Shi‘i Approach to Interpretation of Qur’an: Two Classical Commentaries

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Introduction

Although the emergence of formal written tafsir in the history of Shi'i interpretation of the Qur'an can be dated almost to the third and fourth centuries AH (10–11th CE), there is enough evidence to suggest that the first generation of Shi'a traditionist (muhaddith) exegetes belonged to the first century AH.

Since the time of Imam Ali (A.S), and for about three centuries thereafter Shi'a traditionists, jurists and theologians used to refer directly or indirectly to their Imams. During the time of the Prophet, the exegesis of the Qur'an was embarked upon through his explanations of verses of the Qur'an. This was followed by the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S).

At the time of Imam Ali, some of his companions such as his cousin and disciple, Ibn 'Abbas, used to ask him occasionally about the interpretation of a verse or verses of the Qur'an.

Ali the first Imam, is said to have challenged his audience saying, 'Ask me about the book of God! For by God, there is no verse of the book of God sent down by day or night, on a journey or while present [that is, while at home], about which the Apostle of God did not teach me its recitation and exegesis ... Whatever was sent down of the Qur'an to the Apostle of God in my absence, the Prophet recited it to me when I had returned,..1

Any interpretation presented by the Imam was considered to be one of the most authentic statements in relation to a Qur'anic passage or word. As a disciple of the Imam, Ibn 'Abbas took part in the sessions held by the Imam to teach exegesis of the Qur'an. In this regard, Ibn 'Abbas was one of his outstanding

students.2

For a long time, the approach taken by other exegetes was dominated by Ibn ‘Abbas’s Tafsir. Muslims were acquainted with tafsir almost through the remarks of Ibn ‘Abbas. It is believed that “after the Prophet’s departure tafsir became prevalent after it had been initiated by Ali.”3

Ali himself stated that the Prophet taught him a thousand branches of knowledge one of which must have related to the exegesis of the Qur’an. The Imams after `Ali, too, continued his tradition in dealing with the Book of Allah.4

In the present essay, which focuses on the classical Shi‘i approach to the Qur’an, I intend first to bring to light the very early categories of the commentators who, as the companions of the Imams or as the pupils of the companions, reported what they used to hear from the Imams or their close companions with respect to the interpretation of the Qur’an. In doing so I shall also deal with their methodology and their impact on later Shi‘i tafsir.

As two examples of Shi‘i classical commentary on the Qur’an, I will deal with an early traditional Shi‘i tafsir of the third century (9th CE) Tafsir al-Qummi, as well as with a work of the fifth century (11th CE), al-Shaykh al-Tusi’s theological commentary Al-Tibyan, describing both of their approaches to tafsir. Before I come to the main body of the discussion, I shall first look at some of the essential criteria and characteristics that may be found in the Shi‘i approach to the interpretation of the Qur’an.

The Core Of Shi‘i Tafsir

Shi‘i exegesis makes frequent reference to the reliable and sound traditions of the Imams besides those from the Prophet. From the Shi‘i point of view, the Qur’an is more than a “guide through this life and the next.” In this perspective one of the function of tafsir is to establish “the link between the faithful and their spiritual guides, the Imams.”5

As Dr. Mahmood Ayoub remarks, “Shi‘i tafsir in its entirety is too vast a subject for any comprehensive treatment, let alone a comparative presentation.”6 Ayoub regards the special role that the Imams play as the unique characteristic of Shi‘i Tafsir.7 The Prophet and his vicegerents, who are the elect of his Household (Ahl al-Bayt), “are distinguished by the inheritance of divine knowledge,” thus they “know the full meaning of the Qur’an.” Ayoub explains the widely transmitted tradition of the Thaqalayn:

In a long and well-known tradition by both Shi‘i and Sunni traditionists (with many variants), the Qur’an is presented as the ‘greater weight’ (al-thaqal al-akbar) and the Imams as the ‘lesser weight’ (al-thaqal al-asghar). ... In another version quoted by al-‘Ayyashi in proof of the authority (walayah) of Ali, it is related that Muhammad went on to say regarding ahl al-bayt that ‘the All-Gracious, All-Knowing told me that they [the two weights] shall not be separated until they meet me [on the day of resurrection] ... Do not precede them, for you would go astray, and do not fall behind them, for you would perish. Do not

teach them, for they are of greater knowledge than you.[8]

A Shi'i commentator will always give due consideration to traditions from the Ahl al-Bayt touching upon interpretation of Qur'anic passages. The justification for this is "because Muhammad was the last prophet and the Qur'an was the final revelation, the prophetic circle continues only through the imamah which shall continue until the day of resurrection."[9] In this realm the main distinction of the Imams from the Prophet is that the former never possessed revelation.[10]

The continuous nature of tafsir is perfectly understandable: "The more distanced we are from the time of the Prophet and Imams the more questions are raised in regard to lexical concepts, as well as rational and theological matters."

Certain questions were raised in the minds of people when confronted by a verse. Here, mere reliance on reason could not provide the answers; rather it, in its turn, raised further questions.

Therefore, recourse had to be made to those who were familiar with the Qur'an. After a while, theological discussions arose from such inquiries. For example, it was al-Hasan al-Basri, a theologian and a contemporary of Imam Ali, who employed Qur'anic verses as the basic element of his reasoning. The questions raised in his mind or in those of others were answered by the Qur'anic passages. In this regard, verses were taken as a proof--examples to demonstrate theological concepts.

Gradually, Qur'anic exegesis was affected by more and more disciplines and doctrines, a process which consequently caused tafsir to become "wider in scope." Thus, a kind of extension occurred in relation to the tafsir. The variety of this extension depended mostly on the proficiency of exegetes in special field of knowledge. Naturally, the same phenomenon happened in literary as well as in rational, theological and even in natural discussions and considerations. These occurrences distanced the Qur'an from pure exegesis.[11]

Allamah Tabataba'i,[12] describing several categories of both Sunni and Shi'i exegetes, mentions that among the sixth category, there are those who wrote their tafsir during the age of the emergence and development of different branches of sciences.

Thus, each wrote his commentary based on his proficiency and expertise in a particular field. Examples of this are: Zamakhshari[13] who wrote as an expert in literature as well as a Mu'tazili theologian, al-Fakhr al-Razi[14] as a theologian, Ibn 'Arabi[15] as a Sufi, al-Tha'labi as an extreme traditionist, al-Qurtubi[16] as a jurist, al-Sharif al-Razi[17] who was concerned with the Qur'anic language, Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi[18] who offered a philosophical tafsir, etc. All of these commentators were influenced by their special background of knowledge in interpreting the Qur'an.[19]

Allamah Tabataba'i also states that such contributions to Qur'anic exegesis played an important role in the development of this science and its elevation to the surface of teaching and inquiry. Nevertheless, most of the discussions presented by these exegetes are not related directly to pure tafsir.[20]

The Shi‘a exegetes, under the light and guidance of the Imams’ traditions, were in large able to keep the subject-matter of their tafsir under control and “remain immune from extremism.” This approach has saved the Qur’an from extreme interpretation to some extent. Due to the nature of the approach itself the thoughts and interpretations of the infallible ones were applied to tafsir.

From the Shi‘a point of view the infallibility of the Prophet and the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt was taken as guaranteed, so their ideas, approved through authentic chains of reliable authorities and sources, have been made use of in most Shi‘i tafsirs. Among the Sunnis, too, a similar approach has been taken, with the difference that they believe that only the Prophet was infallible.21

They also rely to a great deal on the reports of the companions of the Prophet who are in the chains of the authorities transmitting the Prophet’s traditions. The Shi`a for their part apply certain criteria in evaluating a hadith or a Muhaddith. It is on this basis that some hadiths on the authority of some of the companions are excluded as inauthentic or invalid, except for those that are confirmed through other reliable chains.

The Classification Of Shi‘i Commentators

Since the Shi‘i approach to the tafsir differs markedly from the Sunni, their categorization in the field of tafsir also differs from one another. ‘Allamah Tabataba’i states:

The method employed by the Shi‘ite commentators, however, was different, with the result that the patterning of the groups was also different. The Shi‘ite commentators, in their study of a verse of the Qur’an, viewed the explanation given by the Prophet as proof of the meaning of the verse.22

The Shi‘a believe in the absolute validity and authenticity of the Prophet’s sayings and hadiths. However, the narratives through the companions and the followers (tābi‘in) are not accepted as indisputable proofs except when it is confirmed that they were from the Prophet himself and functions as a Nabawi hadith.23

Furthermore, in accordance with the widely transmitted hadith of Thaqalayn,24 the hadiths which are related from the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt are valid. The Shi`a believe that the authentication (hujjiyya) of the Prophet’s and Imams’ hadiths is a doctrine that is indicated in the Qur’an itself. This validity or authentication, according to the Shi‘a, is clearly established in the case of those hadiths that have been certainly transmitted by fully trustworthy chains from the Prophet or the Imams.

Thus a tradition may not be recognized as totally acceptable if its ascription to the Prophet and the Imams is not certain.25 Due to this belief the Shi‘a rely only on those hadiths which are certainly transmitted from the Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt. Based on a presupposition that ‘the people of the house have a better understanding and knowledge of what occurs in the house’ (Ahl al- bayt adrā bi-mā fi al-bayt),26 the Shi‘a declare that their Imams, who all were the family of the Prophet and his progeny, were more learned ones after the Prophet. They are more familiar with the prophetic mission and divine

laws including the interpretation of the Qur'an.

The First Generation

We have studied that Shi'i tafsir was initiated by the traditions of the Imams. Thus, the first generation of Shi'i commentators include those Shi'i traditionists and scholars who narrated the interpretation of the Qur'an from the Prophet and from the Imams. Men like Abu Hamzah al-Thamali,[27] Zurarah, Muhammad b. Muslim,[28] Ma'ruf b. Kharbudh, Jarir,[29] Abu al-Jارud,[30] Abu Basir[31] etc.[32] and their fellows among the companions of the Imams were the first authorities in Shi'i commentary of the Qur'an.

Among the huge number of hadiths that have come down to us on the authority of them, or even later Shi'i narrators of hadith, one may find many hadiths concerned with the interpretation of several verses of the Qur'an. These hadiths are to be found in several books of Shi'i tradition. Aqا Buzurg Tehrani[33] in his Al-Dhari'ah attributes some tafsir works to this generation.[34] Though no individual work has come down to us from these early traditionists, their traditions served as the sources for later tafsirs written by Shi'i exegetes of the second generation.

The Second Generation

This includes the first compilers of formal tafsir and writers of classical traditional tafsir as Furات b. Ibrahim al-Kufi,[35] al-'Ayyashi[36] and Ali b. Ibrahim al-Qummi[37] and al-Nu'mani[38]

The method employed by this group in interpreting the Qur'an was to relate the traditions from the first generation and include them along with their full chains of transmission in their books of tafsir. Thus their tafsirs are considered to be al-tafasir bil-ma'thur, which were written in accordance with their understanding of the traditions. On occasions, the texts of hadiths would be included without their chains of authorities. An example of this may be seen in al-'Ayyashi's Tafsir where the omission of the chains was done by his pupils in order to make their master's tafsir shorter.[39]

The Third Generation

This includes people with expertise in different sciences who approached the interpretation of the Qur'an based on their knowledge in scientific fields. Within this category we encounter the names of the Shi'i scholars whose tafsirs represent particular approaches to Qur'anic interpretation. Among these exegetes are al- Sharif al-Radiyy[40] with his literal and rhetorical tafsir, al-Shaykh al- Tusi[41] with his theological commentary, Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi[42] who wrote from a philosophical perspective, etc. There are other commentators in this category who tried to write comprehensive tafsirs employing several aspects of knowledge such as hadith, literature, theology, and so on. Al-Tabarsi's[43] Majma'al-Bayان is considered to be an example of such a tafsir. Thus his work is a traditional, literal, rhetorical and theological interpretation of the Qur'an.[44]

In what follows, rather than try to survey all of the formal written tafsirs attributed to Imami scholars, I intend to restrict myself to two of them. First, I will concern myself with Tafsir al-Qummi, and then briefly discuss the qualities of Al-Tibyān by al-Tusi.

Tafsir al-Qummi

Al-Qummi the Exegete (d. 919 C.E)

The name of Abu al-Hasan Ali b. Ibrahim al-Qummi comes to mind when one thinks of classical and traditional Shi'i tafsir. He was contemporary of the eleventh Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (A.S). Qummi was at the same time one of the most respected scholars of his time, as well as a reliable transmitter in Shi'i tradition.

He used to narrate mostly on the authority of his father Ibrahim b. Hashim al- Qummi (d. 217 / 832), who lived during the time of four Imams (from the eighth to eleventh Imam) and learned hadiths from many of their disciples. It is said that Ibrahim met Imam Rida the eighth Imam and obtained from the Imam several hadiths.

The famous Shi'i muhaddith al-Kulayni relied on Qummi to a great extent and in his Al-Kāfi, described as "one of the four canonical collections of the Shi'i hadith," related many traditions from him. Also, many prayers (du'ās) have come down to the Shi'a on his authority. It is said that his father Ibrahim b. Hashim was originally from Kufa, Iraq.

He departed to Qum and took it as his residence. Ibrahim was a great traditionist who loyally and accurately attempted to transmit the Imams' traditions from Kufi Shi'i traditionists to Qum for the first time. At any rate he and his father have a good reputation among the Shi'a.

His Tafsir

Qummi begins his Tafsir with an introduction concerning the value of the Qur'an and the philosophy of revelation. He explains the Hadith al-Thaqalayn and remarks that the hadith insists on the great status of the Thaqalayn, (the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt). The commentator discusses many issues concerning the Qur'anic sciences as well as Shi'i theology. He argues that the Qur'an refutes idol-worshipers, dualists, fire-worshipers, Jahmites, Mu'tazilites, Qadarites, Ash'arites and other sects whose doctrines are opposed to those of the Shi'i Imami school.[45]

Before Qummi, his master in exegesis al-Furat al-Kufi collected tafsir materials and compiled them in a commentary of his own. However, Qummi's Tafsir is regarded by al-Jazā'iri, the editor of the work, as the earliest commentary on the Qur'an in Twelver Shi'i history. Muhammad al-Kazim, the editor of al-Furat's work, points out that the compiler is more likely to have been a Zaydi Shi`i[46] and not a Twelver.[47]

Possibly because of this, al-Jaz'ri considers Qummi's work to be the earliest commentary on the Qur'an in Twelver history.[48] At any rate, neither 'Allamah Majlisi in his encyclopaedia of Shi'i tradition Bih'r al-Anw'r, nor al-Shaykh Aq' Buzurg Tehrani in his encyclopaedia of Shi'i literature Al-Dhari'ah il' Tas'nif al-Shi'ah mentions that al-Fur't al-Kufi was a Zaydi.[49]

The editor of Tafsir al- Furat therefore seems to be alone in this assumption. Describing Tafsir al-Qummi, al-Jaza'ri considers the work to be the basis of many later Shi'i tafasir. The traditions related by Qummi derive mostly from the fifth and sixth Imams, al-Sadiqayn (676-765).

This is why the tafsir is sometimes called as Tafsir al-Sadiqayn. The tafsir contains traditions describing the Ahl al-Bayt's excellencies. Most of the commentator's consideration lies in his exposition of many verses that would be difficult to understand except through the guidance provided by a number of Ahl al-Bayt hadiths.

The first traditionist to whom Qummi read his tafsir was his pupil Abu al-Fadl al-'Abbas b. Muhammad b. Qasim b. Hamzah b. Musa b. Ja'far. In fact, Abu al- fadl was a descendent of Imam Musa b. Ja'far (749-799) the seventh Imam.[50]

Qummi's Methodology

Qummi restricts himself to one methodology. He brings the meaning of the verses to light with the help of the Imams' traditions. These

traditions are related by Qummi with their full chains of authorities. In each chain the first authority from whom Qummi relates the hadith is his father Ibrahim b. Hashim; thus the traditions usually begin with "haddathani abi", i.e. "my father related to me."

In some cases, he cites several chains of authority for the interpretation of just one verse or passage. For instance, in respect to the interpretation of the Basmala, i.e. 'In the Name of Allah the Compassionate the Merciful,' the Tafsir lists five chains of authorities all explaining the same issue. Qummi not only plays the role of an exegete but also demonstrates his ability as a Shi'i muhaddith, always finding the appropriate hadiths and inserting them to his exegesis.

The chains of authority attached to these traditions related by Qummi end with the Imams and often include three or four hadith scholars, most of whom were the disciples of the Imams.[51] This characteristic gives Qummi's narration as well as his interpretation a high level of authenticity among Shi`i traditionists and commentators of the Qur'an.

His Other Works

Besides his Tafsir, Qummi contributed eleven more works to Shi'i literature. The variety of these works suggests that Qummi was a theologian as well as a traditionist, and one who challenged several notions, basing himself on Shi'i doctrine. Some of his more important works are as follows:

1– Al–N□sikh wal–Mansukh (On the Abrogation)

2– Qurb al–Isn□d (hadith)

3– Al–Shar□'i' (Shi'i jurisprudence)

4– Al–Tawhid wal–Shirk (theology)

5– Fad□'il Amir al–Mu'minin (On the Merits of Imam Ali)

6– Al–Maq□zi (history)

7– Al–Anbiy□ (theology)

8– Ikhtiy□r al–Qur'an52 (Qur'anic studies).

Al–Tibyan fi Tafsir al–Qur'an

Al–Tusi the Exegete (995–1067 C.E)

Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. al–Hasan b. Ali al–Tusi Shaykh al–T□'ifah was born at Tus in the north–east of Iran. He left for Baghdad in 1017 after having completed his early primary Shi'i education in the city of his birth. In Baghdad he studied under the supervision of al–Shaykh al–Mufid,53 at the time the greatest jurist and theologian of the Shi'a.

In Baghdad, he was also among the pupils of al–Sayyid al–Murtada54 a distinguished student of al–Mufid for about twenty–three years. In 1056, a group of adversaries burned down his residence in Baghdad for sectarian reasons.

This occurrence caused al–Shaykh al–Tusi to depart for al–Najaf, where he stayed for the rest of his life. It has been said of al–Tusi: "He is the greatest doctor of the Shi'a sect and is popularly known as Shaikh al–T□'ifa."55 In Najaf he started to teach Shi'i jurisprudence and theology; for this reason the foundation of the Seminary of Najaf is attributed to al–Tusi.

Tusi's Tafsir: Al–Tibyan fi Tafsir al–Qur'an

Al–Tibyan, a work in twenty volumes,56 is considered to be a comprehensive commentary on the Qur'an.57 It is the first Shi'i tafsir in which our commentator covered almost every aspect of the Qur'anic sciences. In his introduction to his tafsir, Tusi mentions that since he did not find among the works of Shi'i scholars any comprehensive exegesis, he decided to write one.

He explains the different methods used by exegetes before him, considering the works by Abu Muslim al–Isfahani and by Ali b. 'Is□ al–Rumani to be the best ones, except for the fact that they went into unnecessary details. Tusi remarks that a group of Shi'i scholars were interested in having a commentary

which discussed all aspects of the Qur'anic sciences and which provided as well arguments by which they might be able to establish the authenticity of their faith in all its principles.

He devoted a chapter to explaining that the Qur'an which is in our hands is the Divine Revelation revealed to the Prophet, the revelation which has never been changed. Thus, it is worth engaging ourselves in its interpretation.58

Tehrani, quoting the above-mentioned passage of Tusi, states that the latter's tafsir is a very invaluable commentary on the Qur'an. He continues by pointing out that the catalogues of Al-Azhar, Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih, and Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid libraries show that they have copies of this tafsir. 'Allamah Majlisi records this tafsir in his Bihar al-Anwar.59 It should be noted that there is also an abridged version of this tafsir by Ibn Idris,60 a grandson of al-Tusi,

Tusi's Methodology

After explaining the verses word by word and point by point, and discussing about the terminological and literal meanings of the Qur'anic terms, Tusi goes into an exposition of the theological attitudes and doctrines which are implied in the verses. For instance, in commenting on the meanings of the word al-Asbat61 the plural of al-sibt, Tusi mentions that according to one possibility the word is considered to be the title of the sons of Israil (Jacob), i.e. Yusuf and his eleven brothers.

He then states that many Sunni commentators prefer to think that al-Asbat (Jacob's sons) were the prophets of God. Tusi for his part remarks that based on his madhhab (denomination) not all of al-Asbat were prophets. This is because among them were some who committed sin by their evil action against their brother Yusuf, and according to the theological concept of 'ismah (infallibility) in Shi'a thought all the prophets of God should be infallible. Therefore, it is not acceptable from Tusi's point of view to claim that al-Asbat were all prophets.62

Tusi, before being a jurist or commentator, was a well-known Shi'i theologian who had taken up the challenge of studying Shi'i religious doctrine. Another example of the theological aspect of tafsir is the author's interpretation of the verse "Your walis (friends / masters) are God, His apostle, and the believers who establish regular prayers and pay charity while they are bowing down humbly (in worship)."63

The exegetes argue about the circumstances of the revelation of this verse. Among these exegetes, Abu Bakr al-Razi, Tabari, al-Rumani, Mujahid, etc. all indicate that it was revealed after Ali b. Abi Talib (A.S), while bowing down in prayer, gave his ring (khatam) to a poor man.

Tusi then elaborates that this is what is related from the Imams Baqir and Sadiq and that it is attested to by all Shi'a scholars. Tusi, in explaining the concept of wali as someone who possesses authority (walayah), remarks that this verse is one of the clear proof-texts that indicates the status of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali as Imam after the Prophet.64 These cases and others represent Tusi's Tafsir as a

theological one.

Tusi's Other Works

Forty works have been attributed to Tusi by Mahmud Ramyar the editor of Tusi's al-Fihrist. Besides his Tafsir, the more important of Tusi's works are as follows:

1-Tahdhib al-Ahk□m, a book containing hadiths which relate to the Shi'a school of jurisprudence.

2-Al-Istibs□r fi-m□ Ukhtulifa fi-hi min al-Akhb□r, another work on hadith in the field of jurisprudence. "The first work is a comprehensive one and contains all kinds of Hadiths, while the second deals only with those traditions which appear to be discrepant." In the Shi'a school of jurisprudence these two works "are among the four canonical books" (al-Kutub al-Arbi'ah) "which are held in the highest veneration."65

3-Al-Mabsut, a work on Shi'i law and jurisprudence.

4-Fihrist Kutub al-Shi'a, a collection of books written by Shi'i scholars.

5-Al-Fusul fi al-Usul, a book on Shi'i theology.66

These works demonstrate the important contribution of Tusi to Shi'a doctrine, especially in the fields of jurisprudence and theology.

Conclusion

So far we have seen how the Shi'i interpretation of the Qur'an was developed. The Shi'a base their interpretation of the Qur'an on the sayings of the Prophet, Imam Ali and the Imams after him. When one deals with a Shi'i tafsir one can easily recognize for example, the traditional or theological materials that have come from these sources. This is especially true of the well authenticate traditions related from the Sadiqayn.

The large number of the traditions that have come down to us from these two Imams67 is due to the circumstances that for the most part took place during the lifetimes of Imam Baqir (A.S) and Imam Sadiq (A.S), circumstances such as the political and military struggle between the Ummayads and 'Abbasids that ended in the victory of the latter over the former. While these rival forces were engaged in conflict, both Imams, one after the other, took advantage of the situation and provided an appropriate academic and scholarly seminary for their disciples and companions.

While the Shi'i tafsirs in general and those by Qummi and Tusi in particular utilize many hadiths from the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt,68 the Sunni works on the Qur'an, with the exception of very few cases, lack such hadiths. Instead, they mostly rely on what is related from the Prophet on the authority of his companions or trust in what has reached them from the companions or the followers (t□bi'in), and

sometimes follow what they have received from one of the four Imams of the Sunni schools of jurisprudence.

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2. A. Saeni, “Approaches to the exegesis of the Holy Qur’an,” Message of Thaqalayn (Tehran: Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly, a Quarterly Journal of Islamic Studies, April 1995), no. 2, pp. 135-137.
3. Ibid., p. 137.
4. Ibid.
5. Ayoub, “The Speaking Qur’an,” p. 177.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 178-179.

8. Ibid., p. 180, citing Muhammad b. Mas‘ud b. ‘Ayyashi al-Sulami al-Samarqandi,
Tafsir al-‘Ayy□shi, edited by al-Mahallati, v. 1, p. 4.
9. Ibid., p. 181.
10. Ibid.
11. Saeni, “Approaches to the exegesis of the Holy Qur’an,” pp. 137-139.
12. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba’i known as ‘Allama was one of the contemporary Shi`i philosophers and exegetes whose major work on the Qur’an al- Miz□n fi Tafsir al-Qur’an containing 20 volumes (Beirut: 1970) is considered to be the most distinguished example of the cross-reference exegesis of the Qur’an.
13. The well-known literal rationalist Mu‘tazili scholar and exegete whose exegesis Al-
Kashsh□f ‘an Haq□’iq Ghaw□mid al-Tanzil is regarded as rhetorical and theological
tafsir. He died in 1143 C.E.
14. Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 1209), a famous Ash‘ari theologian, exegete and the author of Maf□tih al-Ghayb in 32 volumes in the exegesis of the Qur’an.
15. The great sufi and the author of his famous mystical Tafsir, died in 1034 or 1035 C.E.
16. Muhammad b. Abi Bakr al-Qurtubi (d. 1269 C.E), the author of Tafsir al-Qurtubi.
17. Muhammad b. al-Husayn al-Musawi al-Shrif al-Ra
18. Sadr al-Din Muhammad b. Ibrahim al-Shirazi, a famous Shi‘i philosopher whose
Asr□r al-Ay□t and Majmucat Tafasir were written in the exegesis of the Qur`an.
19. ‘Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba’i, Al-Qur’an fi al-Islam, translated into Arabic by al-Husayni Sayyid Ahmad (Tehran: 1983), pp. 74-75 & 78.
20. Ibid., p. 75.
21. Saeni, “Approaches to the exegesis of the Holy Qur’an,” p. 139.
22. Tabataba’i, The Qur’an in Islam (London: 1987), p. 50.
23. Tabataba’i, Al-Qur’an, p. 76.
24. In his introduction to his Tafsir, Qummi remarks that the term Thaqalayn in the hadith followed by Kitaballah wa ‘Itrati, Ahl Bayti refer to these two as the two magnificent and invaluable things that the Prophet left behind, i.e. the Qur’an and his Ahl al-Bayt. The Prophet insisted that these two should go with each other and they should never be separated from one another. In one aspect, it means that the Qur’an after the Prophet should be interpreted by the Imams of his family. See: Abu al-Hasan Ali b. Ibrahim al-Qummi, Tafsir al-Qummi, (Qum: ‘Allamah, 1967), v. 1, pp. 3-4.
25. Tabataba’i, al-Qur’an, pp. 92-93.
26. Cf. Sayyid Ja‘far Murtadha, Al-Sahih min Sirat al-Nabi al-A‘zam, (Qum: 1983), v. 1, p. 192.
27. Abu Hamzah was a Shi‘i jurist and one of the well-known companions of the Imams Sajjad (A.S) and Baqir (A.S), the fourth and fifth Imams.
28. Zurarah b. A‘yun and Muhammad b. Muslim were two Shi‘i jurists and the distinguished companions of the fifth and sixth Imams, Baqir and Sadiq.
29. Ma‘ruf and Jarir were two of the very close companions of the sixth Imam.
30. He was a muhaddith among the companions of the fifth Imam whose hadiths from the Imam are mentioned in several cases by al-Qummi in his Tafsir. For instance, see: al-Qummi, Tafsir,
31. One of the very famous companions of Imam al-Sadiq whose name is mentioned as the first authority among the chains that al-Qummi employed in his Tafsir. Ibid., pp. 28, 30.
32. Tabataba’i, al-Qur’an, p. 76. Also, see: al-Qummi, Tafsir, v. 1, pp. 28, 30, 271.
33. Al-Shaykh Agha Buzurg Tehrani, a great Shi‘i scholar of the late century whose fame is due to his twenty-volume encyclopaedic work of the Shi‘a researches, collections and compilations up to his time. His work was entitled by him as Al- Dhari‘ah il□ Tas□nif al-Shi‘a (Tehran: 1939).
34. Tehrani, Al-Dhari‘ah, v. 4, p. 231
35. Furat was one of the masters and teachers of Ali b. Ibrahim al-Qummi in tafsir. His work on the Qur’an has come down to us as Tafsir al-Fur□t al-Kufi in two volumes.
36. Muhammad b. Mas‘ud al-Kufi al-‘Ayy□shi was one of the highly-ranked Imami scholars in the second half of the third

century whose commentary Tafsir al-'Ayy□shi has reached us.

37. I will deal with his biography and Tafsir later.

38. Muhammad b. Ibrahim was al-Kulayni's pupil in hadith and one of the Imami scholar in the early fourth (tenth) century.

39. Tabataba'i, Al-Qur'an, pp. 77-78.

40. See footnote 17.

41. Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Tusi known as Shaykh al-T□'ifah (d. 460 / 1067) was an important figure in jurisprudence, theology whose Al-Tahdhib and Al-Istibs□r are regarded as two of the four basic sources in Shi'a tradition.

42. Muhammad b. Ibrahim al-Shirazi (1050 / 1640) the famous philosopher and the author of Asr□r al-Ay□t and Majmu'at al-Taf□sir.

43. Amin al-Islam al-Fadhl b. al-Hasan al-Tabarsi (d. 548 / 1153) the well-known Imami scholar and the author of Majma``al-Bay□n fi Tafsir al-Qur'an in ten volumes.

44. Tabataba'i, Al-Qur'an, pp. 78-79.

45. Al-Qummi, Tafsir, v. 1, Qummi's introduction, pp. 3-6.

46. The Zaydis are the followers of Zayd b. Ali b. al-Husayn, the son of the fourth Imam of the Shi'a. They believe in Zayd b. Ali as their final Imam.

47. Ibrahim al-Furat al-Kufi, Tafsir al-Fur□t al-Kufi, (Qum: 1986), v. 1, editor's introduction, p. 11.

48. See: al-Qummi, Tafsir, v. 1, editor's introduction, p. 8, 14. Also, see: Ayoub, "The speaking Qur'an," pp. 184-185.

49. See: Tehrani, Al-Dhari'ah, v. 4, pp. 298-300.

50. Al-Qummi, Tafsir, v. 1, editor's introduction, pp. 15-16.

51. Ibid., pp. 27-28; Tehrani, Al-Dhari'ah, v. 4, p. 308.

52. Al-Qummi, Tafsir, v. 1, editor's introduction, p. 8.

53. Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Nu'm□n al-Baghdadi (d. 1022).

54. Abu al-Qasim `Ali b. al-Husayn (d. 1044).

55. Hidayet Hosain, "al-Tusi," First Encyclopaedia of Islam, edited by M. Th. Houtsma,
M. J. Wensinck, H. A. R. Gibb, W. Heffening (E. J. Brill: Leiden, New York ... 1987), v. 8, p. 982, Also see: Tehrani, Al-Dhari'ah, v. 3, pp. 328-331.

56. Tehrani, citing the author of T□rikh Misr, remarks that the latter mentions the name of al-Tusi saying that he was the author of a great tafsir in twenty volumes. See: Al-Dhari'ah, v.3, p. 331.

57. Ibid. , pp. 328-331. Also see: First Encyclopaedia of Islam, v. 8, p. 982.

58. Tehrani, Al-Dhari'ah, v. 3, p. 329.

59. Ibid.

60. Abu 'Abdillah Al-Shaykh Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Idris al-Hilli (1148-1201) who abridged Tusi's tafsir in two volumes and named it Al-Muntakhab min Tafsir al-Qur'an wal-Kutub al-Mustakhraja min Kit□b al-Tiby□n, (Qum: 1986).

61. The Qur'an, 2: 136.

62. Ibn Idris al-Hilli, Al-Muntakhab, v. 1, pp. 19-20.

63. The Qur'an, 5: 55.

64. Ibn Idris, al-Hilli, Al-Muntakhab. v. 1, p. 234.

65. The two other canonical books are Man La Yahduruhu al-Faqih by al-Shaykh al- Saduq and al-Kafi by al-Shaykh al-Kulayni

66. For more details see: al-Tusi, Al-Fihrist, edited by Mahmud Ramyar, (Iran: Mashhad, 1972), pp. 285-288 and First Encyclopaedia of Islam, v. 8. p. 982.

67. Approximately two third of the traditions used in Shi'i literature are derived from
these two Imams.

68. These are besides the authentic hadiths from the Sunni traditionists utilized by Shi'i commentators as well.

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