

IJTIHĀD, SYNTHESIS, MODERNITY AND RENEWAL: AL-BAYḌĀWĪ'S ANWĀR AL-TANZĪL WA-ASRĀR AL-TA'WĪL IN HERMENEUTICAL TRADITION[⊙]

Gibril Fouad Haddad¹

ABSTRACT

Among the major exegeses of the Qur'ān none has received more attention on the part of Muslim teachers and scholars as the tafsīr by the elusive Turco-Perso- Arab Shāfi'ī-Ash'arī- Sufi savant of Shīrāz and Azerbaijan, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-BayḌāwī (d. 685?/1286?), *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa-Asrār al-Ta'wīl* (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 (i'jāz) of the Qur'ān 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 Qur'ān. 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 Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien Centre for Islamic Studies, Email: gabriel.haddad@ubd.edu.bn

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Among the major exegeses of the Qur'ān none has received more attention on the part of Muslim teachers and scholars as the *tafsīr* by the elusive Turco-Perso-Arab Shāfi'ī-Ash'arī-Sufi savant of Shīrāz and Azerbaijan, born in al-Bayḍā' (present-day Beyza, also known as Sefidan), Fars Province—Abū Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj's native city—in or before the reign of the Ilkhānī Atābak Abū Bakr b. Sa'd-i-Zangī (628-658/1231-1260) and buried in Tabrīz, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt* Nāṣir al-Dīn Abū Sa'īd (also known as Abū al-Khayr and Abū Muḥammad) 'Abd Allāh b. Imām al-Dīn Abī Ḥaḥṣ 'Umar b. 'Alī al-Shīrāzī al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286),¹ *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa-Asrār al-Ta'wīl* (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 (*i'jāz*) of the Qur'ān 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 Qur'ān. 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 'Aṭīyya (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 Qur'ān—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—

¹ His date of birth is unknown while the obitus 685 is the view of the majority of the scholars, cf. 'Alī Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Alī al-Qarah Dāghī, *al-Ghāyat al-Quṣwā fī Dirāyat al-Fatwā*, 2 vols. (Shubrā Miṣr: Dār al-Naṣr lil-Ṭibā'at al-Islāmiyya, 1402/1982) 1:54-57.

² See Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, 4 vols. (London: Unwin, 1909-1928) 3:63, 100-101 and Lutpi Ibrahim, “al-Bayḍāwī's Life and Works,” *Islamic Studies* 18 no. 4 (Winter 1979) 311-321.

³ Ibn 'Aṭīyya, preamble to *al-Muḥarrar al-Wajiz fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-'Azīz*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām 'Abd al-Shāfi Muḥammad, 6 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1422/2001).

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-Bayḍāwī 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 *Tawālī‘ al-Anwār fī Maṭāli‘ al-Anzār* and the *Ghāyat 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,”² only a brief time after the death of their author.

The purpose of *tafsīr* works was nothing less than to revive and boost the relationship of the community of Islam with its most fundamental text. That was certainly Bayḍāwī’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-Tanzīl* and the more than 300 extant supercommentaries of it in the libraries of the world; no other *tafsīr* has received as much attention.³ It is also the *tafsīr* that has received the most editions and reprints since the 1950s—albeit none meeting critical standards as of yet.⁴

¹ al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa-Asrār al-Ta’wīl*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣubḥī b. Ḥasan Ḥallāq and Maḥmūd Aḥmad al-Atrash (Damascus: Dār al-Rashīd; Beirut: Mu’assasat al-‘Imān, 1421/2000) 1:5.

² Ibn Kathīr, *Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahā’ al-Shāfi’iyyīn*, ed. Muḥammad Zaynuhum ‘Azab and Aḥmad Hāshim, 3 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfat al-Dīniyya, 1413/1993) 3:97.

³ See *al-Fahras al-Shāmil lil-Turāth al-‘Arabī al-Islāmī al-Makhtūṭ: ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān, Makhtūṭāt al-Tafsīr wa-‘Ulūmih*, 2 vols. (Amman: al-Majma’ al-Malakī li-Buḥūth al-Ḥaḍārat al-Islāmiyya, 1989) 1:280-344. Nuwayhid, *Mu’jam* (2:855-860) documents 135 authors of marginalia on the *Anwār*. The Syrian national library alone (Maktabat al-Asad) boasts no less than 81 partial and complete manuscripts or rare editions of the *Anwār: Fahras al-Makhtūṭāt al-‘Arabīyya al-Maḥfūza fī Maktabat al-Asad al-Waṭaniyya*, 5 vols. (Damascus: Manshūrāt Maktabat al-Asad, 1996) 4:46-93; and 147 partial or full commentaries (4:123-124, 301, 307-403, 473-490, 519-525, 691-693).

⁴ Cf. *al-Qur’ān al-Karīm wa-bi-Hāmishihī al-Tafsīr al-Musammā Anwār al-Tanzīl* etc., 2 vols. (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1951 and 1955); *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa-Asrār al-Ta’wīl* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, n.d.); ditto, 2 vols. (Beirut: Mu’assasat Sha’bān, n.d.); ditto, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādīr, 2001), based on the earliest Būlāq edition of 1263/1847; *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī al-Musammā Anwār al-Tanzīl* etc., ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Ḥassūna, 5 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1996 and 2005); ditto, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1988, 1999, 2006, 2008 and 2011); *Anwār al-Tanzīl* etc., 2 vols. (Cairo: al-Hay’at al-‘Āmma li-Quṣūr al-

The success of al-Bayḏāwī's intention can also be gleaned from the glowing testimonies of later scholars and the fact that the *Anwār* became and remained for seven centuries the most studied of all *Tafsīrs*:

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 *tafsīr*... and the main requirement of teaching from the deep reaches of India to the farthest Maghreb.¹

Analysis (*taḥlīl*) and Transmission (*athar*)

Unlike works of “transmissive exegesis” or *tafsīr bil-athar*—a genre made famous by Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī with his celebrated *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān* (Encyclopedia of Elucidations for Interpreting the Verses of the Qur'ān)—the method of *Anwār al-Tanzīl* 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” (*tafsīr bil-ra'y*). Yet *Jāmi' al-Bayān* itself, the greatest transmissive *tafsīr*, 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-Bayḏāwī's *tafsīr* constantly exert “proof-based choices of one of several scenarios for interpreting any given term” (*tarjih aḥad ihtimālāt al-lafẓ bil-dalīl*).³

Thaqāfa, 2011); *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa-Asrār al-Ta'wīl al-Ma'rūf bi-Tafsīr al-Bayḏāwī*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mar'ashlī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī and Mu'assasat al-Tārīkh al-'Arabī, 1418/1998); and the 2000 edition detailed in the next to previous note.

¹ Muḥammad al-Fāḏil b. al-Ṭāhir b. 'Āshūr, *al-Tafsīr wa-Rijāluḥ*, Silsilat al-Buḥūth al-Islāmiyya no. 2, year 28 (Cairo: Majma' al-Buḥūth al-Islāmiyya fīl Azhar, 1417/1997) pp. 112, 118.

² E.g. al-Ṭabarī's long introduction and his complex analysis of the *alif lām* of *al-ḥamdu* in the second verse of the Fātiḥa in which he discusses grammar and cites poetry in support of his arguments: *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī et al., 26 vols. (Cairo: Dār Hajar, 1422/2001) 1:138-141.

³ Abd al-Salām Muḥammad, introduction to his edition of Ibn 'Aṭīyya's *al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz* (1:5).

Such choices constitute *ijtihād*—expert judicial exertion¹—informed by a prestigious Iraqi-Khurasanian lexicological tradition. Quranic polysemy was studied within the sub-genre of *al-wujūh wal-naẓā'ir*, where *wujūh* or “aspects” refers to variant meanings while *naẓā'ir* or “analogues” are the multiple instances of homonyms that convey them.² 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-Wujūh wal-Naẓā'ir fīl-Qur'ān*, was penned by the exegete Muqātil b. Sulaymān al-Balkhī (d. 150/767) who is also the author of the first extant comprehensive *tafsīr*. Examples of *wujūh* and *naẓā'ir* he gave include *hudā* (17 different meanings), *kufr* (4), *shirk* (3), *marad* (4), *fasād* (6), *mashy* (4), *libās* (4), *sū'* (11), *raḥma* (11), *umma* (9), *dhikr* (16), *ṣalāt* (2), *khayr* (8), etc.³ Muqātil was followed by others who built on his pioneering work, notably Yaḥyā b. Sallām al-Taymī al-Baṣrī (124-200/743-815)⁴ and the Khārijī 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-Aṣḥabānī’s (d. 502/1108) landmark lexicon *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān* and Zamakhsharī’s *tafsīr* and lexicons such as *Asrār al-Balāgha*, *al-Fā'iḳ fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, *al-Mustaḳṣā min Amthāl al-'Arab* 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 desintential 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 Mu'tazilī Jār Allāh Maḥmūd al-Zamakhsharī

¹ See the comprehensive definition of *ijtihād* and the *mujtahid* in Ibn al-Subkī, *Jam' al-Jawāmi' fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, ed. ‘Abd al-Mun'im Khalīl Ibrāhīm, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya. 1423/2002) pp. 118-119.

² The similarly-termed *al-ashbāh wal-naẓā'ir* flourished in legal and grammatical literature.

³ Muqātil, *al-Wujūh wal-Naẓā'ir*, ed. Ḥātim Ṣāliḥ al-Ḍāmin (Dubai: Markaz Jum'at al-Mājid lil-Thaqāfa wal-Turāth, 1427/2006). Al-Suyūṭī listed many more examples of *wujūh* and *naẓā'ir* in the *Itqān* (Type 39).

⁴ See Yaḥyā b. Sallām, *al-Taṣārīf: Tafsīr al-Qur'ān mimmā Ishṭabāhat Asmā'uḥu wa-Taṣarrāfat Ma'ānīh*, ed. Hind Shalabī (Amman: Mu'assasat Āl al-Bayt, 2007).

(467-538/1074-1143) of Khwarizm (near Samarqand) used in his *Kashshāf ‘an Haqā’iq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl wa-‘Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Ta’wīl* (Guidebook for Verifying the Obscurities of Revelation and Sourcing the Various Aspects of Interpretation) with the multidisciplinary tradition inaugurated by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (543-606/1148-1210) of Ray—near present-day Teheran—in his large *Mafātīh al-Ghayb* (Keys to the Unseen), but without the prolixity 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:

Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150-767) in Balkh and Basra,
 Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (224-310/839-ca.922) in Amol,
 Abū al-Ḥasan al-Jurjānī (d. 392/1002) in Ray and Nishapur,
 Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015) in Ray and Nishapur,
 al-Tha‘labī (d. 427/1036) in Nishapur,
 Abū al-Faḍl al-Rāzī (370-454/981-1062) in Nishapur,
 al-Sam‘ānī (426-489/1035-1096) in Merv and Nishapur,
 al-Baghawī (433-516/1042-1122) in Merv,
 al-Ghazālī (450-505/1058-1111) in Ṭūs (near Mashhad),
 al-Taymī al-Aṣbahānī (457-535/1065-1141) in Ispahan,
 ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078) in Jurjān,
 Bayān al-Ḥaqq al-Ghaznawī (d. after 553/1158) in Nishapur,
 and al-Khuwayy (583-637/1187-ca.1239) in Khurasan.²

¹ Muṣṭafā b. ‘Abd Allāh, known as Ḥajjī Khalīfa and Kātip Ḥalebi, *Kashf al-Zunūn ‘an Asāmī al-Kutub wal-Funūn*, ed. Muḥammad Sharaf al-Dīn Yaltaqāyā and Rif‘at Bilkah al-Kilisī. 2 vols. (Istanbul : Maṭābī‘ Wikālat al-Ma‘ārif al-Jalīla, 1941-1943, rept. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, n.d.) 1:187.

² Qaḍī al-quḍāt Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Khalīl b. Sa‘āda al-Khuwayy al-Barmakī al-Khurāsānī *thumma* al-Dimashqī was a jurist, jurisprudent, and prosodist of the first rank from

Al-Bayḍāwī also integrated into the *Anwār* a comparative critique of the Basran and Kufan schools of grammar and philology; a review of the different narrations of mass-transmitted (*mutawātir*) and anomalous (*shādhdh*) canonical readings of the Qurʾān; 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 (*ikhṭiṣār*), minute precision (*diqqat al-taʿbīr*), strict scholarly terminology (*iltizām al-muṣṭalaḥ 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 (*tajdīd*) 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-mufasssīr*) and as summarized by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (909-973/1503-1565):

Azerbaijan whose great contribution was the completion of his teacher al-Fakhr al-Rāzī's *Tafsīr*, cf. Nuwayhid, *Muʿjam al-Mufasssīrīn* (1:35) and Ibn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-Kubrā* (8:16-17).

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

² Narrated from Abū Hurayra by Abū Dāwūd in his *Sunan* (*Malāḥim*, *Bāb mā yudhkaru fī qarn al-mīʾa*) with a sound chain according to al-Ḥākim and al-ʿIrāqī.

The tools of exegesis are fifteen types of knowledge:

- philology (*al-lughā*),
- grammar (*al-naḥw*),
- morphology (*al-taṣrīf*),
- etymology (*al-ishtiḳāq*),
- style/diction (*al-ma'ānī*),
- rhetoric (*bayān*),
- poetics/prosody (*al-badī'*),
- canonical readings (*al-qirā'āt*),
- principles of creed and principles of law (*al-aṣṭayn*),
- circumstances of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*),
- historical accounts (*al-qaṣaṣ*),
- abrogating evidence (*al-nāsikh*),
- abrogated evidence (*al-mansūkh*),
- sacred law (*al-fiqh*),
- hadiths that explicate the vague and the anonymous (*al-aḥādīth al-mubayyina li-tafsīr al-mujmal wal-mubham*),
- and a knowledge that stems from a spiritual gift ('*ilm 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-Bayḏāwī'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" (*tahdhīb wa-tanqīḥ wa-ikhtiṣār*) and "thoroughgoing revision" of it²—in either case Jār Allāh proving to be Bayḏāwī's principal source. Jār Allāh himself was influenced by the Shāfi'ī doctor 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī's (d.

¹ Al-Haytamī as quoted by his student Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī in *Mirqāt al-Mafātīḥ Sharḥ Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ* (commentary on the hadith *Man qāla fil-Qur'āni bi-ra'yihī fa-aṣāba fa-qaḍ akḥṭa'* – "Whoever speaks about the Qur'ān based on his mere opinion and is correct, is incorrect").

² "Abridgment": Ibn al-Subkī in *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-Kubrā*, al-Suyūṭī in *Ṭabaqāt al-Lughawīyyin wal-Nuḥāt*, Ḥajjī Khalīfa in *Kashf al-Zunūn* and others; "emendation, expurgation and abridgment": Muḥammad Bāqir Khvānṣārī, *Rawḍāt al-Jannat fī Aḥwāl al-'Ulamā' wal-Sādāt*, 8 vols. (Beirut: al-Dār al-Islāmiyya, 1411/1991) 5:128; "thoroughgoing revision": Calverley and Pollock, *Nature, Man and God* (1:xxxiii).

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-Intiṣāf min al-Kashshāf* by Ibn al-Munayyir al-Mālikī (620-683/1223-1284); *Tajrīd al-Kashshāf* by Ibn Abī al-Qāsim (769-837/1368-1434); *al-Ithāf bi-Tamyīz mā Tabī'a fīhi al-Bayḍāwī Ṣāhib al-Kashshāf* by al-Suyūṭī's student the *Sīra* historian Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Ṣāliḥī (d. 942/1536); *Raf' al-Ikhtilāf 'an Kalām al-Qāḍī wal-Kashshāf* by

¹ See Ḥātim Ṣāliḥ al-Dāmin, *Naẓariyyat al-Naẓm: Tārīkh wa-Taṭawwur* (Baghdad: Manshūrāt Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wal-I'lām, 1399/1979) and Darwīsh al-Jundī, *Naẓariyyat 'Abd al-Qāhir fil-Naẓm* (Cairo: Maktabat Nahḍat Miṣr, 1960).

² Khvānshārī, *Rawḍāt al-Jannat* (5:128).

³ This *Hāshiya* regroups several of the great Sunni *ḥawāshī* of the *Kashshāf* such as al-Ṭibī's, al-Taftāzānī's (712-793/1312-1390)—whom al-Suyūṭī calls “al-Sa'd”—and Abū al-Ḥasan al-Jurjānī's (740-816/1340-1413)—whom al-Suyūṭī calls “al-Sayyid.”

⁴ Cf. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wal-Mufasssīrūn*, 3 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 2000) p. 298; Yūsuf Aḥmad 'Alī, *al-Bayḍāwī wa-Manhajuh fil-Tafsīr*, unpublished doctoral dissertation (Mecca: Jāmi'at Umm al-Qurā, n.d.) pp. 246-255.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulūsī (1050-1143/1640-ca.1730); *al-Inṣāf bil-Muḥākama bayna al-Tamyīz wal-Ithāf* by Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (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 inter-textual 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-Zamakhsharī. He did so principally in the two main schools of his region at the time, the Shāfi‘ī 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-Shīrāzī’s *al-Tanbīh fil-Fiqh*—which he went on to comment—and his *Muhadhdhab*; Ghazālī’s *al-Wajīz*; and al-Kāsānī’s *Bad’i’ al-Ṣanā’i’*. He also quoted from Saḥnūn’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 *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the *Minhāj*. Al-Zamakhsharī’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-muṭlaq wal-muqayyad*), etc. as he had masterfully codified these categories in his works on legal theory, especially the *Minhāj*. 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-Zamakhsharī.
- al-Bayḍāwī benefited greatly from al-Zamakhsharī in explaining the huge role of rhetoric in the unfolding of the miraculous linguistic inimitability of the

¹ Lutpi Ibrahim, *The Theological Questions at Issue between al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī with special reference to al-Kashshāf and Anwār at-Tanzīl*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1977) and Ṣāliḥ al-Ghāmīdī, *al-Mas’al al-I’tizāliyya fī Tafsīr al-Kashshāf lil-Zamakhsharī fī Daw’i mā Warada fī Kitāb al-Intiṣāf li-bnīl-Munayyir: ‘Arḍ wa-Naqd*, 2 vols. (Ḥā’il, KSA: Dār al-Andalus, 1418/1998).

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

- al-Zamakhsharī's approach to syntax and etymology is derived mostly from the views of Abū 'Alī 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 (*naql*) of the literal meaning of *ṣallā* ('he supplicates') 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 *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*

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

Al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. al-Mufaḍḍal, known as Abū al-Qāsim al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥāhānī (d. 502/ca.1108) and cited by al-Rāzī "among our [Shāfi'ī-Ash'arī] colleagues (*min aṣḥābina*),"³ produced several exegetical works, among them a *tafsīr* (yet unpublished but for Sūrat Āl 'Imrān and two thirds of al-Nisā');⁴ his magnum opus, the erudite *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*, framed as a glossary of *gharīb* or difficult terms of Qur'ān as shown by its alternate title of *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān* (the Syro-Egyptian exegete al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī (d. 756/1355) critiqued it and expanded on it with his '*Umdat al-Ḥuffāz fī Tafsīr*

¹ See 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Shihri's second audio lesson on *Anwār al-Tanzīl* posted at <http://ar.islamway.net/lesson/132243>, around 25'25" and 56'50".

² Cf. al-Suyūṭī, *Nawāhid* (1:305).

³ al-Rāzī, *Asās al-Taqdīs*, ed. Aḥmad Hījāzī al-Saqqā (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azhariyya, 1406/1986) pp. 17,

⁴ al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥāhānī, *Tafsīr al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥāhānī: min awwal sūrat Āl 'Imrān wa-ḥattā nihāyat al-āya 113 min sūrat al-Nisā'*, ed. 'Ādil 'Alī al-Shidī, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Madār al-Waṭan lil-Nashr, 1424/2003).

Ashraf al-Alfāz); and *Ḥall Mutashābihāt al-Qurʾān*, also known by the alternate titles of *Durrat al-Taʾwīl fī Mutashābih al-Tanzīl* and *Kashf Mushkilāt al-Qurʾān*, 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 Shāfiʿī savant and doctrinaire (*mutakallim*), the *Shaykh al-Islām*, jurist, philologist, genealogist, heresiographer, logician and physician Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Qurashī al-Bakrī al-Taymī al-Ṭabaristānī, known as Ibn al-Khaṭīb and as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (543-606/1148-1209), produced *Mafātīḥ 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 bil-raʾy* 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 Shāfiʿī school), *kalām*, logic and philosophy, with frequent references to Hadīth, *Sīra* and hermeneutical literature (notably Wāḥidī's *Tafsīrs*). He forwarded his doctrinal preferences in refutation of the Qurʾanic commentaries of non-Sunnis (such as the Muʿtazilis al-Aṣamm, al-Jubbāʿī, Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, al-Kaʿbī, Abū Muslim al-Aṣfahānī and al-Zamakhsharī) and non-Shāfiʿīs (particularly Ḥanafīs). The exegete Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī criticized its prolixity in acerbic terms³ while the Ḥanafī Maḥmūd al-Ālūsī gave point-by-point replies in defense of his school in his own commentary entitled *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*. 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

¹ Such as Ibn Qutayba's (213-276/828-886) *Taʾwīl Mushkil al-Qurʾān*, Ibn Fūrak's (330-406/942-1015) *Mushkil al-Ḥadīth wa-Bayānuh*, Bayān al-Ḥaqq al-Naysābūrī's (d. 553/1158) *Bāhīr al-Burhān fī Maʿānī Mushkilāt al-Qurʾān*, and Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām's (577-660/ca.1181-1262) luminous *Fawāʾid fī Mushkil al-Qurʾān*. More recent efforts —by non-Ashʿarī scholars— include *Daf ʾIḥām al-Iḍṭirāb ʿan Āyāt al-Kitāb* by the late Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shinqīṭī and Aḥmad al-Quṣayyir's 2007 doctoral thesis at Jāmiʿat Umm al-Qurā, *al-Aḥādīth al-Mushkila al-Wārīda fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*.

² Cf. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān wa-Anbāʾ Abnāʾ al-Zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, [1970?]) 1:249.

³ To the point he said: "One of the scholars said that his *Tafsīr* contains everything but *tafsīr*!" cf. Ḥajji Khalīfa, *Kashf al-Zunūn* (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 *Mafātih* was completed first by al-Rāzī's student *Qāḍī 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-Khafājī in *Sharḥ al-Shifā* and Ḥajjī Khalīfa in *Kashf al-Zunūn*) that al-Rāzī stopped at Sūrat al-Anbiyā' but a recent study by 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ma'allamī 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-'Ukbarī's (538-616/1144-1219) grammatical analysis of the Qur'ān entitled *al-Tibyān fī I'rāb al-Qur'ān*.

The *Anwār* as a textbook and its scholastic marginalia

We have seen how al-Bayḍāwī can be described as having possessed the criteria of *ijtihād* 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 South-east. The 1912 Cairo edition—together with a 1100-page, four-volume *ḥāshiya* by al-Kāzarūnī (d. after 1102/ 1691), said on its cover: "The higher council in al-

¹ Muḥammad Abū Shahba, *al-Isrā'iliyyāt wal-Mawḍū'āt fī Kutub al-Tafsīr*, 4th ed. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Sunna, 1408/1988) p. 134.

² In Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a (d. 668/1270), *'Uyūn al-Anbā' fī Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā'*, ed. Nizār Riḍā (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, n.d.) p. 647. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a was a student of both al-Rāzī and al-Khuwayy.

³ In Ibn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-Kubrā* (9:31).

⁴ *Majmū' fihī... Baḥṭh Ḥawla Tafsīr al-Rāzī*, ed. Mājid 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ziyādī (Mecca: al-Maktaba al-Makkiyya, 1417/1996) pp. 99-134.

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,¹ particularly the very first *juz*’ which has been translated and lavishly commented on its own.²

Ismā‘il Bāshā Bābānī (d.ca. 1921) identifies by title and author about 69 complete and partial supercommentaries (*hawāshī, ta‘līqāt*) on the *Anwār* in his *Īdāh al-Maknūn*.³ Among the most renowned today are the following:

- *Hāshiya* entitled *Fatḥ al-Jalīl bi-Bayān Khafī Anwār al-Tanzīl* by Shaykh al-Islam Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī (823-926/1420-1520), the last surviving student of Ibn Ḥajar and major Shāfi‘ī jurist, hadith master, linguist, and specialist of canonical readings in his time.⁴ E.W. Lane quotes from it in his *Lexicon*.
- *Hāshiya* 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).
- *Hāshiya* by Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. ‘Arab Shāh, known as ‘Iṣām al-Dīn al-Isfarāyīnī (873-945/1468-1538), who flourished in Isfarāyīn and Samarqand.
- *Hāshiyas* by Sa‘dī Çelebi, known as Tacizade (d. 945/1538) and Shaykh Zādah.⁵
- *Hāshiya* by the recluse Turkish master Muḥammad b. Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Muṣṭafā b. Shams al-Dīn al-Qūjawī 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

¹ Cf. <http://www.jamiabinoria.net/darulifta/pages/nisab.htm>

² Cf. the edition, Urdu translation and commentary by Sayyid Fakhrul Ḥasan, *al-Taqrīr al-Ḥawī fī Ḥall al-Bayḍāwī*, 4 vols. in 1 (Deoband: Kutubkhanah-i Fakhriyah, 1970; rept. Karachi: Islami Kutubkhanah-i, 2004).

³ Ismā‘il Bāshā, *Kitāb Īdāh al-Maknūn fil-Dhayl ‘alā Kashf al-Ḍunūn ‘an Asāmī al-Kutub wal-Funūn*, 2 vols. (Teheran: Maktabat al-Islāmiyya wal-Ja‘farī Tabrīzī, 1967; rept. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, n.d.) 1:138-142.

⁴ Zāhiriyya ms. ‘*Ulūm al-Qur’ān* 266, Damascus.

⁵ King Sa‘ūd University ms. 6750.

which shows me the Preserved Tablet, then I extract the meaning of the verse out of it.¹

Hājji 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'īlīqāt Anwār al-Tanzīl* by Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn al-ʿĀmīlī (953-1030/1546-1621), Shaykh al-Islam of the Safavid state and chief Shīʿī authority in his time.
- *Hāshiyā* by ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm b. Shams al-Dīn al-Sayālkūtī (d. 1066/1656), an Indian specialist of logic.
- *Hāshiyā* by Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Khafājī (977-1069/1569-1659) entitled *ʿInāyat al-Qāḍī wa-Kifāyat al-Rāḍī*. It is perhaps the most widespread and relied-upon supercommentary of al-Bayḍāwī, prized for its clarity and balanced documentation of disputed issues by an accomplished and well-travelled Egyptian qadi and foremost philologist who mastered both the Ḥanafī and Shāfiʿī schools of law.
- Another famous work is the 1100-page, 4-volume edition and *hāshiyā* of al-Bayḍāwī's *Tafsīr* by the Hanafi scholar ʿAfīf al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥasan al-Khaṭīb al-Qurashī al-Ṣiddīqī al-Kāzarūnī (d. after 1102/1691). The author should not be confused with his namesake Muḥammad al-Khaṭīb al-Ṣiddīqī al-Kāzarūnī (d. 940/1534) the author of a *Risāla fī Iʿjāz al-Qurʾān*.

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-

¹ Najm al-Dīn Muḥammad Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib al-Sāʿira bi-Aʿyān al-Mīʾat al-ʿĀshira*, ed. Khalīl al-Manṣūr, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1418/1997) 2:58.

² Nuwayhid, *Muʿjam al-Mufasssīrīn* (2:637-638).

³ See Nuwayhid, *Muʿjam al-Mufasssīrīn* (1:73, 277, 385; 2:486, 555, 571, 625, 674). The word meant "son of" in Ottoman Turkish as did "Oghli," so that "Arab Zādah" means "Son of Arabs" cf. Ḥassān Ḥallāq and ʿAbbās Ṣabbāgh, *al-Muʿjam al-Jāmiʿ fīl-Muṣṭalaḥāt al-ʿUthmāniyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍat al-ʿArabiyya, 1430/2009) p. 106. The French Orientalist Baron Antoine-Isaac Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) named his son "Samuel-Ustazade Silvestre de Sacy."

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-Jalālayn*). Then came, in a longer vein, *Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm ilā Mazāyā al-Kitāb al-Karīm* (Directing Hale Minds to the Unique Aspects of the Precious Book) by the Ottoman Grand Mufti and *qāḍī al-quḍāt* for Suleiman the Magnificent, Abū al-Su'ūd Muḥammad al-'Imādī (900-982/1495-1574), also known as Ebussuud Efendi and Hoca Çelebi.

Closer to our times the qadi, hadith scholar, Prophetologist, heresy-hunter and poet of Beirut and Jerusalem Shaykh Yūsuf b. Ismā'īl al-Nabhānī (1265-1350/1849-1932) penned the briefest *tafsīr* yet, entitled *Qurrat al-'Ayn min al-Bayḍāwī wal-Jalālayn* (The Coolness of the Eye from al-Bayḍāwī and the *Jalālayn*), in which he epitomized the *Anwār* and the *Jalālayn*. 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 Qur'ān 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-Qur'ān* (by al-Mawdūdī, who profoundly influenced Ḥasan al-Bannā', Sayyid Quṭb and Ruhollah Khomeini), *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* (Quṭb) 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

Comparable works in the Arab world today are *al-Tafsīr al-Manhajī* by Ahmad Nawfal, *al-Tafsīr al-Muyassar* by 'Ā'īḍ al-Qaranī, *Zubdat al-Tafsīr* by Sulaymān al-Ashqar, and *Aysar al-Tafāsīr* by Abū Bakr al-Jazā'irī, a Saudi-sponsored bowdlerizing of the *Jalālayn*. Among the larger and medium-sized *tafsīrs* came the works of our Syrian teachers Muḥammad 'Alī al-Ṣābūnī, Wahbat al-Zuḥaylī and the late 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ḥabannaka (1345-1425/1927-2004), commentaries by Thanā'ullāh Maẓharī in India, Muḥammad Abū Zahra and Muḥammad Sayyid al-Ṭanṭāwī in Egypt, and the 10-volume collective *al-*

¹ Aḥmad b. Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī (d. 1371/1952), *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*, 30 vols. (Cairo: Muṣṭafā Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1365/1946), preamble.

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

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