INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA

UMI®
800-521-0600

An Examination of Bint al-Shāṭi''s Method of Interpreting the Qur'ān

by Sahiron Syamsuddin

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

Institute of Islamic Studies
McGill University
June 1998

Dedicated to my parents, my parents-in-law,
my beloved wife Zuhroul Fauwziyah, my daughter Ellina Vinajahi Shafa,
my brothers and my sisters

Abstract

Author : Sahiron Syamsuddin

Title : An Examination of Bint al-Shāṭi''s Method of Interpreting the Qur'ān

Department : Institute of Islamic Studies

Degree : M. A.

This thesis is devoted to the study of Bint al-Shāṭi''s method of interpreting the Qur'ān. The problems of consistency in terms of her hermeneutical theory and of the application of this method represent the focus of the study. It furthermore discusses her attitude towards tendentious and *i'jāz*-misoriented interpretations of the Qur'ān, of which both classical and modern exegetes are guilty in her eyes. Secondly, it studies how she applies her method in specific situations. The cross-referential method, and the concept of *irtibāṭ* (interrelation between verses) are two major points to be analyzed. Finally, it also discusses her theory concerning the *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation), and its application. Using phenomenological, comparative and analytical methods of analysis, and by means of primary and secondary sources, the thesis concludes that Bint al-Shāṭi' in many cases is not consistent in applying the method she established.

Résumé

Auteur : **Sahiron Syamsuddin**

Titre : **Un examen de la méthode d'interpretation qur'ānique de Bint al-Shāṭi'**

Département: **Institut des Études Islamiques**

Diplôme : **Maîtrise ès Arts**

Ce mémoire se consacre à l'étude de la méthode d'interprétation qur'ānique de Bint al-Shāṭi'. Les problèmes de la consistance la théorie herméneutique de l'auteur ainsi que l'application de cette méthode représentent l'orientation de cette étude. De plus, la recherche débattera, en premier lieu, de l'attitude de Bint al-Shāṭi' envers les interprétations tendencieuses et erronées de *i'jāz* (inimitabilité) du Qur'ān auxquelles à la fois les exégètes classiques et modernes, aux yeux de l'auteur, se sont rendus coupables. Deuxièmement, la recherche étudira comment Bint al-Shāṭi' applique sa méthode dans des situations spécifiques. La méthode confrontant les références, ainsi que le concept d'*irtibāṭ* (rapport entre vers) sont deux points majeurs qui y seront analysés. Finalement, l'étude débattera de la théorie de l'auter concernant l'*asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions de la révélation) ainsi que de son application. En utilisant les méthodes phénoménologique, comparative et critique, grâce aux sources primaires et secondaires, ce mémoire conclut que, dans plusieurs cas, l'application de la méthode de Bint al-Shāṭi' n'est pas consistante.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank first of all the ministry of religious affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, the CIDA and the McGill-Indonesia Project for the grant which enabled me to study at the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University. I also wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Issa J. Boullata for the valuable remarks on this thesis, which he supervised, as well as on other work with him I have done while pursuing the M. A. program. I also thank the principal of IAIN (State Institute of Islamic Studies) Sunan Kalijaga of Yogyakarta, and the dean of the Ushuluddin Faculty of the institute for their encouragement and support. I am also grateful to Steve Millier for editing my thesis, and the staff of the Islamic studies library, especially Salwa Ferahian and Wayne St. Thomas, for their help in providing the sources used in this thesis. As well, I should like to thank my friends Alan Guenther, Yudian Wahyudi, Achmad Zaini, Andi Nurbaethy, Inna Muthmainnah, Al Makin and Siti Handarah for lending me books, and Hamdiah Latif for helping me with German citations. Lastly, but not least, I am grateful to my parents, my parents-in-law, my beloved wife Zuhroul Fauziyah, and my daughter Ellina Vinajahi Shafa, for encouraging me to finish my course of study on time.

Table of Contents

The System of Transliteration

The system of transliteration of Arabic words and names applied in this thesis is that used by the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, with only slight modifications.

ب = b	ذ = dh	ط = ṭ	ل = l
ت = t	ر = r	ظ = ẓ	م = m
ث = th	ز = z	ع = ʻ	ن = n
ج = j	س = s	غ = gh	و = w
ح = ḥ	ش = sh	ف = f	ه = h
خ = kh	ص = ṣ	ق = q	ء = ʼ
د = d	ض = ḍ	ك = k	ي = y

Short : ـَ = a ; ـِ = i ; ـُ = u. Long : ا = ā; ى = ī ; و = ū

Diphthongs: أَي = ay; أَو = aw.

Long vowel with *tashdīd*: for يّ and وّ, īya and ūwa are employed.

In the case of *tāʾ marbūṭah* (ة) *h* is not written, unless it occurs within an *iḍāfah*, where it is transliterated with *at*.

The *hamzah* (أ) occurring in the initial position is omitted.

Introduction

This thesis is devoted to the study of the Qur'ānic hermeneutical method that Bint al-Shāṭi', an Egyptian woman scholar of this century, applies in her works on Qur'ānic studies. It deals with the development of her method, and with her theories concerning its application in particular cases. The problem of her consistency, or lack of thereof, is one of the chief concerns in this thesis.

Amīn al-Khūlī (d. 1966) points out in his *Manāhij Tajdīd* that attempts to interpret the Qur'ān seem never to cease.[1] In the light of both Islamic doctrine and historical perspectives, his statement rings true. There is no disagreement among Muslims that the Qur'ān was revealed as religious guidance for all humankind,[2] valid from the time of its revelation to the Prophet Muḥammad until the Day of Judgement. This doctrine, however, results in the constant need for understanding the Qur'ān. Even the Prophet Muḥammad was ordered to explain the Qur'ānic message to his Companions.[3] After his death, his Companions (*ṣaḥāba*), such as 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās,[4] and their Successors

---

[1]Amīn al-Khūlī, *Manāhij Tajdīd fī al-Naḥw wa al-Balāgha wa al-Tafsīr wa al-Adab* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1961), 302.

[2]See, e.g., Q. 2 (*S. al-Baqara*): 185; Q. 3 (*S. Āl 'Imrān*): 138; and Q. 5 (*S. al-Mā'ida*: 49.

[3]See, e.g., Q. 2 (*S. al-Baqara*): 221; Q. 5 (*S. al-Mā'ida*): 16 and 21.

[4]It is recorded that Mujāhid transmitted Ibn 'Abbās' *Tafsīr*. See, for example, Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*, edited by 'Alī Muḥammad 'Umar (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 1972), 1: 232-3.

(*tābi'ūn*), such as Mujāhid (d. 104/722)[5] and Qatāda (d. 118 A.H.),[6] continued the attempt to grasp the message of the Qur'ān. The interpretations of this formative period were later compiled in *ḥadīth* (prophetic tradition) works, such as that of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870). The exegetical works of classical times, such as that of Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), are colored to a great extent by the reports from previous generations. The reports-oriented approach, however, was not the only way of interpreting the Qur'ān in the classical period. Lexical, rhetorical, philosophical, and mystical approaches to the Qur'ān, such as those of al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), and Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638/1240) also represented other methods of interpretations in that period. Modern exegetes, such as Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905), have employed other hermeneutical methods, most of which emphasize the Qur'ān as a guidance for human lives (*hudan li al-nās*). Some, such as Ṭantāwī Jawharī (d. 1941) have tried to impose modern science on the Qur'ānic message in their exegetical works.

Looking at the history of the discipline, one can say that the interpretations of the Qur'ān that satisfied one generation did not always satisfy the next. This is certainly true for many Muslim scholars of our own day. Bint al-Shāṭi', a modern exegete, for example, says that classical interpretations in many ways subjected the Qur'ān to interpretation in the light of extraneous elements,

---

[5]It is alleged that Shibl ibn 'Abbād al-Makkī transmitted Mujāhid's *tafsīr*. See, e.g., al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*, 2: 305-8.

[6]Shaybān ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān reported that he received *tafsīr* from Qatāda ibn Di'āma. See al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*, 2: 43-4.

such as the *isrā'īliyāt* (Judeo-Christian materials), and to sectarian tendencies (*al-ta'wīlāt al-'aṣabīya*), neither of which are really necessary for understanding the Qur'ānic message.[7] She also accuses many interpreters of producing "forced" interpretations, and others of simply misunderstanding the unique rhetoric of the Qur'ān. In response to this situation, Bint al-Shāṭi' composed many works on Qur'ānic studies, such as *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Rhetorical Exegesis of the Qur'ān) in two volumes, *al-Qur'ān wa al-Tafsīr al-'Aṣrī* (the Qur'ān and Modern Exegesis), *al-Shakhṣīya al-Islāmīya* (the Islamic Personality) and others. To achieve this purpose, Bint al-Shāṭi' develops and employs the method that her professor Amīn al-Khūlī (who later became her husband) explained in his book *Manāhij Tajdīd*.[8]

To my knowledge, there have appeared at least six works focusing on Bint al-Shāṭi's exegesis. First, Kenneth Cragg in his *The Mind of the Qur'ān* (published in 1973), describes some of Bint al-Shāṭi"s techniques of interpreting the Qur'ān, concentrating especially on her treatment of Q. 93 (*Sūrat al-Ḍuḥā*). Here, Cragg appreciates her bravery in criticizing past interpreters.[9] Secondly, and more comprehensively, Issa J. Boullata in his article "Modern Qur'ānic Exegesis: A Study of Bint al-Shāṭi"s Method," published in 1974, describes the great

---

[7]See 'Ā'isha 'Abd al-Raḥmān (Bint al-Shāṭi'), *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1990), 1: 16; and 2: 8.

[8]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 10.

influence of Amīn al-Khūlī's method on Bint al-Shāṭi''s *tafsīr*. He also analyzes many of her new hermeneutical findings.[10] Thirdly, like Boullata, J. J. G. Jansen concentrates in his 1974 book *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* on Bint al-Shāṭi''s debt to al-Khūlī in the field of methodology of interpretation. He argues his case, as Cragg does, on the basis of her interpretation of Q. 93.[11] Fourth, there is Muḥammad 'Atā al-Sīd's 1975 dissertation entitled "The Hermeneutical Problem of the Qur'an in Islamic History," in which he studies Bint al-Shāṭi''s hermeneutics. As he himself acknowledges, his study is very much dependent on Boullata's conclusions. In this work, however, he uncovers new information in the form of critiques by scholars of Bint al-Shāṭi''s hermeneutics concerning the problem of the consistency of the Qur'ānic language, and the *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation). His approach, however, seems too apologetic, too concerned to defend Bint al-Shāṭi's position.[12] Fifth, we have Muḥammad Amīn's 1992 master's thesis written for McGill University, entitled "A Study of Bint al-Shāṭi''s Exegesis." In his thesis, he provides a biography of Bint al-Shāṭi' and investigates her exegetical

---

[9]See Kenneth Cragg, *The Mind of The Qur'ān, Chapters in Reflection* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1973), 70-74.

[10]See Issa J. Boullata, "Modern Qur'ānic Exegesis: A Study of Bint al-Shāṭi'," *The Muslim World* 64 (1974), 103-13.

[11]See J.J.G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 65-76.

[12]See Muḥammad 'Atā al-Sīd, "The Hermeneutical Problem of the Qur'an in Islamic History" (Ph.D disssertation, Temple University, 1975), 341-7.

achievements. However, his discussion of the latter is likewise dependent on Boullata's findings, and is very descriptive.[13] Generally speaking, these five contributions are appreciative of Bint al-Shāṭi''s method of interpretation. Finally and by contrast, Muhammad Amin Tawfiq, in his 1976 article "Interpretation and Lessons of Surah 'al-Ḍuḥā'" takes a critical approach to her methodology, especially regarding the issue of the *qasam* (oath). However, Tawfiq is not convincing due to his misunderstanding of Bint al-Shāṭi''s approach to her subject.[14]

The purpose of this thesis is to examine Bint al-Shāṭi''s exegetical method. In order that the thesis should focus on the main subject, I will not explore her biography, except in a note.[15] In the following pages I will attempt to shed new

---

[13]See Muḥammad Amīn, "A Study of Bint al-Shāṭi''s Exegesis" (M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1992), 47-90.

[14]See Muhammad Amin Tawfiq, "Interpretation and Lessons of Surah 'al-Ḍuḥā'", *Majallatu'l Azhar* (1976), 7-16.

[15] Bint al-Shāṭi' was the pen-name of 'Ā'ishah 'Abd al-Raḥmān. She was born in Dumyāṭ (Damietta) in 1913. She was educated traditionally by her father, who would not allow her to attend a public school. However, thanks to her mother and maternal great-grand-father, who concealed her attendance at a public school, she was able to finish her education there. In 1936 she enrolled in the Faculty of Letters at Fuad I University (later Cairo University). She completed a doctoral degree in 1950 with a dissertation on the poetry of Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī. She then went on to teach at several universities in succession, and to write many books and articles on various fields, such as Qur'ānic studies, literary criticism, feminism, history and autobiography, and creative writing. According to Muḥammad Amīn and Hoffman-Ladd, she wrote more than sixty books in the above fields. Abāẓa al-Sabī'ī divides Bint al-Shāṭi''s works into two kinds: (1) Qur'ānic and Islamic studies, and (2) general studies, listing 40 books that she wrote during her lifetime. For more information, see C. Kooji, "Bint al-Shāṭi': A Suitable Case for Biography?," in *The Challenge of the Middle East*, edited by Ibrāhīm A. El-Sheikh et al. (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 1982), 67-72; Muḥammad Amīn, "A Study of Bint al-Shāṭi''s Exegesis," 6-23; Valerie J. Hoffman-Ladd, "'Ā'isha 'Abd al-Raḥmān," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, edited by John L.

light on Bint al-Shāṭi''s exegesis by analyzing her method. In many places, critical analyses will be expressed. There are in fact three questions in particular that will be answered in this thesis. First, how and why does Bint al-Shāṭi' develop her hermeneutical method? This is very much related to her attitude towards previous interpretation. Secondly, where does Bint al-Shāṭi''s method place her in the history of the interpretation of the Qur'ān? Finally, is she consistent in applying the method she established?

To answer these questions, the thesis will be divided into three chapters and a conclusion. Chapter one discusses Bint al-Shāṭi''s critical attitude regarding past exegetes. In this chapter, we will try to determine why she criticized previous interpretations to such a great extent, and how she built her own method, which she calls *"al-manhaj al-istiqrā'ī"* (inductive method), and which I refer to in this thesis as the cross-referential method. Chapter two examines what Amīn al-Khūlī calls *"dirasā fī al-Qur'ān"* (a study of the Qur'ān), in order to determine whether Bint al-Shāṭi' is consistent in applying her method in specific situations. Her use of the cross-referential method in her interpretation of Q. 103 (*Sūrat al-'Aṣr*) and her treatment of the case of *ḥurrīyat al-'aqīda* (freedom of belief) will be analyzed in this chapter. Another topic to be examined concerns

---

Esposito (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1: 4-5; Miriam Cooke, "Arab Women Writers," in *Modern Arabic Literature,* edited by M. M. Badawi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 449; Abāẓa al-Sabī'ī, "Bint al-Shāṭi'," in *Contemporary Arab Writers: Biographies and Autobiographies,* edited by Robert B. Campbell (Beirut: In Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart, 1996), 1: 362-3; and Paul Starkey, "'Ā'isha 'Abd al-Raḥmān," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature,* ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 1: 18.

her idea of the *irtibāṭ* (interconnection) between verses and *sūras*. Chapter three explores her treatment of the *asbāb al-nuzūl*, the study of which Bint al-Shāṭi' calls *mā ḥawl al-Qur'ān* (what surrounds the Qur'ān). Again, the main purpose here is to see Bint al-Shāṭi''s theory and application at work. The thesis will end with a conclusion related to the above discussion.

The method of analysis that will be used in this thesis is, first of all, the phenomenological approach, meaning that I will objectively explore what Bint al-Shāṭi' says about the interpretations and methods of previous exegetes, as well as about her own method and its application. Comparative analysis is also employed, for in order to understand comprehensively her positions on the subjects under discussion, it will be necessary to compare them with those of other Qur'ān exegetes, and in some places, with biblical hermeneutics. This analysis is important in helping us understand where Bint al-Shāṭi' should be placed in the history of Qur'ān exegesis, and of scriptural interpretation in general. Critical analysis is also a major feature of this thesis. This method will deal with the problem of consistency between her theory and its application. To avoid passing judgement, the thesis uses *internal* criticism.

In analyzing the subject matter under discussion, the author employs both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources, for the most part available only in Arabic, mostly concern Qur'ānic studies. Bint al-Shāṭi''s works in this field naturally represent the most important sources of this thesis. Some original

works on biblical hermeneutics are also used in comparative analyses. The secondary sources that are written in English, French and German dealing with Islamic studies in general, Qur'ān exegesis, biblical hermeneutics and other topics, have also been drawn upon in the writing of this study.

Chapter One

Bint al-Shāṭi''s Criticism of Previous Exegetical Tradition in Islam

Bint al-Shāṭi' defines *tafsīr* as an attempt to understand the Qur'ān that consists in explaining and clarifying the text by using interpretive as opposed to synonymous language.[16] She says that it is a discipline that has been practiced by Muslim scholars from a very early period, and acknowledges that such exegetes as al-Farrā' (d. 207/822),[17] al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923),[18] al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144),[19] al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210),[20] Abū Ḥayyān (d. 754/1344)[21] and Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905),[22] made invaluable contributions to this field. However, their interpretations, according to her, are colored to a great extent by tendentious projections, sometimes based on sectarian and extra-Qur'ānic

---

[16]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1990), 2: 9.

[17]See Abū Zakarīyā Yaḥyā ibn Ziyād al-Farrā', *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Najjār (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣrīya li al-Ta'līf wa al-Tarjama, n.d.).

[18]See Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1986-7).

[19]See Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq al-Tanzīl wa 'Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Ta'wīl* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, n.d).

[20]See Fakhr al-Dīn al- Rāzī Muḥammad ibn 'Umar, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, n.d.).

[21]See Muḥammad Ibn Yūsuf Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr al-Musammā bi al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* (Riyāḍ: Maktabat wa Maṭābi' al-Naṣr al-Ḥadītha, n.d.).

[22]See Muḥammad 'Abduh, *Tafsīr Juz' 'Amma* (Cairo: Maṭābi' al-Sha'b, n.d.).

materials, and often ignore the miraculous nature (*i'jāz*) of the Qur'ān.[23] Besides spreading sectarian doctrines,[24] bad enough in itself, this results in Muslims being exposed to much more than the Qur'ānic message and the subtle meanings (*asrār*) of its words, a problem which is, in her eyes, the most significant in the exegetical field. Accordingly, Bint al-Shāṭi' often criticizes such conjectures on the part of previous interpreters.

I. On Tendentious Interpretations

The tendentious interpretations which draw Bint al-Shāṭi''s criticism are the *Isrā'īlīyāt*-oriented, theological, mystical, philosophical, and so-called "scientific" hermeneutical approaches.

The *Isrā'īlīyāt*, which consist of stories derived from the Bible (*Tawrāh* and *Injīl*), particularly in regard to the prophets, the ancient Israelites (*Banū Isrā'īl*), and Jewish folklore,[25] are found in many works of Islamic literature, including those of an exegetical variety. Abbott remarks in her *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri* that during the first century of Islam Muslims read and transmitted

---

[23]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *Al-Qur'ān wa al-Tafsīr al-'Aṣrī* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1970), 24-32; and idem, *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 8.

[24]See, e.g., Ismail K. Poonawala, "Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwaza's Principles of Modern Exegesis: A Contribution toward Quranic Hermeneutics," in *Approaches to the Qur'ān*, ed. G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 235.

[25]G. Vajda, "Isrā'īliyyāt," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. E. van Donzel, B. Lewis and Ch. Pellat (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 4: 211. See also Yūsuf 'Abd al-Raḥmān in his *Muqaddimat Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, published together with Ismā'īl Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1987), 1: 18.

Biblical materials from the *Ahl al-Kitāb* ("the People of the Book") who had converted to Islam, such as Ka'b al-Aḥbār (d. 32-4/652-4)[26] and Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. 110-6/728-34).[27] Many Companions, such as Salmān al-Fārisī (d. 32-4/652-4),[28] Zayd ibn Thābit (d. 45-55/665-74)[29] (the editor-in-chief of the 'Uthmānic edition of the Qur'ān), and Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68-70/687-9)[30] (the so-called father of Qur'ān interpretation) are reported to have had considerable knowledge of the *Isrā'īlīyāt*, and to have passed this knowledge on to others.[31]

Although, since about the middle of the second century of Islam, a general prohibition against reporting the *Isrā'īlīyāt* seems to have been urged by some Successors (*tābi'ūn*), such as al-A'mash (d. 148/765) and Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778),[32] the practice still continued. It is even recorded that, after the

---

[26]See Muḥammad ibn Sa'd, *al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1958), 7: 445; and Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, ed. Ḥusayn al-Asad (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1986), 3: 489-94. See also Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 2: 8.

[27]See al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, 4: 544-57, especially 445, and 447. See also Nabia Abbott, *Studies*, 2: 8.

[28]Ibn Sa'd reported that Salmān al-Fārisī, who converted to Islam just after the Prophet arrived in Medina, used to be a slave of a Jewish person of Banū Qurayẓa. Al-Fārisī read many books of revelation to seek religion. See Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmā' al-Rijāl*, ed. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1992), 11: 247.

[29]See Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 2: 358; and al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, 10: 28.

[30]See Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 2: 365; and al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, 15: 154.

[31]Nabia Abbott, *Studies*, 2: 8-9.

time of the Successors, *Isrā'īlīyāt* reports were even more popular than ever, reflecting a genuine love for these Judeo-Christian tales.[33] Al-Ṭabarī, for instance, collects in his *Jāmi' al-Bayān* a great number of *Isrā'īlīyāt* reports on the basis of which, in part, previous generations had interpreted the Qur'ānic verses which speak of the biblical prophets and their societies.[34] This approach was followed by others, such as al-Khāzin (d. 741/1340),[35] and al-Tha'ālibī (d. 873-4/1468-9).[36] The transmission of such reports was maintained throughout the classical period, because, apart from the fact that the Prophet did not strictly prohibit the practice,[37] the Arab people, who were without a written tradition of their own,

---

[32]See Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī bi Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Bāz (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, n.d.), 13: 334. Nabia Abbott, *Studies*, 2: 10.

[33]Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn*, 1: 176.

[34]Peter G. Riddle, "The Transmission of Narrative-Based Exegesis in Islam: Al-Baghdādī's Use of Stories in his Commentary on the Qur'ān and a Malay Descendent," in *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought & Society*, ed. Peter G. Riddle and Tony Street (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 59.

[35]See 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Istiqāma, 1955).

[36]See 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad al-Tha'ālibī, *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Ammār al-Ṭālibī (Algiers: al-Mu'assasa al-Waṭanīya li al-Kitāb, 1985). The editor remarks in his introduction to this work that in some places the author criticizes some of the *Isrā'īlīyāt* he quotes. Cf. Riddle, "The Transmission of Narrative-Based Exegesis in Islam," 61-9.

[37]There are three different *ḥadīths* governing the attitudes towards *Isrā'īlīyāt*. The first is one from which it may be inferred that transmitting *Isrā'īlīyāt* is permitted. It is reported on the authority of Abū Hurayra that the Prophet said: "Report from Jewish people; there is no objection." The second justifies the contention that the Prophet neither ordered nor prohibited the reporting of *Isrā'īlīyāt*. He said: "Don't deem the people of the Book credible, and don't accuse them of lying, but say: 'We believe in *Allāh* and what He revealed to us." The last one is a *ḥadīth* that prohibits the practice, in

understandably turned to those with such a tradition, such as the "People of the Book."[38] Another reason is that most of the Qur'ānic verses which speak of the stories of previous prophets and societies discuss them only in general terms. This left Muslims, who needed more detailed information, with no other choice but to refer to the stories of "the People of the Book." Moreover, according to Bint al-Shāṭi', the practice also resulted from the tendentious attempt by Jews who had converted to Islam to insert Judaic ideas into the Muslim understanding of the Qur'ān.[39]

Recognizing the fact that the *Isrā'īlīyāt* have colored much exegetical literature, Ibn Taymīya (d. 725/1328), in his *Muqaddima fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, and his disciple Ibn Kathīr (d. 775/1373), in the introduction to his *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, explain how Muslims should approach such reports. After dividing the types of *Isrā'īlīyāt* into three, i.e., (1) those that are proven by Islamic teachings

---

which the Prophet is quoted as having said: "Don't ask the 'People of the Book' about anything." Al-Qasṭallānī maintains in his *Irshād al-Sārī* that the *ḥadīth* is only concerned with the prohibition against asking them about the *sharī'a*. See Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Qasṭallānī, *Irshād al-Sārī li Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1990), 15: 368-70; Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī bi Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Bāz (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, n.d.), 13: 333-5; and Muḥammad Shams al-Ḥaqq al-'Aẓīm Ābādī, *'Awn al-Ma'būd fī Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad 'Uthmān (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1979), 10: 96-7; and M. J. Kister, *"Haddithū 'an banī isrā'īla wa-lā ḥaraja:* A Study of an Early Tradition,"*Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972), 215-39.

[38]See 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, ed. 'Alī 'Abd al-Wāḥid Wāfī (Cairo: Lajnat al-Bayān al-'Arabī, 1958), 1: 490-1. See also al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn*, 1: 177-8.

[39]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 8, idem, *al-Qur'ān wa al-Tafsīr*, 31; and idem, *al-Isrā'īlīyāt fī al-Ghazw al-Fikrī* (Cairo: Ma'had al-Buḥūth wa al-Dirāsāt al-'Arabīya, 1975), 87-145.

[e.g. the Qur'ān], (2) those that contradict these teachings, and (3) those that are left unexplained (*maskūtun 'anhu*), they remark that one should not employ them due to the fact that most of the *Isrā'īlīyāt* tales contradict one another, and that besides there is no religious advantage to knowing detailed *Isrā'īlīyāt* reports.[40] However, this does not seem to constitute a very severe prohibition against *Isrā'īlīyāt*-based interpretation.

Bint al-Shāṭi', like many other modern scholars,[41] criticizes this exegetical tradition.[42] In her *al-Qur'ān wa al-Tafsīr al-'Aṣrī*, she remarks that it is not suitable to interpret the Qur'ān on the basis of *Isrā'īlīyāt*. She, therefore, reproaches Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd for interpreting Q. 44 (*S. al-Dukhān*): 10-11, and Q. 14 (*S. Ibrāhīm*): 48, verses which speak of the appearance of the Day of Resurrection, by referring to Yuḥannā's apocalyptic vision in which he saw the indications of that event,[43] and for identifying Gog and Magog (*Ya'jūj wa Ma'jūj*), referred to in Q.

---

[40]See Ismā'īl ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1987), 1: 5.

[41]Among them are Muḥammad 'Abduh, Rashīd Riḍā, and Abū Rayya. See J. M. S. Baljon, *Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961), 16; Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran*, 27; G. H. A. Juynboll, *The Authenticity of the Tradition Literature: Discussions in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), 121-38; Roland Meynet, Louis Pouzet, Nā'ila Fārūqī, and Ahyaf Sinnū, *Ṭarīq al-Taḥlīl al-Balāghī wa al-Tafsīr: Taḥlīlāt Nuṣūṣ min al-Kitāb al-Muqaddas wa min al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1993), 39.

[42]See Boullata, "Modern Qur'ān Exegesis," 105; Muhammad 'Ata al Sid, "The Hermeneutical Problem," 342; and Yudian Wahyudi, "Ali Shariati and Bint al-Shāṭi' on Free Will: A Comparison," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, 1 (1998), 43.

18 (*S. al-Kahf*): 94, with Field Marshal Montgomery and Mao Tse Tung.[44] Her avoidance of *Isrā'īlīyat* is quite marked in several passages of her own *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*.[45] When interpreting Q. 89 (*S. al-Fajr*): 6-12, for example, which speaks of the pre-Islamic Arab tribes of 'Ād and Thamūd, to which belonged the Prophets Hūd and Ṣāliḥ respectively, she quotes several of the opinions of previous interpreters, namely al-Ṭabarī,[46] al-Zamakhsharī,[47] Abū Ḥayyān,[48] al-Rāzī[49] and Muḥammad 'Abduh.[50] All of these furnish detailed controversial information about the tribes,[51] leading her to remark:

> Most of what they said about the [physical] tallness, names, numbers and building materials [of 'Ād and Thamūd] are from the *Isrā'īlīyāt* that are crammed into the book of Islam [the Qur'ān] either in terms of its text or its context. In order to purify it of involvement with the *Isrā'īlīyāt*, we appeal to the Qur'ān against those opinions, because they become more numerous and contradict one another. If we wish more explanation of the verses of *Sūrat al-Fajr* then we rather seek it from the Qur'ān.[52]

---

[43]See Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd, *al-Qur'ān: Muḥāwala li Fahm 'Aṣrī* (Beirut: Dār al-'Awda, 1979), 181-6, and 193-4; Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa al-Tafsīr*, 61, and 63; and idem, *al-Isrā'īlīyāt*, 168.

[44]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa al-Tafsīr*, 62.

[45]See e.g., Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 12; and 2: 8. See also her *al-Isrā'īlīyāt*, 170-1.

[46]See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 30: 111-4.

[47]See al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 4: 747-8.

[48]See Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, 8: 469-70.

[49]See al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 30: 396.

[50]See 'Abduh, *Tafsīr Juz' 'Amma*, 61.

[51]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 138-41.

Afterwards, listing all Qur'ānic verses dealing with the stories of 'Ād and Thamūd, which, according to Khalaf Allāh, are meant as a warning to those who disbelieve in God's intended punishment of disbelief,[53] Bint al-Shāṭi' elaborates that the mention of the 'Ād, which was Hūd's tribe, always occurs in the Qur'ān as an exemplary warning, stressing their disbelief in their Prophet, their tyranny in the world, and the divine punishment they received.[54]

From the above, one can say that the *Isrā'īlīyāt* accounts, whose employment by both classical and modern interpreters she criticizes severely, are nonetheless given a broader, if not indeed inaccurate, definition by Bint al-Shāṭi'. It seems that the term *Isrā'īlīyāt*, which had been used by many scholars only in reference to Judeo-Christian narratives, was regarded by her as designating every prophet's tale that is not mentioned in detail in the Qur'ān. The detailed extra-Qur'ānic information about the 'Ād and Thamūd is not to be found in the Bible (including the Torah), as al-Ṭabarī points out in his *Tārīkh*,[55] but in pre-Islamic (*Jāhilī*) folk literature, as Stetkevych proves in his *Muḥammad and the*

---

[52]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 141.

[53]See Muḥammad Aḥmad Khalaf Allāh, *al-Fann al-Qaṣasī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣrīya, 1950-1), 293.

[54]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 141-2.

[55]See Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1879-1901), 1: 252-3. See also R. Arnaldez, *Le Coran: Guide de Lecture* (Paris: Desclée, 1983), 105-6; and Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 77.

Golden Bough.[56] Similarly, the interpretation of Gog and Magog as Field Marshal Montgomery and Mao Tse Tung are characterized by Bint al-Shāṭi' as *Isrā'īlīyāt*, but without any basis in fact.

Wahyudi detects in Bint al-Shāṭi''s rejection of the *Isrā'īlīyāt* a manifestation of her resentment of Zionist propaganda in the Muslim world.[57] Given the political context of her times, his opinion could be right. However, phenomenologically speaking, it is sufficient to say that her refusal of the *Isrā'īlīyāt* is entirely in keeping with her concern for literary analysis. Bint al-Shāṭi' explicitly states that the inclusion of *Isrā'īlīyāt* as a source for the interpretation of the Qur'ān can lead interpreters to discuss things irrelevant to its text. Scientific method, she argues, rejects interpretation of a text on the basis of material that is not conveyed in its words and context.[58]

The second kind of tendentious interpretation to which Bin al-Shāti''s criticism is addressed concerns the introduction of theological debate into attempts at understanding the Qur'ān. The theological sects (*madhhab*s) which she targets in particular include the Qadarīya (believers in free-will), whose ideas were later adopted by the Mu'tazila, and the Jabrīya (determinists) who differed considerably in terms of their ideas. It was inevitable that scholars

---

[56]See Jaroslav Stetkevych, *Muḥammad and the Golden Bough* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 50-56.

[57] Wahyudi, "Ali Shariati and Bint al-Shāṭi'," 43.

[58]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Isrā'īlīyāt*, 92; and idem *al-Qur'ān wa al-Tafsīr*, 30.

should become propagandists for the sectarian principles to which they adhered. They, of course, cited either rational or scriptural arguments, or both, in support of their beliefs.[59] Inevitably, the Qur'ān itself was appealed to in order to strengthen their position. For example, al-Zamakhsharī, a Mu'tazilī interpreter, cites Q. 10 (*S. Yūnus*): 108,[60] and Q. 53 (*S. al-Najm*): 39-42[61] (among others) in support of the Mu'tazilī principle of human free will.[62] However, those Qur'ānic verses, such as Q. 11 (*S. Hūd*): 107[63] and Q. 28 (*S. al-Qaṣaṣ*): 56,[64] whose literal meanings seem clearly to contradict this principle are accordingly declared *mutashābihāt* (ambiguous verses) by al-Zamakhsharī in order that they may be

---

[59]See Richard C. Martin, *Islamic Studies: A History of Religions Approach* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1996), 109.

[60]The verse reads: "Say: O mankind! Now hath the Truth from Your Lord come unto You. So whoever is guided, is guided only for (the good of) his soul, and whoever erreth erreth only against it. And I am not a warder over you." The translation of this verse and those of other verses in this thesis are taken from Muhammed Marmaduke Pickthall's *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (Delhi: World Islamic Publications, 1981).

[61]The verses read: "And that man hath only that for which he maketh effort. And that his effort will be seen. And afterward he will be repaid for it with fullest payment, And that thy Lord is the goal."

[62]Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, 2: 375, 430. Commenting on Q. 10: 108, al-Zamakhsharī says: "Those who choose the right guidance (*al-hudā*) and follow the truth (*al-ḥaqq*) will not be given reward through their choice other than for their own selves; and those who prefer the wrong path (*al-ḍalāl*) will harm no other than themselves." See also Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Shakhṣiya al-Islāmiya* (Beirut: University of Beirut, 1972), 48; and Helmut Gätje, *The Qur'ān and its Exegesis: Selected Texts with Classical and Modern Muslim Interpretation*, trans. Alford T. Welch (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), 36.

[63]The verse reads: "... Lo! thy Lord is Doer of what he will."

[64]The verse reads: "Lo! thou (O Muhammad) guidest not whom thou loveth, but Allah guideth whom he will. And He is best aware of those who walk aright."

reinterpreted to fit his theories.[65] Those who held the deterministic view, on the other hand, based their position on the verses that the Mu'tazilīs regarded as *mutashābihāt*, and ignored the other problematic verses.[66]

In this instance, Bint al-Shāṭi' rejects both positions as well as the hermeneutical methods employed to derive them. She says:

> It is impossible to accept some verses and turn away from others, since the whole Qur'ān is from God. The Q. 4 (*S. al-Nisā'*): 82 says: "Will they not then ponder on the Qur'ān? If it had been from other than God they would have found therein much incongruity."[67]

---

[65]Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 3: 422. Q. 28: 56 which literally refers to the idea of determinism, is interpreted in such a way that it accords with the idea of free-will. He says: "You (Muḥammad) will not be able to convert into Islam anyone from your tribe or others, whom you wish to do so, because you are a human being; you do not know whether their hearts are sealed (*maṭbū' 'alā qalbihi*) or not. But, God converts to Islam anybody He likes, for He knows which one is *maṭbū' 'alā qalbihi*. And in this case the divine *luṭf* ("kindness") benefits him. God's *luṭf* goes together with him in order to direct him to Islam." This *ta'wīl* constitutes an hermeneutical application of the interpretive theory of *mutashābih* held by the previous Mu'tazilīs, like 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1024). The latter points out in his *al-Mughnī* that those verses which literally contradict the rational notion of *tawḥīd* (the oneness of God) and *'adl* (divine justice), and which are, therefore, called *mutashābihāt* (ambiguous verses), have to be interpreted through rational interpretation in the light of those *muḥkamāt* (clear verses) which are literally in consonance with the notion. See al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār ibn Aḥmad al-Hamadhānī, *Mutashābih al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Adnān Muḥammad Zarzūr (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, n.d.), 1: 1-39; Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, *al-Ittijāh al-'Aqlī fī al-Tafsīr: Dirāsa fī Qaḍīyat al-Majāz fī al-Qur'ān 'ind al-Mu'tazila* (Beirut: Dār al-Tanwīr, 1982), 180-239; and William Thomson, "Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam: A Critique and Appreciation," *the Muslim World* 40 (1950), 207-216. See also Régis Blachère, *Introduction au Coran* (Paris: Éditions Besson & Chantemerle, 1959), 216-7. In this work, Blachère maintains that the Mu'tazilī exegeses were very much influenced by hellenistic ideas.

[66]See 'Alī ibn Ismā'īl al-Ash'arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn wa Ikhtilāf al-Muṣallīn*, ed. Hellmut Ritter (Istanbul: Maṭba'at al-Dawla, 1930), 2: 540-1; and Maymūn ibn Muḥammad al-Nasafī, *Tabṣirat al-Adilla fī Uṣūl al-Dīn 'Alā Ṭarīqat al-Imām Abī Manṣūr al-Māturīdī*, ed. Claude Salamé (Limassol-Chyprus: al-Jaffān & al-Jābī Imprimeurs-Editeurs, 1993), 2: 595. In this passage, al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114) criticizes both the Mu'tazila and the Jabrīya for ignoring the verses which contradict their ideas.

By means of inductive method (*al-manhaj al-istiqrā'ī*),[68] on the basis of which she tries to arrive at the purely Qur'ānic perspective on the subject, Bint al-Shāṭi' comes to the conclusion that: (1) human will differs from God's will in that the former is acquired (*kasbiyya*), preceded by intention, thinking and desire, and characterized by strength and weakness, whereas the latter is not;[69] (2) unlike human will, divine will is an effective (*nāfidh*) and inescapable (*mubram*) fate;[70] (3) there is no contradiction between the human will and the divine one, meaning that through acquired will human beings choose what they will and act on that choice, while the divine will paves the way for them to act on their choices;[71] and (4) the divine will is neither concerned with the guidance of those who choose to

---

[67]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Shakhṣiyya*, 49; and idem, *al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāyā al-Insān* (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 1982), 147.

[68]She searches for the meanings of the verses: Q. 36 (*S. Yā Sīn*): 40, 47, 82; Q. 17 (*S. al-Isrā'*): 18-19, 94-95; Q. 2 (*Āl 'Imrān*): 145; Q. 13 (*S. al-Ra'd*): 11, Q. 8 (*S. al-Anfāl*): 53; Q. 11 (*S. Hūd*): 101; Q. 92 (*S. al-Layl*): 12-13; Q. 6 (*S. al-An'ām*): 35, 148; Q. 41 (*S. Fuṣṣilat*): 14; Q. 43 (*S. al-Zukhruf*): 20, 60; Q. 73 (*S. al-Muzzammil*): 19; Q. 74 (*S. al-Muddaththir*): 32-37, 53-55; Q. 39 (*S. al-Zumar*): 14-15; Q. 16 (*S. al-Naḥl*): 9; Q. 32 (*S. al-Sajda*): 13; Q. 5 (*al-Mā'ida*): 48; Q. 25 (*S. al-Furqān*): 45; Q. 42 (*S. al-Shūrā*): 32-33; and Q. 18 (*S. al-Kahf*): 23-24. See also Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Shakhsiyya*, 49-55.

[69]See Q. 3 (*S. Āl 'Imrān*): 159. See also Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Shakhṣiyya*, 47; and idem, *al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāyā*, 133.

[70]See Q. 13 (*S. al-Ra'd*): 11, Q. 16 (*S. al-Naḥl*): 40, and Q. 36 (*S. Yā Sīn*): 82. See also Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Shakhṣiyya*, 49; and idem, *al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāyā*, 137.

[71]See Q. 3 (*S. Āl 'Imrān*): 145, Q. 4 (*S. al-Nisā'*): 134, Q. 11 (*S. Hūd*): 15, 101, Q. 17 (*S. al-Isrā'*): 18, Q. 33 (*S. al-Aḥzāb*): 28-9, Q. 42 (*S. al-Shūrā*): 20, and Q. 92 (*S. al-Layl*): 5-10. See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Shakhṣiyya*, 49-50; idem, *al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāyā*, 135-6.

go astray from religious teachings, nor with the breaking of the *sunnat Allāh* (God's Law) in His creatures.[72]

According to Bint al-Shāṭi', the weakness of the disputants lies in their methodology in interpreting the Qur'ān, which is based on their personal projections and bound up with sectarian tendencies.[73] This conclusion is echoed by many scholars, such as Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd and Richard C. Martin, who have studied the history of the emergence of the classical theological sects.[74]

A very tendentious problem in the field of *tafsīr* is also to be found, according to Bint al-Shāṭi', in *al-tafsīr al-ishārī* (symbolic interpretation), which is manifested in mystical (*ṣufī*) and philosophical (*falsafī*) interpretations. The symbolic interpretation (*al-tafsīr al-ishārī*), which is a hermeneutical exercise on which interpreters rely in trying to understand the concealed indications (*ishārāt khafiya*) of Qur'ānic expressions,[75] has been the subject of much debate. Those who admit such interpretation, which does not condradict, even though it

---

[72]See Q. 5 (*S. al-Mā'ida*): 48, Q. 6 (*S. al-An'ām*): 148, Q. 10 (*S. Yūnus*): 99, Q. 16 (*S. al-Naḥl*): 9, Q. 17 (*S. al-Isrā'*): 94-5, Q. 25 (*S. al-Furqān*): 45, Q. 32 (*S. al-Sajda*): 13, Q. 41 (*S. Fuṣṣilat*): 14, Q. 42 (*S. al-Shūrā*): 32-3, Q. 43 (*S. al-Zukhruf*): 20, 60 Q. 36 (*S. Yā Sīn*): 40, 47. See also Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Shakhṣiya*, 53-4; and idem, *al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāyā*, 143-6.

[73]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa al-Tafsīr*, 24-25. In this case, Bint al-Shāṭi' corresponds to Daud Rahbar. See Rudi Paret, "Der Koran und Die Prädestination [Besprechung von: Daud Rahbar, God of Justice]," in *Der Koran*, ed. Rudi Paret (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), 161.

[74]See Abū Zayd, *al-Ittijāh al-'Aqli fī al-Tafsīr*, 42; and Martin, *Islamic Studies*, 109.

[75]Khālid 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-'Akk, *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr wa Qawā'iduh* (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā'is, 1986), 205. See also Pierre Lory, *Les Commentaires ésotériques du Coran d'après 'Abd ar-Razzâq al-Qâshânî* (Paris: Les Deux Océans, 1980), 12.

avoids, the literal meaning of the Qur'ān, offer various religio-dogmatic, rational and historical arguments in justification of their position. Q. 6 (*S. al-An'ām*): 38 and Q. 16 (*S. al-Naḥl*): 89, according to al-Ghazālī, al-Suyūṭī, and others, indicate that the Qur'ān provides the foundations of all knowledge, and that it can be interpreted in many ways by detecting the symbols (*rumūz*) and indications (*dalālāt*) that are contained within it.[76] Similarly, al-Jāḥiẓ says: "Indication (*ishāra*) and word are associated with each other. The indication of a word is the best tool [of interpretation]; and the best interpreter is one who understands the *ishārāt*. [That is because] there are so many *ishārāt* that probably exist in words, and do not need to be written [or spoken]."[77] Moreover, Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, a modern Shī'ī commentator, argues that human intellect and knowledge vary from one person to another, so that it is impossible to convey what is understood by those who have acquired a high degree of knowledge to those who have a lower intellectual capacity.[78] In the history of Qur'ānic hermeneutics, *ishārī* interpretation has been relied upon since early Islam. The

---

[76]See Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1988), 31-2; and Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭi, *al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, n.d.), 4: 24. See also P. Lory, *Les Commentaires*, 17.

[77]'Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo: Maṭba'at Lajnat al-Ta'līf wa al-Tarjama wa al-Nashr, 1948), 1: 78.

[78]See Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Qur'ān fī al-Islām*, trans. Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī (Teheran: Markaz I'lām al-Dhikrā, 1983), 39-46.

Prophet's Companion Ibn 'Abbās, for example, is reported to have regarded Q. 110 (*S. al-Naṣr*) as symbolizing the forthcoming death of the Prophet.[79]

This *ishārī* interpretation was then developed by exegetes who were experts in mystical knowledge and experience, as well as in philosophical thought. This approach, while Islamized in its later development, initially derived mostly from extra-Qur'ānic sources. One example of mystical symbolic exegesis is that of al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). Contending that every single word has "crust" (*qishr*) and "core" (*lubāb*) meanings,[80] al-Ghazālī said that the word *al-qalam* (lit. pen) in Q. 96 (*S. al-'Alaq*): 4, for example, designates not only a pen, but also as a spiritual matter (*rūḥānī*), which represents the essence of the Qur'ānic word.[81] Similarly, Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638/1240) is alleged to have interpreted Q. 30 (*S. al-Rūm*): 1-5,[82] verses which literally refer to the victory of

---

[79]Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, published together with al-Qasṭallānī's *Irshād al-Sārī*, 11: 277.

[80]In his *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* Al-Ghazālī divides the Qur'ānic sciences into two. One set is called *'ulūm al-ṣadaf wa al-qishr* ("crust" sciences). This includes the science of Arabic language (*'ilm al-lugha*), the science of syntax (*'ilm al-naḥw*), the science of Qur'ānic readings (*'ilm al-Qirā'āt*), the science of *makhārij al-ḥurūf*, and literal interpretation (*al-tafsīr al-ẓāhir*).The other is called *'ulūm al-lubāb* ("core" sciences). This consists of the sciences of Qur'ānic stories, Islamic theology (*al-kalām*), Islamic jurisprudence (*al-fiqh/uṣūl al-fiqh*) and Islamic mysticism (*al-taṣawwuf*). See al-Ghazālī, *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*, 22-30.

[81]Al-Ghazālī, *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*, 29-30; and Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, *Mafhūm al-Naṣṣ: Dirāsa fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣrīya al-'Āmma li al-Kitāb, 1990), 307-8.

[82]The verses say: "Alif. Lām. Mīm. The Romans have been defeated in the nearer land, and they, after defeat will be victorious within ten [a few] years--Allah's is the command in the former case and in the latter--and in that day believers will rejoice. In Allah's help [is] victory. He helpeth to victory whom He will. He is the Mighty, the Merciful."

the Romans over the Persians, as a symbol of the triumph of spiritual (*al-rūḥānīya*) over worldly things.[83] Muslim philosophers, like Ibn Sīnā and Mullā Ṣadrā, interpreted the Qur'ān from a philosophical perspective. Their works *al-Ishārāt* and *Asrār al-Āyāt*, respectively, constitute philosophical commentaries on the Qur'ān.[84] In these hermeneutical works, they brought a great many extra-Qur'ānic ideas into their interpretation.

In more recent times, when Muslims began to acquire a knowledge of modern sciences from the West, further extra-Qur'ānic interpretation based on these sciences was offered by some scholars.[85] Some, such as Ṭantāwī Jawharī,[86] Ḥanafī Aḥmad,[87] and Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd,[88] supported this kind of interpretation.

---

[83]See Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Yaqẓa al-'Arabīya, 1968), 2: 255-6. Ḥājjī Khalīfa assigns this work to 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī under the title *Ta'wīlāt al-Qāshānī*. See Ḥājjī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-Ẓunūn 'an Asmā' al-Kutub wa al-Funūn* (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1964). This opinion is echoed by Pierre Lory, saying that the attribution of the *tafsīr* to Ibn 'Arabī was made on the basis of commercial considerations. He says: "Toutes ces raisons n'ont toutefois pas empêché les éditeurs de la dernière édition (Beyrouth, 1968) de garder l'ancien titre et de réaffirmer l'attribution à Ibn 'Arabī -- probablement pour des raisons d'apportunité commerciale, le nom d'Ibn 'Arabī jouissant d'une notoriété nettement plus large que celui de Qāshānī..." See P. Lory, *Les Commentaires*, 20.

[84]Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth as Source and Inspiration of Islamic Philosophy," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 1: 31.

[85]See Al-'Akk, *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, 217-220.

[86]See Ṭanṭāwī Jawharī, *al-Jawāhir fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, n.d.).

[87]See Ḥanafī Aḥmad, *Mu'jizat al-Qur'ān fī Waṣf al-Kā'ināt* (Cairo: Maṭba'at Lajnat al-Bayān al-'Arabī, 1954).

[88]See Maḥmūd, *al-Qur'ān*, 51-61.

In the introduction to his *Mu'jizat al-Qur'ān*, Ḥanafī Aḥmad maintains that experts in natural sciences can see, apart from the literal meanings of Qur'ānic words, subtle meanings (*ma'ānī daqīqa*) that contain the basic essence of nature which was not known to previous generations. The subtle meanings are either derived from clear expressions (*ṣarīḥ al-naṣṣ*), or from the indications (*ishārāt*) and symbols (*rumūz*) of the Qur'ān.[89] Therefore, according to Aḥmad and others, the Qur'ān must be interpreted in the light of modern science.

Bint al-Shāṭi', however, who believed that the Qur'ān is merely a book of religion, and not one of philosophy or science,[90] maintains that a single Qur'ānic word has only one meaning, and must be interpreted as the Arab people of the Prophet's time would have understood it. On this basis, she does not accept[91] the opinions of *ishārī* commentators who interpret symbolically the words *al-ḍuḥā* (lit. morning hours) and *al-layl* (lit. night) of Q. 93 (*S. al-Ḍuḥā*): 1-2 as referring to the face of Muḥammad and his hair, respectively; or as females and males of the *ahl al-bayt*, respectively; or as his knowledge of concealed matters and his forgiveness, respectively; or as metaphors of the acceptance and rejection of Islam, respectively.[92] She also rejects the philosophical interpretation of the word

---

[89]Aḥmad, *Mu'jizat al-Qur'ān*, 1-2.

[90]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa al-Tafsīr*, 15.

[91]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 32.

[92]Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 31: 210.

al-'aṣr (Q. 103: 1) suggested by al-Rāzī.[93] The latter points out that the word is understood to mean "time" (*al-dahr*). He then says:

> Time contains many amazing things (*a'ājīb*), because [in it] there are found happiness, distress, health, illness, wealth and poverty. There is even the most amazing thing, namely that the intellect is not able to consider it as non-existent. It can be, in fact, divided into years, months, days, and hours. ... How can it be then that time itself does not exsist? The intellect is also unable to consider time as existent, because the present time (*ḥāḍir*) can not be divided, whereas the past and the future do not exist. How does it come about that time exists? [94]

Bint al-Shāṭi' considers al-Rāzī's interpretation to miss the point. The *intended* meaning of the word *al-'aṣr* is the "time" in which human beings are oppressed by troubles (*mu'ānāt*) and afflictions (*tajrībāt*).[95] Likewise, she denies Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd's mystical interpretations of Q. 20 (*S. Ṭāhā*): 12,[96] Q. 25 (*S. al-Furqān*): 7,[97] Q. 39 (*S. al-Zumar*): 30,[98] and Q. 48 (*al-Fatḥ*): 26,[99] by saying that his

---

[93]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 75-80.

[94]Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 32: 84.

[95]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 79-80. Her interpretation of Q. 103 (*S. al-'Aṣr*) will be discussed extensively in chapter two.

[96]This verse reads: "Lo! I, even I, am thy Lord. So take off thy shoes, for lo! thou art in the holy valley of Tuwa." The word *na'layka* (thy shoes) is interpreted by Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd as referring to the body (*jasad*) and material desire (*nafs*). The meaning of the verse is, accordingly, that those who would like to meet with God have to leave their bodies and desires through death or renunciation (*zuhd*). See Maḥmūd, *al-Qur'ān*, 134; and Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa al-Tafsīr*, 112.

[97]The verse reads: "And they say: What aileth this messenger (of Allah) that he eateth food and walketh in the markets? Why is not an angel sent down unto him, to be a warner with him." On this verse, Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd comments: "Indeed, it is the divine cover by which the secret of his prophethood is covered by a human ordinary cloth belonging to someone who eats food, and walks in the markets in order that the secret may not become vulgarized through disclosure and fame." Maḥmūd, *al-Qur'ān*, 132. See also Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa al-Tafsīr*, 112.

interpretations are far from the textual context (*siyāq*) of the Qur'ān.[100] On the basis of this reasoning, Bint al-Shāṭi', like Amīn al-Khūlī,[101] also rejects "scientific" interpretation.[102] Commenting on Q. 96 (*S. al-'Alaq*): 2, which speaks of the creation of a human being from *'alaq* (blood clot), she says that the textual context (*siyāq*) does not indicate that the purpose of the verse is to direct the Prophet and believers to look at the science of embryology. It is, rather, a sign of God's power in the creation of human beings.[103]

---

[98]The verse says: "Lo! thou wilt die, and lo! they will die." Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd interprets it by saying: "Be aware of yourself [O prophet Muḥammad]! You do not exist. You are like a shadow; it exists on the earth as far as the sun is in the sky. If the sun sets, your existence will never come back. All shadows which are prolonged beside you also become hidden from you." Maḥmūd, *al-Qur'ān*, 238. See also Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa al-Tafsīr*, 112.

[99]The verse reads: "When those who disbelieve had set up in their hearts zealotry, the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance, then Allah sent down His peace of reassurance upon His messenger and upon the believers and imposed on them the word of self-restraint, for they were worthy of it and meet for it. And Allah is Aware of all things." The word *kalimat al-taqwā* (the word of self-restraint) is referred to by Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd as "the word of warning that all things come to annihilation (*fanā*), and all this universe is a decoration of life, and a city whose destiny is spurious." See Maḥmūd, *al-Qur'ān*, 240. See also Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa al-Tafsīr*, 112.

[100]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa al-Tafsīr*, 113.

[101]See al-Khūlī, *Manāhij al-Tajdīd*, 287-296.

[102]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa al-Tafsīr*, 89-101. See also Jacques Jomier, "Aspects of the Qur'ān Today," in *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, ed. A. F. L. Beeston, T. M. Johnstone, R. B. Serjeant and G. R. Smith, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 266; and Andrew Rippin, *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices. Volume 2: The Contemporary Period* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), 94.

[103]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 18. See also Amīn, "A Study of Bint al-Shāṭi''s Exegesis," 88-90.

From the above survey, one can see that Bint al-Shāṭi''s criticisms of previous interpreters are grounded in the view that they took an improper approach to interpreting the Qur'ān. They searched first for ideas external to the Qur'ān, and then having found them, used them in their commentaries. It is, therefore, very possible that some Qur'ānic verses have been interpreted in such a way that they were made consonant with extraneous materials. In this regard, Abū Zayd comments that the variety of interpretive methods revolves around the difference in meaning between *tafsīr* (or *al-tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr*) and *ta'wīl* (or *tafsīr bi al-ra'y*). *Tafsīr*, on the one hand, approaches the Qur'ān by analyzing historical sources, i.e. the Qur'ān itself, and *ḥadīth* reports, and linguistic tools, which can help interpreters reach an "objective" undestanding (*fahm mawḍū'ī*) of the text. On the other hand, in *ta'wīl* interpreters begin with their personal hypotheses and then try to find Qur'ānic verses that support their hypotheses.[104]

Bint al-Shāṭi''s criticism of the tendentious interpretations of the Qur'ān corresponds to the critical stance taken by Emilio Betti (b. 1890)[105] and E. D. Hirsch Jr. (b. 1928) with respect to Martin Heidegger's (d. 1976)[106] and Hans-

---

[104]See Abū Zayd, *Ishkālīyāt al-Qirā'āt wa Alīyāt al-Ta'wīl* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-'Arabī, 1994), 15-6.

[105]Emilio Betti, *Die Hermeneutik als Allgemeine Methodik der Geisteswissenschaften* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1962), 11-2.

[106]See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, section 31-34, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, in *The Hermeneutic Tradition from Ast to Ricoeur*, ed. Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 115-44.

Georg Gadamer's (b. 1900)[107] idea of "subjective," and "prejudiced" projection in the interpretation of the text of the Bible. Unlike Heidegger and Gadamer, who maintain that every text should be interpreted in accordance with the logic of an interpreter,[108] Betti and Hirsch point out that the task of an interpreter is simply to explore what the author meant, disregarding altogether one's own personal interests and projections.[109]

II. On "Forced" and *I'jāz*-Misoriented Interpretations

Two other kinds of interpretation that Bint al-Shāṭi' attacks are those which she regards as "forced" (*al-tafsīr al-mutakallaf*) and *i'jāz*-misoriented interpretations. These interpretations represent hermeneutical reflections in

---

[107]See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, ed. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1988), 235-58; and idem, "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem," trans. David E. Linge, in *The Hermeneutic Tradition from Ast to Ricoeur*, 147-158;

[108]Heidegger says: "Whenever something is interpreted as something, the interpretation will be founded essentially upon fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception. An interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us. If, when one is engaged in a particular concrete kind of interpretation, in the sense of exact textual interpretation, one likes to appeal [*beruft*] to what 'stands there', then one finds that what 'stands there' in the first instance is nothing other than the obvious undiscussed assumption [*Vormeinung*] of the person who does the interpreting." Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, section 31-34, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, in *The Hermeneutic Tradition from Ast to Ricoeur*, 123.

Gadamer asserts that the expectation of meaning that is conceived to be directing our understanding of the text is "based on the commonality that unites us with tradition and that is constantly being developed." See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 261.

[109]See Betti, *Die Hermeneutik*, 40-1; and Hirsch, *Validity*, 209-64; Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 393; and Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 127.

which interpreters try to explain the Qur'ān's unique linguistic style in order to make it accord with "common" Arabic linguistic rules.[110] This is closely related to the idea of the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān. Before pursuing our discussion of Bint al-Shāṭi''s ideas, however, it would be useful first of all to glance at the various ideas held by previous scholars concerning this subject.

Muslims believe that the Qur'ān, which was revealed to Muḥammad through Gabriel, is the Word of God.[111] It constitutes the sign (*āya*) of

---

[110]This definition is based on my understanding of Bint al-Shāṭi''s detailed elaboration of the subject under discussion in her works, especially *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī li al-Qur'ān, al-Qur'ān wa al-Tafsīr al-'Aṣrī,* and *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī li al-Qur'ān.*

[111]Concerning whether or not the Qur'ān is the verbatim Word of God, there is no agreement among scholars. Many scholars, on the one hand, contend that based on several *ḥadīths,* like those telling of the Prophet Muḥammad's receiving the first revelation in the cave of Ḥirā', the Qur'ān is the divine word-for-word revelation. In support of this opinion, Gätje argues that this is "the meaning of the probably originally Aramaic word *qur'ān.*" On the basis of the *waḥy* ("inspiration") concept derived from Q. 42: (*S. Shūrā*): 51-2, some scholars, like Fazlur Rahman and Hourani, on the other, maintain that although the Qur'ān is regarded as the Word of God, this does not mean that the Prophet Muḥammad received it from God verbally. The Qur'ān, according to them, was "sent down" through the mediatory agent Gabriel to the heart of Muḥammad, and then he expressed it in his own language. See, e.g., Mohammed Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers* (Boulder, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1994), 31; Josef van Ess, "Verbal Inspiration? Language and Revelation in Classical Islamic Theology," in *The Qur'ān as Text,* ed. Stefan Wild (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 177-94; Helmut Gätje, *The Qur'ān and its Exegesis,* 5; and William A. Graham, "The Earliest Meaning of 'Qur'ān'," in *Die Welt des Islams* 23-24 (1984), 360-77, especially 376. Cf. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 30-33; and G. F. Hourani, "The Qur'ān's Doctrine of Prophecy," in *Logos Islamikos: Studia Islamica in Honorem Georgii Michaelis Wickens,* ed. Roger M. Savory and Dionisius A. Agius (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), 179. Watt tries to relate the above belief with the polemics concerning the problem of the createdness of the Qur'ān. See W. Montgomery Watt, "Early Discussions about the Qur'ān," *the Muslim World* 40 (1950), 27-40.

Muḥammad's prophethood (*nubūwa*) and his miracle (*mu'jiza*).[112] They base this notion on several Qur'ānic verses. Al-Zamakhsharī, for instance, comments on the words *uḥkimat āyātuhu* (its verses are perfected) of Q. 11 (*S. Hūd*): 1 in reference to the idea of the inimitability of the Qur'ān.[113] Likewise, Ibn Kathīr, in commenting on the mysterious letters (*al-ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭa'a*) of the Qur'ān, affirms the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān, a book that consists of the letters known to the Arabs,[114] an opinion which is supported by Bint al-Shāṭi'.[115] The question of which aspect[s] of the Qur'ān are actually inimitable (*mu'jiz*) has long been the subject of debate. Among those who have documented the discussion, there is Abdul Aleem who, in his article "'Ijazu'l-Qur'ān," surveys the history of the emergence of *i'jāz* concepts and the debate over this problem among the classical theologians.[116] More comprehensively, Na'īm al-Ḥimṣī and Issa J. Boullata in their articles "Tārīkh Fikrat I'jāz al-Qur'ān" and "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'ān," respectively, elaborate the main ideas on the

---

[112]See, e.g., Arthur Jeffery, "The Qur'ān as Scripture," *the Muslim World* 40 (1950), 43.

[113]Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 2: 326. On this page he interprets Q. 11: 1 as meaning that "its verses are composed firmly and perfectly; there is neither contradiction nor imperfection in them." This interpretation was then adopted by many exegetes, e.g., al-Nasafī (d. 710/1310) in his *Tafsīr*. See 'Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad al-Nasafī, *Tafsīr al-Nasafī: Madārik al-Tanzīl wa Ḥaqā'iq al-Ta'wīl*, ed. Zakarīyā 'Umayrāt (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1995), 1: 558.

[114]Ismā'īl ibn Kathīr al-Dimashqī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, ed. Yūsuf 'Abd al-Raḥmān (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1987), 1: 40.

[115]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī*, 158-180.

[116]See Abdul Aleem, "'Ijazu'l-Qur'ān [sic]," *Islamic Culture* 7 (1933), 64-82 and 215-33.

aspects of *i'jāz* that have concerned both classical and modern scholars.[117] In addition, the latter also discusses Western perspectives on the subject.[118] In summary, one might say that there are various opinions on what constitutes *i'jāz*. Some scholars, such as al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998),[119] have pointed out that the *i'jāz* lies only in the eloquent style of the language of the Qur'ān (i.e., *faṣāḥa* and *naẓm*) in conveying the divine message. Others, such as al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013),[120] al-Rummānī (d. 386/996),[121] al-Jurjānī (d. 470/1078),[122] and al-Zamakhsharī (d.

---

[117]See Na'īm al-Ḥimṣī, "Tārīkh Fikrat I'jāz al-Qur'ān," *Majallat al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Arabī*, 27 (1952), 240-63, 418-33, 571-86; 28 (1953), 61-78, 242-56; 29 (1954), 104-14, 239-51, 417-24, 573-9; and 30 (1955), 106-13, 299-311. See also Boullata, "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'ān: *i'jāz* and Related Topics," in *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 139-157. Cf. Blachère, *Introduction*, 169-81; Jaroslav Stetkevych, "Arabic Hermeneutical Terminology: Paradox and the Production of Meaning," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 48 (1989), 84-87; and Farid Esack, "Qur'anic Hermeneutics: Problems and Prospects," *The Muslim World* 83 (1993), 124-29.

[118]See Boullata, "The Rhetorical Interpretation," 155-7.

[119]See Ḥamd ibn Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭābī, *Bayān I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, published in *Thalāth Rasā'il fī I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad Khalaf Allāh and Muḥammad Zaghlūl (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 19-65. See also Boullata, "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'ān," 144; Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'ān: A Study of Iṣlāḥī's Concept of Naẓm in Tadabbur-i Qur'ān* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1986), 11; and Sahiron Syamsuddin, "al-Bāqillānī vs. al-Khaṭṭābī on Qur'ānic *I'jāz* Concerning the Truthful Information about Future Events," in Yudian Wahyudi, et al., *The Dynamics of Islamic Civilization*, introd. Issa J. Boullata (Yogyakarta: Forum Komunikasi Alumni Program Pembibitan Calon Dosen IAIN se-Indonesia & Titian Ilahi Press, 1998), 3-10.

[120]See Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī, *I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Imād al-Dīn Aḥmad Ḥaydar (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyah, 1986), 57-75. See also Boullata, "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'ān," 144-5; Mustansir Mir, *Coherence of the Qur'ān*, 12-3; and Syamsuddin, "al-Bāqillānī vs. al-Khaṭṭābī on Qur'ānic *I'jāz*," 3-10.

[121]See 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-Rummānī, *al-Nukat fī I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, published in *Thalāth Rasā'il fī I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad Khalaf Allāh and Muḥammad Zaghlūl (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 69-104. See also Boullata, "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'ān," 143.

538/1144) viewed the information about concealed materials, i.e., the stories of previous prophets and future events, in addition to the linguistic eloquence, as the miraculous aspects.[123] Still others, such as al-Naẓẓām (d. 232/846) and Hishām al-Fuwaṭī (d. 218/833) whose opinion, according to van Ess, was adopted by some Shī'ī theologians,[124] maintained that the divine action of turning away (*ṣarfa*) the Arabs from producing the like of the Qur'ān constituted the only *i'jāz*.[125] Some modern scholars, like Ḥanafī Aḥmad and Muḥammad

---

[122]See 'Abd al-Qāhir ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jurjānī, *Dalā'il al-I'jāz* (Damascus: Maktabat Sa'd al-Dīn, 1987). See also Boullata, "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'ān," 146-7; Mustansir Mir, *Coherence of the Qur'ān*, 14-5.

[123]Al-Khaṭṭābī and al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, in spite of their considering the information on concealed events as supplementary (*takmīlī*) and functional (*tawẓīfī*) signs of prophethood, did not agree with the conjecture of the future events-providing-Qur'ānic *i'jāz* on the grounds that the *taḥaddī* (challenge) of the Arabs to produce the like of the Qur'ān, which is expressed in many verses, is without specification, whereas not every *sūra* (chapter) contains the information of concealed materials. The *taḥaddī*, they added, is merely considered meaningful if it is related to the highest ability of the Arabs at the time of revelation, namely their linguistic ability. See al-Khaṭṭabi, *Bayān I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, 25; and al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, "I'jāz al-Qur'ān," in his *al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawḥīd wa al-'Adl* (Cairo: Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub, 1960), 16: 220. See also Syamsuddin, "al-Bāqillāni vs. al-Khaṭṭābī on Qur'ānic *I'jāz*," 6-7. Hourani agrees with the suggestion that the foretelling of the previous prophets constitutes the proof for the prophecy of Muḥammad. See Hourani, "The Qur'ān's Doctrine," 180.

[124]See Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gessellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra* (Berlin & New York: De Gruyter, 1992), 3: 412.

[125]Al-Rummānī, *al-Nukat*, 101. Although not regarding the *ṣarfa* as the only aspect of *i'jāz*, al-Rummānī, on the one hand, in his *al-Nukat* supports the notion. On the other, al-Khaṭṭābī maintains that Q. 88 (*S. al-Isrā'*): 17, which points to an attempt of constraint (*takalluf*), exertion (*ijtihād*), readiness (*ta'ahhub*) and gathering (*iḥtishād*) to produce the like of the Qur'ān, is opposed to the idea of *ṣarfa*. See al-Khaṭṭābī, *Bayān*, 21. See also John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 79; Boullata, "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'ān," 142-4; van Ess, *Theologie und Gessellschaft*, 3: 408-13; and Ismail K. Poonawala, "An Ismā'īlī on the I'jāz al-Qur'ān," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108 (1988), 380 ff.

Shaḥrūr, add to the above list the Qur'ān's anticipation of modern sciences.[126] All these opinions, with the exception of the idea of *ṣarfa,* refer to the miraculous literary expressions and the contents of the Qur'ān.

Bint al-Shāṭi' points out that, regardless of the various opinions that exist on the subject, there is no disagreement on the rhetorical inimitability (*al-i'jāz al-bayānī*) of the Qur'ān. It was in fact widely acknowledged in Muḥammad's own day, even by those who did not believe in his prophethood. The unbelievers' claims that the Qur'ān was *siḥr* (magic), *shi'r* (poetry), and *kahāna* (soothsaying) -- even though they knew that the Qur'ān was actually none of these things --[127] actually constitute, according to Bint al-Shāṭi', a clear affirmation of the extraordinary power of the Qur'ān to affect the hearts and minds of those who had not seen the like of it except in the words of magicians, poets and soothsayers.[128] That is why the tyrants of the Quraysh warned people against listening to the Qur'ān, for its extraordinary power is said to have persuaded many, like 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, to embrace Islam.[129]

---

[126]See Ḥanafī Aḥmad, *Mu'jizat al-Qur'ān fī Waṣf al-Kā'ināt* (Cairo: Maṭba'at Lajnat al-Bayān al-'Arabī, 1954); and Muḥammad Shaḥrūr, *al-Kitāb wa al-Qur'ān: Qirā'a Mu'āṣira* (Damascus: al-Ahālī li al-Ṭibā'a wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 1990), 187-8.

[127]Their claims are documented, for example, in Q. 69 (*S. al-Ḥāqqa*): 38-42.

[128]Bint al-Shāṭi', *Kitābunā al-Akbar* (Omdurman: Jāmi'at Umm Durmān, 1967), 3.

[129]See Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq ibn Yasār, *Kitāb al-Siyar wa al-Maghāzī,* ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1978), 183; and Ismā'īl ibn Kathīr al-Dimashqī, *al-Sīra al-Nabawīya,* ed. Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Wāḥid (Beirut: Dār al-Iḥyā' al-'Arabī, n.d.), 2: 34-5. In the long report on 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's adherence to Islam it is recorded that after reciting Q. 20 (*S. Ṭāhā*) he said: "How beautiful and glorious this Word is!"

It is clear that what inspired Bint al-Shāṭi' to venture the idea of the rhetorical inimitability of the Qur'ān was her research into the *ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭa'a* which stand at the beginning of many Qur'ānic *sūrās*.[130] In the 29 *sūras*[131] where the *ḥurūf* are found, these are followed directly by the words *Qur'ān, Tanzīl*, or *Kitāb*, and serve to indicate the inimitability of the Holy Scripture.[132] Although three of the *sūras*, i.e., Q. 19 (*S. Maryam*), Q. 29 (*S. al-'Ankabūt*) and Q. 30 (*S. al-Rūm*), do not follow this pattern, they nonetheless, Bint al-Shāti' affirms, consist of verses that speak of the victory of the Qur'ān and its miraculous nature.[133] On the basis of a "complete inductive investigation" (*al-istiqrā' al-kāmil*) of the 29

---

[130]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī*, 140.

[131]They are Q. 68 (*S. al-Qalam*), Q. 50 (*S. Qāf*), Q. 38 (*S. Ṣād*), Q. 7 (*S. al-A'rāf*), Q. 36 (*S. Yā Sīn*), Q. 19 (*S. Maryam*), Q. 20 (*S. Ṭā Hā*), Q. 26 (*S. al-Shu'arā'*), Q. 27 (*S. al-Naml*), Q. 28 (*S. al-Qaṣaṣ*), Q. 12 (*S. Yūsuf*), Q. 15 (*al-Ḥijr*), Q. 31 (*S. Luqmān*), Q. 40 (*S. Ghāfir*), Q. 41 (*Fuṣṣilat*), Q. 42 (*S. al-Shūrā*), Q. 43 (*al-Zukhruf*), Q. 44 (*S. al-Dukhān*), Q. 45 (*S. al-Jāthiya*), Q. 46 (*S. al-Aḥqāf*), Q. 14 (*S. Ibrāhīm*), Q. 32 (*S. al-Sajda*), Q. 52 (*S. al-Ṭūr*), Q. 69 (*S. al-Ḥāqqa*), Q. 30 (*S. al-Rūm*), Q. 29 (*S. al-'Ankabūt*), Q. 2 (*S. al-Baqara*), Q. 3 (*S. Āl 'Imrān*), and Q. 13 (*S. al-Ra'd*). The numbers of the *sūras* that I provide here are their canonical (*muṣḥafī*) numbers. Bint al-Shāṭi' arranges them in her *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī* in accordance with their chronological order of revelation. Bint al-Shāṭi''s arrangement of the chronological order of revelation accords with that of al-Biqā'ī, Ibn Nadīm and Nöldeke. See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī*, 160-79. See also Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn 'Umar Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar* (Hayderabad: Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Uthmānīya, 1969); Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist* (Beirut: Maktabat al-Khayyāṭ, [1966]); Theodor Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qorans* (Hildesheim & New York: G. Olms, 1970); and Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Zanjānī, *Tārīkh al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lamī li al-Maṭbū'āt, 1969), 49-57.

[132]See, e.g., Ibn Kathīr; *Tafsīr*, 1: 40; and al-Nasafī, *Tafsīr al-Nasafī*, 1: 12-3.

[133]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī*, 158-60. In these passages she mentions the verses which speak of the subject matter, namely Q. 19 (*S. Maryam*): 16, 41, 51, 54, 56, 97 and 98; Q. 29 (*S. al-'Ankabūt*): 45-52; and Q. 30 (*S. al-Rūm*): 58-60.

sūras according to their chronological revelation, Bint al-Shāṭi' comes to certain conclusions, one of which is:

> They (*al-ḥuruf al-muqaṭṭa'a*) start in *Sūrat al-Qalam*, one of the first of the revelation, directing attention to the subtle meaning of the particle (*sirr al-ḥarf*), then become more numerous and come successively in the middle of the Meccan period from *Sūrat Qāf* – which comes 34th in the chronological order of revelation – to *Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ* – which was revealed 49th in order – and in which the quarrel against the Qur'ān reaches its climax. The problem of *taḥaddī* (challenge) is then demonstrated; and the Qur'ānic verses challenge them (the unbelievers) to compose the like of the Qur'ān or one *sūra* of it; [and this was the situation] until the beginning of the Medinan period in which was revealed the verses of *sūrat al-Baqara*. The fierce quarrel ended after the proof of the truth of the *mu'jiza* was believed by them due to their inability to produce one *sūra* of the like of the Qur'ān.[134]

In other words, according to her, the secret of the *ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭa'a*, by means of which the Qur'ān was revealed, constitutes the indication of its rhetorical *i'jāz*, meaning that although the Arabs of the time of the Prophet were familiar with the *ḥurūf*, and although their literary ability reached its highest level of quality, they were unable to produce the like of the Qur'ān. This emphasizes the fact that there is no written work produced by human beings that is equivalent to the Qur'ān in terms of its unique rhetorical expression.

Bint al-Shāṭi', however, was not satisfied with the explanations of the rhetorical *i'jāz* offered by previous scholars, some of whom were mentioned earlier. After alluding to their opinions on the subject, she says:

---

[134]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī*, 179.

> Nevertheless, the rhetorical *i'jāz* [that they have referred to] continued to evolve within the boundaries of the unchanged traditional forms and overblown explanations. Someone like al-Khaṭṭābī from the fourth century [of Hijra] does not find the explanations [of Qur'ānic *i'jāz*) satisfying in this regard, or able to cure the "disease of ignorance." The explanations are even considered no longer compatible with the glory of the miraculous book, and do not have any significance to this generation of Arabs who desire to unite with the miracle of the highest example of rethoric.[135]

Accordingly, Bint al-Shāṭi' tries to provide the reader with a new approach. She maintains that the rhetorical inimitability of the Qur'ān lies in every particle (*ḥarf*), word (*lafẓ* or *kalima*) and structure (*uslūb* or *ta'bīr*).[136] Each of these three linguistic components of the Qur'ān conveys a subtle meaning (*sirr*, pl. *asrār*); there is no single structure, word, or even particle, which is employed meaninglessly or improperly in the Qur'ān.

This is why Bint al-Shāṭi' criticizes exegetes and linguists for carelessness when dealing with the style of the Qur'ān in terms of the three linguistic elements which are unique to it. To prove her point, she discusses the Qur'ānic employment of the particle *bā'*, for example, which comes before the predicate of the negative *mā*[137] and *laysa*,[138] and which the classical exegetes and linguists

---

[135]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī*, 135. Cf. Michael Sells, "Sound, Spirit, and Gender in *Sūrat al-Qadr*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111 (1991), 240. In this passage he says: "The literatures devoted to *i'jāz al-Qur'ān* (the inimitability of the Qur'an) and *faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* (the excellences of the Qur'ān) offer strong anecdotal affirmation concerning the sound quality of the Qur'ān, but traditional analysis focuses upon rhetorical feaers usually unrelated to the interaction of sound and meaning."

[136]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī*, 136-286.

[137]See Q. 2 (*S. al-Baqara*): 8, 7, 85, 96, 102, 140, 144, 149, 167; Q. 3 (*S. Āl 'Imrān*): 99; Q. 6 (*S. al-An'ām*): 107, 132; Q. 11 (*S. Hūd*): 29, 83, 123; Q. 12 (*S. Yūsuf*): 17, 44, 103; Q. 14

considered otiose (*zā'id*).[139] According to her, the preposition *bā'* (read: *bi*) in the negative informative expression (*al-jumla al-khabarīya al-manfīya*), on the one hand, which is alleged by many exegetes to have functioned as an affirmative particle (*tawkīd*) of the negated present with the particles *mā* and *laysa*, points to the determination of the negation with the repudiation (*taqrīr al-nafy bi al-juḥūd wa al-inkār*) of the existence of a subject contained in the statement.[140] Thus, Q. 68 (*S. al-Qalam*): 2 which reads: *'Wa-mā anta bi-ni'mati rabbika bi-majnūnin'* (Thou art not, for thy Lord's favour unto thee, a madman), for example, is interpreted in reference to the *total repudiation* of the madness of the Prophet Muḥammad,[141] a rumour spread by the Meccan unbelievers.[142] The Qur'ānic usages of the particle *bā'* in the negative interrogative expression (*al-jumla al-istifhāmīya al-manfīya*), on the other hand, refers in her view to the *elimination of the negation* or, in other

---

(*S. Ibrāhīm*): 22; Q. 16 (*S. al-Naḥl*): 46; Q. 26 (*S. al-Shu'arā'*): 114, 138; Q. 27 (*S. al-Naml*): 81, 93; Q. 30 (*S. al-Rūm*): 83; Q. 35 (*S. Fāṭir*): 22; Q. 37 (*S. al-Ṣaffāt*): 162; Q. 40 (*S. Ghāfir*): 56; Q. 41 (*S. Fuṣṣilat*): 46; Q. 42 (*S. al-Shūrā*): 6; Q. 50 (*S. Qāf*): 29; Q. 52 (*S. al-Ṭūr*): 29; Q. 68 (*S. al-Qalam*): 2; Q. 81 (*S. al-Takwīr*): 22, 24; and Q. 86 (*S. al-Ṭāriq*): 14. See also Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī*, 184-6.

[138]See Q. 2 (*S. al-Baqara*): 267; Q. 3 (*S. Āl 'Imrān*): 182; Q. 5 (*S. al-Mā'ida*): 116; Q. 6 (*S. al-An'ām*): 30, 53, 66, 89, 122; Q. 7 (*S. al-A'rāf*): 172; Q. 11 (*S. Hūd*): 81; Q. 15 (*S. al-Ḥijr*): 20; Q. 29 (*S. al-'Ankabūt*): 10; Q. 36 (*S. Yā Sīn*): 81; Q. 39 (*S. al-Zumar*): 36, 37; Q. 46 (*S. al-Aḥqāf*): 32, 34; Q. 58 (*S. al-Mujādila*): 10; Q. 75 (*S. al-Qiyāma*): 40; and Q. 95 (*S. al-Tīn*): 8. See also Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī*, 186-9.

[139]See, e.g., al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 4: 585; and Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, 8: 308. See also Boullata, "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'ān," 153.

[140]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī*, 190.

[141]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 45-7.

[142]See, e.g., al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 4: 585; and Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, 8: 308.

words, the affirmation (*ithbāt*) of the subject matter conveyed in the statement. The Qur'ānic words *alaysa Allāhu bi aḥkami l-ḥākimīna* (Q. 95: 8), for instance, are interpreted as meaning that God is the most conclusive judge.[143] It can be inferred from the above discussion that, according to Bint al-Shāṭi', the weakness of the view that the particles are otiose derives from a lack of understanding of their *subtle* meaning, which results from an incomplete investigation of all instances of their usage in the Qur'ān.

Furthermore, Bint al-Shāṭi' shows the weakness of the above approach in dealing with the *uslūb* of Q. 9 (*S. al-Tawba*): 44 which reads: *"Lā yasta'dhinuka l-ladhīna yu'minūna bi l-lāhi wa l-yawmi l-ākhiri an yujāhidū bi-amwālihim wa-anfusihim...,"* and which, in accordance with its clear textual context, states that the believers did not ask permission for *jihād* (holy war).[144] Al-Ṭabarī, however, interprets it as meaning that the believers did not ask the Prophet for permission (*isti'dhān*) to *abstain* (*al-tark*) from fighting against the enemies of God.[145] Bint al-Shāṭi' does not accept such an interpretation. For her, al-Ṭabarī's interpretation does not take into account the miraculous rhetoric of the Qur'ān, in the sense that he either considers the particle *lā* meaningless, or simply does not understand the elegance of the Qur'ānic structure in this verse. Referring to three

---

[143]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī*, 184; 188 and 190.

[144]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī*, 199.

[145]Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 10: 100.

other verses in the same *sūra*[146] which state that the *isti'dhān* (asking permission) not to perform *jihād* was sought only by the *munāfiqūn* (hypocrites), she says that the proper interpretation of Q. 9 (*S. al-Tawba*): 44 should signify the negation of the believers' *isti'dhān* to undertake *jihād*. Following al-Zamakhsharī's view,[147] she, among other modern exegetes,[148] argues that it does not make any rhetorical sense to relate the believers with the negation of *isti'dhān* to *refrain* from the obligation of *jihād*. The beauty of the verse lies in the fact that, given that *jihād* is obligatory, the believers perform it even without *isti'dhān*.[149]

Another example of "forced" interpretation which ignores the unique rhetoric of the Qur'ān concerns the interpretation of the word *ḍāll* in Q. 93 (*S. al-Ḍuḥā*): 7.[150] The word *ḍāll* in the verse, whose basic meaning is *fāqid al-ṭarīq*

---

[146]The verses are Q. 9 (*S. al-Tawba*): 45-46, which read: "They alone ask leave of thee who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and whose hearts feel doubt, so in their doubt they waver. And if they had wished to go forth they would assuredly have made ready some equipment, but Allah was averse to their being sent forth and held them back and (it was said unto them): Sit ye with the sedentary," and Q. 9 (*S. al-Tawba*): 83, which reads: "If Allah bring thee back (from the campaign) unto a party of them and they ask of thee leave to go out (to fight), then say unto them: Ye shall never more go out with me nor fight with me against a foe. Ye were content with sitting still the first time. So sit still, with the useless."

[147]See al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 2: 274-5.

[148]See, e.g., Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1988), 3: 1662. In this passage, he says: "Those who believe in God and the Day of Reward and Punishment do not wait to be permitted to perform the obligation of *jihād*, and do not hesitate in fulfilling the invitation to participate in the way of God with their wealth and souls...."

[149]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī*, 199-200.

[150]The verse reads: "*Wa-wajadaka ḍāllan fa-hadā*" (Did He not find thee wandering and direct [thee]?).

(someone who has lost his way), is interpreted by many exegetes[151] as referring to the technical term *kufr* (unbelief), or, according to Izutsu's finding, a part of the larger concept of *kufr* as opposed to the term *shukr*.[152] It is alleged that Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, al-Kalbī, and al-Suddī interpreted the verse as meaning that before his prophethood, and until perhaps as late as the age of forty, the Prophet Muḥammad used to follow the belief of *jāhilīya* ("ignorance").[153] On the same technical basis, but with a different interpretation, Abū Ḥayyān points out in his *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* that the meaning of the verse is that *"wa-wajada rahṭaka ḍāllan fa-hadāhu bika"* (He [God] found your society going astray from the right way [i.e., *kufr*], and He then guided them through you).[154] Such interpretations are seen by Bint al-Shāṭi' as failing to understand the Qur'ān's rhetorical usage of the word and its roots. She says: "Indeed, the Qur'ānic employment (of the word and its roots) does not cease to refer to the technical sense. There may, however, be perceived the lexicographical meaning of the word, i.e., losing one's way or lacking guidance to the right way."[155] To support her position, she then demonstrates the various meanings of the word in its Qur'ānic usages. She

---

[151]See, e.g., Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, 7: 486.

[152]See Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1966), 133-7.

[153]See al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 30: 424.

[154]Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, 7: 486. In this case, Abū Ḥayyān points to the elliptic *muḍāf* (construct state), i.e. *raḥṭ* before the word *ka*, the *muḍāf ilayh* (the second noun of a genitive construction).

finally concludes that the meaning of the verse is that, before his prophethood, the Prophet Muḥammad was confused (*mutaḥayyir*), and then states, in an explanation which is consonant with Muḥammad 'Abduh's interpretation:[156]

> I do not have a position here except to repeat what God said to His prophet: 'Thou knewest not what the Scripture was, nor what the Faith.' (Q. 42 [*S. al-Shūrā*]: 52). Before his prophethood, he used to be in a state of confusion; he did not agree with conditions in his society, but he did not know where the right way was, or how to win salvation. He was in this state of confusion many years until the revelation came to him in order to guide him to the right religion and the right way of life.[157]

In my study of Bint al-Shāṭi''s criticism of previous interpretations, I am not concerned with whether her exegetical positions on the above matters are better than others', but rather, with her dissatisfaction with the previous hermeneutical methods in interpreting the Qur'ān, and with her reconstructive attempt to apply the method that she believed to be more appropriate to Qur'ānic hermeneutics. One can see from the above discussion that, according to Bint al-Shāṭi', the failure of previous exegetes to appreciate the Qur'ānic message lay in their provocative attempts to insert extra-Qur'ānic, prejudiced material, and in their ignorance of the unique Qur'ānic rhetoric. This resulted from the intentional, or at least misguided, reliance on invalid hermeneutical methods. In an attempt to right this situation, Bint al-Shāṭi' applied the method

---

[155]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 45.

[156]'Abduh, *Tafsīr Juz' 'Amma*, 84-5.

[157]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 46-7.

that she calls *"al-manhaj al-istiqrā'ī* (inductive method), using the cross-referential procedure, without however igoring the textual and historical contexts, an approach which will be analyzed in more detail in chapter two.

Chapter Two

Fundamental Elements of Bint al-Shāṭi''s Method of Interpretation

I. The Cross-referential Method

A. In the Classical Tradition

Cross-referential hermeneutics of the Qur'ān, known to scholars in the field as the concept of *al-Qur'ān yufassiru ba'ḍuhu ba'ḍan* (one part of the Qur'ān interprets another), is basically not a new approach to Qur'ānic exegesis.[158] This method, which al-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388) refers to in his *al-Muwāfaqāt* as the concept of *kalāmu-llāhi huwa kalāmun wāḥidun* (God's Speech is a unitary Speech),[159] and which is regarded by Ibn Taymīya (d. 728/1328) and al-Zarkashī (d. 793/1392) as the best way of interpretation,[160] is traced by some to the Qur'ānic verse Q. 4 (*S. al-Nisā'*): 82. Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. 150/767), for instance, in his *Tafsīr al-Khams Mi'at Āya min al-Qur'ān*, takes this approach when dealing with the problem of drinking *khamr* (wine) from the Qur'ānic

---

[158]See M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, "Context and Internal Relationships: Keys to Quranic Exegesis. A Study of *Sūrat al-Raḥmān* (Qur'ān Chapter 53)," in *Approaches to the Qur'ān*, 73.

[159]See Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā al-Shāṭibī, *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥy al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥāmid (Cairo: Maktabat wa Maṭba'at Muḥammad 'Alī Ṣabīḥ wa Awlādih, 1969), 3: 284. In this passage, al-Shāṭibī says: "The meaning of one part of the Qur'ān is somehow dependent on another part. That is due to the fact that the meanings of many Qur'ānic verses are not understood perfectly without referring to other verses."

[160]Ibn Taymīya, *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, 93; and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-

perspective. For him, Q. 16 (*S. al-Naḥl*): 67,[161] in which *khamr* is said to be lawful, Q. 2 (*S. al-Baqara*): 219,[162] which declares that the danger of *khamr* is much greater than its benefit, Q. 4 (*S. al-Nisā'*): 43,[163] which forbids it for those who want to perform prayer, and Q. 5 (*S. al-Mā'ida*): 90,[164] which totally forbids it, are to be dealt with together. Through this approach, he concludes that in the Prophet's day the process by which the consumption of *khamr* was forbidden was a gradual one, and that the verses which allow it -- either completely or under certain conditions -- are eventually abrogated (*mansūkh*).[165] Like Muqātil, who applied the cross-referential approach in detecting abrogated verses (*mansūkhāt*), al-Zamakhsharī often used the method in order to clarify the *mutashābihāt* (ambiguous verses), despite his inconsistency in applying it due to his sectarian bias. When dealing with Q. 11 (*S. Hūd*): 106-7,[166] for instance, which verses were

---

Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1957), 2: 175. See also Abdel Haleem, "Context and Internal Relationships," 73.

[161]The verse reads: "And of the fruits of the date-palm, and grapes, whence ye derive strong drink and (also) good nourishment."

[162]The verse reads: "They question thee about strong drink and games of chance. Say: In both is great sin, and (some) utility for men; but the sin of them is greater than their usefulness."

[163]The verse reads: "O ye who believe! Draw not near unto prayer when ye are drunken..."

[164]The verse reads: "O ye who believe! Strong drink and games of chance and idols and divining arrows are only an infamy of Satan's handiwork. Leave it aside in order that ye may succeed."

[165]See Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, *Tafsīr al-Khams Mi'at Āya min al-Qur'ān*, ed. Isaiah Goldfeld (Shfaram: al-Mashriq Press, 1980), 141-7.

often cited by the *Jabrīya* to justify their deterministic beliefs, he relates them to verse 108 of the same *sūra.*[167] Affirming that the verses do not refer to determinism, but of God's absolute will to punish wrong-doers and to reward those who do good, al-Zamkhasharī says: "Think of this. Indeed, part of the Qur'ān interprets another."[168]

The cross-referential approach is also applied by Ibn Taymīya in his *Majmū'at Tafsīr.*[169] Dealing with Q. 87 (*S. al-A'lā*): 10,[170] which speaks of the concept of *khashya* (fear), he declares the verse to be too general in import. Hence, in order to extract more detailed information about the meaning of *khashya* and its consequences, he refers to other verses. Turning to Q. 50 (*S. Qāf*): 45,[171] Q. 52 (*S. al-Ṭūr*): 26-7,[172] and Q. 79 (*S. al-Nāzi'āt*): 42-6,[173] Ibn Taymīya

---

[166]The verses read: "As for those who will be wretched (on that day) they will be in the Fire; sighing and wailing will be their portion therein, abiding there so long as the heavens and the earth endure save for that which thy Lord willeth. Lo! thy Lord is Doer of what He will."

[167]The verse reads: "And as for those who will be glad (that day) they will be in the Garden, abiding there so long as the heavens and the earth endure save for that which thy Lord willeth: a gift unfailng."

[168]See al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf,* 2: 429-30.

[169]See Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm ibn Taymīya, *Majmū'at Tafsīr Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymīya,* ed. 'Abd al-Ṣamad Syaraf al-Dīn (Bombay: Maṭba'at Qāf, 1954).

[170]The verse reads: "He [God] will heed who feareth."

[171]The verse reads: "We are best aware of what they say, and thou (O Muhammad) art in no wise a compeller over them. But warn by the Qur'ān him who feareth My threat."

[172]The verses read: "Saying: Lo! of old, when we were with our families, we were ever anxious; But Allah hath been gracious unto us and hath preserved us from the torment of the breath of Fire."

maintains that the word *khashya* in the Qur'ān is meant as referring to fear of God and His punishment.[174] Furthermore, quoting Q. 40 (*S. al-Mu'min/Ghāfir*): 13,[175] Q. 42 (*S. al-Shūrā*): 22,[176] and Q. 50 (*S. Qāf*): 32-4,[177] he points out that perfect *khashya* can lead someone to repentance (*ināba*, or *tawba*) and hope (*rajā'*) of God's blessing.[178] It is very clear, according to Ibn Taymīya, that the elucidation (*tafsīl*) of *mujmal* (general) verses must depend on the cross-referential approach.

B. Bint al-Shāṭi''s Theory

Despite the usefulness of the cross-referential approach, as we have seen above, few exegetes, according to Bint al-Shāṭi', ever applied it, whether partially or fully (*al-isti'māl al-kāmil*), or in a such way as to show the textual context (*siyāq*)

---

[173]The verses read: "They ask thee of the Hour: when will it come to port? Why (ask they)? What hast thou to tell thereof? Unto thy Lord belongeth (knowledge of) the term thereof. Thou art but a warner unto him who feareth it. On the day when they behold it, it will be as if they had but tarried for an evening or the morn thereof.

[174]Ibn Taymīya, *Majmū'at*, 89.

[175]The verse reads: "He it is who showeth you His portents, and sendeth down for you provision from the sky. None payeth heed save him who turneth (unto Him) repentant."

[176]The verse reads: "Thou seest the wrong-doers fearful of that which they have earned, and it will surely befall them; while those who believe and do good works (will be) in flowering meadows of the Gardens, having what they wish from their Lord. This is the great preferment."

[177]The verses read: "Who feareth the Beneficent in secret and cometh with a contrite heart. Enter it in peace. This is the day of immortality."

[178]Ibn Taymīya, *Majmū'at*, 90-1.

of a particular Qur'ānic verse. Aware of the hermeneutical problems involved, Bint al-Shāṭi' states in the introduction to her *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī* the following:

> The principle of the method in this *Tafsīr* – as I received it from my teacher [i.e., Amīn al-Khūlī] – is objective comprehension (*al-tanāwul al-mawḍū'ī*). This method is devoted to the study of a single subject matter (*al-mawḍū' al-wāḥid*) in the Qur'ān; and hence, all verses in the Qur'ān which speak of the subject are brought together in order that the usual Qur'ānic usages of words and structures – after seeking their original linguistic senses – are understood. This is a method which is different from the method of Qur'ān interpretation known as chapter-by-chapter method, in which a word or a verse is looked at in isolation from its specific textual context (*al-siyāq al-khāṣṣ*) which is signified by the general textual context (*al-siyāq al-'āmm*) of its overall Qur'ānic usage. The chapter-by-chapter method is insufficient to understand the Qur'ān's words, or to notice its clear structures and its unique rhetoric.[179]

It can be inferred from the above quotation that, according to her, there are three theoretical points that must be taken into consideration in applying the cross-referential method. The first is the lexical meaning of any Qur'ānic word. The recognition of the original meaning of a word, of course, can help interpreters to understand its intended meaning (*al-ma'nā al-murād*) in a given textual context. The second point is the involvement of *all* Qur'ānic verses relating to the subject under discussion. This principle means that the Qur'ān is

---

[179]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 10, 17-8; and 2: 7; and idem, *Kitābunā al-Akbar*, 5. In the latter, she says: "It is not allowed to interpret a Qur'ānic word without practicing a perfect induction (*istiqrā' kāmil*) regarding its usages in the whole Qur'ān, just as it is not admitted to deal with a Qur'ānic topic without serious research on all Qur'ānic verses, and thinking about their specific contexts in one verse or chapter, and their general contexts in the whole Qur'ān." See also Boullata, "Modern Qur'ān Exegesis," 104-5; and Poonawala, "Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwaza's Principles," 244 ff.

given the autonomy to speak for itself on any subject by itself for the sake of an objective interpretation. Bint al-Shāṭi' here echoes Betti's idea. The latter says:

> Im Lichte dieses Kanons tritt die Wechselbeziehung und Kohärenz hervor, die zwischen den einzelnen Bestandteilen der Rede, wie überhaupt jedweder Bekundung eines Gedachten waltet, sowie ihre gemeinsame Beziehung auf das Ganze, dessen Teile sie bilden: eine Wechsel - und Ganzheitsbeziehung, die eine gegenseitige Sinnerhellung und - Durchleuchtung sinnhaltiger Formen im Verhältnis zwischen dem Ganzen und seinen Bestandteilen und umgekehrt ermöglicht.[180]

The last point she raises is the awareness of *al-siyāq al-khāṣṣ* and *al-siyāq al-'āmm* in attempts at understanding the Qur'ān's words and concepts. This is, in Hirsch's words, due to the fact that "the meaning of any word is determined according to its coexistence with the words that surround it."[181] After all, the signification or meaning of a sentence, according to Betti, can only be understood in reference to the coherence of its context.[182]

For Bint al-Shāṭi' there are at least two major hermeneutical advantages to applying the cross-referential method to the Qur'ān. The first is that by means of this method, one will be able to determine the *originally intended* meaning of the Qur'ānic words (*al-ma'ānī al-aṣīla*) and the *originally intended* Qur'ānic principles (*al-mabādi' al-Qur'āniya al-aṣīla*), so that the involvement of extra-Qur'ānic

---

[180]Betti, *Die Hermeneutik als allgemeine Methodik der Geisteswissenschaften* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1962), 15. See also idem, *Allgemeine Auslegungslehre als Methodik der Geisteswissenschaften* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1967), 216-9.

[181]Hirsch, *Validity*, 201.

[182]See Betti, *Die Hermeneutik*, 15; and idem, *Allgemeine*, 220.

projections can be avoided.[183] The concepts of *al-ma'ānī* and *al-mabādi' al-aṣīla* are what is meant in al-Shāṭibī's use of the terms *"murād Allāh"* (something that God means by His words),[184] what Betti means by the term *"mens dicentis,"*[185] and Hirsch by the phrase "verbal meaning."[186] The last two terms are used in the hermeneutical study of the Bible. The other advantage, according to Bint al-Shāṭi', is that the method can lead someone to understand the rhetorical subtleties of the Qur'ān in which no single word or particle can replace another with the same meaning.[187]

C. Her Application of the Method

Bint al-Shāṭi' employs the cross-referential approach for two purposes: first, in dealing with Qur'ānic themes (as seen in such of her works as *al-Qur'ān*

---

[183]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 17; and idem, *al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāyā*, 5-8.

[184]See al-Shāṭibī, *al-Muwāfaqāt*, 3: 254-7. In this passages, al-Shāṭibī acknowledges the literal meaning of the Qur'ān (*al-ma'nā al-ẓāhir*), which is linguistic in nature, and its subtle meanings (*al-ma'nā al-bāṭin*), which constitute what God means by his words (*murād Allāh*).

[185] Betti says that "meaning-full forms" have to be regarded as autonomous, and hence must be understood in consonance with their own logic of development, their author's intention. See Betti, *Die Hermeneutik*, 14.

[186]What Hirsch means by the term is "whatever an author wills to convey by his use of linguistic symbols and which can be so conveyed." In other words, it is a *"willed type* which an author expresses by linguistic symbols and which can be understood by another through those symbols." E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), 49.

[187]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 18.

wa Qaḍāyā al-Insān, al-Shakhṣīya al-Islāmīya, and *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī li al-Qur'ān*),[188] and second, in searching for the meaning of Qur'ānic words within a given *sūra* (as seen in her *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī li al-Qur'ān*).[189] Her approach results in many new hermeneutical findings. Sometimes it helps in detecting the subtle meaning (*sirr*) of the *ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭa'a* or in identifying otiose particles in the Qur'ān, topics elaborated in chapter one of this thesis. Other hermeneutical breakthroughs, identified in the studies of Boullata, Jansen, al-Sīd and Amīn, are the notions of the absence of synonymity in the Qur'ān,[190] the emphasis-on-

---

[188]It can be said that these works represent her thematic exegetical works in the study of the Qur'ān. In her *al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāyā al-Insān,* she discusses the Qur'ānic concepts in relation to human beings, such as the human function in the world (*khilāfa,* and *amāna* [trust]), human freedoms in terms of belief (*'aqīda*), reason and reasoning (*al-'aql wa al-ra'y*), and will (*irāda*), and human existence in the afterlife (*maṣīr al-insān*). In her *al-Shakhṣiya al-Islāmīya,* she elaborates the Islamic personality according to the Qur'ān, focusing on the issues of difference between *bashar* (human beings) and *malā'ika* (angels) [also satan], the materiality and spirituality of human beings, the individuality and sociality of human beings, and the problem of the determinism. The last book explores the idea of *i'jāz* of the Qur'ān.

[189]This work, which consists of two volumes, deals with 14 short *sūra*s of the Qur'ān. The first volume is composed of Q. 93 (*S. al-Ḍuḥā*), Q. 94 (*S. al-Sharḥ*), Q. 99 (*S. al-Zalzala*), Q. 100 (*S. al-'Ādiyāt*), Q. 79 (*S. al-Nāzi'āt*), Q. 90 (*S. al-Balad*), and Q. 102 (*S. al-Takāthur*), whereas the other Q. 96 (*S. al-'Alaq*), Q. 68 (*S. al-Qalam*), Q. 103 (*S. al-'Aṣr*), Q. 92 (*S. al-Layl*), Q. 89 (*S. al-Fajr*), Q. 104 (*S. al-Humaza*), and Q. 107 (*S. al-Mā'ūn*).

[190]For detailed information about this, see Bint al-Shāṭi', "The Problem of Synonyms in the Light of Quran," *Proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth International Congress of Orientalists* (New Delhi: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1970). In this work, Bint al-Shāṭi' gives, among others, an example of the words *al-ḥalf* and *al-qasam.* In Arabic dictionaries and Qur'ān commentaries, it is said that both have the same meaning, i.e., to swear an oath. However, in Qur'ānic usage it is not so. Unlike the latter, the former is only used to refer to swearing falsely. See also Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī,* 210-38; and idem, *Kitābunā,* 7-12. In these books, she mentions the differences between the following pair words in their subtle meanings: *al-ru'ya wa al-ḥulm* (a dream), *ānasa wa abṣara* (to see), *al-na'y wa al-bu'd* (distance), *taṣada'a wa taḥaṭṭama* (to be shaken), *al-khushū' wa al-khuḍū'* (humility), *al-khashya wa al-khawf* (fear), *zawj wa imra'a* (couple), *ashtāt wa shattā* (various things), *al-ins wa al-insān* (human being), *al-ni'ma wa al-na'īm*

attention-to-the-Resurrection-event function of verbs in the passive voice (*majhūl*)[191] and the spontaneous-obedience-of-the-universe meaning of verbs in forms VII and VIII (*muṭāwa'a*).[192]

However, the question of whether Bint al-Shāṭi' is consistent in applying this method is one that still requires investigation, and it is this task that we will undertake through a study of her interpretation of *Sūrat al-'Aṣr* (Q. 103), as well as of her treatment of the Qur'ānic verses dealing with freedem of belief or religious pluralism (*ḥurrīyat al-'aqīda*). These reflect her use of the method in dealing with the Qur'ānic language and themes.

1. Her interpretation of *Sūrat al-'Aṣr* (Q. 103)

Indroducing *Sūrat al-'Aṣr*, Bint al-Shāṭi' states that it is a Meccan *sūra* that was revealed immediately after *Sūrat al-Inshirāḥ* (Q. 94) and just before *Sūrat al-'Ādiyāt* (Q. 100), i.e., 13th in the chronological order of revelation.[193] Bint al-Shāṭi''s account of the *sūra*'s *nuzūl* (revelation) conforms therefore to a generally accepted tradition.

(pleasure), and *al-'aṣr wa al-dahr* (time). See also Boullata, "Modern Qur'ān Exegesis," 109-10; idem, "Poetry Citation as Interpretive Illustration in Qur'ān Exegesis: *Masā'il Nāfi' ibn al-Azraq*," in *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*, ed. Wael B. Hallaq and Donald P. Little (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 32; and Amīn, "A Study of Bint al-Shāṭi', 86-88.

[191]See Boullata, "Modern Qur'ān Exegesis," 110.

[192]See Boullata, "Modern Qur'ān Exegesis," 110.

[193]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 75.

This *sūra* consists of three verses, and reads (1) *Wa l-'aṣri* (2) *Inna l-insāna la-fī khusrin* (3) *illā l-ladhīna āmanū wa 'amilū ṣ-ṣāliḥāti wa tawāṣaw bi l-ḥaqqi wa tawāṣaw bi al-ṣabri.* Pickthall translates these verses as follows: "By the declining day. Lo! man is in a state of loss save those who believe and do good works, and exhort one another to truth and exhort one another to endurance."[194] Using the cross-referential method, Bint al-Shāṭi' searches for the meaning of nine words appearing in the *sūra*, i.e., *al-'aṣr, al-insān, khusr, āmanū, 'amilū, al-ṣāliḥāt, tawāṣaw, al-ḥaqq* and *al-ṣabr*, as we shall see in the following.

a) Verse 1-2: ***Wa l-'aṣri inna l-insāna la-fī khusrin***

The original meaning of the word *al-'aṣr*, Bint al-Shāṭi' states, is *al-ḍaghṭ li-stikhlāṣ al-'uṣāra* (pressure for the extraction of juice). The phrase *'aṣr al-'inab* is a common expression in the Arabic language and means "extraction of the juice of the grape." From this word are derived others, for example, *al-mi'ṣara* (tool for extraction), *al-ma'ṣara* (place for extaction), and *al-mu'ṣirāt* (clouds from which the rain is extracted).[195] The original meaning of the word is found in Q. 12 (*S. Yūsuf*): 36, 49 where the words *a'ṣiru* and *ya'ṣirūna* are used to mean "to press and to extract" wine, and in Q. 78 (*S. al-Naba'*): 14 where the word *al-mu'ṣirāt* has

---

[194]Pickthall, *The Meaning*, 449.

[195]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 75. See also Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad Sayyid Kaylānī (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, n.d.), 336; Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab al-Muḥīṭ*, rearranged by Yūsuf Khayyāṭ (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl and Dār Lisān al-'Arab, 1988),

the sense of "clouds." In all these examples there is an original meaning that links these words, namely "pressure" (*al-ḍaghṭ*).[196] On this basis, Bint al-Shāṭi' interprets the word *al-'aṣr* in *Sūrat al-'Aṣr* as referring to "time" in the sense that time *presses* human beings with trials (*tajribāt*) and troubles (*mu'ānāt*), their reactions to which are examined in terms of goodness (*khayr*) or badness (*sharr*).[197] This is a very good example of how the original meaning of a word is used by Bint al-Shāṭi' in interpreting its Qur'ānic usage. On the other hand, however, the question arises: How or why does Bint al-Shāṭi' relate the "pressure" of time to *tajribāt*, *mu'ānāt*, *khayr* and *sharr*? The answer to this question and others which involve the interrelation between words having the same context will be sought later in my analysis of her interpretation of this *sūra*.

In the case of the *qasam* (oath) using the particle *wāw*, Bint al-Shāṭi' is consistent in maintaining that here it is not understood to mean the glorification (*ta'ẓīm*) of *al-muqsam bihi* (the word by which the oath is made), as al-Zamakhsharī,[198] and al-Rāzī[199] insist. It is rather meant to draw attention to an apparent natural phenomenon, that is to say, the affliction of human beings by time (*'aṣr*), preparing the audience to receive the abstract ideas of *khusr*

4: 794; and Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1996), 163.

[196]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 75-6.

[197]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 75, 77, and 80.

[198]See al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 4: 794.

[199]See al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 32: 85.

(damage) and *najā* (safety) for human beings in accordance with their responsibilities (*mas'ūlīyāt al-insān*).[200]

Bint al-Shāṭi''s understanding of the *qasam* is criticized by Tawfiq in his article "Interpretation and Lessons of Surah 'al-Ḍuhā'." Tawfiq reproaches Bint al-Shāṭi' for "taking for granted" the idea of perceptible matters in the *qasam*, when in fact not every *qasam* refers to such things.[201] Using the inductive method, he argues that the *qasam* occurs in the Qur'ān 40 times. In 13 places it appears at the beginning of Meccan *sūras*. In six of the 13 the *muqsam bihi* represents natural phenomena, such as the night (*al-layl*), the sun (*al-shams*), and the dawn (*al-fajr*), while the remainding ones deal with "less or non-perceptible" matters, as in *al-Ṣāffāt*, *al-Mursalāt*, and *al-Nāzi'āt*. The other kinds of *al-muqsam bihi* constitute "God's grace" (Q. 93: 4, Q. 36: 1-6, Q. 19: 68-72, Q. 12: 93-8, Q. 12: 93-8, Q. 12: 88-92, and Q. 12 58-76), "divine support" (Q. 93:1-5, Q. 12: 77-87 and Q. 12: 58-76), "the prophet, the present day and the hereafter" (Q. 12: 88-92, Q. 10: 52-4, and Q. 4: 62-3), "miraculous signs" (Q. 95: 1-6, Q. 92: 1-11. Q. 68: 1-6, Q. 51: 20-3, and Q. 34: 3-4), and "ethics" (Q. 92: 1-11, Q. 75: 1-6, Q. 52: 1-13, Q. 50: 1-5, Q. 34: 3-5, Q. 19: 68-72, Q. 16: 63, and Q. 10: 52-4). From this observation, Tawfiq concludes that the purpose of all instances of the *qasam* in the Qur'ān is to indicate "a significant feature that is the existence of God's grace and His support together

---

[200]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 80; and idem, *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī*, 251.

[201]Tawfiq, "Interpretation and Lessons," 16.

with the oath whether it is with the name of Allāh as in 12: 73, or with one of His created signs as in 93: 1-2."[202] It is very clear that Tawfiq's position is one of support for the classical idea of *ta'ẓīm* (glorification) in the *qasam* structure.

Nevertheless, Tawfiq's criticism seems unsound, and this for at least two reasons. First, he over-simplifies Bint al-Shāṭi''s position on the *qasam*. He asserts that Bint al-Shāṭi' sees all the *qasams* in the Qur'ān as departing from the original meaning of the concept, i.e., the *ta'ẓīm* (glorification) of the *muqsam bihi* and the *ta'kīd* (affirmation) of the *jawāb al-qasam* (the main clause of *qasam* structure), and instead taking on a rethorical meaning (*al-ma'nā al-balāghī*), i.e., drawing attention to a manifest phenomenon in order to introduce an abstract concept. This reduction of Bint al-Shāṭi''s position, however, is inaccurate. In her *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī*, she points to the bipartite division of the meaning of the *qasam* using the particle *wāw*. The first is the *qasam* which is understood to mean both *ta'kīd* and *ta'ẓīm*. This kind occurs in *qasams* in conjunction with the words *Allāh* and *rabb* in Q. 6 (*S. al-An'ām*): 23 and 30, which speak of the oath of the *mushrikūn* (polytheists) in the hearafter. It also occurs in God's oaths sworn on His own name in Q. 51 (*S. al-Dhāriyāt*): 23, Q. 15 (*S. al-Ḥijr*): 92, Q. 4 (*S. al-Nisā'*): 65, and the Prophet's oath by God in Q.10 (*S. Yūnus*): 53. The second kind is the *qasam* that is not meant as *ta'ẓīm* and *ta'kīd*. It draws attention rather to the rhetorical meaning of words, as can be seen in Q. 68 (*S. al-Qalam*): 1, Q. 79 (*S. al-Nāzi'āt*): 1-5, Q. 89 (*S. al-Fajr*): 1-3, Q. 92 (*S. al-Layl*): 1-2, Q. 93 (*S. al-Ḍuḥā*): 1-2, Q. 100 (*S. al-*

[202]Tawfiq, "Interpretation and Lessons," 16.

'Ādiyāt): 1-3, and Q. 103 (*S. al-'Aṣr*): 1. The purpose of the *qasam* in these verses is to focus a reader's attention on perceptible phenomena (*ḥissīyāt mudraka*) as an illustrative introduction to a rhetorical explanation (*bayān ma'nawī*) of abstract phenomena.[203] Tawfiq's claim that certain words, such as *al-nāzi'āt, al-nāshiṭāt, al-sābiḥāt, al-sābiqāt,* and *al-mudabbirāt* in Q. 79 (*S. al-Nāzi'āt*): 1-5, have "less or imperceptible" meaning, is not proven right. The words *al-nāzi'āt* and so on are interpreted variously by exegetes. The best-known definitions, according to al-Zamakhsharī and Bint al-Shāṭi', are that they refer to the angels who are disposed to draw human souls out of their bodies (*al-malak al-ladhī yanzi'u al-arwāḥ*), the stars in the sky (*al-nujūm*), and war horses (*khayl al-ghuzāt*).[204] Of these three interpretations, besides others, only angels are imperceptible. In addition, the *qasam* structure of Q. 79: 1-5 is the same as those in, for instance, Q. 93 (*S. al-Ḍuḥā*): 1-2, Q. 100 (*S. al-'Ādiyāt*): 1-3 and Q. 103 (*S. al-'Aṣr*): 1, where the perceptible meaning of the *muqsam bihi* is very clear. That is why Bint al-Shāṭi' prefers to interpret the the words *al-nāzi'āt* and so forth as referring to "horses," and not "angels."[205] One can say that Bint al-Shāṭi''s bipartate division results from her application of the cross-referential method to the *qasam* verses because

---

[203]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī*, 244-52. See also Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 25, 103, 124; and 2: 43-4, 80, 100, 132; Boullata, "Modern Qur'ān Exegesis," 111; Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran*, 70; Kenneth Cragg, *The Mind of the Qur'ān*, 72; Amīn, "A Study of Bint al-Shāṭi''s Exegesis," 48-54; and Lamya Kandil, "Die Schwüre in den Mekkanischen Suren," in *The Qur'ān as Text*, 41-57.

[204]Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 4: 692-3; and Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 123-4.

it takes into consideration the specific structural features of the *qasam* and the textual context of its use.

The other weakness of Tawfiq's criticism lies in his argument. Rejecting Bint al-Shāṭi''s opinion, he tries to show that all *qasams* in the Qur'ān are intended to point to "the existence of God's grace and His support." However, he misses the significance of the specific textual context of those verses and the relationship between the *qasam* and *jawāb al-qasam* therein, which, according to Bint al-Shāṭi', play a role in determining the different meanings of the *qasam*. Tawfiq does not notice the difference, for example, between the Prophet's oath by God in Q. 10 (*S. Yūnus*): 53 and God's oath by His creatures, as in Q. 103 (*S. al-'Aṣr*): 1-3. Q. 10: 53 tells us that the Prophet was asked by unbelievers whether *'adhāb al-khuld* (the enduring punishment for wrong-doers in the hereafter) is true or not, and he answered that question by using the *qasam* to glorify God and to affirm that the *'adhāb* is true. However, the glorification and affirmation are not found in the *qasam* in Q. 103: 1 in which God swears by *al-'aṣr* (time) when mentioning the idea of *khusr* (lit. loss). Here God needs neither to glorify *time*, because God is the Most Glorious, nor to affirm through the *qasam* His message, because God never lies. In other words, there is another dimension to this *qasam* and others like it. This other dimension, according to Bint al-Shāṭi', is rhetorical emphasis, as mentioned earlier.

---

[205]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 124-30

The word *insān* has the same root, i.e. *'-n-s*, as the words *ins* and *nās*. The root *'-n-s* suggests the lexical meaning of 'intimacy' as opposed to *w-ḥ-sh*, which suggests 'loneliness'.[206] A human being is called *insān* or *ins*, and *nās* (in the collective), because, as al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī states in his *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, human beings are intimate with one another in society (*al-jamā'a*).[207]

Nevertheless, apart from their shared meaning, according to Bint al-Shāṭi', the three words *al-nās*, *al-ins* and *al-insān* have their own specific connotations in Qur'ānic usage.[208] The word *al-nās* appears in the Qur'ān 240 times, conveying a clear indication of the human species in general (*dalālat ism al-jins al-muṭlaq*).[209] Q. 49 (*S. al-Ḥujurāt*): 13, Q. 13 (*S. al-Ra'd*): 17 and Q. 59 (*S. al-Ḥashr*): 21 represent examples of this. The term *al-ins*, which occurs 18 times in the Qur'ān, is always associated with the word *al-jinn* by way of contrast (*'ala wajh al-taqābul*). For Bint al-Shāṭi', this indicates that the human species is different from that of the *jinn* in the sense that unlike the latter, the former is intimate (*anīs*), not wild (*ghayr mutawaḥḥish*), and that furthermore it is visible (*ghayr khāfīn*). This indication is called its *dalālat al-insīya*.[210] The word *al-insān* in the Qur'ān points not only to an individual representative of the human species, but also to what Bint al-Shāṭi'

---

[206]See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 1: 112.

[207]Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt*, 28.

[208]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 81.

[209]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāyā*, 17; and idem, *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 81.

[210]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāya*, 18; and idem, *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2:

calls *dalālat al-insāniīya* (indication of humanity). The word is mentioned in 65 verses. All of these verses deal with humanity's qualification (*ahlīyat al-insān*) to bear *taba'āt al-taklīf* (responsibilities) and *amāna* (trust), and to receive *'ilm* (knowledge) and *'aql* (intellect) as the *khalīfat Allāh* (God's deputy) in the world.[211] More specifically, the word *al-insān* in the context of Q. 103: 2 conveys the sense of mankind's qualification to carry individual and social responsibilities (*mas'ūlīyat al-insān al-fardīya wa al-ijtimā'īya*).[212]

The word *khusr*, etymologically speaking, is the antonym of *ribḥ* (profit). It is used to signify material loss in a business deal. In the religious field, it is understood to mean *"al-ḍalāl 'an al-ḥaqq"* (going astray from the true path).[213] In the Qur'ān the word and its derivations appear 64 times with various meanings. In three places, i.e., Q. 26 (*S. al-Shu'arā'*): 181, Q 55 (*S. al-Raḥmān*): 9, and Q. 83 (*S. al-Muṭaffifīn*): 3, the words *al-mukhsirīn*, *tukhsirū* and *yukhsirūna* (all in the fourth form) occur, conveying the meaning of material loss in a business deal, i.e., "causing a loss." The word *al-khāsirūn* emerges in Q. 5 (*S. al-Mā'ida*): 30 and Q. 12 (*S. Yūsuf*): 14 to indicate the meaning of abstract loss (*al-khusr al-ma'nawī*). The final sense, appearing in various forms, conveys its religious (technical) meaning in the context of warning *kāfirūn* (unbelievers), *mushrikūn* (polytheists),

---

[211]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāya*, 20-5; and idem, *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 82.

[212]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 82.

[213]See al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt*, 147-8; and Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 2: 829-30.

munāfiqūn (hypocrites) and the like, who deserve punishment in the hereafter.[214] Considering the specific textual context, Bint al-Shāṭi' maintains that the word *khusr* should be understood to mean "going astray from the right way" amounting to turning away from *taba'āt al-taklīf* (religious duties) and *mas'ūlīyat al-insān* (human responsibilities) in the world.

b) Verse 3: *Illā l-ladhīna āmanū wa 'amilū al-ṣāliḥāti wa-tawaṣaw bi l-ḥaqqi wa-tawaṣaw bi al-ṣabri*

Bint al-Shāṭi' brings up two major points in relation to this verse: the relation between belief (*īmān*) and good works (*al-a'māl al-ṣāliḥa*), and the meaning of the words *tawāṣaw, al-ḥaqq* and *al-ṣabr.* Prior to the discussion of these matters, however, she explains that the verses contain the message that every human being (*al-insān*) has his/her individual responsibility, that is to say, belief in God and the performance of good works, as well as the collective responsibility to recommend to one another truth and patience.[215]

For evidence on the relation between belief and good works, Bint al-Shāṭi' searches the Qur'ān for passages where they are associated. She finds this to be the case in 75 verses containing references to divine promise (*al-wa'd*) and threat (*al-wa'īd*). In several of these, i.e., Q. 4 (*S. al-Nisā'*): 69, Q. 12 (*S. Yūsuf*): 101, Q. 21 (*S. al-Anbiyā'*): 72, 86, Q. 26 (*S. al-Shu'arā'*): 83, and Q. 27 (*S. al-Naml*): 19, good

---

[214]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī,* 2: 82-4.

[215]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī,* 2: 86.

works are attributed to the prophets. Q. (*S. al-Kahf*): 110 relates the obligation of *al-'amal al-ṣālih* in forbidding polytheism. Another phenomenon is that Q. 41 (*S. al-Rūm*): 44 contrasts *al-'amal al-ṣālih* with *kufr* (unbelief). The above examples, she infers, indicate that *al-'amal al-ṣālih* is connected to *īmān*. Accordingly, the underlying message of the phrase of *āmanū wa 'amilū al-ṣālihat* in Q. 103: 3 is that belief in God should be associated with doing good works in order that human beings be saved from *khusr*.[216]

The word *tawaṣā* is a verb derived from the root *w-ṣ-y* which originally conveys the sense of "strength of relation" (*quwwat al-irtibāṭ wa al-ittiṣāl*).[217] Based on this meaning such statement as, for example: *waṣat al-arḍu*, meaning "plants of the earth are connected to each other," or *awṣā al-rajulu bi-shay'in*, meaning "to entrust something to someone," are formed.[218]

The words that have the above root appear in the Qur'ān in a number of variant forms. The words *waṣṣā* and *awṣā* occur 12 times in the context where God entrusts His divine teachings to His messengers and true believers. The form *tawāsā* eppears 5 times. One of them is to be found in Q. 51 (*S. al-Dhāriyāt*): 53 in the context of *al-istifhām al-inkārī* (the negative question) for the purpose of rejecting the idea that previous prophets had recommended (*tawāṣaw*) to their followers to deny (*takdhīb*) the Prophet Muḥammad. The other instances occur in

---

[216]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 86-7.

[217]See al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt*, 525.

Q. 103: 3 and Q. 90 (*S. al-Balad*): 17, where this form of the word conveys the meaning of the reciprocal recommendation of upholding *al-ḥaqq* (truth), *al-ṣabr* (human inner strength or fortitude), and *al-marḥama* (mercy), which, according to Bint al-Shāṭi', represents a collective human duty (*mas'ūlīyat al-insān 'an al-jamā'a*).[219]

Bint al-Shāṭi' says that the word *al-ḥaqq* is used in the Qur'ān 227 times in various technical senses, for instance, as "the opposite of *bāṭil* (falsehood), a divine name (the Truth), religion, God's promise, God's speech, and a portion which should be returned to its owner."[220] Of these meanings, it is as the opposite of *al-bāṭil*, that, according to her, the word *al-ḥaqq* functions in Q. 103: 3.[221] It might be that she prefers this meaning and not the other, because she believes there is a connection between the word *al-ḥaqq* and the word preceding it, i.e., *tawāṣaw*, which requires the practical human implementation of truth.

The last term that Bint al-Shāṭi' discusses in this verse is *al-ṣabr*. This word, which essentially means *"al-ḥabs"* (the act of holding or keeping back),[222] is understood to mean "human inner strength or patience in every subject on which God reveals His instructions." In what aspects is *ṣabr* related to other

---

[218]See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 6: 938-9.

[219]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 89-90.

[220]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 89.

[221]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 88.

[222]See al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt*, 273; and Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 3: 403.

terms? The Qur'ān uses the word in various contexts. In about 20 verses the Prophet is told to be patient in carrying all burdens relating to his mission. Q. 3 (*S. Alī 'Imrān*): 200 and Q. 8 (*S. al-Anfāl*): 46 relate it to *jihād*, where in Q. 2 (*S. al-Baqara*): 155, 177 and Q. (*S. al-Ḥajj*): 35 it occurs in relation to the afflictions (*ibtilā'*) and disasters (*muṣībāt*) that burden human beings.[223] All of the above aspects, according to her, are at play here in Q. 103: 3. She says: "The silence of Q. 103: 3 – as well as Q. 90: 17 – with regard to mentioning the aspects related to *ṣabr* indicates the *al-iṭlāq wa al-ta'mīm* (generalization) of what the Qur'ān [i.e. other verses] mentions elsewhere, namely patience in regard to the consequences of belief, life's afflictions, disasters, and *jihād*."[224]

As far as the study of Bint al-Shāṭi''s interpretation of Q. 103 is concerned, one can say that she is successful in showing the correlation between the etymological meaning of a Qur'ānic word, its meaning in the general textual context (*al-siyāq al-'āmm*), and its meaning in the specific textual context (*al-siyāq al-khāṣṣ*). In her hermeneutical exercise, it may be observed that the etymological meaning of a word is specified by *al-siyāq al-'āmm* of the whole Qur'ān. Furthermore, the meaning which is derived from *al-siyāq al-'āmm* is designated by *al-siyāq al-khāṣṣ*, such as in Q. 103 where every word has its own specific function in determining the meanings of the words sorounding it. For example, Bint al-Shāṭi' determines the word *al-'aṣr* with *tajribāt*, *mu'ānāt*, *khayr* and *sharr*,

---

[223]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 91-2.

[224]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 92.

and designates the meaning of the word *khusr* to be that of "turning away from *taba'āt al-taklīf*", due to the fact that the words *al-'aṣr* and *khusr* here are associated with the word *insān* which conveys the sense of "responsibility." Likewise, the meaning of *al-insān* in this passage is qualified by the meaning of the clause *illā al-ladhīna āmanū wa 'amilū al-ṣāliḥāti wa tawāṣaw bi al-ḥaqqi wa tawāṣaw bi al-ṣabri.* Again, she determines that the word *al-ḥaqq* means the opposite of *al-bāṭil* in consideration of its relation to the word *tawāṣaw.* This is consonant with what Betti state: "The significance, intensity, and nuance of a word can only be compherended in relation to the meaning-context in which it was uttered, so that the significance and sense of a sentence, and the sentence connected with it, can only be understood in relatien to the reciprocal coherence of meaning-context, and the organic composition and conclusiveness of speech."[225] What is more, the possibility that the specific meaning of every word is determined by its specific textual context lends credence to Bint al-Shāṭī''s position that *there is no synonymity even between instances of the same word.* In conclusion, it can be said that as far as her interpretation of the *sūra* is concerned, Bint al-Shāṭi' is loyal to the cross-referential method she develops. Between her theory and its application there is certainly coherence.

---

[225]Betti, *Die Hermeneutik,* 16. See also Nikunja Vihari Banerjee, *Language, Meaning and Persons* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1963), 117.

2. The case of *ḥurrīyat al-'aqīda*

The problem of religious pluralism represents another interesting subject for discussion, due to the fact that religious fanaticism and sectarian clashes in the name of religion are an unpleasant fact in the history of all faiths, and have cost the lives of so many human beings.[226] In addition, the issue of pluralism is now part of the mainstream of modern religous thought. Bint al-Shāṭi' is one of those who have made a significant contribution to this discussion, in view of what she says about the Qur'ān's position on freedom of belief and religious pluralism. In terms of the discussion of her exegetical method, we will see whether or not she is consistent throughout in her application of the cross-referential method.

In her *al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāyā al-Insān* Bint al-Shāṭi' collects the Qur'ānic verses which are, according to her, related to the above issue. First of all, basing

---

[226]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāyā*, 95. Shipler, on the one hand, proves that the conflict beween Jews and Muslims in the modern era is due to religious fanaticism. See David K. Shipler, *Arab and Jews: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land* (New York: Times Books, 1986), 138-77. Hudson and Rejwan, on the other hand, maintain that the main factor for the emergence of civil war of 1975-76 in Lebanon beween Maronite Catholics and Muslims, for example, was political or enomomic, not religious. For detailed information about this, see Michael C. Hudson, *Arab Politics: the Search for Legitmacy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), 56-81, especially 79; and Nissim Rejwan, *Arabs Face the Modern World: Religious, Cultural, and Political Responses to the West* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 213-21. However, it is very possible, as Yaron Harel concludes, that when political or economic conflicts occur, people use religious identity as a means to suport their political interest. See Yaron Harel, "Jewish-Christian Relations in Aleppo as Background for the Jewish Response to the Events of October 1850," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30, 1, (1998): 77-96.

herself on Q. 10 (*S. Yūnus*): 99,[227] which is a Meccan verse, and Q. 2 (*S. al-Baqara*): 256,[228] which is an early Medinan verse, she maintains that the Prophet Muḥammad whose task was merely to inform people of the divine revelation (see Q. 3: 20, Q. 5: 92, Q. 16: 35, and Q. 42: 48) and to argue in the best way against those who doubted it (see Q. 16: 125),[229] was not allowed to force others to adhere to the religion of Islam. This was in order to emphasize that every human being bears responsibility (*ḥaml al-amāna*) for his or her choice, and that faith (*'aqīda*) must result from conviction (*i'tiqād*), belief (*īmān*) from hearty satisfaction (*riḍā*) and confidence (*ṭuma'nīna*) in recieving the truth.[230]

This principle is, according to Bint al-Shāṭi', related to the positive attitude of Islam towards other religions, such as Judaism and Christianity. Quoting Q. 2 (*S. al-Baqara*): 91,[231] 97,[232] Q. 3 (*S. Āl 'Imrān*): 3-4,[233] Q. 4 (*S. al-Nisā'*): 46,[234] Q. 5 (*S.*

---

[227]The verse (verse 100 in Pickthall's) reads: "If thy Lord willed, all who are in the earth would have believed together. Wouldst thou (Muhammad) compel men until they are believers?"

[228]The verse reads: "There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error..."

[229]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāyā*, 97-8.

[230]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāyā*, 95-6. Cf. Boullata, "*Fa-stabiqū 'l-khayrāt:* A Qur'anic Principle of Interfaith Relations, in *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Wadi Z. Haddad (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 43. In support of the Islamic principle of religious pluralism and tolerance, Boullata quotes four other verses, i.e. Q. 5: 48, Q. 11: 118, Q. 16: 93, and Q. 42: 8. Similarly, Wael B. Hallaq supports this idea by showing that "the Qur'ān considered the Jews and Christians as possessors of their own respective divine laws, and as bound by the application of these laws." See his *A History of Islamic Legal Theories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 4-5.

[231]The verse reads: "And when it is said unto them: Believe in that which Allah hath revealed, they say: We believe in that which was revealed unto us. And they

al-Mā'ida): 46,[235] Q. 35 (*S. Fāṭir*): 31,[236] and Q. 46 (*S. al-Aḥqāf*): 30,[237] she concludes that Islam not only acknowledges the freedom of religious faith for all people, but also encourages Muslims to confirm the religion and belief for which all previous prophets were sent.[238] The Qur'ānic message inferred from Q. 2 (*S. al-Baqara*): 136,[239] 285,[240] Q. 3 (*S. Āl 'Imrān*): 64,[241] 70,[242] 71,[243] Q. 4 (*S. al-Nisā'*): 150,[244]

---

disbelieve in that which cometh after it, though it is the truth confirming that which they possess. Say (unto them, O Muhammad): Why then slew ye the Prophets of Allah aforetime, if ye are (indeed) believers?"

[232]The verse reads: "Say (O Muhammad, to mankind): Who is an enemy to Gabriel! For he it is who hath revealed (this Scripture) to thy heart by Allah's leave, confirming that which was (revealed) before it, and a guidance and glad tidings to believers."

[233]The verses read: "He hath revealed unto thee (Muhammad) the Scripture with truth, confirming that which was (revealed) before it, even as He revealed the Torah and the Gospel aforetime, for a guidance to mankind; and hath revealed the Criterion (of right and wrong). Lo! those who disbelieve the revelations of Allah, theirs will be a heavy doom. Allah is Mighty, Able to Requite (the wrong)."

[234]The verse (verse 47 in Pickthall's) reads: "O ye unto whom the Sripture hath been given! Believe in what We have revealed confirming that which ye possess, before We destroy countenances so as to confound them, or curse them as We cursed the Sabbathbreakers (of old time). The Commandment of Allah is always executed."

[235]The verse reads: "And We caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow in their footsteps, confirming that which was (revealed) before him, and We bestowed on him the Gospel wherein is guidance and a light, confirming that which was (revealed) before it in the Torah -- a guidance and an admonition unto those who ward off (evil)."

[236]The verse reads: "As for that which We inspire in thee of the Scripture, it is the Truth confirming that which was (revealed) before it. Lo! Allah is indeed Observer, Seer of His slaves."

[237]The verse reads: "They said: O our people! Lo! we have heard a Scripture which hath been revealed after Moses, confirming that which was before it, guiding unto the truth and a right road."

[238]Bint al-Shāti', *al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāyā*, 99.

[239]The verse reads: "Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac,

150,[244] Q. 29 (*S. al-'Ankabūt*): 46,[245] Q. 41 (*S. Fuṣṣilat*): 43,[246] and Q. 42 (*S. al-Shūrā*): 13[247] even points to the unity of revealed religion. Although this idea is difficult to achieve in reality, human beings, she suggests, should try to implement it in order to be able to avoid hatred and fanaticism.[248] She also argues that the word

---

and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered."

[240]The verse reads: "The messenger believeth in that which hath been revealed unto him from his Lord and (so do) the believers. Each one believeth in Allah and His angels and His Scriptures and His messengers -- We make no distinction between any of His messengers -- and they say; "We hear and we obey. (Grant us) Thy forgiveness, our Lord. Unto thee is the journeying."

[241]The verse reads: "Say: O people of the Scripture! Come to an agreement between us and you; that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allah. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him)."

[242]The verse reads: "O people of the Scripture! Why disbelieve ye in the revelations of Allah, when ye (yourselves) bear witness (to their truth)?"

[243]The verse reads: "O people of the Scripture! Why confound ye truth with falsehood and knowingly conceal the truth?"

[244]The verse reads: "Lo! those who disbelieve in Allah and His messengers, and seek to make distinction between Allah and His messenger, and say: We believe in some and disbelieve in others, and seek to choose a way in between."

[245]The verse reads: "And argue not with the People of the Scripture unless it be in (a way) that is better, save with such of them as do wrong; and say: We believe in that which hath been revealed unto us and revealed unto you; and our God and your God is one, and unto Him we surrender."

[246]The verse reads: "Naught is said unto thee (Muhammad) save what was said unto the messengers before thee. Lo! thy Lord is owner of forgiveness, and owner (also) of dire punishment."

[247]The verse reads: "He hath ordained for you that religion which He commended unto Noah, and that which We inspire in thee (Muhammad), and that which We commended unto Abraham and moses and Jesus, saying: Establish the religion, and be not divided therein...."

dīn (religion) always appears in the Qur'ān in its singular form, and never in its plural. Still, regarding the notion of freedom of belief, she maintains that Islam allows holy war merely in order to protect that freedom,[249] as stated in Q. 8 (*S. al-Anfāl*): 61,[250] Q. 22 (*S. al-Ḥajj*): 39,[251] and Q. 60 (*S. al-Mumtaḥana*): 8-9.[252]

Nevertheless, Bint al-Shāṭi''s treatment of the Qur'ānic verses dealing with the issue of religious pluralism is somewhat unconvincing, for she in fact fails to apply the cross-referential method in a consistent fashion, a fault that she criticizes in other exegetes. She neglects moreover to explain or even quote the few Qur'ānic verses that are understood by some exegetes to reject religious pluralism. These verses are Q. 3 (*S. Āl 'Imrān*): 19, which reads: *"Inna l-dīna 'inda l-lāhi l-islāmu wa mā-khtalafa l-ladhīna ūtū l-kitāba illā min ba'di mā jā'ahumu l-'ilmu baghyan baynahum wa man yakfur bi-āyāti l-lāhi fa-inna l-lāha sarī'u l-ḥisābi,"* and

---

[248]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāyā*, 100-2.

[249]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāyā*, 102-3

[250]The verse (verse 60 in Pickthall's) reads: "Make ready for them all thou canst of (armed) force and horses tethered, that thereby ye may dismay the enemy of Allah and your enemy, and others beside them whom ye know not. Allah knoweth them. Whatsoever ye spend in the way of Allah it will be repaid to you in full, and ye will not be wronged."

[251]The verse reads: "Sanction is given unto those who fight because they have been wronged; and Allah is indeed Able to give them victory."

[252]The verse reads: "Allah forbiddeth you not those who warred not against you on account of religion and drove you not out from your homes, that you should show them kindness and deal justly with them. Lo! Allah loveth the just dealers. Allah forbiddeth you only those who warred against you on account of religion and have driven you out from your homes and helped to drive you out, that ye make friends of them. Whosoever maketh friends of them -- (All) such are wrong-doers. "

verse 85 from the same *sūra*, which states: *"Wa man yabtaghi ghayra l-islāmi dīnan fa lan yuqbala minhu wa huwa fi l-ākhirati mina l-khāsirīna."*

It seems that her silence with respect to these two verses is due to the fact that she is afraid of being accused of self-contradiction. When dealing with the word *al-dīn* in Q. 107 (*S. al-Mā'ūn*): 1, she says: "It is common (in the Qur'ān) that the word be used in reference to religion in general, and to the religion of Islam in a specific way."[253] To support her statement, she then quotes four verses, two of which are Q. 3: 19 and 85. It can be inferred from her words that, according to her, the meaning of Q. 3: 19 is that the true religion is the religion of Islam, and that Q. 3: 85 intends to say that other religions are not accepted by God. This opposition to religious pluralism was also maintained by two classical exegetes, i.e., Ibn Kathīr and al-Rāzī. Commenting on Q. 3: 19, the former says:

> There is an assertion by God that there is no other religion with Him which He would accept from anyone except Islam. Islam means following the messengers of God in that which He sent them at all times until the coming of Muḥammad, the 'seal of the messengers'. Thereafter God closed all other ways (leading) to Him except the way through Muḥammad.[254]

Likewise, al-Rāzī understands Q. 3: 85 to mean that God declared that the only true religion is Islam, and that no other religion will be accepted by God.[255] A further complication is that, in spite of her insistence that the Qur'ān favors

---

[253]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 184.

[254]Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 1: 362, and 387. See also Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *The Qur'ān and Its Interpreters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 2: 66.

[255]Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 7: 207, and 8: 135. See also Ayoub, *the Qur'ān*, 2: 242.

religious pluralism, she declares on at least one other occasion that Islam, according to the Qur'ān, is the only true religion.[256]

Bint al-Shāṭi''s self-contradiction in this case is due in part to her mis-application of the cross-referential method that she develops. Had she searched for the meaning of the term *islām* and its various forms throughout the Qur'ān, taking into consideration their textual context (*siyāq*), she would have solved her own methodological problem. The word *islām* and its derivations, i.e., *aslama* (*al-fi'l al-māḍī*), *yuslimu* (*al-fi'l al-muḍāri'*), *aslim* (*fi'l al-amr*) and *muslim* (*ism al-fā'il*), appear in the Qur'ān seventy-three times,[257] in most of which cases there is no intention of referring to the religion itself; it rather refers to total submission and belief in the oneness of God, belief in all the prophets and doing good works with *ikhlāṣ* (sincere devotion). For example, the Qur'ānic verses which indicate these points are:

> a. Q. 2 (*S. al-Baqara*): 131, saying: "When his Lord said unto him (Abraham): Surrender [*aslim*)! he said: I have surrendered (*aslamtu*) to the Lord of the Worlds";
> b. Q. 22 (*S. al-Ḥajj*): 34, saying: "And for every notion have We appointed a ritual, that they may mention in the name of Allah over the beast of cattle that He hath given them for food; and your God is one God, therefore surrender [*aslimū*) unto Him, and give good tidings (O Muhammad) to the humble";
> c. Q. 3 (*S. Āl 'Imrān*): 18-9, saying: "Allah (Himself) is witness that there is no God save Him, and the angels and the men of learning (too are witness), maintaining His creation in justice, there is no

---

[256]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 184.

[257]See Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Maṭaba'at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīya, 1954), 355-7.

> God save Him, the Almighty, the Wise. Lo! religion with Allah (is) the Surrender [*al-islām*] (to His will and guidance) ..."; and d. Q. 31 (*S. Luqmān*): 22, saying: "Whosoever surrendereth [*yuslim*] his purpose to Allah while doing good, he verily hath grasped the firm hand-hold. Unto Allah belongeth the sequel of all things."

On this basis, many exegetes, among them al-Zamakhsharī,[258] 'Abduh[259] and Sayyid Quṭb,[260] choose not to interpret the word *islām* in Q. 3: 19, and 85 as referring to the name of a particular religion. 'Abduh, for example, says:

> Indeed, the restriction (*ḥaṣr*) in God's statement: *Inna al-dīna 'inda l-lāhi l-islāmu*, encompasses all religions for which the prophets were sent, for the *islām* (submission to God) represents the general spirit (*al-rūḥ al-kullī*) of the religions, on which they agreed, regardless of the differences in their religious practices (*al-takālīf wa ṣuwar al-a'māl*).[261]

II. *Irtibāṭ al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar* (Interconnection Between Verses and Chapters)

Irtibāt is defined by al-Zarkashī as a discipline in which a certain aspect which links verses (*āyāt*) or chapters (*suwar*) is realized by means of a logical

---

[258]See al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 2: 345 and 381. On these pages, al-Zamakhsharī says that the word is understood in Q. 2: 18 and 85 to mean *"al-'adl wa al-tawḥīd"* (justice and oneness of God).

[259]See Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm* (known as *Tafsīr al-Manār*) (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1954), 3: 257, and 358.

[260]See Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān*, 1: 356-7.

[261]Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. 3: 257.

(*'aqlī*), perceptible (*ḥissī*), or imaginary (*khayālī*) conjecture, or the like.[262] It is an issue that has been discussed by Qur'ān exegetes since the fourth century Hijra. It is reported that the first scholar to speak of *irtibāṭ* was Abū Bakr al-Nīsābūrī (d. 309-10/921-2). Whenever an *āya* was recited to al-Nīsābūrī, he explained why the verse is located before one and after another verse. Similarly, whenever a certain *sūra* was studied, he explained the connection between the *sūra* and that which precedes and follows it in the canonical order.[263] More profound explanations of this discipline are to be found in the exegetical works of al-Rāzī,[264] Abū Ja'far ibn al-Zubayr (d. 708/1308),[265] and al-Biqā'ī (d. 885/1480).[266]

The main purpose behind searching for instances of *irtibāṭ*, according to Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī (d. 543/1148), is to bring out the unity of the Qur'ān in terms of its meaning (*muttasiqat al-ma'ānī*) and the coherence of its words

---

[262]Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 1: 36; and al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 3: 323. Other terms that are used by exegetes to refer to the above definition are *al-rabṭ*, *al-munāsaba*, and *al-tanāsub*.

[263]Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 1: 36; and al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 3: 322.

[264]In his *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, al-Rāzī explains the *irtibāṭ* aspects between verses within a *sūra*, and those between the beginning of a *sūra* and the end of another.

[265]According to al-Suyūṭī, Ibn al-Zubayr was Abū Ḥayyān's teacher. He wrote on Qur'ānic studies, e.g., *al-Burhān fī Munāsabat Tartīb Suwar al-Qur'ān* and *Milāk al-Ta'wīl*. See al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 3: 323. See also Muḥammad ibn Shākir, *Fawāt al-Wafayāt*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1973), 2: 555; and the introduction of Sa'īd al-Fallāḥ to his edition of Ibn al-Zubayr's *Milāk al-Ta'wīl al-Qāṭi' bi-dhawī al-Ilḥād wa al-Ta'ṭīl fī Tawjīh al-Mutashābih al-Lafẓ min Āy al-Tanzīl* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1983), 1: 101. It is very possible that Abū Ḥayyān was very much influenced by Ibn al-Zubayr in relation to knowledge of the *irtibāṭ*. In his *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, the former very often introduces a certain *sūra* by mentioning its *irtibāṭ* with the *sūras* preceding it. See Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*.

(*muntaẓimat al-mabānī*).[267] The unity of the Qur'ān is described by exegetes through the aspects of *irtibāṭ* which, according to al-Zarkashī, consist in comparison (*al-tamthīl/al-tanẓīr*), contradiction (*al-muḍādda*), or digression (*al-istiṭrād*).[268] An example of the *tamthīl* aspect of *irtibāṭ* is shown in the connection between Q. 17 (*S. al-Isrā'*): 1, which speaks of the *isrā'* (night journey) of the Prophet Muḥammad, and verse 2 in the same *sūra*, which speaks of the revelation to the Prophet Moses. For al-Zarkashī, the comparison aspect of the *irtibāṭ* between the two verses is that while God showed evidently (*'iyānan*) through the *isrā'* to the Prophet Muḥammad His concealed signs, He demonstrated by explanation (*bayānan*) His revelation to Moses, which constitutes another divine sign.[269] The *muḍādda* aspect can be seen, moreover, in the relation between Q. 2 (*S. al-Baqara*): 1-5, and Q. 2: 6. Al-Biqā'ī states that the passage in Q. 2: 1-5 concerns the believers' acceptance of the Qur'ān. On the contrary, verse 6 explains the unbelievers' rejection of it.[270] These verses, however, are united by a single theme, i.e., the people's attitude toward divine revelation. Finally, the *istiṭrād* aspect of *irtibāṭ* is elaborated by al-Zamakhsharī

---

[266]See Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn 'Umar al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar* (Hayderabad: Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Uthmānīya, 1969).

[267]Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 1: 36; and al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 3: 322.

[268]See al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 1: 40-52; and al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 3: 324-330.

[269]Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 1: 42. Cf. Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, 6: 6. In this passage, Abū Ḥayyān points to the comparison between the glorification of Muḥammad with the *isrā'* and that of Moses with the Torah.

[270]See al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 1: 92.

when interpreting Q. 7 (*S. al-A'rāf*): 26. He says that the verse comes by way of digression (*'alā sabīl al-istiṭrād*). The verse, which comes after the mention of the appearance of Adam's and Eve's pudenda (Q. 7: 22-25) is referred to in order to show divine kindness in the creation of clothing, the humiliation of uncovering one's pudenda, and to indicate that covering the latter is part of *taqwā* (piety).[271]

Nineteenth century discussions of the concept of *irtibāṭ* followed a somewhat different format in contrast to the earlier concept. Ibn 'Āshūr (d. 1867),[272] for example, maintains that between the Qur'ānic verses in one *sūra* there must be *tanāsub* (interconnection) with regard to their main purpose (*gharaḍ*).[273] Introducing every *sūra*, Ibn 'Āshūr always explains to the reader its *gharaḍ*. For example, when dealing with Q. 2 (*S. al-Baqara*), he begins his interpretation by stating that the *sūra* consists of two main purposes to which all of its verses refer: the first is to affirm the supremacy of Islam in terms of its guidance and foundations for moral purification; the second is to explain the *sharī'a* (Islamic legal rulings).[274]

Some Qur'ān exegetes of the 20th century have taken a more systematic approach to the study of Qur'ānic unity. Mustansir Mir[275] maintains that unlike

---

[271] Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 2: 97.

[272] See Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn 'Āshūr, *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* (Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnīsīya li al-Nashr, 1984).

[273] Ibn 'Āshūr, *Tafsīr*, 1: 79.

[274] Ibn 'Āshūr, *Tafsīr*, 1: 203.

most classical commentators who discussed the *irtibāṭ* between verses within one *sūra*, or between *sūra*s in a "linear-atomistic" approach, some interpreters of the modern period, such as al-Farāhī,[276] apply an "organic-holistic" method. Al-Farāhī (d. 1930-1), for instance, offers the concept of what he calls *"niẓām*, or, *naẓm al-Qur'ān"* (coherence of the Qur'ān). He is not satisfied with the traditional approach. In his *Dalā'il al-Niẓām* al-Farāhī says:

> The interconnection (*tanāsub*) between one verse and another does not demonstrate that the Word of God [i.e., the Qur'ān] is something united, coherent in itself. Those who seek the *tanāsub* are sometimes satisfied with any *tanāsub* (interconnection). They forget the relation through which the Qur'ān becomes united. They also sometimes seek relations between contiguous verses (*al-āyāt al-mutajāwira*), whereas, in fact, they are not connected [directly] to each other. This is because a verse is related to another verse that comes long before it.
> In short, what I mean by the *niẓām* (coherence of the Qur'ān) is that a *sūra* constitutes one (coherent) statement. It (also) has a connection with a preceding and following *sūra*, or with a far-preceding and far-following one. The same thing happens in terms of *naẓm al-āyāt*. Between verses or *sūra*s there are sometimes parenthetical ones (*āyāt mu'tariḍa* or *suwar mu'tariḍa*). On the basis of this principle, you can see that the whole Qur'ān is one, and has interconnection and sequence in its parts from the beginning to the end.[277]

---

[275]See Mustansir Mir, "The *Sūra* as a Unity: A Twentieth Century Development in Qur'ān Exegesis," in *Approaches to the Qur'ān*, 211-24. In these passages, Mir discusses the ideas of *naẓm* according to Thanavī, Quṭb, Darwaza, al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, al-Farāhī and al-Iṣlāḥī. See also his, *Coherence in the Qur'ān*, 25-98.

[276]See 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Farāhī, *Dalā'il al-Niẓām* (Haydarābād: Maḥfūẓat al-Dā'ira al-Ḥamīdīya, 1388 H.).

[277]'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Farāhī, *Dalā'il al-Niẓām* (India: Maḥfūẓat al-Dā'ira al-Ḥamīdīya, 1388 H.), 74-5. Al-Farāhī's concept of *naẓm* was later developed by his disciple, al-Iṣlāḥī. For detailed information, see Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'ān: A Study of Iṣlāḥī's concept of Naẓm in Tadabbur-i Qur'ān* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1986).

As Ibn 'Āshūr does in explaining his notion of *gharaḍ*, al-Farāhī points out that every *sūra* has a main idea (*'amūd*) to which refer all issues (*maṭālib*) contained in its verses.[278] The *maṭlab* (issue) may represent *ta'līl* (argumentation), *ta'ṣīl* (giving a firm foundation), *tafrī'* (derivation), *tafṣīl* (particularization), *tamthīl* (exemplification), *īrād al-muqābil wa al-ḍidd* (providing comparison and contradiction), or *tanbīh* (admonition).[279] All these various kinds of *maṭālib* are interrelated to each other, in the sense that they refer to their *'amūd*. Over and above this, all *'amūd*s in the Qur'ān are united to one other.[280]

Thus it can be concluded that *irtibāṭ* was studied by exegetes of both the classical and modern periods, regardless of the differences in their ideas, in order to demonstrate the unity of the Qur'ān. Al-Rāzī and Ibn 'Āshūr even explicitly state that an understanding of *irtibāṭ* can help convince people of the inimitability of the Qur'ān.[281] The question, therefore, arises: What did Bint al-Shāṭi' think of this idea?

Bint al-Shāṭi''s position on the *irtibāṭ* corresponds in part to that of Ibn 'Āshūr and al-Farāhī. Bint al-Shāṭi' agrees with the *sūra*-coherence idea, or in

---

[278]Al-Farāhī, *Dalā'il*, 73.

[279]Al-Farāhī, *Dalā'il*, 72.

[280]See al-Farāhī, *Dalā'il*, 93-105. In these pasages, al-Farāhī shows the *naẓm* of the Qur'ān by mentioning *'amūd*s and their *maṭālib* from *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* to *Sūrat al-A'rāf*.

[281]Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 2: 18; and Ibn 'Āshūr, *Tafsīr*, 1: 79. See also al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 3: 323.

Mir's words, the "*sūra*-as-a-unity" concept.[282] Explaining her reason for choosing to interpret fourteen short *sūras* in her *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, Bint al-Shāti' says that the fourteen *sūras* selected, most of which are Meccan, have one theme (*waḥdat al-mawdū'*) apiece.[283] Introducing Q. 100 (*S. al-'Ādiyāt*), for instance, she states that the theme of the *sūra* is the Last Day.[284] All of its verses are related to each other, and refer to that theme. She argues that the *sūra* begins with the presentation of a perceptible phenomenon of sudden attack (Q. 100: 1-5) to represent the abstract event of the Day of Resurrection on which all human beings will be scattered and judged in accordance with their deeds (Q. 100: 6-11).[285] Similarly, commenting on Q. 89 (*S. al-Fajr*) whose major theme is a moral lesson, she says that its verses are interconnected. First of all, verses 1-14 of the *sūra* suggest those who are capable of reason (*dhū ḥijr*) can grasp the lesson of the destiny of the 'Ād, the Thamūd, and Pharaoh, who were tyrants, and among the corrupt of this world. Their immoral behavior, according to verses 15-16, resulted from the temptation of wealth and their evil characters. Verses 17-20 then emphasize their

---

[282]See Mir, "The *Sūra* as a unity," 220.

[283]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 18. Jansen's speculation that Bint al-Shāṭi''s preference for these fourteen *sūras* was based on her wish to avoid becoming involved in sectarian polemics, is not proven right. See Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran*, 69. His idea is not in accordance with Bint al-Shāṭi''s explicit statement. As a matter of fact, many polemical issues related to theological, linguistic, exegetical aspects, are dealt with in her works on Qur'ānic studies.

[284]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 103. There are many other examples of Bint al-Shāṭi''s application of the above idea. See, e.g., her *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 75, 76; and 2: 129, 149.

immorality by stating that they insulted orphans, were not interested in social solidarity, and could not distinguish between *ḥalāl* (lawful) and *ḥarām* (forbidden). Finally, the *sūra* ends with the verses which speak of God's punishment and reward in the Hereafter.[286]

Bint al-Shāṭi' differs from other exegetes in regard to which *sūra*s and verses are liable to analysis in terms of *irtibāṭ*. This problem centers on whether the Qur'ān should be interpreted in accordance with its canonical or its chronological order. Unlike al-Nīsābūrī, al-Rāzī, al-Biqā'ī and al-Farāhī, who looked for *irtibāṭ* in consideration of the Qur'ān's canonical order, Bint al-Shāṭi bases herself on its chronological sequence. She maintains that it is improper to explain aspects of *al-irtibāṭ* between verses or *sūra*s which were not revealed at one and the same time, or contiguously. When introducing Q. 102 (*S. al-Takāthur*), for example, she tells that some interpreters, such as al-Nīsābūrī, connect it with the *sūra* preceding it in the canonical order, i.e., Q. 101 (*S. al-Qāri'a*).[287] Niẓām al-Dīn Al-Nīsābūrī (d. 406-7/1015-6) says that the *irtibāṭ* between the two *sūra*s lies in the admonitory atmosphere (*al-jaww al-indhārī*) with regard to the Day of Judgement.[288] This explanation is rejected by Bint al-Shāṭi', who says that there is no point in looking for the *irtibāṭ* between the two *sūra*s

---

[285]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 103.

[286]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 153.

[287]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 195

[288]Niẓām al-Dīn al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad l-Nīsābūrī, *Gharā'ib al-Qur'ān wa Raghā'ib al-Furqān*, published in the margin of al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 30: 154.

because they were not revealed at the same time or one after the other. *Sūrat al-Takāthur* was in fact revealed long before *Sūrat al-Qāri'a;* in the interval at least thirteen *sūras* were revealed.[289] She adopts the same position in her comments on Q. 68 (*S. al-Qalam*),[290] Q. 89 (*S. al-Fajr*),[291] and Q. 92 (*S. al-Layl*).[292]

Nevertheless, Bint al-Shāṭi''s idea of a chronologically-oriented *irtibāṭ* is called into question when she deals with the *irtibāṭ* between verses in *Sūrat al-Qalam*. She says that the *sūra* was revealed in the early Meccan period, except for verses 17-33 and 48-50 which are Medinan.[293] Commenting on verse 33, which reads: "Such was the punishment. And verily the punishment of the Hereafter is

---

[289]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 195.

[290]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 39. In this passage, she does not agree with those who elaborate the *irtibāṭ* between *Sūrat al-Qalam* and *Sūrat al-Mulk* (Q. 67). She says that the latter was revealed later (*muta'akhkhira*). It is 77th in the chronological order. Between the *sūra* and *Sūrat al-Qalam* there were revealed more than 70 *sūras*.

[291]When dealing with the *qasam* (oath) in Q. 89: 1-4, which read: *"Wa l-fajri wa layālin 'ashrin wa l-shaf'i wa l-watri wa l-layli idhā yasri"* (By the Dawn, and ten nights, and the Even and the Odd, and the night when it departeth), Abū Ḥayyān and 'Abduh maintain that the *jawāb al-qasam* (the main clause of the structure of *qasam*) is the end of Q. 88 (*Sūrat al-Ghāshiya*): 25-26, which read: *"Inna ilaynā iyābahum thumma inna 'alaynā ḥisābahum"* (Lo! unto Us their return, and Ours their reckoning). See Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥiṭ*, 8: 457-8; and 'Abduh, *Tafsīr Juz' 'Amma*, 61. Bint al-Shāṭi' rejects this idea, saying: "In this explanation of the interconnection (*al-rabṭ/al-irtibāṭ*) between the two *sūras* there is suspicion (*wahm*). Although *Sūrat al-Ghāshiya* comes directly before *Sūrat al-Fajr* in the canonical order, the former was revealed after the latter at the end of the Mecccan period. *Sūrat al-Ghāshiya* is 68th in the chronological order. Between the two *sūras* there were 58 *sūras* revealed. We understand that the canonical order has a significant aspect. However, we do not conceive the *irtibāṭ* between the *qasam* in *Sūrat al-Fajr* and *jawāb al-qasam* in *Sūrat al-Ghāshiya*. This would have been as if the *qasam* continued to be suspended (*mu'allaq*) without the *jawāb*, until *Sūrat al-Ghāshiya* was revealed after 58 *sūras*." Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 136.

[292]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 97.

[293]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 39.

greater if they did but know," she contends that the verse encourages the people of the Prophet to learn (*'ibra*) from the story of the "owners of the garden" (*aṣḥāb al-janna*) who were punished by God due to their injustice (*ẓulm*), as related in verses 17-32.[294] Bint al-Shāṭi' then affirms that these [Medinan] verses are interconnected (*murtabiṭa*) in terms of the *'ibra* (moral lesson) present in the following verses (34-39), which speak of God's reward for good people.[295] Here, one can see that Bint al-Shāṭi' relates Medinan verses to early Meccan verses. This means that her application of the concept of *irtibāṭ* does sometimes differ from the theory that she herself established.

---

[294]The verses read: "Lo! We have tried them as We tried the owners of the garden when they vowed they would pluck its fruit next morning, and made no exception (for the will of God). Then a visitation came upon it while they slept, and in the morning it was as if plucked. And they cried out one unto another in the morning, saying: Run unto your field if ye would pluck (the fruit). So they went off, saying one unto another in low tones: No needy man shall enter it today against you. They went betimes, strong in (this) purpose. But when they saw it, they said: Lo! we are in error! Nay, but we are desolate! The best among them said: Said I not unto you: Why glorify ye not (Allah)? They said: Glorified be our Lord! Lo! we have been wrong-doers. Then some of them drew near unto others, self-reproaching. They said: Alas for us! In truth we were outregeous. It may be that our Lord will give us better than this in place thereof. Lo! we beseech our Lord."

[295]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 62-6, especially 66.

Chapter Three

Bint al-Shāṭi''s Attitude Towards *Asbāb al-Nuzūl:* Between Theory and Application

The science of *asbāb al-nuzūl*[296] ("the occasions of revelation") has been applied by many *mufassirūn* (interpreters) to understanding the Qur'ān, and studied in depth by scholars both past and present. Its importance is recognized not only by those who base their interpretations on the *riwāyāt* (reports attributed to the Prophet, his Companions and their Successors) approach, like Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr, but also by those who apply *ra'y* (reasoning) in exegesis, like al-Zamakhsharī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. Knowing the occasion associated with the revelation of a Qur'ānic verse or *sūra* is of great help in arriving at an understanding of its meaning.[297] It follows that, because of its significance, many scholars wrote books on the subject, among them al-Wāḥidī (d. 428/1075), who authored the work *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, and al-Suyūṭī who composed the work *Lubāb al-Nuqūl fī Asbāb al-Nuzūl*. These works contain reports about the occasions on which the verses or *sūras* of the Qur'ān were revealed.[298]

---

[296]The word *asbāb* is the plural of *sabab* (occasion). Both are used in this thesis.

[297]See Ibn Taymīya, *Muqaddima*, 38; al-Suyūṭī, *Lubāb al-Nuqūl fī Asbāb al-Nuzūl* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-'Ulūm, 1978), 13; and al-'Akk, *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, 99.

Issues surrounding the *asbāb al-nuzūl*, such as the degree of their significance, the problem of contradictory reports, the difficulty of the numerous reports for the revelation of a single verse and especially the question of the *'ibra* (decisive point) for determining the message of a verse, have been discussed in the many books on *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* (the sciences of the Qur'ān) and *uṣūl al-fiqh* (Islamic legal theory). Among those who in modern times devoted themselves to such discussions was Bint al-Shāṭi'. In her work *Muqaddima fī al-Manhaj*, she presents a brief theoretical discussion on *asbāb al-nuzūl*. The theory is then applied to her interpretations of several *sūras* of the Qur'ān, especially in her book *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*.

A study of Bint al-Shāti''s views on *asbāb al-nuzūl* is needed for at least three reasons: first, Bint al-Shāṭi''s approach to reports on *asbāb al-nuzūl* provides an opportunity to examine her consistency in using this source in her interpretation; second, there is the question how significant the reports of *asbāb al-nuzūl* are to her *tafsīr*; and finally, previous works dealing with her views on the *asbāb al-nuzūl* need to be reviewed and expanded on. Boullata[299] and Jansen,[300] for instance, analyze her position on the *asbāb al-nuzūl*. However, they do not go into these in too much detail, probably because their purpose is only

---

[298]See al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 1: 22; and Rippin, "The Qur'anic Asbāb al-Nuzūl Material: An Analysis of Its Use and Development" (Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 1981), 20.

[299]See Boullata, "Modern Qur'ān Exegesis," 103-13.

[300]See Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran*, 70-1.

to provide a general account of her method of interpreting the Qur'ān. Amīn's thesis presents a relatively short description of the subject. He does not provide any analysis or examples of Bint al-Shāṭi's implementation of the *asbāb al-nuzūl*.[301] This chapter will, therefore, address the issue in more detail, concentrating especially on her critical attitude towards *asbāb al-nuzūl* reports, the significance of *asbāb al-nuzūl* and the idea of the *'ibra* (decisive point).

I. Her Treatment of *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* Reports

Scholars in the field of *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* define the term *sabab al-nuzūl* as an event, or a question raised to the Prophet, in answer to which a Qur'anic verse(s) or a Qur'anic chapter(s) was revealed.[302] In relation to the *asbāb al-nuzūl*, the passages of the Qur'ān are divided into two categories. The first of these includes passages revealed without any particular event preceding them. This category is called *"mā nazala ibtidā'an."* The other, with which the discussion of the *asbāb al-nuzūl* is most concerned, includes verses whose revelation followed a particular occasion, and is called *"mā nazala 'aqib wāqi'a aw su'āl."*[303] It is often found that within a single *sūra* of the Qur'ān both kinds occur. For example, the first five

---

[301]See Amin, "A Study of Bint al-Shāṭi"s Exegesis," 37.

[302]See Dāwūd al-'Aṭṭār, *Mūjaz 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lamī li al-Maṭbū'āt, 1979), 124; and Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Qur'ān fī al-Islām*, tr. Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī (Tehran: Markaz I'lām al-Dhikrā, 1983), 155.

[303]See Muḥammad 'Abd al-Salām Kafāfī and 'Abd Allāh al-Sharīf, *Fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān: Dirāsāt wa Muḥāḍarāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍa al-'Arabīya, 1981), 63; and Muḥammad al-Ṣāliḥ al-Ṣadīq, *al-Bayān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Algiers: al-Mu'assasa al-Waṭanīya li al-Kitāb, 1989), 111.

verses of *sūrat al-'Alaq* were revealed without being preceded by any specific event calling for a response in the form of revelation. The other verses of the *sūra*, however, were sent down to the Prophet Muḥammad for the first time with respect to Abū Jahl's action -- regardless of the debate over whether the *'ibra* (decisive point) lies in the generality of the words, or the specificity of the occasion. It is reported on the authority of Abū Hurayra that Abū Jahl said: "Does Muḥammad cover his face with dust among you?" Someone replied: "Yes." Abū Jahl then said: "By al-Lāt and al-'Uzzā, indeed, if I see him performing prayer, I will set my foot on his neck, and sprinkle his face with dust." There were then revealed several more verses of the *sūra*: "And yet, but yet man is rebellious, for he thinks he is sufficient in himself. Surely, your returning is to your Lord." [Q. *al-'Alaq* (96): 6-8][304]

Bint al-Shāṭi', who bases her interpretation mostly on philological principles,[305] makes an attempt to deal with the problem of *asbāb al-nuzūl*. Before, however, presenting her contribution to this field, it is important to introduce her "theological" opinion concerning the relationship between revelation (*al-waḥy*) and the occasions on which it was revealed. She points out that the connection between a verse or *sūra* and its *sabab al-nuzūl* is not a causal one, which she calls

---

[304]See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 30: 163; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, 4: 565; al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 32: 20; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 4: 224; Al-Suyūṭī , *Lubāb al-Nuqūl*, 232; and Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 26.

[305]See Boullata, "Modern Qur'ān Exegesis," 106-13; idem, "The Rhetorical Interpretation," 152-4; and Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran*, 70-6.

"al-'illiyya," meaning that a verse depends on its *sabab al-nuzul*, just as the existence of an effect (*al-ma'lul*) depends on that of its cause (*al-'illa*). This is because it is inconceivable that a certain verse should not have been revealed if its *sabab al-nuzul* did not take place.[306] It seems to me that she wants to say that revelation constitutes God's will and knowledge, and that His will and knowledge are *qadim* (eternal), and *ghayr muḥdath* (not created).[307] Therefore, the revelation was neither influenced nor occasioned by any temporal event. On this point, her opinion corresponds to the Ash'arī theological point of view.[308] In short, she does not subordinate the revelation to the occasion which it follows. This position is further reinforced by the fact that not every verse has a *sabab al-nuzul*, as we know.

---

[306]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *Muqaddima*, 133; idem, *al-Tafsir al-Bayani*, 1: 23; and Boullata, "Modern Qur'ān Exegesis," 106.

[307]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāyā*, 36.

[308]When talking about the eternity of the revelation (*Kalām Allāh*, God's speech), al-Ash'arī says: "This proof of the eternity of *Kalām Allāh* constitutes the eternity of God's will (*irādat Allāh*). For if His willing were temporally produced, it would have to be produced by God either in Himself, or in another, or as self-subsistent. But God cannot produce it in Himself, because He is not a substrate for produced things; and He cannot produce it as self-subsistent, because it is an attribute, and an attribute cannot subsist in itself -- just as God cannot produce a knowledge and power subsisting in themselves; and He cannot produce it in another, because this would make it necessary for that other to be willing by God's willing. Therefore, since it is impossible to allow these alternatives of which one would have to be realized if God's willing were temporally produced, it is certain that God's willing is eternal, and that by it God has ever been willing." This is McCarthy's translation of a passage of al-Ash'arī's *Kitāb al-Luma'*. See Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Ismā'īl al-Ash'arī, *Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-Radd 'alā Ahl al-Zaygh wa al-Bida'*, edited by Richard J. McCarthy (Beirut: al-Maṭba'a al-Kāthūlīkiya, 1952), 23; and Najm al-Dīn Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Qawiy al-Ṭūfī, *Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Rawḍa*, edited by 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1988), 2: 501.

Bint al-Shāṭi' tries to be careful in using the *asbāb al-nuzūl* reports. She does not accept those which contradict historical evidence. For example, when discussing Q. 93: 3, she mentions that according to some exegetes, like al-Rāzī, Abū Ḥayyān and al-Nīsābūrī, the occasion that preceded the *ibṭā' al-waḥy* was the moment when "a dog of the prophet's grandsons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn entered the house of the Prophet. Gabriel then said to the Prophet: 'Don't you know that we never enter a house in which is a dog or picture?'"[309] To Bint al-Shāṭi', this report does not make sense, for the history of Islam tells us that Ḥasan and Ḥusayn were born three or four years after the Hijra, whereas Q. 93, which is one of the first sections revealed, dates from several years before the Hijra.[310] It can be seen that, according to Bint al-Shāṭi', historical consideration is a crucial tool for assessing the authenticity of *asbāb al-nuzūl*.

Nevertheless, Bint al-Shāṭi''s assessment is sometimes confusing. Let me give an example. When commenting on Q. 68 (*S. al-Qalam*): 17-33, she rejects the report that these verses were revealed in part concerning the strory of the Quraysh. It is recorded that at the time of the battle of Badr the Quraysh swore to destroy the Prophet and his Companions, but in fact failed to fulfil their

---

[309]See al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 31: 211; Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, 8: 485; and al-Nīsābūrī, *Tafsīr Gharā'ib al-Qur'ān*, in the margin of al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 30: 108. See also Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 35.

[310]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 35.

oath.[311] She points out that the report is not consonant with historical evidence, by saying that the battle happened in the second year of the Hijra, when *Sūrat al-Qalam* was clearly revealed in Mecca about 15 years before the battle.[312] The problematic point here is that in the introduction to her interpretation of this *sūra* she says, on the one hand, that it is a Meccan *sūra* with the exception of verses 17-33 and 48-50,[313] whereas, on the other hand, her criticism implies that verses 17-33 of the *sūra* were revealed after all in Mecca.

Regardless of Bint al-Shāṭi's self-contradiction in the above matter, it can at least be said that her critical attitude towards the sources is supported by Rippin's thesis that *asbāb al-nuzūl* reports are not historical evidence but were created by later Muslim generations in order to justify their interpretation of the Qur'ān.[314] However, unlike Rippin, who totally denies the authenticity of the *asbāb al-nuzūl* reports, Bint al-Shāṭi' believes that many of them constitute true records of historical situations surrounding the revelation of certain *sūra*s or verses, as will be seen in the following discussion.

---

[311]Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, 8: 313-4.

[312]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 65.

[313]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 39.

[314]See Andrew Rippin, "The Qur'anic Asbāb al-Nuzūl Material: An Analysis of Its Use and Development," (Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 1981).

II. The Significance of *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*

There is no disagreement that a knowledge of *asbāb al-nuzūl* is important to the interpretation of Qur'ānic verses where there is a question of its application. The extent of its significance, however, is still debated among scholars of *'ulūm al-Qur'ān*. Al-Zarkashī, for instance, assigned knowledge of the subject a rather elevated importance. He mentions in his *al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* six benefits of such knowledge, namely: (1) understanding the factor that instigates a legal decision (*tashrī' al-ḥukm*); (2) particularizing a legal decision in the eyes of those who point out that the decisive point (*al-'ibra*) is the specific cause; (3) understanding the meaning of words; (4) understanding when a word, which is universal, is meant in a particular sense on the basis of other evidence; (5) avoiding the suspicion of *al-ḥaṣr* (limitation); and (6) eliminating the difficulty in determining the meaning of a verse. He then gives many examples of these points.[315] From the above, we can say that, according to al-Zarkashī, without knowing *asbāb al-nuzūl*, no one can interpret the Qur'ān correctly. On this issue, al-Khūlī acknowledges implicitly in his *Manāhij Tajdīd*, through his belief in the necessity of knowing what he calls *"mā ḥawl al-Qur'ān"* (the context or the

---

[315]See al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 1: 22-9. See also al-Suyūṭī, *al-Mukhtār min Kitāb al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, n.d.), 33-4; Dāwūd al-'Aṭṭār, *Mūjaz 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, 127-30; Muḥammad Muḥammad Khalīfa, *Ma'a Nuzūl al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣrīya, 1971), 27-30; Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Aẓīm al-Zarqānī, *Manāhīl al-'Irfān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1962); Muṣṭafā Muḥammad al-Bājiqnī, *Manhaj al-Qur'ān al-Karīm fī Taqrīr al-Aḥkām* (Cairo: al-Dār al-Jamāhīrīya, 1993), 30-3; and Abū Zayd, *Mafhūm al-Naṣṣ*, 109-22.

circumstances surrounding the Qur'ān), that the knowledge of *asbāb al-nuzūl* is of considerable importance. He says:

> The studies on *mā ḥawl al-Qur'ān* are necessary studies for the purpose of the interpretation [of the Qur'ān] as we suggest. Accordingly, those who do not have the specific knowledge of *mā ḥawl al-Qur'ān* are obliged to study it in order that they may be able to understand the Qur'ān in a good and sound manner.[316]

However, he does not mention clearly the extent to which the *asbāb al-nuzūl* are important.

Bint al-Shāṭi' recognizes that there is a harmonious relationship between the two. The revelation responds to the occasion that precedes it, and the occasion, to some extent, indicates what the revelation means. Accordingly, she says in several places that *asbāb al-nuzūl* constitute indications of the situation surrounding the *naṣṣ* (the text of the Qur'ān).[317] Again, when dealing with *sūrat al-'Alaq*, verses 6-9, which were revealed when Abū Jahl demonstrated a negative attitude towards Islam, as quoted before, she says: "The structures of the verses of the *sūra* show that they were revealed after the Prophet announced the message of God, and declared [the need for] worship of God, and then faced

---

[316]Amīn al-Khūlī, *Manāhij Tajdīd*, 309. See also Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran*, 65-6.

[317]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 23. To compare her notion, see also Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 143.

denial [from the pagan society]."[318] This interpretation represents one aspect of the significance of the *asbāb al-nuzūl*.

The significance of the *asbāb al-nuzūl* also rests on their relationship with the specific, literal meaning of words. Boullata's analysis that, according to Bint al-Shāṭi', a traditional report on *sabab al-nuzūl* can be a means of justifying a certain meaning for a word,[319] is quite correct. When interpreting the word *al-ākhira* from the fourth verse of *sūrat al-Ḍuḥā*, which was revealed on the occasion of *futūr al-waḥy* (the restraint of the revelation),[320] for instance, Bint al-Shāṭi' says:

> In the verse from *Sūrat al-Ḍuḥā*, it is clear that *al-ākhira* means the expected tomorrow (*al-ghad al-marjūw*). Its connection with the word *laka* (for you) [points to] its specification with the Prophet Muḥammad. Surely, God affirms with the promised goodness the elimination of *al-tawdī'* (leave-taking) and *al-qilā* (hate) because He abolishes the effect of the *futūr al-waḥy*.[321]

From the above statement, one can see that her interpretation of the word *al-ākhira* refers to the day when there will be an end to the unhappiness caused by the *futūr al-waḥy* to the *sabab al-nuzūl* of the *sūra*.

Bint al-Shāṭi' also admits the *sabab al-nuzūl's* significance in justifying and explaining rationally the importance of the use of certain words in the Qur'ān.

---

[318]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 27.

[319]Boullata, "Modern Qur'ān Exegesis", 106.

[320]See Bint al-Shāti', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 23.

For instance, in *Sūrat al-Ḍuḥā*, whose main topic is the revelation yet to come, she analyzes why the employment of the words *ḍuḥā* (the forenoon) [in the first verse], and *layl* (night) [in the second verse] is important. She says:

> *Al-muqsam bih* (the word by which the oath is made) in the two verses of the *sūra* of *al-Ḍuḥā* is a material form and a sensory event in which human beings witness every day the glow of the forenoon, and then the darkness of night when all is tranquil and quiet. In the successive arrival of the two circumstances, there is no deficiency in the system of the world, nor anything bringing about rejection, nor does anyone suffer from the fact that the sky disappears from the earth and hides itself in darkness and wildness after the glow of light of the forenoon. So, what is so surprising about the fact that after the intimacy of revelation and the emergence of its light on the Prophet, there comes the restraint of revelation, just like the quiet night and the bright the forenoon that human beings witness?[322]

In this case, she uses the contents of the *sabab al-nuzūl*, the occasion of the *futūr al-waḥy*, to make sense of the use of the two words in the *sūra*. In other words, a traditional report on *asbāb al-nuzūl* can explain the accordance of words in the Qur'anic verses with the circumstances which attended their revelation to the Prophet.[323] This interpretation proves the compatibility of wording with a special situation (*iqtiḍā' al-lafẓ li al-ḥāl*). On this point, al-Shāṭibī says:

> The knowledge of occasions of revelations is necessary for those who want to pursue the knowledge of the Qur'ān. That is because the center (*madār*) of the *'ilm al-ma'ānī* and *al-bayān* (science of

---

[321] Bint al-Shāti', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 36. In other contexts, *al-akhīra* means the Hereafter or the Afterlife, as in Q. 2 (*S. al-Baqarah*): 220, Q. 3 (*S. Āl 'Imrān*): 22 and Q. 4 (*S. al-Nisā'*): 77.

[322] Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 26.

[323] See Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran*, 71.

> rhetoric) through which the *i'jāz* (inimitability) of the structure of the Qur'ān is recognized, and even the knowledge of the purposes of the statements of the Arabs is determined, lies in the knowledge of *muqtaḍayāt al-aḥwāl* (the exigencies of the situations)..... and the meaning of the knowledge of *sabāb al-nuzūl* is the knowledge of the *muqtaḍā al-ḥāl*. [324]

Such an attempt, although not the same in every respect, was actually made long before Bint al-Shāṭi'. Al-Rāzī, for example, when interpreting the same *sūra*, says in his *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*: "The word *al-ḍuḥā* implies the revelation to the Prophet, and *al-layl* the time of *futūr al-waḥy*, because in the revelation there is *al-isti'nās* (feeling of intimacy), and conversely, in the time of lassitude there is *al-istīḥāsh* (estrangement)."[325]

On the basis of the relationship between the *asbāb al-nuzūl* and the meaning of words, Bint al-Shāṭi' seems to avoid mentioning a *sabab al-nuzūl* report if the meaning of a word in the verse under discussion is already understood without its *sabab al-nuzūl*. This is probably why she does not mention, for instance, the *sabab al-nuzūl* of the fifth and sixth verses of *sūrat al-Inshirāḥ* (Q. 94): "But lo! with hardship goeth ease. Lo! with hardship goeth ease." It is beyond doubt that as a *mufassira* (a Qur'ān interpreter), she knows that the verses have a *sabab al-nuzūl*. According to some *mufassirūn*, the *sabab al-nuzūl* is the fact that the unbelievers condemned the Prophet and his followers for their

---

[324]Al-Shāṭibī, *al-Muwāfaqāt*, .3: 225. See also al-'Akk, *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, 102-3.

[325]Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 31: 209.

poverty.[326] This *sabab al-nuzūl* report is not quoted by Bint al-Shāṭi' when explaining the meaning of the word *al-'usr* (hardship). This is because after trying to determine its meaning by using the inductive method, in which she compares the usage of the same word, as well as derivations of its root, in other verses of the Qur'ān, and because she considers the definite particle *al* in the word as being *li al-'ahd* (definite particle), she concludes that the word *al-'usr* means the *ḍank* (distress), the *'anat* (inconvenience), and the *ḍīq* (restriction) that the Prophet felt in countering pagan society.[327] From this interpretation, we should note two matters. First, according to her, on the basis of the *"al li al-'ahd"*, we have, on the one hand, the specific hardship that the Prophet suffered. Second, the word *'usr*, on the other hand, has the general meaning of hardship due to various causes, censure, and cruelty. In short, the meaning of *al-'usr* here is the general hardship that the Prophet suffered. This meaning, according to her, is sufficiently clear. Therefore, a discussion of the *sabab al-nuzūl* here is not necessary at all. It is very possible that she believes that the content of the above report, which includes a discussion of the general meaning of the word, provides no further important information. She adopts the same attitude towards Q. 99 (*S. al-Zalzala*): verses 7-8,[328] whose meaning is clear without the *sabab al-nuzūl*.[329]

---

[326]See al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 4: 221; and al-Suyūṭī, *Lubāb al-Nuqūl*, 232.

[327]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 71-2.

[328]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1: 96-100.

It is typical of her not to include in her *tafsīr* any external information that is unnecessary[330] including reports on *asbab al-nuzūl.*

III. The Issue Surrounding the Idea of the *'Ibra* (Decisive Point)

One of the most controversial issues surrounding the *asbāb al-nuzūl* is the idea of the *'ibra,* or the "decisive point," i.e., the interpretive factor that should be considered. Many scholars believe this to lie in the universality of expression, and not the specificity of the occasion, that is, *al-'ibra bi 'umūm al-lafẓ lā bi khuṣūṣ al-sabab.* Some, however, support the contrary view, i.e., *al-'ibra bi khuṣūṣ al-sabab lā bi 'umūm al-lafẓ.*[331] Bint al-Shāṭi' accepts the former opinion, declaring that it must be adopted " *'alā kull ḥalī* " (in any case).[332] When she interprets *sūrat al-Mā'ūn,* for instance, she begins by mentioning the place and time in which the

---

[329]Al-Wāḥidī states in his *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* that on the authority of Muqātil it is reported that there were two people, to one of whom a beggar came (to ask something). He then thought little of something he gave to the begging person, and said: "It is but nothing. We will only be rewarded for giving what we like." On the other hand, the other person disdained what he considered to be a minor sin, such as lying, and slander. He said: "God threatens with the fire only for a great sin". The seventh and eight verses were then revealed. See al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl,* 258. This *sabab al-nuzūl* is not quoted by Bint al-Shāṭi' at all.

[330]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī,* 1: 18; and Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran,* 71.

[331]See Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān,* 1: 32; al-Zarqānī, *Manāhil al-'Irfān,* 1: 118-27; and Muḥammad ibn al-Sayyid 'Alawī al-Mālikī, *Zubdat al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Medina: Maṭābi' al-Rashīd, n.d.), 20.

[332]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *Muqaddima,* 134; and idem, *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī,* 2: 40; 81; 97; 150; 167; and 183.

sūra was revealed. Afterwards, she gives some brief information about its *sabab al-nuzūl*, saying:

> They (previous interpreters) have said in terms of *asbāb al-nuzūl* that the *sūra* was revealed concerning Abū Sufyān, al-'Āṣ ibn Wā'il al-Sahmī, al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīra, or Abū Jahl. Ibn 'Abbās reported that it was revealed concerning a *munāfiq* who had combined the characteristic of avarice (*bukhl*) with that of hypocrisy (*murā'ā*). But, the *al-'ibra* (decisive point) in any case is the universality of the wording.[333]

The same treatment is applied by Bint al-Shāṭi' when dealing with the *asbāb al-nuzūl* of Q. 68 (*S. al-Qalam*),[334] Q. 103 (*S. al-'Aṣr*),[335] Q. 92 (*S. al-Layl*),[336] verses

---

[333]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 183.

[334]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 39-40. In this passage, after quoting its *sabab al-nuzūl* that the *sūra* was revealed concerning al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīra al-Makhzūmī and Abū Jahl ibn Hishām al-Makhzūmī, she says: "That the revelation of the *sūra* was concerning al-Walīd and Abū Jahl does not indicate the essence of the specific occasion, because there is evidence according to which the universality of the word is altered to fit the specific event." The complete report on the *sabab al-nuzūl* can be seen in al-Suyūṭī, *Lubāb al-Nuqūl*, 218-9.

[335]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 80-1. When interpreting the word *al-insān* (man), she explains that among the *mufassirūn* there are two opinions. Some say that the word *al-insān* means all mankind. Others consider the word to apply only to the group of the unbelievers (*al-mushrikūn*), among whom were al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīra, al-'Āṣ ibn Wā'il and al-Aswad ibn 'Abd al-Muṭallib. This is based on the report transmitted by Ibn 'Abbās. Another report informs us that the *sūra* was revealed concerning Abū Lahb, or Abū Jahl. She then says: "We are not involved in the disagreement. However, the decisive point is the universality of the word, not the specific occasion on which the *sūra* was revealed." See also al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 30: 187.

[336]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 97. It is reported that the *sūra* was revealed concerning Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq and his spending of his treasure for the Muslim people, and in relation to Umayya ibn Khalaf and his greed. This is according to one report. Another report tells that it is about Abū al-Daḥdāḥ al-Anṣārī. She then says: "The decisive point in any case is the universality of the word." She argues that the structure of the verse *Inna sa'yakum lashattā* is clear in indicating all people. See also al-Ṭabari, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 30: 142-4; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 4: 555-6; al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, 254-5; and al-Suyūṭī, *Lubāb al-Nuqūl*, 229-30.

15-16 of Q. 89 (*S. al-Fajr*),[337] and Q. 104 (*S. al-Humaza*).[338] The problem here is that she does not articulate why she favors the *'ibra* of the universality of the wording over that of the specificity of the occasion. However, it is very possible that she agrees with scholars who have already offered reasons for supporting it. Al-Ṭūfī (d. 715/1395), a Ḥanbalī jurist, for example, mentions in his *Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Rawḍa* two arguments. First, the authority lies in the divine word, not in its occasion. On this basis, it is obligatory to consider the expression (of the word), either in its universality (*'umūm*) or its specificity (*khuṣūṣ*), as it was revealed *ibtidā'an* (without any occasion).[339] Above all, Ḥanafī jurists, like al-Bazdawī (d. 457/1090), and al-Sarakhsī (d. 490/1137) have insisted that the authoritativeness of universal (*'āmm*) words in the Qur'ān is *qaṭ'ī* (certain), as is the case with the *khāṣṣ* (particular) words. Accordingly, the *'āmm* cannot be

---

[337]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 150-1. The two verses read: 'As for man (*al-insān*), whenever his Lord tries him, and then is gracious and provides good things for him, he says: "My Lord has been gracious to me." But when He tries him by restraining his means, he says: "My Lord despises me." On this point, although some interpreters have identified the word *al-insān* with a certain group, namely: 'Utba ibn Abī Rabī'a, and Abū Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Mughīra (on the basis of Ibn 'Abbās' report), and Ubayy ibn Khalaf (based on the report of al-Kalbī and Muqātil), Bint al-Shāṭi', nevertheless, points out that *al-insān* means all people.

[338]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 167. When dealing with this *sūra* which consists of the words *humaza* (slanderer) and *lumaza* (back-biter), she quotes some reports telling that the *sūra* was revealed with respect to the actions of some unbelievers, that is to say al-Akhnas ibn Shurayq, al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīra, and Ubayy ibn Khalaf, who slandered the Prophet. However, she seems to agree with al-Ṭabarī and al-Zamakhsharī, saying that it is possible the occasion is specific, but that the threats are universal, and apply to all people who perform such bad deeds.

[339]Al-Ṭūfī, *Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Rawḍa*, 2: 503. See also al-Ghazālī, *al-Mankhūl min Ta'līqāt al-Uṣūl*, edited by Muḥammad Ḥasan Haytū (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1980), 151.

specified by a particular occasion.[340] Second, most of the universal decisions, particularly on legal matters, were preceded by specific occasions, such as the ruling on *ẓihār* (a form of divorce), which was first revealed in the case of Aws ibn al-Ṣāmit, and the ruling on *li'ān* (oath of condemnation) in the case of Hilāl ibn Umayya.[341] Accordingly, Ibn Taymīya holds that a verse which has a specific occasion (*sabab*) includes (*mutanāwil*) the given person in the *sabab* and those who are in the same situation (*bi manzilatih*).[342] Bint al-Shāṭi''s agreement with the above reasons can be traced from her statement, for instance, with respect to the *sabab al-nuzūl* of Q. 103 (*S. al-'Aṣr*). When dealing with verses 2-3 of the *sūra*, which read: "Lo! man [*al-insān*] is in state of loss, save those who believe, and do good works, and exhort one another to truth, and exhort one another to endurance," she comments that the clear structure (*al-siyāq 'alā ẓāhirih*) does not associate the word *al-insān* (man) with a specific person [as mentioned in the *sabab al-nuzūl*]. The universal meaning in the word, she argues, can be seen clearly from the *iṭlāq* (generalization) which is followed by the *istithnā'* (exception). The *istithnā'* is invalid if the word *al-insān* is restricted to certain

---

[340]See Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī, *Uṣūl al-Sarakhsī*, edited by Abū al-Wafā' al-Afghānī (Hayderabad: Lajnat Iḥyā' al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmānīya, 1952), 1: 132; and 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Aḥmad al-Bukhārī, *Kashf al-Asrār 'an Uṣūl Fakhr al-Islām al-Bazdawī*, edited by Muḥammad al-Mu'taṣim bi Allāh (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1991), 1: 197 and 587.

[341]See Al-Ṭūfī, *Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Rawḍa*, 2: 503; al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 1: 32; and al-Zarqānī, *Manāhil al-'Irfān*, 1: 118-20.

[342]Ibn Taymīya, *Muqaddima*, p. 37. See also Rippin, "The Qur'anic *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* Material," 51.

people.[343] It follows that, according to her, the authoritative aspect rests in the structure of the Qur'ān's wording.

On the contrary, some Mālikī and Shāfi'ī jurists who insist that the decisive point lies in the specificity of the occasion, argue, for instance,[344] that there are some verses that should be recognized as consisting of specific messages, even though the structure of their wording points to general meanings. An example is verse 115 of Q. 2 (*S. al-Baqara*): *"Wa lillāhi l-mashriqu wa l-maghribu fa aynamā tuwallū fa thamma wajhu llāhi Inna llāha samī'un 'alīm."*[345] Many reports tell us that the verse was revealed in the context of a situation where some travellers were confused about the direction of the *qibla*. They then performed prayer (*ṣalā*) facing in the wrong direction. This situation was then reported to the Prophet, to whom the verse was then revealed.[346] According to

---

[343]Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2: 81.

[344]There are, at least, four logical arguments that they have set forth with respect to this point: (1) If the revelation were not specific for a given occasion (*sabab*), it would be possible to omit the occasion [from the message of the revelation]; (2) if not, there would be no *rāwī* (transmitter) willing to transmit a *riwāya* (report) on a *sabab al-nuzūl* for there would be no benefit at all in so doing; (3) if not specific, the revelation would not be sent down after a certain occasion; and (4) the divine message that is revealed in the case of a certain occasion constitutes a response to it. The response must be suitable to the occasion. This accordance takes place only with the particularity of the message for the given occasion. These arguments seem to be circular, and not strong. Therefore, the majority (*jumhūr*) of scholars reject them. To see their rejection, see al-Ṭūfī, *Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Rawḍa*, 2: 505-9; and al-Zarqānī, *Manāhil al-'Irfān*, 1: 123-7.

[345]This verse is translated by Ahmed Ali: "To God belong the East and the West. Wherever you turn, the glory of God is every where. All-pervading is He and all-knowing."

[346]See al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, 20; al-Suyūṭī, *Lubāb al-Nuqūl*, 27; and al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 1: 90.

those who favor the particularity of the occasion over the universality of the wording, the state of ignorance as to the direction of the *qibla* specifies the verse, meaning that only in that situation is a Muslim allowed not to face the *qibla* when performing prayer.[347] They argue that if one does not take into account the *sabab al-nuzūl* of the above verse, one would have to say that every Muslim in any situation is allowed to face any direction he or she pleases when performing prayer (*ṣalā*). However, this understanding is clearly wrong, because it contradicts the meaning of other verses, like verse 144 of the same *sūra*,[348] which orders Muslims to turn their face toward the *qibla*. In the light of linguistic analysis, it seems that they interpret the word *aynamā* in verse 115 with *ilā ayyat jiha* (to whatever direction). Thus without taking into consideration the *sabab al-nuzūl*, verses 115 and 144 would in all appearance contradict one another.[349]

What then does Bint al-Shāṭi' have to say on this point? Unfortunately, one cannot be certain of her opinion, because she has not dealt with the above

---

[347]Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīya, 1967), 2: 80-1. See also Andrew Rippin, "The Function of *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* in Qur'ānic Exegesis," in *BSOAS* 51 (1988), 12-4.

[348]Verse 144 says: " We have seen you turn your face to the heavens. We shall turn you to a Qiblah that will please you. So turn towards the Holy mosque, and turn towards it wherever you be. And those who are recipients of the Book surely know that this is the truth from their Lord; and God is not negligent of all that you do."

[349]Contradiction between Qur'ānic verses is, as the Qur'ān (4: 81) says, impossible. To deal with those verses that seem (in fact, they are not) to be contradictory to one another, some scholars try to understand them, using the concept of *naskh* (abrogation) and the science of *asbāb al-nuzūl*. See al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 1: 80-3.

verses in particular, or verses relating to *aḥkām* (Islamic legal prescriptions) in general. However, we can assume that in keeping with her belief in *al-'ibra bi 'umūm al-lafẓ lā bi khuṣūṣ al-sabab 'alā kull ḥal*, Bint al-Shāṭi' would probably agree with what al-Zamakhsharī says in his *al-Kashshāf* when interpreting verse 115:

> [*Wa lillāhi l-mashriqu wa l-maghribu*] means that the countries in the East and the West, and all the earth belong to Allāh, who is the Owner of them and in charge of them. [*Fa aynamā tuwallū*] means that in any place you do *al-tawliya*, meaning turning your faces to the *qibla* on the basis of the verse (verse 144 of *sūrat al-Baqara*): *Fawalli wajhaka shaṭra l-masjidi l-ḥarāmi wa ḥaythumā kuntum fa wallū wujūhakum shaṭrahu*, the glory of Allāh is everywhere. The meaning of verse 115 is that if you are kept away from performing prayer in the *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* or in *Bayt al-Maqdis*, I (God) make all the earth a mosque. Therefore, perform prayer in any place you want, do *al-tawliya* there, because the *tawliya* is allowed in all places, not only in a mosque, but also in other places.[350]

From his statement, one can say that, philologically speaking, al-Zamakhsharī interprets the word *aynamā* as meaning *fī ayy makānin* (in any place), not with *ilā ayyat jiha* (to whatever direction). This interpretation is supported by an inductive approach through which he finds that verses 115 and 144 are not contradictory to one another, and that verse 144 even interprets verse 115.

---

[350]Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 1: 90.

Conclusion

As far as the study of Bint al-Shāṭi''s method is concerned in this thesis, we can conclude the following.

It is clear that Bint al-Shāṭi''s method of interpreting the Qur'ān is neo-traditionalist in nature, to borrow Rippin's term.[351] The cross-referential approach, the concept of *irtibāṭ* and the usage of *asbāb al-nuzūl* reports were all methods familiar to earlier interpreters. She goes beyond this traditional approach, however, by introducing some new theories and applications. This is what she means in part by her phrase *al-tajdīd fī al-tafsīr* (renewal in the field of interpretation).[352]

In developing her own style of interpretation, she was critical of past exegetes who used similar tools. This was particularly true of the cross-referential method, which, to her, was never correctly applied, a phenomenon resulting from the tendency on the part of interpreters to project their sectarian beliefs onto the Qur'ān on the one hand, and to import extraneous sources into their commentaries on the other. She also maintains that many of the classical reflections constitute "forced" interpretations and cases of "mis-oriented" *i'jāz*. This is why she often criticizes previous interpretations. The cross-referential

---

[351]See Rippin, *Muslim*, 94.

[352]See Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Shakhṣiya al-Islāmiya: Dirāsa Qur'āniya* (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 1977), 169.

approach that she applied is aimed at correcting these erroneous ideas. She may therefore be regarded, according to Hoy's definition,[353] as a " critical monist" interpreter in the sense that she believes that there is necessarily only one "best" interpretation of the Qur'ān, and that the best is her own interpretation.

Theoretically speaking, her cross-referential method is based on the idea that the Qur'ān is a unity, and therefore capable of self-interpretation. In this case, I agree with Murphy's thesis that the employment of scriptural texts is dependent in part on the "understanding of the nature of revelation."[354] This method corresponds in part to Betti's theory of biblical interpretation, which consists in giving attention to the original linguistic meaning of a certain word under discussion, considering in the case of the Qur'ān the *al-siyāq al-'āmm* (general textual context) of all verses related to the subject matter, and trying to comprehend the *al-siyāq al-khāṣṣ* of a given verse. Her interpretation of Q. 103 (*S. al-'Aṣr*) represents her perfect application of the above hermeneutics. Nevertheless, when dealing with the issue of *ḥurrīyat al-'aqīda* to cite but one example, she falls into self-contradiction. This results from the fact that she does not apply the theory that she herself proposed. She does not take into

---

[353]See David Couzen Hoy, "Is Hermeneutics Ethnocentric?", in *The Interpretive Turn*, ed. David R. Hiley, James F. Bohman and Richard Shusterman (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 158.

[354]Nancey Murphy, "What has Theology to Learn from Scientific Methodology?" in *Science and Theology: Questions at the Interface*, ed. Murray Rae, Hilary Regan and John Stenhouse (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 107.

consideration all the Qur'ānic verses which have reference to this important issue.

In terms of her idea of *irtibāṭ* (interconnection) between verses and *sūras*, she once again lapses into inconsistency. Unlike other interpreters who applied the concept of *irtibāṭ* in accordance with the canonical order of revelation, she insists that *irtibāṭ* must be oriented to the chronological order. The anomaly may be seen in her treatment of *Sūrat al-Qalam*. There she tries to establish an *irtibāṭ* between verses 17-33 of the *sūra*, which were revealed in Medina, and verses 34-39 of the very same *sūra*, which were revealed in Mecca.

Once again, in dealing with the *asbāb al-nuzūl* reports, Bint al-Shāṭi' introduces some confusion in regard to her criteria for the authenticity of the reports. Bint al-Shāṭi' tries to be careful in using such materials in her interpretation of the Qur'ān. Only those reports which she regards as authentic are relied upon. She maintains that the reports must be in agreement with accurate historical data. However, in some places, her assessment of the authenticity of the reports is not convincing, due to the self-contradiction between her theory and its application. Regardless of this weakness, the reports on *asbāb al-nuzūl*, which she considers authentic, represent, according to her, an important tool for determining the meaning of words as required by the particular context (*al-siyāq al-khāṣṣ*) of a certain verse or *sūra* under discussion, and for explaining the logical relationship between the Qur'ānic wording and the particular situation in which a verse was revealed. In other words, her use of the

asbāb al-nuzūl is based on the consideration that there is an interactive relation between revelation itself and the circumstances in which the Qur'ān was revealed. Since revelation offers divine responses to social developments, it might be expected that the details in the *asbāb al-nuzūl* reports could contribute to our understanding the Qur'ānic message. Nevertheless, like the majority of scholars (*jumhūr al-'ulamā'*), she points out that the decisive point (*al-'ibra*) in interpretation rests in the universality of words, not in the particularity of a given occasion. She emphasizes this idea by saying that one should adopt it in any case (*'alā kull ḥal*). She does not, however, articulate clearly her reasons for taking this position. In addition, she does not attempt to interpret the *ayāt al-aḥkām* (verses on Islamic legal prescriptions) in which the debate about the idea of *al-'ibra* (decisive point) is perhaps most crucial. In short, Bint al-Shāṭi''s theory and application of the *asbāb al-nuzūl* is not a convincing one.

This is not to say, however, that all Bint al-Shāṭi''s method is useless or unproductive. As Boullata concludes,[355] there are some amazing hermeneutical findings that result from her use of the cross-referential method. Besides avoiding thereby subjective interpretive projections, she finds that there is a hermeneutical relation between *al-siyāq al-'āmm* and *al-siyāq al-khāṣṣ*, and a reciprocal interconnection between words in the same context, as shown in her interpretation of Q. 103. We may accept the significance of this method, but it

[355]See Boullata, "Modern Qur'ān Exegesis," 113.

needs to be improved in future, and the inconsistency to which Bint al-Shāṭi' falls victim should be conscientiously avoided.

Bibliography

Ābādī, Muḥammad Shams al-Ḥaqq al-'Aẓīm. *'Awn al-Ma'būd Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd.* Edited by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad 'Uthmān. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1979.

Abbott, Nabia. *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri.* 3 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957-1972.

'Abd al-Bāqī, Muḥammad Fu'ād. *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm.* Cairo: Maṭaba'at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīya, 1954.

'Abd al-Raḥmān, Yūsuf. *"Muqaddimat Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr."* Published together with Ismā'īl Ibn Kathīr. *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm.* Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1987.

'Abduh, Muḥammad. *Tafsīr Juz' 'Amma.* Cairo: Maṭābi' al-Sha'b, n.d.

Abū Ḥayyān, Muḥammad Ibn Yūsuf. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr al-Musammā bi al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ.* 8 vols. Riyāḍ: Maktabat wa Maṭābi' al-Naṣr al-Ḥadītha, n.d.

Abū Zayd, Naṣr Ḥāmid. *Mafhūm al-Naṣṣ: Dirāsa fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān.* Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣrīya al-'Āmma li al-Kitāb, 1990.

———. *Ishkālīyāt al-Qirā'āt wa Alīyāt al-Ta'wīl.* Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-'Arabī, 1994.

———. *Al-Ittijāh al-'Aqlī fī al-Tafsīr: Dirāsa fī Qaḍīyat al-Majāz fī al-Qur'ān 'ind al-Mu'tazila.* Beirut: Dār al-Tanwīr, 1982.

Aḥmad, Ḥanafī. *Mu'jizat al-Qur'ān fī Waṣf al-Kā'ināt.* Cairo: Maṭba'at Lajnat al-Bayān al-'Arabī, 1954.

Al-'Akk, Khālid 'Abd al-Raḥmān. *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr wa Qawā'iduh.* Beirut: Dār al-Nafā'is, 1986.

Aleem, Abdul. "'Ijazu'l-Qur'ān [sic]." *Islamic Culture* 7 (1933): 64-82 and 215-33.

Amīn, Muḥammad. "A Study of Bint al-Shāṭi''s Exegesis". M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1992.

Arkoun, Mohammed. *Rethinking Islam: Common Question, Uncommon Answers.* Boulder, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1994.

Arnaldez, R. *Le Coran: Guide de Lecture.* Paris: Desclée, 1983.

Ash'arī, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Ismā'īl. *Kitāb Maqālāt al-Islāmiyīn wa Ikhtilāf al-Muṣallīn.* 2 Vols. Edited by Hellmut Ritter. Istanbul: Maṭba'at al-Dawla, 1930.

———. *Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-Radd 'alā Ahl al-Zaygh wa al-Bida'.* Edited and translated by Richard J. McCarthy. Beirut: al-Maṭba'a al-Kāthūlīkīya, 1952.

Al-'Asqalānī, Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Ḥajar. *Fatḥ al-Bārī bi Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.* 13 Vols. Edited by 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Bāz. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, n.d.

Al-'Aṭṭār, Dāwūd. *Mūjaz 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān.* Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lamī li al-Maṭbū'āt, 1979.

Ayoub, Mahmoud M. *The Qur'ān and Its Interpreters.* 2 vols. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.

Al-Bājiqnī, Muṣṭafā Muḥammad. *Manhaj al-Qur'ān al-Karīm fī Taqrīr al-Aḥkām.* Cairo: al-Dār al-Jamāhīrīya, 1993.

Baljon, J. M. S. *Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation.* Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961.

Banerjee, Nikunja Vihari. *Language, Meaning and Persons.* London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1963.

Beeston, A. F. L., T. M. Johnstone, R. B. Serjeant and G. R. Smith. *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Betti, Emilio. *Allgemeine Auslegungslehre als Methodik der Geisteswissenschaften.* Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1967.

———. *Die Hermeneutik als Allgemeine Methodik der Geisteswissenschaften.* Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1962.

Bint al-Shāṭi', 'Ā'isha 'Abd al-Raḥmān. *A'dā' al-Bashar.* Cairo: Lajnat al-Ta'rīf bi al-Islām, 1968.

——. *Bayna al-'Aqīda wa al-Ikhtiyār.* Beirut: Dār al-Najāḥ, 1973

——. *Kitābunā al-Akbar.* Omdurman: Jāmi'at Umm Durmān, 1967.

——. *Al-Isrā'īliyāt fī al-Ghazw al-Fikrī.* Cairo: Ma'had al-Buḥūth wa al-Dirāsāt al-'Arabīya, 1975.

——. *Ma' al-Muṣṭafā.* Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1972.

——. *Muqaddima fī al-Manhaj.* Cairo: Ma'had al-Buḥūth wa al-Dirāsāt al-'Arabīya, 1971.

——. *Al-Qur'ān wa Qaḍāyā al-Insān.* Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 1978.

——. *Al-Qur'ān wa al-Tafsīr al-'Aṣrī.* Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1970.

——. *Al-Shakhṣīya al-Islāmīya.* Beirut: University of Beirut, 1972.

——. *Al-Shakhṣīya al-Islāmīya: Dirāsa Qur'ānīya.* Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 1977.

——. *Al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm.* Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1990.

Al-Biqā'ī, Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn 'Umar. *Naẓm al-Durar fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar.* Hyderabad: Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Uthmānīya, 1969.

Boullata, Issa J. *"Fa-stabiqū 'l-khayrāt:* A Qur'anic Principle of Interfaith Relations. Pp. 43-53. In *Christian-Muslim Encounters.* Edited by Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Wadi Z. Haddad. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995.

——. "Poetry Citation as Interpretive Illustration in Qur'ān Exegesis: *Masā'il Nāfi' ibn al-Azraq."* 27-40. In *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams.* Edited by Wael B. Hallaq and Donald P. Little. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991.

——. "Modern Qur'ān Exegesis: A Study of Bint al-Shāṭi''s Method." *The Muslim World* 64, 2 (1974): 106-13.

——. "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'ān: *I'jāz* and Related Topics". In *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān.* Edited by Andrew Rippin. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988. 139-57.

Blachère, Régis. *Introduction au Coran.* Paris: Éditions Besson & Chantemerle, 1959.

Al-Bukhārī, 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Aḥmad. *Kashf al-Asrār 'an Uṣūl Fakhr al-Islām al-Bazdawī.* 4 vols. Edited by Muḥammad al-Mu'taṣim bi Allāh. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1991.

Cragg, Kenneth. *The Mind of the Qur'ān. Chapters in Reflection.* London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1973.

Cooke, Miriam. "Arab Women Writers." In *Modern Arabic Literature.* Edited by M. M. Badawi, 400-32. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Al-Dhahabī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn. *Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn.* 3 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1961.

Al-Dhahabī, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad. *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'.* 23 Vols. Edited by Ḥusayn al-Asad. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1986.

Esack, Farid. "Qur'anic Hermeneutics: Problems and Prospects." *The Muslim World* 83 (1993): 118-41.

Ess, Josef van. *Theologie und Gessellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra.* 6 Vols. Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 1992.

———. "Verbal Inspiration? Language and Revelation in Classical Islamic Theology." 177-94. In *The Qur'ān as Text.* Edited by Stefan Wild. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method.* Translated by Sheed and Ward Ltd., and edited by Garrett Barden and John Cumming. New York: the Crossroad Publishing Company, 1988.

———. "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem." Translated by David E. Linge. 147-58 in *The Hermeneutic Tradition from Ast to Ricoeur.* Edited by Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.

Gātje, Helmut. *The Qur'ān and its Exegesis.* Translated by Alford T. Welch London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971.

Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad. *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān.* Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1988.

———. *Al-Mankhūl min Ta'līqāt al-Uṣūl*. Edited by Muḥammad Ḥasan Haytū. Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1980.

Graham, William A. "The Earliest Meaning of 'Qur'ān'." *Die Welt des Islams* 23-24 (1984): 360-77.

Grondin, Jean. *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Translated by Joel Weinsheimer. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994.

Haleem, M. A. S. Abdel. "Context and Internal Relationships: Keys to Quranic Exegesis. A Study of *Sūrat al-Raḥmān* (Qur'ān Chapter 53). In *Approaches to the Qur'ān*. Edited by G. R. Hawting, Abdul-Kader and A. Shareef. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.

Hallaq, Wael B. *A History of Islamic Legal Theories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Al-Hamadhānī, al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār ibn Aḥmad. *Mutashābih al-Qur'ān*. Edited by 'Adnān Muḥammad Zurzūr. Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, n.d.

Harel, Yaron. "Jewish-Christian Relations in Aleppo as Background for the Jewish Response to the Events of October 1850." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30, 1, 1998: 77-96.

Hirsch, E. D., Jr. *Validity in Interpretation*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967.

Hoffman-Ladd, Valerie J. "'Ā'isha 'Abd al-Raḥmān." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic Word*, edited by John L. Esposito, 1: 4-5. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. Vol. 1. Pp. 4-5.

Hourani, G. F. "The Qur'ān's Doctrine of Prophecy." 175-81. In *Logos Islamikos: Studia Islamica in Honorem Georgii Michaelis Wickens*. Edited by Roger M. Savory and Dionisius A. Agius. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984.

Hoy, David Couzen. "Is Hermeneutics Ethnocentric?." 155-75. In *The Interpretive Turn*. Edited by David R. Hiley, James F. Bohman and Richard Shusterman. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Hudson, Michael C. *Arab Politics: the Search for Legitmacy*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977.

Ibn 'Arabī, Muḥy al-Dīn. *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*. Beirut: Dār al-Yaqẓa al-'Arabīya, 1968.

Ibn Isḥāq, Muḥammad, ibn Yasār. *Kitāb al-Siyar wa al-Maghāzī*. Edited by Suhayl Zakkār. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1978.

Ibn Kathīr, Ismā'īl al-Dimashqī. *Al-Sīra al-Nabawīya*. 4 Vols. Edited by Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Wāḥid. Beirut: Dār al-Iḥyā' al-'Arabī, n.d.

———. *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*. 30 Vols. in 4 tomes. Edited by Yūsuf 'Abd al-Raḥamān. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1987.

Ibn Khallikān, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad. *Wafayāt al-A'yān wa Anbā' Abnā' al-Zamān*. 8 vols. Edited by Iḥsān 'Abbās. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1977.

Ibn Manẓūr, Muḥammad ibn Mukarram. *Lisān al-'Arab al-Muḥīṭ*. Rearranged by Yūsuf Khayyāṭ. Beirut: Dār al-Jīl and Dār Lisān al-'Arab, 1988.

Ibn al-Nadīm, Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq. *Kitāb al-Fihrist*. Beirut: Maktabat al-Khayyāṭ, 1966.

Ibn Shākir, Muḥammad. *Fawāt al-Wafayāt*. 5 vols. Edited by Iḥsān 'Abbās. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1973-1974.

Ibn Taymīya, Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm. *Muqaddima fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*. Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1994.

Ibn al-Zubayr, Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm. *Milāk al-Ta'wīl al-Qāṭi' bi-dhawī al-Ilḥād wa al-Ta'ṭīl fī Tawjīh al-Mutashābih al-Lafẓ min Āy al-Tanzīl*. 2 vols. Edited by Sa'īd al-Fallāḥ. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1983.

Al-Iṣfahānī, Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Rāghib. *Al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān*. Edited by Muḥammad Sayyid Kaylānī. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, n.d.

Izutsu, Toshihiko *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān*. Montreal: McGill University Press, 1966.

Jāḥiẓ, 'Amr ibn Baḥr. *Al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*. Edited by 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn. 4 Vols. Cairo: Maṭba'at Lajnat al-Ta'līf wa al-Tarjama wa al-Nashr, 1948.

Jansen, J. J. G. *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974.

Jawharī, Ṭanṭāwī. *Al-Jawāhir fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm.* Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, nd.

Jeffery, Arthur. "The Qur'ān as Scripture." *The Muslim World* 40 (1950): 41-55, 106-34, 185-206, and 257-75.

Jomier, Jacques. "Aspects of the Qur'ān Today." 260-70. In *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period.* Edited by A. F. L. Beeston, T. M. Johnstone, R. B. Serjeant and G. R. Smith. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Al-Jurjānī,'Abd al-Qāhir ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān. *Dalā'il al-I'jāz.* Damascus: Maktabat Sa'd al-Dīn, 1987.

Juynboll, G. H. A. *The Authenticity of the Tradition Literature: Discussions in Modern Egypt.* Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969.

Kafāfī, Muḥammad 'Abd al-Salām, and 'Abd Allāh al-Sharīf. *Fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān: Dirāsāt wa Muḥāḍarāt.* Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍa al-'Arabīya, 1981.

Kandil, Lamya. "Die Schwüre in den Mekkanischen Suren." 41-57. In *The Qur'ān as Text.* Edited by Stefan Wild. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996.

Khalaf Allāh, Muḥammad Aḥmad. *Al-Fann al-Qaṣaṣī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm.* Cairo:Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣrīya, 1950-1.

Khalidi, Tarif. *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Khalīfa, Ḥājjī. *Kashf al-Ẓunūn 'an Asmā' al-Kutub wa al-Funūn.* New York: Johnson Reprint, 1964.

Khalīfa, Muḥammad Muḥammad. *Ma'a Nuzūl al-Qur'ān.* Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣrīya, 1971.

Khaṭṭābī, Ḥamd ibn Muḥammad. *Bayān I'jāz al-Qur'ān.* Published in *Thalāth Rasā'il fī I'jāz al-Qur'ān.* Edited by Muḥammad Khalaf Allāh and Muḥammad Zaghlūl. Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.

Khāzin, 'Alī ibn Muḥammad. *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl.* 4 Vols. Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Istiqāma, 1955.

Khūlī, Amīn. *Manāhij Tajdīd fī al-Naḥw wa al-Balāgha wa al-Tafsīr wa al-Adab.* Cairo: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1961.

Kister, M. J. *"Haddithū 'an banī isra'īla wa-lā ḥaraja:* A Study of an Early Tradition." *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972): 215-39.

Kooji, C. "Bint al-Shāṭi': A Suitable Case for Biography?". In *The Challenge of the Middle Eas.* Edited by Ibrāhīm A. El-Sheikh et al. 67-72. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 1982.

Lory, Pierre. *Les Commentaires ésotériques du Coran d'après 'Abd ar-Razzâq al-Qâshânî.* Paris: Les Deux Océans, 1980.

Al-Mālikī, Muḥammad ibn al-Sayyid 'Alawī. *Zubdat al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān.* Medina: Maṭābi' al-Rashīd, n.d.

Martin, Richard C. *Islamic Studies: A History of Religions Approach.* Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1996.

Meynet, Roland, Louis Pouzet, Naila Farouki, and Ahyaf Sino. *Ṭarīq al-Taḥlīl al-Balāghī wa al-Tafsīr: Taḥlīlāt Nuṣūṣ min al-Kitāb al-Muqaddas wa min al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī.* Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1993.

Mir, Mustansir. *Coherence in the Qur'ān: A Study of Iṣlāḥī's Concept of Naẓm in Tadabbur-i Qur'ān.* Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1986.

——. "The *Sūra* as a unity: A twentieth century development in Qur'ān exegeis." 211-24. In *Approaches to the Qur'ān.* Edited by G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.

Al-Mizzī, Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf. *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmā' al-Rijāl.* Edited by Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf. 35 Vols. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1992.

Muqātil, ibn Sulaymān. *Tafsīr al-Khams Mi'at Āya min al-Qur'ān.* Edited by Isaiah Goldfeld. Shfaram: al-Mashriq Press, 1980.

Murphy, Nancey. "What has theology to learn from scientific methodology?" 101-26. In *Science and Theology: Questions at the Interface.* Edited by Murray Rae, Hilary Regan and John Stenhouse. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. "The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth as Source and Inspiration of Islamic Philosophy." In *History of Islamic Philosophy.* Edited by Seyyed

Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.

Al-Nasafī, 'Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad. *Tafsīr al-Nasafī: Madārik al-Tanzīl wa Ḥaqā'iq al-Ta'wīl*. Edited by Zakarīyā 'Umayrāt. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1995.

Al-Nasafī, Maymūn ibn Muḥammad. *Tabṣirat al-Adilla fī Uṣūl al-Dīn 'Alā Ṭarīqat al-Imām Abī Manṣūr al-Māturīdī*. 2 Vols. Edited by Claude Salamé. Limassol-Chyprus: al-Jaffān & al-Jābī Imprimeurs-Éditeurs, 1993.

Nöldeke, Theodor. *Geschichte des Qorans*. Hildesheim & New York: G. Olms, 1970.

Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991.

Paret, Rudi. "Der Koran und Die Prädestination [Besprechung von: Daud Rahbar, God of Justice]." 159-64. In *Der Koran*. Edited by Rudi Paret. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975.

Poonawala, Ismail K. "An Ismā'īlī on the I'jāz al-Qur'ān." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108 (1988): 379-85.

——. "Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwaza's Principles of Modern Exegesis: A Contribution toward Quranic Hermeneutics." 225-46. In *Approaches to the Qur'ān*. Edited by G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.

Al-Qasṭalānī, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad. *Irshād al-Sārī li Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. 15 Vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1990.

Al-Qurṭubī, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad. *Al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*. 20 vols in 10 tomes. Cairo: Dār al-Katib al-'Arabī li al-Ṭibā'a wa al-Nashr, 1967.

Quṭb, Sayyid. *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān*. 30 vols. in 6 tomes. Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1988.

Rahman, Fazlur. *Islam*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

——. *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Al-Rāzī, Muḥammad ibn 'Umar Fakhr al-Dīn. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*. 32 vols. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, n.d.

Rejwan, Nissim. *Arabs Face the Modern World: Religous, Cultural, and Political Responses to the West.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998.

Riddlle, Peter G. "The Transmission of Narrative-Based Exegesis in Islam: al-Baghdādī's Use of Stories in his Commentary on the Qur'ān and a Malay Descendent." 57-80. In *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought & Society.* Edited by Peter G. Riddlle and Tony Street. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997.

Riḍā, Muḥammad Rashīd. *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm* (known as *Tafsīr al-Manār*). 12 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1954.

Rippin, Andrew L. "The Function of *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* in Qur'ānic Exegesis." *BSOAS* 51 (1988): 1-20.

———. *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices. Volume 2: The Contemporary Period.* London & New York: Routledge, 1995.

———. "The Qur'anic Asbāb al-Nuzūl Material: An Analysis of Its Use and Development". Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 1981.

Robinson, Neal. *Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text.* London: SCM Press Ltd., 1996.

Al-Rummānī, 'Alī ibn 'Īsā. *Al-Nukat fī I'jāz al-Qur'ān.* Published in *Thalāth Rasā'il fī I'jāz al-Qur'ān.* Edited by Muḥammad Khalaf Allāh and Muḥammad Zaghlūl. Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.

Sabī'ī, Abāẓa. "Bint al-Shāṭi'." In *Contemporary Arab Writers: Biographies and Autobiographies,* edited by Robert B. Campbell. 1: 360-3. Beirut: In Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart, 1996.

Ṣādiq, Muḥammad al-Ṣāliḥ. *Al-Bayān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān.* Algiers: al-Mu'assasa al-Waṭanīya li al-Kitāb, 1989.

Al-Sarakhsī, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad. *Uṣūl al-Sarakhsī.* 4 vols in 2 tomes. Edited by Abū al-Wafā' al-Afghānī. Hyderabad: Lajnat Iḥyā' al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmānīya, 1952.

Shaḥrūr, Muḥammad. *Al-Kitāb wa al-Qur'ān: Qira'a Mu'āṣira.* Damascus: al-Ahālī li al-Ṭibā'a wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 1990.

Al-Shāṭibī, Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā. *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām.* 4 Vols. Edited by Muḥammad Muḥy al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥāmid. Cairo: Maktabat wa Maṭba'at Muḥammad 'Alī Ṣubayḥ wa Awlādih, 1969.

Shipler, David K. *Arab and Jews: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land.* New York: Times Books, 1986.

Sīd, Muhammad 'Ata. "The Hermeneutical Problem of the Qur'an in Islamic History." Ph.D. Dissertation, Temple University, 1975.

Starkey, Paul. "'Ā'isha 'Abd al-Raḥmān." In *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature.* Edited by Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.

Stetkevych, Jaroslav. "Arabic Hermeneutical Terminology: Paradox and the Production of Meaning." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 48 (1989): 81-96.

———. *Muḥammad and the Golden Bough.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996.

Al-Suyūṭi, Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān. *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān.* Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, n.d.

———. *Lubāb al-Nuqūl fī Asbāb al-Nuzūl.* Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-'Ulūm, 1978.

———. *Al-Mukhtār min Kitāb al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān.* Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, n.d.

Syamsuddin, Sahiron. "Al-Bāqillānī vs. al-Khaṭṭābī on Qur'ānic *I'jāz* Concerning the Truthful Information about Future Events." 3-10. In Yudian Wahyudi et all. *The Dynamics of Islamic Civilization.* Introduction by Issa J. Boullata. Yogyakarta: Forum Komunikasi Alumni Program Pembibitan Calon Dosen IAIN se-Indonesia and Titihan Ilahi Press, 1998.

Al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr. *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān.* 30 vols. in 12. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1986-7.

———. *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk.* Edited by M. J. de Goeje (et al.). Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1879-1901.

Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn. *al-Qur'ān fī al-Islām.* Translated by Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī. Tehran: Markaz I'lām al-Dhikrā, 1984.

Tawfiq, Muhammad Amin. "Interpretation and Lessons of Surah al-Ḍuḥā'." *Majallatu 'l Azhar* (1976): 7-16.

Al-Tha'ālibī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad. *Al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān.* Edited by 'Ammār al-Ṭālibī. 30 Vols in 5 tomes. Algiers: al-Mu'assasa al-Waṭanīya li al-Kitāb, 1985.

Thomson, William. "Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam: A Critique and Appreciation." *The Muslim World* 40 (1950): 207-216.

Al-Ṭūfī, Najm al-Dīn Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Qawīy. *Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Rawḍa.* 3 vols. Edited by 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1988.

Vajda, G. "Isrā'īliyyāt." In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam.* Edited by E. van Donzel, B. Lewis and Ch. Pellat. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978.

Wahyudi, Yudian. "Ali Shariati and Bint al-Shāṭi' on Free Will: a Comparison." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, 1 (1998): 35-45.

Wansbrough, John. *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Warnke, Georgia. *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987.

Watt, W. Montgomery. "Early Discussions about the Qur'ān." *The Muslim World* 40 (1950): 27-40.

Weinsheimer, Joel. "Hermeneutics." 117-36. In *Contemporary Literary Theory.* Edited by G. Douglas Atkins & Laura Morrow. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1989.

Al-Zamakhsharī, Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar. *Al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq al-Tanzīl wa 'Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Ta'wīl.* 4 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, n.d.

Al-Zanjānī, Abū 'Abd Allāh. *Tārīkh al-Qur'ān.* Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lamī li al-Maṭbū'āt, 1969.

Al-Zarkashī, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh. *Al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān.* 4 vols. Edited by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm. Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiya, 1957.

Al-Zarqānī, Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Aẓīm. *Manāhil al-'Irfān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*. 2 vols. Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1962.