾ al-Bayān, p. 243. Indeed, this is almost a matter of consensus among translators.

\(^{38}\) Tafsīr al-Qurān, p. 185.

\(^{39}\) Cf. 6:150, where only the first reading is possible: “bi-rabbihim yaḍilūn”. It is surprising that this was not cited, although the existence of a parallel is not conclusive in itself.

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

\(^{41}\) Thus argues Ālūsī (Rūḥ al-Maʿānī, 8/24-25), who points out that this strategy, too, allows for different conclusions.

\(^{42}\) Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, 4/3129.
view (as in the translation above) that the former denotes each person’s death and the latter the Hereafter, citing both 7:187 and 79:42-44 to support the signification by the word ʿindahu that none knows its coming but He.\(^{43}\) However, he also cites a view attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās and Mujāhid to the effect that the former is the age of this worldly existence, and the latter each person’s final age, saying that this could be supported by 6:60 which contains the same expression ajal musammā: “It is He who calls your souls back by night, knowing what you have done by day, then raises you up again in the daytime until your fixed term is fulfilled.”\(^{44}\)

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

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

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\(^{43}\) Tafsīr al-Qurān al-ʿAzīm, 3/161. Amritsari agrees and cites 31:34 to this effect (Tafsīr al-Qurān, p. 185). Īsālī adopts the same view, adding that there is a third meaning of ajal (musammā) in the Qurʿān, namely the time of destruction of a nation (7:34) (Tadabbur, 3/18).

\(^{44}\) Paret also cites to this effect 39:42 and 40:67 (Konkordanz, p. 134).

\(^{45}\) Al-Mīzān, 7/8–11.

\(^{46}\) I used Ali Quli Qaraʾī’s translation in order to reflect the author’s intent. “Mother” may be rendered instead as “source” – see 3.1.2 and 3.31 below for other usages. On Ṭabātabāʾī’s “preeminent verses” (al-ʿāyt al-ghurār), refer to Medoff, Ijtihād and Renewal, p. 95 ff.

\(^{47}\) A related enquiry is the meaning of “the hour” (al-sāʿa) in: “Lost indeed are those who deny the meeting with their Lord until, when the Hour suddenly arrives, they say, ‘Alas for us that we disregarded this!’” (6:31). The term is frequently used for the Day of Judgement, but the term “suddenly” (baghtatan) led Amritsari (referring also to 6:92) to explain it in terms of death, which is unknown to each person (31:34) – Tafsīr al-Qurān, p. 190. Ālwi uses “suddenly” (also in 7:187, 43:66) to argue, contrary to common belief based on hadith reports, that there are no major signs of the Day of Judgement (Tafsīr Sūrat al-ʾAʿrām, p. 66).
believers, namely the unbelieving chieftains of Mecca who demanded that Muḥammad shun his low-status followers in order to be taken seriously. This interpretation is advanced by Farāḥī, who cites as a parallel: “The righteous are not in any way held accountable for the wrongdoers; their only duty is to remind them, so that they may be mindful of God” (6:69). Thus the meaning is that the Prophet is not blamed for their rejection, and – since they do not carry his burden of propagating the faith – he should not waste his time on them, neglecting the believers. On the other hand, most of the Group took the reference to be to the believers, which is the more obvious reading of the pronouns. Ibn Kathīr explains this by citing Noah’s reply to a similar demand: “What knowledge do I have of what they used to do? It is for my Lord alone to bring them to account…” (26:112-113) – thus the meaning is that Muḥammad is not accountable for anything his followers may have done before joining him.

2.2.2 – Grammar and Syntax

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

48 Abdel Haleem, The Qur’an, p. 83 footnote b.
49 Farāḥī, Taṣḥīḥ, 1/184.
50 Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿĀzīm, 3/179. Amristari cites parallels, and Ṭabāṭabā’ī does likewise along with several explanations, based on the same interpretation of the pronouns.
51 Ādāʾ al-Bayān, p. 3. However, he considers the first of these opinions to be most evident, further citing 53:23 and 10:66 to clarify the meaning of 43:84.
52 Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿĀzīm, 3/161. Also Islāhī and Ṭabāṭabā’ī.
The above reading, which effectively places a full stop after “and on earth”, is shared by all translators I consulted. However, there are two other plausible readings of the sentence structure, which would also affect the reciter’s point of pause (waqf wa ibtidā'). The second could be translated as: “He is God. He knows what you conceal or reveal in the heavens and on earth”, which is attested by 25:6: “Say, ‘It was sent down by Him who knows the secrets of the heavens and earth. He is all forgiving, all merciful.’”

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

A more intricate example is the divergence over the phrase ‘alā lladhī ahsana in verse 154. Ibn Kathîr outlines three interpretations (arising from three senses of the preposition 'alā):

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

b. Also regarding Moses, “for the good that he did”. This uses a different sense of the particle 'alā, which is familiar nonetheless. In contrast, this

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

54 Aḍwâ‘ al-Bayân, p. 244.

55 Jâmi‘al-Bayân, 4/3132.


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

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

Regarding the last of these opinions, namely that the singular relative pronoun alladhī here denotes a plural, Ṭabarī cites the grammar of 103:2-3 (al-insān) in support of this possibility.⁶⁰ Ṭabāṭabāʾī also takes it to denote a plural (or genus) but interprets it similarly to (a) above: “upon those [Israelites] who did good”, citing 2:58.⁶¹

2.2.3 – Modifying the Apparent Sense

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

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

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⁶⁰ Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, 4/3404.
⁶¹ Al-Mizān, 7/395.
⁶² Picking up on a point not noted by any of the Group, Paret (Konkordanz, p. 136) links this to the frequent refrain that Abraham was never a polytheist (including 6:79 and 16:1).
argument being that if the very presence of the Messenger is supposed to negate disbelief, it is inconceivable that the Messenger would disbelieve.63 In the second case, Amrītsārī points out that the Prophet could not be ignorant, as other verses (such as 68:2-4) preclude this.64 However, a different sense of “ignorance” itself could be intended, as Farāhī suggests, citing a later verse to clarify the context and intent: “We have made some of them a test for others, to make the disbelievers say, ‘Is it these men that God has favoured among us?’ Does God not know best who are the grateful ones?” (6:53). Hence the meaning is “ignorance of [divine] justice and differentiation between the grateful and ungrateful”.65 In the third case, Amrītsārī cites 12:108 to argue that Muḥammad could never doubt, since his path is defined by clear proof (baṣīra).66

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

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

64 Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-Kālim al-Raḥmān, p. 192.

65 Taʾlīqāt, 1/182.


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

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

69 Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-Kālim al-Raḥmān, p. 208.
means of the following verses: “Those to whom We gave the Scripture before believe in it” (28:52) – this indicates that some do confess faith; “When they listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears because they recognise the Truth [in it]. They say, ‘Our Lord, we believe, so count us amongst the witnesses.’” (5:83) – which indicates, as Iṣlāḥī argues, that the ones to believe are the sincere and righteous ones.70

### 2.2.4 – Sectarian/Theological Differences

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

After extolling the Prophets, verse 89 says: “They are the ones whom We gave the Book, the judgement and prophethood. So if these disbelieve in them, We have certainly entrusted them to a people who will never disbelieve in them” (6:89-Qaraʾi). Amritsārī states that the people (qawm) here are the Anṣār, citing 59:9 for their virtues. Sunnī exegeses in general advance a variety of opinions,71 but Ṭabāṭabāʾī’s conclusion is markedly Shīʿī. He argues that they must be a class of infallibles (ahl al-ʿisma), referring to the leaders of the Prophetic household; however, he concedes that the meaning may be extended (using 16:99) to elite believers.72 He points out that other classes of believers may have amongst them hypocrites or eventual renegades, and if the verse were referring to any of those, the exceptions to the rule would have been made explicit per the norm in the Qurʾān (he cites 3:86-89, 4:145-146, 48:2973 and 95:4-6 in this regard). He dismisses the view that it refers to

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

71 See Ālūsī, Rīh al-Maʿānī, 8/294.

72 Al-Mīzān, 7/265.

73 There is no exception here, but the allusion must be to the word minhum near the end of the verse (misplaced in the printed edition of Al-Mīzān, 7/266), which Ṭabāṭabāʾī reads as denoting partitivity (tabīd). The other examples are positive exceptions to the negative, making them somewhat different from 6:89.
the Persians, which is based on linking this verse to 4:133 which has been thus explained; however, he cites a report from 'Alî b. Abî Ṭalîb which equates the referents of this verse to another qawm: “O you who have faith! Should any of you desert his religion, Allah will soon bring a people whom He loves and who love Him” (5:54-Qara’i).

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

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74 In his narration study: Al-Mizân, 7/274.
75 See also Q 47:38 and its exegeses.
76 He could also have cited 12:108, “Say, ‘This is my way (sabīl)…” to support this meaning.
77 In his narration study: Al-Mizân, 7/398.
78 Compare with Abdel Haleem: “I ask no reward from you for this, only the affection due to kin”; see Al-ût, Râh al-Ma‘ūnî, 24/268 ff.
79 This point has implications for the authority of the TQQ argument: since the indications (dalāla) in the premises are speculative (ţannî), the conclusion cannot be assumed to be definitive (qātî).
2.3 – Thematic Exegesis

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

2.3.1 – Quranic Terminology

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

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

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

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

Although Ṭabarî considers the first kalima to refer to the Qur’ān, he explains “No one can change His kalimát” similarly as divine decree. Amritsarî takes a slightly different approach, explaining the latter as divine knowledge (ma’lûmât) and ability (maqûdarât), citing, respectively: “They do not comprehend any of His

82 Al-Mizân, 7/64.
83 Taʿlîqât, 1/181.
84 The singular reading belongs to the four Kūfâns and Yaʾqûb. The other five Readers have it in the plural (Khûrûf, Al-Mayyasar, p. 142).
85 I noted earlier the pluralist leanings of The Study Quran, and this juncture provides the first such example. Under 6:154, Dakake cites Ṭabarî to the effect that 6:115 refers to the Qur’ān – hence she argues that the descriptions of tâmâm and taafsîl are shared between the two scriptures (see also “huḍân wa raḥma” in 6:157), indicating that “the Torah remains a valid source of guidance” (Study Quran, p. 399, citing also 5:43-45).
86 Al-Mizân 7/339. Likewise, he argues that 10:96 alludes to 3:85/11:119; and 7:137 to 28:5. He also explains Jesus being kalima in 3:45 with reference to the word of decree (“Be”) in 3:59.
87 Jâmiʿ al-Bayân, 4/3318. His example is of the decree in 48:15, in which “God’s words (kalâm)” are expressed in 9:82.
knowledge except what He wills” (2:255) and “He is the Supreme Master (al-qāhir) over His creatures” (6:18).88

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

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

“He has the keys (mafātih) to the unseen: no one knows them but He. He knows all that is in the land and sea. No leaf falls without His knowledge, nor is there a single grain in the darkness of the earth, or anything, fresh or withered, that is not [written] in a clear kitāb” (6:59). Ṭabāṭabā’ī cites the parallel usages for this register of divine knowledge in 10:61, 20:52, 57:22 and 34:3.93 He contrasts the kitāb with the mafātih – which he interprets as “storehouses” (khazā’ in)94 – in that the kitāb “that only the purified can touch” (56:78-79) is, nonetheless, accessible to other than

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88 Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi-Kālām al-Rahmān, p. 208. Since this means that whatever is known to Him pre- eternally must come to pass and none can avert His ability to implement His will, the meaning amounts to the same.

89 Al-Mizān, 7/28. He also cites 51:23, which is unclear. See also: Madigan, The Qur’an’s Self-Image, 108 ff.

90 Ta’līqūt, 1/182; Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān bi-Kālām al-Rahmān, p. 192.


92 Tadabbur, 3/49; Al-Mizān, 7/83.

93 Al-Mizān, 7/129.

94 This links the verse to another of his “preeminent verses”, namely 15:21. The meaning “keys” is also attested (see 2.6.1 below).
God, and secondary to the *mafātīh*. This divine register, although it contains records of changing events and realities, is unchanging in itself (13:39, 50:4, 85:22).

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

As has become evident from the preceding word study, the most thorough exegete from our Group in terms of thematic study is Ṭabarānī, who connects verses not only to one another, but also to the philosophical understanding linked to his “foundational verses” such as 13:39, 15:21 and 16:96. Another noteworthy example is his approach to explaining the *wajh* (“face”) of God, as mentioned in 6:52.

Ṭabarānī discusses the implications of this term in detail, including to argue that all those things which the righteous are described as seeking, such as His bounty and mercy (5:2/35, 17:28) are included in the *wajh* by virtue of this verse and its parallels (2:272, 30:38-39, 76:9). Another interesting part of his discussion is his use of 55:27 and 28:88 which say that (only) the *wajh* will remain, along with 16:96 which says that what is “with (ʿinda) God” will remain, to argue that all those things “with God” (as in 3:169, 7:206, 15:21, 21:19) are included in the *wajh* and remain eternally with Him.

### 2.3.2 – Quranic Positions

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

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

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95 *Al-Mizān*, 7/131.
96 *Al-Mizān*, 7/130.
97 This is followed by a more detailed treatment of each term in *Al-Mizān*, 7/260-264.
98 Dakake (*Study Quran*, p. 358) alludes to a more literal interpretation based upon hadīth reports about beholding God in Paradise; see the discussion below on seeing God (based on 6:103).
authorities) 10:90, 20:77 and 26:61 for the meaning of *idrāk*. He and Ibn Kathīr compare the “non-encompassing vision” with “non-encompassing knowledge”, as implied in 2:255 (“they do not comprehend any of His knowledge (*lā yuḥṭūna bi-shay in min ‘ilmīh*) except what He wills”) and 20:110 (“He knows what is before and behind them, though they do not comprehend Him (*lā yuḥṭūna bihī ‘ilmān*)”).

Other verses are brought to support the beatific vision: “On that Day there will be radiant faces, looking (*nāẓira*) towards their Lord” (75:22-23), and the contrary implication of this description of the unbelievers: “On that Day they will be screened off (*maḥjūbūn*) from their Lord” (83:15).

Shinqīṭī also refers to the “*ziyāda*” (increase) mentioned in 10:26—or rather its interpretation in the light of ḥadīth. All of these pertain to the Hereafter, hence the possibility of specifying the negation to this life: Amritsārī cites the verse in which Moses is told “You shall not see Me” (7:143), which he takes also to refer only to this worldly existence and earthly eyes. The same can be argued concerning the narration from ‘Āʾishah in which she denied that the Prophet ever saw God, citing 6:103 along with: “It is not granted to any mortal that God should speak to him except through revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger to reveal by His command what He will” (42:51).

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

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99 Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, 4/3293.
100 Tafsīr al-Qurʿān al-ʿAzīm, 3/226.
101 Ibid.
102 Adwāʾ al-Bayān, p. 253. Similarly the “*maẓāf*” of Q 50:35, which I did not find cited here.
103 I have used the Qaraʿi translation which uses “not”, in place of Abdel Haleem’s “never”, because the extent of this negation into the future is the very point of dispute, including on a linguistic level.
104 Tafsīr al-Qurʿān bi-Kalām al-Raḥmān, p. 205.
105 Tafsīr al-Qurʿān al-ʿAzīz, 3/227. Muʿtazilites such as Qaḍīʿ ʿAbd al-Jabbar (see Mutashābih al-Qurʿān, p. 255) denied the beatific vision. A contemporary sect upon this opinion is the Ibādīs; the Mufīs of Oman, Ahmad b. Hamad al-Khalīfī, defends this position in *Al-Haqq al-Dāmīgh*, pp. 29–99. See also Oztürk, ‘*Kuran’ın Kur’anla Tefsiri*’, pp. 8–10.
well. He said to his father (ab)\textsuperscript{106} and his people, ‘What are these images to which you are so devoted?’” (21:51-52). He further cites 30:30 and 7:172 with the concept of \textit{fitra} (taken to imply an innate inclination to monotheism) to say that if such applies to common people, it must be more so for Abraham.\textsuperscript{107} Shinqīfī further draws from context, in that it seems that the preceding verse refers also to a prior stage: “In this way We showed\textsuperscript{108} Abraham [God’s] mighty dominion over the heavens and the earth, so that he might be a firm believer.” (6:75). Abraham addresses the people, saying, “How can you argue with me about God when He has [already] guided me (\textit{qadar hadānī})?” (6:80), and this event is subsequently described as “the argument (\textit{hujja}) We gave to Abraham against his people” (6:83).\textsuperscript{109}

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

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


\textit{\textsuperscript{108} It should be noted that the verb \textit{naw} (here “showed”) is imperfect.}

\textit{\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Adwā’ al-Bayān}, p. 251. Īsābī’s argument for this interpretation appeals to the theme of the entire \textit{sūra} and the purpose of this passage as the climax of the argument being presented to Quraysh (see Mir, \textit{Coherence}, p. 112). As such, it would be a matter of certainty for him.}

\textit{\textsuperscript{110} For this intricate argument, see Tabāṭabā’ī, \textit{Al-Mīzān}, 7/163–165, where he also engages in a thematic study of Abraham’s use of pronouns in reference to idols, studying 21:63-67 and 26:70-73. Regarding Abraham’s objection to “those who/those set (\textit{al-ğifān})”, Tabāṭabā’ī notes its sound plural and draws on his thematic study to explain the sense as: “I would not even respect rational beings that disappeared, let alone non-rational ones” (ibid, 7/184).}
differently from Ibn Kathīr et al: Abraham had been given the essentials of monotheism, but God would continue to guide him into the fullness of truth.

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

Farāhī offers another interpretation of this verse, in which the phrase “everyone it reaches” is conjoined not to the object, but to the subject: that is, whoever receives the Qur’ān must also warn with it.113 This sense of responsibility to convey the warning is also found in 9:122; Iślāḥī links this also to the concept of “witness” in 2:143.114

There are two verses of al-An‘ām which may be taken as contrary to the universality interpretation, however. “This is a blessed Scripture that We have sent down to confirm what came before it and for you to warn the Mother of Cities and all around it” (6:92) – Ṭabāṭabā’ī115 mentions a narration indicating that this verse only referred to Mecca’s immediate environs (thus making it like 26:214, “Warn your nearest kinsfolk”). To counterbalance this idea, he cites some of the aforementioned verses, along with the immediate context of verse 90: “Say, ‘I ask no reward for it from you: it is a lesson for all people (li-l-ʿālamīn).’” Another verse seems to limit the warning to a specific type of listener: “And warn with it those who realise (yakhāfūn) that they will be gathered to their Lord” (6:51). Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s explanation is that it means especially this category.116 As to their identity, one possibility is that they are

111 Al-Mīzān, 7/40.
112 Aduwā’ al-Bayān, p. 246.
113 Ta’līqāt, 1/179. Comparison could be made with the meaning and grammar of 12:108, in which man is conjoined to the explicit pronoun ana.
114 Tadabbur, 3/31.
115 In his narration study: Al-Mīzān, 7/315.
the humble devotees described in the following verse; Ibn Kathīr cites 23:57 and 13:21 regarding the people of *khawf* and *khashya* (fear and reverence of God, which makes them readier to heed the warnings).  

Fourth, the accountability of animals and birds. “All the creatures…in the end they will be gathered to their Lord” (6:38) – the exegetes debated the sense of this “gathering” (*ḥasr*): does it denote the death of these creatures, or their resurrection? The latter implies that animals will be held accountable. Ṭabarī prefers to adhere to the straightforward sense of the word, citing 38:19 as another such usage. For the sense of resurrection, Ibn Kathīr cites “When wild beasts are herded together” (81:5)¹¹⁹; Ṭabāṭabāʾī discusses the question at length, citing several verses as *prima facie* support for accountability of animals, including: “If God took people to task for the evil they do, He would not leave one living creature on earth” (16:61). The idea that divine justice extends to all perpetrators is supported by a narration from Abū Hurayra which maintains that, on Judgement Day, wrongs will be set right between animals, which will then be turned to dust¹²¹; a connection is thus made to 78:40, “On the Day…when the disbeliever will say, ‘If only I were dust!’” – which is cited as part of this narration. For Ṣalāḥ’s refutation of this claim by “reincarnationists” – Ṭabarī outlines both stances, with those who denied this stating that although *minkum* here addresses both jinns and humans, the point pertains

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¹¹⁸ *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3175.
¹²⁰ Al-Mīzān, 7/77.
¹²¹ *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3175.
¹²² *Ṭafsīr Sūrat al-Anʿām*, p. 68: he alludes to the aforementioned ḥadīth. Concerning the term *umma* appearing earlier in this verse, Dakake states that it “usually denotes a specific religious community” in the Qurʾān (as in 3:110, 10:47). She suggests, based on 10:47, that each *umma* of animals must have received a messenger (cf. Rāẓī’s refutation of this claim by “reincarnationists” – *Maṯāṭīth al-Ghayb*, 6/412). According to Dakake, this has implications for ethical treatment of animals (*Study Quran*, p. 352).
specifically to the latter. To support this, they cited 55:22 (in which pearls and coral are said to emerge from “both” seas, whereas in reality this applies to saltwater only) and 35:12 (as the “adornments” are from saltwater only) – the latter narrated from Ibn Jurayj. Ibn Kathīr further supports the negating view by citing 4:163-165, 29:27 (re: Abrahamic legacy, in that jinns are not from his progeny), 25:20 and 12:109.

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

2.3.3 – Quranic Imagery

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

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

124 Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, 4/3347.

125 *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzīm*, 3/255.

126 *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, p. 211.

127 *Adwāʿ al-Bayān*, p. 255.

128 I have not discussed muteness here because its connotations are different. It does feature in several of the parallels cited, and Amritsarī mentions 16:76 specifically for this aspect.
“Praise belongs to God who created the heavens and the earth and made darkness (al-zulumāt) and light…” (6:1) – the apparent reference is to the physical phenomena, although some commentators noted the metaphorical usage, and compared the plural zulumāt and singular nūr to the single true path (ṣirāt/sabīl) and multiple false ways (subul) in verse 153. Ibn Kathīr refers back to this opening when discussing “He makes the dawn break…” (6:96) as well as under verse 122, which is clearly metaphorical. This indicates an appreciation on his part of thematic connections in the sūra.

“Only those who can hear will respond; as for the dead, God will raise them up, and to Him they will all be returned.” (6:36) – Ṭabarī indicates that the meaning is to hear/listen intently and effectively, contrasting this with the image in 2:171. Ṭabaṭabāʾî contrasts the perception of the unbelievers in this life with that in the next, citing: “If only you could see the wrongdoers hang their heads before their Lord: ‘Our Lord, now that we have seen and heard, send us back’” (32:12). As for the term “dead”, Shinqīṭī cites both 6:122 and 35:22 to argue that it means “the unbelievers”, not its literal meaning. “Those who reject Our signs are deaf, dumb, and in total darkness…” (6:39) – Ṭabaṭabāʾî suggests that the “deaf” and “dumb” here are, respectively, ignorant

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


131 Ḥāmiʿ al-Bayān, 4/3171.

132 Al-Miṣān, 7/68. Contrast this with 17:72 and 20:124, which describe the unbelievers being raised “blind”.

133 This is despite his rejection of majūz, especially in the Qurʾān, as outlined in his treatise Manʿ Ṭawfiq al-Majūz (appended to some editions of Adīṣaʿ al-Bayān). Brāhīm al-Maṣʿani has documented numerous cases in which Shinqīṭī has deviated from this theoretical position in his exegesis, while generally eschewing the technical term itself (Al-Majūz fi l-Lughā wa l-Qurʾān al-Kāfirūn, 2/345–357). Shinqīṭī gathers a number of verses on this theme; in his commentary of 35:22, he cites 27:80. Under the latter verse (Adīṣaʿ al-Bayān, pp. 1354–1355), he has a detailed discussion of this imagery (also found in 36:70). Shinqīṭī highlights the roles of context and contrast in deriving these meanings, and bases his conclusions on a “comprehensive survey” (istiqrāʾ) of the Qurʾān. He provides further parallels for these verses in terms of their purpose, namely to console the Prophet, e.g. 16:37, 5:41, 28:56, 10:100 (and 30:52-53, which is almost identical to 27:80-81).
followers and deceptive leaders\textsuperscript{134}, citing two other verses in this \textit{sūra} which depict these actors. The leaders: “tell others not to listen [to the Quran], while they themselves keep away from it” (6:26) and the masses say: “Why has no sign been sent down to him from his Lord?” Say, ‘God certainly has the power to send down a sign,’ though most of them do not know” (6:37). This is unlike the situation in 2:18, in which all these traits belong to the hypocrites; whereas the open unbelievers are intended in 2:7.\textsuperscript{135}

“Certainly insights (\textit{baṣā’ir}) have come to you from your Lord. So whoever sees, it is to the benefit of his own soul, and whoever remains blind, it is to its detriment…” (6:104-Qara’i) – Ṭabarī narrates from Ibn Zayd that the term \textit{baṣā’ ir}\textsuperscript{136} refers to clear proofs which are perceived by the heart, not the eyes, as indicated by:

“Have these people [of Mecca] not travelled through the land with hearts to understand and ears to hear? It is not people’s eyes that are blind, but their hearts within their breasts.” (22:46).\textsuperscript{137} This invites a broadening of the thematic study to incorporate other dimensions of Quranic epistemology.

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

\textsuperscript{134} \textit{Al-Mīzān}, 7/86. Hence “[variously] deaf and dumb, [both] in total darkness”.

\textsuperscript{135} \textit{Al-Mīzān}, 7/86.

\textsuperscript{136} The word occurs five times in the Qur’ān: Muqātil (\textit{Tafsīr}, 1/363) cites 7:203. It also describes Moses’ miracles (17:102) and the Torah (28:43).

\textsuperscript{137} Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, 4/3298.

\textsuperscript{138} \textit{Tafsīr al-Qurān}, p. 209. The latter verse includes the word \textit{baṣīna}, which is the singular of \textit{baṣā’ ir} as in 6:104.
Ṭabāṭabā’ī argues that elite believers possess life and perception distinct from others, even beyond the metaphorical level. For life, he cites 16:97 as well as 58:22, which speaks of believers receiving a rūḥ (interpreted as life-spirit) from God – this meaning may be imparted similarly to 42:52, which describes the Qurʾān as rūḥ.

For perception, he cites 7:179, describing the ineffectual faculties of unbelievers. He takes the “light” here to be knowledge which stems from faith and guidance.

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

Figure 2 - Aggregated Citations for the Four Images

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single image</th>
<th>Light/darkness</th>
<th>2:257, 6:1, 24:40</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hearing/deafness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life/death</td>
<td></td>
<td>16:96, (58:22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Two images combined</th>
<th>Light/darkness + Seeing/blindness</th>
<th>(Overlap self-evident)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Light/darkness + Hearing/deafness</td>
<td>6:39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light/darkness + Life/death</td>
<td>6:122, 42:52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing/deafness + Life/death</td>
<td>6:36, 35:22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

139 Tadabbur, 3/159.
140 Al-Mizān 7/349. Dakake (Study Quran, p. 386) notes the parallel of “light by which to walk” in 57:28.
2.3.4 – Quranic Arguments

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

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

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


\textsuperscript{142} Dakake (\textit{Study Quran}, p. 352) notes a thread throughout this sūra regarding the futility of miracles for stubborn folk, adding verses 4, 25 and 46 to those listed here.
“They also say, ‘Why has no sign been sent down to him from his Lord?’ Say, ‘God certainly has the power to send down a sign,’ though most of them do not know:’ (6:37) “They swear by God with their most solemn oaths that if a miraculous sign came to them they would believe in it. Say [Prophet], ‘Signs are in the power of God alone.’ What will make you [believers] realize that even if a sign came to them they still would not believe?” (6:109) “And when a sign comes to them, they say, ‘We will not believe until we are given the like of what was given to Allah’s apostles.’ Allah knows best where to place His apostleship!” (6:124-Qara’i)

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

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

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143 Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, 4/3135. Sinnaṭī used this example in his introduction as “bayān of the purpose of a demand” (ʿAdīsā’, p. 10).
144 Al-Mīzān, 7/19.
Second: hence, as expressed in 6:9, the angel would have to be in human form to be approachable, and this would not remove the scepticism. Thir: if it were to come in angelic form, this would be among the class of miraculous events which preclude genuine free choice in belief and would herald the end of this life of testing. The phrase *qudiya l-amr* ("the matter would be settled") appears first in this context (6:8) and subsequently in the context of calling for judgement to be hastened (6:58). Ibn Kathir makes a link to 15:7-8 and 25:21-22, both of which indicate that the sending of angels heralds the end-times and will be bad news for the rejecters. The "coming of the Lord and angels" is paralleled by 2:210, 16:33 and 89:22; as for "one/some of His *āyāt*" (6:158), Tabatabai explains these variously as an overwhelming sign which precludes genuine choice (27:82 and 32:28-29; he explains the latter with reference to *fāṭ* in 7:89 and 14:15), or the punishment itself (40:84-85).

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

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

147 Islahi, *Tadabbur*, 3/208. Shiniqi (Advā' al-Bayān, intro p. 11) gives this as an example of fleshing out details ("duha al-muta'lliq").

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

149 Paret (*Konkordanz*, p. 135) adds 74:52. Alisi (*Rūh al-Ma'āni*, 8/45-46) links 6:7 to a *sahih* report pertaining to the demand made by several polytheists and does not cite these Quranic references. For 'Alwani (*Tafsir Sittat al-An'ām*, p. 52), the verse is connected to the objection to the Qur'an being revealed piecemeal (25:32; Dakake adds 28:48); Ibn 'Ashur (*Al-Tabrīr wa l-Tanavīr*, 7/122) discusses the possibility that this *sūra* was revealed in one piece by way of response to this objection. However, Alisi considers the reports on which this hypothesis is based to be highly questionable (*Rūh al-Ma'āni*, 8/6–7).

150 *Al-Mizan*, 7/19.

151 *Tafsir al-Qur'an*, p. 192 and repeatedly.

152 *Tafsir al-Qur'an*, p. 192.
prerogative of the Prophet; the rhetorical instruction to “seek a tunnel into the ground or a ladder into the sky” is compared by Farāḥī to that directed at his enemies in 22:15. Similar to the argument concerning angels, Ibn Kathīr cites 26:4 for the “little-known” wisdom of not sending miracles, namely that it would result in forced belief; he adds 17:59, which speaks of the obstinacy of former peoples in the face of miracles. Thus the argument is that the idolaters of Mecca would do the same if given what they asked (see 7:132, 10:96-97/101, 15:14-15, 52:44). Indeed, as 6:124 indicates, they would not stop short of demanding the mission and leadership of the messengers. Instead, the Qurʾān with its miraculous and guiding āyāt ought to be their focus: “They say, ‘Why have no miracles been sent to him by his Lord?’ Say, ‘Miracles lie in God’s hands; I am simply here to warn you plainly.’ Do they not think it is enough that We have sent down to you the Scripture that is recited to them?” (29:50-51).

2.3.5 – Quranic Worldview

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

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153 Taʿlīqāt, 1/182.
155 Adwāʾ al-Bayān, p. 244.
156 Al-Mizān, 7/352.
158 For this theological debate, see Watt, The Formative Period of Islamic Thought, p. 82 ff, and Gätje, The Qurʾān and its Exegesis, pp. 218–227.
As can be seen in Figure 3 below, there are occasionally pairs of verses which balance each other in terms of emphasis on human and divine will (see verses 35-36 and 148-149). The balance may be found within a single verse, as Farāhī argues concerning 6:125: it is “those who do not have faith” who are constricted and defiled as a result of their unbelief. In this, he appeals to the muḥkam (i.e. foundational verses and concepts) of the Qurʾān. Such a theological question is a key test for the theory of muḥkam vs. mutashābih verses (see 3.3.1 below), as the distinction may be subjective. In any case, the Group of exegetes did cite certain verses with more frequency (e.g. 61:5), thus treating them as clearer and hence suitable to explain the more problematic expressions. It should be noted also that a single expression may be interpreted in different ways and cited to various ends: hence my categorisations in the table below should be understood as approximate.

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

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

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

161 Both from Qaraʾī translation.

162 Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, 4/3392.

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

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

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\(^\text{164}\) *Al-Mīzān* 7/326. ‘Alwānī (*Tafsīr Sūrat al-Anʿām*, p. 109) suggests that the ascription to God here better suits the purpose of promoting tolerance: since the people’s misguidance is ultimately part of God’s plan, there is no reason to curse them.

\(^\text{165}\) *Al-Mīzān*, 7/304.

\(^\text{166}\) *Al-Mīzān*, 7/305–307.
### Figure 3 - Citations Emphasising Choice vs. Fate

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fate</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“We have cast veils on their hearts lest they should understand it, and a deafness into their ears; and though they should see every sign, they will not believe in it” (6:25)</td>
<td>2:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Had Allah wished, He would have brought them together on guidance” (6:35)</td>
<td>7:179 – created for Hell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Allah leads astray whomever He wishes, and whomever He wishes He puts him on a straight path” (6:39)</td>
<td>8:23 “Had Allah known any good in them, surely He would have made them hear”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“That is Allah’s guidance: with it He guides whomever He wishes of His servants” (6:88)</td>
<td>10:99 “And had your Lord wished, all those who are on earth would have believed”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11:118-119</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17:82 “We send down in the Qurʾān that which is a cure and mercy for the faithful, and it increases the wrongdoers only in loss”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse</td>
<td>Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:102</td>
<td>“That is Allah, your Lord, there is no god except Him, the creator of all things”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:105</td>
<td>“...[so that they] say, ‘You have received instruction,’ and so that We may make it clear for a people who have knowledge”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:107</td>
<td>“Had Allah wished they would not have ascribed partners”</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:108</td>
<td>“That is how to every people We have made their conduct seem decorous”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:109</td>
<td>“Had your Lord wished, they would not have done it. So leave them with what they fabricate”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:112, 6:137</td>
<td>“Thus have We installed in every town its major criminals that they may plot therein”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:123</td>
<td>“Whomever Allah desires to guide, He opens his breast to Islam, and whomever He desires to lead astray, He makes his breast narrow and straitened as if he were climbing to a height. Thus does Allah lay [spiritual] defilement on those who do not have faith”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:125</td>
<td>“Say, ‘To Allah belongs the conclusive argument. Had He wished, He would have surely guided you all.’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:149</td>
<td>“He is not questioned concerning what He does, but they are questioned”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22:53</td>
<td>“Surely I will fill hell with all the [guilty] jinn and humans”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41:44</td>
<td>“But you do not wish unless it is wished by Allah”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.3.6 – Resolving Tensions

I argued previously that those exegetes who listed parallels generally concentrated on similarities, rather than exploring the differences between these verses and what might explain them. There are examples of this comparative approach, and especially of the effort to reconcile verses which appear to contradict. Before looking at the apparent contradictions, there is one famous example of a *mutashābih* pair, which provides a window onto the tension between the two approaches of reductionism and pluralism in interpretation.
In al-Anʿām: “Do not kill your children out of poverty (min imlāq) – We will provide for you and for them” (6:151); and in al-Isrāʾ: “Do not kill your children for fear of poverty (khashyata imlāq) – We shall provide for them and for you – killing them is a great sin” (17:31). The first difference which draws attention is between the expressions min imlāq and khashyata imlāq: should they be explained in terms of each other? Muqātil apparently did this, glossing min imlāq with khashyata l-faqr. The other difference is between the order of the pronouns “you” (parents) and “them” (children). Ibn Kathīr explains the second difference with reference to the first, pointing out that in 6:151, poverty is a reality; as such, provision for the parents is given priority in mention, as though the children will be a source of provision. The poverty in 17:31 is, as yet, only feared: so provision for the children was mentioned first, followed by the continuation of the parents’ provision.

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

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167 I adjusted this from Abdel Haleem’s “in fear of poverty”, which itself must be a synthesis, consistent with the wording in both verses.


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

170 Ḫāmiʿ al-Bayān, 4/3152.

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

172 Al-Mīzān, 7/32.
The next example concerns a phrase occurring twice in the sūra: “Say, ‘I have been commanded to be the first of those who submit (awwala man aslama)’” (6:14). He has no partner, and this [cred] I have been commanded [to follow], and I am the first of those who submit (awwalu l-muslimīn)” (6:163). This is obviously in tension with all the references to the islām of previous prophets and peoples. Ibn Kathīr’s solution is to qualify this “first” as pertaining to the present nation. Ṭabāṭabā’ī disagrees with this approach, arguing that the sense of “first” is in degree, not chronology.

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

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173 Qara’ī translation. Paret cites 39:12 for this phrase (Konkordanz, p. 136). Dakake cites 7:143 (mistakenly printed as 153) and 26:51, with similar statements from Moses and the sorcerers, respectively (and not both from Moses, as she states): Study Qur′ān, p. 345.


175 Al-Mīzān, 7/408.

176 Adwe’al-Bayān, pp. 268–279.

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

178 Adwe’al-Bayān, p. 270.

179 Tadabbur, 3/191.

180 Ta’līqāt, 1/201.
idolaters. He extends this explanation to the list of commandments in 6:151-153: these, too, hark back to Abraham, as indicated by the mention of the Torah afterward (6:154), followed by the Qurʾān (6:155).

### 2.4 – Abrogation

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

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

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

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

183 To ascertain this, I looked initially at their commentaries upon 2:106, as none touched on the issue in their introductions (if present). The comments of Muqātil (see also 16:101, which he links to 13:39) and Ahrānṣāri are characteristically brief: the latter glosses ʿayn as ḥukm, i.e. it is the ruling which is replaced. Tabarī underlines this point and explains that declaratives (aḥḥār) can neither abrogate nor be abrogated. Ibn Kathīr includes a brief usūlī definition. In the case of Shinqī, the discussion of naskh (and of 2:106) occurs under 16:101, where he emphasises that abrogation can only be established by means of a text in Qurʾān or Sunna, not by reason, consensus or analogy. Tabātābā’ī makes a distinction between the phenomenon of naskh on one hand, and those of takhliṣ, taqyīd and tabyīn on the other. Islāhī affirms the abrogation of some verses by others, in which case both are still found in the Quranic text; he notes that his discussion draws upon the research of Farāḥī.
principle of \textit{naskh} and the existence of abrogated verses in the Qur’ān, it seems that the later (and more TQQ-oriented) exegetes took a minimalist approach in this regard. Most remained silent on the issue when discussing these identified verses, implying that they saw no particular merit in the claim of abrogation; indeed, there are several instances of critique of this claim, most notably from Ṭabāṭabā’ī. In cases where the claim of abrogation arose from an apparent tension or contradiction, these exegetes may have seen no such tension to resolve, or they preferred to use such opportunities to explain more fully and reconcile the meanings. Here I address general cases before looking at claims surrounding the Sword Verse.

2.4.1 – General Cases

(a) Fear versus Forgiveness

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

In his dedicated book on abrogation, Ibn al-Jawzī\textsuperscript{187} refers to this claim by “some exegetes” who preceded him but rejects it on the basis that both are declarative

\textsuperscript{184} \textit{Tafsīr Muqātil}, p. 339.

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

\textsuperscript{186} Kāshānī, \textit{Al-Ṣāfi fi Tafsīr Iklām Allāh al-Wāfi} (accessed at www.altafsir.com, 1/9/2017). Ṭabāṭabā’ī does not discuss this or any riwāyas connected to this verse.

\textsuperscript{187} \textit{Nawāsib}, p. 423.
sentences (khabar) which are not subject to abrogation – he discounts the possibility of an implied ruling. He compares this verse to 39:65 with its similar conditional using particle in – “If you ascribe a partner to God…” – as though to demonstrate that the hypothetical punishment would not be cancelled altogether, even if the disobedience upon which it is predicated is ruled out by the Prophet’s infallibility or the promise of forgiveness in 48:2.

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

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

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188 Tafsīr al-Qurʾān, p. 188.
189 This can be understood from Ibn ʿĀshūr, Al-Tahrīr wa-l-Tanwīr, 7/160.
190 Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān, 5/24.
191 Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān, 5/24 note 3. I presume this to refer to Abū l-Muʿīn al-Nasafi (d. 508/1114), via his student ‘Alāʾ al-Dīn al-Samarqandī (d. 539/1145). See the introduction to Taʾwīlāt, 1/57.
broader Quranic context as a positive trait which the Prophet should not be without; and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā notes that there is nothing to negate fear which is born of reverence (iqlāl wa taʿẓīm).

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

(b) Pardon versus Burden

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

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

192 Ṭafsīr al-Manār, 7/287.
193 See Ālūsī, Riḥ al-Maʿānī, 8/78.
194 Ālūsī, 8/77. This view could be supported by comparison with 11:63, which contains a form of argumentation comparable to “Pascal’s wager”.
195 Ālūsī, 8/77. The Ibāḍī commentator Ṭafayyish (d. 1914) argues, on the contrary, that there should be no fear in the presence of an unfailling promise (citing 50:29 to this effect). He responds to a tradition cited by Ālūsī – “O Moses, do not feel secure from My plot until you have traversed the Sirāṭ [or: entered the Garden]” – by interpreting it as an instruction to “Act with caution and humility as though you were someone who does not know himself to be infallible” (Ṭafsīr al-Ṭafsīr, accessed at www.altafsir.com, September 2017).
196 Ṭafsīr Muqāṭīl, 1/352.
from Ibn Jurayj\(^\text{197}\) which says that this verse indicates that if the believers do sit with the mockers, they will not be held accountable for their mocking (“The righteous are not in any way held accountable”)\(^\text{198}\); thus the abrogating phrase, as Ibn Kathîr clarifies, is: “You yourselves will be like them”, i.e. equal in sin.\(^\text{199}\)

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

(c) Meat of Jews and Christians

On the ruling expressed in 6:121, “Do not eat any [meat] over which God’s name has not been pronounced”: Ṭabarî narrates from Ṭâṭîya that this pertains to animals slaughtered to false deities – as opposed to carrion (mayta), or animals slaughtered without pronouncing the divine name (matrûk al-tasmiya). This opinion is based on the juxtaposition of this verse and 6:118 preceding, on the assumption that that command (“Eat any [animal] over which God’s name has been pronounced”) and this prohibition are non-identical in import.\(^\text{203}\) Ibn Kathîr notes that this meaning is

\(^{197}\) Muṣṭafâ Zayd critiques this and similar reports in terms of its chain of narration: see Zayd, Al-Naskh, 1/466.

\(^{198}\) Jâmi’ al-Bayîn, 4/3219.

\(^{199}\) Tafsîr al-Qurîn al-Azîm, 3/197.

\(^{200}\) This would remove the apparent problem of Satan being said to cause the Prophet to forget (see Dakake, p. 365, who cites 22:52 in support of this possibility). See Âlûsî, Rûh al-Ma‘ânî, 8/227–228 and 17/368 ff. for this issue. In contrast, Farâhî takes the shayûtân of 22:52 to be human and jinn enemies of the Prophets – as in 6:112 and 121 – and interprets the verse as describing the Qurîn’s abrogation of corrupted scriptures [see Nizâm al-Qurîn, 1/427–434].

\(^{201}\) In Tabâtabâ’î’s narration study: Al-Mîzân, 7/158.

\(^{202}\) Al-Maḥâbîrah al-Wajîz, p. 631.

\(^{203}\) Jâmi’ al-Bayîn, 4/3329.
made explicit in 6:145 (as does Amritsarī, noting the ruling of *fisq* in both\(^{204}\)); whereas the opposing view (that *matrūk al-tasmiya* is likewise prohibited) is based partly on 5:4 – “…So eat what they catch for you, but [first] pronounce God’s name over it” – and accords to the apparent wording of this verse.\(^{205}\)

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

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

(d) Proto-*Zakāt* versus *Zakāt*

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

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\(^{204}\) *Tafsīr al-Qurān*, p. 209.

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

\(^{206}\) *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4/3331.

\(^{207}\) *Tafsīr al-Qurān al-ʿAzīm*, 3/242. This is a recurrent issue: see under 3.2.2.

\(^{208}\) In his narration study: *Al-Mīzān*, 7/346.

\(^{209}\) *Aṭāʾī al-Bayān*, p. 255 ff. He cites this (introduction, p. 15) as an example of the Sunna being required to complete the explication.
downgraded to a recommendation). Ṭabarī opts for the view of abrogation: the abrogating verses are assumed to be all those which obligated zakāt – with its technical meaning – in Medina.

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

(e) Ashudd versus Nikāḥ

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

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

211 Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, 4/3372.

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

213 Adwaʿ al-Bayān, p. 256.

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

215 Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, 4/3399.
2.4.2 – The Sword Verse

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

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

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

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

\[217\] Zayd (Al-Nāṣh, 2/6–7) argues that the mushrikīn mentioned in this verse were the specific polytheists who had been in conflict with Muhammad, as the verse’s context indicates. See also Ghazālī, Nahw Tafsīr Maḍīrī, pp. 141–143.
freeing him from blame, not a prohibition of fighting.  

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

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

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218 Jāmiʿ al-Bayūn, 4/3422. See also: Zayd, Al-Nashkh, 1/468.
220 Taṣfīr al-Qurʿān, p. 218.
221 Tadabbur, 3/209.
222 Taṣfīr al-Qurʿān al-ʿAzīm, 3/196.
223 Taṣfīr al-Qurʿān, p. 198.
225 Taṣfīr al-Qurʿān, p. 206.
226 In his narration study: Al-Mīzām, 7/157.
227 See also Zayd, Al-Nashkh, 2/29, in which the author refutes the abrogation of the latter two phrases by appealing to the opening phrase – “If it had been God’s will, they would not have associated partners.”
The two verses identified by Ṭabarī as abrogated by 9:5 are more explicit in instructing the Prophet to “turn away” or “leave alone” his opponents: “Leave (dhar) those who take their religion for a mere game and distraction…” (6:70); “…And turn away (a’rid) from the polytheists” (6:106). He narrates the abrogation of the former from Qatāda; the latter is narrated from Ibn Ḥabbās with the addition that wordings “of this kind” (wa nahu), i.e. advocating tolerance of the polytheists, were all abrogated by “Wherever you encounter the idolaters, kill them” (9:5).228

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

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

228 Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, 4/3303. Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī decries the tendency to cancel out such “ethical directives” and “the moral dimension of the Islamic personality” (Fiqh al-Jihād, 1/326).
229 Shīnqī counts 6:106 as abrogated in Dafʿ Ḫām al-Ijtīrāb [p. 132] but does not mention that in Adwāʾ al-Bayān. See 4.3.2 below concerning this separate treatise.
230 Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, 4/3219. See Ibn al-Jawzāʾ, Nauṣīḳ, p. 426. Citation of parallels appears to oppose claims of abrogation, unless the exegete wishes to state that all these parallel verses are abrogated.
231 A thorough contextual study of 9:5 is in Abdel Haleem, Exploring the Qurʾān: Context and Impact.
232 Jamāl al-Qurrāʾ, 2/705. Zayd places this total at one hundred and forty (Al-Naskh, 2/10).
233 Jamāl al-Qurrāʾ, 2/705. He also uses the term “āyat al-sayf”.

—— which designates the context as one of faith and ultimate judgement, rather than worldly disputation and conflict.
supposition (ẓann), pointing out that the divergence of opinions over which verses are abrogated or abrogating is a sign that certain knowledge has not obtained in such cases.234

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

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234 Jamāl al-Qurrā’, 2/705.
236 Zarkashī, Al-Burhān, pp. 280–281. The passive participle mansa ‘is being used here to correspond to the meaning of the canonical reading of the verse (Ibn Kathīr al-Makkī and Abū ‘Amr al-Baṣrī) with “aw nansa hā” with hamza. This comes from the root nas ‘meaning “postpone”, in contrast to the majority reading “aw nansihā” which derives from nisīn (or more specifically insā) which is either “to cause to forget” or “to abandon/instruct to abandon” (Fārisī, Al-Hijja, 1/391–402).
237 Fiqh al-Jihād, 1/332. See Amin, Reclaiming Jihad, pp. 98–101 for the Qutbian distinction between “transitional” and “final” texts, based on the classical claims of abrogation. See also Islāhī’s critique of this view of “delay”, which he describes as “complete rejection” of naskh within Islamic law: Pondering Over the Qur’ān Vol. 1, pp. 328–329.
2.5 – Canonical Readings (Qirāʾāt)

2.5.1 – General Observations

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

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

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238 In the sūra surveyed, Ṭabarī discusses the impact of these readings in five places. Ibn Kathīr has two discussions (as does Muṣāṭil), and Shīnīṭī only one. There is no mention of them in Amrītsāri, Fārāḥī (i.e. his Taʾlīqāt) or Iṣlāḥī.

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

240 This corresponds with narrations recorded in Abū Dāwūd al-Sūjīstānī’s Kitāb al-Maṣāḥīf (see pp. 260, 273). Also Dānī, Al-Muṣīṣī, pp. 576–577.

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

242 This is one of the most controversial variants, but later scholars came to its defence. See Khalīl, Dījāz al-Sanīn al-Halabī, pp. 54–85. A less famous example is in 6:109, in which Ṭabarī takes the words “What would make you realise” to be directed to the believers, stating that if they were directed at the unbelievers, the final words would be lā tuʾmninā; he belittles that reading as belonging to “a few Meccans”, whereas it is now canonised in the readings of Ibn ʿĀmir (Levant) and Hamza (Iraq) – Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, 4/3307.
pattern concerning which variants each chose to mention. In terms of their approach to dealing with those readings, there are instances of reductionism (i.e. variants being explained in terms of each other), and others of pluralism (i.e. meanings treated as complementary). I will present the Group’s treatment of qirāʾāt in al-An’ām in two different ways. First, I summarise in table form Ṭabarī’s interpretation and assessment of seven variant junctures. This is followed by separate examples in which the exegetes – including Ṭabarī – used Quranic citations in the process of explaining (tawjīh) and supporting (iḥtijāj) the readings they saw fit to discuss.

2.5.2 – Early Treatment

In this table, I cite the ‘standard’ reading along with a variant which impacts upon meaning; I translate each accordingly.

Figure 4 – Ṭabarī’s Approach to Selected Variant Readings

| 23: wa-lāhi rabbīnā  
| wa-lāhi rabbānā | “By Allāh our Lord”  
| “By Allāh, O our Lord” | Prefers the latter because it is more appropriate as a response |
| 55: wa li-tastabīna sabīlū l-mujrīmīn246  
| wa li-tastabīna sabīla l-mujrīmin | “So that the way of the criminals may become clear” | Prefers the standard reading because its meaning is broader |

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

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

245 Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, 4/3151.

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

247 Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, 4/3197.
“So that you [Prophet] will recognize clearly the way of the criminals”

74: li-abihi āzarā
li-abihi āzaru

“Abraham said to his father Āzar”
“Abraham said to his father, ‘O Āzar’”

Prefers the first because it is the “majority reading”

83: narfa’u darajātin man nashā’
narfa’u darajāti man nashā’

“We raise in ranks whomever We will”
“We raise the ranks of whomever We will”

Says both are acceptable and amount to the same meaning\(^{248}\)

96: wa ja’ala l-layla sakanān
wa jā’ilu l-layli sakanān

“and He made the night a repose”
“and Maker of the night as a repose”

Says they are equally acceptable and equivalent in meaning\(^{249}\)

119: la-yudillūna bi-ahwā’ihim
la-yadillūna bi-ahwā’ihim

“They mislead [others] through their desires”
“They go astray because of their desires”

Prefers the first because it suits the context, particularly 6:116\(^{250}\)

159: farraqū dinahum
fāraqū dinahum

“Those who divided their religion”
“Those who left their religion”

Prefers the first but says that they amount to the same meaning\(^{251}\)

### 2.5.3 – Quranic Citations to Explain Readings

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

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\(^{248}\) Jāmi’ al-Bayān, 4/3251.

\(^{249}\) Jāmi’ al-Bayān, 4/3275.

\(^{250}\) Jāmi’ al-Bayān, 4/3322.

\(^{251}\) Jāmi’ al-Bayān, 4/3419.

\(^{252}\) See Bahālūz, Al-ʿAzīz wa Daʿwruh fī Taṣawwīh al-Qurān, p. 99 ff.
There is a subtle grammatical difference between the subjunctive and indicative readings of the verbs in: “They will say, ‘If only we could be sent back (nuraddu), we would not reject (lā nukadhdhiba/u) the revelations of our Lord, but be (nakūna/u) among the believers.’” (6:27). Because the subjunctive reading entails a non-declarative sentence, Ṭabarāʾī cites 32:12 and 35:37 to demonstrate that the idolaters were making an implicit promise in this verse not to reject the message again; hence their description as “liars” in the next verse makes sense.253 This problem does not present itself in the majority reading with both in the indicative (nukadhdhibu, nakūnu), as the statement can thus be interpreted as declarative and subject to being called “lies”.254

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

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

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

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

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

256 Jāmīʿ al-Bayān, 4/3198.

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

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

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

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

### 2.6 – Ḩadīths and Prophetic TQQ

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

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259 Al-Mizān, 7/280.
260 M. Rashīd Riḍā (Tafṣīr al-Manār, 7/535) hypothesises that the verse was recited with the third person in Mecca and continued to be so in Medina until the second-person reading was revealed in response to an act of concealment by its Jews. Ṭabarāʾī responds to this directly (Al-Mizān, 7/283).
261 Tafṣīr al-Qurʿān al-ʿAẓīm, 3/228.
262 Ḳāʾī al-Bayān, p. 253 (he ascribes this to Qurṭubī). See Bāzmūl, Al-Qirāʾ, 2/548–551.
264 My focus is upon marfūʿ reports (traced back to the Prophet) which constitute TQQ (especially those graded as saḥīḥ or hasan, though I would have discussed any cited for TQQ purposes by the Group). I have not considered the broader usage of ḥadīths in these exegetical works, as it would be clearly outside the scope of my study.
implications of these reports and TQQ linkages; this will impact upon the discussion of the authority of TQQ as “Prophetic method”, in Chapter 3.

2.6.1 – Keys of the Unseen

The first report is in Bukhārī’s Šāhiḥ collection, in Kitāb al-Tafsīr (“Book of Exegesis”) under Q 6:59: “The keys to the unseen (mafātiḥ al-ghayb) are five: ‘Knowledge of the Hour belongs to God; it is He who sends down the relieving rain and He who knows what is hidden in the womb. No soul knows what it will reap tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it will die; it is God who is all knowing and all aware’“265 (Q 31:34). This or similar narrations are referenced by Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr and Shinqīṭī. However, there is no mention of the report or of 31:34 in the other commentaries of the Group.266 Iṣlāḥī equates the mafātiḥ to the maqālīd (keys) of 42:12.267 Ṭabāṭabāʾī allows for this possibility but argues that its meaning as khazā in (storehouses) is better supported, as in 6:50, 15:21, 38:9, 52:37 and 63:7.268

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

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

265 In Ibn Ḥajar, Fath al-Bārī Sharḥ Šāhiḥ al-Bukhārī, 8/205; see also 8/543.
266 I.e. Muqāṭil, Amrītsaīr, Iṣlāḥī. Farāhī’s Taʿlīqāt do not include 6:59. Ṭabāṭabāʾī does discuss it in a separate section from his bayān of the verse, as described below.
267 Tadabbur, 3/68.
268 Al-Mizān, 7/127.
269 This raises a broader question of how ḥadīths are categorised by the maḥaddithān as relevant to tafsīr and linked to specific verses.
270 Ālūsī, Rūḥ al-Maʿānī, 8/203.
He further argues that these five represent essentially the same category of the unseen – namely foreknowledge of events – whereas *al-ghayb* is a much broader concept, as the verse itself indicates.  

2.6.2 – *Ẓulm* and *Shirk*

The second example is very famous and narrated in various wordings, the following being that of *Kitāb al-Īmān* (“Book of Faith”) of Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīh* collection: “Upon the revelation of ‘Those who believe and do not mix their belief with wrongdoing’ [wa lam yalbīṣū ʾīmānahum bi-ẓulm – 6:82], the companions of the Messenger of God found it onerous and said: Which of us does not wrong himself? So the Messenger of God said: It is not as you suppose; rather, it is as Luqmān said to his son: ‘O my son, do not associate partners (shirk) with God: verily, shirk is a tremendous ẓulm’.” (31:13) – this is cited in various narrations by Ṭabarî, Ibn Kathîr, Shinqîṭî and Ṭabāṭabâ’î.  

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

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271 *Al-Mizān* 7/153. He uses the expression “ʿāla taqḍīr siḥḥatīhā”, which implies that he is unconvinced of the report’s authenticity.


273 Amrîsâri cites 31:13 but not the report. Islâhî states that the meaning is shirk, but cites neither the report, nor the verse! ‘Alwânî (*Tafsîr Sûrat al-An’am*, pp. 89–93) departs from the context and direct meaning of the verse to elaborate on broader concepts of ʾamn (security) on a societal level, and likewise ẓulm as a multifarious concept. Despite arguing in his introduction that all or most Prophetic clarifications were based on intraquranic considerations, he does not mention this ḥadîth or link the verse to 31:13.

274 Ṭabâṭabâ’î discusses this report in his bayān section (*Al-Mizān*, 7/210) while critiquing a quotation from M. Rashîd Riḍâ, then again alongside other traditions – including Shi‘î reports – in his narration study (ibid, 7/217 ff.). It is not clear from his explanation how the Prophet’s clarification would have functioned as solace to his companions (i.e. those who were confused and raised the query).

275 *Al-Mizān*, 7/208.
The focus in the immediate discussion has been how the exegetes, especially those who took *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* as their primary approach, dealt with this report which is its best-known example. Whereas most adopted it in a straightforward fashion, we have seen that Ẓabātabāʾī limited its applicability to the verse and its term *zulm*. Before him, the Muʿtazilite exegete Zamakhshārī maintained that lesser sins (*maʿāṣī* amounting to *fisq*) are indeed intended by this verse, a view which elicited criticism from later exegetes due to its disregard for the ḥadīth. In Chapter 3, we return to this report to examine a distinct question: does it genuinely constitute an example of Prophetic TQQ, and what does this entail for the importance and relative authority of this method? There are also questions of chronology (between al-Anʿām and Luqmān) which we shall consider at that point.

2.7 – Quranism

2.7.1 – Description

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

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

277 The proponents of this view are generally known in Arabic as *Qurʾāniyyūn*, but there is no direct equivalent used for ‘Quranism’. The phenomenon is also known as *inkār al-hadīth*. Labels used by the various groups themselves include ‘Qurʾān Only’ and “Submitters”. 
termed Traditionism, especially the “radical hermeneutics” of the Taymiyyan trend. However, between the two, there has always been a range of approaches and emphases in the balance between the Quranic text and the narrations purporting to situate and explain it. Farahi’s school, for example, exhibits a cautious approach to the asbâb literature and other hadîth reports which explain individual verses in a way which conflicts with their understanding of the sûra’s structure and arguments.

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

278 See Saleh, ‘Historiography,’ p. 24. I have already noted in Chapter 1 my disagreement with Saleh’s proposition that Suyyû‘î had signed up fully to Ibn Taymiyya’s hadîth-exclusiveist approach. Stephen Burge builds on this theory in his study of Suyyû‘î’s methodology in Al-Dur al-Manthûr, but he alludes in his conclusion to the possibility of reading it instead as “a supplement to other exegeses… a means by which someone reading an exegesis in the Sunni core can easily see the relevant ahadîth related to a particular exegesis” (Burge, ‘Scattered Pearls,’ p. 271). I cannot see a basis to assume that Suyyû‘î considered Al-Dur as a full tafsîr work: even the title is ambiguous in that regard. Moreover, I see Suyyû‘î’s broader exegetical oeuvre along with Al-Iqtîn – which is full of linguistic tools etc. to interpret the Qur’an – as evidence for my position rather than that of Saleh and Burge. Suyyû‘î does not comment on every verse (or complete verse) in this commentary: in Sûrat al-An’ám, for example, there are reports related to 116 verse-fragments, representing a smaller number of verses (Al-Dur al-Manthûr, 6/5 ff.). To demonstrate Al-Dur’s utility as a thematic resource: Muḥammad b. ‘Alî al-Shawkânî praises it in the introduction to his own exegesis, stating that he intends to build on it and combine “nuvâyra and dinîya” (Fath al-Qadîr, 1/71).

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

280 Regarding Yüksel, a Kurdish–Turkish–American writer influenced by Rashad Khalîfî (d. 1990; his own translation is not substantial enough for this study) see Musa, Hadîth as Scripture, p. 100. A figure who influenced Ahmed – and whose Exposition of the Holy Qur’an (Lahore: Tolu-I-Islam Trust, 2010, translated from Urdu) would have been included if I had encountered it earlier – is Ghulam Ahmad Parwez (d. 1985), who is discussed extensively in Brown, Rethinking Tradition and Baljone, Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation.
disputed passages”; if this applies to “clergy” by virtue of their training, the very endeavour of explaining the Qurʾān must surely be problematic from this standpoint. Indeed, the editors go on to insist, uncontroversially, that their annotations “do not constitute a source or authority” comparable to divine scripture. However, the next sentence suggests that theirs is “the best available English translation and the most accurate in its rendering the meaning of the scripture.” Similar claims to objectivity and superiority are found with Ahmed, who states in his preface: “The work, although close to translation, is more of an understanding from within the Qurʾān itself.”

2.7.2 – Evaluation

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

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282 *A Reformist Translation*, p. 11.
283 Ahmed, *The Qurʾān as it Explains Itself*, vi.
284 Manṣūr was an associate of Khalīfah until the latter claimed prophethood. See Musa, *Hadith as Scripture*, p. 103. The letter appears on his website: www.ahl-alquran.com/arabic/printpage.php?doc_type=1&doc_id=12
(114) because it is perfect, unchanging (115) and the only source of certainty – unlike hadiths which generally do not rise above the level of speculation (zann) (116). This interpretation, with which Yüksel concurs, removes the passage from its context – a dialogue with the Prophet’s disbelieving opponents – to a commentary on actions by Muslims which had not yet occurred.

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

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

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283 This verse was discussed under 2.3.1 above. The Quranist commentators have taken kalima here to refer to the Qurʾān, a view which has a precedent in Ṭabari. Ahmed uses this verse in his Introduction [xii] as proof that “The Qurʾān explains itself”.

286 A Reformist Translation, p. 133.

287 A Reformist Translation, p. 124.

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

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

290 A Reformist Translation, p. 131, and see ʿĪsāḥ’s opinion in the earlier thematic discussion of kitāb. Dakake (Study Quran, p. 353) notes that if this is taken to imply the legal sufficiency of the Qurʾān, this may be because further sources of law are implicit in the Qurʾān, such as Prophetic sunna (33:21, 47:33, 59:7) and consensus of the believers (3:110).
people are setting things right”. Using this parenthesis, Ahmed has combined the two interpretations of the clause “bi-zulm” in the latter verse. He has taken zulm in al-An’ām to pertain to the rights of fellow humans, while in the verse of Hūd, he has made it a question of belief (rights of God). Simultaneously, he has used the latter part of 11:117 to support his reading of 6:47. In verse 92, Ahmed insists that the common translation about “guarding prayers” (’alā ṣalātihim yuhāfizūn) “makes no sense”, and renders the expression as “They ensure following of the Divine Commands”. He remarks along with 6:101 – which asks “How can [God] have a son when He never chose for Himself a mate?” – that Jesus, too, must have had a father according to divinely created laws. Ahmed translates 6:156 with an interpretation of dirāsā which makes the verse about falsification of earlier scriptures: “…and we remained unaware of what they originally read” – he cites 2:79/101, 3:78 and 5:48 as parallels.

Further examples from Yüksel: he interprets 6:56 to indicate that Muḥammad worshipped idols before his mission, rendering “innī nūḥūt an a’budā” as: “I am warned to stop serving those you call upon...”, and citing 42:52 and 93:7 in support.

Regarding 6:68, “If you encounter those who make fun of Our signs, then turn away from them until they move on to a different topic”: he takes this as an indicator of freedom of belief/unbelief, providing other verses supporting this principle (6:110.

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

292 Ṭabarī prefers the opinion that zulm here refers to the people’s wrongdoing, specifically shirk, making reference to 31:13 (Tāmī’al-Bayān, 4/3348). Ṭabāṭabāʾī takes the other view, i.e. “wrongfully, unjustly” (Al-Mizān, 7/368).


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

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

296 *The Qur’ān as it Explains Itself*, p. 141.

297 *A Reformist Translation*, pp. 125, 131.
2:256, 4:140, 10:99, 18:29, 88:20-21)\textsuperscript{298}; he explains 6:110 in a way similar to the exegetes of the Group (particularly Amritsarī, Iṣlāḥī and Ṭabāṭabāʾī), citing 7:146 to say that it is prejudice and arrogance which prevents people from perceiving God’s signs.\textsuperscript{299} Finally, he links the root meaning in 6:79 – “the One who created (faṭara) the heavens and the earth” – to 21:30, which he takes to allude to the Big Bang theory (and 21:104 to what is known as the Big Crunch).\textsuperscript{300}

2.8 – Context and Structure

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

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

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{298} A Reformist Translation, p. 132.
\item \textsuperscript{299} A Reformist Translation, p. 133.
\item \textsuperscript{300} A Reformist Translation, p. 132.
\item \textsuperscript{301} Cf. study of the sūra in its own right, as a form of tafsīr or literary analysis. An example of a structural study is in Neuwirth, Studien, pp. 290–291. She divides the sūra into three main sections (1–73 with three sub-groups, and further passage divisions; 74–153 with two sub-groups and further passage divisions; and 154–165 with three short passages).
\item \textsuperscript{302} Coherence in the Qurʾān, p. 1; cf. Andrew Rippin’s assessment of this “rhetorical move by contemporary writers that serves to justify discarding the legacy of earlier times” (‘Contemporary Scholarly Understandings of Qur’anic Coherence,’ p. 4).
munāsabāt), it is only a further step to assume that the entire sūra may be connected in this way. The strongest such claims are advanced by the Farāhian school in that they posit a unifying theme or “axis” (ʿamūd) as a central part of their theory. For al-Anʿām, per Islāhī, this is the theme of inviting the idolaters of Quraysh within the broader group theme (i.e. Q 6-9) of “Islam as the religion of Abraham”. There is a potential circularity in the process of deducing and applying this ʿamūd, which remains a matter of opinion and ijtiḥād.

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

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

303 Mir, Coherence, p. 86.
304 Taʿlīqāt, 1/200. This interpretation is not novel, as Farāhī himself cites a quotation from Ibn ʿAbbās to the effect that the condemnation in 6:144 ("fa-mun aẓlām") pertains to the individual who altered the sharīʿa of Ishmael (see Rāzī, Majāṣīʿ al-Ghayh, 7/199 – he does not accept this). The suggestion could be made that the phrase in al-Anʿām “recalls” that in al-Baqara, except that this may be challenged on the basis of chronology.
305 Taʿlīqāt, 1/201.
appreciation of its connections and semantic flow, despite their overall “atomism”. Indeed, one researcher who focused on Ṭabarī’s use of context has suggested that he took Sūrat al-Anʿām to revolve around “disbelievers who equate others to God”, as he has referred to this phrase (bi-rabbihim ya’didūn) at least thirteen times throughout his commentary upon the sūra.306 The theme of associating partners with God is prominent here: indeed, the Arabic word shirk and its derivatives occur more frequently in al-Anʿām (twenty-nine times) than any other sūra.307 Hence Ṭabarī cited the same verse from Sūrat Luqmān associated with 6:82 – “Verily, shirk is a tremendous zulm” (31:13) – in his explanation of the expression “bi-zulm” in 6:131, as though a correspondence has been established between these two terms, at least in Sūrat al-Anʿām.308

2.9 – Conclusions

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

306 Qāsim, Dalālat al-Sīyāq al-Qurʾānī, 2/442–444. This is fairly similar to Išlāḥī’s putative ʿanūd.
307 Via the Dictionary feature on the Qurʾān Wiki website (www.quran-wiki.com). The next highest count is Q 9, with twelve occurrences.
308 Jāmiʿ al-Bayʿūn, 4/3348.
Collectively, I would argue that the Group I selected, together with the supplementary resources, represent the best available material on TQQ, including its radical trajectory among the Quranists. While some (notably Ṭabarānī) are richer in their combination between citations, analysis and thematic study, no single work would suffice to represent the breadth of TQQ study in Muslim scholarship to date. Ṭabarānī, more so than Muqāṭīl, demonstrates that this type of material is found quite frequently among the earliest authorities. Ibn Kathīr, if we assume that he intended to implement Ibn Taymiyya’s “best methods” schema, demonstrates that it is impractical to exhaust the Qurʾān before consulting the Sunna, and this was not his method even if the Quranic parallels tend to be cited first. Regarding the Farāhīan nāẓm exegetes, I admit that the methodology employed here (focused almost exclusively on intraquranic citations) was not ideal to highlight the depth of their approach and contribution; however, it has succeeded in bringing them into a comparative analysis not seen before.

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

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

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309 This is not to devalue works which were excluded because they did not extend to al-An’ām, such as the commentaries on fourteen short sūras by Bint al-Shāṭī’. 
verse. If novelty is desirable in its own right, then more is to be found among the Quranists, but there is very little depth to their analysis because they proceed from the assumption that the Qur’ān is clear. There is certainly scope for a more detailed comparison between the TQQ commentaries and those incorporating a broader range of approaches and opinions.\textsuperscript{310} Also deserving of further exploration is the chronological aspect in citations, as well as considering any pattern in linkage between sūras (e.g. the two Prophetic citations of Luqmān to explain verses in al-An’ām).

\textsuperscript{310} This can include such encyclopaedic works as Rūh al-Maʿānī by Ālūsī, and indeed the exegesis of Tabarî himself, as it is not defined as Qur’ān-primary (similarly Ibn Kathîr). This further study can identify cases where TQQ conclusions are overruled by other considerations, such as hadîth. It can also identify the kind of questions addressed in the broader tafsîr tradition which are missed out in a work which focuses exclusively upon one method.
Chapter 3

Theories and Principles in TQQ

3.0 – Introduction

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

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

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

3.1.1 – Definition

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

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

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

¹ Neuwirth, “Two Faces of the Qurʾān,” pp. 142–145.
² Neuwirth observes that the traditional chronological apparatus assigned to the text in the form of revelatory periods and contexts “does not prevent readers from applying a purely synchronic approach when explaining texts through others” (“Two Faces,” p. 143 note 3). Although TQQ does depend upon a largely synchronic reading, there is a role for chronology in naskh and that which resembles it.
words attributed to Muḥammad. In arguing for this assumption, Hamza appeals to the “peculiarity of style” and “unusual narrative form” which are displayed consistently in the Qurʾān, compared to contemporaneous materials. By “neither extraneous or absent”, I mean that there neither are there any non-Quranic passages between its covers, nor is there anything outside those covers which ought to be part of any intraquranic analysis.

3.1.2 – Unity in Islamic Scholarship

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

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

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

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

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4 Ibn Hishām, Mughnī t-Labīb, p. 207.
5 Al-Muwāfaqāt, 3/420. Wael Hallaq argues that, in this respect, Shāṭībī “came closer to the doctrine of the exegetes than to that of fellow legal scholars” (‘The Primacy of the Qurʾān in Shāṭībī’s Legal Theory,’ in Hallaq and Little (eds.), Islamic Studies, pp. 71, 75–76).
6 Al-Muwāfaqāt, 3/420.
point] intended by the revelation, namely to establish the various categories of rulings; still others as a conclusion which refer to what preceded in order to emphasise, etc. However, Shāṭibī goes on to state that it is “more evident” to say that these sūras do not, together, constitute one complete discourse, in that they have been separated by the basmala formula (“In the name of God…”). The more compelling argument he advances is that “most verses” were revealed in response to situations and contexts (asbāb) such that “their independent revelation shows that they can be understood in isolation [from each other]”. A response to this could be that the previously revealed texts formed part of the very context which made it possible for the new locutions to be understood (intertextually) before becoming part of a corpus (then studied intratextually). We return to this issue shortly.

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

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


10 Translations for these include, respectively: the Preserved Tablet, the Source of the Book, and the Concealed Writ. See Q 85:22, 13:39/43:4 and 56:78 with commentaries.
The following are illustrative narrations as presented in Suyūṭī’s compendium *Al-Itqān fi ‘Ulām al-Qur’ān*:

- Hākim, Bayhaqī and others narrate via Mansūr, from Saʿīd b. Jubayr, that Ibn ʿAbbās said: “The Qurʾān was sent down on the Night of Glory as one unit (*jumlatan waḥidatan*) to the heaven of this world (*samāʾ al-dunyā*), and it was [as though among] the positions of the stars (*bi-mawāqīt al-nujūm*). Then God would send it down upon His Messenger piece by piece.”

- Hākim and Bayhaqī also narrate, along with Nasāʾī, via Dāwūd b. Abī Hind, from ʿIkrima, that Ibn ʿAbbas said: “The Qurʾān was sent down as one unit to the nearest heaven (*al-samāʾ al-dunyā*) on the Night of Glory, then it was sent down thereafter over twenty years.” Then he recited: “They cannot put any argument to you without Our bringing you the truth and the best explanation” (Q 25:33) and “It is a recitation that We have revealed in parts, so that you can recite it to people at intervals; We have sent it down little by little” (Q 17:106).

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

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

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

13 However, see ‘Abbās, *Itqān al-Burhān*, 1/100 ff. for a critical discussion of multiple revelations.
sent down to him all at once?’ We sent it in this way to strengthen your heart [Prophet]; We gave it to you in gradual revelation. They cannot put any argument (mathāl) to you without Our bringing you the truth and the best explanation (tafsīr)” (Q 25:32-33). It should be noted that there is no mention or negation here of a prior heavenly transference, but instead the wisdom of its gradual revelation is explained with reference to two recipients: the Prophet and the people. The other verse cited in the narration, 17:106, focuses upon the latter.

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

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

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

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

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14 See Saleh, ‘A Piecemeal Qurʿān,’ p. 48; and Sinai, ‘Qurʿānic self-referentiality as a strategy of self-authorization’ in Wild (ed.), Self-Referentiality in the Qurʿān, p. 120. Austin Droge (The Qurʿān: A New Annotated Translation, p. 80) notes that tafsīl of God’s verses, in this and previous scriptures, is a thread through Sharī‘at al-Qurʿān (verses 55, 97-98, 114, 119, 126, 154).

15 Cf. the use of this term in opposition to tashābah (discussed in Section 3.3.1 below).

16 Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʿān, 7/125.
argument for the integrity of its compilation and preservation. In a similar way, internal, literary evidence can be employed to support (or critique) the assumption that there is cohesion and unity between various parts of the Qurʾān. This is the approach we shall take in the next section with reference to a range of scholars and literary theories.

3.1.3 – Evidence for Unity

(a) The Need for Clarification

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

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

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

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17 See Sadeghi, ‘The Chronology of the Qurʾān,’ p. 288, where the author concludes that his study “reveals the stylistic continuity and distinctiveness of the text as a whole” and that “style backs the hypothesis of one author”.

18 Ibn Taymiyya, Muqaddima, p. 93.

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

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

21 Similar can be said of an earlier discussion by Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004) of the phenomenon of iqtiṣāṣ (which he relates to the concept of maḏm of the Qurʾān), which means to “follow up” an idea or term expressed in one verse with allusions to that concept in other verses. This implies a chronology between the usages. See Al-Ṣāḥībī’s Fiqh al-Lughah (p. 181 ff.) – this was later cited by Zarkashī (Al-Burhān, p. 635)
an intentional relationship between the two categories, i.e. that the existence of detail elsewhere made it unproblematic for certain verses to be expressed summarily – and this is the very Principle of Unity we are describing. When this is assumed, it follows that expansion upon unclear passages should be sought within the broader corpus.

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

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

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

22 Al-Iqūn, 4/1426.
23 Al-Iqūn, 4/1426.
24 Zarkashī, Al-Burhān, p. 348 ff.
25 Adwāʾ al-Bayān, pp. 7–15; I summarised this in Chapter 1. See more on Zarkashī in 3.4.1 below.
26 Cf. the concept of “neediness” used to support use of external sources to explain the Qurʾān, especially the Sunna (below in 3.4.3).
which seems to give agency to the text in place of the interpreter – to be, in reality, a statement about the cohesive nature of the Qurʾān as a whole, and the dependency of some parts upon others.

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

**(b) Self-Referentiality**

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

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

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

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

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

(c) Diachronic Cross-References

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

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

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30 Pondering Over the Qurʾān Vol. 1, p. 41.

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

32 This term is used by some modern authors including Shinqiṭī. It is also used for the linguistic concept of “reference”, as in Anīs, Al-Iḥāla fī l-Qurʾān al-Karīm.
the original ruling, whereas Muqātit argued that there is abrogation (i.e. firm prohibition after mere discouragement). Brief mention was made also of 16:118 – “We forbade to the Jews what We have recounted to you earlier…”33 – which exegetes link back to 6:146, which specifies “every animal with claws, and the fat of cattle and sheep (etc.)”.

For reference made in al-An’ām to an external passage, I outlined the opinions concerning 6:119, “He has already fully explained what He has forbidden you”. This is often linked to 5:3, but that is generally agreed to be a late revelation. Some linked it to 16:115, given that al-Nāḥl is classed as Meccan and therefore could be argued to precede al-An’ām. However, this complicates the preceding claim that 16:118 refers back to 6:146, a point which Shinqīṭī actually uses as evidence for al-Nāḥl being a later revelation.34 As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the matter could be resolved by positing staggered revelation of these verses, rather than one sūra being revealed prior to the other in full. Assuming it is a mutual cross-reference, this raises an interesting question concerning the relationship between the two sūras.

(d) Synchronic Structure

The preceding discussion highlights the significance of diachronic reading of the Qur’ān, which is unavoidable when analysing passages which make explicit mention of “earlier” revelations. On the other hand, the mushaf today has a received structure, in which the āyas and sūras are arranged in the familiar way. It is now common for academic studies to explore the compositional logic of individual sūras, as the study of “the Qur’ān as literature” receives greater attention.35 This has been taking place for longer in Muslim exegetical scholarship, as represented in discussions of munāsabāt (linear connections and flow) and the later theories of nazm/nizām (coherence, structure) advanced by Farāḥī and Islāḥī.36 Identifying the arrangement of a particular sūra (or the broader structure of the Qur’ān) may be employed to various

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33 Ali Quli Qara’ī translation.
34 Adwā’ al-Bayān, p. 269.
35 For a round-up of individual sūrah studies by scholars such as Neuwirth, Robinson and Cuypers, see Randhawa, ‘A Bibliography of Studies in English on the Coherence and Structure of the Qur'ān’s Suras’ on the Bayyinah Blog (http://blog.bayyinah.com/nazm-bibliography – accessed 1/9/2017).
36 See Chapter 4 for more on both topics.
ends: it may tell the researcher something about the history of its compilation, and may be used as evidence for the integrity of the processes of canonisation and preservation. The latter is not exclusive to apologetic contexts, but a stronger claim is that the very fact of a large corpus such as the Qurʾān having a coherent final structure, despite having been assembled from piecemeal revelations, is indicative of a miraculous source or divine hand in its composition. The other key purpose in structural analysis is to inform interpretation, and this is the central aim of Farāhī, who argues for Quranic structure in *Dalāʾīl al-Nīzām*. In the present context, my purpose in raising this issue is a combination of the two, namely: that evidence for intentional structure in the Qurʾān lends support to the Principle of Unity which maintains that it is a single corpus; this, in turn, has implications for interpreting any part of the text.

According to Farāhī, an understanding of the organisation of the Qurʾān and its ideas must be derived from the text itself. Unfortunately, his writings on this topic were published in an incomplete form; however, the following excerpt illustrates his conception of how organisational coherence and unity is deduced from the Qurʾān:

> The Quranic text itself demonstrates in the majority of sūras a concern for certain features not found in any discourse which is assembled without care for organisation. One such feature is the [rhyming] verse-endings (fawāṣil) found in numerous long sūras. Another is repeated verses [motifs] as in al-Mursalāt (Q 77) and al-Raḥmān (Q 55). Another is for verses to be connected by means of a style of wording (uslūb zāhir), such as the verse 9:67, “The male and female hypocrites (al-munāfiqūn wa-l-munāfiqāt) belong to each other (baʿduhum min baʿd)” being followed by numerous verses connected by such wording. Likewise, meanings may connect to each other in an obvious fashion, as you see in stories [within a single sūra].

These considerations are all linguistic and formal; however, Farāhī states that it is the semantic keys which demonstrate nizām more compellingly, yet identifying the latter requires deeper reflection. A core aspect of his theory concerns the unity of the sūra; he considers each sūra to revolve around an axis known as the ʿamūd (literally: pillar). Despite acknowledging that deducing the unifying ʿamūd is extremely difficult

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37 This motivation is implicit in the structural presentations in Khan and Randhawa, *Divine Speech*.

38 Marginal note appended to *Rasāʿīl al-Imām al-Fanāḥī*, p. 39.

(particularly for the longer and more complex sūras), Farāhī claims that its discovery is “like the emergence of dawn by which the entire sūra is illuminated”.

The Farāhian school further maintains that the sūras are arranged in groups (and pairs, according to ʿIṣlāḥī), amounting to a meaningful structure for the entire Qurʾān. Rather than discussing them in detail here, my purpose is simply to highlight that such claims, particularly at their most intuitive and well-evidenced, provide justification for treating the Qurʾān as a unified whole.

3.1.4 – Challenges to this Principle

It has already become apparent that the Principle of Unity has to contend with the historical process of the Qurʾān’s canonisation. Moreover, any reading which appeals to the structure of the Qurʾān’s verses and chapters, and to the textual environment of any particular passage under examination, may also be in tension with the historical approach suggested by the genre of asbāb al-nuzūl, the circumstances and contexts (or more literally: causes) of revelation. Muslim tradition holds that revelation came gradually over two periods of time corresponding to the Meccan and Medinan phases of Muḥammad’s prophetic career. Revelations would come to him in fragments as short as a verse or less, and as long as a whole sūra. The asbāb literature provides narrations concerning particular passages and the times, contexts and questions which occasioned their revelation. Exegetes incorporate such maʿthūr (transmitted) data, to varying extents, into their study of the Qurʾān; this involves assessing strength, relevance and impact, and sometimes negotiating conflicting reports.

A strong dependence on asbāb may lead to an “atomistic” approach to interpretation, in which the historical context of each verse is given precedence over
its compiled context. Such a reading, in effect, seeks to restore chronology or historicity to a text which was “flattened” by the process of canonisation. Efforts are directed to seeking (perhaps, at times, hypothesising) historical contexts rather than reading between the lines of the text itself. A commitment to this approach would lead one to agree with the critique levelled at those who looked for munāsaba between verses and chapters, pointing out, in the words of Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām quoted in Chapter 1, that connecting verses that were revealed separately is:

…a task which cannot be fulfilled except with flimsy [hypotheses] which ought to be avoided in reference to any fine speech, let alone the very finest. The Qurʾān was revealed over a period of twenty-odd years with various rulings and in a variety of contexts (asbāb), and such cannot then be connected together.

The point being made is that contiguous verses which were revealed separately are bound more strongly to their respective time-contexts than to their position in the text; there is, therefore, no significance for the interpreter in their having been placed together subsequently. This would apply a fortiori to verses in different chapters, separated by both time and space.

As noted previously, the doctrine of the Preserved Tablet is integral to resolving this tension between cohesion and fragmentation. It may be visualised like a jigsaw puzzle from which pieces are sent to a recipient in an apparently chaotic sequence, then this recipient must place the pieces in their appropriate places until the puzzle is reassembled in its original form. The image here requires that the recipient (the Prophet) be instructed with these positions, and that he ensure that they are placed correctly as they arrive: this corresponds to the doctrine of tawqīf (divine mandate). One expression of this is in Zarkashī’s citation from Manfalūṭī, mentioned previously in Chapter 1:

Those who said that one should not seek after the contextual connection (munāsaba) for Quranic verses, in that they relate to unconnected events, were mistaken. The reality of the matter is that their revelation (tanzīl) [was] in accordance with events, but their compiled order (tartīb) is in accordance with [divine] wisdom (ḥikma). Hence the muṣḥaf [in our hands], like the šuhuf [written by scribe-angels] is in agreement

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43 See Farāhī on why scholars turn away from nazzīn in Dalāʾīl al-Nīṣām (Rasāʾīl, pp. 34–38).
44 Quoted in Biqāʿī, Nazm al-Durar, 1/6.
with the contents of the Concealed Writ (al-Kitāb al-maknūn) [see Q 56:78]. Its sūras and āyās are arranged by divine mandate.\textsuperscript{45}

Manfalūṭī goes on to compare this situation to a scholar who is asked about various issues and responds with Quranic verses according to their relevance; when he comes to recite the Book for himself, he follows only the compiled order which is “as it was sent down in one totality to bayt al-ʾizza (the noble abode)”.\textsuperscript{46} After citing this, Zarkashī notes that the tawqīf opinion is the preponderant one (rājīḥ) in Muslim scholarship.\textsuperscript{47}

Knowledge of asbāb has long been emphasised as part of Quranic and exegetical sciences, although classical works have also acknowledged the potential tension between revelatory and compositional contexts, expressed in terms of ‘umūm al-lafẓ (universality of wording) versus khusūṣ al-sabab (particularity of referent as indicated by revelatory context).\textsuperscript{48} The quote from Māturīdī above sheds light on the utility of the asbāb literature: it is an attempt to reconstruct the contextual knowledge of the Prophet’s Companions gained through witnessing the revelation and its engagement with specific events and questions. In this connection, scholars quote a saying from ‘Abd-Allāh b. Mas‘ūd: “There is no verse in God’s Book except that I know concerning whom it was revealed and where it was revealed.”\textsuperscript{49} In the study of balāgha, the rhetoricians refer to the concept of maqām, the situation in which speech is uttered, and the need for that speech to be appropriate. However, it is straightforward to argue that, while the original situation helps to clarify the intent of the speaker (or divine locution), the very nature of the Qurʾān’s arrangement (non-chronological) indicates that its import is not to be limited by revelatory context. Rather, once the verse ‘slots in’ to its pre-determined position in the sūra, it may be understood on its own terms, and in light of its surrounding verses.\textsuperscript{50}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{45} Al-Burhān, p. 42.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Al-Burhān, p. 43. This term corresponds to the “lowest heaven” in earlier quotations; see Zurqānī, Manāhil al-Tafsīr, 1/37–38.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Al-Burhān, 43. The difference of opinion pertains to the order of sūras overall, not the order of āyās within them – see Zurqānī, Manāhil, 1/278 ff. See also Farāhī, Dalāʾil (in Rasāʾil, p. 52).
\item \textsuperscript{48} See for example Suyūṭī, Al-Iṣqān, 1/196 ff.
\item \textsuperscript{49} Ibn Taymiyya, Muqaddima fī Usūl al-Tafsīr, p. 96.
\item \textsuperscript{50} See 4.4 below regarding “Contextual Methods”.
\end{itemize}
Sabab-Scepticism (Synchronism)

Having noted the nuances in exegetical scholarship generally, it is pertinent to describe the tendency among some exegetes to limit the use of asbāb explicitly. Some clear examples are found within Indian scholarship, especially in the TQQ works already explored in Chapter 2. Critical ideas concerning asbāb in the hermeneutical treatise of Shāh Walī-Allāh Dihlawī were quoted at length by Amritsarī at the beginning of his exegesis. Here I summarise those points from two separate sections of Al-Fawz al-Kabīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr. Some of Dihlawī’s remarks concern the compilations in which asbāb material is to be found: on the one hand, dedicated collections by the likes of Ibn Isḥāq, Wāqidī and Kalbī contain a majority of unreliable narrations according to the standards of ḥadīth scholarship; on the other hand, the broader ḥadīth collections mix asbāb with extraneous material of little relevance to the exegete.

Even when the relevant reports are identified and authenticated, Dihlawī prescribes caution in understanding the import of certain recurrent expressions. For example, the Companions may say that a verse “was revealed concerning (nazalat fī) such-and-such”, yet this may not describe the actual context of revelation. Rather, it may mean that the verse – or the core ruling it expresses – applies to that situation (which may even have occurred later). Indeed, a narrator might describe an incident to illustrate the kind of people concerning whom the verse was revealed, without intending to claim that the verse came at that specific time and in direct reference to those described. The Prophet may have recited that verse at a later occasion due to its relevance (even partial), and this may be described with the expression “…and so God revealed (fa-anzala) this verse”. This is because these words can conceivably

51 My choice of al-An‘ām for the case study was not ideal for a comparison of how asbāb reports were treated by the various exegetes, because this sūra is often considered to have been revealed completely, or mostly, as one unit. Nevertheless, Hilālī and Naṣr list reports in relation to twenty-one verses or passages of al-An‘ām (Al-Iṣāb, 2/130–166). The majority are graded as “weak” or “fabricated”. Muzaynī in Al-Muḥarrar (pp. 523–537) only discusses four cases drawn from the major ḥadīth collections.
53 Al-Fawz al-Kabīr, p. 60.
54 Al-Fawz, p. 55.
55 Al-Fawz, p. 55. See also Suyūṭī, Al-Iṣāb, 1/208.
56 Al-Fawz, p. 56.
refer to the Prophet’s own divinely guided reasoning, by which he applied an earlier verse to a new situation; or it may be that the verse was sent down more than once.\textsuperscript{57} Another type of report describes chronology, such as Ibn ʿUmar saying that Q 9:34 was revealed “before zakāt”. In cases like this, Dihlawī maintains that it refers to conceptual rather than literal priority – hence 9:34 is conceptually prior to the detailed discourses on zakāt despite being a late revelation.\textsuperscript{58}

Closer to the purpose of this discussion is a further set of problems for taking \textit{asbāb} accounts at face value presented by the nature of Quranic discourse, specifically the contextual flow of verses in their compositional order. Sometimes one verse causes a question to arise in the listener’s mind, so the next verse addresses that question. The early authorities would sometimes express that question as though it were the \textit{sabab}, even though it may not have been given voice at the time. Indeed, it is often implausible that a Quranic passage was revealed in separate portions as the \textit{asbāb} reports imply.\textsuperscript{59} If the preceding point seems to attribute such statements to the \textit{ijtiḥād} and inference of the early authorities, a further claim by Dihlawī goes even further: he suggests that they would sometimes notice an obscure allusion in the text and describe a context that could conceivably explain it – then later scholars mistook those for actual claims of \textit{asbāb}.\textsuperscript{60}

For Dihlawī, the \textit{asbāb} reports, despite these inherent complications, are indispensable for the \textit{mufassir} in several situations. When there is extensive reference to events at the time of the Prophet, such as battles, then the story must be sourced and summarised as part of the \textit{tafs̱ir}.\textsuperscript{61} Furthermore, any account which modifies the apparent sense of the verse must be taken into account, such as particularisation (\textit{takhṣīṣ}).\textsuperscript{62} Whenever a verse presents a puzzle which requires contextualisation, the \textit{sabab} literature can provide the appropriate solution (\textit{tawjīḥ}). An example is the reason

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{57} \textit{Al-Fawz}, p. 56. See Faḍl ʿAbbās’ critique of the claim that certain verses were revealed more than once (\textit{Itqān al-Burhān}, 1/132 ff.).
\item \textsuperscript{58} \textit{Al-Fawz}, p. 58. This may mean that it refers to the broader vice of hoarding wealth despite pressing communal needs, i.e. its revelation and message do not follow from the specific obligation of zakāt.
\item \textsuperscript{59} \textit{Al-Fawz}, p. 57.
\item \textsuperscript{60} \textit{Al-Fawz}, p. 98.
\item \textsuperscript{61} \textit{Al-Fawz}, p. 97.
\item \textsuperscript{62} \textit{Al-Fawz}, p. 56.
\end{itemize}
for the expression *lā junāh* ("There is no blame") being applied to the obligatory pilgrimage rite of walking between the Ṣafā and Marwa hills: this is explained by the report which states that some Arabs used to avoid these hills (due to the presence of idols).\(^{63}\)

These detailed remarks from a scholar who preceded Farāhī can aid in understanding the latter’s motivation in minimising the incorporation of *asbāb* reports in his *nizām/nazīm* approach to interpretation. In his view, the context of revelation should be deduced from the text itself, “just as an expert doctor identifies the ailment a patient is suffering from by simply analysing the medicines mentioned in the prescription by another doctor”.\(^{64}\) He illustrates his argument with appeal to the essential nature of eloquent and effective discourse:

> We experience that an expert orator delivers a speech regarding conditions and requirements before him, in such a way that he does not mention a particular issue, yet his speech covers all the pertinent issues. Likewise, sometimes he mentions a particular person or incident, but his address is all embracing and universal in nature.\(^ {65}\)

In light of Dihlawī’s analysis of the *ijtihād*-based statements of the early authorities, Farāhī’s proposal to deduce contexts from the text is less radical than it may appear. Moreover, he is willing to consider “external” reports of *asbāb al-nuzūl*, but only those which are “in harmony with the context of the *sūra* rather than those which disrupt its coherence”.\(^ {66}\)

With this, I have demonstrated how some of the scholars who wished to prioritise the Qur’ān as a resource for its own interpretation have dealt practically and theoretically with the challenge posed by external *asbāb* reports which have the potential to fragment the text and call into question its overall cohesion and unity.

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\(^{64}\) *Exordium to Coherence in the Quran*, p. 31.

\(^{65}\) *Exordium*, p. 32.

\(^{66}\) *Exordium*, p. 33.
3.2 – The Principle of Consistency

The second of the four principles which, as I argue, govern, underpin and justify intratextual exegesis of the Qurʾān, is the Principle of Consistency, which is the negation of contradiction. This principle follows closely from the Principle of Unity, in that it assumes that the “single author” did not fall into contradiction upon producing the series of pronouncements, narratives and rulings subsequently compiled in scriptural form. Therefore, every verse of the Qurʾān is consistent with every other, even if there appears to be any conflict or contradiction. It is not unreasonable to assume consistency on the part of any author who is self-aware and has the means to keep track of his various statements. However, the stronger position – one which rules out the possibility of contradiction altogether – relies upon a stronger belief in the author, particularly in a book of the length and complexity of the Qurʾān.67 Certainly, the Principle of Consistency is a straightforward implication of belief in the scripture’s divine origin (verbatim) and protection.

3.2.1 – Consistency in Islamic Scholarship

To illustrate this principle and assumption as expressed in Muslim tradition, we refer first to chapters in ʿulūm al-Qurʾān works which address seeming conflicts, such as Chapter 35 of Al-Burhān, entitled Maʾrifat Mūhim al-Mukhtalif (“Knowing [the passages] which give the impression of being contradictory”), which the author opens by saying:

The speech of God, glory be to Him, is perfectly free (munazzah) from contradiction (ikhtilāf), as God has said: “If it had been from other than God, they would have found therein much ikhtilāf” (Q 4:82). However, the beginner may find that which gives the impression of contradiction while not, in reality, being so. Hence this requires resolution, just as there are works in the field of mukhtalif al-hadīth clarifying how to reconcile between [conflicting texts].68

This comparison with the genre in hadīth studies is interesting, as it implies that the problem of contradiction gained more scholarly attention there; Zarkashi alludes to a

67 This could be called the Strong Consistency Principle. There is an even stronger notion of consistency that I describe at various points as “reductionism”: to hold that the Qurʾān is consistent in its word usages etc. and does not deviate from these norms. This assumption does not follow from belief in divine origin, as one could equally hold that eloquent variety is a feature of divine speech.

68 Al-Burhān, p. 282.
work on the Qurʾān by the Basra linguist Qutrub (d. 206/821), and there does exist a genre known as mushkil al-Qurʾān or mutashabih al-Qurʾān⁶⁹, and other works focused on resolving contradictions.⁷⁰ It is clear from the titles or introductions of these various works that they were often motivated by questions, critiques and allegations directed at the Qurʾān. Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) opens his Taʾwil Mushkil al-Qurʾān by citing verses (Q 18:1, 41:42) which negate any “crookedness (ʿiwaj)” or “falsehood (bāṭil)” from God’s book.⁷¹

The concept of ikhtilāf, as negated in Q 4:82 cited by Zarkashī above, has been explained by the exegetes in various ways; in the context of negation, it may be argued that all of these are intended. The first is internal contradiction (tanāqud), which is most relevant here; this explanation is attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās.⁷² A second is external contradiction, i.e. for the statements of the Qurʾān – including those which expose the inner motivations of the unbelievers – to be false.⁷³ It is straightforward to see why both should be ruled out. There is less agreement on the third view, as advanced by Zamakhsharī: that ikhtilāf refers to fluctuating levels of eloquence, such that only parts can be recognised as miraculous.⁷⁴ Some commentators distinguish between positive and negative ikhtilāf: the former is mere variation, such as between readings (qirāʿāt), rulings and subject matter, or in lengths of ʾāyas and sūras.⁷⁵

A quotation from Abū Ishāq al-Isfārāyīnī (d. 418/1027) in Al-Burhān summarises the strategies to be employed in cases of conflict (taʿārud) between verses:

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⁶⁹ This term is used in two different ways in works relevant to resolving contradictions. One is the category of unclear verses delineated in Q 3:7 (see below), and therefore an alternative term for mushkil. The other usage (mutashabih lafž) is for passages which closely resemble each other; the differences between them may also give rise to claims of contradiction – see 4.3.1 below.

⁷⁰ See 4.3.2 below.

⁷¹ Ibn Qutayba, Taʾwil Mushkil al-Qurʾān, p. 67.

⁷² See Ālūsī, Rūḥ al-Maʿānī, 6/164–165.

⁷³ See Ibn ʿAshūr, Al-Tahrīr wa-l-Tanwīr, 5/138. The point about unbelievers pertains to the context of Q 4:82.

⁷⁴ Zamakhsharī, Al-Kashshāf, p. 249. Ālūsī defends this reading against criticism (without naming the critic); the translation according to his grammatical explanation would be: “They would have found much of it incongruent” (Rūḥ al-Maʿānī, 6/165).

⁷⁵ Al-Iqṭān, 4/1485.
When verses conflict and it is not possible to reconcile them, then resort is made to chronology (تاریک) and the earlier one is abandoned in favour of the later, which constitutes abrogation (ناشک). If chronology is unknown, yet there is consensus upon acting on one of the two verses, then this consensus demonstrates that the one so acted upon has abrogated [the other]. There is no example in the Qurʾān of two conflicting verses to which neither of these descriptions applies.

This account begins with the attempt to reconcile and harmonise the conflicting texts, which may take various forms, to be outlined in Chapter 4. When that is not possible, then preponderance is given to one over another (ترجیح), in the form of abrogation. A strategy not mentioned here is to relegate one of the verses (or one conflicting reading, قراءة of a verse) to the category of متشابه, such that preference is given to the one deemed to be clearer in import (هence محدق, univocal). The relevance of that dichotomy (discussed under the next principle, that of Interpretability) to strategies of resolving contradiction is further seen in this citation from Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī, who included non-contradiction among the key principles of his TQQ exegesis:

The Qurʾān, being divine speech, does not contradict itself, so it should be interpreted in that light. The Qurʾān is explicit that its equivocal (متشابه) texts should be referred to the univocal (محدق), so whatever is established with certainty is made a definitive basis.

### 3.2.2 – The Challenge of Abrogation

As noted above, the appeal to نشک (abrogation) is made when reconciliation ( jamʿ, تفیق) is not possible – this is in the context of rulings, and hence the domain of عشیر al-فیqh as well as تفسیر. Whenever chronology can be ascertained, the later of the two rulings is taken to be in force, while the other is considered to have been replaced. Implicit in this account is an affirmation of contradiction between the two rulings. If the Principle of Consistency were to be maintained fully, it would entail withholding judgment whenever reconciliation proved too difficult. However, when exegetes affirm that only one of the two rulings can possibly be operable, based on their meanings and implications, this is to state that they are contradictory. Indeed,

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76 In Al-Burhān this is “التاریح”; based on another occurrence of this word on the next page (p. 284), I take this to denote “comparison”. In Al-Iqān (4/1484), it is “التاریح wa-tjam”: comparison and reconciliation. Another manuscript of Al-Burhān (see p. 283 note 5) has al-tawsīf in place of al-tartīb.

77 Al-Burhān, pp. 283–284.

78 In Rasāʾil al-Imām al-Farāhī, p. 225.
such is made explicit in the conditions stipulated by ʿusūl scholars for claiming instances of abrogation. The following axiom in a modern work of qawāʾid al-tafsīr illustrates that contradiction is a prerequisite, often supported by other evidences:

Abrogation must be established through evidence, whether in the verse itself or via an explicit statement of the Messenger (peace be upon him) or his Companions; or consensus of the Muslims; or based on the existence of genuine contradiction (taʾarūḍ ḥaqiqī) along with knowledge of the chronology. This [contradiction] is simultaneously an evidence for abrogation, and a necessary condition for declaring it. 79

Scholars have categorised naskh into various types, including two forms in which a verse is no longer included in the Qurʾān and no longer recited. 80 The type which is relevant to our discussion is “abrogation of the ruling, not the recited words” (naskh al-ḥukm dāna l-tīlāwa), as this has implications for the words which remain “between the two covers”, or, in other words, considered unanimously to be part of the Qurʾān. This form of naskh implies that certain verses have been stripped of their operability, even though a believer still gains reward for reciting them in prayer. We are also concerned only with intraquranic abrogation, rather than abrogation of – or by – the Sunna.

The essential point here is that this theory of abrogation entails that there are, in fact, contradictory verses in the Qurʾān. This could be treated as merely an exception, or the principle modified to state that “No two muḥkam 81 verses in the Qurʾān may contradict”. One problem for this is the lack of agreement over precisely which verses are abrogated, as demonstrated and discussed below. For an exegete engaging in tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān, it is necessary to delineate which verses are to be taken into account: should an abrogated verse be overlooked completely? It may be said that naskh is a form of TQQ, in that one verse “explains” that another is no

79 Sabt, Qawāʾid al-Tafsīr, 2/292. See also Zurqānī, Manāhil, 2/520, 542–544.
80 These are known as naskh al-tīlāwa, and it may be combined with naskh al-ḥukm such that the words and rulings are both effaced; or the ruling may be maintained despite the removal of the words from the Quranic corpus, as is frequently claimed for the “verse of stoning married adulterers” – see Zurqānī, Manāhil, 2/547.
81 This is used as the antonym of mansūkh, abrogated. The abrogating verse itself is called nāsīkh. The other main usage of the word muḥkam is discussed under the next principle.
longer active in a legal sense; in other words, it modifies its ruling to the utmost extent, by cancelling it. Any further explanation of the abrogated verse is for historical or literary interest, with no juristic force. The designation of the “later” verse as “abrogating (nāsikḥ)” is to point to it as the operable ruling.

Early authorities used this term more liberally to refer to various types of modification, especially takhṣīṣ (particularisation), which means to limit the scope of a ruling which had a universal import. In this regard, Shāṭibī says in his Muwāfaqāt:

It is apparent from the statements of the early authorities (mutaqaddimūn) that the term naskh was employed in a broader meaning than that used by the jurisprudents (uṣūliyyūn). They used this term to describe qualifying the unqualified (taqyīd al-muṭlaq); particularising the universal (takhsīṣ al-ʾumūm) via a connected or unconnected evidence; and clarifying the vague or unclear (bayān al-mubham wa-l-mujmal), just as they would use it for the cancellation of a legal ruling by a subsequent evidence [i.e. the later technical usage]. This is because all the above shares one meaning [i.e. modification of the original ruling].

This insight makes claims of naskh extremely significant for TQQ – even for naskh-sceptics – as they may be seen more generally as statements connecting two verses and highlighting that one is essential to understanding the other. Another way in which these claims are significant is the implication of taʿāruḍ (contradiction) they contain: this implication can lead the exegete to ponder more deeply on the verses, seeking to resolve the apparent conflict, leading to new interpretations of one or both verses.

Debates over Abrogation

According to Zarkashī, the mainstream position of the Muslims has been to affirm both the possibility (jawāz) of abrogation occurring in the Qurʾān, and the fact

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82 The expression used is “bayān muddat al-ḥukm” (Al-Burhān, p. 275), i.e. “clarification of the duration of the ruling”, which, in turn, is categorised under bayān al-tabdīl, “modifying clarification” (Ṣāḥīh, Taṣfīr al- Ṯaṣūṣī, 1/35). It may also be true in some cases that the abrogating verse is not fully understood without reference to the ruling which it replaces. As such, we may describe these two directions as taṣfīr al-mansūkh bi-l-nāṣikḥ (explaining earlier by later) and taṣfīr al-nāṣikḥ bi-l-mansūkh, which is to clarify the background to the abrogating verse.

83 Al-Muwāfaqāt, 3/108. The author goes on to explain that, since the universality or unqualified meaning (etc.) of the earlier text has been cancelled, this is a situation resembling naskh in its later usage. See also Ṭayyār, Al-Tāḥrīr, pp. 218–219; and Suyūṭī’s explanation of what led later scholars to include so many instances of naskh (Al-Itqān, 4/1441–1443).

84 This is a way of understanding the care of early authorities in documenting and studying this field (see Al-Burhān, p. 273). See 4.3.2 below for more on this approach within TQQ, and what I term “creative conflict”.
that this has occurred (wuqū). However, he notes positions of some Muslim scholars who either rejected such naskh altogether or restricted its applicability.85 The majority position is supported by at least two verses of the Qurʾān which contain key words for this phenomenon; by narrations from the Companions which describe its occurrence explicitly; and by the existence of conflicting passages for which naskh is arguably the strongest – or only – explanation. The most famous proof-text is Q 2:106, which may be rendered: ‘Whenever We subject any āya to naskh or insā’, We bring forth its superior or equivalent. Do you not see that God has power over all things?’86 These key words are the subject of debate amongst the exegetes in general. Those who affirm abrogation in the Qurʾān take the term āya to refer to a Quranic verse; however, Abū Muslim al-Iṣfahānī (d. 322/934) argued that it refers to earlier scriptures which are abrogated by the Qurʾān.87 Much later, Muḥammad ʾAbduh (d. 1905) argued that the context – including the emphasis on divine power – entails that āya refers to miraculous proofs which were given to prophets in succession.88 These latter two interpretations have been supported variously by modern-day deniers of abrogation in the Qurʾān.89

85 Al-Buhān, pp. 274–275. See also the end of his Chapter 34 (p. 281), where he cites an unnamed source who emphasises that the Qurʾān is the abrogating guardian (muḥaymin – see Q 5:48) over other scriptures, as well as self-supporting (muhāṭa) and preserved (Q 15:9). As such, there is only a small quantity of internal naskh which is signposted (muḥālim wa quṭīl): he gives the example of the Verse of Nāṣirā, which I discuss below. The rest of what the exegetes have classed as naskh is, according to this person, either nas’ (which Zarkashā explains as suspension of a ruling due to circumstances) or bayān of various kinds.

86 The pairing of naskh/insākh and nas’/insā (according to the various canonical readings) generates numerous possibilities for the exegete and translator, not least because of the ambiguity inherent in the words. Whereas the first is generally taken to indicate “cancellation”, the latter may describe “causing to forget”, “leaving alone” or “postponing”. I suggest that these ambiguities are intended to increase the force of the verse in describing God’s power and wisdom, as if to say: “We can do all these things: send down an āya, delay it or keep it without revealing; then cancel its meaning and/or blot out its memory; or leave it unchanged. In all these cases We continue to bring what is similar to, or as complement to them.” The other key verses in the abrogation debate (and arguably clearer in their import) are 16:101 (with the term tabdīl, exchange) and 13:39 (with muḥaww’ilah, erasure and establishment). Detailed discussions in tafsīr works are often found under 2:106 by virtue of appearing first.

87 This is one of his suggested interpretations (see Rāzī, Ṭafsīr al-Ghayb, 2/260). Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī preserved Abū Muslim’s arguments in response to naskh claims throughout the Qurʾān; he sometimes agrees with those responses.

88 As quoted in Rūḍā, Ṭafsīr al-Manār, 1/399–401.

89 See Qaradāwī, Fiqh al-Jihād, 1/285 ff. Muḥammad ʾImārā (Ḥaqīqat wa Shubhātā, pp. 34–39) supports the interpretation as “miracle” with a somewhat arbitrary appeal to the usage of āya (in the singular) elsewhere in the Qurʾān. ʾAḥā al-Alwānī (Nahwu Mawsīf Qurʾān, p. 52) claimed, rather implausibly, that this is the majority view of the exegetes; however, his own explanation is more concerned with supersession of dispensations (see ibid, p. 48, in which the author repurposes a passage from Al-Tahiri
There are diverse motivations behind *naskh*-scepticism, which affect the types of arguments levelled against the theory. I have already argued that a TQQ approach to Qurʾān interpretation need not be at odds with *naskh*, but must take such relationships into account. However, stronger claims of Qurʾān-sufficiency (see below under the Principle of Authority) would appear to clash with the suggestion that any part of the Qurʾān is unauthoritative or cancelled; hence the *naskh*-denial of the likes of Ahmad Ṣubḥī Manṣūr.\(^90\) It is interesting to note, on the other hand, that the *naẓm* theorists such as Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī – despite their emphasis upon the synchronic structure of the Qurʾān – accepted the existence of abrogated verses.\(^91\) As was seen in Chapter 2’s discussion of the “Sword Verse” and its over-application, some researchers come to re-evaluate *naskh* due to its implications for a particular issue.\(^92\)

In contrast to outright rejection of *naskh* in the Qurʾān, there has long been a tendency to limit the number of actual occurrences to the most clearly established. An example of this is Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, who cautioned against taking the words of “low-ranking exegetes” and argued that there are only nineteen genuine occurrences.\(^93\)

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\(^90\) He was mentioned previously under 2.7.2; Khālid al-Basyūnī responded to his book *Lā Nāsīkh wa Lā Mansūkh fi l-Qurʾān* in his own book, *Al-Naskh Bayna Shububāt al-Munkirān wa Adillat al-Muthātān*.  

\(^91\) See *Pondering Over the Qurʾān* Vol. 1, pp. 329–331, for Islāḥī’s minimalistic stance and allusion to eight cases of abrogation, of which one (prayers towards Jerusalem) was not a Quranic directive. His teacher Farāḥī appears to accept the phenomenon: see his *Taʾlīqīt* (1/43), in which he describes “closely-following steps” within the Muḥammadan *shariʿa* after a longer process of progression and elevation through preceding dispensations. Contrast this with the stance of Israr Ahmad Khan in *The Theory of Abrogation: A Critical Evaluation*; Khan is otherwise an ardent supporter of Islāḥī’s methods, but here refutes abrogation altogether (albeit as represented by Suyūṭī, not Islāḥī).  


\(^93\) *Al-Iqān*, 4/1443-1447; the author presents a list of twenty-one from Ibn al-ʿArabī’s *Al-Nāsīkh wa-l-Mansūkh*, then removes 4:8 and 24:58, and adds 2:115 (abrogated by 2:149 which specifies the *qibla*). This is in contrast with his earlier contribution to *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*; surveying his commentary on Sūrat al-Anʿām, I found that he described 6:159 as “abrogated by the Sword Verse” and noted that several others were “before fighting was mandated”. The *ḥāshiya* (supercommentary) by Sulaymān al-ʿUjaylī (known as al-Jamāl, d. 1204/1789) points out that Suyūṭī conflates two conflicting opinions under 6:66, in that his presented gloss “fa-nūjāzīyakum” would not be subject to abrogation by the command to fight (see *Al-Fatūḥāt al-ʿIlāhiyya*, 2/391).
Of these, Wa bénéfic Allāh Dihlawī only accepted five. Muṣṭafā Zayd in his modern study also concluded that there are five abrogated verses; only two are in common with Dihlawī. Iṣlāḥī affirmed most of these latter five, with the addition of two further cases (also included by Suyūṭī).

**Case Study: The Verse of Najwā**

Some scholars have argued that there is no verse in the Qur’ān that is agreed unanimously to have been abrogated; rather, there are multiple perspectives at each juncture. This is obviously true when naskh-deniers are included; however, to assess the value of this claim, one should focus on verses which have received greater agreement on being abrogated. My summary of Suyūṭī, Dihlawī, Iṣlāḥī and Zayd has yielded only one case to achieve “consensus of the minimisers”, namely Q 58:12, which is said to be abrogated by the verse immediately following: “You who believe, when you come to speak privately with the Messenger, offer something in charity before your conversation: that is better for you and purer. If you do not have the means, God is most forgiving and merciful. / Were you afraid to give charity before consulting the Prophet? Since you did not give charity, and God has relented (tāba) towards you, you should [at least] observe your prayers, pay the prescribed alms, and obey God

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94 Al-Fawz al-Kabīr, pp. 47-54, 102. Aside from the verse of counsel (58:12) discussed below, the four cases he affirmed are: (a) 2:180 which mandates bequests (waṣīyya) to parents and near of kin. This was abrogated by 4:11-12 with stipulations for inheritance, along with the hadith “No bequest for an inheritor”. (b) 2:240 which stipulates a year’s residence and maintenance for widows, abrogated by 2:234 (waiting period of four months and ten days) and 4:11-12 (inheritance of an eighth or a quarter). (c) 33:52 – the Prophet was forbidden from taking more wives, until 33:50 abrogated it. (d) 8:65-66, in which the latter verse expresses “lightening” (takhfīf) of the former expectation that believers can defeat an enemy that outnumbers them ten to one.

95 Al-Nashīḥ, 2/337 ff. These include: (a) Obligation of night vigil in 73:1-4 abrogated for general believers by the end of the sīra; this depends on hadith explanation. (b) Punishment of adultery in 4:15-16 abrogated by 24:2. (c) The lighter ruling on intoxicants in 4:43 replaced by prohibition, 5:90. The last of these is not in Suyūṭī’s list of nineteen.

96 8:65 is not on his list; see Tadhrib, 3/507 for his explanation.

97 These are: (a) 4:33, which mandated inheritance between Muhājirūn and Anṣār, abrogated by 8:75. (b) 2:184 which permitted those who missed a fast due to sickness or travel to choose between making up the fast and paying the ransom (fidya) (see Pondering, 1/462), then abrogated by the following verse. Another common opinion, which Iṣlāḥī critiques, is that the ransom was an option (instead of making up the fast) for anyone who found fasting difficult. However, it seems to me that his reading does not account for the preposition ūlā, which implies obligation. His point may be modified to say that people who missed fasts due to sickness or travel were required both to make them up and pay the ransom (if able), until this was lightened; this would be more consistent with the co-text.

98 E.g. Qaraḍāwī in Fiqh al-Jihād, 1/298.
and His Messenger: God is well aware of your actions” (58:12-13, Abdel Haleem translation).

An obvious reason for the broad agreement upon this instance is the immediate sequence between the two statements, and the explicit wording of divine relenting (tawba) which implies replacement of the more demanding ruling. While this makes absolute rejection of naskh difficult on a practical level, the very existence of such explicit cases could be used by deniers and minimisers to support their view that abrogation should not be read into verses which do not contain such expressions as tawba or takhfīf (lightening). When the Qurʾān itself indicates that a ruling has been replaced, this cannot be seen as arbitrary, based on external sources, or contrary to its structural integrity – all concerns raised against naskh generally. From a TQQ perspective, the exegete would be in no doubt that the verses must be treated together, whether he describes this treatment as naskh or as contextual interpretation. The explanation of these verses, according to those who affirm the abrogation, is that a payment was initially made obligatory for anyone seeking private counsel with the Prophet. After a short time, perhaps only a few days or hours, this was lifted and the believers were exhorted to abide by the basic obligation of zakāt.99 Some associated reports – which are sound according to Sunnī standards – indicate that ʿAlī b. Abī Tālib was the only one from the Companions to act upon the ruling before its abrogation; for Abū l-Qāsim al-Khūṭī, this demonstrates the superiority of the first Shiʿite imām and reveals the divine wisdom in revealing the initial ruling and its cancellation.100

An opposing view was advanced by Abū Muslim al-İsfahānī, who argued that the purpose of the initial injunction was to test the hypocrites (munāfiqūn), or specifically to distinguish between those who had entered into genuine faith from those who remained upon their dissimulation. Because this was a temporary need, the ruling was inherently temporary, hence not subject to naskh.101 Upon citing this, Rāzī states: “This is a good, unproblematic statement; however, the majority position is that it was


100 Khūṭī, Prolegomena, pp. 243–247.

101 Rāzī, Maftūḥ al-Ghayb, 15/276; he summarises Abū Muslim’s position: “Al-taklīf kāna muqaddaran bi-ghāya makhsūṣa fa-vejaha intiḥāb ’inda l-intiḥāb l-ghāya al-makhsūṣa”. The same rationale for the ruling was narrated from Aslam (the freedman of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb) via his son Zayd, albeit without the denial of naskh (Ibn al-ʿArabī, Aḥām al-Qurʾān, 4/202).
abrogated by [the second verse]. Some said that it was abrogated by the obligation of zakāt.”

It is important to note that Abū Muslim’s strategy here is based on a technical distinction between naskh and intihāʾ al-ghāya; the latter pertains to situations in which the original ruling did not have a permanent character. Where there is such an expression as hattā (“until”) then the verse containing this caveat retains its proper sense after the subsequent ruling is revealed. However, there is nothing in the wording of 58:12 to fit this description, so the distinction between this case and genuine naskh – in which the temporary nature of the ruling is eventually revealed by its abrogating verse – is unclear. Moreover, as Muṣṭafā Zayd points out, Abū Muslim’s suggestion that the ones who did not offer the sadaqa were the hypocrites conflicts with the apparent sense of 58:13, in which God relents towards the believers who had fallen short; similarly the hadith reports in this regard.

Another alternative to naskh was proposed by Israr Ahmad Khan, based on his understanding of Quranic coherence, influenced by Iṣlāḥī (who did affirm abrogation here and elsewhere). His perspective is that verses 7-13 of Sūrat al-Mujādila “form one single context dealing with one subject matter”, and that it is unreasonable to suppose that these two verses were separated by any period of time. Khan goes on to consider the explanations for the initial ruling and its cancellation. If the sadaqa was mandated in order to deter people from abusing the privilege of private counsel with the Prophet, then it would make no sense for this to be lifted so that they could immediately resume this abuse. If the obligation was lifted because the poor

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102 Majāṭīth al-Ghayb, 15/276.
103 See Suyūṭī, Al-Iṣqān, 4/1438.
104 Al-Naskh, 1/289. In attempting to refute Muṣṭafā Zayd in his affirmation of naskh at this juncture, the legal philosopher Jasser Auda (Fiṣḥ al-Maqāsid, pp. 182–184) misquotes three classical exegetes. Auda claims that Ibn Kathīr considered the initial command to be a mere recommendation, but Ibn Kathīr is explicit in considering it an obligation which was abrogated (Taṣīr al-Qurān al-ʿAẓīm, 7/188). He wrongly claims that Qurānī denies this instance of naskh (cf. Al-Jāmiʿ li-ʿAbkām al-Qurān, 17/228). His misrepresentation of Ibn al-ʿArabī (who is, in fact, quoting Adam, as noted above) is particularly strange, as this is among his twenty-one abrogated verses mentioned previously. See Akhām al-Qurān, 4/203 for the crucial phrase removed from Auda’s quote (“wa nasakh-hā ʿayat Fā-ʾidh lam”).
105 Khan, The Theory of Abrogation, pp. 94–95. The author also suggests that the associated narrations are contradictory and untrustworthy.
106 See Rāzī, Majāṭīth al-Ghayb, 15/274.
107 The Theory of Abrogation, p. 95.
Muslims were unable to afford the privilege, then there was no need for further revelation, since they were already exempted in 58:12: “If you do not have the means, God is most forgiving and merciful.” A fundamental problem with Khan’s interpretation is demonstrated by his translation of a key phrase from 58:13, as follows: “If you do not do so (fa-idh lam taf’alū), and Allah forgives you…” – which he takes to be a continuation of the dispensation provided in the preceding verse. However, since the particle idh is used for the past tense and to explain cause, it ought to be rendered: “Since you did not”. This confirms the past tense for the preceding phrase also, which Khan renders “Is it that you are afraid of spending sums in charity?” based on his view that this is an address to the poor believers; the verse goes on to exhort the payment of zakāt, rendering that theory unlikely.

The preceding discussion has demonstrated that the theory of abrogation entails the existence of what may be deemed a “manageable quantity” of contradiction between Quranic verses. Knowledge of naskh was considered from an early stage to be an essential quality for an exegete: this is an affirmation of the importance of intratextual exegesis. Some scholars argued against naskh in the Qurʾān based on various convictions concerning the Quranic corpus; they have raised significant questions regarding the import of the textual evidences for naskh (such as Q 2:106), and have provided alternative explanations for many of the alleged occurrences. However, some of those explanations fail to be more convincing than the claims of abrogation: unless that is resolved, naskh will remain an essential part of the mufassir’s toolkit. The existence of minimisers and outright sceptics can certainly encourage greater rigour on the part of interpreters, and it is reasonable to expect harmonisation efforts to be exhausted before resorting to abrogation: this is the classically-advocated procedure.

109 The Theory of Abridgment, p. 95.
110 The same is found with a number of prominent Qurʾān translators.
111 See Suyūṭī, Al-Iqtān, 3/1012.
112 See Al-Burḥān, p. 273, and the qualifications list in Al-Iqtān, 6/2297.
3.3 – The Principle of Interpretability

This principle, like the Principle of Unity, may be seen as foundational to the broader enterprise of *tafsīr*\(^{113}\), and it shares with that principle in ascribing intentionality to the composition of the Qurʾān. By interpretability, I mean that the Qurʾān is taken to contain meanings which the author intended to convey, and which can be understood by the reader. Interpretation may be straightforward or require sophisticated methods, but in either case there is objective meaning to be sought. It is theoretically possible to arrive at the intended meaning, even if subjectivity gives rise to multiplicity in practice. While it can be argued that multiple meanings were intended in some cases, this principle entails that one may claim justifiably that some interpretations are better than others.

I shall not elaborate on the fact of this set of assumptions on the part of the exegetes, as it can be inferred from their interpretative practices, as well as the development of *uṣūl* for exegesis, however rudimentary in some respects. The very discussion of a “best method” for exegesis (per Ibn Taymiyya) implies a search for objective meaning through scholarly methods. There is a recognition of the need for rules for “preference” (*tarjīḥ*) between exegetical opinions. The condemnation of “raʾy” in interpretation – whether taken to designate a lack of qualification, the imposition of biases, or merely deviating from the “*maʾthūr*” – is further illustration of this. Some maintain that there can only be one true meaning to any Quranic expression: Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāḥī, for example, argued that this is to be sought through the structural coherence in the text – this, in turn, is a function of authorial intentionality.\(^{114}\)

\(^{113}\) According to Walid Saleh in his review of Boullata (ed.), *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning*, “this elementary hypothesis is absent from much of the scholarly literature” (Saleh, ‘In Search of a Comprehensible Qurʾān,’ p. 160). In Karen Bauer’s words, exegetes “presume that there is intrinsic meaning to the Qurʾān, and their entire venture seems to be focused on understanding the original meaning or meanings” (Introduction to Bauer (ed.), *Aims, Methods and Contexts*, p. 7).

\(^{114}\) See *Al-Tahmīl* (in *Rasūl*, p. 229). Farāḥī singles out Rāzī for criticism in that he listed as many divergent opinions as possible, and thereby “made the Qurʾān into an obscure (*mushābīh*) and confusing book which one cannot hope to understand”. He further criticises Rāzī’s stance on the speculative (*zānī*) status of linguistic proofs, which is contrary to the Qurʾān’s affirmation of its clarity (*bayān*). Farāḥī states pointedly: “It is high time to look anew at that which we had treated with suspicion, and approach it with a positive attitude” (ibid, pp. 233–234). For further responses to Rāzī’s account of the “ten dependencies” of linguistic proofs (as in *Majāfīth al-Chayb*, 1/42, 4/175 etc.), see Qaraḍāwī, *Kayfa Nataʿlumal*, pp. 43–46 and Ḥusayn, *Muḥiyr al-Qubāl wa-l-Radd*, p. 682 ff.; Ibn Taymiyya composed his
3.3.1 – The Problem of Tashābuh

Insofar as this is quite apparent in what has preceded, I shall focus on another concept and dichotomy which presents a problem for interpretability. This is the description of some Quranic verses as *muḥkam* and others as *mutashābih*, terms which are derived from a pivotal verse (Q 3:7) which is quoted here from the Abdel Haleem translation:

> It is He who has sent this Scripture down to you [Prophet]. Some of its verses are definite in meaning (āyāt muḥkamāt) – these are the cornerstone of the Scripture (umm al-kitāb)\(^{115}\) – and others are ambiguous (mutashābihāt). The perverse at heart eagerly pursue the ambiguities in their attempt to make trouble and to pin down a specific meaning of their own\(^{116}\): only God knows the true meaning. Those firmly grounded in knowledge say, ‘We believe in it: it is all from our Lord’- only those with real perception will take heed.

This verse and the categories it delineates have attracted much scholarly attention. John Wansbrough claimed that it is “unanimously agreed to represent the point of departure for all scriptural exegesis”.\(^{117}\) It will become clear below, based on the reception of this verse in Muslim hermeneutical scholarship, that it has particular significance for TQQ, in that it mandates referring difficult verses to those which are deemed authoritative in import.

Definitions

The precise meaning of *mutashābih* in 3:7 is subject to numerous different opinions.\(^{118}\) Its linguistic denotation is “resemblance”, in that the competing interpretations resemble each other such that the exegete must exert effort to distinguish the correct one(s). Another possibility is that certain verses have a correct meaning alongside others which are false, yet ripe for exploitation by opponents of the

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\(^{115}\) Cf. the other usage of this expression as in 3.1.2 above.

\(^{116}\) This is an interpretive gloss; the expression *ibtighāʿa taʿālīkī* may be read more plainly as “seeking after its meaning/interpretation”.


Beyond the context of 3:7, the term is employed in Quranic scholarship in four ways, two of which pertain to interpretation. The usages not relevant to this particular discussion are, first, a description of the whole Qur'an as being mutashābih, as in Q 39:23 – as noted previously, this is taken by some commentators to denote the stylistic unity and non-contradiction within the Quranic corpus. It is thus relevant to the Principle of Consistency, in that parts of the Qur'an resemble each other. Related to this is the usage of mutashābih as a descriptor of near-parallel verses which are studied comparatively – this is further explored in Chapter 4.

As for the two usages relevant to interpretability, these are to consider the mutashābih as having meaning known only to God; or to consider them as ambiguous and in need of explication. These can be derived from the famous debate over the syntax (i.e. sentence break known as waqf) in 3:7, whereby the reciter affirms either that its taʾwil (interpretation) is known to none “except God (illā Lāh)” – as in most translations, such as Abdel Haleem’s above – or that it is known to none “except Allah and those firmly grounded in knowledge (wa-l-rāsikhūna fī l-ʿilm)” as in the Qaraʾi translation, for example. The choice between these syntactic readings is not simply a matter of taste or transmission, nor does it rely solely upon internal Quranic evidence; according to Suyūṭī, the majority of scholars argued for stopping upon “except God” due to a number of traditions attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās and other early authorities. However, another narration from Ibn ʿAbbās has him declaring: “I am among those [firmly grounded in knowledge] who know its interpretation.”

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119 Ibn ʿAṭīyya, Al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz, p. 274. As such, the intended fitna is to create confusion and spread doubts among Muslims, and the intended taʾwil is distortion of the true meanings.

120 Witztum (’Variant Traditions, Relative Chronology and the Study of Intra-Quranic parallels’, p. 44) suggests that 3:7 could be taken as referring to this phenomenon. However, he does not explain how this fits the context of contrast with the muḥkam.

121 See Al-Iṣqān, 4/1340 ff.

122 Al-Iṣqān, 4/1339. Ibn ʿAṭīyya argues that Ibn ʿAbbās advanced both opinions because both are correct, i.e. there are knowable and unknowable categories of mutashābih (Al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz, pp. 276–277). According to Ibn Taymiyya: “Tashābuh is a relative matter, as one thing may be mutashābih to one person and not another. However, there are verses which are muḥkam with no tashābuh in them for anyone. As for these mutashābih verses, once their meaning becomes known, they are no longer mutashābih” (Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā, 13/79). I return to these issues at the end of this section.
the distance between the two positions is not as great as it appears at first glance. Both accept the existence of verses which require interpretation, and of which the interpretation is possible by referring to the unequivocal and authoritative verses. These equivocal verses may be classed as mutashābih or not, in that Q 3:7 is not explicit in excluding a middle set of verses which are neither muḥkam nor mutashābih. In this connection, Zarkashī cites an opinion which defines the former as “that which is known [in meaning] without the need for bayān (explanation)” whereas the latter is “that which cannot be explained (lā yurjā bayānuh)”. This implies that there are other verses which require explanation, and whose explanation is possible: according to other definitions, these are the mutashābih – or this term encompasses both types of verse.

The result is that the mutashābih refers to a similar concept as the mujmal discussed previously (and see 4.1.1). In jurisprudence, these terms are considered equivalent by the majority of legal schools. The definition in the Ḥanafī school appears to have shifted from interpretable to uninterpretable, in that Abū l-Ḥasan al-Karkhī (d. 340/952) defined it as “That which has more than one possible meaning”, whereas later authorities defined it as “Any expression which has an inherently obscure meaning and has not been clarified by Qurʾān or Sunna”. As Muḥammad Adīb al-Ṣāliḥ argues, such a definition precludes the mutashābih from relevance to juristic questions and confines it to the domain of doctrine. This echoes the point raised by Yahyā b. Sharaf al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) as cited in Al-Iqān: “It is implausible that God would address His servants in terms which none in all creation has hope of understanding.”

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123 I will not elaborate here on the numerous points of divergence in interpreting Q 3:7, such that the two stances may be reconciled in other ways. An example is the word “taʾwilahu”: does it refer to interpretation in the conventional sense, or a kind of ultimate knowledge which is the sole preserve of God? Does its pronoun refer to the mutashābih portion of the Qurʾān specifically, or the whole scripture? See Wıld’s summary of “legal, rhetorical, and anti-exegetical” interpretations of the verse (‘Sura 3:7 as an Exegetical Challenge’ in Wıld (ed.), Self-Referentiality, pp. 429–430).

124 See Farāhī, Nizām al-Qurʾān, 1/345.

125 Al-Burān, p. 293.

126 Ṣāliḥ, Taṣfīr al-NDAR, 1/274.

127 Taṣfīr al-NDAR, 1/257–258.

128 Al-Iqān, 4/1339.
We may conclude that the concept of *tashābuh* does not present a significant challenge to the Principle of Interpretability which underpins *tafṣīr* in general. This is because the strongest claims relegate this to a small number of verses, such as the mysterious “Opening Letters” (*al-muqāṭṭa` āt*) which commence certain *sūras*, and to such details as when the Day of Judgement (described in so many verses) will actually occur. Some applied the term to verses which describe God with attributes potentially resembling creation; yet this pious relegation (*tafwīḍ*) did not prevent other scholars from affirming (*ithbāt*) the apparent meanings or otherwise interpreting these attributes metaphorically (*ta‘wīl*). This fact points to the subjectivity of identifying the *mutashābihāt*, as I shall discuss further below. Not only is *tashābuh* not a barrier to exegesis, but in fact the identification of *mutashābih* and *muḥkam* verses can be seen as an important starting point and feature of intraquranic exegesis, as I shall now explain.

**Referring Back to the Muḥkam**

It follows from many of the definitions offered by the scholars for these two terms that the *mutashābih* texts must be “referred back (*radd*)” to the *muḥkam*. This would apply to the lightest sense of *tashābuh*, in which a verse simply carries multiple possible meanings: the correct interpretation is identified, or incorrect interpretations ruled out, by reference to verses which only carry one possible meaning. As for the strongest definitions which place the *mutashābih* beyond the reach of the exegete, this too entails a kind of reference and return to the *muḥkam* texts, in that the reader of the Qurʾān is exhorted to give primacy to that which is clear and authoritative, and relegate the knowledge of the *mutashābih* texts to God while having faith in their truth and veracity. This concept of referring back to the *muḥkam* verses is often derived from their description in 3:7 as “*umm al-kitāb*”, which is understood here to mean the “source (*aṣl*)” to which other things are referred. 

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129 See *Al-Iṣqā̀n*, 4/1354 ff.

130 Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Tahrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 3/155. The term may also imply that such represents the “majority” of the Qurʾān (*Qaraḍāwī, Kayfa Nata‘īmal*, p. 267).
word *umm* implies that these verses are in harmony with each other\textsuperscript{131}, thus making them suitable to be a foundation for understanding the entire book.

These meanings are made more explicit by Ibn al-Ḥaṣṣār (d. 620/1223) as cited in *Al-Itqān*:

> God has divided the verses of the Qurʾān into *mutashābih* and *muḥkam* and described the former as “the source of the Book” in that the latter are referred back to it. These [muḥkam verses] are those which are relied upon in understanding what God wants from His creation with respect to the things they are obligated to know… The Legislator intends for us to give priority to understanding these univocal source-texts. Once you have achieved certainty and deep knowledge thereby, you would not be troubled by anything that is difficult to understand.\textsuperscript{132}

The distinction between two levels of *tashābih*, as discussed above, is further elaborated by Ḥamad b. Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998):

> The *mutashābih* is of two types: for one type, the meaning is identified by referring it to the *muḥkam* and examining it in its light; for the other type, there is no way to appreciate its true meaning.\textsuperscript{133}

It is thus seen that the language used to describe the process of analysing the *mutashābih* verses is very much the language of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*.\textsuperscript{134} As such, the existence of equivocal verses is treated not as an intractable problem, but as the very genesis of the craft of exegesis. Whereas some may question the wisdom of the existence of scriptural texts that are less than explicit and give rise to ambiguity, this contention is answered variously with reference to human nature and language, and to the purpose of religion. As Qaraḍāwī argues, to make the entire Qurʾān *muḥkam* and its verses univocal would mean stripping it of its eloquence and flexibility; depriving the scholars of the opportunity to explore its deeper meanings; and removing

\textsuperscript{131}Tabāṭabā’ī, *Al-Mizān*, 3/23. See also Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma‘āni*, 4/21, where this meaning (“as though they are a single verse”) is suggested alongside the possibility that each *muḥkam* verse is like an *umm* in its own right.

\textsuperscript{132}*Al-Itqān*, 4/1349.

\textsuperscript{133}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{134}This point is illustrated particularly well by this definition narrated from Mujāhid b. Jabr: “The *muḥkamat* are those verses which pertain to lawful and unlawful things. The remainder is *mutashābih*: its parts corroborate each other (ṣywaddīqu baʿdaahu baʿdaṭan)” (*Al-Itqān*, 4/1337). This may mean that the *muḥkam* corroborates the *mutashābih* by clarifying the correct meanings; it may also imply that *mutashābih* verses are not mutually contradictory as they sometimes appear before being clarified by the *muḥkam*. 

the element of testing which is one of the aims of revelation, as human beings are obligated (taklīf) to strive for truth and follow it.\textsuperscript{135}

It follows that the categories of muḥkam and mutashābih may be employed constructively within a TQQ methodology which specifies which kinds of verses require referral, and which others function as clearer authorities. Therefore, more than saying that “verses explain each other” or are “understood in each other’s light”, there is a sense in which some verses are foundational and take priority over others.\textsuperscript{136} By so clarifying the mutashābih texts, they may be granted a status of “secondary foundationality”, described by some scholars as muḥkam li-ghayrihī.\textsuperscript{137}

An ostensibly objective definition is available for the muḥkam, namely: that which accepts only one interpretation. However, in practice, identifying those incontrovertible verses remains highly subjective, as illustrated by the existence of such a work as Mutashābih al-Qurʾān by the prominent Muʿtazilite Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār.\textsuperscript{138} In reality, it is a dialectical work which disputes the proofs relied upon by other theological schools, from Ashʿarīs to anthropomorphists; the author acknowledges the problem of subjectivity and relativity in his introduction.\textsuperscript{139} One man’s muḥkam is another man’s mutashābih; therefore, beyond accusing opposing schools of distorting the evidences by reversing the roles and treating the ambiguous as foundational, it would be necessary – in order for this polemic to be convincing – to demonstrate why specific texts should be agreed upon as muḥkam.\textsuperscript{140}

\textsuperscript{135} Qaraḍāwī, Kayfa Nataʿimal, p. 270. See also ʿAbd al-Jabbār, Mutashābih al-Qurʾān, pp. 22–24 and Rāzī, Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb, 4/170.

\textsuperscript{136} The broader asāl al-fiqh categories provide a similar account, in more detail. The most explicit texts are termed nasīṣ, zāhir and mufassar, and defined in various ways. See Ṣāliḥ, Taṣfīr al-Nāṣīṣ, 1/186.

\textsuperscript{137} See Ṣaḥāṭabāʾī, Al-Mīzān, 3/24 and Ṣāliḥ, Taṣfīr al-Nāṣīṣ, 1/146.

\textsuperscript{138} The editor, ʿAdnān Zarzūr, states that the Muʿtazilites were the first to write such works (in which the word mutashābih is used in this sense) and dominated the genre (Preface to Mutashābih al-Qurʾān, p. 51). See also Mourad, ‘The Introduction to the Tahḏīḥ of al-Ḥākim al-Jishum’, in Bauer (ed.), pp. 111–112.

\textsuperscript{139} ʿAbd al-Jabbār, Mutashābih al-Qurʾān, 8–9. See also Belhaj, ‘al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s Qur’anic Hermeneutics’ in Gorke and Pink (eds.), p. 278.

\textsuperscript{140} See Rāzī’s exegesis of Q 3:7, in which he notes the subjectivity problem and proposes rules for iḥlām and tashābih related to rational proofs (Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb, 4/173–174).
3.4 – The Principle of Authority

The fourth principle underpinning TQQ is epistemological: that the Qurʾān functions as evidence, indeed as the most authoritative textual proof for any religious claim. As such, the Qurʾān is also to be consulted in the process of interpreting the Qurʾān. This is a claim made on an ascending scale of authority: at its most basic, it is to affirm the possibility of TQQ as a mandated method; above this is to consider it the best method; then to criticise the neglect of this method; and at the strongest end, it is to deny the authority of any other source of exegesis besides the Qurʾān itself (along with language and reason). I illustrate this with the following diagram:

Figure 5 - The Quranic Authority Spectrum in Tafsīr

Rather than delving extensively into the most foundational premise here, let us recall the citation by Ibn Taymiyya in his Muqaddima of the famous report in which the Prophet’s companion Muʿādh b. Jabal, as he was being sent to govern in Yemen, was asked about how he would derive answers to questions arising. Although its authenticity has been challenged in terms of its chain of narration, there is general acceptance that this hadīth reflects the Muslim scholarly attitude to the primary sources and the place of individual reasoning. As explained in Chapter 1, Ibn Taymiyya

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1 For the difference between Ibn Taymiyya and the “mainstream”, see 1.5.2 above. The difference between “best” and “primary” is that the former amounts to little more than lip-service, as explained with respect to Ibn Taymiyya’s hierarchy in his Muqaddima. Various figures, such as Farāhī and Tabātabāʾī, have advocated for intraquranic methods to be given actual primacy.
deployed it in support of his schema of “best methods” of interpretation, while side-stepping the mention of *ijtihād* therein.

The Messenger of God asked Muʿādh while sending him to Yemen, “By what will you judge (*bi-ma taḥkum*)?” He replied, “By the Book of God.” “And if you do not find it (*ja-in lam taḍīd*) [there]?” “By the Sunna of the Messenger of God.” “And if you do not find it [there]?” “I shall strive to form an opinion (*ajtahidu raʿīṭi*).” So God’s Messenger struck [Muʿādh’s] chest and said: “Praise be to God Who has guided the messenger of God’s Messenger to what pleases God’s Messenger.”

Clearly, this text says nothing directly about exegesis, but it grants priority to the Qurʾān as a source of legislation – a point which is reflected in all the books of Islamic jurisprudence. However, it does not necessarily follow that the best way to interpret the Qurʾān is to consult the Qurʾān itself.

To give a comparison: a sentence I utter today is to be understood with reference to the denotations and connotations of the words in this communicative act between speaker and listeners, along with the context of place, time and situation in which the words are delivered. Whereas the immediate speech context (i.e. sentences before and after) would play an important role in following my argument, primacy would not be given in this situation to statements of previous weeks or years, or to others yet to be delivered (such may provide further clarification to speech which must, nevertheless, be clear upon delivery). Reference to other parts of my speech may be done in a meaningful way if the principles outlined in this chapter are assumed to hold, particularly unity and consistency (although later utterances may be taken as “abrogating” the earlier). We may certainly accept that this holistic approach is important and indispensable, but it is difficult to maintain that it is “best” in any meaningful sense. This thought process may be compared with the situation of TQQ, which is arguably both valid and necessary – but it cannot be deemed superior to other tools of exegesis in the absolute terms advanced by Ibn Taymiyya and those who followed him in this regard, until it was elevated to “consensus of *salaf* and *khalaf*” – a claim I challenged in Chapter 1.

### 3.4.1 – Rethinking TQQ’s Superiority

Before considering an alternative approach to the question of TQQ’s relative authority, let us review the arguments underpinning claims of its overall superiority,
outlined in Chapter 1. In some cases, appeal is made to divine authority, as in Shinqīṭī declaring that “None better knows the meaning of the book of God than God.” This is related to the problematic categorisation of TQQ under “transmitted exegesis” (al-tafsīr al-ma’thūr, or bi-l-ma’thūr) which suggests that the explanation was given by an earlier authority – God Himself? – and conveyed faithfully by the exegetes to their readership. An alternative discourse, due to Ṭabāṭabā’ī, speaks of allowing the Qurʾān to “speak for itself” (istinṣaq al-Qurʾān), which is a claim to objectivity. The term al-iḥtiḵām ilā l-Qurʾān, as employed by ʿĀʾisha ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (Bint al-Shāṭi’), implies that the corpus is made to “adjudicate” between possible interpretations of a word in its local context. A further point which appeals to the Prophet’s own use of this method will be considered below. Rarely is an argument advanced based on features of the text itself, as I have attempted above as “Evidence for Unity” (3.1.3).

Regarding divine authority and hermeneutical objectivity, I have underlined the problems with these claims several times before, in that they obscure the inevitable role of scholarly ijtihād and raʿy – which will feature to various extents in the various types and processes of TQQ. Chapter 2 has demonstrated the wide scope for divergent interpretations based on TQQ, which disproves the notions that it is an objective method or that such exegesis is ready to be “discovered”. In my view, such claims place too much emphasis on sources at the expense of theories and methods. A single source, in this case the Qurʾān, will be analysed in diverse ways by scholars bringing to the task a variety of theological commitments and biases – a point underlined above in connection with identifying the muḥkam verses. When the Muʿtazilite employs TQQ in order to support his school’s position, you do not find his Ashʿarīte opponents, for example, acquiescing to that argument simply because it is based on intraquranic methods.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² The term itself admits some ambiguity in this respect. Rather than just “hearing” the Qurʾān, the exegete must play a role in having it speak.

¹⁴³ See Naguib, ‘Bint al-Shāṭi’”s Approach to tafsīr,” pp. 58–61. The resulting ʿiḥbān al-Qurʾān – which, despite this term, does not confer perfect objectivity (ibid, p. 68) – then reveals the internal coherence of the passage.

¹⁴⁴ Indeed, Muḥyīr’s book Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān: Taṣīl wa Taqwīm was originally titled (as a PhD thesis): Ashab al-Khataṭ bi Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān (causes of error) – and this is reflected in his Salafī critique of TQQ from other schools. Among the causes he discusses are some connected to ṭafīda (doctrine). He also lists among the sources of error: contradicting prophetic ḥadīths or even the opinions
Instead of a sweeping claim for the superiority of TQQ, a more nuanced approach offered by some authors considers various categories of TQQ and their respective levels of authority. In other words, they address the specific types of verses under examination and the type of relations between them, along with other factors pertinent to the truth-bearing potential of TQQ. An early example of this approach is found in Al-Burhān of Zarkashī, in his discussion of types of bayān (clarification): his categorisation suggests that the clearest type is that which is connected textually to the phrase under examination; citations from elsewhere in the sūra or the rest of the Qurʿān may be less compelling due to the connection being less obvious.145 However, the first example Zarkashī provides demonstrates some problems with this idea. He quotes Muḥammad b. Kaʿb al-Quraṭī as saying that the explanation of al-Ṣamad (112:2) is the following verse: “He begot no one nor was He begotten”.146 However, if this were so clear, there would be consensus on this point and no need to cite Muḥammad b. Kaʿb in this connection.

His second example is the word halūʿan in 70:19, which is followed by these two verses: “fretful when misfortune touches him, but tight-fisted when good fortune comes his way” – Zarkashī quotes the grammarian Thaʿlab (d. 291/904) as saying: “Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir asked me, what is this hala’? I replied: God has already explained it.”147 This kind of explicit clarification is described by Muṭayrī as tafsīr al-Qurʿān li-l-Qurʿān, and other examples include questions posed in the Quranic text together with an immediate answer (e.g. 86:1-3).148 It may be said, however, that this is so obvious as to make its designation as tafsīr unnecessary. In many cases, it is better described as a rhetorical tool than a case of clarification. Indeed, it is not necessarily the case – even when it appears so – that the “answer” corresponds perfectly to the

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145 Al-Burhān, pp. 348–354. See Chapter 1 for more on Zarkashī’s account of TQQ.
146 Al-Burhān, p. 349.
147 Al-Burhān, p. 349.
148 Tafsīr al-Qurʿān bi-l-Qurʿān, p. 41. A variation on this are asbāb reports which indicate that extra phrases were revealed in response to confusion over the original verse. This has been narrated concerning the phrase “min al-fajr” being added to 2:187, and “ghayrī ʿalī l-durar” to 4:95. The same applies to whole verses which came as clarification, as has been narrated concerning 2:286 (to clarify 2:284) and 21:101 (to clarify 21:98). The relevant narrations are in Suyūṭī’s Al-Durr al-Manṣūr.
“question”, as eloquent speech sometimes involves turning away from the question as posed.\(^{149}\)

For Muṭayrī, there are two main factors which make some TQQ opinions more authoritative than others: first, the person who expresses this opinion, in that Prophetic exegesis is accepted absolutely, and the exegesis of Companions and Followers to a lesser degree. Second, the extent to which the results of TQQ agree with other principles and sources of exegesis (ṣaḥīḥāt al-ṣaḥīḥāt), especially the Sunna.\(^{150}\) The question arises here: in the presence of an explicit, authentic ḥadīth, is a TQQ-based explanation still more authoritative (“best” and taken “first”, according to Ibn Taymiyya’s schema)? This proposition has not found the favour of the exegetes in practice, and modern writers such as Muṭayrī have pointed out that TQQ is open to abuse, so to speak, in substantiating various opinions. His explanation leaves the question unanswered: which has authority over the other, Qurʾān or Sunna?

Ṭayyār argues, similarly, that the authority of a TQQ-based opinion varies according to the authority of the exegete, since it is based upon his ijtihād. As such, Prophetic TQQ is the only kind with clear authority, alongside the most explicit and proximate Quranic clarifications as described previously.\(^{151}\) The example he provides of Prophetic TQQ is the explanation of “mafāṭih al-ghayb” in Sūrat al-Anʿām (6:59) as referring to the five categories of the Unseen as expressed in 31:34. However, as I explained in Chapter 2, some exegetes acknowledged the ḥadīth without adopting it as the (sole) explanation of the verse; thus it may be said that they took it as no more than an “authoritative example” and preferred to take the verse at its universal face value.\(^{152}\)

\(^{149}\) One form of this is known as “al-ʿustūb al-ḥakīm” (see Suyūṭī, Al-ʾIqān, 4/1311).

\(^{150}\) Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān, p. 75.

\(^{151}\) Al-Tahārī fi ʿUṣūl al-Tafsīr, pp. 46–47.

\(^{152}\) Similar can be said concerning the ḥadīth linked to Q 1:7 which explains “those who incur wrath” as Jews, and “those who are astray” as Christians (see Ibn ʿAsīr, Al-Tahārī wa-l-Tawārīkh, 1/199, where it is taken as an “illustration”). In Nasr et al (eds.), The Study Quran, the relevant ḥadīth is made a postscript to a thematic study of the causes of ḡadāb and ḍalāʾil in the Qurʾān (pp. 10–11). The editor, Joseph Lombard, makes an extreme understatement by describing this identification (found in almost all tafsīr) as “one interpretation given by a number of commentators”; he implies falsely that this ḥadīth is weaker than others accepted in tafsīr, describing it as “a saying attributed to the Prophet, though not considered to be of the highest degree of authenticity”. To his credit, he acknowledges that the common opinion is often supported with other verses, such as 5:60 and 5:77 (see Šābān, Ṣāmīʾ al-ʾIṣkāḥ, 1/158, 162). If this opinion is expressed as: “not like the worst members of former communities”, then it is uncontroversial and clearly well attested in the Qurʾān. An earlier alternative view was presented by Rāzī (Mafāṭib al-Ghayb, 1/207), in which these terms – following from the praise of believers in 1:6 – refer to kaffār and
3.4.2 – Revisiting the “Prophetic Method”

As noted previously, some scholars argued for the superiority of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* precisely because it was the “Prophetic method”. If methodological principles can be extracted from the Prophet’s practice, then these would enjoy a level of authority which could not be rivalled by the scholars. The existence of such ḥadīths can establish the validity of this method through precedence, if one disregards the possibility that his method was specific to him: a point related to the existence and nature of his extraquranic revelations.¹⁵³ If Muḥammad was informed of the explanation by “non-recited revelation”, that may limit the exegete’s ability to imitate him; on the other hand, the same issue as faced by the jurist has not hindered the development of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Ibn Taymiyya’s quotation from Shāfiʿī is optimistic about imitation of the Prophetic hermeneutic: “Everything that God’s Messenger ruled came from what he understood from the Qurʾān”.¹⁵⁴

If the weaker claim is simply that Muḥammad did engage in this method, then the stronger claim is that this was the basis of all his explanations of the Qurʾān, explicitly or implicitly.¹⁵⁵ However, Quranic provenance is not readily apparent in most *tafsīr* attributed to the Prophet, and TQQ-based explanations appear to be very few in comparison with the broader corpus of exegetical *ḥadīths*.¹⁵⁶ To establish this point, I went through one recent compilation which aims to include all explicit narrations of Prophetic exegesis – irrespective of grades of authenticity¹⁵⁷ – and found no more than five, some of questionable relevance. If restricting analysis to reports deemed acceptable by the ḥadīth scholars, the corpus narrows further.

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¹⁵³ See Shāfiʿī, *Al-Risāla*, pp. 91–93. Saleh’s observation that “the traditionalist never bothered to explain how a Companion knew the meaning of a certain ãya” (‘Historiography,’ p. 26) can be extended to this situation.

¹⁵⁴ *Muqaddima*, p. 93. I noted the unclear provenance of this quotation in Chapter 1.

¹⁵⁵ See ʿAlwānī, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Ankām*, pp. 27, 29 – the author made some unreferenced attributions to support his contention that most or all Prophetic *tafsīr* was of this nature. See also Chapter 1 re: Tabāṭabāʾī’s similar claim.

¹⁵⁶ Muṭṭārī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, p. 57; the author himself includes improper examples.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the most famous example is the explanation of the *ẓulm* in 6:82 in terms of the *shirk* in 31:13. Here the operative question is: was Muḥammad actually engaging in TQQ when he explained one in terms of the other? Alternatively, could his explanation have been based on some other source or method, such that the citation of 31:13 served another purpose?

“Upon the revelation of ‘Those who believe and do not mix their belief with wrongdoing’ [wa lam yalbisū īmānahum bi-ẓulm – 6:82], the companions of the Messenger of God found it onerous and said: Which of us does not wrong himself? So the Messenger of God said: It is not as you suppose; rather, it is as Luqmān said to his son: ‘O my son, do not associate partners (shirk) with God: verily, shirk is a tremendous ẓulm’.” (31:13)

*Ḥadīth* commentators explain that the confusion arose from the universal (ʿāmm) term “ẓulm” which could refer to any type of transgression against another’s rights, or misplacing something. It gains another kind of universality by being indefinite in a negated sentence (nakira fī siyāq al-nafy); but this combined universality is still subject to particularisation (takhṣīs), and this is what the majority of commentators concluded based upon the *ḥadīth*. However, as described previously, some exegetes – including Zamakhsharī and Ṭabāṭabāī – opted to retain the universal meaning of ẓulm or a variation upon that.

To ascertain whether this *ḥadīth* represents a genuine case of TQQ (as opposed to independent Prophetic teaching), we can ask: could the meaning of *shirk* be independently deduced, even without reference to the verse of Luqmān? The following are indications within the verse and its context:

1. The entire story and the point of contention between the “two parties” was about *shirk*.
2. The verse itself references ẓulm in opposition to īmān, implying that its opposite is intended.

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158 See the commentary of Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bāri*, 1/152. On this genre see Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God*.


160 Zarkashī, *Al-Būhān*, p. 348. This may also be taken as an appeal to Quranic norms, i.e. faith is generally contrasted with disbelief, not lesser sin.
3. According to Arabic rhetoric (balāgha), the word zulm being indefinite may imply “a great injustice” which in turn suggests the greatest form – shirk – and indeed may hint to the very wording of Q 31:13.161

4. Shirk is a dominant theme in Sūrat al-Anʿām, beginning from its first verse.

5. “Most” Quranic warnings to zālimūn pertain to the unbelievers, says Ibn Rajab, citing Q 14:42 and 42:44 as examples162; Shinqīṭī cites Q 2:254 and 10:106 alongside the verse of Luqmān in his exegesis of 6:82.163 This shows that the citation of 31:13 was not necessary. On the other hand, it may not have been sufficient to dispel the misconception, as its wording does not entail that shirk is the only form of zulm. While some narrations have only the quotation, others include a clarification from Muḥammad to the effect that “It means shirk”. This may be why Zarkashī states that the Prophet based his explanation on 6:82 itself and only cited 31:13 by way of support (isti’nas) for the idea of shirk being referred to as zulm.164 It may well be, as the Shāfiʿī quotation implies, that the Prophet corrected the Companions based on what he himself understood from the Qurʾān. An obstacle to this – if contextual clues excluding 31:13 are disregarded – is that some narrations have it that the latter was in fact revealed in response to the confusion. Noting the conflict with other narrations which say “Have you not heard what Luqmān said”, Nawawī suggests that the Prophet said this to them after the verse was revealed in response to their confusion.165 This seems less plausible than to say – following Dihlawī’s observations above concerning asbāḥ al-nuzūl – that this was either an occasion for re-revelation of the verse (or fragment), or that its description as a sabab is imprecise.166

My conclusion from this analysis is that this incident is not as clear an example of TQQ as generally assumed. More importantly, it cannot be used to establish

161 Ālūsī, Rūḥ al-Maʿānī, 8/276.
162 Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, Ṭaḥāt al-Bārī, 1/144; see Muṭayrī, Ṭafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān, p. 91.
163 Shinqīṭī, Adwāʾ al-Ｂayān, p. 251.
164 Al-Burhān, p. 348.
165 Nawawī, Ṣaḥīh Muslim, 1/323; see also Ibn Ḥajar, Fath al-Bārī, 1/152. Ibn ʿĀshūr states that Q 6 was the fifty-fifth chapter to be revealed, while Q 31 was the fifty-seventh (Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr, 7/123, 21/138), though the inexactness of such designations should be kept in mind.
166 Assuming that the whole of Sūrat al-Anʿām was revealed before the whole of Luqmān, the latter could still have been known to the Companions before the confusion surrounding the former emerged.
something called the “Prophetic method” of TQQ, nor does it demonstrate convincingly that this was the way that Muḥammad himself deduced meanings from the Qurʾān. It is one thing to conclude, with the majority of exegetes, that the intended meaning of ẓūlīm in 6:82 is indeed shirk, based on the Prophet’s clarification. However, it is more clearly categorised as an example of Prophetic tafsīr than an instance of tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān. The most apparent explanation is that he was teaching his Companions (those who misunderstood, who may have been a small group) to deduce this meaning from its immediate context, and only cited 31:13 to demonstrate that this meaning for ẓūlīm exists elsewhere in the scripture. Compared with numerous other examples of TQQ presented in Chapter 2 and elsewhere, the connection between the two verses is not obvious and not convincing in its own right. Indeed, if one were to draw TQQ conclusions in a similar vein – without reference to the various contextual factors listed above – one may well be accused of making flimsy inferences based on the reoccurrence of words (such as ẓūlīm in this instance).

3.4.3 – Quranism

The preceding discussion assumes that the Prophet was given the task of explaining the Qurʾān; that he carried out this duty to one extent or another; and that this is reflected in the hadīth literature which is considered by the bulk of mainstream Islam to represent the second source of legislation known as the Sunna. In contrast, the various individuals and groups known as Quranists (see 2.7 above) do not accept the hadīth corpus as authoritative – even the most “authentic” reports by Sunnī or Shīʿī standards – insisting that only the Qurʾān should be treated as revelation and scripture. According to the most influential proponents of this trend in the modern era – such as Rashad Khalifa and Ghulam Ahmed Parwez – Muḥammad was tasked only with delivering the divine message intact.167 The Prophetic bayān, rather than explanation

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167 For this and other key arguments of the two figures, see, respectively: Musa, Hadith as Scripture, p. 14, and Baljon, Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation, pp. 17–19. Musa draws attention to early manifestations of hadīth rejection by examining Shīʿī’s response to that trend; however, this does not establish continuity with modern Quranism. Moreover, while insisting that it is “an inherently Muslim response to inherently Muslim concerns” (p. 3, see also 85), Musa downplays the effects of Western dominance and the ideological trends such as liberalism. See Brown, Rethinking Tradition, p. 21 ff. for a balanced treatment of ‘internal’ trends and ‘external’ influences.
and exegesis, should be understood in its other sense of mere proclamation, whereas God himself retained the prerogative to fulfil its bayān-as-clarification.168

In my view, there are three main arenas in which debates between Quranists (also known as ḥadīth deniers) and affirmers of the authority of ḥadīth take place; only one of these is of direct relevance to our discussion on the validity of non-TQQ (or specifically ḥadīth-influenced) exegesis of the Qurʾān. Before visiting and refining that aspect, I shall outline the other two and consider some of their problems.

(a) Debating Quranic Proof-Texts

The first of these arenas is the set of proof-texts advanced from the Qurʾān itself by each side of the debate. In principle, constructive debate could take place around these, in that the Qurʾān is the only source agreed upon by all; however, the divergent views about how its verses are to be interpreted could interfere with the very possibility of mutual understanding being achieved. If advocates of the majority position opt to restrict themselves to forms of argument acceptable to their opponents (i.e. linguistic and intraquranic evidence), then they have already conceded a point about the nature of the Qurʾān: that it can be understood in isolation and abstraction from the life of the Prophet. This is perhaps too much of a concession, considering that both Traditionists (as they are sometimes described) and Quranists accept that Muḥammad received and proclaimed the scripture gradually, and that many verses refer directly to events in his mission. As such, the relationship between message and messenger ought to be of central importance to the debate over Qurʾān and Sunna (or ḥadīth) and it seems unreasonable to insist that the former is the only admissible evidence for the latter.

Putting aside these foundational problems, the fact is that proponents of ḥadīth have advanced a set of verses as evidence at least since the time of Shāfiʿī, who records a debate in Socratic style in his Kitāb Jimāʿ al-ʿIlm (part of Al-Umm).169 Among his

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168 Daniel Brown quotes ʿInāyat-Allāh Khān Mashriqī as saying: “The correct and the only meaning of the Qurʾān lies, and is preserved, within itself, and a perfect and detailed exegesis of its words is within its own pages. One part of the Qurʾān explains the other…” (Rethinking Tradition, p. 45). Khalifa went further to state that Muḥammad was forbidden from explaining the Qurʾān. He supported this with the following translation of Q.75:17-19: ‘It is we who will put it together as a Quran. Once we reveal it, you shall follow it. Then, it is we who will explain it’ (emphasis his; see Musa, p. 91).

169 A translation of this work forms the latter part of Musa, Ḥadīth as Scripture.
core strategies was to establish that Muḥammad received two types of revelation, which he termed “recited” and “non-recited”, represented by the Qurʾān and Sunna, respectively. A nuanced interpretation of the latter would be that the angelic communications and spiritual inspiration he received – other than the direct words of the Qurʾān – came to be reflected in his other teachings, including his clarifications on the scripture.\(^\text{170}\)

As part of his case, Shāfiʿī analysed the statements to the effect that the Prophet was to teach both *al-kitāb* and *al-hikma* (e.g. 2:151), arguing that if the former is the Qurʾān, the latter must be a distinct entity, and there is no more fitting referent than the Sunna.\(^\text{171}\)

Other proof-texts from the Qurʾān in support of seeking out and following the Prophetic teachings external to it are such as say “Obey God and obey the Apostle” (4:59) or the instruction contained within 59:7 – which begins by discussing the distribution of spoils of war – to “Take whatever the Apostle gives you, and relinquish whatever he forbids you”.\(^\text{172}\)

Despite the context being clear, the Prophet’s companion Ibn Masʿūd and then Shāfiʿī and others argued that this represents a universal principle.\(^\text{173}\) These are some of the key texts used to support the legitimacy of *ḥadīth* from the Qurʾān.

Needless to say, modern Quranists are not convinced by these citations. The identification of *al-hikma* with the Sunna is plausible but not compelling, especially when these verses are studied thematically.\(^\text{174}\)

It is a straightforward manoeuvre to relegate obedience to the Messenger to his own lifetime, and to treat the likes of 59:7 as specific to the stated context. For Khalifa, obedience to the Messenger after his life consists in following only the Qurʾān.\(^\text{175}\)

For their part, the Quranists advance a selection of Quranic texts which they take to support their stance. As Musa notes,

\(^{170}\) See Musa, p. 5, where the matter is over-simplified. I believe it is important to distinguish between this “other revelation” as it is posited to exist firstly as divine and angelic communication with the Prophet; secondly as the Prophet’s teachings to his followers; and thirdly as the community’s efforts to gather these teachings in the form of disparate reports and then compiled books of Sunna.

\(^{171}\) See Musa, p. 40 and Brown, p. 51.

\(^{172}\) This and the previous verse are given here in Ali Quli Qara’ī’s translation.

\(^{173}\) See Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī*, 27/29–30. The issue of spoils may be thus seen as comparable to a *sabab nuzul* which is included primarily but does not limit the extension of the rule.

\(^{174}\) Other prophets were given or taught “*al-kitāb wa-l-hikma*” (e.g. 4:54, 5:111). Perhaps the clearest support for Shāfiʿī’s interpretation are verses which describe them both as being “sent down” on Muḥammad (e.g. 4:113).

\(^{175}\) Musa, p. 14. See also Brown, pp. 71–72.
Khalifa had a predilection for verses containing the word hadīth, such as Q 45:6 [his translation]: “These are God’s verses; we recite them for you truthfully. In which ‘Hadith’ beside God and His verses do they believe?”176 If reading the later hadīth terminology into this verse appears both anachronistic and anti-contextual, the same can be said of examples I shared in Chapter 2 of the tendency to read much of the Qurʾān as a treatise in support of Quranism rather than exhortations to the idolaters, Jews and Christians. Whereas there is abundant support for their insistence that the Qurʾān is “complete, perfect, and fully detailed”, the attempt by Khalifa and then Yüksel to make Q 17:46 a proof for mentioning God “in the Qurʾān alone” again fails to withstand contextual and thematic scrutiny.177

The foregoing examples were intended to demonstrate that the first “arena” of debate between Quranists and hadīth-affirming Muslim scholars, while bearing considerable potential for addressing the core questions, has little by way of final conclusions. On the one hand, the Qurʾān emphasises its completeness and perfection, while not precluding that secondary sources may be drawn upon to help explain it. On the other hand, the Qurʾān also underlines the role of the Messenger to convey the revelation accurately, which implies that any misunderstandings on the part of its audience would need to be addressed: either through further āyāt of the scripture, or through less formal means. The question remains whether and how those explanations – which presumably were needed only for some of the Qurʾān – were preserved and what authority they continue to hold for later generations of believers.

(b) Debating Hadīth Texts

This leads us to consider the second arena: that of the hadīth literature itself. Most of the debate surrounds its relevance to Islamic legislation, rather than its utility in shedding light on other aspects of Quranic meaning. Although there are significant

176 Musa, p. 91. Other examples are 39:23 and 31:6 (ibid).
177 Yüksel, A Reformist Translation, p. 205. This is a good test case for TQQ, as there is a parallel in 39:45, where the wording is “Idhā dhukira Lāhu wādūlā” rather than “Idhā dhakarta rabbaka fī-l-Qurʾānī wahdah” as in 17:46. As Yüksel acknowledges, the various occurrences in 7:70, 40:12/84 and 60:4 all refer to “God alone” as object of faith, worship and supplication. However, he prefers to take this instance as being about “Quran alone” and provides this as a heading for the verse. He also supports his position with reference to the controversial “19 mathematical system” first posited by Khalifa.
differences between Sunnī and Shīʿī approaches to ḥadīth as well as differences within the sects, affirmers of ḥadīth are in agreement that the corpus overall reflects a monumental effort on the part of Muslim scholarship. The presence of reports deemed unreliable or spurious within most of the famous compilations is taken not as a fundamental flaw, but instead as a reflection of the honesty and diligence of generations of scholars who strove to classify them and continue to debate the finer points. In this light, the contention that this corpus is “one-hundred percent conjecture” – per Khalīfa180 – is hyperbolic, to say the least. As a process of recording history, some credit must be granted to the results of the Ḥadīth Project, as it may be termed. After all, the Qurʾān itself would have had to pass through the same hands and minds which the Quranists accuse – explicitly or by implication – of forgery, ignorance and conjecture.

Like from the Qurʾān, both sides have, at times, cited ḥadīth texts in support of their respective stances. There is an obvious problem for Traditionists in this respect, as the sources they point to are not accepted as accurate and authoritative by their interlocuters. Surprisingly, some sceptics have used ḥadīth texts as positive evidence, such as: “Ḥadīths from me will spread, so whatever comes to you that is in harmony with the Qurʾān, it is from me; but whatever comes to you that contradicts the Qurʾān, then it is not from me.” As the ḥadīth compiler Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) pointed out: “The text is self-defeating, for there is no indication in the Qurʾān that we ought to compare a ḥadīth to the Qurʾān.”181 Of course, the deployment of such texts is intended to convince the ḥadīth advocates that their stance is inconsistent; however, a sceptic who holds that only this type of narration is reliable would need to explain his own inconsistency.

More frequent is the citation of ḥadīths which exemplify, for Quranists, the self-evident implausibility of numerous texts which have passed the criteria of Sunnī scholarship, such as those in the Sahīh collections of Bukhārī and Muslim. As Daniel Brown notes, various figures have described how discovering such “vulgar, absurd,
theologically objectionable or morally repugnant” texts in the famous books is what led them to reject ḥadīth altogether. In response to (or even in anticipation of) such critiques, the genre of commentaries – including the sub-genre which addresses the problematic texts known as Mushkil or Mukhtalīf al-Ḥadīth – have discussed many such points, and the answers may at times be satisfactory, at others unsatisfactory to the critics. However, to dismiss the whole corpus summarily in this way leads one to enquire why the Qur’ān itself should be accepted despite containing numerous verses which have faced criticism and claims of contradiction – hence the genre of Mushkil al-Qur’ān and others discussed in Chapter 4.

(c) Quranic “Neediness”

The third “arena” for debate – and the one of most relevance to principles underpinning TQQ – is the nature of the Qur’ān itself, and its “neediness” (iḥtiyāf) for external sources to help understand it. This concept was perhaps expressed most directly by the jurist ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Awzā’ī (d. 158/774): “The Book is more in need of (ahwaj ilā) the Sunna than the Sunna is of the Book.” This has typically been understood as describing the role of the Prophet’s words and examples in clarifying the import of Quranic rulings and teachings, including to resolve aspects of ambiguity. This type of contrast is also found in the following reports recorded by Suyūṭī in his chapter on Polysemy:

Ibn Sa’d reported via ʿIkrima from Ibn ʿAbbās, that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālīb sent him to the Kharijites, saying: “Go to them and debate them; but do not dispute with them using the Qurʾān, for it is multifaceted (dhū wujūh). Rather, debate them with the Sunna.” He reported with another chain that Ibn ʿAbbās said to him: “O commander of the faithful, I am more knowledgeable than they concerning the Book of God, for in our houses it was revealed.” He replied: “You are right; but the Qurʾān is multivalent (ḥammāl) and multifaceted. You will talk, and they will talk. Rather, dispute with them using the Sunna (khāṣimhum bi-l-sunan), for they will find no escape from it.”

182 Rethinking Tradition, p. 95.
183 See Musa, pp. 19–20.
184 See, for example, Sibā’ī, p. 350 ff.
185 Zarkashi, Al-Bahr al-Muhit, 4/167. Cf. Ahmad b. Ḥanbal’s hesitance to affirm the expression that the Sunna is the arbiter of the Qurʾān, instead saying: “It explains and clarifies it.” See also Brown, Rethinking Tradition, p. 43. Compare with Wansborough’s Deutungsbedürftigkeit, “that the scriptural style is incomplete without commentary” (Quranic Studies, p. 100; see Bauer (ed.), p. 277).
So he went to them and disputed using the Sunna, leaving them devoid of arguments.\textsuperscript{186} Quranists may well point out the tension between such statements and the Qur\’ān’s self-descriptions as clear and perfect guidance.\textsuperscript{187} Putting aside this theoretical problem, I suggest that the neediness of the Quranic text is a fact experienced by any scholar who undertakes the detailed process of exegesis.\textsuperscript{188} There are various types of \textit{ijmāl} that cannot be clarified by intraquranic investigation alone: some of which are necessary to reach a plausible understanding of the text. For example, the \textit{mufassir} often needs to know the revelatory context and the initial referents of a Quranic locution; despite Farāhī’s optimism about deducing this information from the Qur\’ān itself, this is not possible in all cases. This very need is what led exegetes to speculate in many cases, as suggested by Dihlawī. Another example is statements which appear to contradict: these may be resolved by external context, or the Sunna may reveal the specific application of each, or that one ruling has abrogated the other.\textsuperscript{189}

Rather than focusing on the “neediness” of individual verses of the Qur\’ān, the idea may be taken to apply to the text as a whole and the broader context in which it must be placed and understood. The term Sunna (or plural \textit{al-sunan} as in the second narration from ‘Alī above) is sometimes used in early sources in the broader sense of the knowledge of religion as practised by the community.\textsuperscript{190} As the narration from ‘Alī also suggests, the Qur\’ān is more subject to biased reading when taken in isolation, as opposed to reading it in conjunction with the shared understanding which is derived, in large part, from the teachings and actions of the Prophet. Therefore, one may engage in a Sunnī reading of the Qur\’ān and/or readings influenced by modern-day worldviews – but a completely objective reading is unattainable.

\textsuperscript{186} \textit{Al-Iqtān}, 3/977.
\textsuperscript{187} Cf. Kermani on the Qur\’ān’s insistence on being clear, which, he argues, served as a counter-balance to the mystery and obscurity inherent in the term \textit{waḥy}, for revelation (\textit{God is Beautiful}, p. 104).
\textsuperscript{188} I recognise that this perception is relative, and that it is possible to go to extremes in assuming “neediness”, thus falling short in understanding the Qur\’ān on its own terms. I have seen numerous examples in which Farāhī, for example, offers a coherence-based explanation which is more convincing than the opinions of earlier exegetes who took external reports as their starting point.
\textsuperscript{189} See Musa, p. 43 for Shāfi‘ī’s point concerning \textit{nashīh}.
\textsuperscript{190} See Zarkashī, \textit{Al-Bahr al-Muḥīṭ}, 4/378.
In the field of legislation particularly, a popular strategy to undermine the Quranists’ position is to highlight directives in the Qur’ān that lack sufficient detail to be implemented; most obviously, the repeated command to “establish al-ṣalāh” and the paucity of detail concerning timings, postures and words, and other prerequisites and integrals. To approach it in another way, the question may be: how did the Muslim community come to agree upon five daily prayers and other core rituals not detailed in the Qur’ān? Daniel Brown describes an early trend among modern Quranists, exemplified by ‘Abd-Allāh Chakrālawī of the of the Ahl-i-Qur’ān movement, to “prove that the details of the five daily prayers can all be derived from the Qur’ān”. By indulging in what Brown calls “exegetical fantasies”, Chakrālawī went to great lengths to affirm most of the accepted rituals rather than remoulding the ṣalāh rules significantly, or redefining the term altogether, as attempted by later Quranists in the Subcontinent and beyond. On the question of community practice of Sunna, the approach taken by Khalifa and others has been to claim that “Religious practices came from Abraham, not Muḥammad” – as such, they would have been known to the Quraysh before the latter proclaimed his teachings.

### 3.4.4 – Relative Authority: Conclusion

The purpose of outlining the perspective of Quranists and the divergence between their approach to the Qur’ān and those of mainstream exegetes was to complete the illustration of a spectrum of views on Quranic authority. On one end is the commitment of “Traditionists” to the primacy of the Qur’ān, albeit with a stronger belief in its “neediness” and often a practical emphasis on external sources and neglect of intraquranic reflection. For these authors, TQQ is valid and praiseworthy, but

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191 For an outline of types of clarification or modification by the Sunna of the Qur’ān, see Nyazee, *Islamic Jurisprudence*, pp. 177–179.

192 *Rethinking Tradition*, pp. 45–46. See also Qasmi, ‘Towards a New Prophetology’.


194 This can be seen in Shabbir Ahmed (*The Qur’an as it Explains Itself*, xiii); also Baljon, pp. 76–78.


196 I have suggested previously that this is represented by the overall trajectory of Ibn Taymiyya’s *Muqaddima*, which Walid Saleh termed “radical hermeneutics”. Works such as the *Tafsīr* of Ibn Kathīr...
they may also highlight the dangers of allowing it to override the Sunna. My analysis of a range of *tafsīr* works including that of Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī has demonstrated that an exegete may well cite an opinion based on TQQ but prefer a different opinion.197

The opposite end of the spectrum is in fact more radical in that it rejects the authority of any source beside the Qurʾān and insists on intraquranic methods coupled with lexical and rational considerations. Notably absent is a detailed hermeneutical account, which may be explained in part by the commitment of Quranists to the notion that the Qurʾān is clear in practical terms, and therefore in no need of exegesis.198

Between these two exist a range of approaches to exegesis which place TQQ at the peak of hermeneutical methods. This is the theoretical position of Ibn Taymiyya in the relevant section of his *Muqaddimah*; in Chapter 1, I discussed various problems with this account, as well as the contrast between its enthusiastic reception in theoretical treatises and its limited application in exegetical works. One category of works falling in the middle of the spectrum are those which took seriously the belief that *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* is superior to other approaches, such as Farāḥī and Iṣlāḥī. They are of particular note because they built their explanations of the Qurʾān upon an identified theory (i.e. *naẓm*), and their hermeneutical ideas continue to attract interest and grow in influence.199 Similar may be said about the commentary of Ṭabāṭabā’ī: its influence – in methodology, more than any novel conclusions – is evident in subsequent Shi’a *tafsīr*.200 Amritsarī drew inspiration from Dihlawī’s *asbāb*-scepticism but his commentary is too concise to display much variance from the general *Ahl-i-Ḥadīth* trend, despite the backlash he faced for incorporating aspects of Māturīdī theology in the first edition.

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197 See Rūmī, *Dināsāt fi Qawā'id al-Tajīb*, pp. 314–370: the author has included examples of TQQ working in tandem or competing, as it were, with other principles.

198 See 2.7 above.

199 Farāḥī’s works continue to be published by Al-Dā‘īra al-Ḥamīdīyya in Azamgarh, India, but the associated seminary, Madrasat Iṣlāh, does not appear to have maintained a leading status in Quranic training since his time. Through a network called Al-Mawрид, Javed Ghamidi promotes these works and advances his own theories. Another prominent figure in Farāḥī’s school is the *ḥadīth* specialist Mohammad Akram Nadwi, who connects to the founder through his lesser-known (but longer-associated) student, Akhtar Aḥsan Iṣlāhī (d. 1958). [Source: lecture by M. Akram Nadwi, July 2014].

The case of Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shinqīṭī is different, however. Despite being among the best known of this group of commentaries, and most readily identified as a TQQ work, the conclusions reached therein are not ground-breaking. The author’s introduction is, in reality, more about the nature of the Qurʾān and the forms of intraquranic bayān – identified after completing his project – than an elaboration of methodology. The work is at its most sophisticated when Shinqīṭī indulges in questions of jurisprudence, at which points the intraquranic contribution is negligible. The specialities of ḡdāwāʾ al-Bayān are its collection of parallels – drawing from Ibn Kathīr and others, including the author’s own insights – and application of juristic methods of exegesis (see Chapter 4 for this category). In describing these limitations, I am querying: what was the need to author such a work, if it did not yield significant conclusions or point the way to further intraquranic research (cf. Farāḥī et al)?

I propose that the ḡdāwāʾ (and arguably some others) be classified alongside Suyūṭī’s Al-Durr al-Manthūr as a thematic collection of exegesis. Whereas Suyūṭī’s is limited to materials from ḡadīth (broadly defined) of importance to the exegete, Shinqīṭī’s functions as a collection of verses together with his views on their relevance – as simple parallels or as evidence. Neither work is a stand-alone exegesis, especially considering that Shinqīṭī passes over many verses without comment, presumably because no TQQ explanation occurred to him. The same verses may well receive detailed treatment in standard works of ṭafsīr, centred not only upon ḡadīths but on questions of language, theology and so on. Therefore, Shinqīṭī’s compilation and similar works may be drawn upon by any exegete looking for a detailed treatment of one particular aspect and source, just as he or she is likely to consult specialist works on linguistic analysis (i’rāb wa ma’ānī), abrogation (nāsikh wa mansūkh), juristic interpretation (aḥkām al-Qurʾān) and contexts of revelation (asbāb al-nuzūl). These classical genres can be seen as thematic aids to studying the Qurʾān; just as they cannot suffice in isolation from that broader discussion and synthesis, the same may be said for TQQ compilations. Indeed, I suggested previously that Ibn Kathīr, by leaving many

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201 In his introduction, Shinqīṭī does not include bold claims like most of the other TQQ exegetes about how his work will be different, nor does he dismiss other works as lacking objectivity or being in need of this new method to resolve their conflicting opinions.
of his cited parallels without analysis and comment, may have intended for these cross-
references to be of use to later exegetes inspired to investigate further.

The discussions in this chapter have encompassed a number of key principles
underpinning *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, providing it with its epistemic authority; as
well as related theories which may problematise this authority in some respects, such
as temporal revelation and abrogation. What emerges is a complex picture of what
TQQ involves in theory, just as there is a range of processes and methods outlined in
the next chapter. As such, it makes little sense to treat TQQ as one thing, on one level
of authority, such that it can be considered the “best” or otherwise. The distinction was
made above between levels of clarity of TQQ (from Zarkashī’s types of *bayān*), and
some scholars outlined factors which make TQQ opinions more compelling, namely
the personal authority of the exegete (especially the Prophet) and the support of other
exegetical sources and methods. If it is useful to compare TQQ with other approaches
in terms of authority, the account would be far more complex once these factors are
combined with the diversity of methods constituting TQQ. However, in my estimation,
an exegete is not in need of simplistic or detailed accounts of what is “best”, as exegesis
is a complex and subtle craft involving careful negotiation with the sources together
with rational and narrated evidence. In short, there will be times when his conclusions
depend most strongly upon one or another form of TQQ, and times when other
considerations are at the forefront: this is the reality of most exegesis as found in the
books.
Chapter 4
Methods and Genres in TQQ

4.0 – Introduction

At various points, I have referred to TQQ as the “intraquranic method” in the singular; yet it has become clear through the theoretical discussions and study of exegetical examples that there are various methods at play. In this chapter, these aspects of methodology will be examined more closely and brought together into one context, as though to represent the “TQQ toolkit” from which the exegetes have drawn and continue to draw. I am also interested in how the truth-bearing potential of these tools can be optimised for the future mufassir or student of the Qurʾān. The result may then be seen as one “method” encompassing a variety of techniques and processes, alongside the aspects of theory addressed previously. I take as a starting point the relevant discussions identified in hermeneutical works of ʿulūm al-Qurʾān etc. (Chapter 1) and build upon the observations in Chapter 2 concerning the practices of those exegetes who defined their own projects as being based wholly or primarily upon the intraquranic method. The methods discussed here can, in numerous cases, be linked directly to theories discussed in Chapter 3; there are also fresh theoretical considerations related to a number of the methods examined.

I have divided the methods under consideration into four groups, namely: juristic, thematic, comparative and contextual. Excluding the first, these groups form a conceptual whole, insofar as a thematic approach to the Quranic entails finding parallels and building a more complete picture; a comparative approach is to give some parts or meanings preponderance over others; and a contextual approach is to draw conclusions from a text’s immediate surroundings rather than the broader corpus. Under each group, I have drawn material and conclusions from both theory and practice. As well as summarising the methods employed by the TQQ exegetes (and others), I refer to the ʿusūl and ʿulūm literature to clarify the methodology by which these authors operated. In order to arrive at the most complete picture possible of a theory and methodology of TQQ, I have widened the net to specialist works in Quranic
studies as well as other genres in Muslim scholarship which display direct relevance to the methods under consideration. The first of these genres which have the appearance of being external to Quranic studies is _üşūl al-ḥiqh_.

**4.1 – Juristic Methods**

This group of methods is distinct from the others by virtue of being more developed and thoroughly articulated; I have called them “juristic” because they have been codified in the genre of _üşūl al-ḥiqh_, which is generally translated as jurisprudence, legal theory, or similar.¹ Since interpreting scripture is integral to the formation and justification of Islamic law, scholars of legal theory developed hermeneutics of textual interactions in the Qurʾān and Sunna. However, this does not entail that theories and methods so elaborated were intended to be exclusive to the domain of _ḥiqh_ or to those verses classified as having legal relevance.² I am proceeding on the assumption that these methods are applicable – or adaptable – to the hermeneutics of the entire Qurʾān with its varied subjects, insofar as the interpretation of these passages involves the juxtaposition of texts which are explained with respect to each other.³ Here I discuss the three types of interaction which are of most direct significance to _tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān_, as reflected in books of _uşūl al-tafsīr_.⁴

**4.1.1 – Bayān of the Mujmal**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a detailed account of the causes of _ḥiqāl_, meaning “lack of clarity in denotation”, was included by Zarkasḫī in his chapter concerning “_Tafsīr_ and _Taʾwil_”. At the end of this chapter (41), he describes those texts

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¹ Vishanoff uses the latter along with “hermeneutics” in *The Formation of Islamic Hermeneutics: How Sunni Legal Theorists Imagined a Revealed Law*.

² Such verses are described as _āyāl al-ahkām_ and commonly estimated at five hundred. As Zarkasḫī points out (Al-Burhān, p. 262), other passages – such as narratives and parables – can also be sources for rulings. Books of _uşūl al-ḥiqh_ do cite “non-legal” verses in the course of establishing legal principles, especially points of language.

³ Muhammad al-Ghazālī and others have cautioned that _uşūl al-ḥiqh_ cannot simply be universalised to all texts and topics within the Qurʾān (see Hammād, *Ḥām Uṣūl al-Ṭafsīr*, pp. 56–57). My own view is that multiple types of _uşūl_ could be formulated to reflect different Qurʾanic ‘genres’, or various ‘readings’ of the text – see 4.2.3 below.

⁴ See Chapter 1. Other _uşūl al-ḥiqh_ topics are addressed elsewhere, particularly _naskh_ (3.2.2) and _dalālāt_ (4.4.1).
in the Qur‘ān which are “ẓāhir, i.e. denoting a meaning with alternative possibilities remaining”, as opposed to the unequivocal category known as naṣṣ.5 These alternatives are eliminated by recourse either to verbal or non-verbal indications (qarā‘in), and the verbal consists of either connected or unconnected speech. Whereas the “connected” type has the potential to be most authoritative (as I discussed in Chapter 3), the “unconnected” category is the most relevant to the majority of intraquranic exegesis.

As Zarkashī explains, wherever there is an equivocal verse which is clarified by another text, the latter has one of two effects: (a) to demonstrate that the equivocal text is to be understood in other than its most apparent meaning: this is called ta‘wil (interpretation) or takhsīs (particularisation); or (b) to make clear the actual meaning of that equivocal verse: this is bayān (clarification). The example he gives for ta‘wil is the statement “Divorce is twice” (al-ṭalāqu ṭuaratān; Q 2:229): with reference to the following verse, it becomes clear that this ṭalāq is the revocable type, which may be followed by the third, binding pronouncement. As for bayān, this is exemplified by Q 6:103 (lā ṭudrikhu l-absār), which – as explained in Chapter 2 – may be taken as denying altogether that people may see God, or merely denying that their vision may encompass Him; according to Sunnī interpretation, other verses (75:23, 83:15) clarify that only the latter sense is intended.6

Zarkashī lists nine general causes of ijmāl, which I summarise here:7

a. Ishtirāk (homonymy and polysemy) on the word level;
b. Ḥadhf (ellipsis) in the sentence;
c. Identifying referents of pronouns;
d. Waqf and iḥṭidā, i.e. where sentences begin and end;
e. Gharīb (uncommon) words;
f. Archaic expressions;
g. Taqdim and ta‘khūr, i.e. unusual word order;
h. Manqūl/mungalib words, i.e. adapted forms;

5 Al-Burhān, p. 361. It is evident from the heading given to this section that the term ẓāhir is being used as an equivalent for muqna‘; indeed, they are used interchangeably within this section, just as various terms have been used synonymously with bayān/tabyīn. See 3.3 above for muṣṭashābīh and muḥkam as closely related concepts.

6 Al-Burhān, pp. 361–362.

7 Al-Burhān, pp. 359–361. I have not included his examples.
i. Repetitive phrases which obscure the apparent sentence structure.

These various types of *ijmāl* are then subject to *bayān* (or *tabyīn*), which may be found within the immediate context, in other Quranic passages, or in the Sunna. Zarkashī provides over thirty examples of *bayān al-mujmal* by separate passages of the Qurʾān – though he does not describe it as such, this is an obvious application of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*. These examples suffer from a lack of organisation and a disconnect from theory.⁸ In many cases, it is not clear that any *ijmāl* is present and/or that the other verse has provided genuine *bayān*; this applies most of all to the examples of response (*radd, jawāb*) given in one verse to a contention raised by various unbelievers in another. Some involve vague (*mubham*) expressions given more detail elsewhere, such as the famous example of “those You have blessed (*anʿamtaʿalayhim*)” (Q 1:7) being elaborated in 4:67, “Whoever obeys God and the Messenger will be among those God has blessed (*anʿama Liāhuʿalayhim*): the messengers, the truthful, those who bear witness to the truth, and the righteous”. Zarkashī discusses why this citation is more fitting as *tafsīr* than 19:58 (which contains the same expression): he argues that its meaning is broader and closer to the intent of 1:7.⁹

Since the category of *mujmal* may be defined as a catch-all which includes those which I discuss below, it is unsurprising that some examples pertain to *takhsīṣ* or *taqyīd*, or involve thematic or comparative approaches. An example of particularisation (using a conditional) is that the apparent universal response to supplications in 2:186 must be understood as predicated upon God’s will and intent to respond – a point made explicit in 6:41 (“…if He wills”).¹⁰ A questionable thematic reading is provided for Moses’ request to see God (7:143): Zarkashī cites an earlier suggestion that he was not asking on his own behalf, but based on the Israelites’

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⁸ *Al-Burhān*, pp. 350–352. In addition, they suffer from a lack of editorial rigour in every edition I consulted. The second item in the list (“*fa-lahū khayrun minhā*”, Q 27:89, 28:84) does not have its *bayān* provided. The third item is missing its first stage of *ijmāl*, i.e. verses which state that the Qurʾān was sent down “without clarifying whether this occurred by day or night”, followed by those which specified night (44:3), then the name of this night, 97:1. Instead, these two items run together in the printed editions, incomprehensibly.

⁹ *Al-Burhān*, p. 353.

¹⁰ *Al-Burhān*, p. 350. Zarkashī also quotes a *ḥadīth* which explains different forms of “response” which are vouchsafed for supplications which fulfil certain conditions.
Another example involves an apparent conflict between two effects of God’s remembrance (dhikr) upon the believers: to create tranquillity in their hearts (13:28) and to make their hearts tremble (8:2) – a further verse is said to juxtapose these and resolve the tension, namely 39:23.  

A noteworthy aspect is the role – or absence – of context in some of the examples. The clarification provided by context is sometimes overlooked for the sake of arguing that this was provided by a separate verse. Zarkashi states that 43:17 – “When one of them is brought the news of what he ascribes to the All-beneficent, his face becomes darkened” – is clarified by 16:58, “When one of them is brought the news of a female, his face becomes darkened”. However, this is unnecessary because the preceding verse makes this explicitly clear: “Did He adopt daughters from what He creates while He preferred you with sons?” (43:16).

The conclusion I draw from surveying the treatment of this category is that, despite being listed by the likes of Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabi and Ṣubḥi Ṣāliḥ as one of the forms of intraquranic exegesis (see Chapter 1), bayān al-mujmal is in fact too broad a concept to be thus subsumed. Since there are numerous forms of ijmāl, and the concept is applied subjectively – indeed, many examples provided by the authors involve modification of something that appears clear in itself – it would be more fruitful to break this concept into its constituent elements. As described in Chapter 1, a more detailed account of Quranic ijmāl and bayān is provided by Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shinqīṭī in the introduction to Aḍwā’ al-Bayān. With further refinement and organisation, the specific elements requiring clarification – such as homonymy, which heads both Zarkashi’s and Shinqīṭī’s lists – may be identified and systematised along with the āmm and mutlaq texts discussed below.

From an uṣūl al-fiqh perspective, the “ruling” (ḥukm) concerning any mujmal text is that its bayān must be sought out (whether from the Qurʾān or externally) in

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11 Al-Burhān, p. 353. The unnamed scholar further states that “It is not stated in the Torah that [Moses] requested to see [God] at any other time than when he had his people with him.” However, such is found in Exodus 33.

12 Al-Burhān, p. 351.

13 Al-Burhān, p. 350. These translations are by Qara‘ā, emphasis added. Note the contrast here with Zarkashi’s own point about context versus istiḥās in the identification of ẓulm (in 6:82) with shirk (in 31:13) – see 3.4.2 above.
order to “act upon it”\textsuperscript{14} This account focuses upon verses which contain practical rulings (\textit{āyāt al-aḥkām}), and can extend unproblematically to points of creed, in that affirming beliefs is a kind of action. As for scenarios of \textit{ijmāl} beyond these categories, such as narratives or descriptions of natural phenomena, it should be said that the exegete is required to seek out \textit{bayān} for the purpose of understanding, rather than action. This is to assume that the \textit{bayān} will always be available: as mentioned in Chapter 3, there is a debate among the legal theorists on this point. According to Suyūṭī, “The most correct [opinion] is that [texts] upon which action is mandated may not remain [unclear]; this does not apply to other [types of text].”\textsuperscript{15} The stipulation (by Dhahabī et al) that the exegete must seek out relevant verses for clarification and completeness is, essentially, a \textit{thematic} approach; this is especially the case in examples where the text does not appear problematic in itself. Rather, it is simply the case that other verses (or hadīths, etc.) indicate that it should not be understood in its apparent sense.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{4.1.2 – \textit{Takhṣīs} of the \textit{ʿĀmm}}

Whereas the previous type of textual interaction was relatively broad, this and the following type pertain more directly to juristic rulings; the topics of universal (\textit{ʿāmm}) and particular (\textit{khāṣṣ}) expressions, especially, receive extensive attention in \textit{usūl al-fiqh} works. The \textit{ʿāmm} expression is one which “denotes all items to which the wording extends, comprehensively, with no limitation in terms of amount or quantity”\textsuperscript{17} Whereas the \textit{khāṣṣ} is “that which was coined to denote a single, specific meaning”\textsuperscript{18}, the concept which is of relevance to our discussion is in fact the particularisation (\textit{takhṣīs}) of universal expressions: this may be defined as “removing universality from the \textit{ʿāmm}, clarifying that it denotes only some of those items to which the wording extends”.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{14} Şāliḥ, \textit{Tafsīr al-Naṣūḥ}, 1/247.
\textsuperscript{15} Al-Iqān, 4/1426.
\textsuperscript{16} See 2.2.3 above for examples of “modifying sense” in Sūrat al-An‘ām.
\textsuperscript{17} Şāliḥ, \textit{Tafsīr al-Naṣūḥ}, 2/15.
\textsuperscript{18} Such as an individual person (e.g. \textit{Zayd}), a species (e.g. \textit{insān}), genus (e.g. \textit{hayawān}) or concept (e.g. \textit{ʿilm}) – see Şāliḥ, 2/136.
\textsuperscript{19} Adapted from Şāliḥ, 2/69.
There are a host of Arabic expressions which are taken to denote universality, and a universal meaning is also created by certain structures, such as a negated indefinite word (as in 6:82, where, linguistically, all *zulm* is negated). Once these linguistic expressions are identified as being universal in principle, they are divided into three categories: (a) that by which the universal meaning is, in fact, intended; (b) that which is known – through context and reason – not to be intended literally, but restricted by necessity; (c) those which are universal in themselves, but have been restricted and particularised by another text through *takhšīš*: our focus is solely on this latter category (known as *makḥāṣīs*).

The procedure with respect to *ʿāmm* texts and *takhšīš* is articulated in the various works of Quranic and juristic studies, and at its tersest in the form of an axiom (*qāʿida*): “A universal expression is considered universal unless there is evidence to particularise it.” This means that the default attitude to any wording which appears to denote universality is that it does so in fact; there is no need to search out a particularising locution (*mukḥāṣīs*) – contrary to the situation when faced with a *mujmal* text – and the exegete may not exclude referents from the expression without justification. Writers of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, as noted above, are concerned with the imperative to “act upon” the universal import of the location. However, the axiom as presented is broad enough to include other types of Quranic discourse.

As Suyūṭī outlines, there are numerous linguistic features which act as *mukḥāṣīs* and particularise the universal. Of these, some are connected to the original location, namely: exceptions, adjectives, conditions, limits and substitutions. However, the relevant categories for TQQ are the unconnected particularisers within

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20 These include words made definite with the article denoting comprehensiveness (*istighrāq*), or those which have a similar meaning through annexation (*iḍāfā*) to a definite genitive. There are auxiliary words which denote universality, including conditionals, interrogatives and relative pronouns. This is in addition to words coined as emphasis in this regard, e.g. “*kulluhum, ālamaʿan*> (all of them, all together)”. See Wahbī, *Al-Masāʾil al-Muḥtaraka bayna Ulūm al-Qurān wa Uṣūl al-Fiqh wa Aḥradhā fi l-Tafsīr*, pp. 458–469.

21 Wahbī, pp. 469–474.

22 For elaboration on the difference between the latter two, see Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān*, 4/1414–1416. He discusses the claim that there are hardly any genuine universals – he argues that this applies only to legal rulings (see also Wahbī, p. 474). Suyūṭī also notes the opinion which holds the *ʿāmm* text to be non-literal (*maḏāzū*) when it is subject to *takhšīs*.


24 See Wahbī, pp. 475–478 (including Quranic evidences for this axiom) and 538–540.
the Qurʾān (while Suyūṭī further lists hadīth, ijmāʿ and qiyās). An example of such takhsīs is the universal statement concerning “divorced women” (al-muṭallaqāt) in 2:228, that they must “wait for three monthly periods” before remarrying. Whereas the term encompasses all women upon whom divorce (ṭalāq) has been pronounced, two other verses demonstrate that this ruling does not apply equally to all divorcées. First, it excludes cases of divorce prior to consummation, in which no waiting period is mandated (33:49). Second, pregnant women are to remain in waiting until giving birth (65:4). As such, the original term “al-muṭallaqāt” in 2:228 should be interpreted as “consummated, non-pregnant divorcées”. This manoeuvre is sometimes looked at from the perspective of the original term being limited in scope (hence being made more particular or specific), and at other times the focus is upon the exclusions being made. The latter is illustrated by Suyūṭī’s second example: both “carrion and blood” are prohibited by 5:3, but fish was excluded (khuṣṣa l-samak) by 5:96, and non-flowing blood by 6:145 – here, the word takhsīs pertains to the item “specified as exception”.

The question of priority is important here. The procedure of takhsīs grants the particular (khāṣṣ) priority over the universal (ʿāmm). In cases where the universal was revealed earlier, the khāṣṣ ruling replaces one which originally was – or appeared to be – ʿāmm: this replacement occurs in the subset to which the khāṣṣ pertains. As noted in the discussion on abrogation, the resemblance here to naskh led frequently to early authorities using that term while intending takhsīs. It is certainly conceivable that a universal statement be revealed subsequent to a particular one – in such cases, to take the universal at face value would amount to naskh, in that the universal overrides the particular.

This question is related to another scenario, in which there are two rulings which appear to contradict, one being universal and the other particular. According to Fahd al-Wahbī in his recent work outlining areas of overlap between usūl al-ḥīḍ and ʿulūm al-Qurʾān, this is an issue overlooked within the latter genre despite its

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25 Al-Ijtihād, 4/1417–1418.
26 Al-Ijtihād, 4/1418.
27 Al-Ijtihād, 4/1418. See below re: taqyīd, as 6:145 is an example of that. The point concerning fish is that it is not such as can be slaughtered by knife, and thus would fall naturally under the category of carrion (mayta).
28 See 3.2.2 for the quote from Shāṭibī.
importance. The majority of legal schools take the approach of considering both verses operational, which can only be achieved by giving priority to the khāṣṣ, thereby doing takhṣīṣ of the ‘āmm ruling. In this, chronology is irrelevant. The example Wahbī gives is of the permission to marry Jewish and Christian women (Q 5:5), and the prohibition of mushrik women (2:221): the former is taken to limit and qualify the latter. The Ḥanafī school, on the other hand, proceeds from a stance that both the ‘āmm and khāṣṣ are definitive (qaṭʿ) in import – as such, the conflict must be resolved in light of chronology. A particularising locution which follows the universal one immediately is considered takhṣīṣ, whereas any separation in time would require that it be categorised as “partial abrogation” (naskh juzʿī). An example of the former is the command in Q 2:185 for everyone who enters Ramaḍān to observe the fast, followed immediately by the dispensation for people who are ill or travelling. As for the latter, this is exemplified by the ḥadd penalty for accusing chaste women of adultery without four witnesses (24:4), which conflicts with the verse permitting a husband to bear witness by himself four times (24:6). Due to the existence of a sabab report which has it that the latter was revealed separately in response to a particular case which arose, the Ḥanafīs consider this to effect abrogation of a part of the original verse, namely its application to husbands as accusers. A third possibility is that chronology cannot be determined, in which case other methods are used to decide on the preponderant ruling; if that is not possible, then neither of the verses (or evidences) is acted upon with respect to the area of overlap between them.

It is clear from the preceding discussion that there are underlying theoretical considerations and debates between the jurisprudential schools, especially between the Ḥanafīs and the other three Sunnī schools known as “the majority” (al-jumhūr). One

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29 Al-Masāʾiḥ al-Mustaraka, p. 535.
30 Ibid. This is on the assumption that mushrik extends here to Jews and Christians, which is in fact a subject of debate (see Ālūsī, Rāh al-Maʿānī, 3/259).
31 Ṣāliḥ, Taṣfīr al-Nāṣīṣ, 2/107.
32 Suyūṭī points to these differing approaches at the beginning of his discussion of Meccan and Medinan revelations (Al-Itqān, 1/43). Hamid Algar’s translation obscures this point: “according to those who believe that a specifying verse always comes later” (The Perfect Guide Vol. 1, p. 1).
33 Ibid. There is a typographical error here which is clarified by reference to 2/86 of the same volume.
35 Ṣāliḥ, 2/109.
of the challenges of generalising the hermeneutical rules from ʿusūl al-fiqh to the whole of tafsīr – in addition to the inherent variety of Quranic literary genres beyond the aḥkām verses – is that these rules were developed in the context of juristic debates that encompassed a range of legal evidences, along with the diversity of inherited practices and approaches of the earliest generations. Whereas the proper interpretation of the Qurʿān and Sunna is, on a purely conceptual level, the source and justification for legal opinions, the reality is that some interpretations – and even principles of interpretation – are influenced by practical positions and used to justify them.  

Nevertheless, the basic concept of particularisation of universals is clearly an important aspect of textual interplay which features in TQQ, and this applies outside the context of juristic rulings. An example from Chapter 2 pertained to Q 6:20, which contains two universals: “Those to whom We have given the Scripture” who recognise the Prophet and/or Qurʿān; and that “they will not believe”. The first of these, as argued by some of the exegetes, is particular to the knowledgeable ones among them, as evidenced by 34:6. The second apparent universal is particular to the stubborn and wicked among them, as evidenced by 5:83. The procedure of takhṣīṣ may, indeed, be simpler outside the context of aḥkām.

In closing, I shall highlight two concepts to which takhṣīṣ has a relationship. The first of these is naskh, as already mentioned. It remains to be said that they share in the assumption of their absence: that is to say that any āmm verse is assumed to be universal in import unless a particulariser is identified; likewise, it is assumed to be operative (muḥkam) unless abrogation is established. The other relationship is with asbāb al-nuzūl, revelatory contexts. In the summary in Chapter 3 of Waḥī-Allāh Dihlawī’s critical remarks on asbāb, it was noted that he considered those reports to be indispensable whenever they are authentic and indicate that the apparent sense of the verse is not intended, such as with takhṣīṣ. The core question is: if a universal wording is revealed concerning a particular circumstance, does that circumstance particularise the wording? This is the debate over ʿumūm al-lafẓ (universality of locution) versus khusūṣ al-sabab (particularity of context). Those who argued for

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37 Al-Fawz al-Kabīr, p. 56.
particularism intended that the verse should be understood as applying to any situation that matches – in all relevant aspects – with the original context of revelation: this original scenario is known as ṣūrat al-sabab (its “form”). As such, any further extension is based on analogy (qiyyās). As Wahbī states, the majority position is that the universality of the statement is maintained; the ṣūrat al-sabab is therefore no more than an incontrovertible example of that to which the locution extends.38

4.1.3 – Taqyīd of the Muṭlaq

This type of textual interaction bears similarity to the previous, insofar as a broader wording is restricted in meaning by another text.39 The muṭlaq locution is in fact a subcategory of the khāṣṣ and defined as that which “denotes an essential meaning without any qualification (qayd) to restrict its extension”40. For example, the term “shahrayn (two months)” – as a period of fasting – is specific in its import but is not restricted by any further stipulations. Qualification would come in the form of connected words, e.g. an adjective – like “mutatābiʿayn (continuous)” – or similar.

In addressing the rulings pertaining to the muṭlaq (unqualified, unrestricted) and muqayyad (qualified, restricted) texts of the Qur’ān, the similarity to the case of particularisation of the universal is clear: “An unqualified expression is treated as unqualified unless there is evidence to qualify it.”41 In reality, however, the similarity is not between taqyīd and takhṣīṣ but between interpreting each type of locution (universal or unqualified) in the light of the other (particular or qualified, respectively) – the operation described as “applying” (ḥaml) one to the other. To do so is a reductionist approach, whereby a qualifying or restricting clause found at one juncture is assumed to apply to similar expressions where it is absent. Hence the qualified expression is taken as tafsīr or bayān of the unqualified one, and this is TQQ when both are in the Qur’ān.

38 Al-Masāʾīl al-Muṣhtarakā, pp. 516–522, including a citation from Ibn Taymiyya’s Muqaddima. This is comparable to the authority of examples expressed by the Prophet (see 3.4.1 above).

39 Wahbī uses this to explain the fact that it contains less enquiries within works of usūl: much is implicit from the treatment of ūmm and khāṣṣ (Al-Masāʾīl al-Muṣhtarakā, p. 543).

40 Ṣāliḥ, Tafsīr al-Nuṣāṣ, 2/159. A khāṣṣ locution is in contradistinction to the ūmm and hence not universal. The khāṣṣ is then either muṭlaq or muqayyad.

41 Saḥḥ, Qawāʾid, 2/165.
Since the operation of equating two junctures is not self-evident but involves some subtle considerations, there are varying positions on the matter among the juristic schools. By default, two separate verses in which a similar expression occurs – one with a restrictive clause, the other without – are to be considered individually. This point was underlined by Muhammad b. Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī (d. 483/1090), the Ḥanafite jurist, with the following example:

Every [instruction] of fasting in the Qurʾān which God has not stipulated to be continuous, a may be performed intermittently. However, what He has stipulated as continuous may not be made intermittent… [An example of the former] is making up missed [fasts of Ramadān], as God said “Fasting on other days” (Q 2:185): these may be made up continuously or intermittently, as the [word “ayyām (days)”] is unqualified by any description. Ibn ʿAbbās said: “Treat as vague (mubham) whatever God left vague.”

Concerning this specific ruling, the major Sunnī schools are in agreement. However, some jurists are more cautious than others in applying the reductionist approach (i.e. ḥaml al-muṭlaq alā l-muqayyad), as we shall see in the examples which follow.

The taqyīd vs. ʿīṭlāq may occur in a number of different scenarios. First, it may either be in the ruling (ḥukm) itself, or in its obligating cause (sabab). In the latter case, the Ḥanafīs are alone in considering such a qualifying clause inoperative. As for the occurrence of such competing expressions pertaining to the ruling itself, there are four possibilities: the texts match up in both ḥukm and sabab; they match up in ḥukm only, or in sabab only; or they differ in both respects. The legitimacy of interpreting the unqualified in terms of the qualified receives broad acceptance in the first of these scenarios. An example is found in Sūrat al-Anʿām, in which verse 6:145 – which specifically prohibits “flowing blood” (dam masfūḥ) is taken to clarify and restrict the unqualified prohibition of “blood” in other verses, e.g. 5:3. Here, the ruling – prohibition of consuming blood – is the same in the two places, and the cause – the

42 From Al-Mabsūṭ; quoted in Sāliḥ, Tafsīr al-Nuṣāṣī, 2/164. The quote from Ibn ʿAbbās, “Abhimū mā abhamu Lāhū” means to consider expressions open to various possibilities when the wording contains no restrictions. See also Ibn Rushd, The Distinguished Jurist’s Primer, 1/350.

43 Sāliḥ, 2/171. There may be Quranic examples, but the sources I consulted used rulings based on ḥadiḥs, such as whether zakāt al-ｆīṣr is to be paid on behalf of non-Muslim dependents.

44 That is, blood which has been caused to flow out from the animal, contrary to that which remains in the meat.
harm associated with this consumption – is also shared: the consensus in this scenario is to interpret reductively.\(^{45}\)

Likewise there is consensus that, when there is a difference in ḥukm, this manoeuvre is improper, even if the sabab is one and the same. For example, Q 5:6 stipulates washing (ghasl) the hands/arms (aydī) up to the elbows (ilā l-marāfiq) in order to remove minor ritual impurity before prayer, in the ablution process known as wudu’. The same verse then describes the procedure to remove ritual impurities when water is unavailable, known as tayammum: i.e. to seek clean earth and wipe (masḥ) the face and hands/arms. Here, the rulings of washing and wiping are different, even though the cause – ritual purification – is one.\(^{46}\) Therefore, even though the same term aydī (singular: yad) is mentioned twice, the qualification of “to the elbows” may only be applied where it occurs and not transferred to the context of tayammum. However, texts from the Sunna have been used by the various juristic schools to limit the obligation of wiping to either the elbows or wrists.\(^{47}\) The illegitimacy of reductionism is even more pronounced if both sabab and ḥukm differ: for example, this ruling of washing the yad up to the elbow has no bearing upon the ruling to “cut the yad” of the thief in 5:38. However, that is limited to the below the wrist based on evidences from the Sunna.\(^{48}\)

As for the scenario of two texts sharing in ḥukm only, this is the greatest point of divergence between the jurists. A common example of this is the question of freeing a slave as expiation for the pseudo-divorce practice known as zihār: is it necessary for this to be a Muslim slave? The verse of zihār (58:3) stipulates “freeing a slave [literally: a neck] (tahrīr raqaba)” without any qualification, whereas the expiation in the case of unintentional killing (qatl khaṭa’i) includes “freeing a believing slave (raqaba mu’mina)” (4:92). Does the latter imply anything for the former? The Ḥanafīs argue that each should be treated as a distinct ruling, because they pertain to different causes, namely zihār and unintentional killing. Since there is no conflict between the

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\(^{45}\) Sālīḥ, 2/175–176.

\(^{46}\) Sālīḥ, 2/179–180. Cf. Wahbī, who attributes the relevant usūlī position to “most” rather than all scholars (Al-Masā’il al-Mushtaraka, p. 551).

\(^{47}\) Sālīḥ, 2/176–177.

\(^{48}\) Sālīḥ, 2/178–179.
two rulings, each can be applied independently: a believer is required in the latter, but not in the former.\textsuperscript{49} The \textbf{second} position belongs to many among the Shāfiʿīs, namely: to apply the restricting clause to both, as though it was only left out at one juncture because it is self-evident, or due to the fact it is explicit at the other juncture.\textsuperscript{50} It is interesting to note the appeal of these scholars to what I have described in Chapter 3 as the Principles of Unity and Consistency, saying that the Qurʾān is “as though a single word (\textit{ka-l-kalima al-wāhidā})”. As Muḥammad Adīb al-Ṣāliḥ points out, citing an earlier objection by the Shāfiʿite scholar ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), this argument fails to acknowledge the diverse rulings and purposes which the Qurʾān addresses in its various passages and contexts.\textsuperscript{51} A \textbf{third}, related, position – held by some from the Shāfiʿī and Mālikī schools – is to extend the import of the qualifying clause through the process of analogy (\textit{qiyās}) rather than directly through the expressions (\textit{lafz}). For example, in this case, the two sins share in requiring expiation of the “optimum” form, and the Sharīʿa has placed particular virtue in freeing believers from slavery.\textsuperscript{52}

A final case ought to be mentioned: when an unqualified expression has two potential qualifiers (\textit{qayd}) from elsewhere in the Qurʾān. In Khālid al-Sabt’s collection, the relevant axiom is expressed as so: “\textit{If there are two competing qualifiers for an unqualified expression and it is possible for one to be preponderant over the other, the expression must be qualified using the preponderant one.}\textsuperscript{53} An example of this situation is described by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in \textit{Al-Maḥṣūfā\textsuperscript{54}}, to the effect that, according to Q 2:185, making up missed fasts of Ramaḍān is to be on “other days (\textit{ayyām ukhar})” – continuity or otherwise is not stipulated. While there is another verse

\textsuperscript{49} Ṣāliḥ, 2/184–185. See also 2/186–188 concerning the relevance of contrary implication (\textit{nahḥām al-mukbālafā}) to this debate and the position of the Hanafīs.

\textsuperscript{50} Ṣāliḥ, 2/185.

\textsuperscript{51} Ṣāliḥ, 2/186. This is an example of an anti-reductionist statement.

\textsuperscript{52} Ṣāliḥ, 2/189.

\textsuperscript{53} Qawāḍid al-Tafsīr, 2/168.

\textsuperscript{54} I have mentioned this detail to draw attention to the possibility that the very authors of \textit{tafsīr} and \textit{ʿulūm al-Qurʾān} works may have reserved pertinent discussions and details for their \textit{usūl al-fiqh} works. This may be seen also in Fahd al-Wahbī’s section on “Issues Covered Only by \textit{Usūl} Scholars Concerning Mutaʿlq and Mughayyib” \textit{Al-Maṣūfā al-Muḥtaraka}, pp. 471–473), in which he quotes a list of conditions from Zarkashi’s \textit{Al-Bahr al-Muḥīt}. This implies that the same issues were not included in his Quranic encyclopaedia \textit{Al-Bahān}. For the conditions, see also Ṣāliḥ, 2/191.
which includes a continuity clause (58:4, in the context of ḥarār), yet another passage mandates separating fasts (2:196, for the pilgrim who fails to offer sacrifice). Referring to the above-noted juristic distinction between equating through lafẓ or qiyās, Rāzī states: “Those who claim that the muṭlaq may be qualified by the muqayyad through the expressions themselves, must leave the muṭlaq here unqualified: this is because neither [of the latter two verses] is worthier than the other of serving as qualification. As for whoever does so by means of analogy, they would decide which is more suitable as a basis for analogy.”

4.1.4 – Conclusions

The purpose of the above outline of several key intertextual (or intratextual) operations discussed primarily in usūl al-fiqh was to illustrate the level of detail characterising those discussions. They are indisputably part of Quranic hermeneutics, but the extent to which fiqh-centric conclusions can be generalised to other discourses and genres within the Qurʾān remains an open question. Among those detailed usūl al-fiqh discussions are topics which have not been covered in the ʿulūm al-Qurʾān literature, although the influence of the former upon the latter was noted in the Introduction and Chapter 1. The process of incorporating the jurists’ insights into a broader Quranic hermeneutics must be selective and draw from more examples outside the sub-corpus known as āyāt al-aḥkām. In so doing, the insights of the exegetes must be given prominence.

In terms of content, the above discussions represent a sub-concern within what I have classed below as thematic, comparative and contextual methods: once texts are juxtaposed for analysis, there are a number of procedures which may be applied, including modification through takhlīṣ or ṭaqūʿīd. As noted above, the topic of bayān al-mujmal is broad and contains a number of elements which could be given more detailed treatment. Eventually, I propose that the juristic methods be subsumed within the other three: they are privileged here in recognition of historical realities.

55 Ṣāliḥ, 2/190. See Rāzī’s quote in Al-Maḥṣūl fi Tḥl Uṣūl al-Fiqh, 3/147.

56 My contention is that scholars steeped in the specialities of Quranic interpretation – beyond its utility for juristic reasoning – may reasonably be expected to have unique insights concerning textual interactions. At the same time, the historical reality is that most mujassirūn were also fiqhāʾ, even when their exegetical contributions came to be their most influential.
The role of theories and principles was noticeable at various junctures above. The domain of *uṣūl al-fiqh* is also rich in this regard, especially as it is linked to core questions in theology, philosophy and linguistics. It is also clear that many issues are subject to debate, at times with clear divergence between the schools (including between the *mutakallimūn* majority and the Ḥanafī *fuqahāʾ*, according to the famous dichotomy). What will happen if these debates and divergent opinions are transferred to the pages of *uṣūl al-tafsīr* works? At present, there is no developed notion of “schools” of exegesis or hermeneutics in Islamic thought, each with its own principles and methods. This could change as the field develops.57

Finally, the note of caution concerning reductionist approaches sounded by some scholars (in the context of *taqyīd*) is pivotal to performing TQQ soundly. The point expressed there in terms of *sabab* is, more broadly, the question of relevance and relations between verses of the Qurʾān. Mere resemblance and superficial similarities are insufficient to establish that one should be interpreted in light of the other. We shall return to this point in some of what follows.

### 4.2 – Thematic Methods

This second group of methods pertains to one of the core processes of TQQ, namely to gather verses upon a theme. Upon so doing, the exegete may apply rules of textual interaction as described above. When the outcome of this process is to build a fuller picture of the meanings and establish connections across the Quranic corpus, I describe the approach as “thematic”; when it involves clarifying the meaning of one verse by contrasting it with others, I describe it as “comparative”. Both of these depend upon identifying verses of relevance: when such provide some form of support for the verse under study, they are often described as “*naẓāʾir* (parallels)”, singular *naẓīr*. Our consideration of thematic approaches to Qurʾān exegesis will begin with the concept

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57 Cf. Abdul-Raof, *Theological Approaches to Qurʾanic Exegesis*, who outlines what he terms the “traditional”, “hypothetical opinion” and “linguistic” schools. In reality, these are aspects and methods of interpretation which are employed – to various degrees – by all the exegetes. The notion of “schools” I am describing here pertains to diverging opinions about how to approach certain questions.
of the parallel verse, followed by that of Quranic “rules and norms”, and then modern developments in thematic tafsīr methodology and study.

4.2.1 – Parallels (Naẓāʾīr)

It is evident from the case study of TQQ-based exegeses in Chapter 2 that some of them – notably Ibn Kathīr – placed emphasis on presenting verses which resembled the one under study. As I argued there, this should not, in itself, be considered a form of tafsīr: the term implies that the additional verses have been used to clarify or modify something. Instead, the stage of gathering identical or resembling wordings from the Quranic corpus is a foundation for applying interpretive methods such as those described above. Rather than “exhausting Qur’ān before turning to Sunna” as his stated methodology (from Ibn Taymiyya) mandates, it seems that Ibn Kathīr chose to suffice with indications for further exploration; this could be seen as a step towards a concordance of sorts, before such works were compiled.58 Even if the parallel in itself has no obvious explanatory function, it may be instructive to compare the respective contexts in which the resembling verses are located. In this way, even exact matches can be useful to the exegete, as well as slight variations which can perform functions of takḥṣīṣ, taqyīd, etc.

Another way of understanding many of these citations by Ibn Kathīr and others is that the parallel performs a supporting role, in which case it may also described as shāhid (pl. shawāhid) – literally “witness”. In the context of ḥadīth criticism, such similar wordings may be used to support a claim to authenticity of a particular tradition which is lacking some standards of transmission.59 In the context of TQQ, the need to support the authenticity of a verse is absent; therefore, the exegete must be seeking to support a particular interpretation. In many cases, this is fairly mundane, and the author is merely drawing attention to the fact that the same meaning is found elsewhere in the Qurʾān. In other cases, there are divergent opinions concerning a verse, and the author cites a parallel in order to establish the plausibility of the interpretation he supports:

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58 Although based on differing organising principles, word indexes (such as Al-Muṣjam Al-Mufahras li-Allāh al-Qurʾān al-Karīm, which Muhammad Fuʿād ʿAbd al-Baqī based on the work of Gustav Flügel) and subject indexes (such as Muṣjam Al-Aʿlām wa-l-Mawḍūʿāt fi l-Qurʾān by ʿAbd al-Ṣābir Marziq) overlap in some ways with the idea of a cross-reference concordance.

59 See Brown, Hadīth, p. 92. Similar can be said for supporting the authenticity of certain readings in the field of tawjīḥ al-qināʿāt, discussed under 4.3.3.
this process is described as *istiḥhād*, “appeal to witness”.\(^{60}\) As I argued in Chapter 3, following Zarkashī, this is even the case with the ḥadīth in which Prophet Muḥammad explained the universal term *ẓulm* (wrongdoing) in 6:82 as denoting one particular type, namely to associate partners with God (*shirk*). When he cited 31:13 which describes *shirk* as a major *ẓulm*, this was in order to demonstrate that the meaning is found elsewhere in the Qur’ān and could already be familiar to its audience.\(^{61}\)

In summary (from above and Chapter 2), I conclude that a parallel verse may serve one or more of the following functions:

a. Support for the exegete’s reading or interpretation;
b. Clarifying through more explicit or expansive wording, or through context;
c. Modification, e.g. particularisation or qualification;\(^{62}\) 
d. Additional details;
e. Cross-reference for further exploration of Qur’ān;
f. Cross-reference to the exegete’s detailed explanation under that verse.

In light of this variety of purposes, we can revisit the question of *relevance* raised above. This is a point on which the exegete needs to satisfy himself or herself, and possibly justify to the reader: what makes this verse “parallel” to the one under examination, and what is achieved through citing it? There are different types of parallel, and the matter is not limited to repetition of key words and phrases. The two verses may express similar meanings with differing vocabulary and/or sentence structure. Subtler still is for an exegete to consider a verse parallel in one particular respect, such as a point of grammar or an implication: examples of this abound in the case study of Al-Anʿām. It follows that exegetes may identify different parallels depending on their interpretation of the verse at hand, and that they may disagree with citations advanced by others. An example which I did not include in Chapter 2 pertains to the term *al-fawāḥish* in 6:151 (literally: “abominable acts”). This is often taken to

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\(^{60}\) Farāhī states that selecting a meaning which appears elsewhere in the Qur’ān is “more cautious” in order to avoid following personal whims – see Rasāʾīl, pp. 264 and 268 (the latter in Al-Takmīl). 

\(^{61}\) See Zarkashī, Al-Burḥān, p. 348, where he describes this as *istiḥās*, which is similar to *istiḥhād*.

\(^{62}\) In Chapter 2, I have distinguished between parallels and evidentiary citations. When the wording of the two verses is similar (but differs in a crucial sense such as the existence of a *qayd*, qualifying clause) then it belongs to both categories.
Note extra-marital sex (zīnā) specifically, due to this same description (in the singular, fāḥisha) being applied to zīnā in 17:32. However, the modern exegete Ibn ʿĀshūr – whose note of caution regarding reductionism was quoted in Chapter 1 – comments on this: “It is not necessarily the case that the meaning intended by similar verses is one and the same.” The problem of reductionism vs. pluralism is examined further in the next section.

I have described seeking parallels as a first stage of thematic (and comparative) analysis; it should also be noted that it is only a part of the broader task of “gathering verses upon a theme” as advocated by Dhahabī and others (see Chapter 1). Relevance is not only similarity, but also contrast: intratexts which appear to contradict are thematically linked to the same extent, and ought to be taken into account when explaining any verse. Although it is not feasible to consider in much detail here the process of locating parallels (and other relevant cross-references), it should be noted that technology allows for more possibilities than were available to Ibn Kathīr, or even to Rudi Paret, author of Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz (first published 1971). Although modern search and index technology can summon parallel words and phrases in an instant, there remains a role for scholarly refinement and enhancement of those results. A careful methodology could incorporate the insights of exeges, especially TQQ-focused ones, as presented in the Appendix of this thesis in tabular form. A well-designed interface – whether in print or otherwise – would prove valuable to exeges or to researchers exploring the Qurʾān thematically.

63 Of the Group studied in Chapter 2, only Iḍlāḥī made this link explicitly. Ibn Kathīr cited parallels in 6:120 and 7:33.

64 Al-Ṭahār wa-l-Tanwīr, 8/160.

65 I have corresponded with a Canadian researcher concerning his corpus linguistics project which maps relationships between verses based on their collocation in a vast number and range of writings, many outside the genre of tafsīr. My brief engagement with his results (including on Sūrat al-Anʿām) suggests that the lists generated appear random and further refinement is necessary for it to prove useful.

66 A potential advance is being made with the “Cross-References Project” by the International Qurʾanic Studies Association, though I was unable to ascertain its current status. According to the IQSA website, this presentation prioritises links in meaning and theme rather than simply words. It is based on similar reference works on the Bible (https://iqsaweb.wordpress.com/2012/11/19/qcrtq – accessed 1/9/2017).
4.2.2 – Quranic Norms and Rules (‘Ādāt, Kulliyyāt, Qawā‘id)

There are reports attributed to early authorities, and conclusions expressed by later authors, concerning general rules about Quranic usage of words and grammatical features. In order to reflect the contents of the Qurʾān accurately, these would have to be based on a comprehensive study of relevant passages; therefore, a thematic approach was implicit in the formulation of these “rules” (qawā‘id). Based on an inductive process from specific instances (which may be called juzʿiyyāt), these are claims – at their strongest – of general rules governing the usage of these terms, hence kulliyyāt (i.e. “Every (kull) instance of this word means X”). Their utility to the exegete, therefore, is as ready-made TQQ which he or she may then re-apply to juzʿiyyāt.

Another way in which these phenomena is described is as “norms” (ʿādāt) of the Qurʾān, which can be used to give weight to a certain opinion about a word or point of grammar under examination. If, for example, a word was used with a particular meaning in numerous verses of the Qurʾān, then it may be argued that – in a single case where it is ambiguous – it has that same meaning. In Chapter 2, it was seen that exegetes occasionally appeal to this reductionist argument in support of a conclusion based on other evidences (in other words, it is more a factor in tarjih and treated as circumstantial evidence). Returning to the ẓālim and shirk example: I previously cited Ibn Rajab as stating that “most” Quranic warnings to ẓālimūn pertain to the unbelievers, citing 14:42 and 42:44; Shinqīṭī added 2:254 and 10:106.\footnote{Ibn Rajab, Fath al-Bārī, 1/144. I have not checked whether this claim of majority holds true.}

As we shall see below, this reductionist approach exists in tension with another approach (represented by the study of wujūh al-Qurʾān) which recognises plurality and the possibility that one meaning or usage exists in isolation and distinction from other usages of the same word. Although the issue extends beyond individual lexical items and encompasses grammar, meanings and concepts, I shall focus on the example of defining words through the process of TQQ, and its relationship to the study of kulliyyāt. It should be noted that it is not possible for the meaning of Quranic words to be determined through purely intratextual means, not least those which occur only
once. The meaning of words must naturally be derived from the Arabs’ usage at time of revelation. However, both the immediate co-text and broader Quranic usage serve as guides to the meaning of a particular usage, and to restrict the polyvalency of words.

I shall illustrate the kulliyyāt genre with some selections from Al-Itqān, while noting that Suyūṭī did not dedicate a chapter to this topic. In Chapter 39, he attributes a report to Prophet Muḥammad to the effect that “Every occurrence in the Qurʾān of qunūt means obedience (ṯāʾa).” Among the early reports, a good number are attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās via various chains.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim reported via ʿIkrima that Ibn ʿAbbās said: “Every case of alīm means painful (mūjī ).” He also reported via ʿAṣḥāb that Ibn ʿAbbās said: “Every occurrence of qutila means ‘cursed be’ (luʿina).” Via Ḍaḥḥāk, he reported that Ibn ʿAbbās said: “Every rijz in the book of God means ‘punishment’.” Firyābī said: “Qays narrated to us from ʿAmmār al-Duhnī, from Saʿīd b. Jubayr, that Ibn ʿAbbās said: ‘Every tasbīḥ in the Qurʾān is prayer (ṣalāt), and every sulṭān in the Qurʾān is a proof (ḥujja).’” Ibn Abī Ḥātim reported via ʿIkrima that Ibn ʿAbbās said: “Every occurrence in the Qurʾān of dīn means ‘accounting’ (hisāb).”

68 Shawkat Toorawa has written several articles on hapax legomena, singularly-occurring words in the Qurʾān. In his chapter in Reynolds (ed.), New Perspectives on the Qurʾān, p. 245, he cites notes of caution via biblical scholars Metzger and Ehrman concerning the assumption that any anomalous usage must be an error: “Before resorting to conjectural emendation, therefore, the critic must be so thoroughly acquainted with the style and thought of the author that a certain anomaly must be judged to be foreign to the author’s intention”. Applying this thought to the study of kulliyyāt vs. wujūh, it suggests that there are levels of familiarity with the spirit of the text: while reductionism is the more obvious approach at an early or middle stage, the deepest familiarity entails recognition of those instances when the author contravenes his own norms to make a point.

69 The point about co-text is best illustrated by the Farāhīan approach, but the point has long been recognised. See Chapter 1 for comments by Zarkashi referring to Rāghib and his Majnudāt (Al-Burhān, p. 343). The broader appeal to Quranic usage is demonstrated well by Tabātabāʾī and Bint al-Shāṭī.

70 The relevant material appears in Chapters 39 (on wujūh and naẓāʿir), 40 and 42. See my forthcoming translation.

71 Al-Itqān, 3/994. While Suyūṭī described this report as possessing “a good chain which Ibn Ḥābīb considered sound”, various authorities including Ibn Kathīr (Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzīm, 1/231) declared it unreliable. See also the list from Ibn Fāris below which cites two Quranic exceptions.


The purpose of such rules is, in the first place, to clarify a word which is otherwise classed as difficult or uncommon (gharīb)\(^{74}\), and the “every” aspect sometimes appears unnecessary. A reader of the Qur’ān who accepts the rule would perhaps be expected to cast other possible interpretations from his mind. However, it is clear that some examples cannot be taken at face value, such as the final one which overlooks the use of dīn as religion. Another problem is the conflict between some alleged rules and the variety of qirā’āt, as demonstrated by the following examples of contrasting terms:

> From Abū Bakr b. ‘Ayyāsh: “Every kisfan means ‘punishment’, while kisafan means ‘chunks of cloud’.” And from ‘Ikrima: “The barrier made by God is called sudd, whereas that made by people is sadd.”\(^{75}\)

In each of the instances of sadd/sudd, and all but 52:44 from among the occurrences of kisf/kisaf, both vocalisations are attested among the canonical ‘Ten Readings’. Therefore, these rules either pertain to specific readings, or they must be taken as purely linguistic claims. If the latter, it is seen that the reciter-imāms did not accept these ‘rules’ universally or apply them consistently in their selections (ikhtiyār).\(^{76}\) While his overall approach was simply to reproduce these claims, Suyūṭī made the occasional comment on an inaccuracy. After quoting Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna as saying that “God only used the word māṭar [literally: rain] in the Qur’ān for punishment, whereas the Arabs call [the rain] ghayth,” he remarks: “The exception to this is 4:102, where rainwater is definitely intended.”\(^{77}\)

In these presentations, the existence of exceptions is not seen as a challenge. Rather, such are sometimes presented directly as part of the account, and drawing

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\(^{74}\) See Al-Itqān Chapter 36, which is mostly based upon narrations from Ibn ‘Abbās, including the “Enquiries of Ibn al-Azraq”.

\(^{75}\) Al-Itqān, 3/998.

\(^{76}\) I checked the four occurrences of sadd/sudd against the recitations, and found that four of the Ten Reciters use sudd throughout (Nāfī’ and Abū Ja’far of Medina, Ibn ‘Amir of the Levant, and Ya’qūb of Baṣra). The Kūfan recitation of ‘Aṣim is divided between the constant sudd of Shu’ba and sadd of Hafs (i.e. the most widespread reading today). The two occurrences in al-Kahf (Q 18:93, 94) refer, respectively, to mountains (God-made) and a barrier which Dhi l-Qarnayn was asked to construct. The other three Kūfāns (Kisāʾī, Hamza and Khalaf) shift from sudd to sadd, which is consistent with the narration from ‘Ikrima. However, they recite the two occurrences in Q 36:9 as sudd, despite the maker being God (albeit not mountains). The remaining two Readers (Ibn Kathīr of Mecca and Abū ‘Amr of Baṣra) recite sadd in al-Kahf and sudd in Yā-Sīn, which is difficult to resolve semantically.

\(^{77}\) Al-Itqān, 3/1000. For brevity, I have elided the Quranic citation and replaced it with a reference. The same applies to what follows from Ibn Fāris.
attention to the ‘anomaly’ may well be the reason for the rule to be formulated and recorded. The following selection from a list in Al-Itqān – sourced from Ibn Fāris’ Al-Afrād⁷⁸ – is indicative of this:

- Every mention in the Qur’ān of asaf means ‘sadness’, except 43:55 where it means ‘anger’.
- Every mention of burūj means ‘heavenly bodies’ (kawākib), except 4:78 where it means ‘lofty fortresses’.
- Every mention of barr and bahr means ‘dry land’ and ‘water’ respectively, except 30:41 where they refer to ‘empty land’ (barriyya) and ‘settlements’ (ʿumrān).
- Every mention of baʾl means ‘husband’, except 37:125 where it is the name of an idol.
- Every occurrence of jithiyyan means ‘all together’ (jamīʿan), except 45:28 where jāthiya means ‘kneeling upon their knees’.⁷⁹
- Every mention of rijz means ‘punishment’, except 74:5 where it refers to idols.
- Every mention of rajm means ‘kill (by stoning)’, except 19:46 where it means ‘to abuse verbally’ [and 18:22 where it means ‘speculation’ (ẓann)].⁸¹
- Every mention of zakāt refers to ‘wealth’, except 19:13 where it means ‘purity’ (tuhra).⁸²
- Every mention of zaygh means ‘incline’ (mayl), except 33:10 where it means ‘to stare’ (shakhaṣat).
- Every occurrence of sakhira means ‘mocking’, except 43:32 where [sukhriyyan] is derived from taskhīr, meaning to be subjected to use.
- Every mention of aşhāb al-nār refers to ‘the denizens of hell’, except 74:31 where it means its ‘wardens’ (khazana).
- Every mention of qumīt means ‘obedience’ (tāʿa), except 2:116/30:26 where it means ‘to acknowledge’ (muqirrūn).

⁷⁸ The title indicates that the exception was the purpose, something like “hapax”. See Haykal, ‘Al-Afrād (Word Choice) in Uri Rubin’s Hebrew Translation of the Qur’an’ (Arabic paper).

⁷⁹ There are only two occurrences of jithiyyan, both in Sūrat Maryam (19:68, 72), which are also taken by exegetes to denote kneeling.

⁸⁰ According to most of the Readers. However, Ḥafs, Abū Jaʿfar and Yaʿqūb have it as rujz.

⁸¹ This second exception reveals that the author has quoted this section from Al-Burḥān (pp. 74–77) without proper attribution, as it is in fact Zarkashi who appended it to the exception provided by Ibn Fāris. See Haydar, ‘Ulūm al-Qurʾān bayna l-Burḥān wa l-Itqān, p. 147.

⁸² The exception extends to 18:81 and possibly others, as argued by Qarnī, Kulliyāt al-Aflūz fī l-Tafsīr, 2/679 (and preceding discussion).
Every mention of nikāḥ means ‘marriage’ (tazawwuj), except 4:6 where it refers to the ‘age of puberty’ (ḥulum).

Every mention of ya’ṣ means ‘despair’ (qunūṭ), except 3:2 where it means ‘knowledge’.

It is clear that the kulliyyāt genre, subject to complete istiqrā’ (i.e. accounting for any exceptions) and verified with reference to works of tafsīr as well as qirā’t, is of use to the exegete in summarising the Quranic usage of a word which may be understood differently in other texts.

The Polysemic Approach (Wujūh al-Qur’ān)

The above material features in Suyūṭī’s Chapter 39 concerning “Wujūh and Naẓāʾir” (drawn from Chapter 4 of Zarkashī’s Al-Burhān) – these two terms may be understood as opposing concepts. We have already seen the latter meaning “parallels” in the Qur’ān, and this description fits the idea of kulliyyāt just described. Zarkashī provides himself gives a somewhat imprecise definition: “The meaning of naẓāʾir is similar to that of mutawāti’ (category) words.”³ As for the term wujūh (facets), he states that it describes “a single word (mushtarak) carrying multiple meanings”.

Emphasising the importance of this appreciation of plurality, he cites Muqāṭil b. Sulaymān’s volume on Al-Wujūh wa-l-Naẓāʾir, in which this saying is attributed to the Prophet: “One does not become a scholar (faqīḥ) with complete understanding until he sees many facets (wujūh) to the Qur’ān.”⁴

To illustrate the genre, I have selected one list from Al-Itqān which is also the longest in Al-Burhān; Suyūṭī’s added one item to make eighteen senses (wujūh) for the

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³ Al-Itqān, 3/976. This definition (from Zarkashī, Al-Burhān, p. 73) compares the concept of naẓāʾir to a word that has a single definition but applies equally to multiple members of its set, such as “animal” to humans, birds and horses. When such a word is used throughout the Qur’ān, it has only one meaning but may refer to different member(s) in each case. See El-Awa, Al-Wujūh wa-l-Naẓāʾir, pp. 44–47.

⁴ Al-Itqān, 3/976–977. The modern scholar Ahmad Hasan Farāhāt proposes that this thought be completed by saying “…and gives preference to one of these facets.” While conceiving of many possible meanings is a sign of hermeneutical prowess (or horizontal knowledge), doing tarjīḥ of one demonstrates depth of knowledge (see Buẓā’, Maḥfīm al-Taqwī, p. 46 for this citation and explanation). However, it is not clear that the original saying (more authentically attributed to the Companion, Abū l-Dardā’) pertains to words having multiple meanings as spread across the corpus, as it may refer to layers of meaning within a single verse, as Suyūṭī notes. See also: Kermani, God is Beautiful, pp. 105–106.
word al-hudā. Since a conventional translation for this is “guidance”, I have used that in the translation of the example verses wherever possible. However, the polysemic approach entails that one should read the specific meaning in place of each occurrence of “guidance”, e.g. “Grant us steadfastness” and “Those are upon clarity”.


b. Clarity (bayān): ‘Those are upon guidance from their Lord’ (2:5).


d. Faith (īmān): ‘And those who have followed guidance, God increases them in guidance’ (19:76).

e. Invitation (du’ā): ‘And to every people, a guide’ (13:7); ‘And We made them leaders, guiding by Our command’ (21:73).

f. Messengers and scriptures: ‘So if there should come to you, from Me, guidance…’ (2:38).

g. Awareness (ma‘rifā): ‘And by the stars they derive guidance’ (16:16).

h. The Prophet: ‘Verily those who conceal what We have sent down of clear signs and the guidance…’ (2:159).

i. The Qurʾān: ‘And there has already come to them, from their Lord, the guidance’ (53:23).

j. The Torah: ‘And We did indeed give Moses the guidance’ (40:53).

k. To recite the istirjāʾ [formula]: ‘And those are the guided’ (2:157).

l. Proof (hujja): ‘And God does not guide the wrongdoing people’ (2:258) coming after ‘Have you not seen the one who disputed (hājja) with Abraham’, i.e. He does not guide them to a proof.

m. Monotheism (tawḥīd): ‘And they say: If we were to follow the guidance with you…’ (28:57).

n. Example (sunna): ‘So follow their guidance’ (6:90); ‘And we follow guidance upon their footsteps’ (43:22).

o. Reform (iṣlāḥ): ‘And that God does not guide the plot of the traitors’ (12:52).

p. Inspiration (iḥlām): ‘He Who gave everything its creation, then guided’ (20:50), i.e. inspired it with its way of living.

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85 Al-Iṣqīn, 3/978. See also Abdussalam, *Concordance of Qurʾānic Polysemy*, p. 252: this work demonstrates some of the challenges facing a translator in this connection.

86 That is, to utter the formula mentioned in the preceding verse: “To God we belong and to Him we shall return (nājiʿūn)”. The name derives from the last word in that verse.
q. Repentance (tawba): ‘We have repented to you’ (7:156).  

r. To direct (irshād): ‘Perhaps my Lord will guide me to the right way’ (28:22).

It is evident that these diverse meanings or nuances are derived with reference to the co-text of each occurrence. In stark contrast to the reductionist approach, this mode of study seems, at times, to over-emphasise the distinction between these various senses: this led al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 255/869) to respond to these lists in his Taḥṣīl Ṣan`āʾ al-Qurʾān, explaining how one essential meaning is present in all usages (in the case of hudā, it is mayl, “inclination”). In the verses cited above, more than one of these meanings could apply to some of the junctures. Some, like the claim concerning istirjāʾ, are hardly plausible and receive little credence in the tafsīr works.

What has now come into view is an inherent tension: not only between the approaches which favour reductionism or plurality, but potentially between two methods of tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān. The wujūḥ genre points to a broader approach which draws from the surroundings of a word to help determine its meaning. The kulliyāt genre is based on studying the Quranic corpus holistically. Therefore, an exegete may be faced with two competing TQQ imperatives: to situate the word in its co-text, and to consider its usages elsewhere in scripture. This is a subtle balance which

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87 I did not translate this verse with a derivative of ‘guidance’ because it is unclear how it would be derived from this root. It is generally considered to come from ḥaʾ-ʾaww-dāl. See Farāhī, Mufradāt al-Qurʾān, p. 324 concerning this root and its denotations of ‘returning/repenting’ as well as ‘Jewishness’. Nevertheless, Tirmidhī includes it in his reductive account of derivatives of hudā (Taḥṣīl Ṣan`āʾ al-Qurʾān, p. 20).

88 The role of siyāq in this genre was detailed by Salwa El-Awa in her hermeneutical study Al-Wujūḥ wa-l-Nazāʾ fi l-Qurʾān al-Karīm (pp. 62–78).

89 The strongest claim of diversity of meaning occurs in the category of words known as addād, auto-antonyms. See Munajjīd, Al-Taṣāqal, pp. 167–174 in which the author argues that certain meanings were advanced for the word zamīn (assumption) for theological reasons linked to its occurrence in the Qurʾān, but that it need not be interpreted as equivalent to yaqīn (certainty) in any instance. See also El-Awa’s detailed study of zamīn in its Quranic contexts (Al-Wujūḥ wa-l-Nazāʾ, pp. 95–127); this is followed by examination of the semantic fields of related words nājī and khaṣīf, which could aid the kind of study discussed under Comparative Methods below.

90 Taḥṣīl Ṣan`āʾ al-Qurʾān, pp. 19–24. This was apparently a response to Muqāṭāt’s work. See also the introduction to Rāghib’s tafsīr, in which he criticises the frequent conflation of genuine wujūḥ (he uses the term nazāʾ) with cases in which a broad word is used in several of its narrower senses (Muqāṭāt Jāmīʾ al-Tafsīr, p. 61). The same trend in Tirmidhī’s work is present in dictionaries which specialise in root meanings and derivations, particularly Ibn Fāris’ Muṣjam Muqāṣays al-Lugha and the recent publication by Muḥammad Ḥasan Jābal, Al-Muṣjam al-Iṣṭiqāṣ al-Muṣafal.

91 Although some exegetes may have noted this opinion, the general approach concerning 2:157 is to describe various senses in which such people could be described as “guided”; not that hudā here has the meaning of istirjāʾ. See for example Rāzī, Maṣāʾīḥ al-Ghayb, 2/450.
will be affected by the predilections and theoretical commitments of the exegete: some prioritising the immediate context, coherence and semantic flow; others being persuaded by the frequency of a meaning and usage which amounts to a Quranic norm. Both approaches or emphases rely upon the flexibility of such words as kitāb (see Chapter 2) which has literal denotations as well as numerous metaphorical usages. Neither would be excused for overlooking the other dimension of the question, such as to ignore co-text or other occurrences of the word within the scripture.

4.2.3 – Thematic Exegesis (al-Tafsīr al-Mawdūʿī)

Aspects of the preceding discussion have already pointed the way to a fully thematic approach to the Qurʾān based on a comprehensive study of selected words, concepts, issues and features. A modern coinage for this is al-tafsīr al-mawdūʿī, a term in which the adjective refers to “themes/subjects” in the Qurʾān. However, the genre has precursors both within and beyond the works of tafsīr. Some exegetes punctuate their verse-by-verse analysis with topical asides in order to explore key concepts, based exclusively or partially on intraquranic citations – Ṭabāṭabāʾī stands out in this respect. There are other works and genres based on study of specific themes and recurring features of the Qurʾān. Of these, two in particular are of interest in light of the preceding discussions. Collections of legal verses (āyat al-aḥkām) take it as axiomatic that the explanation of one such verse is incomplete, and may be misleading, if it is not juxtaposed with verses which complement or modify its meaning, as well as evidence from the Sunna and opinions of the jurists. Aside from the legal context, the

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92 The same question faces a translator: if a word with similar flexibility is available in the target language – say, for example, “book” – then that word may be applied to all the various contexts; otherwise, alternatives are required in at least some. See Abdel Haleem, ‘The Role of Context in Interpreting and Translating the Qurʾān’, pp. 54–55.

93 An example of the latter would be to interpret the mushāz on the part of the wife, in Q 3:34, without consideration of the same word as used in 4:128 on the part of the husband. See Hidayatullah, Feminist Edges of the Qurʾān, p. 104.

94 I am referring here to Qurʾān-wide studies of concepts and topics. The term al-tafsīr al-mawdūʿī is also used frequently to describe thematic studies of sūras individually, as in Muḥammad al-Ghazālī’s Naḥwa Tafsīr Mawdūʿī li-Suwār al-Qurʾān al-Karīm. An unrelated meaning of the word mawdūʿī is “objective”.

95 Further examples: polysemy (wujūh wa nazāʿīr), metaphors (majāz), abrogation (nāṣikh wa munsīkh), uncommon/difficult passages (gharīb/mushkil), oaths (aqām), parables (amthāl). See 3.4.4 above.

96 Examples in the genre are Ahkām al-Qurʾān by Abū Bakr al-Rāzī al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370/981), a Ḥanafite authority, and works by the same title by the Shāfiʿite al-Kiyyā al-Harrāsī (d. 504/1010) the Mālikite Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148). See Dhahabī, Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn, 2/385–400.
genre of Quranic narratives (*al-qaṣṣaṣ al-qurˈānī*)\(^97\) is another example of the need to synthesise materials from across the Quranic corpus, along with ḥadīths and other sources. My case study of Sūrat al-An’ām demonstrated that the story of Abraham raises sensitive issues which require a careful reconstruction of chronology and individual contexts for their resolution.\(^98\)

I shall describe here how thematic exegesis is conceptualised in two scholarly centres today: the University of Al-Azhar in Egypt, and the Moroccan research institute MUBDI’, founded in 2007 by al-Shāhīd al-Būshīkhī.\(^99\) Al-Azhar has the distinction of being home to some of the earliest figures in tafsīr mawḍū‘ \(^100\) and its subsequent development into a distinctive approach and emerging genre within tafsīr; books produced and taught in the Faculty of Theology (Ūṣūl al-Dīn) cover selected Quranic themes as well as the method for their extraction.\(^101\) The Moroccan institute has more pronounced emphasis on methodology; its approach is centred on the idea of “Quranic terminology” (*al-muʃṭalaḥ al-qurˈānī*).\(^102\) In his study of the concept of

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\(^{97}\) The genre of *qaṣṣaṣ* (verbal noun meaning “narrative content”); alternatively *qiṣaṣ*, “stories”) is both thematic and comparative, as will become clearer in the next section. Some important works deal particularly with the Prophets, such as the publication *Qiṣṣa al-Anbiyā*’, extracted from Ibn Kathīr’s history *Al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya*. See for issues surrounding this and the broader genre, and its relationship to the Qur‘ān and exegesis: Michael Pregill et al, ‘Qiṣṣa al-Anbiyā’ as Genre and Discourse’ in Mizan Journal 2, 1 (2017) – accessed online 1/9/2017.

\(^{98}\) For example, whether he was already fully immersed in monotheism when he said to his people concerning certain heavenly bodies, “This is my Lord”.

\(^{99}\) This name is short for Mu’assasat al-Buhjāth wa-l-Dirāsāt al-Ilmiyya; in my introduction, I mentioned the significance of this Moroccan centre, along with Markaz Taṣfīr in Saudi Arabia, in current Quranic research. They have a broader interest in “methodology (*manhaj*) studies”.

\(^{100}\) For example, Muḥammad ‘Abd-Allāh Drāz is credited with being a pioneer of *ṣiṣa* studies, with his thematic overview of al-Baqara (see *The Qur’an: An Eternal Challenge*, p. 137 ff.) – this is relevant to the study of coherence and structure (4.4.3 below). More relevant to our present discussion is his study of ethical content in the Qur‘ān, originally written in French, and translated to Arabic as *Dustūr al-Akhlāq fī l-Qurˈān* and to English as *The Moral World of the Qur’an*.

\(^{101}\) One of its retired professors, ‘Abd al-Sattār Fath-Allāh Saʿīd, expressed his hope for an encyclopaedia of Quranic topics to be created (see *Muḥādārat fī l-Taṣfīr al-Mawḍū‘*?, p. 16). Something of this nature is being achieved (in English) through the Integrated Encyclopedia of the Qur‘ān (IEQ), an ongoing project of the Center for Islamic Sciences, Canada.

\(^{102}\) The project aims at reforming Islamic thought and assumes that religious concepts are best understood when their scriptural usage is studied holistically (see Büüz, *Maṭḥūm al-Taqwā*, p. 58). Similar motivations underpinned the “Quranic Methodology” project of the International Institute of Islamic Thought, represented most clearly by Tahā al-ʿAlwān’s book *Maṭḥūm fī l-Manhaj al-Qurˈān*. 
Muḥammad al-Būzī describes the development of thematic study of Quranic terms from early scholarship (including the genres of exegesis, jurisprudence, theology and lexicography) to Farāḥī’s Mufradāt al-Qurʾān and the Egyptian exegetical trends initiated by Muḥammad ‘Abduh and Amīn al-Khūlī.

What follows is a summary and synthesis of the key processes outlined by writers on taafsīr mawḍūʿī and Quranic muṣṭāḥ. Būzīkhī has described “five pillars” which involve stages of preparation, analysis (the central pillar) and presentation. Taking these as the headings for the points below, I have combined various sources in the description.

1. **Al-Dirāsa al-ihṣā’īyya.** Using concordances or computer programs, all potentially relevant verses are identified and gathered. This may require creative use of synonyms (and antonyms, etc.) to ensure comprehensive coverage of the topic. This stage may involve initial sorting into categories including awareness of chronology.

2. **Al-Dirāsa al-mu’jamiyya.** This involves study of the linguistic roots pertaining to the key terms and the nature of their derivation from those roots.

3. **Al-Dirāsa al-nāṣṣiyya.** This is the stage of examining the selected texts closely. Traditional exegesis (known in contrast as taafsīr mawḍūʿī) is consulted to determine the meaning of individual verses and take account of relevant details.

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103 Originally a doctoral thesis supervised by Būzīkhī, its full title is: Mafhum al-Taqwā fī l-Qurʾān wa-l-Hadīth, so it extends beyond the Quranic corpus. Both aspects under study here are reflected in the book’s sub-heading: Dirāsah musṭalāhiyya wa taafsīr maṣūdīyya.

104 Būzī, pp. 22–35, also 35–52. He does not include Orientalist contributions to analysing Quranic terms. Of particular significance are the works of Toshihiko Izutsu, God and Man in the Qurʾān and Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾān.

105 The “pillars” are summarised in Būzī, pp. 61–69. Most of the supplementary points here are from Sa’īd, Al-Madhḥal ilā l-Tafsīr al-Mawdūʿīyya, pp. 60–70. Regarding topic selection, Sa’īd insists that this be native to the Qurʾān and not imposed upon it; he mentions one study concerning “the nuclear bomb in the Qurʾān”! If a number of related terms are to be examined, the broadest should be placed in the title of the study.

106 The minimum is to divide them into Meccan and Medinan. There is surprisingly little emphasis on chronology in the sources I consulted, compared to the diachronic approach of Neuwirth and others.

107 The researcher should not take dictionary definitions for granted, as the very purpose of thematic study is to determine meanings in and through the Qurʾān.

108 I.e. specific to the place, like Mīr’s “atomistic” or Hassan Hanafi’s “longitudinal” (‘Method of Thematic Interpretation of the Qurʾān’ in Wild (ed.), The Qurʾān as Text, p. 195). Although some writers like Sa’īd consider thematic exegesis a new frontier requiring attention in the modern age, they emphasise the integral nature of traditional taafsīr to this endeavour.
such as Prophetic explanations, revelatory contexts, abrogation, and relation to other verses (e.g. ‘āmm and khāṣṣ) as explained by previous authorities.

4. *Al-Dirāsa al-mafhūmiyya*. This involves observing trends, defining concepts and constructing categories.\(^{109}\)

5. *Al-ʿArḍ al-muṣṭalaḥī*. The relevant data is presented under sub-headings. The primary presentation is of the verses themselves together with any explanation required, citing trusted sources. The book or research paper also requires an introduction and conclusion, and coherent flow of concepts is maintained by focus upon the central theme.\(^{110}\)

Despite hopes expressed by proponents of the above thematic methods that they will reform approaches to study of the text and even enrich society through clearer concepts derived from scripture, the purpose of *tafsīr mawdūʿī* in their approach is to *survey* and present the contents of the Qurʾān as objectively as possible. This contrasts with an approach to thematic study – as outlined by Hassan Hanafi – which acknowledges clearly the significance of the interpreter’s convictions and social context.\(^{111}\) Thematic study in this account amounts to a “*reading*” of the text proceeding from known assumptions and needs. This is nothing new, as jurists, for example, approached the Qurʾān with the intent of *instinbāt* (extraction and deduction) of practical rulings, and as *dalīl* for their positions: an approach not limited to the so-called *āyāt al-ahkām*.\(^{112}\) Contemporary advocates for social justice have adopted intratextual and thematic methods to reassess Quranic positions which may have been misunderstood or overlooked previously. Aysha Hidayatullah has described this as a “keystone feminist exegetical strategy” which consists both of comparing Quranic verses, and reading them in light of the scripture’s “overall movement” towards egalitarianism.\(^{113}\) This reading involves gathering texts and then identifying which of

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\(^{109}\) Büzî, p. 65.

\(^{110}\) See Büzî, pp. 67–68 for a regimented approach to structuring *muṣṭalaḥ* research.


\(^{112}\) See Hanafi, pp. 197–200 for more on “disciplinary commentaries”, and see 4.4.1 below.

\(^{113}\) Hidayatullah, *Feminist Edges of the Qurʾān*, p. 87. She notes the general lack of application of Ibn Taymiyya’s recommendation of TQQ, and the critique by “modernist” scholars including Fazlur Rahman of “atomistic” approaches. This provided an epistemic starting point for feminist exegetes such
them represent “guiding principles” to interpret problematic passages\textsuperscript{114} – this recalls the concept of \textit{muhkam} verses\textsuperscript{115} discussed in Chapter 3.

Both thematic approaches to exegesis – surveys and readings – require further development in their theoretical grounding.\textsuperscript{116} Wadud has proposed a major, long-term treatment of “the larger textual development of [each Quranic] term” and study of “trajectory of meaning and application”.\textsuperscript{117} At least superficially, this resembles the project being undertaken by Būshīkhī and colleagues, namely “a historical dictionary of Quranic terminology”.\textsuperscript{118} Such scholarly resources would, undoubtedly, benefit writers with a wide variety of motivations and perspectives.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{114} Hidayatullah, p. 93.

\textsuperscript{115} I am unsure whether this term is invoked by feminist exegetes. Concerning another classical concept, namely \textit{naskh}, Hidayatullah describes its relationship and relevance to the “trajectory argument” \textit{(Feminist Edges, pp. 97–98). Although its proponents describe their aim as preserving the unity and integrity of the scripture, this argument and strategy goes beyond intratextual analysis to what Hidayatullah describes as “reading the Qur’an ‘beyond’ the Qur’an” \textit{(ibid, p. 99).}

\textsuperscript{116} A recent publication by Ramon Harvey, \textit{The Qur’an and the Just Society}, straddles a line between these approaches: it takes its cue from \textit{tafsīr mawdūʿī} \textit{(Introduction, p. 5) but describes itself as “a thematic reading of the Qur’anic blueprint for the just society” \textit{(ibid, p. 2). His introductory chapters include one on hermeneutics, which describes his process of “intra-textual analysis” \textit{(which entails primary comparison) followed by four modes of study. Two are “semi-internal”, namely syntax-pragmatics and semantics, while the others are “external”: textual structure and socio-historical context \textit{(ibid, pp. 44–45). The author explains that the latter two represent synchronic and diachronic modes of engagement with the text, respectively \textit{(ibid, p. 44). The purpose of this process is defined as “extracting \textit{hikmas}” i.e. divine wisdoms behind rulings \textit{(ibid, p. 45). This could certainly be considered beyond the purpose of \textit{tafsīr}, although Harvey places his project in the third of Abdullah Saeed’s “four-stage model” of exegesis \textit{(ibid, p. 3, citing Saeed, \textit{Interpreting the Qur’an, pp. 150–152).}}

\textsuperscript{117} Quotes from Hidayatullah, p. 108.

\textsuperscript{118} See Būshīkhī’s paper: \textit{‘Naḥwa Muʿjam Tārīkhī li-l-Mustalalahī al-Qurānīyya al-Muʿarrāfa}. As I understand, this project remains in its early stages. The paper contains an interesting case study of the term \textit{taghyīr} (change), in which it can be observed that exegetes generally equated the implications of Q 8:53 and 13:11 (i.e. the people’s change towards ingratitude and sin results in the removal and change of divine favours), even though the latter verse is potentially broader \textit{(see pp. 382–390).}

\textsuperscript{119} For an example of traditionalist responses to feminist readings, see Raysūnī, \textit{Al-Nass al-Qurānī min Tahāfut al-Qiyāât ilā Uṣfaq al-Tadabbur}, pp. 340–360. In this section, the author comments particularly on Wadud’s \textit{Qur’an and Women}. He is critical of the idea of “readings” \textit{(as his title suggests) and the use of Western hermeneutics in Qurān interpretation. The book was awarded a governmental prize in Morocco and published by its religious ministry in 2010.}
4.3 – Comparative Methods

The thematic approach, with its various methods, involves finding texts which complement and support the meaning of the verse under study. A variation on this is to find texts which touch on the same subject but in a way that modifies the initial understanding of that verse. The spectrum of modification includes the likes of qualification and particularisation, and – at its extreme – abrogation (according to the majority of Muslim scholars). The common starting point for all the comparative methods discussed below is to perceive tension between two expressions, even to the extent of contradiction. Faced with this, together with basic assumptions about the unity and consistency of divine speech (see Chapter 3), the exegete will draw upon a set of methods to resolve this tension.

These methods generally proceed on a path of ‘least resistance’, which is to say that the goal is to maximise the sense of harmony among meanings of the Qurʾān, and resort to ‘disruptive’ claims – such as abrogation – as infrequently as possible. The procedure is both logical and reflected in other fields of scholarship, especially hadīth studies. First, the exegete attempts to reconcile the two meanings in a way which is straightforward, or at least plausible, without any active modification of the sense of either verse. If that is not possible, and there remains tension or ikhtilāf between them, then this may be treated as ‘creative conflict’ that leads to understanding each of the verses under examination more fully and correctly, through a process of modification. When one verse is considered a modifier to another, this may be seen as a form of preponderance (tarjīḥ). In a closed corpus in which all verses are considered of equal authority, established definitively (qāṭī al-thubūt), the scope of tarjīḥ is necessarily more constrained than in the context of hadīth. However, there are various senses in which a particular verse may be “overruled” by others via a comparative process.

The initial stage of locating relevant verses was discussed in the context of parallels and thematic exegesis, so there is no need to reiterate those points. Instead, we shall address three issues – and genres with their respective methods – in turn. First,

120 The term ikhtilāf may mean contradiction (as in Q 4:82; see 3.2.1 above), but it has also been used in a positive sense as ikhtilāf al-tanawwul, i.e. such as represents complementarity rather than conflict (see Ibn Taymiyya’s Muqaddima, p. 38 ff., regarding differences between the Salaf). That kind of variation belongs to the thematic domain, rather than comparative.
how the exegetes and others identify nuances of meaning by comparing individual words and extended passages – such as stories – in the Qurʾān. Thereafter, a closer look at how they seek to resolve apparent contradictions in the text. Finally, how they treat variant canonical readings (qirāʿ āt), with both thematic and comparative methods at play.

4.3.1 – Near-synonyms (Mutarādifāt) and Near-parallels (Mutashābihāt)

In this chapter, I am outlining intraquranic methods employed within tafsīr works, which are often complemented by distinct sub-genres of ʿulūm al-Qurʾān that have the potential to be integrated into the hermeneutical account of TQQ. Two such methods and sub-genres involve the study of lexical nuances (furūq) between words which appear synonymous; and the subtle differences between verses which are similar in wording (mutashābihāt).121 The connection between these two phenomena is that they proceed from observing similarities to investigating distinctions, thereby seeking a fuller understanding of each lexical item or each verse, respectively. The two fields overlap in those resembling verses which differ with respect to a particular pair of words used synonymously.122 Both genres are built upon an anti-reductionist assumption, namely that the author of the Qurʾān had a purpose in using specific wordings and varying these according to context.123

Near-Synonyms (Word-Level)

Zarkashī gathered a number of examples of “Words misconstrued as synonymous” in his lengthy Chapter 46 of Al-Burhān124, drawing from several sources

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121 The variety of usages of this word was outlined in Chapter 3. This usage is sometimes given the adjective lafżīyya, i.e. verbal resemblance between verses. The differences I am considering here do not reach the level of tension or contradiction, which is the topic of the next section.

122 The difference between this lexical enquiry and those of kullīyyāt and wujūh described previously, is that the latter deals with a single word which is used for one or more meanings. Furūq pertains to different words which are used for the same meaning.

123 For an overview of negative positions of Qurʾān scholars towards synonymy, see Munajjīd, Al-Tarādud, pp. 121–125.

124 This was summarised in Al-Itqān Chapter 42, “Rules (qawāʿid) the exegete must know”.
including the famous lexicon of al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī. The first example is the distinction between *khawf* and *khashya*, both of which may be translated as ‘fear’ – Zarkashī observes that “linguists seldom make any distinction between them.” The relationship he describes between them is ‘*umūm wa khuṣūs*, which is to say that one is a subset of the other, i.e. more specific: this is a common strategy in differentiating between near-synonyms. The first argument stems from the respective Arabic roots along with their usage in the Qurʾān:

*Khashya* is undoubtedly more intense, the strongest type of *khawf*. It comes from ‘a dry (*khashī*) tree’, which refers to complete loss, whereas *khawf* comes from ‘a diseased (*khawfū*) she-camel’, i.e. a shortcoming which does not amount to loss. Therefore, *khashya* particularly is linked to God in the verse: “They are in awe (*khashya*) of their Lord and in fear (*khawf*) of the evil reckoning” (13:21).

Zarkashī expands this point further, drawing from ‘major derivation’ applied to each root, concluding that “*khashya* follows from the greatness of the one feared, even if the fearful one is himself strong; as for *khawf*, it results from one’s own weakness and thus may obtain even with respect to something insignificant.” Why, then, Zarkashī asks, was it appropriate for *khawf* to be used in 16:50 – “They fear their Lord” – even though, according to his earlier point, the norm is to use *khashya*? He responds that both words hold true and are used according to perspective, i.e. one is described with *khashya* of God in respect to His greatness, and *khawf* of Him due to weakness before Him. The result of this manoeuvre is to turn an objection into a subtlety which

125 Rāghīb’s critique of excessive pluralism in *wujūh* was mentioned above: in the domain of *furūq*, he is advocating pluralism over the reductionism represented by *tafrīd* theory. The same applies to Tirmidhī, who – as well as his *Taḥṣil Naẓār al-Qur’ān* described above – penned another influential work entitled *Al-Furūq wa Man‘ al-Tarāʾiduf*. This combined stance is to say that each Quranic word is distinct from others, and each is used consistently throughout the text.

126 The late Azharite scholar M.M. Ghālī, in *Synonyms in the Ever-Glorious Qur’an*, suggested English terms for each near-synonym, which he also applied in his translation of the Qurʾān. In this case, he has *khashya* as “apprehension” and *khawf* as “fear”.

127 *Al-Burḥān*, p. 751.

128 *Al-Burḥān*, p. 751. This verse is itself an indication that the two words are not synonymous. A commonly cited rule is that when words are cited together (or contrasted), their denotation diverges, whereas they may be synonymous when occurring individually.

129 The study of meta-meanings through various permutations of root letters is known as *al-istiṣāq al-kaḥīr*. See Jabal, *ʿIlm al-Istiṣāq*, p. 41.

130 *Al-Burḥān*, p. 751.
further supports the belief that the Qurʾān employs these near-synonyms with attention to detail; the argument is here summarised by Suyūṭī:

As for 16:50 – “They fear (khawf) their Lord above them” – it contains a subtlety in that it refers to the angels; since they were described as great and powerful creations [in other verses], their attitude was expressed here as khawf to indicate that despite their severity and strength, they are weak before Almighty God. Then the concept of elevation (fawqiyya) was added, which entails greatness, so the two aspects were combined. As for humans, their weakness is known, so there was no need to draw attention to this matter in their regard.131

A modern scholar, Muḥammad Dāwūd, studied these two terms along with six other near-synonyms (ruʿb, rahba, rawʿ, faraq, fazaʿ and wajal) in their Quranic usages, concluding that some overlap almost completely, whereas each displays certain nuances.132 The purpose behind such study is for the interpreter to go beyond the obvious denotation of a word, to consider the subtleties of its usage and connotations. As such, when studying the vocabulary of a particular verse, the meaning is further refined and clarified by comparing it with similar words used elsewhere. The very fact that near-synonyms exist in the Quranic corpus is a stimulus to investigate the intended meaning of each in its place.

Near-Parallels (Verse-Level)

We turn now to focus on the resembling verses, for which Zarkashī composed Al-Burhān’s Chapter 5, ʿIlm al-Mutashābih.133 As I noted in Chapter 2 of this study, many of the verses categorised as parallels could equally be studied for their variations, hence under this genre.134 However, in practice, the TQQ exegetes did not incorporate

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131 Al-Itqān, 4/1304.
133 Suyūṭī summarised this in Al-Itqān Chapter 63. Both Zarkashī and Suyūṭī described Ibn al-Zuhayr’s work Milāk al-Taʿzīl as the best and most extensive of the genre, hence my focus upon it in this section. The remainder of the book’s title indicates its purpose: “Al-qūṭihi dhawāʾ il-illāh wa-l-taʿzīl [i.e. responding to critics of the Qurʾān] fi tanṣīḥ al-mutashābih al-lafzī min ʿay al-tanzīl [by providing explanations for such variations, i.e. other than confusion in the text]”. In his detailed study of the work, Muhammad al-Sāmarrāʾī demonstrates that, despite stating in Al-Itqān that he had not encountered Al-Milāk, Suyūṭī reproduced extensively from it – without attribution – in another of his works, Muʿṭarık al-Aqrān (Sāmarrāʾī, Dirāsat al-Mutashābih al-Lafzī, p. 60).
134 There are books compiled specially to summarise these variations as an aid to accurate memorisation, e.g. Zawāwī’s Musḥaf al-Mutashābihāt. These could be used as a source for the tafsīr study described here.
this form of analysis in their works consistently.\textsuperscript{135} This becomes clear by comparing the citations linked to Sūrat al-Anʿām in Ibn al-Zubayr’s *Milāk al-Taʿwīl*\textsuperscript{136} with those provided under the same verses by the Group\textsuperscript{137} in my case study. In the right-hand column, I have summarised the point(s) of divergence between the near-parallels and, wherever relevant, what implications Ibn al-Zubayr concludes this has for the interpretation of the verse in al-Anʿām.\textsuperscript{138}

\textit{Figure 6 - The Group’s *Nazāʾir* / Ibn al-Zubayr’s *Mutashābīḥāt*}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Parallels</th>
<th>Near-Parallels</th>
<th>Divergence/Implication</th>
</tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1:1*, 18:1, 34:1, 35:1</td>
<td>Phrases following <em>ḥamd</em>: al-Anʿām theme is negation of Dualism.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{135} Joseph Witztum further states that this genre is “rarely referred to in Western Quranic studies” despite its value to the critical researcher (‘Variant Traditions, Relative Chronology and the Study of Intra-Quranic Parallels,’ in Sadeghi et al (eds.), p. 9). Witztum argues that a variety of approaches are required in order for systematic analysis of this phenomenon and to understand its implications for the Qurʾān’s composition (ibid, p. 2). He summarises the various approaches under the following six “axes”: synchronic–diachronic, atomistic–coherent, oral–written, single–multiple authorship, harmony–discord, human–divine (ibid, p. 4). He then provides examples of traditional and modern studies which involve harmonisation, appeal to *sūra* context, diachronic reading, and others (ibid, pp. 5–12).

\textsuperscript{136} Sourcing these citations requires not only going through the *sūra* in question, but the whole book prior to it. This is because, if Ibn al-Zubayr was comparing between verses in al-Baqara and al-Anʿām, for example, he would only mention this comparison under al-Baqara. I have marked the verse where the discussion appears with an asterisk (*).Underlined verses were also cited by the Group; if they do not appear in the Parallels column, this is because they were cited as evidence (see full table in Appendix).

\textsuperscript{137} In this version of the table, I have combined the parallels cited by the Group with those from the Supplementary works (see Chapter 2). However, I have sometimes restricted the parallels list to those relevant to a phrase.

\textsuperscript{138} I am disregarding here explanations which touch purely upon word-forms, for example, as my topic of study is meaning. I have also left out points which are easily derived from the context rather than comparison with *mutashēbīhāt*. Some explanations are informative about the non-Anʿām verses, but I have left those out for clarity in the table.
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reference</th>
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<td>11</td>
<td>3:137, 7:84/86, 10:39/73, 28:58</td>
<td>27:69, 29:20</td>
<td>Thumma vs. fa-: implies command to observe creation first, then the fate of previous nations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>3:185</td>
<td>45:30</td>
<td>Lack of separating huwa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>laʿib and lahw</td>
<td>17:90ff, 25:7-8</td>
<td>11:31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>6:46-47, 10:50</td>
<td>A-raʾaytakum and a-raʾaytum.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>7:94-95</td>
<td>7:94</td>
<td>Yataḍarraʿūn vs. yaddarraʿūn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>11:31</td>
<td>11:31</td>
<td>Inclusion of lakum: Quraysh are addressed in harsher tone than the people of Noah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>16:37</td>
<td>81:27</td>
<td>Dhikrā vs. dhikr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>brought again</td>
<td>18:48, 19:95, 21:104</td>
<td>18:48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97-99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Verse endings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>13:16, 39:62, 40:62</td>
<td>40:62</td>
<td>Placement of &quot;There is no god but He&quot;.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contrary to my expectations, this survey of Milāk’s entries for al-An’ām does not yield a great deal of valuable TQQ content. Nevertheless, the approach and some of the techniques employed by this and other authors has potential to add to the understanding of certain verses by comparing them with variants within the corpus. The example of 6:151 was discussed in Chapter 2: based on the interpretation Ibn al-Zubayr has taken from Durrat al-Tanzīl by Iskāfī, this could be glossed as follows: “Do not kill your children due to your current poverty, for God will respond to your righteous behaviour by alleviating your present hardship and providing for your progeny in the future.” Thus it is markedly different from its near-parallel in 17:31, which provides: “Do not kill your children out of fear that they will make you poor.
Rather, God will guarantee their provision and yours.”\textsuperscript{139} Whereas some exegetes treated them as parallels or explained both reductively in terms of that fear (\textit{khashya}), the comparative approach allows for both these forms of reasoning to exist in the Qur’ān against the practice of infanticide.\textsuperscript{140}

Aside from the intricacy of Ibn al-Zubayr’s prose, challenges to incorporating his detailed study into the genre of \textit{tafsīr} include its polemical bent, the speculative nature of many of his explanations – a reality the author readily admits with humble interjections of “\textit{Allāhu a’lam}” – and the fact that these explanations are frequently strained. Rather than aiming at exposition of the verses of the Qur’ān, the author has based his project on establishing the “appropriateness (\textit{munāsaba})” of each wording to its context. The vagueness of this concept is readily observed, for example, in his explanation for the particle \textit{fī} being present in 35:39 – hence “successors on the earth” – but absent from 6:165, which uses the \textit{idāfa} construction – hence “successors of the earth”.\textsuperscript{141} Ibn al-Zubayr attributes this difference to a general sense of “constriction” surrounding the first juncture in \textit{Sūrat Fāṭir}, compared with a sense of “expansion” in the themes and statements leading to the closing of al-Anʿām. This is related to the fact that removing the preposition \textit{fī} results in a more expansive image of human population of the earth, not bound to a particular location.\textsuperscript{142}

I conclude the discussion on the \textit{mutashābihāt} genre with brief points on method and prospects. As with other TQQ-related fields of enquiry, surveying the Qur’ān comprehensively is essential, in order to gather all relevant parallels and near-parallels, and check for counters to whatever deductions are made, including in the corpus of \textit{qirā’āt}.\textsuperscript{143} As Muḥammad al-Sāmarrā’ī states, such study depends on

\textsuperscript{139} See \textit{Milāk al-Ta’wil}, 1/479.

\textsuperscript{140} A similar point is made by Muḥammad ʿAbel-Allāh Drāz in his book \textit{Al-Nabaʾ al-ʿAzīm} concerning the statement of divine incomparability in 42:11 (\textit{Laysa ka-mithlihi shay}), which is generally conflated with that in 112:4 (\textit{Wa lam yulan hubu kufuwan ahad}). After dismissing explanations which treat the ‘double-preposition’ \textit{ka-mithli} as a problem to be explained away, he uses this construction to build two distinct theological arguments from the verse. The first is that nothing resembles God in any way: therefore, not only does He not have any equal (\textit{kufu}) in all respects, but no equal in any of the divine attributes (such as hearing and sight, mentioned immediately after). The second argument is that incomparability is by virtue of the very nature of divinity itself (see in translation, \textit{The Qurʾān: An Eternal Challenge}, pp. 116–119).

\textsuperscript{141} Some translators, such as Abdullah Yusuf Ali, seem to have taken note of this distinction.

\textsuperscript{142} \textit{Milāk al-Ta’wil}, 1/484.

\textsuperscript{143} See Haydar, \textit{ʿUlam al-Qurʾān}, p. 626. Ibn al-Zubayr did take account of variant readings in his arguments concerning 6:37 and 29:50, which have the same singular \textit{āya} in the readings of Ibn Kathār,
thorough familiarity with Arabic grammar and morphology, and often external factors including revelatory contexts (asbāb al-nuzūl). His own publication, based on a rearrangement of Milāk al-Taʿwīl, facilitates the process of applying the insights and techniques of Ibn al-Zubayr et al to the craft of exegesis. This can be further developed into Quranic style manuals which guide the reader to the impact of verbal nuances upon meaning.  

4.3.2 – Resolving Apparent Contradiction (Taʿāruḍ)

A genre which overlaps with the study of mutashābihāt verses seeks to respond in particular to apparent or alleged contradictions between verses of the Qurʾān. Zarkashī titled Al-Burḥān Chapter 35 on this topic: Mūhim al-Mukhtalīf [or al-Mukhtalaf]46, recalling the concept of ikhtilāf (inconsistency) mentioned in Q 4:82 and discussed previously in Chapter 3. Suyūṭī based Chapter 48 of Al-Itqān on this and titled it: Mushkil [al-Qurʾān] wa Mūhim al-Ikhtilāf wa-l-Tanāqud. Though the second and third of these terms can hardly be distinguished, the first represents a broader genre of problematic (mushkil) verses.47

Although not widely employed, Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shinqīṭī also used the term idṭirāb for internal contradiction: he authored a work separate from his TQQ exegesis Adwāʾ al-Bayān, entitled Dafʿ Ikām al-Iḏṭirāb ‘an Āyāt al-Kitāb. As previously for mutashābihāt, the following table outlines the entries pertaining to Sūrat al-Anʿām, noting the contradiction and the nature of Shinqīṭī’s response. Of these, only

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144 Sāmarrāʿī, p. 234.

145 The writer’s father, Fāḍil al-Sāmarrāʿī, has authored a number of works which contribute to this aim (see Dirāsāt al-Mutashābih al-Lafzī, p. 28).

146 Both renderings are common in describing this genre and its equivalent in Ḥadīth Studies.

147 Perhaps the most famous work of the broader genre is Ibn Qutayba’s Taʿāruḍ Mushkil al-Qurʾān. I disagree with Ḥaydar (Uṣūn al-Qurʾān, p. 269) in saying that the term ikhtilāf encompasses the meaning of ishākīl. As he notes himself (ibid, note 3), contradictions form only a subset of Ibn Qutayba’s discussions. Suyūṭī does not go beyond this subset in the chapter in question.
half were discussed by one or more exegetes in my case study, highlighting the importance of looking beyond the immediate *tafsîr* genre.\textsuperscript{148}

**Figure 7 - Seeming Contradictions in al-Anām According to Dafʾ Îhām al-Iṭṭirāb**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:62</td>
<td>Describes God as the true <em>mawlâ</em> of all people.</td>
<td>47:11</td>
<td>Denies that the unbelievers have any <em>mawlâ</em>.</td>
<td>Two senses of <em>wilâya</em>: God is “master” of all, but patron and supporter of the believers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:69</td>
<td>Implies that one is not sinful for sitting with mockers of the religion.</td>
<td>4:140</td>
<td>Equates the mocker and listener in sin.</td>
<td>See Chapter 2 (Abrogation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:92</td>
<td>Appears to limit the Prophet’s message to the environs of Mecca.</td>
<td>6:19, 7:158, 25:1, 34:28 – these make the mission universal.</td>
<td>See Chapter 2 (Thematic, universality of message).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:128</td>
<td>Implies that the torment of Hell may end.</td>
<td>4:169 and many others state that it is everlasting.</td>
<td>The exception may pertain to sinning believers “those whom God wills”; or the excluded time may be that between resurrection and being placed in Hell.\textsuperscript{149}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:107</td>
<td>States that if God willed, none would commit <em>shirk</em>.</td>
<td>6:148</td>
<td>Condemns the <em>mushrikûn</em> for stating exactly that.</td>
<td>The Qurʾān is refuting not the words expressed, but the intended implication: that God is satisfied with their actions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are some differences between the opinions presented in this work and in *Adwāʾ al-Bayān*, studied in Chapter 2. In his *tafsîr*, Shinqîṭṭi treats 4:140 as clarification of 6:69, but in *Dafʾ al-Îhām*, he seems to treat the possibility of abrogation as equally plausible.\textsuperscript{150} Moreover, I did not find him mentioning in *Adwāʾ* that the “Sword Verse” abrogated any of al-Anām; however, in *Dafʾ*, he states concerning 6:106 – which exhorts Muḥammad to “turn away from the polytheists” – that “It does not contradict

\textsuperscript{148} Shinqîṭṭi does not suggest in his *Adwāʾ* that 6:92 conflicts with the other verses. In general, *Dafʾ al-Îhām* is a more detailed study of apparent tensions than in his exegesis proper. I left out of this table the suggestion concerning 6:141 (also 6:99), that “*mutashâbih wa ghayr mutashâbih*” might be considered a contradiction (*Dafʾ al-Îhām*, p. 130)! 

\textsuperscript{149} *Dafʾ al-Îhām*, p. 134. The author goes on to respond in detail to scholars who argued that Hell will indeed perish. 

\textsuperscript{150} *Dafʾ al-Îhām*, p. 128.
(taʿāruḍ) the Sword Verse, because that abrogates this.”\textsuperscript{151} As discussed in Chapter 3, the technical sense of abrogation (naskh) only applies when two texts are irreconcilable – therefore, his point, effectively, is that this is an acceptable contradiction.

An example from al-Anāʾīm not analysed by the Group or by Shinqīṭī in this work, was discussed by Ibn al-Zubayr\textsuperscript{152}, but without a direct acknowledgement of the apparent contradiction between the statements. I refer here to the verses which ask: “Who does greater wrong (man azlam) than one who…?” – as in verses 21, 93, 144 and 157 of this sūra, among other references. Since the rhetorical force of the question is to describe each type of person as the greatest wrongdoer (or most unjust, azlam), it does not seem possible for the superlative to hold true for the whole range. The problem was noted by Suyūṭī, who reproduced several explanations from Abū Ḥāyyān’s exegesis, which I summarise here: \textsuperscript{153}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Each is relative to the type of action described, e.g. the worst and most unjust “prevention” is to prevent people from the mosques (2:114), and the worst “invention” is to invent lies against God (6:144).
\item Each describes the first to perform the respective sins, therefore described as azlam relative to all who follow in their footsteps.
\item The verses, taken together, can be understood as equating these various sins to each other in wrong and injustice. Each only negates that there is anyone more unjust, not that there is anyone as unjust.
\end{enumerate}

Suyūṭī adds one more explanation from an unnamed source, to the effect that the verses should not be taken literally to entail that each sinner described is the worst; rather, it is a rhetorical question which emphasises the great wrong that each is committing.\textsuperscript{154}

The general strategies for dealing with conflicting verses were summarised by Isfarāyīnī, quoted in Al-Burhān, as I cited previously in Chapter 3. It should be noted

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{151} Dāfāʿ al-Īhām, p. 132.
\textsuperscript{152} Miḥāl al-Taʿwil, 1/431.
\textsuperscript{153} Al-Iqān, 4/1482. Suyūṭī is not explicit about his source, though he mentions that Abū Ḥāyyān preferred the third explanation. See Ḥaydar, Ulūm al-Qurān, p. 271.
\textsuperscript{154} Al-Iqān, 4/1483. This is the perspective I find most convincing.
\end{flushright}
that the location of these discussions has generally been *uṣūl al-fiqh*, pertaining to practical rulings, as the reference to abrogation implies:

When verses conflict and it is not possible to reconcile them, then resort is made to chronology and the earlier one is abandoned in favour of the later, which constitutes abrogation. If chronology is unknown, yet there is consensus upon acting on one of the two verses, then this consensus demonstrates that the one so acted upon has abrogated [the other].

The process can be summarised as follows.

1. The exegete attempts to reconcile (*tawfiq*, *jamʽ*) between the statements or rulings, such that both hold equally true. This may involve:
   - Clarifying the vocabulary and/or grammar: the confusion may arise from a simple misreading. A word may have *wujūh* such that two verses may appear contradictory while actually speaking of different things.
   - Clarifying the scope of each utterance: if they apply to different people, places, times or situations, then contradiction does not obtain. A closer examination and comparison allows for clearer meanings to arise for the individual verses: this is “creative conflict”.
2. If straightforward reconciliation is not possible, then one is given preponderance (*tarjîh*) over the other: both remain operable, but one is “modified” by the process.

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155 *Al-Burhân*, pp. 283–284.

156 This includes the possibility of literal (*haqîqa*) and non-literal (*majâz*) meanings, as well as idioms not to be analysed for literal import. This axiom was mentioned in Chapter 1: “Contradiction between a negative statement and an affirmative statement only exists if they are equal in terms of the statement itself, the subject, their circumstances, time and place, and whether literal or figurative meanings are intended” (Sabt, *Qawā'id*, 2/256).

157 Zarkashī provides an instructive account of five “causes (*asbâb*) of contradiction” (*Al-Burhân*, pp. 286–291) which expands on this point.

158 Isfarâyînî did not mention *tarjîh*, presumably including it as a form of *jamʽ*. It may also be said that *nâsîkh* is a form of *tarjîh*, since both verses remain in the recited Qur'ân but it is considered necessary to refer to and act upon the *nâsîkh*. Zarkashī includes a list of “preponderating factors (*murajîhâb*)” in *Al-Burhân*, p. 284.
- If one verse is univocal (muḥkam) and the other equivocal (mutashābīh), then the latter is interpreted in light of the former.\textsuperscript{159}
- If one is more particular or qualified than the other, then a process of takhṣīṣ or ḥaml may be applied, as described previously.

3. *Naskh*, which is to consider one of the verses “cancelled” in terms of its ruling, is the last resort.\textsuperscript{160} This is established by chronology, which depends upon explicit reports as well as circumstantial evidence; the consensus of early jurists is a form of the latter.

A thorough study of the treatment of conflicting verses by the exegetes as well as writers in these various sub-genres in Quranic studies could form the basis for a more detailed theoretical account and systematic approach to resolving tensions and contradictions. This could include specific approaches to types of content in the Qurʾān, such as its stories (qaṣaṣ), which may differ from rulings (aḥkām), for example.\textsuperscript{161}

4.3.3 – Canonical Readings (*Qirāʾ āt*)

Some of the theoretical accounts of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* encountered in Chapter 1, particularly later texts, included the use of *qirāʾ āt* as one of its forms. Whereas Dhahabi provided examples outside the recognised canon of the Seven or the Ten Readings, others restricted TQQ to those described as al-*qirāʾ āt al-mutawātira*, i.e. those which fulfil the criteria set by Muslim scholarship to be considered as part of the Qurʾān. The relevance of multiple, variant readings to TQQ stems from the very conception or definition of the Qurʾān: alongside the written consonantal skeleton, the text has an oral reality and has been vocalised in different ways. Thus, in the present time, there are differences between the Qurʾān as heard (and as vowelled in the printed copies) in different regions: although the Ḥafṣ–’Āṣim sub-reading is the predominant

\textsuperscript{159} See 3.3.1 above. I have explained above that the term *muyjal* is treated by some *usūl* scholars as equivalent to *mutashābih*. Zarkashi (Al-Burhān, p. 285) cites examples, via Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, of verses which are subject to *taʾlīl* (interpretation) in the light of more authoritative ones.

\textsuperscript{160} This is assuming that there is no explicit and authoritative statement to the effect that *naskh* has taken place. In that case, it would not make sense to insist on reconciliation as the first step.

\textsuperscript{161} By way of example: quotations in the Qurʾān of historical figures who did not speak Arabic necessarily involve adaptation. In that light, variations in different *sūras* do not present the same challenge as points of law or doctrine.
one around the world today, there is strong representation of Warsh–Nafi’, Qalun–Nafi’ and others in parts of Africa, for example.\footnote{See Ghânîm al-Hamad, \textit{Muhâdirat fi Ullâm al-Qurân}, pp. 148–150 for an outline of the historical rise of Āsim and its Ḥafṣ transmission, which were originally identified among Iraqi readings; he argues that this preceded the advent of printing and the patronage of the Ottomans (cf. Nasser, \textit{Transmission}, p. 1).} Even when such differences in transmission and recitation result in divergent meanings within some verses of the Qur’ān, Sunnī consensus\footnote{The cautious adjective reflects the existence of ṣira’āt-scepticism in Shāfi’i scholarship, as exemplified by Khūṭ’s in his \textit{Prolegomenon} (see pp. 92–93 and 114–117, and his conclusion regarding readings “well established during the lifetime of Ḥafṣ al-Beṣṭ”, FadullṭābABB responds to Khūṭ’s in \textit{Iqīn al-Barḥān}, 2/422–425). See re: other major figures in Nasser, \textit{Transmission}, pp. 112–115. Dissent of a similar character is expressed by Javed Ghamidi, who argues, based on a quotation from Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī (see Zarkashā, \textit{Al-Barḥān}, p. 137), that there was a single reading at the time of the Companions, described as al-qirā’āt al-āmm. Ghamidi equates this to the Ḥafṣ sub-reading, and quotes Islāhī as saying that no other qirā’a is as eloquent and coherent (see Islam: A Comprehensive Introduction, pp. 33–34). Both assertions are highly problematic; moreover, Zarkashā clearly places Sulamī’s quotation in the context of major variations (affecting orthography).} maintains that each of these is authentic and authoritative in its own right.\footnote{A related question is whether each reading is \textit{sufficient} in its own right. That is the broad assumption even in scholarship, which rarely treats comparison of qirā‘āt as a necessity in presenting or interpreting the Qur’ān. Translations of the Qur’ān are, almost universally, based on the Ḥafṣ narration (that of Aisha and Abdul-Haqq Bewley is an exception, being based on Warsh). Word indexes, such as \textit{Al-Mujāham al-Mujahāna}s of ‘Abd al-Baqi‘, also fail to take variants into account, which would increase or decrease occurrences of certain words. According to the ahdharite scholar Muhammad ‘Abd al-Khālíq ‘Udāyama, grammarians frequently make judgements without surveying the Qur’ān comprehensively, including its multiple readings. See his immense work \textit{Dirāsāt li-Uṣūlāb al-Qur‘ān}, 1/15–17.} This is reflected in the learning institutions in which specialists are trained to recite in multiple ways, usually relying upon the didactic poems composed by al-Qāsim b. Fīrru al-Shāṭibī (d. 590/1194) and Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Jazarī (d. 833/1429). For students of this field, the various readings are treated equally, and the idea that Ḥafṣ–Āsim is the “standard” does not feature.

The role of variant readings in \textit{tafsīr} is intimately connected to the conceptualisation of their provenance, and doctrine concerning their authority. It is not possible here to explore the core questions regarding \textit{qirā‘āt} – and their relationship to the traditions concerning seven \textit{ahruf}, “letters” or modes – as my focus is upon the general stance of Islamic scholarship post-canonisation, which began with Ibn Mujāhid (d. 324/936) selecting seven variants from five regional centres in his book \textit{Kitāb al-Sab‘ā}.\footnote{Re: Ibn Mujāhid’s ‘sevenisation’, see Nasser, \textit{Transmission}, pp. 35–36 and 48–61, and Shah, ‘The Early Arabic Grammarians’ Contributions to the Collection and Authentication of Qur’ānic Readings: The Prelude to Ibn Mujāhid’s \textit{Kitāb al-Sab‘a}. An area requiring further research and elaboration is the role and processes of \textit{idāhiyat} (selection) on the part of the reciter-imāms (see Ahmad ‘Al al-Īmān, \textit{Fārsīt Readings of the Qur‘ān}, p. 141 ff.). Whether they were selecting purely from received readings (upon the
Jazarī, author of *Kitāb al-Nashr* which incorporated three further readings which had retained popularity – the Seven and, subsequently, Ten Readings were classed as “mutawātir”. Although this label purports to refer to the successively multiple transmission of these readings, its accuracy from an *usūl al-fiqh* or ḥadīth perspective is a matter of dispute.\(^\text{166}\) For this reason, I opt to describe the Ten as “canonical” and such readings as fall outside this corpus (known as *shādhdh* readings, literally: anomalous) as “non-canonical”. This perspective treats the *qirāʿāt* not as a separate phenomenon from the Qurʾān, but a “composite part of its nature”.\(^\text{167}\) Each divinely-ordained mode of recitation of a verse has the same Quranic status: as such, any comprehensive survey (*istiqrāʾ*) of the Qurʾān would require taking all canonical readings into account.

As Shady Nasser has documented, there was a marked shift from early approaches to variant readings to a developed consensus of both reciters (*qurrāʾ*) and *usūl* scholars, affected by methodologies in ḥadīth studies, that the Ten Readings enjoy an equal status as Qurʾān, and that any textual variant found in these canonical readings is above criticism. This shift is reflected in the *tafsīr* tradition, as observable in the relevant section of my case study in Chapter 2. Ibn Jaʿrī al-Ṭabarī, who preceded and even taught Ibn Mujāhid, did not hesitate to express preference for some readings over others, or even to criticise some (such as Ibn ʿĀmir’s reading of 6:137) in the strongest terms.\(^\text{168}\) Later scholars would mount a staunch defence of any reading from the Seven in particular, responding to the critiques of early exegetes, and especially linguists and grammarians.\(^\text{169}\) Upon either stance, the variant readings – even those downgraded as

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\(^\text{166}\) See Nasser, *Transmission*, p. 98 ff.

\(^\text{167}\) Shah, ‘Review of Variant Readings of the Qurʾān by Ahmad ʿAlī al-Imām,’ p. 78. A contrary expression is used by Zarkashi, who describes the Qurʾān and the *qirāʿāt* as “distinct realities (*ḥaqiqatān* *mulaghāyiratān*):’ the former is revelation, and the latter refers to variations and selections pertaining to some of the words from that revelation – *Al-Burḥān*, p. 180. This does not contradict the assertion that the existence of the Qurʾān depends upon the existence of at least one *qirāʿ*: then the question would be how this is identified.

\(^\text{168}\) See 2.5.1 above. Aside from linguistic considerations, Tabari frequently justifies his preference with appeals to the “majority” of readers, before such matters were defined through canonisation.

\(^\text{169}\) See Rufaydah, *Al-Nahw wa Kitāb al-Tafsīr* for chronological accounts of the exegetes’ treatment of *qirāʿāt*. Shawknī is unusual as an exegete who engaged in critique of particular readings long after canonisation.
shādhdh – do have a role to play in exegesis, but the inclusion of this source in TQQ is predicated upon this later consensus.

Alongside this assumption of the ‘Quranicity’ of each of the Ten Readings, there is another key principle underpinning their use in explaining each other intraquranically. This is that each canonical qirā’a of a verse is to be considered equivalent to an independent verse\textsuperscript{170}, such that one may be explained with reference to the other – in the same manner as other cross-references and evidentiary citations. From this perspective, variant readings represent not indeterminacy, but richness of content. This, too, marks a shift from early trends of preferring some readings over others, to explaining the import of each, and even studying them thematically.

The Tawjīh Genre

There are some exegetical works which have given greater attention to comparing qirā’āt: a late example is Ṣūrah al-Ma’ānī by Maḥmūd al-Ālūsī. Aside from this is a complete genre of works known as ihtijāj li-l-qirā’āt, ‘īlāl al-qirā’āt, or tawjīh al-qirā’āt.\textsuperscript{171} The first of these titles implies that there were debates over which readings were best attested in language, and which should be considered weak: ihtijāj means to argue for the validity of readings using linguistic citations, including Quranic parallels.\textsuperscript{172} Thus one of the main functions of this genre is to explain the basis for each reading, even when the validity of the Seven and Ten has become a foregone conclusion. This is the import of ‘īlāl, whereas the term tawjīh may also describe an additional function of this genre: to explain the implications of these readings for the meaning of the text. One can observe a pluralistic approach in some works, which may yet be combined with the reductionism of preferring some readings over others (or, less controversially, preferring one meaning over others). This is demonstrated, for

\textsuperscript{170} In his chapter on seeming contradictions, Zarkashī states: “[Authorities] have treated the conflict between two readings of a single verse like the conflict between two verses” (Al-Burhān, p. 285).

\textsuperscript{171} Nasser describes such works in ‘Revisiting Ibn Mujāhid’s Position on the Seven Canonical Readings,’ pp. 88–89. He does not point out that later works in the genre eschew denigration of any of the readings.

\textsuperscript{172} Some works are specific to one reading, whereas others: such as Al-Hujja by Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī, a leading grammarian and student of Ibn Mujāhid, encompassed the Seven or more.
example, by Abū Maṣṣūr al-Azhārī (d. 370/980) in *Maʿānī l-Qirāʾāt*, which is titled to reflect its focus upon meanings.173

The modern era has seen the compilation of several *tawjīh* works which place greater emphasis on the canonicity and relevance of all *mutawāṭīr* readings.174 Even so, the dichotomy between reductionism (i.e. harmonisation) and pluralism (i.e. adding further meanings) exists here as elsewhere in intraquranic exegesis. Is it the case that *Mālik* and *Malik* – the variants describing God as “Master” or “King” of Judgment Day, respectively, in Q 1:4 – should be understood as equivalent? Or should the *muṭassir* inform us that the verse delivers both these meanings, which are complementary? Here, as in the case of apparent contradiction, a staged process may apply. According to the grammarian Ibn Hishām (d. 761/1359), the default presumption is that variant readings agree in meaning.175 Where that is not feasible, the next recourse of the exegete is to explain that the meanings are not contradictory; indeed, they may enhance the understanding of the verse. In some cases, *tarjīḥ* may be necessary: not to the extent of negating the authenticity of a reading (as in pre-canonical times), but to interpret it in light of a clearer reading of the same verse.176

The logical conclusion of the canonical and pluralistic approach to multiple readings is to expect them all to be taken into account in the interpretation of any particular verse.177 This is the premise of a series of Master’s theses at the Islamic University of Gaza, subsequently published under the title of *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qirāʿāt al-ʿAshr al-Mutawāṭīra* (“Exegesis of the Qurʾān through the Ten Canonical

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173 See Brockett, ‘Value of Ḥaṣāf and Warsh Transmissions’ in Rippin (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qurʾān*, pp. 37–40 for interesting comments on pluralism and reductionism (though Brockett does not use these terms).

174 Most influential is Hābāsh, *Al-Qirāʿāt al-Mutawāṭīra*, which is arranged thematically around juristic and creedal issues. A different focus is provided by Ahmad Saʿd Muhammad in *Al-Tawjīḥ al-Balāghī li-l-Qirāʿāt al-Qurʾānīyya*, which is arranged according to topics in Arabic rhetoric and includes non-canonical readings. A new publication which I did not include here is Miḥānā and Wādī, *Ittiṣāʿ al-Dalālāt fī Taʿaddud al-Qirāʿāt al-Qurʾānīyya*.


176 A reading at one juncture could even be classed as *mutashābih*, beyond explanation (see 3.3.1).

177 Ibn ʿĀshīr states in his introductions (*Al-Tahrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 1/55–56 and 96) that whenever canonical readings yield multiple meanings, those meanings should all be regarded as “intended” by the verse. However, on the whole, he does not consider their study integral to *tafsīr* (ibid, 1/25 and 51).
Readings”). The analysis in this series resembles other modern tawjīḥ works, but each discussion culminates in a section “combining” the readings (al-jamʿ bayna al-qirāʾāt) pluralistically, as far as possible.

With reference to a range of tawjīḥ works, I have studied a selection of variants in Sūrat al-Anʿām to summarise the various explanations and harmonisations featured, as well as some which were not expressed in the sources I consulted. The “reductionist” explanation here means either to say that the two readings amount to the same meaning, or that one is interpreted in light of the other. A “pluralistic” explanation is to say that the combination of qirāʾāt results in a fuller understanding of the verse than could have been attained without that multiplicity.

**Figure 8 - Analysis of Selected Variants in al-Anʿām from Tawjīḥ Works**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variants</th>
<th>Reduction</th>
<th>Plurality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **23:** wa-llāhi rabbīna / wa-llāhi rabbanā | The second reading may be the “accusative of praise”

180, hence means the same as the first. | The two expressions describe the same moment in two ways. The first suggests that the mushriks felt solidarity with each other in the face of punishment. The second emphasises their desperation before God.

181 |
| **55:** wa li-tastabīna sabīla l-mujrimīn / wa li-tastabīna sabīla l-mujrimīn | The first encompasses the second, as it describes the path becoming clear irrespective of the observer.

182 | Realities are made clear through the revelation, primarily for the Prophet himself.

183 |

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178 Another premise is that the multiplicity of readings and meanings reflects the miraculous nature of the Qurʾān. The portion including Sūrat al-Anʿām was written by Fātina al-Sakānī (2006). It covers fifty-one verses of al-Anʿām, but it missed yudillān vs. yadillān in 6:119. The writer has sometimes mixed up explanations from the sources and failed to articulate conclusions clearly.

179 These are the same as in Figure 4 in Chapter 2, in which I summarised Tabarī’s opinions. I refer here to classical works (in the “longitudinal” format), as well as modern thematic tawjīḥ works and the Gaza series. This whole genre requires further study to establish its principles and lineages.

180 Azbarī, Kiāb Maʿānī l-Qurʾān, p. 150, citing Abū Ishāq al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923), whose book demonstrates the grammarians’ approach to outlining linguistic possibilities: Zajjāj also explained how rabbunā (nominative) would be appropriate, though it is not attested in the qirāʾāt (Maʿānī l-Qurʾān wa Iṣābūh, 2/190).

181 Sakānī, p. 89.

182 Tabarī, Žāmiʿ al-Bayān, 4/3197.

183 Sakānī, p. 109.
193: li-abîhî āzara / li-abîhî āzaru

Whoever is raised, so are his degrees. The first is clearer in denoting multiple degrees of elevation. These are separate concepts: a person is raised (in knowledge etc.) or favoured over others (tafâfû). Or: God raises people’s ranks and raises them to those ranks [combined, this results in greater elevation].

191: narfa ‘u darajätin man nashâ / narfa ‘u darajâtî man nashâ

[His father was named Āzar and he addressed him by this name.]¹⁸⁴

[Tentative] These are separate concepts: a person is raised (in knowledge etc.) or favoured over others (tafâfû). Or: God raises people’s ranks and raises them to those ranks [combined, this results in greater elevation].²⁸⁷

96: wa ja ala l-layla sakanan / wa jā ilu l-layli sakanan

Two expressions for the same meaning.²⁸⁸

119: la-yu’dillûna bi-ahwâ ihim / la-yu’dillûna bi-ahwâ ihim

One who leads others astray is necessarily astray himself.²⁸⁹ One who is astray is likely to mislead others (without even intending).²⁹⁰

159: farraqû dinahum / farraqû dinahum

Both verbs mean “split”.²⁹² Abandoning any part of the religion is abandoning it all.²⁹³ Their selective

¹⁸⁴ This example demonstrates that, upon the canonical approach, explanations of vocabulary such as Āzar ought to be checked against the various qâ’ût for consistency.

¹⁸⁵ This semantic preference for the tanwīn reading is attributed to Abû ‘Amr, who is one of the Seven, yet the reading with his name is with idâfa. The author of Al-Taqzîh al-Balâghî (p. 146) questioned his claim that “We raise the degrees (đangût) of whomever We will” could refer to raising even by one degree. I suggest that the idea is that each person occupies several degrees, and these could be elevated collectively even by one. On the other hand, “We raise by degrees whomever We will” is explicit in denoting multiple degrees of elevation.

¹⁸⁶ Fârisî, Al-Ḥujja, 2/817–818.

¹⁸⁷ Sakanî, p. 127.

¹⁸⁸ Fârisî, Al-Ḥujja, 2/835. He explains that conjoining jā’la to fâhîq requires their equivalence in denoting past tense. Similar is said concerning the conjunction of wa-l-shamsa (accusative) to jâ’il al-laylî (genitive), which requires semantic equivalence. Therefore, it is difficult to argue for any divergence between the use of perfect verb and active participle in this instance. Cf. Sakanî, p. 140, where a tentative attempt is made but the conclusion is unclear.

¹⁸⁹ Ibn Khâlahwayh, Ḥayba al-Qirā’ât al-Sab‘ wa Mabrûbû (Beirut: Dâr al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2006), p. 105. [NB: contrary to the cover and front matter, which attribute it to a scholar two centuries subsequent, the author is Abû ‘Abd-Allâh Ahmad b. Ḥusayn Ibn Khâlahwayh (d. 370/980).] See also Fârisî, Al-Ḥujja, 2/860, part of a longer intraquranic study of this word-pair. Ibn ‘Ashûr excludes from this the scenario in which a person walks the correct path but misinforms others so they go astray [Al-Tahrîr wa-l-Tanwîr, 8/36]. However, in theological terms, such a person must be considered astray himself.

¹⁹⁰ Ibn ‘Ashûr, Al-Tahrîr wa-l-Tanwîr, 8/36.

¹⁹¹ Exegetes state that the bâ’ preposition in bi-ahwâ ihim is for sababiyya (causation). While this is undoubtedly the case for the intransitive reading, I propose that the same preposition in the transitive reading could be interpreted as instrumental (bâ’ al-istâ‘ana) – see Suyûtî, Al-‘Iqân, 3/1083.

¹⁹² Azharî, Mu‘ānî l-Qirâ’ât, p. 174.

¹⁹³ Sakanî, p. 197, citing Alûsî. See also Habash, Al-Qirâ’ât al-Mutawwîlîna, p. 229; Muhammâd, Al-Taqzîh al-Balâghî, p. 77.
In the preceding study of variants, I have looked for reductionist and pluralistic approaches in the *tawjīḥ* literature and added some suggestions to make these approaches clearer. Some of the attempts to generate multiple meanings are unconvincing (such as in 6:23), and at other times, this appears to be impossible (6:96). A clear methodology in this regard has not been elaborated, as far as I can tell, in the Gazan project. On the other hand, there are some meanings that are unavoidably separate, without necessarily contradicting: an example is “his father Āzar” and “said to his father, ‘Āzar’”. The syntactic readings (*naʿ* and *nidāʾ*, respectively) are necessarily separate, whether Āzar describes the “father” or an idol, as some exegetes claimed.

There is very little comparative study of works of *tawjīḥ*, let alone comparing these two approaches applied by the authors without an obvious methodology and consistent distinction between them. Moreover, while one may expect later works to incorporate the best insights of the early scholars, I found points in the earlier works (which may be longer, as with *Al-Ḥujja* of Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī) which are absent from later works: an example is the distinction between the senses of “raising someone in ranks” and “raising someone’s ranks” (6:83). Therefore, if the method I have outlined here – presenting reductionist and pluralist readings in parallel – is to be applied to the whole Qurʾān, it should draw from the earliest sources (including the *tafsīr* genre itself) as well as making use of later insights.

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194  Bāzmūl, *Al-Qirāʾ ʿāl Wa Atharuh ʿāl Tafsīr ʿāl-Abdīn*, 2/553. The author lists this example in his chapter concerning “readings which expand the meaning of the verse”. His other chapters include those which “explain” or “resolve problems”; stylistic variants; and readings pertaining to *ʿumām, khusūṣ* and *ijmāl*.

195  In the latter case, it may be translated, respectively, as: “to his father, (do you worship) Āzar?” or “to his father, O (worshipper of) Āzar!” – Ibn Kathīr describes the first of these and dismisses it as implausible grammatically (*Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzīm*, 3/206).

196  For further points on traditional methodologies of using *qirāʾ ʿāl* in *tafsīr*, see Shiddī, *Dawābiṭ ʿāl ʿĀthār Istīʿānat al-Muḥafṣīr bi-l-Qirāʾ ʿāl*. 
4.4 – Contextual Methods

4.4.1 – Importance and Types

In the thesis introduction and some points subsequently, I have drawn attention not only to the importance of context in performing intraquranic textual operations, but also to the fact that co-textual reading of any verse may itself be described as *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* – even if that is not the way the term has been used traditionally. By the same token, it may be said that all TQQ is contextual reading, whether a verse is studied with reference to its immediate surroundings or against the backdrop of the entire Quranic corpus. Based on the recognition that an utterance may have starkly differing – or even opposite – senses depending on its context, it was an issue that received attention of exegetes, linguists and jurists from the earliest times.

In this section, I aim to shed some light on how Islamic scholarship – particularly in the study of *tafsīr* – has conceived of the role of context, most broadly referred to in Arabic as *siyāq*. Further development of contextual studies of the Qurʾān can thus be designed with reference to existing exegetical theory and practice.

Terms related to “context” are used in three distinct ways relevant to our study of TQQ, two of which are generally accepted in modern scholarship. The first of these is textual (*naṣṣī/lughawī*) context, or *co-text*. When a Quranic expression is explained with reference to verses which precede or follow it in a passage – or a little farther afield within the same sūra – then it is an obvious example of explaining the Qurʾān through the Qurʾān. Putting aside debates over contextual flow and relevance represented by the study of *munāṣabāt*, there is prima facie plausibility to the notion that proximity increases relevance. However, appealing to passage context does not...

197 See Bint al-Shāṭi’ī’s words to this effect in Chapter 1.

198 A quote from Zarkashī in this connection (with Q 44:49 as an example) was cited in Chapter 1. For the earliest examples, see Jār-Allāh, *Naqd al-Sahāba wa-l-Tāhīn*, p. 365 ff.

199 See Raysūnī, *Al-Nās al-Qurʾānī*, p. 83 for all three, and Abdel Haleem, ‘The Role of Context’, p. 47, for the first two which he calls *siyāq al-nass* and *siyāq al-mawqif*, respectively. There is a further type of context which I am not addressing here: the intertextual phenomenon whereby the Qurʾān points to earlier scriptures or literature in circulation at the time of its revelation: see for example Reynolds, *The Qurʾān and its Biblical Subtext*.

200 The study of *munāṣabāt*, as discussed by exegetes such as Rāzī, is about establishing connections (between verses and chapters) where such are not obvious; it is about establishing contextual flow, rather than *using* it. Our discussion here starts with context which is readily discernible, then considers the subtler aspect represented by the elusive “ʿimād” in Farāhī’s theory.
necessarily follow the same procedures described previously in general TQQ: the matter is subtler and points towards the other aspects of context.

The second type of context is described by the rhetoricians as ḥāl or maqām, i.e. the situation in which the utterance is made: this may be linked to asbāb al-nuzūl, hence best rendered as “contexts/situations of revelation”.201 The specific event which accompanied a particular verse being presented before its listeners can elucidate its meaning and application – without necessarily limiting it to that exact situation. We may differentiate between the “micro-sabab” – i.e. a specific event – and the “macro-sabab” which is a social phenomenon being addressed, implicitly or explicitly, by a passage of the Qurʾān: both of these fall within this sense of the word “context”.202 There are two possible routes to acquire information about situational context: internal and external. The former, as Farāhī argued (see Chapter 3), is to infer this from the text itself; the latter relies on historical reports.

The third usage is found mainly with uṣūl al-fiqh scholars: this is for siyāq and similar to describe the speaker’s intent (gharaḍ), i.e. the purpose behind the utterance.203 More evidently, this is the purpose of studying context (textual and situational), and indeed the very purpose of tafsīr is to discern “what God intends (murād Allāh) from His words.”204 It may be confusing to use the same term for this higher-order reality alongside the forms of context which the reader can access directly (co-text) or through secondary texts (such as asbāb); the latter two can be described in terms of internal or external “cues” (qarāʾin).205 At the same time, this is the sense in which one commonly speaks of reading a verse “in context” or “out of context”, i.e. according to its original, intended purpose or otherwise. As I shall describe below, some of the jurists built textual categories explicitly upon this distinction.

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201 The literal sense of “cause” is also relevant here, as the situation is what “causes” or prompts the response in the form of revelation. Although the word “occasion” is often appropriate, it has the appearance of referring to time rather than events and realities.


204 See for example: Zurqānī, Manāhil al-ʾIrfān, 2/381.

205 For a summary of these in the context of tafsīr see Ahmad, Athar al-Siyāq, pp. 57–58.
Whether or not we accept “context” as denoting authorial intent itself, the various aspects can be illustrated as in the following figure: the summit represents the purpose or higher-order reality, and the arrow demonstrates that co-text is one of the key sources to determine situational context.

Figure 9 – Context Family in Tafsīr

The importance of context to scriptural interpretation is well known even in popular discourse around religion. The problem of taking verses out of context is most noted when it results in violent interpretations (or the imputation of such negative teachings to the scripture), as with the famous “Sword Verse”. However, one of the key forms of interaction with the Qurʼān, namely deducing rulings (istinbāṭ) and identifying evidences (istidlāl), often involves taking fragments of text in isolation from co-text and/or revelatory context. From the perspective of a jurist (and in other evidence-based disciplines), the dalīl has a function independent of the purpose of its revelation, as long as there is a genuine relationship between the text and the meanings

206 By rulings, I do not mean only juristic (fiqhī) rulings, as this term may apply to theology, language, and other fields: any judgement of what is permissible, obligatory, illicit, and so on. A valuable resource for the study of istinbāṭ is Suyūṭī’s Al-Bāḥī fī Istinbāṭ al-Tanzīl, a compilation from various disciplines, which deserves a thorough study to identify the routes of denotation employed by scholars and to sift the stronger istidlāl from the weaker: this will often be a function of context. See also Ḥusayn (Maʿṣūr al-Qābūl wa-l-Radd, pp. 710–717) for rules to balance between naẓm (here denoting the wording, not context) and siyāq. For example, “Those who do not judge according to what God has sent down” (Q 5:44) refers primarily to the Israelites (in context), but the wording encompasses anyone who fits the description.
and implications drawn from it. The various relationships are known as the denotations (dalālāt) of words, and the Ḥanafites categorised these as four, in order of strength of denotation: ‘ibārat al-naṣṣ, ishārat al-naṣṣ, dalālat al-naṣṣ and dalālat al-iqtīḍā’. The first of these refers to a text being used in its plain meaning, in line with its evident purpose (mā staq l-kalāmu lahu) – in other words, in its original context. The second type of denotation is for a ruling to be concomitant (lāzim) to the original context and purpose: this is less evident than the ‘ibāra, yet nevertheless authoritative. The third category is similar to analogy (qiyyās), but it is for a ruling to extend to unstated scenarios due to an overlap – evident from the text itself – with the original context. The last is when something must be assumed in order for the text to hold true.

The purpose of enumerating these categories – aside from their inherent value to usūl al-tafsīr, originating in usūl al-fiqh – is that they demonstrate that a ruling may be deduced from a text which is not concerned directly with conveying that ruling: in other words, out of context. That does not mean that rulings – or their evidential basis – cannot be challenged on the basis of context, as this does occur in works of exegesis. A juristic example is found in Rāzī’s Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb under Q 7:204, “When the Qur’ān is recited, listen to it attentively and be silent, so you may be shown mercy”. After enumerating the positions of the fiqh schools, he dismisses their various applications of the verse, because the surrounding verses demonstrate that this was “addressed to the unbelievers in the context of the Messenger reciting to them”. An example mentioned previously is 'Abduh’s interpretation of the verse of naskh (2:106): if, as he argues from context, it is actually about one miraculous sign (āya) replacing another, then it has no evidentiary value for the theory of abrogation.

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207 Sāliḥ, Tafsīr al-Naṣṣ, 2/384. I am not providing precise usūli definitions here but describing the relation to context in simple terms.

208 Sāliḥ, 2/391.

209 Sāliḥ, 2/420–421. Shi‘ītes describe this as maqām al-muwafaqa, and it is sometimes known by fahaa 1-khiṭāb and other names.

210 Sāliḥ, 2/443.


212 Maqāfāt al-Ghayb, 8/99.

213 Tafsīr al-Manār, 1/399–401. This verse, although the most famous proof-text for abrogation (and the first in the mushaf-order of the Qur’ān), is by no means the strongest evidence for the theory (see 3.2.2 above).
Apart from evidentiary use for rulings, there are at least two other ways in which Quranic expressions are regularly taken out of context. One is for these to be used similarly to proverbs and sayings, such as “The male is not like the female” in 3:36.\footnote{This is an example of what some writers call a Quranic maxim (qāʿida), which is akin to a proverb or mathal (and close to the concept of iqṭibās, citation in other contexts). Ibn ʿĀshūr provides an interesting argument for extracting such expressions from their original contexts, finding precedence in Prophet Muhammad’s citation of 8:24 (see Al-Tāhthir wa-l-Tanāṣīr, 1/94–95; see also Mahmūd, Introduction to the Principles of Qur'anic Exegesis, pp. 71–75). This particular expression features in the titles of various articles about gender, including one by Karen Bauer (‘The Male Is Not Like the Female’ [Q 3:36]: The Question of Gender Egalitarianism in the Qur’ān’). An anti-equality reading is elaborated in Muqbil, Qawāʿid Qurʾāniyya, pp. 57–64. For his part, Suyūṭī only mentions in Al-Iklīl (p. 171) the argument that women who menstruate may not be hired to serve [in the relevant sense] in the mosque.} Whereas this is sometimes used to emphasise gender differences or even to denigrate women, the original context presents it either as the perspective of Mary’s mother, or as divine praise of that particular female, to whom no (imagined) male could compare – according to the interpretation of Zamakhshārī.\footnote{Zamakhshārī, Al-Kashshāf, p. 169. This was adopted by Muhammad Asad in his translation.} The other is the field of mystical commentary known as al-tafsīr al-ishārī, found in early Sūfī works such as the Laṣṭʿif al-Iṣḥārī of Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1073), and later in discrete sections of Alūsī’s Rūḥ al-Maʿānī. Whereas some writers have criticised such commentaries for indulging spiritual allusions at the expense of both text and context, others believe that they may be accepted on the condition that they are not considered to reflect the actual meaning of the text, and intent of the Author.\footnote{For rejection, see Muhammad al-Fāḍīl Ibn ʿĀshūr, Al-Tafsīr wa Rāḥiluh, pp. 168–169: his points echo criticism by Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) of esoteric (Bāṭini) interpretations. For cautious acceptance, see Dhahahī, Al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufassirūn, 2/328–331.}

Unlike various sets of methods described previously, there is no distinct genre in Islamic scholarship dedicated to the study of context per se. Rules and methods to form part of a developed intraquranic hermeneutics can be derived from two main sources: the practice of the exegetes (classical and modern), and theories from linguistics (Arabic and comparative). Here I give more attention to the former, beginning with more traditional scholars before the advocates of context, coherence and structure.\footnote{An example of the latter approach is El-Awa, Textual Relations in the Qurʾān: Relevance, Coherence and Structure (see pp. 7–8); this work draws particularly upon Western theories of verbal communication.}
4.4.2 – Context in Traditional Exegesis

By “traditional”, I mean works by exegetes who did not take context as fundamental to their approach. Whereas Mir has described the bulk of exegesis prior to Farāhī (see below) as “atomistic”, the role of context in their deliberations is undoubtedly a vast area of enquiry. What concerns us at this juncture is co-text, i.e. the words and sentences which surround an expression under examination. I shall suffice here by outlining some principles of contextual study, drawn from one early and one late exegete, namely Ṭabarī (d. 923 CE) and Ibn ‘Āshūr (d. 1973). A contemporary researcher, ‘Abd al-Ḥakīm al-Qāsim, has drawn the following axioms from Ṭabarī’s Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, some verbatim and others paraphrased (I have added some brief comments).

a. Assume that context is connected unless there is evidence to the contrary. Discontinuities include, for example, shifts in speakers, referents or addressees, and may be deduced from internal or external cues. Similarly: The interpretation which [most] results in congruence is to be preferred.

b. The best explanation of a verse is one which accords with the sūra context. This is another factor in preferring opinions (tarjīḥ), and predates modern focus upon sūra unity.

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218 Mir acknowledges this in ‘Continuity, Context, and Coherence,’ p. 17. Surprisingly, Muṭayr remarks that Ṭabarī would sometimes appeal to context at the expense of more important considerations (Tafsīr al-Qurān bi-l-Qurān, p. 174).

219 Dalālat al-Siyāq al-Qurānī, p. 142 ff. From his list of nine (which included other forms of context), I have quoted five in total.

220 Dalālat al-Siyāq, p. 183 ff. The internal cues mentioned are: language, syntax, frequent usage. External: revelatory context, Prophetic hadīth, statements of Companions, consensus.

221 Dalālat al-Siyāq, p. 262.

222 Dalālat al-Siyāq, p. 215 ff. and cf. Mir, ‘The Sura as a Unity: A Twentieth Century Development in Qur’ān Exegesis’ in Hawting and Shareef (eds.), Approaches to the Qur’ān. An example is Sūrat al-An’ām, as mentioned previously (2.8): Ṭabarī refers back to the phrase in Q 6:1 at various points in his tafsīr, indicating that he considers shirk, or “those who equate others with their Lord” a recurring theme in the sūra.
c. Studying the beginning of a verse assists in understanding the relevance of its ending, such as the divine names which appear in various formulations. The reverse may also be true.\(^{223}\)

d. Any interpretation which implies meaningless repetition is to be rejected. As such, the relevance of each iteration (e.g. the motifs in Q 55 and Q 77) must be established. This applies also to lexical items when juxtaposed, e.g. *fuqaraʾ* and *masākīn* cannot be synonyms in Q 9:60.\(^{224}\)

As a twentieth-century reformist scholar with an intimate, analytical engagement with the exegetical tradition, Ibn ʿĀshūr’s extensive use of context is particularly worthy of study.\(^{225}\) In contrast to Farāhī’s goal to discover the single correct interpretation of each Quranic verse by placing it in its context, Ibn ʿĀshūr affirms the polyvalency of the text: multiple linguistic possibilities are to be accepted as long as they do not violate context. While critical of opinions deemed to violate context or fragment the text,\(^{226}\) Ibn ʿĀshūr is also sensitive to the subtleties of semantic flow, recognising the frequent use in the Qurʾān of interruptions or interjections (*iʿtirād*) to rhetorical ends. In such cases, he appeals to broader context, such as other textual connections and the argument being made throughout the passage. Therefore, it can be seen that two contexts (even two co-texts) are in competition, or that generic *siyāq* (in the sense of continuity) is competing with broader coherence (*naẓm*).\(^{227}\)

An example of this is Q 27:88, which Abdel Haleem translates: “You will see the mountains (*tarā l-jibāl*) and think they are firmly fixed, but they will float away like clouds (*tamurru marra l-sahāb*): this is the handiwork of God who has perfected all things. He is fully aware of what you do”. Like in most translations, the “seeing” and “moving/floating” are both rendered in the future tense, which is a well-known

\(^{223}\) *Dalālat al-Siyāq*, pp. 229–240.

\(^{224}\) *Dalālat al-Siyāq*, pp. 248, 254. This denial of synonymy depends on the principle “*Al-ʿaff yaqtaḍi al-mughāyara*”, i.e. conjunction only makes sense between distinct concepts. However, there is another view concerning 9:60 that the conjunction is for emphasis (see Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Tahrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 10/235). See also 4.3.1 above.

\(^{225}\) See Ahmād, *Athar al-Siyāq*, which is a beneficial study of Ibn ʿĀshūr. However, the section on axioms for weighing and critiquing opinions is general and not limited to the contextual aspect.

\(^{226}\) See examples in Ahmād, pp. 534, 539.

\(^{227}\) See Muḥārī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*, pp. 194, 199, 209 for examples of competing contexts (*siyāq* or *qarāʾīn*).
usage of Arabic imperfect verbs; moreover, this future reading is well-supported by contextual flow, since the preceding verse begins: “On the Day the Trumpet sounds”, and the following verse speaks of “the terrors of that Day”. However, Ibn ʿĀshūr argues that 27:88 describes a present reality, namely the movement of the mountains as the earth rotates on its axis: knowledge unknown to the Arabs, and not confirmed scientifically until centuries later. Noting that this results in discontinuity, he proposes a different scheme of connection: this verse follows logically from 27:86, which points to the alternating phenomena of night and day. Upon this account, it is 27:87 which constitutes į’tirād, but that is justified because the preceding verse contains a subtle allusion to life after death. He further advances positive contextual arguments for this reading:

- The alternation of night and day results from the earth’s rotation.
- Specifying the mountains is appropriate due to their position relative to the earth, and to the sun for an observer.
- The comparison to the motion of clouds is because the latter also move at a pace that is not immediately apparent. The author therefore distinguishes the verbal noun marr from the word sayr which features in 18:47, which many exegetes cite as a parallel, treating both terms as synonymous.

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228 There is a story behind my study of this verse and its context. In 2015, I attended a seminar by an Arabic scholar who argued that the exegetes and translators (excluding Richard Bell) were completely mistaken in adopting the future tense. He ‘excused’ them for being unaware of the scientific fact of the rotation of the earth. When I raised the point about context with him, he seemed not to have considered it. Upon investigation, I came across this thorough argument from Ibn ʿĀshūr. Several recent translators have adopted this reading, including Ali Quli Qara’i, Muḥammad Ghālī and Mustafa Khattab.

229 Ibn ʿĀshūr, Al-Tahrīr wa-l-Tanwīr, 20/47–51.

230 Ibn ʿĀshūr makes occasional arguments for “scientific miracles” in the Qurʾān: see his tenth introduction (Al-Tahrīr wa-l-Tanwīr, 1/127). In the present verse, he notes that the address has shifted to the Prophet directly (“You see” in the singular), indicating that elite knowledge is being imparted, like that given to Abraham (ibid, 20/49).

231 Al-Tahrīr wa-l-Tanwīr, 20/48.

232 Al-Tahrīr wa-l-Tanwīr, 20/49; these two points were not made entirely clear and explicit.

233 Al-Tahrīr wa-l-Tanwīr, 20/50.
The reference to “God’s handiwork (ṣun’ Allāh)” etc. is more appropriate to describe a perfected system than its eventual unravelling.234

4.4.3 – The Farāhian School

The preceding example is illustrative of the subtleties involved in appeal to various types and levels of context. While it is true that many exegetes engaged such considerations (explicitly or implicitly), the famous proponents and practitioners of naẓm-based exegesis are Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī and his student Aḥsan Islāḥī, author of Tadabbur-i-Qur’ān. In Chapter 2, I focused on their use of cross-references for the sake of comparison with other exegetes. However, this aspect of intraquranic tafsīr is secondary to their focus upon context and coherence. Although excellent studies of their work continue to be published, much of this focuses upon their observations concerning the structure of sūras and the architecture of the Qur’ān.235

While it is true that structure impacts – to one extent or another – upon passage context and the meanings of verses, much of the current discourse on the topic stems from an interest in its compositional history and literary features.236 Another aspect lacking until now is a thorough comparison of the reasoning and conclusions of this school alongside other exegetes (beyond Rāzī and Biqāʾī, who have been identified as proponents of a less sophisticated naẓm approach).237

234 Al-Tahīr wa-l-Tanā‘īr, 20/51. I have suggested that Ibn ‘Āshūr has applied a naẓm-based approach to this passage. In contrast, Farāhī (Ta’līqī, 2/30) and Islāḥī (Tadabbur, 5/637) adopted the standard future interpretation which accords with contextual flow.

235 An example is Farrin, who titled his work Structure and Qur’anic Interpretation but gave little or no treatment of interpretation. More broadly, structural studies of the Qur’ān represent a burgeoning field, with Angelika Neuwirth and Neal Robinson being influential figures. The approach of Michel Cuypers (see The Composition of the Qur’ān, pp. 10–12) proceeds from a theory that Semitic rhetoric calls for forms of organisation which include cyclical patterns. The recent publication Divine Speech by Khan and Randhawa builds on these various ideas, and its co-author Nouman Ali Khan, utilises them in his popular lectures for two main purposes: to inspire people concerning the “perfection” of the scripture, and to highlight meanings which would otherwise remain unnoticed. It is the latter purpose which is most pertinent to our discussion of usūl al-tafsīr.

236 See discussion and critiques of the various approaches in Sinai’s review essay ‘Going Round in Circles’; Rippin, ‘Contemporary Scholarly Understandings’; and Friedman, ‘Interrogating Structural Interpretation’.

237 See for example: Mir, Coherence, pp. 17–18; El-Awa, Textual Relations, pp. 16–17; and Khan, Understanding the Qurʾān, pp. 137–184. The latter is a thematic comparison between Biqāʾī and Islāḥī, largely to the favour of the latter. The author’s dismissive characterisations of major tafsīr works (ibid, v–viii) may have been influenced by Farāhī’s terse summaries of the approaches of Tabari, Ibn Kathīr, Zamakhshārī and Rāzī (see marginal note in Rasā’l al-Imām al-Farāḥī, p. 216).
The term *naẓm*, which has frequently been translated as “coherence”\(^{238}\), may encompass several levels or forms of context. Mustansir Mir uses it for three different types in his paper on ‘Continuity, Context, and Coherence’:

“By **continuity** I mean linkage between some or all the verses of a *sūrah*; by **context** I mean a framework of meaning which is typically created by a set of verses seen to form a cluster and which helps to determine the meaning of one or more verses occurring inside or in the vicinity of that cluster; and by **coherence** I mean overall, or organic, unity or coherence in a *sūrah*.\(^{239}\)

It is therefore worthwhile to summarise these levels of text relations (and various terms used to describe them) before making some final observations on the Farāhian school and its implications for contextual methods for interpreting the Qurʾān.

1. Relationship between meaning and words in a single expression (known in Arabic rhetoric as *naẓm*).\(^{240}\)
2. Links between sequential verses or passages, classically known as *munāsaba* (Abdul-Raof: consonance. Mir: continuity. Khan and Randhawa: linear coherence).\(^{241}\)
3. Broader textual relations inside passages (Mir: context).
4. Thematic unity to the level of the *sūra*. (Farāhī: *niẓām*. Iṣlāḥī: *naẓm*. Mir: coherence. Khan and Randhawa: holistic coherence).\(^{242}\)
5. Intra- and inter-*sūra* structural observations. (Part of Farāhian theory. Harvey: *niẓām*).\(^{243}\)
6. Intraquranic cross-references (classically *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*).\(^{244}\)

\(^{238}\) Notably by Mustansir Mir in *Coherence in the Qurʾān*. However, Salwa El-Awa argues that the term coherence is closer to the concept of *munāsaba*, which is not necessarily linear and sequential as Mir infers from his reading of Rāzī (see El-Awa, pp. 15 and 165). She further explains that in linguistic theory, “coherence” pertains to relations between linguistic units, whereas “relevance” (her preferred approach) extends also to the information being communicated (ibid, p. 26).


\(^{241}\) Abdul-Raof, *Consonance in the Qurʾān*; Khan and Randhawa, *Divine Speech*, p. 151.

\(^{242}\) Khan and Randhawa, p. 152.

\(^{243}\) See Harvey, *The Qurʾān and the Just Society*, pp. 50–52 for a good overview of these concerns and his distinction between *naẓm* and *niẓām*.

\(^{244}\) See El-Awa, *Textual Relations*, pp. 41–42. The highly influential sentence on the subject by Ibn Taymiyya, on which I have commented several times in this thesis, describes the relation between one
I have previously discussed Farāhī’s theoretical discussions in *Al-Takmil fi Uṣūl al-Ta’wil* (see Chapter 1), *Dalā‘īl al-Nizām* (see Chapter 3) and other sources including his unfinished notes. For him, the organisation and flow of the text is an aid to eliminating possibilities and identifying the single correct interpretation.245 If that is so, then it is necessary for the principles and processes to be clarified fully; his own writings, which were incomplete at the end of his life and are currently being collected and published, are nevertheless a rich source for further development in this regard.246 His explanation of the importance of context is similar to comments of earlier scholars, the key difference being his emphasis on the thematic “pillar” of the sūra or smaller passage:

“Where there are multiple possibilities, we opt for the best and most suited to the structure (nizām) and central theme (‘amād).”247

“When there are various meanings and aspects (wujūh, i’tibār) [for an expression], we opt for that most suited to the context (maqām) and the theme of the passage (‘amād al-kalām).”248

Farāhī acknowledges that deducing the nazm and the unifying ‘amād is extremely difficult249 – this is a point which requires further investigation if this methodology is intended to settle exegetical differences. The very fact of its difficulty presents a challenge to the assumption of clear Quranic discourse, which is one of the premises of his approach with its minimal use of “external” sources. Nevertheless, clarity is achieved or restored once the unifying theme is identified – as Farāhī says, it illuminates the sūra “like the emergence of dawn”250

This process is, therefore, inferential then deductive, going from juz ‘ī (the meanings of individual verses) to kullī (theory concerning the entire edifice) and back

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246 See for example *Al-Takmil*, p. 266, where he gives an example of context clarifying mujānal expressions in a passage.
247 Added by the editor from Farāhī’s notes to Rasā‘îl, p. 225.
248 *Al-Takmil* in Rasā‘îl, p. 267.
250 *Dalā‘îl* in Rasā‘îl, p. 89.
to juz’ī again. It is the final stage which is the test of the efficacy and value of nazm theory, and this is where a comparative study of the conclusions of this school and the broader corpus of tafsīr would be instructive. In Chapter 2, I cited the example of Farāḥī reading the injunctions in Q 6:145 and 6:151-153 as a reference to Abrahamic shari‘a, rather than laws revealed upon Muḥammad. This accords with the putative ‘amūd of al-An‘ām, which Iṣlāḥī articulates as “inviting Quraysh” to “Islam as the religion of Abraham”. At the very least, this method can be used to select, from multiple linguistic possibilities, the interpretation most appropriate to the sūra and its overall purpose.

Apart from the unifying theme, the other novel feature of nazm theory concerns the structure and arrangement of verses. For the most part, these accounts do result in novel interpretations of individual verses; rather, they often lead to greater appreciation of the appropriateness of their placement, and, more importantly, their significance. Mir gives three examples of verses which Watt considered “isolated” from their contexts, and the explanations given by Iṣlāḥī. The first of these is the verse of qiṣāṣ, or just retribution for murder (2:178). Iṣlāḥī looks at the preceding verses (from 2:163) as a “Law” section which emphasises, first, the monotheistic faith, then the inextricable link between faith and ethical behaviour in society (2:177); then the following two verse-pairs outline rules which ensure respect for human life and property, respectively.

251 According to Iṣlāḥī, Pondering, 1/33–35, coherence points to emergent properties of the sūra as a message of guidance, hence making it more than the sum of its parts. The opposite of emergence and holism is reductionism, but I have used the latter word in a different sense above.

252 Farāḥī, Ta‘līqāt, 1/201, 204.

253 Mir, Coherence, p. 86.

254 Another example from al-An‘ām is Iṣlāḥī’s interpretation of Abraham’s dialogue (see Mir, p. 112), which accords with most of the Group (see 2.3.2 above).


256 Pondering Over the Qur’ān Vol. 1, p. 443 ff; see also Khan and Randhawa, Divine Speech, pp. 201–204. In my study of 2:178, I found that Ibn Taymiyya advanced a novel interpretation (with partial precedence in narrations mentioned, not adopted, by Tabari) which no exegete after him adopted or cited, as far as I could ascertain (which raises the question of his influence as a mufassir). He understood the verse to be an address to previously warring tribes to tally their existing losses and settle the excess on either side with blood money, to stem further bloodshed (see Hindī, Ikhtiyārāt Ibn Taymiyya, 2/321–335). Taken in this light, the position of the verse is perhaps even more profound, as it opens a series of legal precepts for the new umma by ensuring that past scores are settled.
Some naẓm enthusiasts of the present day seem convinced that this methodology is the future of Quranic hermeneutics and the route to Muslim renaissance. In my view, its potential is great, but much work remains to be done to clarify the processes involved. I also question the portrayal of coherence-based exegesis, as sometimes with *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* generally, as an objective method which will lead to unified results. The chapters of this thesis may serve to place Farāhī’s school in context and identify issues for further exploration in that method, and in intraquranic hermeneutics as a whole.

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257 See Khan, *Understanding the Qurʾān*, x.

258 As stated earlier, this enrichment may draw from up-to-date linguistic and hermeneutical theories.
Conclusion

Through my survey of Islamic hermeneutical works of various genres, I found the claimed underdevelopment of *ushūl al-tafsīr* to hold true for the specific area of inqaṭuranaic exegesis. While it is the case that such methods were practised in *tafsīr* works such Muqāṭil’s and Ṭabarī’s, and sometimes acknowledged explicitly, as in Zamakhsharī’s and Rāzi’s, there was no theoretical account – as far as I could trace – of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* in early treatises and exegetical introductions until the famous sentence of Ibn Taymiyya concerning the “best method”. I noted how this claim was adopted in subsequent works – with notable exceptions, such as *Al-Fawz al-Kabīr* by Dihlawī – and continues to be reproduced uncritically in modern works.

At various points, I discussed the problems inherent in that account, beyond the fact that it received little elaboration or implementation over the centuries and claims of “consensus” on the matter are overstated. I have argued that TQQ cannot be reduced to one method which is “best” as an absolute, but that various factors affect its accuracy as well as its relationship with other sources and approaches – hence it cannot be exhausted “first” as Ibn Taymiyya implied. Likewise, the classification of TQQ as “*maʾthūr*” (transmitted) has tended to obscure the role of the exegete’s *ijtihād* and *raʾy*, which may explain the lack of attention to probing TQQ theory and methods until recently. Nevertheless, important materials have long been available – for example in Suyūṭī’s *Al-Itqān fī Ulūm al-Qurʾān* – but in need of critical analysis, development and integration.

The twentieth century saw not only the compilation of TQQ works such as Shinqīṭī’s *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, but the emergence of modern approaches as seen in the Farāḥian structural coherence school and the literary school emerging from Egypt. In order to assess the actual practice of exegetes from the earliest time and the modern era, I examined as many TQQ-primary *tafsīr* works as were available to me, along with various secondary works for my comparative case study of Sūrat al-Anʿām. This provided a greater understanding of the general trends in this genre as well as individual features of the exegeses and their relative value to the researcher and *mufassir*. The roles of parallels, near-parallels and evidentiary citations have been
clearly delineated, and the quantitative approach of the citations table (see Appendix) can be extended or developed for future projects.

Key findings from the case study include the extent of divergence between opinions of TQQ exegetes, which underscores the subjectivity involved. The works surveyed tended not to place much emphasis on naskh or qirāʾāt, a point which reflects some of the individual attitudes of those exegetes, or implications of intraquranic study more broadly. They did not display a heavy reliance on hadīth literature, even those which represent Prophetic TQQ; some adopted the meaning without citing the report. Despite some overlap and signs of lineage between the exegetes, for the most part they operated independently. Future concordances should include these sources which contain some citations missed by the likes of Paret; more can be found in general tafsīr works, and all should be classified according to relevance.

It seems that commentaries based on Quranic cross-references have not presented many conclusions not already found in general tafsīr works – though more comparison is needed. I propose that some, such as Adwāʾ al-Bayān – and similarly Al-Durr al-Manthūr for narrated exegesis – be considered as thematic collections of exegesis (i.e. resources for the exegete). Further studies of the various approaches are needed, and some – such as the contemporaries ʿIṣlāḥī and Bint al-Shāṭi’ – have yet to be studied comparatively, to my knowledge. As for ‘Quranists’, their contributions to date are limited and unsophisticated, though the convictions of the authors studied led them to some novel conclusions.

Through the study of exegetes, I gathered some insights into al-Anʿām itself, such as the prominence of the issue of shirk and some which were less obvious at first, e.g. the tension between freewill and predestination. An improvement on my case study approach could give greater attention to the chronological aspect of citations and consider whether the verses could have had the same explanatory effect at the time of revelation. Another aspect which requires more expansive study is the use of context by exegetes in general. My comparative approach allows the methods to come more clearly into focus.

In terms of theoretical underpinnings of the TQQ endeavour, I summarised these in the form of four principles: Unity, Consistency, Interpretability and Authority. Some of these are intuitive and general; hence, rather than an imposed
doctrine, TQQ can be seen as an inherent need and logical approach for a corpus containing unclear and clarifying passages. I identified some inherent tensions between various principles and theories: between scriptural unity (synchronicity) and contextual revelation (diachronicity); between consistency and abrogation; between interpretability and equivocality (tashābūh); and between Quranic authority and “neediness” for clarification through the Sunna or other external sources. In terms of exegetical methodology, there is a further tension between reductionist and pluralistic readings of Quranic passages.

I outlined historical and potential approaches to these tensions, such as a minimalist approach to asbāb and naskh. Whereas abrogation has often been exaggerated, the explanations offered concerning specific passages in the Qurʾān, by those who opposed the idea altogether, are not all convincing. In the end, naskh can be categorised as a form of TQQ (based on chronology), just as the categories of muḥkam/mutashābih are the basis of a form of TQQ (based on relative clarity). Another important conclusion in Chapter 3 was that, while the commonly-cited examples of Prophetic TQQ provide a mandate to interpret the Qurʾān contextually and intratextually, they cannot inform methodology and may not be true examples of TQQ at all.

Regarding methodology, I drew attention to a range of genres (including ḫūṣ, al-fiqh, lexicography, thematic/comparative studies, and qirāʿāt literature) in which relevant materials can be found and extracted, beyond the works of tafsīr and ḫūṣ al-tafsīr already described. I considered how these various sources can be approached and what further work is needed to improve and integrate these areas of study. Whereas ḫūṣ al-fiqh has historically been the primary domain for Islamic hermeneutical activity (and overlap with theology, philosophy and linguistics), a generalised approach would require sensitivity to different genres within the Qurʾān. Therefore, while ḫūṣ al-fiqh and ḫūṣ al-tafsīr overlap where legally significant verses of the Qurʾān are concerned (including the topics of dalālāt, takhshīs/taqyīd and naskh), each has a domain of interest distinct from the other. An increased incorporation of ḫūṣlī debates may result in further diversity in Quranic exegesis and a clearer delineation between hermeneutical “schools”.
Both thematic exegesis and coherence-based exegesis display potential to advance and refine our understanding of the Qurʾān. In the case of the former, I delineated the survey approach (which purports to be objective) and “readings” of the Qurʾān which are inherently goal-oriented (if not called biased). All these approaches require further methodological grounding, and the comprehensive study in this thesis of intraquranic methods and their underlying theories can be of service in this regard, including to evaluate new developments in Quranic hermeneutics, whether in East or West.

For next steps in tafsīr and usūl al-tafsīr studies, I propose that further focus be directed to the following areas (some of which were covered to an extent in this study): interpretation on the basis of language; use of narrations from the Prophet and early authorities; use of qirāʾāt; contextual and structural study; methods in Quranic stories; understanding references to earlier scriptures and religions (and use of isrāʿīliyyāt); and usūl for general deduction (instinbāt) and reflection (tadabbur) along with the existent body of legal hermeneutics. Much of this requires a two-stage process: gathering and clarifying the traditional approaches, and incorporating the most pertinent concepts and techniques from the modern humanities.
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**Other Languages**


### Appendix

**Qur’an Citations in al-An’ām Commentaries**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Parallels</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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</table>
| 1     | al-ʾnūr (singular) | **yaʿdilūna** | 153, 16:48  
2:165, 26:98  
(150, 27:60) /  
23:74 (4:135) |         |
| 2     | the two uses of ajāl |         | 2:28, 63:11 /  
7:187, 31:34,  
79:42-44 / **60**  
(39:42, 40:67) /  
| 3     | heavens and earth |         | **43:84** / **25:6** /  
67:16-17, 20:5 /  
7:7, 57:4, 58:7 | Various readings of syntax |
| 4     |         | (10, 12:105,  
15:81, 26:5,  
36:46, 54:2) |         |         |
| 5     |         | 13:17, 42:24,  
61:8-9 /  
37:176-177 | **19**, **66**, **104-106**, **17:105** |         |
| 6     | destruction of stronger communities |         | 7:95, 34:45  
(19:74, 30:9,  
35:44,  
40:21/82, 43:8,  
46:26, 50:36)  
(5:54, 7:169,  
23:31/42,  
28:45) | **133** was not noted. |
| 7     |         | 25, **111**, 7:132,  
10:96-97/101,  
15:14-15,  
52:44 | **4:153**, **17:93** |         |
| 8     | demands for angel | **qudiyā l-amr** | 17:94, 64:6  
**15:8**, **25:22** | **25:7** / **17:92**,  
38:67-70,  
41:13, 81:19-21 |
| 9     |         | 50, 3:164,  
16:43 **17:95**,  
36:30 | **43:60** |         |
<p>| 10    |         |         | <strong>29:40</strong> etc. |         |</p>
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<td>12</td>
<td>question &amp; response mercy la-yajma’annakum disbelief/loss</td>
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<td>13:16</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Muqātil cites reading of Ubayy/Ibn Maš‘ūd</td>
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<td>Droge suggests 22:37 relevant; hence 136 too. Dakake links to argument in 5:75.</td>
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<td>Final phrase obviously similar to Abraham’s statement (78 – noted by Paret, Droge, Dakake).</td>
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¹ See Hamza and Rizvi (eds.), *An Anthology of Qur’anic Commentaries*, p. 309.
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<td>Amritsari’s citation pertains to wilāya (authority). The other canonical reading walāya was deemed equivalent by some – see Ālūsī 15/360.</td>
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<td>Amritsarī cites this as a fundamental concept</td>
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| 141 | isrāf | 147, 68:17-33, 25:67, 17:26-27 / 7:31 | Shinqīṭī states Sunna is needed to “complete” the ruling; some consider it abrogated.
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<td>“Cutting cattle’s ears” in 4:119 is related to their dedication to idols, the theme here in al-An`ām.³</td>
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<td>Tension between this statement and the existence of other prohibitions (e.g. 5:90)</td>
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<td>16:35, 43:20, 107, 149, 39:7, 41:15, 46:4</td>
<td>Shinqūṭī considers this a prediction; later verses expressed fulfilment</td>
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<td>17:35, 4:6, 2:220, 83:1-6</td>
<td>See 4.2.1 for Ibn `Āshūr’s caution re: superficial similarities</td>
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³ Ibn `Āshūr, Al-Tahrīr wa-l-Tanwīr, 5/205.
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Ṭabātabā’ī argues “my path” is most evidently in voice of the Prophet. 12:108 supports this. Ibn Kathīr notes other juxtapositions of Qur’ān and Torah. Farāhī uses its mention here to argue that the previous laws were Abrahamic.
| 160 | ten times reward | 27:89 (expanded here) | 2:261, 4:40 (39:10) | These suggest rewards for the elite beyond the multiple of ten |
| 161 | qayyiman (reading) | 9:36, 98:5 | 159 |
| 163 | other than Allah | 16:17 | 52:21, 74:39 |
| 165 | khalā'if | 17:21, 43:32 | 133, 2:30, 7:129, 10:14/73, 27:62, 43:60 |
|  | testing | | 158 / 156, 159, 5:48 |