IJTIHĀD, SYNTHESIS, MODERNITY AND RENEWAL:
AL-BAYḌĀWI’S ANWĀR AL-TANZĪL WA-ASRĀR AL-TAʿWĪL
IN HERMENEUTICAL TRADITION

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ABSTRACT

Among the major exegeses of the Qurʾān none has received more attention on the part of Muslim teachers and scholars as the tafsīr by the elusive Turco-Perso-Arab Shāfīʿi-Ashʿarī- Sufi savant of Shīrāz and Azerbaijan, Nāṣīr al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286), Anwār al-Tanzil wa-Asrār al-Taʿwil (The Lights of Revelation and the Secrets of Interpretation). It contains such a consummate analysis of the Quranic use of Arabic grammar and style that it is viewed as the foremost demonstration of the linguistic, rhetorical and semantic inimitability (iʿjāz) of the Qurʾān in Sunni literature. Its success crowns al-Bayḍāwī’s intent to pour out into his last work the quintessence of his skills and scholarly experience into the service of the Qurʾān. This paper shows some of the ways in which al-Bayḍāwī set the standard in the genre—just as he had done in other fields with his opera magna in legal theory, credal doctrine and sacred law—and was able, for seven centuries since his Tafsīr first came out, to revive and boost the relationship of the community of Islam with its most fundamental text.

Keywords: Ijtihad, Modernity, Baydawi, Tafsir.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Among the major exegeses of the Qurʾān none has received more attention on the part of Muslim teachers and scholars as the tafsīr by the elusive Turco-Perso-Arab Shāfiʿi-Ashʿarī-Sufi savant of Shīrāz and Azerbaijan, born in al-Bayḍāʾ (present-day Beyza, also known as Sefidan), Fars Province—Abū Maṣūr al-Ḥallāj’s native city—in or before the reign of the Ilkhānī Atābāk Abū Bakr b. Saʿd-i-Zangī (628-658/1231-1260) and buried in Tabrīz, Qādi al-quḍāt Nāṣir al-Dīn Abū Saʿīd (also known as Abū al-Khayr and Abū Muḥammad) ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿImām al-Dīn Abī Ḥaṣṣa ʿUmār b. ʿAlī al-Shīrāzī al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286),1 Anwār al-Tanzīl wa-Astrār al-Taʾwil (The Lights of Revelation and the Secrets of Interpretation). It contains such a consummate analysis of the Quranic use of Arabic grammar and style that it is viewed as the foremost demonstration of the linguistic, rhetorical and semantic inimitability (iʿjāz) of the Qurʾān in Sunni literature. Its success crowns al-Bayḍāwī’s intent to pour out into his last work—not only as a doctor of the creed, legal theorist and jurisprudent of the first rank but also as a litterateur and historian in Arabic and Persian2—the quintessence of his skills and scholarly experience into the service of the Qurʾān. This comes as no surprise since tafsīr, the most encompassing of the Islamic disciplines, demands the widest array of knowledge from its expert. As the Andalusian exegete Ibn ʿAtiyya (d. 546/1151) said, “The Book of Allah cannot be explained unless all of the disciplines are mobilized for it.”3 Such a rule held especially true for language as al-Bayḍāwī points out in his preamble:

Truly the greatest of the sciences in scope and highest in rank and radiance is the science of exegesis of the Qurʾān—the chief and head of all the religious sciences, the edifice of the bases of the sacred law and their foundation. None is suited to practice it or undertake to speak about it but he who excels in the religious sciences in their totality—

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1 His date of birth is unknown while the obituary is the view of the majority of the scholars, cf. ʿAlī Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAlī al-Qarāh Dāghī, al-Ghāyat al-Quswā fī Dirāyat al-Fatwā, 2 vols. (Shurba Mīr: Dār al-Naṣr lil-Tībā at al-Islāmiyya, 1402/1982) 1:54-57.


roots and branches!—and has proven superior in the crafts of the Arabic language and the literary arts in all their varieties.¹

Thus al-Bayḍawī aimed to set the standard in the genre just as he had done in other fields with his opera magna in legal theory (uṣūl al-fiqh), credal doctrine (kalām) and sacred law (fiqh) —respectively the Minhāj al-Wuṣūl ilā 'Ilm al-Uṣūl, the Tāwāli‘ al-Anwār fī Maṭāli‘ al-Anzār and the Ghayat al-Quṣwā fī Dirāyat al-Fatwā. The Damascene historian and exegete Ibn Kathīr (700 - 774/1301-1373) expressed his admiration for these paradigmatic writings—together with the Anwār—as “works that travelled the lands east and west producing imams,” only a brief time after the death of their author.

The purpose of tafsîr works was nothing less than to revive and boost the relationship of the community of Islam with its most fundamental text. That was certainly Bayḍawī’s intent, and it appears to have received the greatest share of acceptance in the Umma as can be inferred from the more than 1,400 manuscripts of Anwār al-Tanzîl and the more than 300 extant supercommentaries of it in the libraries of the world; no other tafsîr has received as much attention.³ It is also the tafsîr that has received the most editions and reprints since the 1950s—albeit none meeting critical standards as of yet.⁴

The success of al-Bayḍāwī’s intention can also be gleaned from the glowing testimonies of later scholars and the fact that the Anwâr became and remained for seven centuries the most studied of all Tafsîr:

The scholars have placed it, ever since it first emerged and became famous in the second half of the seventh century, on a pedestal of reliance and acceptance and they have devoted themselves to it as the principal reference-work in tafsîr... and the main requirement of teaching from the deep reaches of India to the farthest Maghreb.1

Analysis (taḥlîl) and Transmission (athan)

Unlike works of “transmissive exegesis” or tafsîr bil-athan—a genre made famous by Ibn Jarîr al-Ṭabarî with his celebrated Jâmi’ al-Bayân ‘an Ta’wil Ây al-Qur’ân (Encyclopedia of Elucidations for Interpreting the Verses of the Qur’ân)—the method of Anwâr al-Tanzil does not hinge on the compilation of exegetical hadiths and reports but on linguistic and stylistic analysis and critique, which puts it in the somewhat ineptly-named category of “speculative exegesis” (tafsîr bil-ra’y). Yet Jâmi’ al-Bayân itself, the greatest transmissive tafsîr, was largely an analytical commentary as well, since it devotes many pages to the discussion of language and its intricacies.2 Even more so does al-Bayḍâwî’s tafsîr constantly exert “proof-based choices of one of several scenarios for interpreting any given term” (tarijih aḥad ihtimalât al-lafẓ bil-dalîl).3


2 E.g., al-Ṭabarî’s long introduction and his complex analysis of the alif lâm of al-ḥamdû in the second verse of the Fâtiha in which he discusses grammar and cites poetry in support of his arguments: Tafsîr al-Ṭabarî: Jâmi’ al-Bayân ‘an Ta’wil Ây al-Qur’ân, ed. ‘Abd Allâh b. ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkî et al., 26 vols. (Cairo: Dâr Hajar, 1422/2001) 1:139-141.

Such choices constitute *ijtihād*—expert judicial exertion—informeda prestigious Iraqi-Khurasanian lexicological tradition. Quranic polysemy was studied within the sub-genre of *al-wuḍūḥ wa-l-nāẓāʾir*, where *wuḍūḥ* or “aspects” refers to variant meanings while *nāẓāʾir* or “analogues” are the multiple instances of homonyms that convey them. After initial forays by the Successors ’Ikrima Mawlā Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 105/723) and the Syrian post-Successor Kharijite ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa (d. 143/760) the first full-length work on the subject, *al-Wuḍūḥ wa-Nāẓāʾir fil-Qur’ān*, was penned by the exegete Muqāṭīl b. Sulaymān al-Balkhī (d. 150/767) who is also the author of the first extant comprehensive *tafsīr*. Examples of *wuḍūḥ* and *nāẓāʾir* he gave include *ḥudā* (17 different meanings), *kufr* (4), *shirk* (3), *marāḍ* (4), *fasād* (6), *mashy* (4), *libās* (4), *sū* (11), *raḥma* (11), *umma* (9), *dhikr* (16), *ṣalāt* (2), *khayar* (8), etc. Muqāṭīl was followed by others who built on his pioneering work, notably Yāḥyā b. Sallām al-Taymī al-บาشري (124-200/743-815) and the Khāriji linguist and exegete Abū ‘Ubayda Ma’mar b. al-Muthannā al-Taymī (110-210/728-825) with a *tafsīr* entitled *Majāz al-Qur’ān*. These works formed the basis of al-Rāghib al-Aṣbahānī’s (d. 502/1108) landmark lexicon *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur’ān* and *Zamakhsharī’s* *tafsīr* and lexicons such as *Asrār al-Balāgha*, *al-Fā’iq fi Gharib al-Ḥadīth*, *al-Muṣtaqṣā min Amthal al-ʿArab* etc., both of which authors are among al-Bayḍāwī’s main sources.

**Synthesis of Khurasanian-Persian Hermeneutics and the Basran and Kufan Schools of Grammar**

At the same time as he produced a reference-work on polysemy, stylistic registers and linguistic universals, al-Bayḍāwī digested the literature on miraculous inimitability (*i jāz*) and parsing or desientential syntax (*i rāb*) to which he was heir through two pioneering models of *tafsīr*, each of which had broken the mould of the genre in its time and transcended it. He integrated the sura-by-sura linguistic method the Ḥanafī Muʿtazīlī Jār Allāh Maḥmūd al-Zamakhshārī

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2 The similarly-termed *al-ashbāh wa-l-nāẓāʾir* flourished in legal and grammatical literature.


(467-538/1074-1143) of Khwarizm (near Samarqand) used in his Kashshāf ‘an Ḥaqāʾiq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzil wa-ʿUyūn al-Aqāwīl fi Wujūh al-Taʿwil (Guidebook for Verifying the Obscurities of Revelation and Sourcing the Various Aspects of Interpretation) with the multidisciplinarian tradition inaugurated by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (543-606/1148-1210) of Ray—near present-day Teheran—in his large Mafāṭīḥ al-Ghayb (Keys to the Unseen), but without the proxility of either. As just mentioned, he also relied on the works of al-Rāghib al-Aṣbahānī:

This tafsīr of his is a magnificent book that needs no introduction. He summarized in it the material of the Kashshāf that is related to parsing, semantics and rhetorics; from the Tafsīr al-Kabīr [of al-Rāzī] whatever is related to sapience and dialectics, and from al-Rāghib’s tafsīr whatever is related to etymologies, arcane truths and subtle allusions, adding to that whatever his mind reined in of rational perspectives and plausible variants….¹

His contribution went further yet as he blended together, in an unprecedented condensed format, the works of many other figures of Khurasanian-Persian linguistic exegesis, among them:


² Qāḍī al-ʿuṣrāt Abū al-ʿAbbās Ṭabīb b. Khalīfah b. Saʿīda al-Khuwayy al-Barmakī al-Khurāṣānī thumma al-Dimashqī was a jurist, jurisprudent, and prosodist of the first rank from
Al-Bayḍāwī also integrated into the Anwārā a comparative critique of the Basran and Kufān schools of grammar and philology; a review of the different narrations of mass-transmitted (mutawātīr) and anomalous (shādhdhī) canonical readings of the Qur’ān; references to the Sunni schools of law on legal issues—in particular the Shāfiʿī—and the Sunni schools of doctrine, in particular the Ashʿarī; last but not least, sufism.

*Ijtihād, modernity and renewal*

Additionally, al-Bayḍāwī’s concentration of information into a very concise amount of words lent his work a rich, multi-layered depth of intertextual and hypertextual qualities. He showed mind-boggling mastery of the art of combining what al-Fāḍil b. ʿĀshūr called

concision (ikhtīṣār), minute precision (diqqat al-taʿbir), strict scholarly terminology (iltizām al-muṣṭalāḥ al-ʿilmī) and the economic use of implied mental inferences for meanings that branch out of the text and then serve as basis for the passage that follows.¹

The result must have surely appeared as both a very modern and a very classical hermeneutics for its time, and the ultimate didactic tool because of its comprehensiveness and clarity. In light of the standing garnered by the Anwār it would therefore not be an exaggeration to say that al-Bayḍāwī’s achievement was an example of renewal (tajdid) in the sacred sense of the word, as told in the Prophetic hadith: “Verily Allah shall send to this Community, at the onset of every hundred years, one/those who will renew their religion for them.”²

*Ijtihād*, furthermore, buttressed the edifice of exegesis and protected it from erosion through the dedicated sub-disciplines of Quranic studies applied by qualified experts as defined, for example, by al-Suyūṭī in his *Itqān* (Type 78, shurūṭ al-mufassir) and as summarized by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (909-973/1503-1565):

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¹ Muḥammad al-Fāḍil b. ʿĀshūr, *al-Tafsīr wa-Rijāḥ* (pp. 114-115).

² Narrated from Abū Hurayra by Abū Dāwūd in his *Sunan* (*Malāḥim, Bāb mā yudhkaru fī qarn al-niʿa*) with a sound chain according to al-Ḥakim and al-ʿIraqī.
The tools of exegesis are fifteen types of knowledge:
• philology (al-lugha),
• grammar (al-naḥw),
• morphology (al-taṣrīf),
• etymology (al-Ishtiqāq),
• style/diction (al-maʿānī),
• rhetoric (bayān),
• poetics/prosody (al-badiʿ),
• canonical readings (al-qirāʾāt),
• principles of creed and principles of law (al-āṣlāyin),
• circumstances of revelation (asbāb al-nuzūl),
• historical accounts (al-qasās),
• abrogating evidence (al-nāsikh),
• abrogated evidence (al-mansūkh),
• sacred law (al-fiqh),
• hadiths that explicate the vague and the anonymous (al-ahādīth al-mubayyina li-tafsīr al-mujmal wal-mubham),
• and a knowledge that stems from a spiritual gift (ʿilm al-mawhiba),

which is a knowledge Allah imparts to whoever puts into practice what they know.

Some of those sciences were found among the predecessors in practice, and some were found in their characters, without training.¹

al-Bayḍāwī’s main sources:
I. His reworking of al-Zamakhsharī

The Anwār has been called an abridgment (mukhtaṣar) of Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī’s Kashshāf and, more precisely, “an emendation, expurgation and abridgment” (tahdhib wa-tanqīl wa-ikhtiṣār) and “thoroughgoing revision” of it²—in either case Jār Allāh proving to be Bayḍāwī’s principal source. Jār Allāh himself was influenced by the Shāfiʿī doctor ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurfānī’s (d.

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¹ Al-Haytamī as quoted by his student Mulla ‘Alī al-Qārī in Mīraqāt al-Maṭāḥī Shariʿ Mīshkār al-Maṣābīḥ (commentary on the hadith Man qala fīl-Qurʾānī bi-raʾyihi fa-aṣāba fa-qad akhfa’ — “Whoever speaks about the Qur’an based on his mere opinion and is correct, is incorrect”).

471/1079) landmark studies Dalā’il al-I’jāz and Asrār al-Balāgha which integrated and codified what became known as “composition theory” (naẓariyyat al-naẓm) in Quranic syntax.¹ Their respective methods cover roughly the same aspects:

(i) morphology, establishing the form or forms of each word;

(ii) etymology, mentioning the various schools of grammar and the Quranic verses, hadiths and poetic examples adduced by each in support of their respective positions. Al-Bayḍāwī never fails to clarify his own preference in the process;

(iii) phonetics, establishing how words are pronounced in close conjunction with form, notably for alif lām mīm (verse 2:1);

(iv) syntax and grammar, establishing in what way or ways the verses’ verbal units form clauses in order to supply meanings;

(v) historical canonicity of the text as Quranic and variants of canonical readings;

(vi) the merits of verses and suras as mentioned in the Prophetic reports.

Yet everything is in the Qadi’s reworking as he not only frequently parts ways with his source but aims to expunge it of its “rank Mu‘tazilism.”² He did not completely succeed as can be gleaned from al-Suyūṭī’s (849-911/1445-1505) frequent criticism in his erotically-entitled supercommentary Nawāhid al-Abkār wa-Shawārid al-Afkār (The Budding Breasts of Virgins and Vagrant Thoughts)³ and that of other inspectors.⁴ This holds especially true in light of prior and posterior Sunni critiques of the Kashshāf such as al-‘Intisāf min al-Kashshāf by Ibn al-Munayyir al-Malikī (620-683/122/1284); Tajrīd al-Kashshāf by Ibn Abī al-Qāsim (769-837/1368-1434); al-‘Irāf bi-‘Umayz má Tabī’ā fīhi al-Bayḍāwī Ṣāḥib al-Kashshāf by al-Suyūṭī’s student the Sīra historian Muḥammad b. ʿAbī al-Ṣāliḥ (d. 942/1536); Ṣafī al-Ikhṭilāf ʿan Kalām al-Qādī wal-Kashshāf by

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³ This Ḥāsiyya regroups several of the great Sunni ḥuwāshī of the Kashshāf such as al-Tibri’s, al-Taftazānī’s (712-793/1312-1390)—whom al-Suyūṭī calls “al-Sā’d”—and Abū al-Ḥasan al-Jurjānī’s (740-816/1340-1413)—whom al-Suyūṭī calls “al-Sayyid.”

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ghānī al-Nābulusī (1050-1143/1640-ca.1730); al-Inšāf bil-Muḥākama bayna al-Tamīz wal-İṭḥāf by Muṭṭādī al-Zābīdī (1145-1205/1732-1790) and two recent studies.¹

Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of pure originality, the Anwār proved superior to the Kashshāf in the following aspects:

• al-Bayḍāwī showed greater mastery of the Qur’ān’s intra-textuality and intertextual illustrative proofs from the Hadith—the two primary authoritative sources for exegesis;

• He connected Qur’ānic proof-texts to their legal applications and rulings better than al-Zamakhshārī. He did so principally in the two main schools of his region at the time, the Shafi‘i then the Ḥanafī. Students and readers noted in particular his references to some of the principal reference-works of those two schools such as Abū Ishāq al-Shirāzī’s al-Tanbih fil-Fiqh—which he went on to comment—and his Muḥadhdhab, Ghazālī’s al-Wajiz, and al-Kāsānī’s Badā‘ī al-Ṣanā‘ī‘. He also quoted from Sa‘nūn’s Mudawwana in Mālikī fiqh. As a rule he did not source his citations, in keeping with the unencumbered practice of compendia.

• al-Bayḍāwī adduced points of legal principles taken from al-Ghazālī’s Mustaṣfā and al-Rāzī’s Maḥṣūl, which he also used in his own book on ṣūl al-fiqh, the Minḥāj. Al-Zamakhshārī’s approach lacks this aspect entirely. Furthermore, he was more adept than his predecessor at expounding the interpretive dichotomies of meaning-inference from proof-texts such as “general versus specific” (al-‘āmm wal-khāṣṣ), “absolute versus restricted” (al-muʃlaq wal-muqayyad), etc. as he had masterfully codified these categories in his works on legal theory, especially the Minḥāj. This, furthermore, allowed him to highlight the disciplines of hermeneutics (‘ulūm al-Qur’ān) and their respective roles in expounding the Qur’ān better than al-Zamakhshārī.

• al-Bayḍāwī benefited greatly from al-Zamakhshārī in explaining the huge role of rhetoric in the unfolding of the miraculous linguistic inimitability of the

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Qur’ān, but he explained that role more successfully and with greater transparency than his predecessor.¹

- al-Zamakhshari’s approach to syntax and etymology is derived mostly from the views of Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī and his student Ibn Jinnī, which at times produces exegesis in isolation of established views, as if in a vacuum, while al-Bayḍāwī is more knowledgeable of and more consistent in taking exegetical tradition into account. When, for example, the Kashshāf claims that ṣalāt is thus named “because the praying person moves his buttocks” (ṣalā, dual ṣalawayn), he rejects the latter view and reasserts the derivation of ṣalāt as a “transference” or metaphorization/ transference (naqīl) of the literal meaning of slaught ʿhe supplicates² to apply to ṣalāt and its forms from beginning to end, in line with past and future exegetes.²

II. Rāghib’s Mufradāt and Tafsīr; Rāzī’s Mafāṭīḥ al-Ghayb

Next in order of importance of inspiration in the Anwār among the books of tafsīr come the works of two major Khurasanian Ashʿarī authorities with a predilection for linguistics and rhetoric: al-Rāghib al-ʿAsfahānī and al-Fakhr al-Rāzī.

Al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. al-Mufaḍḍal, known as Abū al-Qāsim al-Rāghib al-ʿAsfahānī (d. 502/1108) and cited by al-Rāzī “among our [Shāfiʿī-Ashʿarī] colleagues (min aṣḥābinā),”³ produced several exegetical works, among them a tafsīr (yet unpublished but for Sūrat Āl ʿImrān and two thirds of al-Nīṣā’);⁴ his magnum opus, the erudite Mufradāt Alfaż al-Qur‘ān, framed as a glossary of gharīb or difficult terms of Qur’ān as shown by its alternate title of al-Mufradāt fi Gharib al-Qur‘ān (the Syro-Egyptian exegete al-Samīn al-Halabī (d. 756/1355) critiqued it and expanded on it with his ‘Umdat al-Huffaż fi Tafsīr

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¹ See ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Shihārī’s second audio lesson on Anwār al-Tanzil posted at http://ar.islamway.net/lesson/132243, around 25’25" and 50’50".

² Cf. al-Suyūṭī, Nawāḥīd (1:305).


Ashraf al-Alfāz); and Hall Mutashābihāt al-Qur‘ān, also known by the alternate titles of Durrat al-Ta’wil fi Mutashābihāt al-Tanzil and Kashf Mushkilāt al-Qur‘ān, a work dedicated to the elucidation of obscure meanings and seemingly contradictory passages as its last title indicates, in the tradition of similarly-named works.¹

Another Shāfi‘ī savant and doctrinaire (mutakallimīn), the Shaykh al-Islām, jurisprudent, philologist, genealogist, heresiographer, logician and physician Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Qurashi al-Bakrī al-Ṭaymī al-Ṭabaristānī, known as Ibn al-Khaṭīb and as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (543-606/1148-1209), produced Mafārīḍ al-Ghayb (Keys to the Invisible), also known as al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr, generally hailed as a masterpiece of erudition and perhaps the greatest tafsīr bi-l-ra’y in the literature, in 12 to 30 volumes depending on the edition. The author spent the last fifteen years of his life writing it and died before finishing it.² He included in it his knowledge of the natural sciences of his time, Arabic grammar, rhetoric and philology, as well as the various positions of the scholars of fiqh (particularly the Shāfi‘ī school), kalām, logic and philosophy, with frequent references to Hadith, Sīra and hermeneutical literature (notably Wāḥidi’s Tafsīs). He forwarded his doctoral preferences in refutation of the Qur’ānic commentaries of non-Sunnis (such as the Mu’tazilīs al-Asham, al-Jubbā’ī, Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, al-Kā’bī, Abū Muslim al-Aṣḥāḥānī and al-Zamakhshārī) and non-Shāfi‘īs (particularly Ḥanafīs). The exegete Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī criticized its proximity in acerbic terms³ while the Ḥanafī Muḥammad al-Ḥūsainī gave point-by-point replies in defense of his school in his own commentary entitled Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī. A contemporary scholar wrote:

[al-Rāzī] gave the science of tafsīr its due in full…. I could give a thousand proofs to this effect. Among its excellences is its near-complete exemption of Israelite reports: whenever he mentions one it is only in

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³ To the point he said: “One of the scholars said that his Tafsīr contains everything but tafsīr” cf Ḥajjī Khalīfā, Kashf al-Zunān (1:431).
order to show its falsehood, as he did in the stories of Hārūt and Mārūt, Dāwūd and Sulaymān. He also addressed the narrations which cast aspersions on the Prophet’s immunity from error and demonstrated their falsehood, as in the story of the cranes.¹

The Mafātīḥ was completed first by al-Rāzī’s student Qādī al-quḍāt Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Khalīl al-Khuwayy al-Dimashqī (d. 637/1240),² then by Najm al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Qamūlī (d. 727/1327).³ It has been claimed (by al-Shihāb al-Khafāji in Shahr al-Shīḥa and Hajjī Khalīfa in Kashf al-Zunūn) that al-Rāzī stopped at Sūrat al-Anbiyāʾ but a recent study by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Maʿālim asserts that al-Rāzī’s hand shows for Sūras 1-28, 37-46, 57-59 and 67-114; furthermore, the continuator was most probably Shams al-Dīn al-Khuwayy alone, since internal clues make al-Qamūlī implausible.⁴

In language al-Bayḍāwī also relies on other works according to need, such as al-ʿUkbārī’s (538-616/1144-1219) grammatical analysis of the Qurʾān entitled al-Tibyān fī l ṣāb al-Qurʾān.

The Anwār as a textbook and its scholastic marginalia

We have seen how al-Bayḍāwī can be described as having possessed the criteria of ijtiḥād listed by Ibn al-Subkī (727-771/1327-1370) (see note 12 above) and those of tafsīr listed by al-Suyūṭī and al-Haytamī; and, more importantly, how he was able to synthesize various analytical approaches into a seamlessly woven text for the benefit of subsequent generations. This is one of the reasons his Tafsīr enjoyed such success in the Muslim world and became required study in the madrasa curriculums of Mamlūk and Ottoman Egypt including al-Azhar, the rest of the Arab world including al-Zaytūna, and all Asia—Central, South and Southeast. The 1912 Cairo edition—together with a 1100-page, four-volume ḥāshiyya by al-Kāzarūnī (d. after 1102/1691), said on its cover: “The higher council in al-

³ In Ibn al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿīyya al-Kubrā (9:31).
Azhar has decreed this book be taught to sixth-year students.” Even today it is required reading for seventh-year madrasa students in parts of the Indian Subcontinent, particularly the very first juz’ which has been translated and lavishly commented on its own.

Ismā’il Bāshā Bābānī (d.ca. 1921) identifies by title and author about 69 complete and partial supercommentaries (ḥawāshi, ta’līqāt) on the Anwār in his Ḣḍā al-Maknūn. Among the most renowned today are the following:

• Ḩāshiya entitled Faḍḥ al-Jalīl bi-Bayān Khaṭ fi Anwār al-Tanzīl by Shaykh al-Islam Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī (823-926/1420-1520), the last surviving student of Ibn Ḥajar and major Shāfī’ī jurist, hadith master, linguist, and specialist of canonical readings in his time. E.W. Lane quotes from it in his Lexicon.

• Ḩāshiya by Ibn Kamāl Bāshā’s (Kemalpaşazade d. 940/1534), a partial manuscript of which is kept at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, USA (Walters ms. W.584).

• Ḩāshiya by Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. ʿArab Shāh, known as ʿIṣām al-Dīn al-Isfārāyīnī (873-945/1468-1538), who flourished in Isfahān and Samarkand.

• Ḩāshiya by Saʿdī Çelebi, known as Tacizade (d. 945/1538) and Shaykh Zādah.

• Ḩāshiya by the recluse Turkish master Muḥammad b. Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Muṣṭafā b. Shams al-Dīn al-Qūjāwī al-Rūmī al-Ḥanafī, known as Shaykh Zādah (d. 951/1544), in eight volumes—for beginners—which he then rewrote into four.

He would say:

When I hesitate regarding a verse of the Qur’ān I turn to Allah Most High, then my chest expands until it becomes as big as the world, and two moons rise—I know not what they are—followed by a great light

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4 Ţāhiriyā ms. ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān 266, Damascus.
5 King Saʿūd University ms. 6750.
which shows me the Preserved Tablet, then I extract the meaning of the verse out of it.¹

Ḥājji Khalīfa praised it over all other supercommentaries for its ease and clarity in its explanation of Bayḍāwī’s language.²

Many other Ottoman scholars who wrote on the Anwār are also known as “Zādah.”³

- Ta’līqāt Anwār al-Tanzil by Bahā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḫūsain al-ʿĀmilī (953-1030/1546-1621), Shaykh al-Islam of the Safavid state and chief Shīʿī authority in his time.

- Ḥāshiyya by ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm b. Shams al-Dīn al-Sayyālkhūṭī (d. 1066/1656), an Indian specialist of logic.

- Ḥāshiyya by Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Khafājī (977-1069/1569-1659) entitled ‘Ināyat al-Qāḍī wa-Kifāyat al-Rāḍī. It is perhaps the most widespread and relied-upon super commentary of al-Bayḍāwī, prized for its clarity and balanced documentation of disputed issues by an accomplished and well-travelled Egyptian qādi and foremost philologist who mastered both the Ḥanāfī and Shāfīʿī schools of law.

- Another famous work is the 1100-page, 4-volume edition and Ḥāshiyya of al-Bayḍāwī’s Tafsīr by the Ḥanafī scholar ʿAffī al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍīl ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥasan al-Khaṭīb al-Qurashī al-Shiddīqī al-Kāzarūnī (d. after 1102/1691). The author should not be confused with his namesake Muḥammad al-Khaṭīb al-Shiddīqī al-Kāzarūnī (d. 940/1534) the author of a Risāla fi l’jāz al-Qurān.

Epigones and epitomes

Two independent commentaries built on al-Bayḍāwī’s precedent in subsequent tafsīr taḥlīlī literature: the Jalālayn and the Irshād. The first is Jalāl al-Dīn al-

² Nūwayhīd, Muʿjam al-Mufassāʾīn (2:637-638).
Maḥāllī’s (791-864/1389-1460) *tafsīr*, which he wrote from Surat al-Kahf to the end after which Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (849-911/1445-ca.1505) completed it (hence it is known as *Tafsīr al-Jalālāyn*). Then came, in a longer vein, *Irshād al-‘Aql al-Salīm ilā Mazāyā al-Kītāb al-Karīm* (Directing Hale Minds to the Unique Aspects of the Precious Book) by the Ottoman Grand Mufti and qāḍī al-qudāt for Suleiman the Magnificent, Abū al-Suʿūd Muḥammad al-‘Imādī (900-982/1495-1574), also known as Ebussuud Efendi and Hoca Çelebi.

Closer to our times the qādī, hadith scholar, Prophetologist, heresy-hunter and poet of Beirut and Jerusalem Shaykh Yūsuf b. Ismāʿīl al-Nabhānī (1265-1350/1849-1932) penned the briefest *tafsīr* yet, entitled *Qurrat al-‘Ayn min al-Bayḍāwī wal-Jalālāyn* (The Coolness of the Eye from al-Bayḍāwī and the Jalālāyn), in which he epitomized the *Anwār* and the *Jalālāyn*. This work received several editions.

**Gradual disuse of the *Anwār***

Sadly, the trend in the past 75 years has been the shelving of this remarkable work and its replacement by purportedly more relevant works written in everyday language, paraphrasing or outlining the Qurʿān and purporting to address scientific discoveries or political doctrines such as *Tafsīr al-Manār* (by Muḥammad ‘Abduh and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā), *Tafsīr al-Jawharī* (by Ṭanṭāwī b. Jawharī), *Tafhīm al-Qurʿān* (by al-Mawdūdi, who profoundly influenced Ḥasan al-Bannā’, Sayyid Qūṭb and Ruhollah Khomeini), *Fi Zilāl al-Qurʿān* (Qūṭb) and *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*.

without the proud concision of bygone times … [but rather] self-explanatory… addressing the need of contemporaries in its style and arrangement and easily accessible.¹


Tafsir al-Mawḍūʿī published in Sharjah (United Arab Emirates) in 2010. In comparison to the classical tafsir tradition some of the above-mentioned works at times seem doctrinaire or read like glossaries interspersed with historical notes, or revisionist critiques of past tafsirs. Scholars and the general public also took note of the popular tafsir of the late Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Shārāwī (1911-1998)—first televised to Egyptian audiences then published in print—and Tafsir al-Taḥrīr al-Tanwīr, also known as al-Maʿnā al-Sadīd wa-Tanwīr al-ʿAqīl al-Jādīd fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-Maǧīd by Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir b. ʿĀshūr (1296-1394/1879-1973) the rector of Jāmiʿ at al-Zaytūna in Tunis, one of the important modern large tafsirs.

5.0 REFERENCES


