Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi'l-Qurʾān (Intra-Qur'anic Exegesis)

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The term *tafsīr al-qurʾān bi'l-qurʾān* (hereafter, "TQQ") is sometimes used to refer to a **principle** of Qur'anic hermeneutics; at other times, it is characterized as a **method** or approach; and we may also describe a **genre** of works to which the label applies directly or indirectly. The term itself translates to "exegesis of the Qur'an through the Qur'an": that is, to interpret a particular verse by referring to its surrounding verses or others in the whole scripture. Despite the ubiquity of this principle and approach since the earliest periods, and the later emergence of works dedicated to this form of exegesis, there has been little theorization about the place of TQQ among hermeneutical methods, or elaboration on how it is performed. In this chapter, classical and modern works of *tafsīr* and its principles (*uṣūl*) are presented under three headings to elucidate the current state of the field.

1. TQQ as a Principle

The commonsensical merit of reading the Qur'an holistically and intratextually has long been acknowledged in Islamic hermeneutical works, and came to be elevated in many to the prime position among exegetical principles. Statements in this regard are attributed to some of the Prophet's companions and the subsequent generation,[1] and scattered remarks are found in works of exegesis.[2] The introduction to the exegesis of Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. 150/767) outlines features of the Qur'an relevant to TQQ:

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[1] A saying is attributed to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) to the effect that: "Its one part speaks for another (*yanṭiqu baʿḍuhu bi-baʿḍ*) and one part testifies (*yashhadu*) to another." See Louis Medoff, "Ijtihad and Renewal in Qur'anic Hermeneutics: An Analysis of Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāʾī's *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*" (PhD diss., UC Berkeley, 2007), 24. With reference to the word *mutashābih* in Q 39:23, Saʿīd ibn Jubayr (d. 95/714) is quoted as saying: "Its parts resemble, confirm (*yuṣaddiqu*) and point (*yadullu*) to each other." Muḥammad b. Jarīr aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Taʾwīl Āy al-Qurʾān*, ed. Aḥmad al-Bakrī et al. (10 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 2012), 9:7065.

[2] See Muḥsin al-Muṭayrī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi'l-Qurʾān: Taʾṣīl wa Taqwīm* (Riyadh: Dār al-Tadmuriyya, 2011), 53–55, for quotes from az-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1143), ar-Rāzī (d. 604/1210), and later exegetes. However, it is noteworthy that the principle is not mentioned directly in the exegetical introductions of aṭ-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1075), al-Ḥakīm al-Jishumī (d. 494/1101), ar-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 502/1108), Ibn ʿAṭiyya (d. 541/1146) or al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273); nor in the following hermeneutical works: al-Muḥāsibī's (d. 243/857)

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In the Qur'an there is… equivocal (*mutashābih*) and univocal (*muḥkam*); explicated (*mufassar*) and vague (*mubham*); implicit (*iḍmār*) and explicit (*tamām*); otiose (*ṣilāt*) parts of speech; abrogating (*nāsikh*) and abrogated (*mansūkh*); that which is brought forward (*taqdīm*) or delayed (*taʾkhīr*); polysemes (*ashbāh*) with many aspects of meaning (*wujūh*); and a response [to a question etc., found] in another *sūra*.[3]

Later, the Andalusian Ibn Juzayy al-Kalbī (d. 741/1357) describes, in his introductory chapters to his exegesis, the factors due to which some opinions are preferred over others (*tarjīḥ*).[4] Though he does not state that the list is ordered by priority, the first item is "to explain parts of the Qur'an 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."[5]

However, it was the brief account of this principle by Ibn Juzayy's Syrian contemporary, Ismāʿīl Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), that would have the most influence on subsequent works. While it has generally been assumed that the introduction to his exegesis was reproduced verbatim from a treatise by his teacher Taqī ad-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), which was later published as *Muqaddima fī Uṣūl at-Tafsīr*,[6] new evidence has come to light that it was Ibn Kathīr's own work which was mistakenly appended (as Chapters 5 and 6) to Ibn Taymiyya's.[7] The relevant passage is as follows:

Fahm al-Qurʾān, Ibn al-Jawzī's (d. 597/1201) *Funūn al-Afnān*, and aṭ-Ṭūfī's (d. 716/1316) *al-Iksīr fī Qawāʿid ʿIlm at-Tafsīr*.

[3] Muqātil ibn Sulaymān al-Balkhī, *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd (3 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2003), 1:22. Cf. Isaiah Goldfeld's reading of this passage in "The Development of Theory on Qurʾānic Exegesis in Islamic Scholarship," *Studia Islamica* 67 (1988), 23–26. He compares the notion of *jawāb fī sūra ukhrā* ("continuation in different chapter") with Rabbi Eliʾezer's "complementation of Tora verse by other Biblical verse." I suggest the concept of *jawāb* is more evocative of the Qur'anic 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.

[4] Some recent works have focused on these processes, adding another sub-genre to *uṣūl at-tafsīr*. One such study has shown that ar-Rāzī used the TQQ principle extensively when adjudicating between exegetical opinions ʿAbd-Allāh al-Rūmī, *Dirāsāt fī Qawāʿid at-Tarjīḥ* (2 vols. Riyadh: Dār at-Tadmuriyya, 2010), 314–370.

[5] Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Juzayy, *at-Tashīl li-ʿUlūm at-Tanzīl*, ed. ʿAlī aṣ-Ṣāliḥī (4 vols. Medina: Dār Ṭayba al-Khaḍrāʾ, 2018), 1:85.

[6] On this work, see Walid Saleh, "Ibn Taymiyya and the Rise of Radical Hermeneutics: An Analysis of *An Introduction to the Foundations of Qur'anic Exegesis*" in *Ibn Taymiyya and his Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). The treatise's title was provided by its eventual publisher, Jamīl ash-Shaṭṭī, in 1936. The impact of this treatise on twentieth century works has been documented in Muḥammad Sulaymān et al., eds., *Uṣūl at-Tafsīr fī al-Muʾallafāt* (Riyadh: Markaz Tafsīr, 2015), 121–128.

[7] See the recent edition of *Muqaddima fī Uṣūl at-Tafsīr* edited by Sāmī ibn Muḥammad ibn Jād-Allāh (Riyadh: Dār al-Muḥaddith, 2022), in which the editor provides stylistic evidence for the attribution of these two chapters to Ibn Kathīr, as well as crucial manuscript and publication history. Jād-Allāh concludes that the original editors used one old manuscript in which part of Ch. 4 was missing, so they sourced another copy which contained the rest plus two more chapters. They assumed this was all by Ibn Taymiyya, but it was actually a compilation by Ibn ʿUrwa al-Ḥanbalī (d. 837/1433) called *Mukhtaṣar al-Kawākib ad-Darārī*, which had combined his treatise with

> If one should ask concerning the best methods (*aḥsan ṭuruq*) of exegesis, then the answer is that the most correct (*aṣaḥḥ*) method is for the Qur'an to be explained using the Qur'an; 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 Qur'an…"[8]

Ibn Kathīr is thus explicit in granting TQQ prime position among methods of *tafsīr*. The subsequent influence of this schema must be tied to its reproduction in two major compendia of Qur'anic sciences. First, Badr ad-Dīn az-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392) included it in Chapter 41 of *al-Burhān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* as an enquiry concerning the "best methods of exegesis", with a vague attribution ("*qīla*").[9] Later, Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) adopted materials from the aforementioned chapter of the *Burhān* along with its introduction and distributed those discussions into Chapters 77–79 of *al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*.[10] There is a lengthy quotation from Ibn Taymiyya's *Muqaddima* in Chapter 78 concerning "Prerequisites and Proper Conduct of the Exegete". However, the very opening of this chapter attributes Ibn Kathīr's brief account of TQQ opaquely to "the *ʿulamāʾ*", implying a broad acceptance of this hermeneutical hierarchy. Furthermore, as-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 Qur'an."[11]

The dominance of this paradigm was bolstered by two Egyptian Azharites in the twentieth century.[12] Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm az-Zurqānī (d. 1948) noted in his *Manāhil al-ʿIrfān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* that TQQ is based on pondering (*tadabbur*) upon the Qur'an, yet he also classed it among forms of *at-tafsīr bi'l-maʾthūr* (transmission-based exegesis); according

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Ibn Kathīr's, both without attribution. This theory helps explain some anomalies noted by scholars, such as why this passage, which seems like a logical starting point, appears instead in Chapter 5 of the published *Muqaddima*.

[8] Ismāʿīl Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm* (7 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Āthār, 2009), 1:26; see also in Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, 188.

[9] Muḥammad az-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAṭāʾ (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2006), 331–362. It is interesting to compare this section with his preceding account of the four main sources (*maʾākhidh*) available to the exegete, which begins with Prophetic *ḥadīth*s, followed by statements of Companions, recourse to language, then the exertion of scholarly opinion (335–339). TQQ is conspicuously absent from this account, which may lead us to question az-Zarkashī's own commitment to the idea. The same observation is made by Mustafa Öztürk, "Kur'an'ın Kur'an'la Tefsiri: Bir Mahiyet Soruşturması," *Çukurova Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 8:2 (2008), 4.

[10] See Ḥāzim Saʿīd Ḥaydar, *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān bayna al-Burhān wa'l-Itqān* (Medina: Dār az-Zamān, 1999): 293.

[11] ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān ibn Abū Bakr as-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, ed. Markaz ad-Dirāsāt al-Qurʾāniyya (7 vols. Medina: Mujammaʿ al-Malik Fahd li-Ṭibāʿat al-Muṣḥaf, 2005), 6:2274. Elsewhere, as-Suyūṭī reproduces the words of az-Zarkashī in these same terms – "the scholars" – so it is likely that he was the one referred to here. He may not have known of the connection of this specific passage to Ibn Kathīr or Ibn Taymiyya.

[12] Walid Saleh, "Preliminary Remarks on the Historiography of *tafsīr* in Arabic: A History of the Book Approach," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 12 (2010), 34–35.

to him, TQQ is "indubitably authoritative…because God knows better than anyone else what He means, and the most truthful speech is God's book."[13] Then the historiographical work *at-Tafsīr wa'l-Mufassirūn* by Muḥammad Ḥusayn adh-Dhahabī (d. 1977) presents TQQ in the context of sources (*maṣādir*) relied upon by the Companions in their interpretations, namely the Qur'an, the Prophet, their reasoning, and the People of the Book. In so doing, he has conflated the historical discussion with one on methods, as though TQQ were the earliest method historically. Adh-Dhahabī argues that the indispensable first step taken by an exegete is to gather and compare all verses upon a theme, since "The speaker is most knowledgeable of the meanings of his speech."[14] Like az-Zurqānī, he counts TQQ as the first type of "*at-tafsīr al-maʾthūr*" and says that such exegesis – along with that based on authentic Sunna – ought to be "universally accepted, because such cannot be affected by weakness or doubt."[15]

Further developments in TQQ theory by twentieth century exegetes such as al-Farāhī and aṭ-Ṭabāṭabāʾī will be noted later. However, the trend in the most recent publications on *uṣūl al-tafsīr* has been to adopt Ibn Kathīr's framework, largely uncritically, such that the idea that TQQ is the "best approach" has been declared "the consensus of *salaf* and *khalaf*".[16] Among the various arguments presented for TQQ, the most useful point to the nature of the Qur'an 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 the Ibn Kathīr passage, which goes on to state that one should resort to the Sunna when the explanation cannot be found in the Qur'an.[17]

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[13] Muḥammad az-Zurqānī, *Manāhil al-ʿIrfān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* (2 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 2006), 2:387–388.

[14] Muḥammad adh-Dhahabī, *at-Tafsīr wa'l-Mufassirūn* (3 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2005), 1:37.

[15] Adh-Dhahabī, *at-Tafsīr wa'l-Mufassirūn*, 1:140. In contrast, he notes at 1:40 that TQQ is 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." This undermines its categorization as *maʾthūr*; indeed, the introduction to the recent encyclopedia *Mawsūʿat at-Tafsīr al-Maʾthūr*, a project overseen by Musāʿid al-Ṭayyār (24 vols. Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2017), 1:108, is explicit in attributing the "error" of including the Qur'an among narrative sources to az-Zurqānī and adh-Dhahabī.

[16] See Mawlāy Ḥammād, *ʿIlm Uṣūl at-Tafsīr: Muḥāwala fī al-Bināʾ* (Cairo: Dār as-Salām, 2010), 68–70 for this and other quotes of modern scholars.

[17] As Mahmoud Ayoub put it in *The Qur'an and its Interpreters* (Petaling Jaya: Islamic Book Trust, 2012), 22: "Thus whenever a verse, phrase or word of the Qur'an may be elucidated by another, no recourse to any other source is necessary." In order to avoid this implication, modern Salafī commentators (assuming these to be Ibn Taymiyya's words) have argued that the order is in fact intended as order of authority, in line with the generally recognized primacy of the Qur'an over other sources of legislation etc.; or it is a pedagogical device to outline the various sources. See *al-Jāmiʿ fī Uṣūl at-Tafsīr wa Manāhij al-Mufassirīn* (2 vols. Egypt: Dār al-Arqam, 2010), 1:457–467. Another possibility is that the reference here is to the most definitive cases of TQQ, such as when one verse cites another explicitly.

The principle of explaining Qur'anic verses with reference to each other depends on several assumptions about the text in terms of its unity, consistency, interpretability, and authority, as we will outline here in brief.[18] It is first assumed that the Qur'an constitutes a unified whole, brought together by an intentional process; moreover, its composition and compilation must be attributed to a single source, such that it can be said that "the author knows best." Abū Isḥāq ash-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388) explains in his *Muwāfaqāt* that the revealed Qur'an can be described as a "single discourse" (*kalām wāḥid*) in the sense 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*…"[19] This observation about the "neediness" of parts of the Qur'an for other parts can be compared with a similar argument made for its dependence on external clarification in the Sunna.[20] The issue is also connected to the primordial unity of God's speech, as we see in Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī's (d. 333/944) explanation of Q 11:1, which contrasts a prior *iḥkām* (perfection) with a subsequent *tafṣīl* of its verses:

> *Fuṣṣilat*, meaning the verses came separately in the revelatory process, 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.[21]

Further support for the unity and identity of the Qur'an can be derived from its self-referentiality. As Stefan Wild notes, "the Qur'an 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 Qur'an, 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 Qur'an, exegesis

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[18] See Sohaib Saeed, "Intraquranic Hermeneutics: Theories and Methods in *Tafsīr* of the Qur'an through the Qur'an" (Phd diss., SOAS University of London, 2018), Chapter 3.

[19] Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā ash-Shāṭibī, *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl ash-Sharīʿa*, ed. ʿAbd-Allāh Drāz (4 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1975), 3:420.

[20] This concept was perhaps expressed most directly by the jurist ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān al-Awzāʿī (d. 158/774): "The Book is more in need of (*aḥwaj ilā*) the Sunna than the Sunna is of the Book." Az-Zarkashī, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-ʿĀnī (6 vols. Kuwait: Wizārat al-Awqāf, 1992), 4:167.

[21] Muḥammad al-Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān*, ed. Ahmet Vanlıoğlu et al. (18 vols. Istanbul: Dār al-Mīzān, 2011), 7:125.

itself becomes scripture."[22] Not only does the Qur'an refer to itself, but it also contains several diachronic cross-references, such as Q 4:140 referring back, quite plainly, to 6:68-69.

Along with unity, a further assumption is that the "single author" did not fall into contradiction upon producing the series of pronouncements, narratives and rulings subsequently compiled in scriptural form. Az-Zarkashī explains this belief in consistency with reference to a Qur'anic verse:

> The speech of God, glory be to Him, is perfectly free (*munazzah*) from contradiction (*ikhtilāf*), as God has said: "If it had been from other than God, they would have found therein much *ikhtilāf*" (Q 4:82). However, the beginner may find that which gives the impression of contradiction while not, in reality, being so. Hence this requires resolution, just as there are works in the field of *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* clarifying how to reconcile between [conflicting texts].[23]

Moreover, it must be assumed that the Qur'an is interpretable. If the category of *mutashābih* (unclear) verses described in Q 3:7 appears to be a problem in this regard, then the same verse provides a direct mandate to refer such texts to others to the *muḥkam* (clear-cut) verses which constitute the "foundation" of the Book.[24]

Finally, intratextual exegesis depends on belief in the authority of the Qur'an as evidence of any religious claim, including claims about meanings in the Qur'an itself. There is no dispute over the legitimacy of this approach, and it is seen to be mandated by the example of the Prophet and early Muslims.[25] However, views about the authority of TQQ can be described as a spectrum, ranging from the general view of it being mandated; through the Kathīrian paradigm of being "best", and exegetical projects which took this as their primary approach; to the far end represented by the "Qur'an-only" doctrine which rejects the authority of any exegetical source beside the Qur'an, particularly the *ḥadīth* tradition. We return to this approach below in our discussion of the TQQ genre.

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[22] Stefan Wild, "The Self-Referentiality of the Qur'ān: Sura 3:7 as an Exegetical Challenge" in *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 432.

[23] Az-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 282.

[24] Ibn al-Ḥaṣṣār (d. 620/1223) said: "God has divided the verses of the Qur'an into *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* and described the former as *umm al-kitāb* in that the latter are referred back to it" (as-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 4:1349). The following quote from Mujāhid ibn Jabr (d. 104/722) illustrates the connection between this dichotomy and TQQ: "The *muḥkamāt* are those verses which pertain to lawful and unlawful things. The remainder is *mutashābih*: its parts corroborate each other" (as-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 4:1337).

[25] Contrary to a stronger claim made by some modern writers, Qur'anic 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 *ḥadīth*s. To establish this point, I went through one recent compilation which aims to include all explicit narrations of Prophetic exegesis, irrespective of grades of authenticity, namely Khālid al-Bātilī, *at-Tafsīr an-Nabawī* (2 vols. Riyadh: Dār Kunūz Ishbīliyā, 2011). Of the 318 narrations in the book, no more than five met this criterion.

2. TQQ as Method

While *tafsīr al-qurʾān bi'l-qurʾān* is frequently described as a method of exegesis, it is more clearly thought of as a set of methods, all of which pertain to the use of a source (namely the Qur'an, when used to explain the Qur'an). It may also be described as an approach to exegesis, but not necessarily one that exists separately from others; rather, for most exegetes, TQQ is one aspect of their method, and intratextual analysis is done alongside other forms. The section following this one looks at works in which this approach is adopted primarily or exclusively. Here we consider the TQQ toolkit as applied more generally in *tafsīr* and described in the hermeneutical works.

To demonstrate the breadth of topics to which TQQ is connected, I present here a list of seventeen chapters (out of eighty) from as-Suyūṭī's *Itqān*, together with a brief note explaining the relevance of each. This provides some insight concerning the importance of "Qur'anic sciences" compendia, and the individual genres from which they were compiled, for the reconstruction of hermeneutical principles.

- 22–27: *Qirāʾāt* (readings). Inasmuch as Muslim scholarship has reached consensus on a definition of the Qur'an which encompasses ten canonical readings, any explanatory interplay between these readings (variations which affect meaning) would constitute TQQ. The same applies to the early process of arguing (*iḥtijāj*) for a particular reading with reference to parallels (*naẓāʾir*) in the rest of the Qur'an.

- 39: *Wujūh wa naẓāʾir* (polysemy). When a particular word appears in multiple contexts in the Qur'an, 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* (norms), which provides a shorthand for identifying the meaning of a particular term on the basis of generalizations 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 Qur'an: hence this chapter is related to the aforementioned polysemy and norms. The same applies to:

- 42: *Qawāʿid* (axioms).

- 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 "foundational", as alluded to in Q 3:7.

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

- 46: *Mujmal wa mubayyan* (unclear vs. clarified). Another *uṣūl al-fiqh* category, which underpins the TQQ imperative more broadly. This is the only chapter as-Suyūṭī cited as relevant to TQQ, since his (unattributed) quote from Ibn Kathīr made reference to *ijmāl*.

- 47: *Nāsikh wa mansūkh* (abrogating vs. abrogated). If some verses of the Qurʾan 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.

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

- 62: *Munāsabāt* (textual consonance). This studies the contextual flow between *sūra*s 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 generally be classed as TQQ.

- 63: *Āyāt mushtabihāt* [commonly: *mutashābihāt*] (near-parallels). Beyond identifying narratives and expressions repeated with slight variations in various *sūra*s, 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.

While the above presentation of methods within the broad approach known as *tafsīr al-qurʾān bi'l-qurʾān* is scattered and incomplete, we may build up a complete picture by considering the following aspects in turn: intratextual approaches to the Qurʾanic lexicon; citation of parallel verses; evidential citation of verses; and reading a verse in its immediate context.[26]

When determining the meaning of a particular word in a verse of the Qurʾan, one of the factors invariably taken into account is how it is used elsewhere in the text. For example,

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[26] This is the approach I take in Chapters 4–7 of *Explaining the Qurʾan through the Qurʾan* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming). In my earlier thesis "Intraquranic Hermeneutics" (Chapter 4), I categorized methods into juristic, thematic, comparative and contextual.

whether *mutawaffīka* in Q 3:55 means "cause to die" will be informed by the use of this word for that meaning in numerous other verses. However, the existence of a different sense in Q 39:42 (namely, the soul being taken during sleep) makes it possible to posit a different sense in which Jesus was taken and raised by God according to the first verse. Already the openness to debate in application of TQQ can be seen: one group may take a reductionist approach and appeal to the majority of junctures, citing this meaning as one of the fixed "norms" of the Qur'an. The second group can counter this by citing the other verse as evidence for reading *mutawaffīka* in other than its most obvious and frequent meaning. Moreover, there is nothing to prevent them citing 3:55 itself as the exception to that "rule", as the genre of *kulliyyāt* has always admitted exceptions; indeed, that is one of the purposes of the genre, which is sometimes formulated in terms of "singularities" (*afrād*). The following entries, selected from a list in az-Zarkashī's *Burhān*, sourced, in turn, from *al-Afrād* by Ibn Fāris, illustrate this reality:[27]

- Every mention in the Qur'an of *asaf* means "sadness", except 43:55 where it means "anger".
- Every mention of *burūj* means "stars" (*kawākib*), except 4:78 where it means "lofty fortresses".
- Every mention of *barr* and *baḥr* means "dry land" and "water", except 30:41 where they refer to "empty land" (*barriyya*) and "settlements" (*ʿumrān*).
- Every mention of *baʿl* means "husband", except 37:125 where it is the name of an idol.

More broadly, Muslim scholars have described the phenomenon of polysemy in the Qur'an, calling it *al-wujūh wa'n-naẓāʾir*. The second term pertains to "parallels", whereas the first describes "a single word (*mushtarak*) carrying multiple meanings."[28] For example, as-Suyūṭī lists eighteen different senses for the word *hudā*, which is typically translated as "guidance";[29] it is evident that these diverse meanings or nuances are derived with reference to the co-text of each occurrence.[30] In stark contrast to the reductionist approach, this mode of study seems, at times, to over-emphasize the distinction between these various senses: this led al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 255/869) to respond to these lists in his *Taḥṣīl Naẓāʾir al-Qurʾān*, explaining how one essential meaning is present in all usages (in the case of *hudā* it is *mayl*, "inclination").[31]

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[27] Az-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 74–77.

[28] Az-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 73.

[29] As-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 3:978. See also Ahmad Shehu Abdussalam, *Concordance of Qurʾānic Polysemy* (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, 2008), 252.

[30] See Muhammad Abdel Haleem, "The Role of Context in Interpreting and Translating the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 20:1 (2018), 54–55.

[31] Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Taḥṣīl Naẓāʾir al-Qurʾān*, ed. Ḥusnī Zaydān (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat as-Saʿāda, 1969), 19–24. This was apparently a response to Muqātil's *al-Wujūh wa'n-Naẓāʾir*.

We can thus see how an exegete must find a balance between two competing TQQ imperatives: to situate a word in its co-text, and to consider its usages elsewhere in scripture.

The next method for consideration is citation of "parallel" verses (or "near-parallels" which differ in some significant detail), observed frequently in the exegetical practice of Muqātil, Ibn Kathīr, and numerous others. By itself, citing another verse for its similarity is difficult to describe as *tafsīr*. However, it serves a number of functions:

a. Support for the exegete's reading or interpretation;

b. Clarifying through more explicit or expansive wording, or through context;

c. Modification, such as to particularize or qualify;[32]

d. Additional details;

e. Cross-reference for further exploration of Qur'an;

f. Reference to the exegete's detailed explanation under that verse.

Gathering verses which are semantically linked, even if the wording differs, is the first stage of what has come to be known as *at-tafsīr al-mawḍūʿī*: the adjective refers to "themes/subjects" in the Qur'an. Glimpses of this approach can be found in works of classical and modern *tafsīr*, and distinct treatment of topics and categories[33] have precedents in collections of legal verses (*āyāt al-aḥkām*) and the genre of Qur'anic narratives (*al-qaṣaṣ al-qurʾānī*), among others which juxtapose and synthesize materials from across the corpus along with external sources.

While citations by way of clarification or evidence take many forms, interaction between Qur'anic texts has arguably received the most attention when it pertains to legal rulings. The field of *uṣūl al-fiqh* addresses various hermeneutical topics which also appear in works of *uṣūl at-tafsīr*: here we touch briefly upon three types of textual interaction most pertinent to TQQ. The broadest of these is *bayān al-mujmal*, which means to clarify a text which is, in one way or another, unclear in its denotation; indeed, this category subsumes the following two categories and most of what we call *tafsīr al-qurʾān bi'l-qurʾān*. One non-legal example given by az-Zarkashī is Q 6:103, which may be taken either to deny altogether that people can ever see God, or merely to negate that their vision may encompass Him; according to Sunnī interpretation, other verses (75:23, 83:15) clarify that only the latter sense is intended.[34] The next category is *takhṣīṣ al-ʿāmm*, meaning "to remove universality from a

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[32] This is discussed below under evidentiary citations, but it belongs to this topic insofar as the citations are of resembling verses which contain, for example, an additional clause (*qayd*).

[33] There is a 2019 compilation in 36 volumes by Markaz Tafsīr, Riyadh, entitled *Mawsūʿat at-Tafsīr al-Mawḍūʿī* (modoee.com). An ongoing project in English is *The Integrated Encyclopedia of the Qurʾān* (iequran.com).

[34] Az-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 361–362.

universal expression, clarifying that it denotes only some of those items to which the wording extends."[35] Similarly, *taqyīd al-muṭlaq* means to restrict or qualify an expression (with an adjective or similar) which was otherwise unqualified. An important part of these discussions involves interpreting each type of locution (universal or unqualified) in the light of the other (particular or qualified): this operation is 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'an.

Finally, we note the relevance of methods pertaining to the passage context (co-text) of a verse under study. As we shall see below, this field of enquiry has grown considerably in the modern period. However, despite the frequent characterisation of pre-modern exegesis as "atomistic", context has always played a role in the exegetes' deliberations.[36] A contemporary researcher has drawn the following axioms from aṭ-Ṭabarī's *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, some verbatim and others paraphrased (I have added some brief comments):[37]

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.

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.

d. "Any interpretation which implies meaningless repetition is to be rejected." As such, the relevance of each iteration (such as the motifs in Q 55 and Q 77) must be established. This applies also to lexical items when juxtaposed; for example, *fuqarāʾ* and *masākīn* cannot be synonyms in Q 9:60.[38]

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[35] Adapted from Muḥammad Adīb aṣ-Ṣāliḥ, *Tafsīr an-Nuṣūṣ fī al-Fiqh al-Islāmī* (2 vols. Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 2008), 2/69.

[36] See Mustansir Mir, "Continuity, Context, and Coherence in the Qur'an: A Brief Review of the Idea of *Naẓm* in *Tafsīr* Literature," *Al-Bayan* 11:2 (2013), 17. Surprisingly, al-Muṭayrī remarks in *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi'l-Qurʾān*, 174, that aṭ-Ṭabarī would sometimes appeal to context at the expense of more important considerations.

[37] ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm al-Qāsim, *Dalālat as-Siyāq al-Qurʾānī* (2 vols. Riyadh: Tadmuriyya, 2012), 1:142–346. From his list of nine (which included other forms of context), I have quoted five.

[38] Al-Qāsim, *Dalālat as-Siyāq*, 248, 254. This denial of synonymy depends on the principle "*al-ʿaṭf yaqtaḍī al-mughāyara*", i.e. conjunction only makes sense between distinct concepts. However, there is another view

Such methods and considerations fall under TQQ insofar as the Qur'an itself, rather than any external source, is used to establish the meaning of a particular word or verse.

3.   TQQ as a Genre

We have already seen that the principle of interpreting the Qur'an with reference to the Qur'an itself has met acceptance in Islamic hermeneutical works, even if it is not always articulated or advocated by those authors. Moreover, the set of methods which make up this intratextual approach can be readily observed throughout the exegetical tradition, despite the fact that few works gave this approach primacy in practice, or expressed that intent in their titles or introductions. In this section, we consider the history of works that did adopt TQQ as their main, or even sole, methodology.

3.1   Pre-/Early-Modern Works

Notably, when as-Suyūṭī discussed the topic, drawing from Ibn Kathīr's words quoted in *al-Burhān*, he could only cite one exegetical work based on this principle, an unnamed work by Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) documenting "what is left unclear in one passage of the Qur'an and explained in another."[39] Before him, Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd (d. 702/1302) noted simply that he had heard about a book of *tafsīr al-qurʾān bi'l-qurʾān*.[40] Other than that, there appears to be little to no mention of such a genre before the twentieth century. This fact alone calls into question later assertions about this being the "best approach" to exegesis, particularly those which make this indisputable and a matter of consensus across the ages.

However, the recently published *Kashf al-Asrār wa Hatk al-Astār* by Jamāl ad-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Hilāl aṣ-Ṣafadī (d. 696/1296) may be considered the earliest extant commentary based explicitly on TQQ and displaying a Qur'an-primary methodology. The author, an

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concerning 9:60 that the conjunction is for emphasis: see Muḥammad aṭ-Ṭāhir Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Tafsīr at-Taḥrīr wa't-Tanwīr* (12 vols. Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2021), 5:193.

[39] As-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 6:2274. The editors of Ibn ʿAqīla al-Makkī's *az-Ziyāda wa'l-Iḥsān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* (10 vols. Sharjah: University of Sharjah, 2006), 7:410, suggest that this is *Taysīr al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, which remains unpublished. If this is the same as *Taysīr at-Tibyān fī ʿIlm al-Qurʾān* which Ibn al-Jawzī mentions in the introduction to his *Nawāsikh al-Qurʾān*, ed. Muḥammad al-Milibārī (Medina: Islamic University, 2003), 74, then it should be noted that his brief description does not match as-Suyūṭī's.

[40] Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī, *Iḥkam al-Aḥkām sharh ʿUmdat al-Aḥkām*, ed. Aḥmad Shākir (2 vols. Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1987), 1:110. Ibn al-Jawzī's or aṣ-Ṣafadī's might be intended, or another.

Aleppine doctor with knowledge of Arabic literature and Ḥanafī jurisprudence, describes his approach at the end of his exegesis of Sūrat al-Fātiḥa, including this illuminating passage:[41]

> I have clarified the uncommon (*gharīb*) expressions with reference to the language of the Arabs, the subtle meanings with reference to the evident ones, and the ambiguous (*mutashābih*) verses with reference to the definitive (*muḥkam*) ones.[42] Hence I have explained the Qur'an through the Qur'an, since I found no deficiency therein which would lead me to compensate via some other source. Nobody can object to one who has presented nothing from his own self, nor to the Book of Almighty God, as every such objection would be overruled by it.

This clear statement of intent and appeal to divine authority is balanced by the author's insistence that this work represents his own scholarly effort (*ijtihād*) which is not binding on any reader, and his admission that "most of what I have stated has appeared with earlier scholars." This raises the question of the value that is added by such a genre: is it expected to lead to different conclusions, or merely provide intratextual evidence for the same range of exegetical opinions? Certainly, the work of aṣ-Ṣafadī displays more originality than this last remark – presumably intended to allay concerns surrounding his methods – implies; it deserves to be studied carefully and compared with modern works which have adopted similar *ḥadīth*-minimalism and *naskh*-skepticism.[43]

The next work chronologically, albeit not a clear member of this genre, is Ibn Kathīr's *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*: even though its engagement with narrated exegesis (often via aṭ-Ṭabarī) is far more prominent a feature, the fact that its introduction – discussed above – gives primacy to TQQ invites consideration of how this principle was applied in the exegesis itself. Certainly, the work is rich with parallel verses, which are given a prominent place; but it is not the case that he implemented the described procedure literally, which would mean exhausting the Qur'an as a resource before turning to the Sunna. The fact that he often cites parallel verses (usually with the phrase "*ka-mā qāla taʿālā*") without any clear explanatory function could be interpreted as a basic form of building a concordance of the Qur'an.[44] Other than that, Ibn Kathīr's use of verses as evidence for opinions and explanations is typical of the *tafsīr* tradition.

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[41] Yūsuf ibn Hilāl aṣ-Ṣafadī, *Kashf al-Asrār wa Hatk al-Astār*, ed. Bahā ad-Dīn Dārtmā (5 vols. Istanbul: Maktabat al-Irshād, 2019), 1:37. The biographical information provided in the editor's introduction (1:13) is very limited.

[42] See also his discussion of these terms 1/314–317.

[43] See Enes Büyük, "Safedî'nin Kur'an'ın Kur'an'la Tefsiri Yöntemine Yaklaşımı," *Marife: Journal of Religious Studies*, 20:1 (2020): 39–63.

[44] Modern 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); nevertheless, there remains a role for scholarly refinement and enhancement of computer-generated results based on verbal and semantic resemblance. The latest to be published in this field is Mun'im Sirry, *The Qur'an with Cross-References* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022).

If the genre of TQQ is defined to include works which pay particular attention to contextual flow and relevance (*munāsabāt*) between Qurʾanic phrases, verses and chapters, even if they provide no more internal cross-references than typical *tafsīr* works, then there are several which may be seen as forerunners of the modern Structural Coherence school. Indeed, Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī makes brief mention of the work of an earlier Indian scholar, ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Mahāʾimī (d. 835/1432).[45] In his exegesis *Tabṣīr ar-Raḥmān wa Taysīr al-Mannān bi-Baʿḍ mā Yushīr ilā Iʿjāz al-Qurʾān*, al-Mahāʾimī explained that God opened his eyes to "forms of inimitability based on the remarkable connection between its words and the sequence of its verses, after such were considered almost as riddles."[46] Iṣlāḥī also mentions, via as-Suyūṭī, the Syrian exegete Burhān ad-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar al-Biqāʿī (d. 885/1480), author of *Naẓm ad-Durar fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt waʾs-Suwar*.[47] One of the key sources he draws from in his discussions on *naẓm* is the now-lost exegesis of Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥarāllī (d. 638/1241) of Morocco, who is now receiving more scholarly attention.[48]

A little before the modern period, Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Amīr aṣ-Ṣanʿānī (d. 1182/1768) authored a work that has so far been published only in parts, but has been counted along with others in the TQQ genre. Its title, *Mafātiḥ ar-Riḍwān fī Tafsīr adh-Dhikr biʾl-Āthār waʾl-Qurʾān*, seems to be ambivalent about this intent; but researchers have noted that it is richer in parallels than Ibn Kathīr's commentary; the author may have attempted to be comprehensive in this regard, at least in sections of his work.[49] Nevertheless, like Ibn Kathīr's,

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[45] Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Pondering Over the Qurʾān Volume 1*, trans. M.S. Kayani (Petaling Jaya: Islamic Book Trust, 2007), 31.

[46] ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn al-Mahāʾimī's introduction to *Tabṣīr ar-Raḥmān wa Taysīr al-Mannān* (3 vols. Beirut: Kitāb Nāshirūn, 2011), 24. Nevertheless, the editor's introduction treats it primarily as a Ṣūfī work of allusions (*tafsīr ishārī*).

[47] Israr Ahmad Khan, *Understanding the Qurʾan* (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, 2006), 137–183, makes a detailed comparison between al-Biqāʿī's and Iṣlāḥī's works. Al-Farāhī made a distinction between the concept of *tanāsub* and the broader theory of *naẓm*: see Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qurʾān* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1986), 32–33. Al-Biqāʿī has been studied in various publications by Walid Saleh, including his entry "al-Biqāʿī" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*.

[48] A volume entitled *Turāth Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥarāllī fī at-Tafsīr* (Casablanca: Maṭbaʿat al-Najāḥ, 1997) was collected by the Moroccan scholar Maḥmādī al-Khayyāṭī from three of the author's hermeneutical treatises along with quotations provided by al-Biqāʿī. See Faris Casewit, "Harmonizing Discursive Worlds: The Life and Times of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ḥarrālī (d. 638/1241)" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2019), and Islam Dayeh's chapter in *Prefiguration and Fulfilment in the Qurʾan and its Biblical Milieu*, ed. Islam Dayeh and Angelika Neuwirth (Abingdon: Routledge, forthcoming).

[49] Al-Amīr aṣ-Ṣanʿānī, *Mafātiḥ ar-Riḍwān fī Tafsīr adh-Dhikr biʾl-Āthār waʾl-Qurʾān* (Q 26–30), ed. ʿAbd-Allāh az-Zahrānī (Master's diss., International Islamic University of Medina, 1990), 62. Currently there are several unpublished dissertations spanning sections of the work, as well as a published one from the beginning to Q 22, edited by Hudā al-Qibāṭī (Sanaa: Markaz al-Kalima aṭ-Ṭayyiba, 2004).

it displays typical characteristics of *tafsīr*, including citation of earlier exegetes,[50] and lacks any particular methodology for TQQ. A stronger contender for this genre is a work by the Amīr's son, Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad (d. 1214/1799) entitled *Fatḥ ar-Raḥmān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi'l-Qurʾān*, which is sometimes conflated with the former.[51]

3.2   The Twentieth Century

At the turn of the century, the Indian *Ahl-i Ḥadīth* leader Thanāʾ-Allāh Amritsarī (d. 1948) published a commentary in Urdu followed by his Arabic work *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-Kalām ar-Raḥmān* in 1902; among the recommendations prefaced to the work is one by Shibli Nomani (d. 1914) who stated that the TQQ method adopted "is not found, to my knowledge, in any other work."[52] Despite his overall Salafī leanings, Amritsarī drew upon various theological and exegetical opinions, for which he was chastised by peers in India and Saudi Arabia.[53] After a short introduction emphasizing the centrality of Arabic language and the dangers of interpreting according to unfounded opinion (*raʾy*), Amritsarī reproduces an extensive passage from Shāh Walī-Allāh ad-Dihlawī's (d. 1176/1762) *al-Fawz al-Kabīr fī Uṣūl at-Tafsīr* outlining problems with over-reliance upon revelatory contexts (the *asbāb* literature).[54] The commentary itself adopts the in-line style, citing Quranic parallels or evidences frequently.

The next exegetical works we shall mention were built upon a deliberate and defined hermeneutical approach, that of the Structural Coherence school founded in India by Ḥamīd

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[50] Al-Amīr aṣ-Ṣanʿānī, *Mafātiḥ ar-Riḍwān* (Q 38–44), ed. Ḥāmid al-Muṭayrī (Master's diss., International Islamic University of Medina, 2008), 34. Al-Muṭayrī argues that the Amīr followed closely the Ottoman exegesis of Ebüssuûd Efendi (d. 982/1574); moreover, he relied for *ḥadīth* reports upon *ad-Durr al-Manthūr* of as-Suyūṭī.

[51] See az-Zahrānī's edition, 41. Unfortunately, I was unable to access the manuscripts of *Fatḥ ar-Raḥmān* before publishing this chapter.

[52] Thanāʾ-Allāh Amritsarī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-Kalām ar-Raḥmān* (Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 2002), 24. Amritsarī also debated representatives of various religions and movements including the *Ahl-i Qurʾān* group. See Ali Usman Qasmi, "Islamic Universalism: The 'Amritsarī' Version of Ahl al-Qurʾan," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 20:2 (2009), 171–176

[53] This is described in a foreword by Ṣafī ar-Raḥmān Mubārakpūrī in the Saudi edition (17–21). By way of example, Amritsarī's "controversial" explanation of Q 7:54 has been replaced by a footnote spanning two whole pages, apparently by the author himself, reproducing the views of Ibn Taymiyya and "the way of the *Salaf*" (228–229). After ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq Ghaznawī penned a treatise *al-Arbaʿīn* critiquing forty junctures of Amritsarī's exegesis, the latter released a counter-treatise, also in Urdu, entitled *al-Kalām al-Mubīn fī Jawāb al-Arbaʿīn*. For more details and context see Martin Riexinger, "A Conflict Among the Ahl-i Ḥadīth in British India," in *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, edited by Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 502–513. See also Sohaib Saeed, "Fights and Flights: Two Underrated 'Alternatives' to Dominant Readings in *tafsīr*," *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 24:1 (2022), 61.

[54] See Saeed, "Intraquranic Hermeneutics," 138–140. The *Fawz* was originally written in Persian, but Amritsarī quoted it in Arabic. See Walī-Allāh ad-Dihlawī, *The Great Victory on Qurʾanic* Hermeneutics, trans. Tahir Mahmood Kiani (London: Ta-Ha Publishers, 2014), 83–97. The book contains little of direct relevance to TQQ.

al-Dīn (or ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd) al-Farāhī (d. 1930). His exegesis of various passages was collected and published under his chosen title of *Niẓām al-Qurʾān wa Taʾwīl al-Furqān bi'l-Furqān*, which alludes to his two key exegetical principles: Qur'anic structural coherence, and intraquranic interpretation. In his hermeneutical treatise *at-Takmīl fī Uṣūl at-Taʾwīl*, al-Farāhī critiques classical approaches to the Qurʾān and affirms the definitive (*qaṭʿī*) nature of the text and its meanings, as opposed to all "external" evidences including *ḥadīth*.[55] 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.[56] The following summary of his methodology was appended to *at-Takmīl* by the editor from al-Farāhī's notes:[57]

a. Being divine speech, the Qur'an does not contradict itself, so it should be interpreted in that light.
b. The Qur'an 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.[58]
c. We derive our principles (*uṣūl*) from reason and the Qur'an – this is the supreme principle.
d. We do not diverge from the apparent meanings (*ẓāhir*) of the Qur'an based on weak evidence; rather, the apparent meaning is considered a proof.
e. Where there are multiple possibilities, we opt for the best and most suited to the structure (*niẓām*) and central theme (*ʿamūd* [lit: pillar]).

While al-Farāhī did not write a complete exegesis, his personal notes in Arabic, spanning the whole Qur'an, have been published under the title *Taʿlīqāt fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*.[59]

Arguably, the mantle of this hermeneutical school was taken on by his student Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī (d. 1997) who compiled a complete Urdu exegesis entitled *Tadabbur-i Qurʾān*,[60] which he prefaced with a detailed introduction expounding and adjusting al-Farāhī's methodology. Dividing his sources of exegesis into internal and external, the former is said to consist of: Qurʾanic Arabic as conveyed in pre-Islamic poetry; "coherence" (*naẓm*); and

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[55] In *Rasāʾil al-Imām al-Farāhī fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, ed. Badr ad-Dīn al-Iṣlāḥī (Azamghar: ad-Dāʾira al-Ḥamīdiyya, 1991), 214, 225, 234. *At-Takmīl* has been published in this volume along with the author's *Dalāʾil an-Niẓām*, *Asālīb al-Qurʾān* and miscellaneous notes. See Mir, *Coherence*, 29.

[56] Al-Farāhī, *Rasāʾil*, 229–230.

[57] Al-Farāhī, *Rasāʾil*, 225.

[58] Cf. his definitions of these terms in his exegesis of Q 3:7: al-Farāhī, *Niẓām al-Qurʾān wa Taʾwīl al-Furqān bi'l-Furqān*, ed. ʿUbayd-Allāh al-Farāhī (2 vols. Tunis: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2012), 1:344.

[59] These have been compiled as *Taʿlīqāt fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*, ed. ʿUbayd-Allāh al-Farāhī (2 vols. Azamgarh: ad-Dāʾira al-Ḥamīdiyya, 2010). We are informed in the preface (4–6) that most of this content was copied from notes al-Farāhī kept in several *muṣḥaf*s 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.

[60] Partial translations are available online at www.tadabbur-i-quran.org. Two volumes (until the end of Q 3) were published by the Islamic Book Trust before the death of the translator Mohammad Saleem Kayani in 2016. Other significant writers in this school include Javed Ahmed Ghamidi and Muḥammad ʿInāyat-Allāh Subḥānī.

explaining the Qurʾan through the Qurʾan.[61] Adducing Qurʾanic evidence for the latter, Iṣlāḥī cites Q 39:23 concerning the book's arrangement and style of repetition, as well as the concept of *taṣrīf* mentioned in Q 17:41 and elsewhere – taking this to denote meaningful variation, as opposed to vain repetition. Concerning questions of vocabulary and style, he states that his commentary depends primarily upon the Qurʾan, 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."[62]

In perhaps the best-known work of the genre, Muḥammad al-Amīn ash-Shinqīṭī (d. 1972), a Mauritanian scholar who settled in Saudi Arabia,[63] took TQQ as his explicit methodology without proposing a novel theory. In his introduction to *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān fī Īḍāḥ al-Qurʾān bi'l-Qurʾān*, he cites "the scholarly consensus" that TQQ is the best form of exegesis, since "none better knows the meaning of the book of God than God." The following is summarized and rearranged from ash-Shinqīṭī's detailed account of the types of *ijmāl* for which the Qurʾanic *bayān* is presented in his book:[64]

    a. Solving homonymy (*ishtirāk*) of nouns, verbs or particles; appealing to the dominant Qurʾanic 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 question and answer occurring elsewhere; or ruling out a word's apparent meaning due to context or other verses.

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

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

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

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

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[61] Iṣlāḥī, *Pondering*, 1:25, 29, 41.

[62] Iṣlāḥī, *Pondering*, 1:42.

[63] Regarding his theological background and apparent shift after moving to Riyadh, see Faḍl ʿAbbās, *at-Tafsīr wa'l-Mufassirūn* (3 vols. Amman: Dār al-Nafāʾis, 2016), 3:85–86. It should be noted that the unfinished portion of the *Aḍwāʾ* (from Q 59 onwards) was written after Shinqīṭī's death by his student, ʿAṭiyya Sālim: see the publisher's preface to Muḥammad ash-Shinqīṭī, *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān fī Īḍāḥ al-Qurʾān bi'l-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2011), 3.

[64] Ash-Shinqīṭī, *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, pp. 6–15. The list appears to be a description after the fact of his exegesis.

Ash-Shinqīṭī also discusses his method of dealing with multiple interpretations based upon the Qurʾan: he selects the strongest (*tarjīḥ*) with reference to the Sunna and other factors. He does not cite Ibn Kathīr's hierarchy, but provides a subtler account of his own method: "If a verse has an explanation from the Qurʾan which is not fully satisfactory, then I supplement the explanation with the Sunna, to clarify it." Unlike al-Farāhī, he is willing to accept that multiple interpretations are equally correct if all are attested by the Qurʾan and there is no way of deciding between them.[65] Ash-Shinqīṭī's commentary draws noticeably upon Ibn Kathīr's, but he does not address every verse (for example, he explains only 49 of Sūrat al-Anʿām's 165 verses), and he elaborates on certain juristic issues even when TQQ does not feature in those discussions.

Muḥammad Ḥusayn aṭ-Ṭabāṭabāʾī (d. 1981), author of *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, is the only Iranian and (Twelver) Shīʿī scholar I have counted in this genre.[66] Since the Qurʾan describes itself as "a clarification (*tibyān*) of all things" (16:89), he argues in his introduction, it is necessarily the best resource for its own explication.[67] To strengthen this point, aṭ-Ṭabāṭabāʾī repurposes the *maʾthūr*/*raʾy* dichotomy in a subtle fashion. First, he claims that all or most exegesis narrated from the Prophet and the *imām*s was of the intraquranic type, describing this as "the oldest inherited (*maʾthūr*) approach."[68] Later, he provides a definition for *tafsīr bi'r-raʾy* which encompasses everything that departs from the apparent sense (*ẓāhir*) of the Qurʾan by drawing on external sources. After discussing the various narrations from Prophet Muḥammad prohibiting the use of *raʾy* in interpreting the Qurʾān, aṭ-Ṭabāṭabāʾī concludes:

> What has been forbidden is only autonomy (*istiqlāl*) in Qurʾanic exegesis and exegetical self-reliance... It follows that it is incumbent (*wājib*) for an exegete to seek aid from and refer to something other than himself. This "other" must either be the Book or the Sunna; if we say it is the Sunna then this contradicts the Qurʾan and the Sunna themselves, in that they command us to refer to [the Qurʾan] and take it as the standard for evaluating reports (*akhbār*). For reference and aid in *tafsīr* the only remaining possibility is the Qurʾan itself.[69]

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[65] Ash-Shinqīṭī, *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*, 12–15.

[66] See Medoff, "Ijtihad and Renewal," 34–36 for the place of *al-Mīzān* in the trajectory of Shīʿa exegesis.

[67] Muḥammad Ḥusayn aṭ-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (22 vols. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlā, 1997), 1:8–10. 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.

[68] Aṭ-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *al-Mīzān*, 1:14–17.

[69] Aṭ-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *al-Mīzān*, 3:87–89.

Aṭ-Ṭabāṭabāʾī defined his exegetical project as "having the Qur'an speak for itself", which seems to imply objectivity.[70] This is particularly in his sections labelled "*bayān*" (explanation), which are far more extensive than his "*riwāya*" sections which discuss narrations from earlier authorities and exegetes, especially the *Ahl al-Bayt* and Shīʿa tradition. There are also occasional thematic studies (drawing from across the Qur'an) of individual terms and concepts which arise while studying the verses sequentially. When compared with Sunnī works in the genre, it can be observed that some differences are attributable to sectarian doctrines, but it is also the case that divergence of opinion is frequent between Sunnīs themselves.[71]

The Egyptian professor ʿĀʾisha ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān (known as Bint ash-Shāṭiʾ, d. 1998), one of very few female exegetes, implemented the literary (*adabī*) approach established by her husband, Amīn al-Khūlī (d. 1966). However, her two exegetical volumes, entitled *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī li'l-Qurʾān al-Karīm*, expound only on fourteen short *sūra*s of the Qur'an.[72] Like various others writing in this genre, Bint ash-Shāṭiʾ claimed that the classical exegetes failed to act upon the famous principle that "the Qur'an explains itself".[73] She advocates giving full authority to the Qur'anic text; she uses the term "*al-iḥtikām ilā al-qurʾān*" to describe how the corpus is made to "adjudicate" between possible interpretations of a word in its local context. Here I summarize the elements of the author's methodology, provided most clearly in the introduction to the fifth edition of Volume 1:

1. Thematic analysis (*al-tanāwul al-mawḍūʿī*), which starts with gathering verses containing the word or expression under study. These Qur'anic usages are then studied both in their "local context of *āya* and *sūra*" and "the broad context of the whole Qur'an."[74] A key word which appears several times in Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's introductions is *istiqrāʾ*, implying a comprehensive survey of relevant verses.

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[70] See Medoff, "Ijtihad and Renewal," 20 ff.; there is greater elaboration of his method in a separate Persian treatise entitled *Qurʾān dar Islām*. The term *istinṭāq al-qurʾān* admits some ambiguity: rather than just "hearing" the Qur'an, the exegete must play a role in having it speak.

[71] See Saeed, "Intraquranic Hermeneutics," 71–72.

[72] Volume 1 of *at-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, the aim to highlight the miraculous perfection of Qur'anic expressions, which exists in Bint ash-Shāṭiʾ's project alongside investigation of the meanings. The term *adabī*, on the other hand, gives an impression of locating study of the Qurʾān within broader study of literature.

[73] ʿĀʾisha ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān, *at-Tafsīr al-Bayānī li'l-Qurʾān al-Karīm Vol. 1* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1990; 7th edn.), 18.

[74] ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān, *at-Tafsīr al-Bayānī Vol. 1*, 10–11, 17. In contrast to al-Farāhī's school, Bint ash-Shāṭiʾ does not argue for thematic unity at *sūra* level, exception in short *sūra*s: see 18; and cf. Mustansir Mir, "The Sura as a Unity: A Twentieth Century Development in Qur'an Exegesis" in *Approaches to the Qurʾān*, ed. G. Hawting and A.K. Shareef. (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993).

2. The sequence and social circumstances of revelation are studied in order to appreciate the context, described as "what surrounds the text" (*mā ḥawl an-naṣṣ*). The *asbāb* literature is part of this examination.[75]

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 Qurʾanic corpus which represents its own lexicon (*muʿjam alfāẓihi*) and guide to style (*uslūb*). 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.[76]

4. To appreciation the subtleties of its phraseology (*asrār at-taʿbīr*), appeal is made to the "text and spirit" of the Qur'an as a whole.

3.3 Outliers

The above presentation displays some diversity in the backgrounds of authors, and in the nature of the works which fall within the genre of *tafsīr al-qurʾān bi'l-qurʾān*. As noted, the inclusion of works which focus on contextual flow could be questioned. Likewise, there are several other types of modern Qur'an commentary which have some relationship with this genre.

First, works which adopt a radical Qur'an-only or "Quranist" approach, including translations of the Qur'an. According to the most influential proponents of this trend in the modern era – such as Ghulam Ahmed Parwez (d. 1985) and Rashad Khalifa (d. 1990) – the Prophet Muḥammad was tasked only with delivering the divine message intact.[77] The Prophetic *bayān*, rather than explanation and exegesis, should be understood in its other sense of mere proclamation, whereas God himself retained the prerogative to fulfil its *bayān*-as-clarification. In principle, one may expect this group to have developed a sophisticated intratextual hermeneutic. However, it seems that their belief that the Qur'an does not require explanation

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[75] See Shuruq Naguib, "Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's Approach to *tafsīr*: An Egyptian Exegete's Journey from Hermeneutics to Humanity," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 17:1 (2015), 46–48, regarding the historicism inherent to the literary school and its roots in Muḥammad ʿAbduh's ideas on the transformative effects of the Qur'an.

[76] ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān, *at-Tafsīr al-Bayānī li'l-Qurʾān al-Karīm Vol. 2* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1990; 5th edn.), 8.

[77] For this and other key arguments of the two figures, see, respectively: Johannes Baljon, *Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 17–19, and Aisha Musa, *Ḥadīth as Scripture: Discussions on the Authority of Prophetic Traditions in Islam* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 14. Musa draws attention to early manifestations of *ḥadīth*-rejection by examining ash-Shāfiʿī's (d. 204/820) 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" (3, see also 85), Musa downplays the effects of Western dominance and ideological trends such as liberalism. See Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 21 ff. for a balanced treatment of internal trends and external influences.

has prevented this movement from demonstrating anything that approaches the exegetical prowess of various writers named in the previous section. Instead, emphasis is placed on asserting their departure from the tradition, and, at times, demonstrating modernist credentials. Rather than shedding the bias they decry in mainstream exegesis, they have made *ḥadīth*-rejection a primary focus and read that concern into numerous passages of the Qur'an, often stretching plausibility and paying little heed to context.[78]

Second, works which self-identify as TQQ while missing the characteristics of *tafsīr* in general, or of this type in particular. Two modern Egyptian publications which were criticized by Muslim scholars and seem to have fallen out of circulation are Muḥammad Abū Zayd ad-Damanhūrī's *al-Hidāya wa'l-ʿIrfān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi'l-Qurʾān*, and ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Khaṭīb's *at-Tafsīr al-Qurʾānī li'l-Qurʾān*.[79] More recently, the Iraqi scholar Ṭāhā Jābir al-ʿAlwānī (d. 2016) published *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Anʿām* as the first of a series on *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi'l-Qurʾān* – and several more chapters are included in a posthumous collection with this title.[80] In my assessment, the sparsity of Qur'anic citations in this work, together with tangents of tenuous relevance to the verses under discussion, suggest that the author used the claimed objectivity of TQQ as a cover to advance his personal theories about religion.

Third, thematic readings of the Qur'an. Gathering and comparing verses on a particular subject may be seen both as a stage within TQQ and as an extension of it, so works following the methodology of "thematic exegesis" (*at-tafsīr al-mawḍūʿī*) may well fit the genre.[81] However, alongside these attempts to survey the Qur'an objectively, there is another approach which acknowledges clearly the significance of the interpreter's convictions and social

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[78] See examples in Saeed, "Intraquranic Hermeneutics," 115–118.

[79] See al-Muṭayrī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi'l-Qurʾān*, 59–61 and Muḥammad Qajwī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi'l-Qurʾān: Dirāsa Tārīkhiyya wa Naẓariyya* (Rabat: ar-Rābiṭa al-Muḥammadiyya, 2015), 12–17. Both criticize ad-Damanhūrī's work severely, along with the later *al-Bayān bi'l-Qurʾān* by the Libyan writer Muṣṭafā Kamāl al-Mahdawī. Qajwī is softer towards al-Khaṭīb's work, while classing it as a personal reflection on the Qur'an that does not fit its self-description as TQQ. He further mentions two titles without further details: *Tafsīr al-Kitāb bi'l-Kitāb* by ʿAbd ar-Raḥīm ibn ʿAnbar aṭ-Ṭaḥṭāwī, and *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi'l-Qurʾān* by Aḥmad Fāyiq Rashad. I am also aware (thanks to Kamran Khan of Freiburg University) of a work in Urdu entitled *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi'l-Qurʾān* by Mohammad Abdul Hakim Khan (d. c. 1919), written while still a follower of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), though the Ahmadiyya disregarded his works (including an English Qur'an translation) after he split from them in 1907.

[80] Ṭāhā al-ʿAlwānī, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Anʿām* (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 2012), and *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi'l-Qurʾān* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2020). See Saeed, "Intraquranic Hermeneutics," 58 and citations in Chapter 2.

[81] See for various theoretical approaches: the Azharī scholar ʿAbd as-Sattār Fatḥ-Allāh Saʿīd's *al-Madkhal ilā at-Tafsīr al-Mawḍūʿī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Īmān, 2011), 60–70, and Muḥammad al-Būzī, *Mafhūm at-Taqwā fī al-Qurʾān wa'l-Ḥadīth* (Cairo: Dār as-Salām, 2011), 61–69. The latter belongs to the Moroccan school of "Qur'anic terminology" (*al-muṣṭalaḥ al-qurʾānī*) founded by ash-Shāhid al-Būshīkhī. See also Sohaib Saeed, "The Shāhīn Affair and the Evolution of *uṣūl al-tafsīr*," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 21:3 (2019), 127–128.

context.[82] Thematic study in this account amounts to a "reading" of the text proceeding from known assumptions and needs. For example, Aysha Hidayatullah describes the "keystone feminist exegetical strategy" of comparing Qur'anic verses and reading them in light of the scripture's "overall movement" towards egalitarianism.[83] There are overlaps with the preceding two categories, in that this genre tends to depend on *ḥadīth*-skepticism, and the concept of TQQ may be invoked by way of circumventing traditional approaches to *tafsīr* altogether.[84]

4.   Conclusion

Intratextual exegesis of the Qur'an is more multi-faceted, and the study of it richer for further exploration, than many perfunctory treatments of the subject would suggest. The sections above provided analysis of the principles underpinning this hermeneutic approach, followed by an overview of the methods involved. Then we have charted the history of writings focused on *tafsīr al-qurʾān bi'l-qurʾān*, which became more frequent and prominent in the modern period. However, the boundaries of the genre of TQQ, if such exists, are fluid due to a lack of definition within this field, alongside broader questions of exegesis and genre.

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[82] See Hassan Hanafi, "Method of Thematic Interpretation of the Qur'an" in *The Qurʾan as Text*, ed. Stefan Wild (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 202–205.

[83] Aysha Hidayatullah, *Feminist Edges of the Qur'an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 87–89. She notes the general lack of application of Ibn Taymiyya's (i.e. Ibn Kathīr's) recommendation of TQQ, and the critique by the likes of Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988) and Mustansir Mir of the "atomistic" exegesis of tradition. This provided an epistemic starting point for feminist commentators such as Amina Wadud, who coined the term "hermeneutics of *tawḥīd* (unity)".

[84] See for example Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qurʾan* (Austin: University of Texas Press, revised edition 2019), 10, which announces its disdain for traditional exegesis as "the work entirely of men." Barlas proposes a "hermeneutics derived from the Qur'an" which includes the traditionally understood "textual holism as the basis of 'intrascriptual investigation'" (19) – Ibn Kathīr is referenced via a secondary source. Whereas Mustansir Mir's advocacy for *naẓm* is cited approvingly (8), there is no assessment of the work of Iṣlāḥī, Mir's primary case study. In short, this work presents itself as a "reading" and "unreading" rather than a contribution to *tafsīr* per se.