Mustansir Mir

Coherence in the Qur'ān

A Study of Islāhi's Concept of Nazm in Tadabbur-i Qur'ān

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To my father
Muhammad Safdar Mir
who is a constant source of inspiration
and Dr. Farrukh H. Malik
for his unfailing support

Title cover: An ornamented page of the Qur'an (14th Century) in Qaysoon Masjid.

Courtesy V° A. Morel Et C°, Libraires-Editeurs.
Those who tore the Qur'an to pieces.

*Qur'ān, 15:91*

"And this," he said, "is the reason why the cure of many diseases is unknown to the physicians of Hellas, because they disregard the whole, which ought to be studied also, for the part can never be well unless the whole is well."

*Plato, Charmides*
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PREFACE

This work is a revised version of my doctoral dissertation, which I completed at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in 1983. It is an attempt to introduce to Western scholars of Islam a major 20th-century Urdu Qur’ân commentary, a commentary that marks a radical departure from the traditional style of exegesis.

In the course of writing my dissertation, I received very helpful comments and criticisms from the members of my doctoral committee, for which I am grateful. I would especially like to thank Professor James A. Bellamy, chairman of the committee, who set exacting standards, and Professor Fazlur Rahman of the University of Chicago, who most graciously agreed to serve as a member on the committee. I gratefully acknowledge the permission given to reproduce or draw on material published in the following journals: “Iṣlâhî’s Concept of Sûra-Pairs,” Muslim World, LXXIII (1983) 1:22-32; “Comparative Study of a Few Verses in Iṣlâhî and Other Scholars,” Hamdard Islamicus, VII (1984) 1:25-36; and “Iṣlâhî’s Concept of Sûra-Groups,” Islamic Quarterly, XXVIII (1984) 2:73-85. An article based on chapter III of this book and scheduled to appear in Studia Islamica was withdrawn with the kind permission of the editors. Most of the biographical information about Iṣlâhî was provided by Mr. Khalid Masood. Finally, I must thank Mr. Tariq Quraishi of the American Trust Publications for helping, in more ways than one, to make possible publication of this book.

Unless otherwise indicated, the translation of the Qur’ânic verses cited is my own.

The following abbreviations are used: vs. = verse; vss. = verses; S. = Sûrah; Ss. = Sûrahs; G. = Group; Gs. = Groups.
INTRODUCTION

Composition of the Qur'an: The Prevalent View

Muslim Qur'anic exegesis is of several types—traditionist, theological, literary-philological, juristic. But if there is one feature that almost all types have in common, it is probably atomism. By atomism is here meant a verse-by-verse approach to the Qur'an. With most Muslim exegetes, the basic unit of Qur'an study is one or a few verses taken in isolation from the preceding and following verses. This approach led to the widely-held belief (or the belief may have caused the approach) that the received arrangement of Qur'anic verses and surahs is not very significant for exegetical pur-

1Traditionist tafsir ("exegesis") is based on ahadith ("reports" from or about Muhammad; sing., hadith), asbāb an-nuzūl ("occasions of revelation"; sing., sabab an-nuzūl), and riwāyat ("historical reports" or "opinions of early authorities"; sing., riwāyah). Two commentaries of this type are: Jami' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wil Ay al-Qur'an by 'Abū Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (224-310/839-923), and Al-Durr al-Manthūr fi Tafsīr bi l-Ma'thīr, by Jalāl ad-Dīn ʿAbd al-Rahmān as-Suyūṭī (849-911/1445-1505). Theological tafsir seeks to defend and support particular theological views against rival views. The prime example in this category is the Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr of Fakhr ad-Dīn ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar ar-Rāzī (544-606/1150-1210); the work is also known as Mašāfī al-Ghayb. Literary-philological tafsir concentrates on the rhetorical, linguistic, and grammatical aspects of the Qur'an. The best representative of this class is the Al-Kashshaf ʿan Ḥaqiqat al-Tanzil wa Līyān al-Aqūl al-Maʿālim of ʿAbd al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn ʿUmar al-Zamakhshārī (467-538/1075-1144). Writers of juristic tafsir deal primarily with the Qur'anic verses containing legal injunctions, and present, often in a polemical fashion, the views held by their schools on those verses. Two well-known examples are: Ahkām al-Qur'an (3 vols.; Istanbul: Maṣfa'at al-Awqāf al-Islāmīyyah, 1335-1338/1916 or 7-1920) by the Hanafi jurist, 'Abū Bakr Ahmad ibn ʿAllār-Rāzī al-Jassās (305-370/917-980), and a work of the same title by the Mālikī jurist, Abū Bakr Muhammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Mašāfīrīfīrī, known as Ibn al-ʿArabi (468-543/1076-1148).

Two points should be noted. First, the above classification is not meant to be exhaustive. Other types of tafsir exist. There is, for example, mystical tafsir, which employs an esoteric mode of interpretation (see next note). Second, the classification is not meant to be a rigid one, as there is considerable overlapping of content and approach among the several types. While, for example, theological discussions may be said to be the most distinctive feature of Rāzī's commentary, this commentary also contains an extensive treatment of grammatical points and defends the Shāfī'i against the Hanafi juridical position.
poses. "Most scholars, including Imām Mālik and al-Bāqillānī, hold
the view that the arrangement of the Qur'ān has nothing to do with
divine guidance."2

In view of this belief of Muslim scholars, it is not surprising
that many Western writers have concluded that the Qur'ān lacks
coherence of composition. Thomas Carlyle bluntly described the
Qur'ān as "toilsome reading . . . a wearisome, confused jumble,
crude, inconclive."3 Montgomery Watt, pulling his punches but still
representing the standard orientalist position, remarks that the
Qur'ānic arrangement is "unsystematic,"4 that the Qur'ān lacks
"sustained composition at any great length."5

This view of the composition of the Qur'ān has been respon-
se for the relatively underdeveloped state of Qur'ānic studies in the
West. As John Merrill observes: "A lack of logical connection in the
chapters of the Qur'ān has been felt by many Westerners and has
often discouraged them from its perusal."6 And while the subject
of the chronology of the Qur'ān has intrinsic interest, it is probable
that frustration with the existing arrangement of the Qur'ān was a
principal motivation behind the attempts to reconstruct the Qur'ān
chronologically.7

2Julandi, p. 76. Muslim mystics, or Sūfis, are hardly an exception. It is true that
they have often attempted to see the Qur'ān as a unity, but, as Fazlur Rahman
remarks, "this unity was imposed upon the Qur'ān (and Islam in general) from
without rather than derived from a study of the Qur'ān itself." Islam and Modernity,
p. 3.

3Quoted in H.A.R. Gibb, Mohammedanism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971),
p. 25.

4Watt, p. xi. See also ibid., p. 22, where Watt speaks of "a characteristic of the
Qur'ān which has often been remarked on, namely, its disjointedness."

5Ibid., p. 73.

6Merrill, p. 135. Writing in a similar vein, Hartwig Hirschfeld had already remarked
(p. 5) that "the manifold difficulties" of the Qur'ān "repel rather than encourage the
study of the Qur'ān."

7Such attempts were made by Theodor Nöldeke, Hübemb Grìmme, J.M. Rodwell,
11.) For brief reviews of these attempts, see Watt, chapter 7, and Blachère, Introduc-
tion, pp. 247-263. Blachère also speaks of the attempts made by Muslim scholars to
rearrange the Qur'ān chronologically. These attempts were inspired, he says, "d'une
curiosité à la fois pieuse et pratique," and, despite the near identity of the sources
used by Muslim and Western scholars, led "à des résultats absolument divergents."
Ibid., p. 240. He concludes: "Remarquons bien qu'il ne s'agit pas d'un reclassement
chronologique à proprement parler." Ibid., p. 244. Cf. Fazlur Rahman, Major
Themes, p. xii.

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Nature and Significance of Islāhī's Work

Amin Ahsan Islāhī, a contemporary Pakistani scholar, rejects
the view that the Qur'ān, in its received form, lacks coherence. He
holds that the Qur'ān is endowed with a coherence that is not only
remarkeable in itself but is integral to the meaning and interpretation
of the Qur'ān. This view constitutes a major, in fact the major,
underpinning of his eight-volume Qur'ān commentary, Tadabbur-i
Qur'ān ("Reflection on the Qur'ān"), completed only a few years
ago.

It is also a radical view, one that poses a manifold challenge to
the tradition of Qur'ān exegesis. If found to be valid, it would
change fundamentally our perception of the kind of book the
Qur'ān is. As such, it needs to be closely examined.

Islāhī borrows his basic theoretical framework from his
teacher and mentor, Ḥāmid ad-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥāmid al-Faráhī
(1280-1349/1863-1930). But, as will become clear in due course, he
modifies Farāhī's theory and makes significant additions to it. So,
while in the present work Farāhī's ideas are sometimes discussed at
length, this is done only in order to provide the necessary back-
ground, the focus throughout being on those ideas as interpreted by
Islāhī and on ideas that are original to Islāhī.

The term that Islāhī (following Farāhī) uses to describe coherence
in the Qur'ān is nāẓm (literally, "order, arrangement, organiza-
tion"). We shall present, analyze, and evaluate Islāhī's concept of
nāẓm as found in Tadabbur-i Qur'ān, attempting to see the signifi-
cance of the concept for Qur'ān interpretation.

Nāẓm constitutes the most important, but still only one, of the
exegetical principles Islāhī subscribes to. Some of the other prin-
ciples used by him also have nāẓm ramifications, and we shall touch
upon them. Generally, however, we shall be concerned with what
Islāhī specifically designates as the principle of nāẓm.

It is true that a number of early Muslim scholars have main-
tained that the Qur'ān possesses coherence. The word often used
by these writers to describe that coherence is, again, nāẓm. But their
understanding of Qur'ānic nāẓm, as we shall see, is of a rudimentary
kind. A few modern scholars have essayed to show the cohesion in
the Qur’ānic outlook, but, as will also be seen later, without suffi-
ciently accounting for the arrangement the Qur’ān actually pos-
sesses. Ishāhī’s *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, based though it is on Farāhī’s
pioneer work, is the first thoroughgoing attempt to show that the
Qur’ān is marked by thematic, and also by structural, coherence. As
such, *Tadabbur* suggests lines of Qur’ānic study that are pregnant
with new possibilities.

So far no analytical study of *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān* has been
made. It is written in Urdu and that makes it difficult of access to
Arab and Western scholars. Even in Pakistan, until recently, it was
not widely known, though it has now attracted much scholarly
attention there. Also, a few of Ishāhī’s opinions have become contro-
versial, arousing as a result general interest in *Tadabbur*. This
study, it is hoped, will introduce an important modern *tafsīr* to
Western Islamicists and pave the way for a fuller examination of its
author’s views.

**Sources, Methodology, and Plan**

Since no prior research on Ishāhī exists, and only very little
work has been done on Farāhī,9 or on the idea of Qur’ānic *nazm*
ityself, the present work is to a very large extent based on primary
sources. For the basic *nazm* theory as set forth by Farāhī, reliance
has been placed on three of Farāhī’s works: *Dalā’il an-Niṣām* ("Arguments for [the Presence of] *Nazm* in the Qur’ān"), *At-
Takmil fi ‘Uṣūl at-Ta’wil* ("Comprehensive Treatment of the Prin-
ciples of [Qur’ān] Interpretation"), and *Majmū‘ah-yi Tafsīr-i Farāhī* ("Collected Commentary Works of Farāhī"). The last book con-
tains an exhaustive Introduction in which Farāhī sums up his *nazm*
views.

9For example, Ishāhī holds that the distinction made by Muslim jurists between the
punishment for a married fornicator and that for an unmarried fornicator is without
basis, and that the punishment for both is the same, namely, that stated in Qur’ān
24:2 (see *Tadabbur*, 4:500-507). A few years ago a Pakistan High Court cited Ishāhī’s
view in one of its rulings, causing much agitation on the part of religious scholars and the
public.

9Sayyid Sa‘īd Abū al-‘Āṣid has written a doctoral dissertation entitled “Hamīd
ad-Dīn al-Farāhī: Ḥayyūthu wa Manhajuhu fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān wa Athar Dhālik fī
I-Hindi” (cited in *Ad-Dalal al-Bibiyyarf i* li r-Rasā’il al-Jamā‘iyah fī Misr, 1922-
1974, Vol. 1, *Al-Insānīyiyah* [Cairo, 1976], p. 475). So far, however, I have not been
able to obtain a copy of this work.
that, as a rule, all sūrahs exist in the form of pairs. Chapter VI discusses the seven groups into which Iṣlāḥī divides the Qur’ānic sūrahs. Chapter VII presents conclusions. Two appendices offer additional examples of Iṣlāḥī’s application of the naẓm theory.

Biographical Sketches of Farāḥī and Iṣlāḥī

This work deals with the views of Iṣlāḥī, and so a biographical sketch of Iṣlāḥī is in order. But there is such a close relationship between the views and personailities of Farāḥī and Iṣlāḥī that a life-sketch of Farāḥī may not be out of place.

Farāḥī

Farāḥī was born in Phreha (hence the name “Farāḥī”), a village in the district of Azamgarh (Uttar Pradesh, India). He belonged to a distinguished family, and was a maternal cousin of the famous theologian-historian Muḥammad Shiblī Nuʿmānī (1274-1332/1858-1914).10

After studying Arabic, Persian, and Islamic sciences with several prominent religious scholars—Shiblī Nuʿmānī was one of them—Farāḥī, about twenty years of age, secured admission to the reputed Aligarh Muslim College13 in order to study modern disciplines of knowledge. His recommender was Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1233-1315/1817-1897), the founder of the college. In his letter addressed to the principal, an Englishman, Sir Sayyid wrote that he was commending him a young man who was a greater scholar of Arabic and Persian than the professors of the college. While a student at the college, Farāḥī rendered parts of the At-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā14 of Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Saʿd az-Zuhrī (168-230/784-845) into Persian. The translation was found to be so good

10I have borrowed the details of Farāḥī’s life from the account with which Iṣlāḥī prefaces his translation of Farāḥī’s Majmū‘ah.

11Farāḥī, Majmū‘ah, p. 9.

12Ibid., pp. 9-11.

13The Aligarh Muslim College was founded in 1292/1875. It became a university in 1339/1920.


that Sir Sayyid had it included in the college syllabus. Farāḥī obtained his B.A. from Ilāhībad University.15

Farāḥī obtained his B.A. from Ilāhībad University.16

for the next many years, Farāḥī taught Arabic at various institutions, including Aligarh and Dār al-ʿUlūm, Hyderabad. During his stay in Hyderabad, Farāḥī conceived the idea of establishing a university where all religious and modern sciences would be taught in Urdu. The scheme he prepared for this purpose later materialized in the form of Jāmī‘ah ʿUthmāniyyah, Hyderabad.17 He subsequently came to Sarā’e Mīr, a town in Azamgarh, where he took charge of the Madrasat al-Iṣlāḥ (“School for [Muslim] Reform”), an institution based on the educational ideas of Shibli Nuʿmānī and Farāḥī. Farāḥī had served as chief administrator of the school since its inception, but other engagements had until now kept him from becoming actively involved in its affairs.18

From 1344/1925, when he came to Sarā’e Mīr, to 1349/1930, the year of his death, Farāḥī devoted most of his time and energy to managing the affairs of the Madrasat al-Iṣlāḥ and teaching there. A few students—Aḥmād Aḥsān Iṣlāḥī was one of them—received special training from him; they were supposed to become the bearers of his thought.19

An erudite scholar, Farāḥī commanded knowledge of a number of languages, among them Hebrew and English. He learnt Hebrew from the German Orientalist Josef Horovitz (1874-1931), who was professor of Arabic at the Aligarh Muslim College. Horovitz studied Arabic with Farāḥī.20

Farāḥī’s chief scholarly interest was the Qur’ān, the focal point of all his writings. Most of his published works are in the form of notes that were later compiled by his students. Among his books, besides the three already mentioned, are: Mufradāt al-Qur’ān21 (“Vocabulary of the Qur’ān”), Asābīb al-Qur’ān22 (“Style of the

15Farāḥī, Majmū‘ah, p. 11.

16Ibid., p. 12.

17Ibid., p. 13.


19Ibid.

20Ibid., p. 13.


Introduction


İslâhi

İslâhi is one of the most accomplished students of Farâhî. He was born in Bumbore, a village in Azamgarh, in 1324/1906. After his initial education, he was admitted to the Madrasat al-İslâhî, from where he was graduated in 1341/1922. A graduate of the Madrasat al-İslâhî is known as “İslâhi.”

İslâhi started his career as a journalist, writing for several newspapers. In 1344/1925 he met Farâhî, and, at the latter’s suggestion, gave up his journalistic career and came to Sarâ‘e Mîr in order to study with him. From 1344/1925 until Farâhî’s death five years later, İslâhi lived in close association with Farâhî,26 and mastered the latter’s approach to the Qur’ān. With Farâhî he studied not only the Qur’ān, but also philosophy, political science, and other subjects.

After Farâhî’s death, İslâhi studied Hâdîth (“Prophetic Traditions”) with Muḥammad Ə Abd ar- Раhîm Mubârakpûrî (1283 or 4-1354/1866 or 7-1935), one of the greatest Hâdîth scholars of India. Returning to Sarâ‘e Mîr, he taught at the Madrasat al-İslâhî, and also became actively involved in the administration of the school. He arranged for the publication of Farâhî’s works, and published a journal, Al-İslâh (“Reform”).27

In 1359/1940 Abû l-A‘lî Mawdûdî (1321-1400/1903-1979) founded the Jamâ‘at-i İslâmî (“Islamic Party”), a religious-political organization. İslâhi, who was in agreement with the goals and objectives of the Jamâ‘at, soon joined it as a regular member. In the Jamâ‘at he became a key figure and always held distinguished positions. In fact he represented the “intellectual” element in the Jamâ‘at, and when, in the mid-1950s, following serious differences, he resigned from the Jamâ‘at, the Jamâ‘at suffered a loss from which it was never to recover. In 1378/1958 İslâhi founded the Tanzîm-i İslâmî (“Islamic Organization”), but the venture did not prove successful.

Since then İslâhi has been mainly engaged in private scholarly work. The chief product of this phase is Tadâbbur-i Qur’ân, parts of which were first published in Mîthâq (“Covenant”), a monthly journal put out by İslâhî in 1379/1959. After the completion of Tadâbbur in 1400/1980, İslâhi established, in Lahore, a study circle28 in which instruction on the Qur’ân and Hâdîth was to be imparted in accordance with the Farâhî-İslâhî approach. The study circle holds regular meetings, and also publishes a journal, Tadâbbur (“Reflection”).

İslâhi has written a large number of books and articles on diverse Islamic subjects. Among his books, besides Tadâbbur and Mabâdî-yi Tadâbbur-i Qur’ân, are: Tazkiyyah-yi Nafs29 (“Purification of the Soul”), Da‘wat-i Din aur Us kâ Țarîq-i Kâr30 (“Islamic Message and the Correct Way of Propagating It”), İslâmî Qânûn ki Tâdînî31 (“Codification of Islamic Law”), İslâmî Riyâsî32 (“Islamic State”), and Pakistanî Āwrat Do Râha par33 (“Pakistani Woman at the Crossroads”).

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25 There are thus many “İslâhî’s,” and some of them are well-known Urdu authors. In this work, Amin Abshân is the only “İslâhi” referred to.
26 Farâhî, Majmû‘ah, p. 16.
27 Under İslâhi’s editorship, the journal was published regularly from 1355/1936 to 1359/1940. Its principal aim was to bring to light Farâhî’s work on the Qur’ân. Ibid., p. 19, n. 1.
28 It is called “İdârah-yi Tadâbbur-i Qur’ân-o-Hâdîth.”
NAZM IN THE QUR’ĀN: BRIEF HISTORY OF AN IDEA

Although Muslim Qur’ān exegesis, as noted in the Introduction, is predominantly atomistic, there have been writers who have tried to see in the Qur’ān elements of coherence and integration. And nazm is the term many of these writers use to describe such elements in the Qur’an. In this chapter we shall make a brief survey of the principal ways in which nazm, as applied to the Qur’an, has been understood. To this end we shall review the ideas of selected traditional and modern Muslim writers. For our purposes, “modern” writers are twentieth-century writers, those belonging to earlier periods being “traditional.”

Traditional Writers

The idea of Qur’ānic nazm seems to have arisen in connection with the discussion on the ḫājz (“inimitability”) of the Qur’ān.¹ As a proof of its being the Word of God, the Qur’ān presents the claim that none can produce the like of it, that it is inimitable.² Muslim theologians later developed this claim into a full-fledged notion of Qur’ānic ḫājz.³ With the exception of a few writers, like Abū ʿl-Ḥusayn ʿAḥmad ibn ʿAbī Ḥāṣan ibn ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān (d. 298/910), Muslim writers have unanimously held the Qur’ān to be muļḥījz (“inimitable”), though they have differed on precisely how Qur’ānic ḫājz is to be explained. Some of them have argued that Qur’ānic ḫājz consists in Qur’ānic nazm.

The views of a few early Muslim scholars who considered Qur’ānic nazm to be an essential component of Qur’ānic ḫājz are not known. Abū ʿUṯmān ʿAmm ibn Bahṣ al-Jāhiz (163-255/780-869) and Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Zayd al-Wāṣiṭ (d. 309/920) are said to have written books on Qur’ānic nazm, but these are not extant.⁴ The works of a few other scholars are not easily accessible.⁵ The authors whose views have reached us may be divided into two broad categories: those who interpret Qur’ānic nazm to mean some kind of a relationship between words and meanings, and those who understand by it a linear connection existing between the Qur’ānic verses, sūrah, or verses and sūrah both.

Word-Meaning Relationship

We will select four writers from the first category. They are: Abū Sulaymān Ḥamd ibn Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭābī (319-388/931-998), Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān (338-403/950-1013), Abū Bakr ʿAbd al-Qāhir ibn ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1080), and Abū l-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn ʿUmar az-Zamakhshāri.

1. Khāṭṭābī. Khāṭṭābī is the first writer definitely known to have suggested that it is nazm that largely explains the ḫājz of the Qur’ān. In his “Kitāb Bayān ʾIṣṭāʿal al-Qur’ān” Khāṭṭābī says that the key to Qur’ānic ḫājz is Qur’ānic balāqah ("eloquence").⁶ “The Qur’ān is inimitable,” he writes, “in that it employs the most eloquent words in ideal forms of composition (ahsan nuẓum at-taʿlīf), embodying the truest meanings.”⁷ Balāqah is thus constituted of three elements: words, meanings, and nazm.⁸ Khāṭṭābī considers the element of nazm to be more important than the other two:

As for the modes of nazm, the need to master them is greater [than the need to choose the right words or reflect on the meanings], for

⁵Ḥimṣi, pp. 53-54, 59-60. Bouman, p. 45. Abdul Aleem, pp. 72, 74.
⁶Of the several works listed below, the first is now available to me, but unfortunately it was not possible to make use of it before this book went to press. The works are: Nazm al-Durar fi Ṭanāsib al-Āyāt wa s-Sawar by Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar al-Biqāʿī (809-885/1406-1480); Taṣfīr ar-Raḥmān wa Taṣfīr al-Mannān bi Bāḍ al-Maṭāhir li ʾIṣṭāʿal al-Qur’ān by ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan “All ibn Ahmad al-Makhlūm al-Mahunī (776-835/1374-1422); and Taṣfīr Muḥammad fi riḥlah al-Ayāt by Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbī Ḥāṣan ibn Naṣīr ad-Dīn (d. 982/1574). Suyūṭī (Iṣṭāʿal, 2:108) refers to a book he himself wrote on the relationships between the Qur’ānic verses and sūrah.
⁸Ibid., p. 27.
⁹Ibid.,
they hold words and meanings together, and it is by virtue of them that the parts of an utterance become well-knit.  

What does Ḵaṭṭābī mean by naẓm? A study of the many Qur’ānic examples he cites in explanation of his view would lead one to conclude that naẓm in Ḵaṭṭābī stands for the particular ways in which words are arranged in order to put across the desired meaning. When he says that naẓm is more important than words or meanings, Ḵaṭṭābī implies that a poor arrangement of otherwise appropriate words would impede the conveying of the meaning, no matter how clearly the meaning was conceived mentally. The Qur’ān is inimitable, he argues, because, in addition to employing words that are perfectly suited to the meaning it wants to impart, it generates ideal naẓm or structure. The examples Ḵaṭṭābī cites to illustrate his view of Qur’ānic naẓm—and hence of Qur’ānic balāghah—are all made up either of a single word, phrase, or sentence. It may accordingly be said that naẓm in Ḵaṭṭābī is naẓm of individual words, phrases, or sentences; that he does not, for example, aim to show that a series of sentences taken together, or an extended passage, might be informed by naẓm. But the main point that emerges from the discussion above is that Ḵaṭṭābī regards naẓm as a constituent of balāghah that is independent of the other two constituents, words and meanings, and that he conceives of naẓm in terms of word-meaning arrangement.

2. Bāqillānī. In his Fījāz al-Qur’ān, Bāqillānī expounds the Fījāz of the Qur’ān. According to him, there are three proofs of Qur’ānic Fījāz: the Qur’ān’s accurate relation of little-known past events and its true prediction of future events; the fact that Muḥammad, upon whom be peace, was illiterate and could not have produced the Qur’ān himself; and Qur’ānic naẓm. After briefly treat-

10Ibid., p. 36.
11Ibid., pp. 29 ff.
12Bāqillānī, pp. 48-51.

ing the first two, Bāqillānī devotes most of the book to a discussion of the third proof.

Like Ḵaṭṭābī, Bāqillānī interprets naẓm in terms of Qur’ānic balāghah. But it is not immediately clear exactly what he means by naẓm. For, in different contexts, he uses the word naẓm in so many different senses that one almost despairs of being able to assign a definite meaning to it. It is this lack of precision on Bāqillānī’s part that prompted ǦA‘īsah ǦAbd ar-Raḥmān Bint ash-Shāṭi’i to make the following remark:

It is extremely difficult for a reader of Bāqillānī’s book to derive, from the mass of dialectical arguments and lengthy passages of prose and poetry he cites, a clear notion of the eloquentary Fījāz of Qur’ānic naẓm (Fījāz waṣiṣah فی الجاذب واصحاب لَ نَازمٌ اخلاق).  

Nevertheless, Bāqillānī provides a few significant clues to what he means by Qur’ānic naẓm. One clue is his repeated assertion that the Qur’ān is characterized by badṭ. Now badṭ is a technical term in Arabic and denotes that branch of balāghah which deals with the use of literary devices like mu’āllāghah (“emphatic statement”), iṣṭīrād (“digression”), mu’tābāqah (“contrasting pairs”), ta‘sīs (“paronomasia”), etc. Bāqillānī discusses these and other devices at great length, cites from the Qur’ān examples of each, and tries to explain why, in this respect, the Qur’ān cannot be imitated. The point to note is that the science, or subscience, of badṭ, though it has to do with certain literary devices, is yet concerned with judging the appropriateness of the use of these devices to the basic aim of all speech, namely, effective communication. In other words, the question of the suitability of the expression used to the meaning intended again becomes relevant. Thus it can be said that, essentially, Bāqillānī, too, understands by naẓm the unique relationship that the Qur’ān establishes between words and meanings. This is

13It may be noted in passing that the first of the three proofs is a borrowing of Bāqillānī’s. Abū ǦIṣḥāq ibn Sayyār an-Naẓzām (160-231/775-846) is said to have believed that the Qur’ān is inimitable because of its relation of otherwise unknown past events and its prediction of events still in the womb of time. But Qur’ānic naẓm, he believed, could theoretically be matched, though God has, by depriving man of the ability to match it, prevented him from doing so. This is known as the theory of ǧarāf (“prevention”). See Abū l-Ḥasan “All ibn Ismā‘il al-Ash‘arī (d. 324/935), p. 225. Thalāth Rasūlī, pp. 23-24, 75.
14Bint ash-Shāṭi’i p. 100.
15See, for example, Bāqillānī, pp. 51, 52, 287.
also borne out by the examples he cites in illustration of Qur’ānic ḥaṭīfī, and by his criticism of some of the Arab poets.\^17

3. Jurjānī. If ḥaṭīfī is to Bāqillānī one of the several proofs of Qur’ānic ḥaṭīfī, it is to Jurjānī the only proof, or at least the primary or fundamental proof, of that ḥaṭīfī. The argument for Qur’ānic ḥaṭīfī, he writes in “Ar-Risālah ash-Shāfiyyah,” rests on ḥaṭīfī:

The [Qur’ānic] challenge was that they [Arabs] give expression to any thought they liked but in such a way that the product should, in point of ḥaṭīfī, either compare with the excellence of the Qur’ān or approximate that excellence.\^18

It is ḥaṭīfī, therefore, that makes the Qur’ān inimitable,\^19 and it is Qur’ānic ḥaṭīfī that the Arabs failed to match.\^20 But what does Jurjānī mean by ḥaṭīfī?

Ḥaṭīfī, Jurjānī says in Dalā’il al-Ḥaṭīfī, is the relating of words to one another in a way that would establish between them a causal connection.\^21 Thus, in Arabic, words may be related to one another in three ways: noun to noun, noun to verb, and particle to noun and verb.\^22 But the order in which words are arranged is determined, or ought to be determined, by the order in which meanings exist in the mind of the speaker.\^23 In order to achieve a perfect translation of ideas into words, it is necessary to adhere to the rules of grammar. By grammar Jurjānī means not simply the inflectional endings of words, as he claims most grammarians before him took grammar to be, but also grammatical structures in which the positions of the structural components are significant—in which ta‘rīf (“definiteness”) and tankīr (“indefiniteness”), taqdim (“preposing”) and ta‘khīr (“postposing”), ḥadhīf (“ellipses”) and takrār (“repetition”).

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etc., are meaningful and must be reckoned with.\^24 Jurjānī calls these aspects of grammar maḏānī an-nahw (“grammatical meanings”) and makes an understanding of them a prerequisite to the appreciation of Naẓm.\^25

By insisting that maḏānī an-nahw are an integral part of Naẓm, Jurjānī has enlarged the scope of grammar, has in fact brought grammar closer to the science of balāghah or rhetoric.\^26 But whether he is analyzing maḏānī an-nahw or criticizing other grammarians, Jurjānī’s concern always is that the speaker should, through adherence to grammatical-rhetorical rules, achieve exact and unambiguous expression of the ideas that exist in his mind. That is to say, words should serve as vehicle to thought—Jurjānī calls them awfīyāt li l-maḏānī\^27 (“receptacles for meanings”).

4. Zamakhshārī. Zamakhshārī begins the Introduction to his Qur’ān commentary by expressing gratitude to God, Who has revealed kalāmān mu‘allaftan munāzzaman\^28 (“a well-composed and well-knit discourse”). Thus, from the outset, Zamakhshārī seems to be preoccupied with the idea that the Qur’ān is characterized by Naẓm, and that Qur’ānic Naẓm explains Qur’ānic ḥaṭīfī.

But Zamakhshārī’s concept of Naẓm does not, in essence, differ from the concepts of Ḥaṭṭābī, Bāqillānī, and Jurjānī. It is true that, besides explaining the suitability of Qur’ānic words to Qur’ānic ideas,\^29 Zamakhshārī also deals elaborately with the structure of the Qur’ānic sentence,\^30 and, still further, often tries to bring out the relationships between the verses of a passage.\^31 Still, Zamakhshārī, like Jurjānī, conceives of Naẓm in grammatical-rhetorical terms, if in a much more complex way. It is by demonstrating the Qur’ān’s matchless way of pressing grammar and rhetoric into its service that Zamakhshārī attempts to establish the excellence of Qur’ānic Naẓm. To give an example, he says that the four sentences

\^16Ibid., pp. 279 ff.
\^17Ibid., pp. 241-272, 334-366.
\^18Thalāth Rasā’il, p. 141.
\^19Ibid.
\^20Ibid.
\^21Jurjānī, Dalā’il, pp. 43-44.
\^22Ibid., pp. 44-45.
\^23Ibid., pp. 93, 95, 97.
\^24Ibid., pp. 117-118.
\^25Ibid., p. 123 passim.
\^26Ḥimṣī, p. 84.
\^27Jurjānī, Dalā’il, p. 95.
\^28Zamakhshārī, 1:3.
\^29Abū Muḥāammad, pp. 213 ff.
\^30Ibid., pp. 269 ff.
\^31Ibid., pp. 369 ff.
that make up Qur'ān 2:1-2 possess the highest kind of *balāghah* and beauty of *naẓm*, which, he adds, can be appreciated only when the many grammatical and rhetorical features—like the absence of the conjunctive particle *wa*, the ellipsis, the preposing, and the terseness of expression—are noted and reflected on.\(^{32}\)

There are of course differences between the four writers. Khaṭṭābī presents the basic idea that *naẓm* constitutes *balāghah*, and *balāghah* explains Qur'ānic *fijāz*; he restricts his discussion almost exclusively to Qur'ānic examples. In Bāqillānī that idea becomes more complex as Bāqillānī tries to elucidate Qur'ānic *naẓm* in terms of *bādī*; he tries to show that the Qur'ān is free from the imperfections that mark Arabic poetry. Jurjānī considers the grammatical meanings to be constituting *naẓm*; in explaining this *naẓm*, Jurjānī, contrary to Bāqillānī, relies heavily on Arabic poetry and refers to the Qur'ān relatively infrequently.\(^{33}\) which signifies that the idea of *naẓm* in him becomes somewhat independent of the issue of *fijāz* and a subject of interest in itself. A balance, as it were, is reached in Zamakhsharī, who, on the one hand, cites extensively from Arabic poetry, and, on the other, shows how the Qur'ān exceeds the highest standards of human eloquence (typified for Zamakhsharī in classical Arabic poetry). At the same time, Zamakhsharī presupposes, on the reader's part, a much keener understanding of Arabic grammar and rhetoric than do Khaṭṭābī, Bāqillānī, or Jurjānī, and often establishes, between the parts of one verse or between a series of verses, *naẓm* relationships that are subtler and more complex than found in any of the other three writers.

In spite of these differences, however, the four writers take an essentially similar view of the matter before them: they all define *naẓm* as some kind of a relationship between words used and meanings intended, and they all try to prove that, in establishing such a relationship, the Qur'ān far excels any other discourse. Within the group of these writers, it is in Zamakhsharī that the idea of *naẓm* finds its most mature and balanced expression.

The views of the four writers thus mark the establishment of *naẓm* as a significant new trend in Qur'ānic exegetical approach. But these views are not only of historical interest; they are, as we shall see, presupposed in subsequent *naẓm* thought on the Qur'ān.

\(^{32}\) Zamakhsharī, 1:121-122.

\(^{33}\) Bint ash-Shāji', pp. 110-111.

\(^{34}\) The second chapter of *Burhān*, in which this discussion takes place, is entitled "Maṣrifat Munāsabāt bayn al-Āyāt".

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 1:37.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 1:38.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 1:36.

\(^{38}\) See for example, Rāzī, 9:219; 10:140.

\(^{39}\) See, for example, ibid., 6:14-15, 83; 9:189; 24:176.
reconcilable) between verses. Thus he may give his own explanation of the nazm connection and, at the same time, adduce a sabab an-nuzūl that links up the verses in question. It should be noted, however, that Rāzī does not hesitate to reject a sabab an-nuzūl if it appears to him to be in clear contradiction of the nazm interpretation he himself has arrived at, though this does not often happen.

Rāzī uses a number of expressions synonymously with nazm. The ones he uses most frequently are: munāsabah;41 wajh an-nazm huwa annahū .42 (“the explanation of the nazm is as follows . . .”); ta‘alluq hādhihi l-āyati bi nā gabilahū huwa .43 (“this verse is related to the preceding verse in the following manner . . .”); and lammā with perfect verb followed by perfect verb (“after elucidating such-and-such a point, [God] now [follows it up with this point]”).

Rāzī’s attempt to see munāsabah between the Qur’ānic verses—and, in some cases, sūrahs—was followed by similar attempts by a number of other scholars, perhaps most notably by these four exegetes: Niẓām ad-Din ibn al-Hasan al-Qummi an-Nisābūri (d. 728/1327); Abū ʿAbd Allāh Abī al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Yūsuf (654-745/1256-1344), known as Abū Ḥayyān; Shams ad-Dīn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ash-Shirbīnī (d. 977/1569); and Abū Ṭh-Thānā Shihāb ad-Dīn Maḥmūd as-Sayyid Muhammad al-Ālūsī (1217-1270/1802-1854). These writers borrow heavily from Rāzī, taking over from him not only his method but also the formulaic expressions he uses to express his idea of nazm. Of these four, Nisābūri is probably the most dependent upon Rāzī, though he represents an advance over Rāzī in that he does not content himself with connecting individual verses to one another, but, typically, divides a sūrah into a number of passages and tries to link up these passages by connecting the dominant ideas in them. Abū Ḥayyān in this respect follows Rāzī. Shirbīnī did not, it seems, originally plan to explain Qur’ānic nazm, and there is no significant mention of it in his commentary on the early part of the Qur’ān. However, by the time he reaches the middle of the Qur’ān, nazm has become an established principle with Shirbīnī. Ālūsī, while he is mindful of the general context in which certain verses occur and often makes this general context the criterion for determining the merit of a particular interpretation, does not take pains to establish an unbroken link between all the verses of a sūrah. He, however, excels the other writers of this category when it comes to establishing connections between sūrahs. For, unlike the others, who connect two sūrahs by connecting the closing verses of the one sūrah and the opening verses of the other, Ālūsī offers concrete points of comparison between sūrahs taken as wholes. But neither Rāzī nor any of the other four writers seeks to establish links between all the sūrahs.

We may conclude that the nazm these writers seek to establish is linear in character and has a bearing chiefly on individual sūrahs. But, in their preoccupation with what we have called the larger units of the Qur’ān, these scholars have further developed the concept of nazm. And while they seek to establish nazm between the verses of a given sūrah, and sometimes between several sūrahs, these scholars continue to discuss nazm in the sense of ideal word-meaning relationships. This means that their nazm view, rather than being opposed to the nazm view of the scholars of the first category, incorporates it and builds upon it.

Modern Authors

The issue of Qur’ānic nazm has continued to intrigue Muslim scholars in present times. These scholars have tried to come to grips with the issue either in response to Western scholars’ criticism of the Qur’ān as a disjointed, unsystematic work, or with the aim of providing more satisfactory solutions to the nazm question than have hitherto been offered, or in order to investigate an area considered not only legitimate but important in modern literary theory. The three types of motivation are of course not absolutely distinct from each other, and one might detect the presence of all three in a writer’s approach to the problem.

Before proceeding further, we should note that, in expounding the elements of nazm in the Qur’ān, not all modern scholars use expressions like nazm or munāsabah. This, however, is not a crucial matter. As long as these scholars are concerned with the issue of nazm in its essential sense, that is, as long as they attempt to see the Qur’ān as a work marked by coherence, then, irrespective of whether they use certain specific expressions or not, their views will be germane to our study.

40See, for example, ibid., 10:116, 209; 11:6, 32, 89.
41See, for example, ibid., 9:158; 28:193.
42See, for example, ibid., 10:105.
43See, for example, ibid., 10:205; 11:42, 57-58, 60, 69-70.
44For Nisābūri’s acknowledgement of his debt to Rāzī, see Nisābūri, 1:8.
We will select three modern writers for discussion: Abū l-Aṣṭār Mawdūdí, Muḥammad Muḥammad Hījāzī⁴⁵, and Fazlur Rahman (b. 1338/1919). The views of two other writers will come in for treatment in chapter IV.

1. Mawdūdí. Mawdūdí is fully aware that a modern reader of the Qurʾān is likely to become perplexed by the way the Qurʾān presents itself. The Qurʾān does not classify its subjects into self-contained chapters, but in the same breath speaks of matters legal, historical, political, philosophical, and ethical. This apparent lack of coherence leaves the reader with the impression that the Qurʾān is a poorly arranged work.⁴⁶

After granting that the problem is likely to arise, and in an acute form, Mawdūdí suggests that it can be solved with reference to the subject, purpose, and central thesis of the Qurʾān. The subject of the Qurʾān is man and his salvation; the central theme is the "right attitude" that man ought to adopt toward God, the universe, and life; the purpose is to invite man to adopt this attitude.⁴⁷ The Qurʾān, Mawdūdí says, never draws away from its subject, never forgets its purpose, and never abandons its fundamental thesis.⁴⁸ Moreover, the Qurʾān was revealed in bits and pieces over a period of twenty-three years, and so one cannot expect to find in it the plan of a doctoral dissertation.⁴⁹ Still further, the original, revelatory arrangement of the Qurʾān, which answered the needs of the time of the Prophet, was changed by the Prophet because it would not have been suitable for later times.⁵⁰

This is an ingenious response to the charge of incoherence in the Qurʾān. There is, however, a problem with this response. For it is not enough to say that the Qurʾān always sticks to its subject, purpose, and basic thesis. A book of quotations on a subject may meet the same criteria, and yet the unity of such a book will be of a very different kind from the unity of a book that offers a systematic treatment of a subject. Moreover, if the Qurʾān meets the above-stated criteria, then it would continue to meet them no matter what arrangement it is given. But the real question is not whether the Qurʾānic material, irrespective of what arrangement it is given, continues to have coherence or not, but whether, with the arrangement it actually has, it possesses coherence or not. To this question Mawdūdí does not address himself.

And yet Mawdūdí's response has its value. For one thing, Mawdūdí, as a representative modern Muslim thinker, shows a sharp awareness of the problem. For another, his solution to the problem, even though it may be vulnerable in the form in which he presents it, can probably be made, through a close analysis of what Mawdūdí calls the Qurʾānic subject, purpose, and central thesis, the basis of a more plausible solution.

2. Hījāzī. Hījāzī claims to be the first to have presented the notion of "topical unity" in the Qurʾān. In his Al-Wahdah al-Mawdūdîyyah fi l-Qurʾān al-Karîm, after acknowledging the efforts of earlier scholars to see interrelationships (munaṣṣabât) between Qurʾānic verses and sūrahs,⁵¹ he writes:

However, none of the earlier exegettes has attempted to collect all the verses on one topic, arrange them according to their chronological sequence, and, considering the occasions of revelation and the suitability of the verses in the sūrahs they occur in, attempted to study the verses in a thorough, systematic manner with a view to arriving at a complete and unbroken topical unity.⁵²

What Hījāzī is saying is that, besides the naẓm of the verses and sūrahs of the Qurʾān, there is another type of naẓm to be found in the Qurʾān, one that scholars have failed to notice. This naẓm, Hījāzī contends, is brought out only when all the Qurʾānic verses on a given subject are brought together and studied in their chronological order.

Apart from the fact that Hījāzī offers a rather meager amount of evidence to substantiate his thesis (he gives only three examples,

⁴⁵I have not been able to ascertain Hījāzī's dates.


⁴⁷Ibid., 1:19-20.

⁴⁸Ibid., 1:20.

⁴⁹Ibid., 1:25.

⁵⁰Ibid., 1:26-27.

⁵¹Hījāzī, p. 23.

⁵²Ibid., p. 25. See also ibid., pp. 31, 33-34, 54, 60, 95, 125.
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which are not truly representative\(^{53}\), there is a basic flaw in his theory: it places too heavy a reliance on the occasions of revelation. For one thing, it is well-nigh impossible to say with certainty that a given *sabab an-nuzul* in fact occasioned the revelation of a certain verse. Furthermore, because of the problems attendant upon taking a strictly historical view of the occasions of revelation, Muslim scholars sometimes interpret an occasion of revelation to mean not an actual historical event but any situation to which a given Qur'anic verse might have application.\(^{54}\) But this shift of emphasis from the *historicity* of the occasions to their *applicability* does not augur well for Hijazi's theory, which is predicated on a *historical* view of them.

Hijazi's attempt to see a certain type of *nazm* in the Qur'an would thus yield results of questionable value. Yet it is significant that he tries to place a historical perspective on the issue and offers a critique, however brief, of the *nazm* views of earlier writers. In other words, he would like to place himself in what he seems to regard as a more or less well-established tradition of *nazm* interpretation of the Qur'an. For it should be clear by now that a *nazm* tradition in Qur'anic exegesis does exist, a fact not appreciated generally.

3. Fazlur Rahman. The Qur'an, Fazlur Rahman says, possesses a "cohesive outlook on the universe and life."\(^{55}\) It inculcates "a definite weltanschauung" and "its teaching has no inner contradictions" but coheres as a whole.\(^{56}\) But "little attempt has ever been made to understand the Qur'an as a unity,"\(^{57}\) there having been "a general failure to understand the underlying unity of the Qur'an, coupled with a practical insistence upon fixing on the words of various verses in isolation."\(^{58}\) Fazlur Rahman is very critical of this "piecemeal, ad hoc, and often quite extrinsic treatment of the Qur'an."\(^{59}\) For a study of the Qur'an as a unity, he proposes a hermeneutical method that consists of "a double movement, from the present situation to Qur'anic times, then back to the present,"\(^{60}\) Fazlur Rahman thus rejects the "piecemeal" approach to the Qur'an and advocates a holistic approach. But although he conceives of the Qur'an as a unity, he does so in thematic terms only,\(^{61}\) and does not look for any structural unity or coherence in the Qur'an. In other words, he is not concerned with vindicating the received arrangement of the Qur'an. In fact, he emphasizes the need to make a "systematic attempt . . . to understand the Qur'an in the order in which it was revealed . . . ,"\(^{62}\) a view that by implication dismisses the idea that the existing Qur'anic arrangement is significant.

This rounds off our brief survey of the historical development of the idea of *nazm* in the Qur'an. But even this survey makes it sufficiently clear that the concept of Qur'anic *nazm* has a fairly long history. Beginning as an appendage to the issue of Qur'anic *fiżāz*, the notion of *nazm* in the Qur'an evolves to become a subject of interest in itself. The shift of emphasis is very evident in Jurjani, who, it will be recalled, cites plenty of verses from Arabic poetry but relatively few Qur'anic verses. With him, one might say, a theological issue is transformed into a literary issue. With modern writers, the connection between *fiżāz* and *nazm* is further loosened.

\(^{53}\) The three examples are: divinity of God (ibid., pp. 134 ff.), wine and usury (ibid., pp. 257), and the story of Moses (ibid., pp. 325 ff.). These examples, especially the first two, are not truly representative because they pertain to subjects about which sufficient background historical material is available, something that cannot be said of a large number of other Qur'anic subjects. Hijazi's definition of a "topic" is not quite precise either: usury and wine form a topic in themselves, and so does the story of Moses. But with this definition of a topic, the Qur'an may be said to have hundreds and thousands of topics. For these hundreds and thousands of topics—and they would include not only familiar historical events but also abstract notions and concepts of all kinds—there are hardly any occasions of revelation available.

\(^{54}\) Zarkashi, 1:31-32.


\(^{56}\) *Islam and Modernity*, p. 6.

\(^{57}\) Ibid.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., p. 2.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., p. 4. See also ibid., pp. 2-3; and *Major Themes*, p. xii.

\(^{60}\) *Islam and Modernity*, p. 5. For a fuller treatment of the subject, see ibid., pp. 5-11, 17-20—with p. 20 providing a summary statement of the method. According to Fazlur Rahman, "Although the method I have advocated here is new in form, nevertheless its elements are all traditional." Ibid., p. 143. See also ibid., p. 145.

\(^{61}\) In his *Major Themes*, Fazlur Rahman, using a "logical rather than chronological" procedure, attempts to offer a "synthetic exposition of Qur'anic themes." See *Major Themes*, p. xi.

\(^{62}\) *Islam and Modernity*, p. 144. Fazlur Rahman clarifies, however, that what he recommends is "studying the Qur'an in its total and specific background (and doing this study systematically in a historical order), not just studying it verse by verse or passage by passage with an isolated 'occasion of revelation' (sha'n al-nuzul) [sic]." Ibid., p. 145. The "total" background of the Qur'an is the general sociohistorical context in which the Qur'an was revealed, the "specific" background consists of the specific contexts of specific Qur'anic texts. Ibid., p. 143. See also ibid., p. 6.
Also, we can see a more or less logical progression in the nazm ideas of the writers. The views of the second category of traditional scholars represent an advance over the views of the scholars of the first category. And although the views of modern writers differ significantly from those of traditional writers taken as a group, the former’s preoccupation with thematic coherence in the Qur’an is perhaps not entirely unrelated to the latter’s “word-meaning relationship” or “linear connection.”

But none of the authors that we have discussed, traditional or modern, present the Qur’an as a book that possesses thematic and structural nazm at the same time.

This defines for us the task that Iṣlāḥī sets himself in Tadabbur-i Qur’an, namely, to show that the Qur’an possesses structural as well as thematic coherence, and that this coherence exists in the Qur’an in complex but regular and interwoven patterns. Thus, although the pivotal concept in Iṣlāḥī carries the name of nazm, the term nazm in Iṣlāḥī acquires a meaning radically different from the ones we have so far encountered. But first we should take a look at the nazm framework constructed by Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī. That nazm framework is the subject of our next chapter.

**Summary**

The concept of Qur’anic nazm has a fairly long history. Arising in connection with the discussion on Qur’anic ḍājza, the concept originally referred to the Qur’an’s inimitable way of relating words to meanings. Next it was interpreted to mean a linear connection between Qur’anic verses and sūras, although even at this stage scholars continued to discuss the word-meaning relationship the Qur’an seeks to establish. Modern writers, to the extent that Mawdūdī, Ḥijāzī, and Fazlur Rahman can be taken as representing them, emphasize aspects of thematic unity in the Qur’an.

**Chapter II**

**NAZM ACCORDING TO FARĀHĪ AND IṢLĀḤĪ**

In this chapter a general discussion of Iṣlāḥī’s exegetical principles will be followed by a treatment of the most salient principle used by him in Tadabbur-i Qur’an, namely, the principle of nazm.

**Exegetical Principles**

Essentially, Iṣlāḥī subscribes to the principles of exegesis laid down by Farāhī, but he presents them more methodically. The following treatment is, therefore, summarized from the Introduction to Tadabbur. The places where Farāhī’s own discussion of them is to be found are indicated in the notes. Since the focus in the present work is on the nazm principle as understood by Iṣlāḥī, and Iṣlāḥī’s views on nazm sometimes differ from Farāhī’s, a separate section points out the differences between the two writers. But first a brief note. One of the words Iṣlāḥī uses for “principles” of exegesis is wasā’il (literally, “means, sources”). In the following paragraphs, the word “principles” is used as an equivalent of wasā’il.

**Statement**

Iṣlāḥī divides the principles of Qur’an exegesis into two types, those that are internal to the Qur’an and those that are external. The internal principles are three in number: Qur’anic language, Qur’anic nazm, and Qur’anic nazā’ir (“parallel”).

A deep knowledge of pre-Islamic Arabic is of the utmost importance. In point of idiom, structure, and style that Arabic differs markedly from modern Arabic, and one must have a good command of it before one can fully understand the Qur’anic style and method of presentation. In fact, one must be thoroughly familiar with the entire range of pre-Islamic literature, for that literature is an accurate mirror of the Arabian society against whose backdrop the Qur’an was revealed.

**Nazm** is a fundamental characteristic of the Qur’an. The

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1Iṣlāḥī, Tadabbur, 1:i.

2Ibid.

3Ibid., 1:ii-v. Farāhī, Majmū’dh, p. 42.
Qur'an, that is to say, is a very well-structured book. It is a known fact that the Qur'anic arrangement, fixed as it was by Muhammad himself, does not reflect the chronological arrangement of the revelations. There must, therefore, be a special hikmah or wisdom in the rearranging of the Qur'an. Hence the importance of nazm, for a study of Qur'anic nazm brings out that hikmah.  

By providing abundant thematic and other kinds of parallels, the Qur'an explains itself. What is unclear in one verse is made clear in another, what is brief in one surah is elaborated elsewhere. The best guide to the Qur'an is the Qur'an itself.

These three internal principles, together with one of the external principles, that of the Sunnah mutawātirah (see below), are the quaīf ("categorical") principles, while the rest are zannī ("non-categorical", literally, "conjectural") principles. The former are primary and irreducible, and suffice for the purpose of arriving at the basic Qur'ānic interpretation. The latter are secondary in importance, are theoretically dispensable, and should be used only when they are in accord with, or at least do not contradict, the former.  

There are six external principles: Sunnah mutawātirah, Hadith, asbāb an-nuzūl, earlier Qur'ān commentaries, previous scriptures, and ancient Arab history.

The Prophet's normative practice, when it is transmitted by such a large number of people that the possibility of its being falsely attributed to him is excluded, is known as the Sunnah mutawātirah ("universally known practice"; literally, "practice that is transmitted widely and with unbroken chains of narrators"). The Sunnah mutawātirah provides the only authoritative interpretation of the large number of terms that the Qur'ān uses technically but does not always explain, terms like ṣalāh ("ritual prayer"), zakāh ("welfare due"), ṣawm ("fasting"), ḥajj ("pilgrimage"), 'umrah ("lesser pilgrimage"), ṭawfīq ("circumambulation").

As a principle of interpretation, the Ḥadīth ("Tradition") of Muhammad—and Islāhī brackets with Ḥadīth the asbāb of Muḥammad's Companions, that is, the reports about the Companions' religious conduct—is invaluable. But it does not compare in authenticity with the Sunnah mutawātirah, and is, therefore, zannī in character.

The asbāb an-nuzūl should be derived from the Qur'ān insofar as much as possible, and historical events and incidents should be cited, and then in their essential form, only when the Qur'ān itself refers or alludes to them (see below).

The existing Qur'ān commentaries should not be used as a primary source of exegesis, though they may be used for corroborative purposes, that is, for confirming an interpretation reached through the use of quaīf principles.

The Qur'ānic references to the previous scriptures (which for practical purposes are the Old Testament and the New Testament) should be explained through a critical study of the Bible itself. That is to say, one should not set much store by the accounts that Muslim scholars in their works provide of them, for these accounts are largely based on hearsay and carry conviction neither with Jews and Christians nor with Muslims themselves.

Ancient Arab history helps one in understanding the Qur'ānic references to the pre-Islamic Arab peoples. But sufficient historical information on the subject is lacking. For such information, therefore, one has to depend largely on the Qur'ān itself.

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4Islāhī, Tadabbur, 1:xvi-xvii. Farāhī, Majmu'ah, pp. 41-42.

5Islāhī, Tadabbur, 1:xviii-xxi. Farāhī, Majmu'ah, pp. 39, 40, 41.  


7Islāhī, Tadabbur, 1:xvii-xviii. Farāhī, Majmu'ah, p. 35.

Comparison with the Traditional Set of Principles

A comparison of the above-stated principles with the principles of exegesis held by traditional Muslim scholars will point up many differences.

The Muqaddimah fi Uṣul at-Tafsir of Taqī ad-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalim ibn Taymiyyah (662-728/1262-1327) is a representative work in the field of Qur’ānic exegetical theory. Ibn Taymiyyah lists the following as the principles of Qur’ānic interpretation: Qur’ānic parallels,14 the Sunnah of Muhammad,15 the sayings of his Companions16 (the ʿasbāb an-nuṣūl are apparently subsumed by Ibn Taymiyyah under these sayings17), and the sayings of the Successors to the Companions.18 What is known as tafsīr bi r-raʾy (“use of personal opinion in exegesis”) is disallowed by Ibn Taymiyyah.19 Knowledge of Arabic is of course assumed by him.

Zarkashī in his Burḥān gives a fairly similar description of the principles of Qur’ānic interpretation. The major exegetical principles are four: the sayings of Muhammad,20 the sayings of the Companions (who have first-hand knowledge of the ʿasbāb an-nuṣūl)21 and of the Successors,22 knowledge of Arabic,23 and opinion.24 Zarkashī hastens to point out that by “opinion” he does not mean tafsīr bi r-

raʾy but opinion that is informed by wisdom with which God endows a person like the Companion ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās (1st/7th century). Muhammad specially prayed to God that He might bless Ibn ʿAbbās with wisdom in religious and Qur’ānic matters.25

Speaking overall, the major difference between the Ibn Taymiyyah-Zarkashī set of principles and the Farāhī-Iṣlāhī set of principles is that the former is a continuum, while there is, in the latter, a clear break between two kinds of principles. In Ibn Taymiyyah-Zarkashī, the principles are arranged in diminishing order of importance: the second principle will be used where the first cannot be used, the third where the second cannot be, and so on.26 In Farāhī-Iṣlāhī, on the other hand, a sharp contrast is made between qaḍī and zāmil principles, and the difference between the two is one of kind, not simply one of degree.

Comparison between individual principles from the two formulations will bring out other differences. First of all, to Ibn Taymiyyah and Zarkashī, the sayings of Muhammad’s Companions are an independent exegetical source. Farāhī and Iṣlāhī bracket the Companions’ sayings with Ḥadīth and treat them accordingly. Unlike Zarkashī and Ibn Taymiyyah, they do not consider the sayings of the Successors as an independent source of exegesis.

Second, Zarkashī does not mention the ʿasbāb an-nuṣūl as an independent exegetical principle, but puts it under “the sayings of the Companions,” and Ibn Taymiyyah appears to do the same.27 But both of them attach great value to ʿasbāb an-nuṣūl as an aid to understanding the Qur’ān.28 Farāhī and Iṣlāhī mention them as a principle, but interpret them differently. ʿAsbāb an-nuṣūl, as historically understood, lose much of their importance in these two writers, for they insist that the sabab an-nuṣūl, of a Qur’ānic sūrah for example, should be derived from the Qur’ān itself. Just as a physician can look at a prescription and identify the ailment for which it was intended, so should a scholar, by closely studying a sūrah, be able to figure out its sabab an-nuṣūl. Only in cases where the Qur’ān refers or alludes to specific incidents should one look outside the sūrah for the sabab an-nuṣūl. Thus, in Farāhī and Iṣlāhī, the ʿasbāb

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14Ibn Taymiyyah, pp. 93, 94.
15Ibid., pp. 93-94.
16Ibid., pp. 95 ff.
17Ibid., pp. 48-49, 95-96.
18Ibid., pp. 102-105.
19Ibid., pp. 105-108. For a brief discussion of tafsīr bi r-raʾy, see Abū Zahrāb, pp. 596-603; and Jullandar, pp. 81, 86 ff. I do not, however, agree with Jullandar when he calls tafsīr bi r-raʾy “rational commentary,” for this is a loaded expression and implies that tafsīr bi l-maʿārif (“traditionist commentary”) lacks the element of reasoning. He presents the Muʿtazilah as the free-thinkers of Islam, but this view has now generally been discarded. See, for example, Fazlur Rahmān, Islam, p. 88, and Ahmad Amin, Zuhr al-Islām (4 vols.; Cairo: Maktabat an-Nāhājah al-Miṣriyyah, 1372/1952), 4:7.
21Ibid., 2:157.
22Ibid., 2:158-159.
23Ibid., 2:160.
24Ibid., 2:161.
25Ibid.
26See, for example, Ibn Taymiyyah, pp. 93 ff.
27Zarkashī, 2:157. See also n. 17 above.
28Ibn Taymiyyah, pp. 47-49, Zarkashī, 1:22-34.
an-nuzūl are redefined to become, mainly, a feature internal to the Qur‘ān and cease to be something that is superimposed on the Qur‘ān.

But the most important difference between Ibn Taymiyyah and Zarkashī on the one hand and Farāhī and Iṣlāhī on the other is that while the latter believe the Qur‘ān to be possessed of a highly significant naẓm, the former do not raise the issue at all. In the last chapter we noted that the question of Qur‘ānic naẓm had begun to be discussed by the end of the 2nd/8th century, that the extant works dealing with Qur‘ānic naẓm date at least from the 4th/10th century, and that already in the 6th/12th century Rāzī had made extensive use of the naẓm principle as he understood it. But neither Ibn Taymiyyah nor Zarkashī gives any consideration to naẓm as a likely exegetical principle. Even after Zarkashī and Ibn Taymiyyah, as we saw, a number of Qur‘ān commentators used a naẓm approach to the Qur‘ān. And yet not until Farāhī was naẓm raised to the status of a regular principle of exegesis. The next section will present the views of Farāhī and Iṣlāhī on naẓm.

The Naẓm Principle

To Farāhī and Iṣlāhī, the principle of naẓm is indispensable; Farāhī calls it the first and foremost of all exegetical principles,29 and the most distinguishing feature of Iṣlāhī’s Tadabbur-i Qur‘ān, of course, is no other.30

Arguments for the Presence of Naẓm in the Qur‘ān

Several arguments may be presented to show that the Qur‘ān is possessed of naẓm.31

First, a number of Muslim scholars (Rāzī, for example) have held that the Qur‘ān possesses naẓm. Although none of these scholars were able to give a satisfactory explanation of Qur‘ānic naẓm,

yet the idea that the Qur‘ān has naẓm obviously has a history of its own.32

Second, scholars who have denied the existence of naẓm in the Qur‘ān have done so not because they were fully convinced that the Qur‘ān lacks naẓm, but because they were only partially successful in unraveling that naẓm. Unable to prove that the whole of the Qur‘ān possessed naẓm, they denied that naẓm was present in any part of it. In so doing, they were trying to maintain a consistent view about the matter, but that does not mean that the Qur‘ān is without naẓm.33

Third, the chronological arrangement of the Qur‘ān was drastically changed by Muḥammad, a proof that the new arrangement must have a ḥikmah that would have been lost had the original arrangement been preserved.34

Fourth, the order in which the sūrahs are arranged in the Qur‘ān is evidently not determined by the rule of decreasing length, a rule that would have come in handy if the Qur‘ān had lacked naẓm. One must, therefore, find another way to account for the fact that short sūrahs sometimes follow but sometimes also precede longer sūrahs. It is naẓm that supplies the needed explanation.35

Lastly, no sensible discourse may lack naẓm or coherence. It is indeed surprising that the Qur‘ān, a book of proven inimitability, should be thought to be marked by incoherence.36

These arguments do not clinch the matter in favor of the particular Farāhī-Iṣlāhī view of Qur‘ānic naẓm. They do suggest, however, that it is erroneous to regard the Qur‘ān as a book that lacks naẓm completely or has a superficial naẓm. The arguments that make this suggestion most forcefully are the last four. But they will remain suggestions unless concrete evidence in support of them is presented from the Qur‘ān itself. In chapter III we shall see whether the evidence presented by Farāhī (and later by Iṣlāhī) is compelling or not.

29 Farāhī, Majma‘ah, p. 35.

30 Iṣlāhī, Tadabbur, 8.8.

31 The arguments are offered by Farāhī, but the order in which they are here presented is taken from Iṣlāhī’s Mabādi‘yi Tadabbur-i Qur‘ān. References to the places in which they are treated in Farāhī’s writings and Iṣlāhī’s Introduction to Tadabbur will be added in the notes.


34 Iṣlāhī, Mabādi‘, pp. 177-178; Tadabbur, 1:v-vii. Farāhī, Majma‘ah, pp. 32-33. See also n. 4 above.


**Nature of Qur'ānic Nazm**

Farāhī draws a distinction between other scholars' concept of nazm and his own. "Other scholars" in this context are those who hold to what in chapter I was called "linear nazm." But the point to note is that Farāhī uses the word munāsabah to describe the view of these scholars and reserves the word nazm for his own. That is to say, even when these writers discuss what they call nazm, they are, in Farāhī's view, dealing with no more than munāsabah, which forms only one part of his own concept of nazm. Farāhī distinguishes between the two terms in the following way:

A few scholars have written about the tanāsib (= munāsabah) between the [Qur'ānic] verses and surahs, but as for the niẓām (= nazm) of the Qur'ān, I do not know [of anyone having written about it]. The difference between the two is that tanāsib is a part of niẓām. Tanāsib between its verses would not show the [Qur'ānic] discourse to be a unified entity in its own right. The seeker of tanāsib often contents himself with any kind of munāsabah [he can think of].

Thus, according to Farāhī, tanāsib or munāsabah simply means the linking up of the sentences of a discourse in disregard of the possibility that the discourse is more than the sum total of its constituent sentences. To look for such tanāsib or munāsabah in the Qur'ān is, in Farāhī's view, to take a fragmentary approach since, at any step in this search for munāsabah, the whole is ignored for the details, the wood lost for the trees.

After making this distinction between nazm and munāsabah, Farāhī further explains what he means by nazm or niẓām:

In brief, by niẓām we mean that a sūrah be a totality, and also be related with the sūrah that precedes it and the one that follows, or with that which precedes or follows it at one remove. ... On the score of this principle, the entire Qur'ān will be seen to be a single discourse, all of its parts, from start to finish, being well-ordered and well-knit.

Farāhī concludes by saying that "niẓām is something over and above munāsabah and tartīb ['sequential order']]. This "something over and above" he calls wahdāniyyah ("unity"). He then remarks that the three key elements of nazm are tartīb, tanāsib, and wahdāniyyah. But at this point Farāhī puts a different construction on the word tanāsib. Until now he has used it in the sense of simple "linkage," contrasting it with nazm. But now he uses it in the sense of "proportion." Also, the word tartīb, which means "order," is now given the meaning that was originally carried by tanāsib, namely, "linkage." As for wahdāniyyah, it imparts unity to a discourse, making it a whole that is more than the sum total of its parts. According to Farāhī, the element of wahdāniyyah is missing from the other scholars' concept of nazm. That is why he describes their concept as the concept of munāsabah and his own as that of nazm.

To sum up, a discourse will possess nazm when it has tartīb, tanāsib, and wahdāniyyah, that is, when it is well-ordered, well-proportioned, and well-unified.

**Importance of Nazm**

In chapter I we saw that, to Rāzī, Qur'ānic nazm is significant because it brings to light many latā'if or "subtleties" of the Qur'ān. According to Farāhī and Iṣlāhī, nazm does not simply bring out the subtleties of thought and niceties of expression in the Qur'ān, it...

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37 Farāhī, Dalā'il, p. 74.
38 Ibid., p. 75.
39 Ibid.
forms an integral part of the essential meaning or message of the Qur'ān. Qur'ānic nazm is important because it provides the only key to the proper understanding of the Qur'ān. Upon reading the Qur'ān without the guiding light of nazm, one will at best acquire knowledge of a few isolated injunctions or pronouncements of the Qur'ān. It is nazm that, by furnishing an integrated view of the Qur'ān, throws new light on every verse. A chemical compound is much more than a simple combination of its constituent substances. Without nazm the Qur'ān is no more than an aggregate of verses and surahs; with nazm it is transmuted into a real unity.43

But how would Qur'ānic nazm furnish the only key to the proper understanding of the Qur'ān? Farāhī and Išlāḥī would reply: by placing the Qur'ānic verses in an ineluctable context. Multiple (and often contradictory) interpretations of Qur'ānic verses are due to the fact that the verses are taken out of context. By putting every verse in its context, nazm would eliminate the possibility of wayward interpretations. In a word, adherence to the nazm principle would make for a definitive interpretation of the Qur'ān.44

**Farāhī's Scheme of Nazm**

We shall now outline Farāhī's scheme of nazm, and also note the modifications that Išlāḥī makes to it.

The basic nazm unit in the Qur'ān is the surah. Every surah has a central theme called ʿamād (see next chapter), around which the entire surah revolves. The ʿamād is the unifying thread in the surah, and the surah is to be interpreted with reference to it.45

Not only is every surah a unity, there is a logical link between all the surahs as they follow one another in the present Qur'ānic arrangement.46 The surahs fall into nine groups, and each group is, like a surah, a unity.47 Every group begins with a Makkān surah and ends with a Madinan surah.48

A surah may have parenthetical verses in it, which means that

Sometimes its verses will be connected with one another at one or several removes.49 In a surah group, likewise, there may be a surah that is supplementary to the preceding one, which means that two surahs may be connected with each other at one remove.50

**Modifications and Additions by Išlāḥī**

Essentially, Išlāḥī takes over the design of Qur'ānic nazm as presented by Farāhī. But he makes a few changes in it.

First, he classifies the surahs into seven rather than nine groups.51 Further, he regards all surahs, with the exception of a few, as paired.52 The important point is that, for the seven-fold division and for the surah-pairing, Išlāḥī seeks to adduce evidence from the Qur'ān itself. In a later chapter of the book we will examine this evidence.

Second, according to Išlāḥī, in each of the seven surah groups, the Makkān and Madinan surahs form distinct blocs, with the Makkān bloc preceding the Madinan. That is, the Makkān bloc contains no Madinan surah and the Madinan bloc contains no Makkān surah.53 This distinction, as we shall see in chapter VI, is significant in the eyes of Išlāḥī. Farāhī does not insist on this distinction. For example, in his 8th surah group, which consists of Suras 67-112, Suras 67-109 are called Makkān by him, Suras 110 Madinan, and Suras 111 again Makkān.54 Išlāḥī regards Suras 110 as Makkān,55 thus maintaining the solidity of the Makkān bloc.

Third, Išlāḥī thinks that each of the seven surah groups treats all the phases of the Islamic movement as led by Muḥammad in Arabia, though the emphasis in each group is different.56 This idea, in this form, is not found in Farāhī.

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44Farāhī, Taknīl, p. 20; Dalāʾīl, p. 25. Išlāḥī, Tadabbur, 1:x.
45Farāhī, Dalāʾīl, pp. 73, 77, 82.
46Ibid., pp. 83-84.
47Ibid., pp. 92-93.
48Ibid., p. 91.
49Ibid., p. 74.
50Ibid., p. 91.
51Išlāḥī, Tadabbur, 1:xii–xiii.
52Ibid., 1:xiv.
53Ibid., 1:xii–xiii.
54Farāhī, Dalāʾīl, p. 93.
55Išlāḥī, Tadabbur, 8:628-630.
56Ibid., 1:xiv.
Naẓm According to Farāḥī and Išlāḥī

Summary

Of the several differences between the Farāḥī-Išlāḥī principles and the traditionally held principles of Qurʿānic exegesis, the most significant pertains to naẓm: while other scholars make no mention of naẓm as an exegetical principle, Farāḥī and Išlāḥī not only regard it as one, they regard it as a principle of supreme importance. The constituents of naẓm, according to Farāḥī, are three: order, proportion, and unity. Basically, Išlāḥī takes over Farāḥī’s naẓm framework, but makes a few changes in it. Both Farāḥī and Išlāḥī believe that it is naẓm that, by providing a definite context for Qurʿānic verses, yields the correct interpretation of the Qurʿān.

Chapter III

THE SŪRAH AS A UNITY (I)

According to Išlāḥī, every Qurʿānic sūrah is a unity and ought to be studied and understood as such. Basically, however, this is an idea that Išlāḥī has borrowed from Farāḥī. It is necessary, therefore, to first examine the latter’s concept of the sūrah as a unity.

Existence of Naẓm in a Sūrah

Farāḥī offers the following arguments to prove that all Qurʿānic sūrahs possess naẓm or thematic-structural coherence. First, the division of the Qurʿānic material into so many sūrahs indicates that each sūrah has a distinct theme, otherwise the whole of the Qurʿān could have been made one sūrah. Second, the unequal length of the sūrahs implies that it is considerations of naẓm that determined the length of any sūrah. Third, the word “sūrah” means “a wall enclosing a city.” Within an enclosing wall there can be only one city. Within a sūrah, likewise, there can be only one set of integrally related themes. In the Qurʿān, even sūrahs that have similar themes but lack this integral connection are not combined into one sūrah, a fact borne out, for example, by the last two sūrahs. Fourth, the Qurʿān, claiming to be inimitable because it was from God, challenged the disbelievers to produce the like of at least one of its sūrahs, which suggests that by a “sūrah” it meant a thematically complete and structurally coherent discourse. Finally, the larger sūrahs of the Qurʿān contain passages (e.g. 2:1-20) that have an obvious naẓm, and reflection on such passages will enable one to discover naẓm in those places in the Qurʿān in which it may not be

1Farāḥī, Majmʿah, p. 51.
2See chapter I, n. 2.
3Farāḥī, Majmʿah, pp. 51-52; Dālāʾīl, p. 76, n. [2]. It is noteworthy that Farāḥī’s interpretation of the Qurʿānic challenge is different from the interpretation usually given. Since the shortest sūrah (no. 103) contains three verses, Muslim scholars have held that the disbelievers, if they agree to meet the challenge, should produce a composition at least three verses long (see, for example, Zarkashi, 2:108-110). But they do not stipulate that the composition also possess coherence. Farāḥī, however, regards this as a necessary condition, the actual number of verses in the sūrah to be produced in response to the challenge being quite immaterial in his view. Majmʿah, p. 52.
so obvious. These arguments are not conclusive. The first, second, and fourth arguments do not by themselves prove that the Qur'ānic sūrahs possess nāzīm, at least the kind of nāzīm Farāhī has in mind. Any cogency the third argument may have will derive from taking the word “sūrah” exclusively in the sense in which Farāhī takes it, but there are other interpretations of the word. The last argument is certainly more empirical than speculative, but it needs to be supported by a greater amount of evidence before it can be accepted as valid. Once it is found to be valid, however, it will lend credence to some of the other arguments. This brings us to the question: Has Farāhī provided sufficient evidence to prove his thesis? The answer hinges on the definition of “sufficient evidence.” Farāhī’s Majmū‘ah contains commentary on no more than fourteen sūrahs: nos. 1, 51, 66, 75, 77, 80, 91, 95, 103, 105, 108, 109, 111, 112.6 All of these are among the shorter sūrahs of the Qur’ān, some of them the shortest, and Farāhī’s commentary on two of them (1 and 112) is incomplete. From a quantitative point of view like this, Farāhī would hardly seem to have supplied sufficient evidence.

But the phrase “sufficient evidence” may have another—methodological—sense. If it can be shown that Farāhī has developed a method that, upon being applied to all the sūrahs, will yield results supporting his view of the sūrah as a unity, then he may be said to have furnished sufficient evidence. Farāhī has indeed tried to develop such a method, to which we now turn.

**Farāhī’s Method and His Application of It**

According to Farāhī, each Qur'ānic sūrah has a distinct controlling theme called ّامید. The ّامید (literally, “pillar, column”) is the hub of a sūrah, and all the verses in that sūrah revolve around it. In attempting to establish the unity of a sūrah, Farāhī’s central concern is to determine the sūrah’s ّامید.7 The present arrange-

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4Farāhī, Majmū‘ah, p. 52.

5See, for example, Zamakhshari, 1:239-240; Nisabūri, 1:28-29. See also Geschichte, 1:31, n. 1; Hirschfeld, p. 2, n. 6; Rodinson, p. 131.

6Iślāhī (Majmū‘ah, p. 23) refers to a manuscript containing Farāhī’s partial commentary on Sūr 2 and 3. As far as I know, the commentary is still unpublished.

7The concept of ّامید is a major concept in Farāhī and Iślāhī, and so its nature should be understood clearly.

8There may be sūrahs (like Sūr 103, 108, 111, 112) that are too small and “monolithic” to admit of sectional division.

9This account is based on an analysis of Farāhī’s treatment of the sūrahs and on the following statements by him:
which are sometimes beneficial to man and sometimes harmful) point to the reward-and-punishment system in the hereafter. The section also explains the aspect of punishment in the afterlife, the next section explaining the aspect of reward. The third section reinforces the thesis by drawing arguments from the phenomena of nature and human existence. The next two sections provide historical evidence in support of the thesis. The sixth section relates the theme of the hereafter to two other fundamental themes in Islam: the oneness of God and prophecy. The last section concludes the Prophet, saying that the responsibility for his opponents' disbelief lies with the opponents themselves and not with him.10

The 'amūd of the sūrah, according to Farāhī, is the theme of recompense in the hereafter,11 with emphasis on the aspect of retribution. This 'amūd, as can be seen, runs through the whole of the sūrah, knitting all seven sections into a unity. It is also apparent that there is a logical progression of ideas in the sūrah: a thesis is stated (section 1), explained (sections 2, 3), reinforced with arguments of several types (sections 4, 5), placed in a larger perspective (section 6), and, finally, related to the situation in which it was being presented by Muhammad (section 7). That the aspect of punishment rather than that of reward receives greater emphasis is evident from the way the illustrative material is presented in the sūrah,13 as also from the sūrah's tone. This emphasis may account for the fact that, in the sūrah, it is the retribution, and not reward, that is spoken of after the initial statement of the overall theme of recompense.

The 'amūd is thus the bedrock of a sūrah's naẓm. It is the unifying thread of the sūrah, which can be understood as a unity only after its 'amūd has been discovered.

But while the discovery of the 'amūd is the basic prerequisite for establishing the unity of a Qur'ānic sūrah, many other things have to be kept in mind before one can fully appreciate a sūrah's naẓm. For one thing, one must determine whom the Qur'ān is principally addressing in a sūrah, otherwise one will fail to comprehend the sūrah's logic, mood, and scheme of argument.14 Farāhī's interpretation of S. 105, al-Fīl ("The Elephant"), differs radically from the traditional interpretation,15 and a major reason for that is that, in Farāhī's view, it is the Quraysh of Makkah, and not Muhammad, whom the Qur'ān is addressing.16 Also, the Qur'ānic method of presentation should be understood because of its significance from the viewpoint of a sūrah's naẓm. The Qur'ān draws parallels and contrasts between themes and situations in passages juxtaposed to each other (as in 51:1-14 and 15-19; 77:1-40 and 41-441b). It combines arguments taken from history, nature, and human life to reinforce the same point (as in 51:1-4619 and in the whole of S. 9120). Also, following the standard literary practice of its time, the Qur'ān usually omits what are known as the transitional words and expressions—a Qur'ānic stylistic feature that can be most exasperat-

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10 Farāhī, Majmūʿah, pp. 93-145.
11 Ibid., pp. 94, 95.
12 Ibid., p. 95.

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13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., pp. 62-63.
15 Ibid., pp. 372-410.
16 Ibid., pp. 369-372.
17 Ibid., pp. 104-105.
18 Ibid., p. 242.
19 Ibid., pp. 120, 124-125.
20 Ibid., p. 283.
ing to a modern reader, accustomed as he is to styles that make abundant use of such connecting links. Farāhī also holds that if a surah has several or many sections, each section possesses internal Ṽazm (as, do, for example, 51:20-23, 24-46, 66:10-12, 80:23-32), which should be studied as part of the overall Ṽazm of the surah.

Farāhī successfully applies his method to those surahs in the Majmūʿah—twelve in number—on which he has written a complete commentary. As in the case of ḍh-Ḍhāriyyah, so in the case of each of the other eleven surahs he is able to offer a cogent account of the surah’s unity. A reader of the Majmūʿah is very likely to conclude that, judging from Farāhī’s treatment, the Qur’ānic surahs are characterized by unity. But here we should pause to note a significant fact about the Majmūʿah.

With one exception (that of S. 66), all the surahs Farāhī discusses in the Majmūʿah are Makkān.26 Now there are certain obvious differences between the Makkān and the Madīnah surahs. Thematically, the Makkān surahs lack diversity. They usually deal with the fundamentals of Islamic doctrine, speak in terms of principles, and base the argument for Islam on a small number of themes (like those of the oneness of God, prophecy, and the hereafter). The Madīnah surahs, on the other hand, generally give details of practical conduct, and, as such, deal with a variety of social, political, economic, and other matters.

Structurally, many Makkān surahs are of a discrete, staccato nature. They present vivid scenes and dramatic dialogue, making rapid shifts from one subject to another—in the form of verses that are often short, incisive, and aimed at shaking up the audience. By contrast, the Madīnah surahs are, as a rule, expository and discursive, have complex and long-drawn-out sentences, frequently contain parenthetical material, and seem to have many loose ends. Of course one cannot make a watertight distinction between the two types of surahs; each contains features found in the other. Still it is possible to make a fairly clear distinction between the two types, and what we have said about their divergent natures is basically valid.

This raises a question. If there are important differences between the Makkān and the Madīnah surahs, then these differences must have a bearing on the subject of a surah’s unity. Can we say that Farāhī’s theory, which we found to be applicable to the Makkān surahs he has discussed, will equally apply to the Madīnah surahs, which (with the one exception noted above) he has not discussed? Our search for an answer to this question brings us to Iṣlāḥī, for it is Iṣlāḥī who has tried to apply Farāhī’s theory to all the surahs in the Qur’ān.

Iṣlāḥī’s Treatment of the Subject

Before we discuss Iṣlāḥī’s treatment of the Madīnah surahs, we shall inquire into how he treats the Makkān surahs that Farāhī has left undiscussed, and, for that matter, the ones the latter has discussed?

The Makkān Surahs

In writing his commentary on the surahs on which Farāhī’s commentary exists, Iṣlāḥī usually borrows very heavily from his teacher, as is evident from his commentary on Ss. 51, 75, 95, 103, 105, 108, and 111.27 Occasionally, he differs with Farāhī on a surah’s ġamād. One example is S. 77, al-Mursalah (“Those Sent Forth”). Farāhī describes its ġamād as: the Resurrection, fear of God, and good acts.28 In Iṣlāḥī’s view, the ġamād is: warning to the disbelievers that certain punishment awaits them in the hereafter.29 The ġamād, as stated by Iṣlāḥī, has the advantage of being more precise, but it does not materially differ from the ġamād as Farāhī states it, for the three themes isolated by Farāhī are combined into one by Iṣlāḥī. Once or twice, however, the ġamād suggested by the two writers differ more sharply, as in the case of S. 80, ġAbasa (“He

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21Farāhī, Dalā’il, pp. 65-67.
22Idem, Majmūʿah, p. 119.
23Ibid., pp. 137-138.
24Ibid., pp. 184 ff.
25Ibid., pp. 271-273.
26Iṣlāḥī regards S. 112, too, as Madīnah (Tadabbur, 8:643-644), thus differing with the traditional view (for which, see Zarkashi, 1:193). As for Farāhī, he does not raise the point at all, and so it is safe to assume that he regards it as Makkān.
27Iṣlāḥī, Tadabbur, 6:77-634 (S. 51), 8:71-96 (S. 75), 433-446 (S. 95), 529-540 (S. 103), 555-566 (S. 105), 589-598 (S. 108), 627-639 (S. 111).
28Farāhī, Majmūʿah, p. 223.
29Iṣlāḥī, Tadabbur, 8:123.
The Sūrah as a Unity (1)

Frowned”). According to Farāḥī, the sūrah prohibits Muḥammad from wasting his attention on people who belittle the truth.30 According to Išlāḥī, the ʾamūḍ is essentially the same as that of the preceding sūrah, an-ʾNāzīʿīāt (“Those That Snatch Away”), namely, the certainty of the coming of the Last Day and the ease with which God can bring about that day.32 A look at the sūrah’s content will show Išlāḥī’s ʾamūḍ to be more accurate.

Again, Išlāḥī’s sectional division of a sūrah sometimes differs from Farāḥī’s. To take one example, the latter divides S. 80 into the following sections: vss. 1-10, 11-22, 23-32, 33-42.33 Išlāḥī’s division is as follows: vss. 1-10, 11-16, 17-23, 24-32, 33-42. The difference is obviously of no major significance. We may conclude that, as far as the sūrah’s of the Majmūʿah are concerned, Išlāḥī is basically content to reproduce Farāḥī’s commentary.

To this general conclusion, however, there are two exceptions: Ss. 1 and 112. Since Farāḥī’s commentary on them is incomplete (also, in discussing them, Farāḥī tends to be less “exegetical” and more “philosophical”), Išlāḥī had to write his own commentary on them. While the latter’s commentary on each of the two sūrah’s does justice to Farāḥī’s method and bears out its relevance and usefulness, it is his commentary on S. 1 that is remarkably treated from the standpoint of naẓm. In it, Išlāḥī not only convincingly brings out the sūrah’s coherence, he also shows how the sūrah may rightly be called the Qurʾān in miniature and why it serves as an ideal preface to the Qurʾān.35

According to Išlāḥī’s division of the Qurʾānic sūrah’s into Makkah and Madīnah36 (to be compared in chapter VI with the traditional division), the number of the Makkah sūrah’s on which

Išlāḥī has written original commentary comes to seventy-five.37 This is a large number, and even a cursory look at Išlāḥī’s commentary on these sūrah’s will reveal that it is closely patterned on the model furnished by Farāḥī in the Majmūʿah. Of course there is a major and immediately noticeable difference: Išlāḥī’s commentary lacks the sweep of Farāḥī’s commentary. In dealing with his subject, Farāḥī provides extensive etymological discussions, copious parallels from Arabic poetry, exhaustive comparisons with the Bible, and detailed comments on other scholars’ interpretation of the Qurʾānic verses in question. Išlāḥī, while he uses this approach on a smaller scale, usually confines himself to a study of the Qurʾānic text proper, concentrating on the naẓm aspect of the Qurʾān. But this difference, though important, should not engage our attention for too long, our main interest being Išlāḥī’s approach to Qurʾānic naẓm. And in point of Qurʾānic naẓm, we can safely remark that Išlāḥī, in trying to arrive at the naẓm of a Makkah sūrah, employs Farāḥī’s method as scrupulously as does Farāḥī himself, and achieves results essentially similar to those Farāḥī achieves in the Majmūʿah. As far as the Makkah sūrah’s are concerned, one can say that Išlāḥī presents a strong case for Farāḥī’s theory.

The Madīnah Sūrah’s

In writing his commentary on the aforementioned seventy-five Makkah sūrah’s, Išlāḥī had before him not only Farāḥī’s theory, but also the model that the latter provides in the Majmūʿah. In dealing with the Madiḥan sūrah’s, Išlāḥī has practically no model before him. Farāḥī’s commentary on S. 66, which is Madīnah, cannot have been of much help. The twelve verses of the sūrah bear reference to a single historical incident and do not raise any naẓm problems at all. Išlāḥī borrows much of Farāḥī’s commentary on the sūrah, although he states the sūrah’s ʾamūḍ a little differently than

30 Farāḥī, Majmūʿah, p. 249.
31 Išlāḥī, Tadabbur, p. 191.
32 Ibid., 8:169.
33 Farāḥī, Majmūʿah, pp. 249, 262, 268, 274.
34 Išlāḥī, Tadabbur, 8:191-192.
36 Ibid., 1:xii-xiii.
37 Although he wrote a complete commentary on a few sūrah’s only, Farāḥī did leave notes in which he talked about naẓm in the other sūrah’s and about certain difficult points in them. See Majmūʿah, p. 23. Even so, one can see from Dalāʾīl and other works of Farāḥī that these notes are quite sketchy, and, from the point of view of serving as a basis for writing a detailed commentary on the sūrah’s, rather inadequate. To a large extent, then, Išlāḥī’s commentary on these sūrah’s is original.
The Sūrah as a Unity (1)

God, their Creator, and through Adam and Eve, their common ancestors (1). God-consciousness (taqwīḥ) and kinship thus provide a basis for the regulation of human affairs. An appeal to this basis underlies the following: the instruction to the guardians of orphans to treat the latter with kindness and shun avarice in managing the latter’s property (2-10); the statement of the law of inheritance (11-14); the placing of checks on sexual anarchy (15-18); the prescription of rules for safeguarding women’s rights (19-22); and the description of women one may or may not marry (23-25). The importance of these injunctions is driven home (29-33), and their scope is enlarged (34-35). A final note on the rights of God and human beings (36-43) rounds off this part.

2. The Islamic Community and Its Opponents (44-126): Analysis of Jewish opposition to the reforms, and prophecy of the establishment, in the face of all opposition, of an Islamic State (44-57). Unlike Jews, Muslims must never let national and sectarian conflicts keep them from truth and justice; the means by which Muslims can achieve unity, and the need for them to beware of the Hypocrites, who may subvert this unity (58-70). Unlike the Hypocrites, who are skeptical about the fate of Islam, are reluctant to make any sacrifices for Islam, and shrink from fighting for Islam, Muslims must be prepared to serve their religion and fight for it when necessary (71-76). The weaknesses and machinations of the Hypocrites (77-85). Recommended attitude the Muslims should adopt toward the Hypocrites at this stage (86-100). The manner of performing ritual prayer during war (101-104). There is no need to make undue allowances for the mischief-making Hypocrites (105-115), who will face the wrath of God (116-126).

3. Conclusion (127-176): Reply to a few questions about vss. 2-4 of the sūrah (127-134). Muslims must keep their responsibilities in mind and beware of the Hypocrites, who are admonished (135-152). Warning to the People of the Book (153-162). Consolation to Muḥammad: he should not worry over the disbelief of the opponents. The opponents given a final warning (163-175). Supplement to vs. 12 (176).

The Sūrah as a Unity (1)

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Summary of an-Nīsa41

Iṣlāḥī divides the sūrah into three parts, and each part into a number of sections. The sections are once again divided into sub-sections in the Urdu translation Iṣlāḥī gives, but we can ignore these sub-sections here. Verse numbers are given in parentheses.

1. Social Reform (1-43): All human beings are united through


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38 According to Farāhī, the camūd is: the principle that an individual is himself responsible for failing to fulfill his moral obligations, and that only sincere repentance will make amends for such lapses. Majmūʿah, p. 163. Iṣlāḥī states the ‘amūd—probably more accurately—as: how to observe, in a relationship of love with others, the ḥudūd (“bonds, prescriptions”) of God. Tadabbur, 7:451.

39 Sayyid Qūb, 1:554

40 Why did we not choose S. 2 or 3, obvious candidates for such a study? First, because Farāhī’s partial commentary on them exists (see n. 6 above), and we do not know to what extent Iṣlāḥī is indebted to him for his commentary on them. Second, both sūrah have lengthy sections containing theological discussions, and these sections do not present any serious naẓm problems.

41 Following his usual practice, Iṣlāḥī provides an introductory analytical summary of S. 4 (for which, see Tadabbur, 2:11-16). However, it is in his naẓm discussions, which occur within the commentary at points of sectional division, that Iṣlāḥī attempts to explain how the various sections of a sūrah are interconnected. And since in this chapter we intend to highlight Iṣlāḥī’s view of a sūrah’s naẓm, the summary of an-Nīsa that we have presented here is to a large extent based on these naẓm discussions by Iṣlāḥī.

42 Iṣlāḥī, Tadabbur, 2:9-10.
Observations

1. Even this summary is likely to give one the impression that Iṣlāḥī has made a creditable attempt at presenting an-Nisā' as an integrated whole. The division of the sūrah into three main parts seems to be justified by the major thematic shifts that occur in the sūrah at vss. 44 and 127, although it may be asked whether vs. 135 does not make as good a point of division as vs. 127. The three parts are convincingly shown to be interlinked in a progressively unfolding scheme of thought. The first part deals with some of the social reforms that Islam introduced in Arabia. The second part evaluates the hostile response these reforms evoked from the Madīn society of Islam—Jews and Hypocrites—and also deals with certain organizational matters pertaining to the Muslim community. The third part answers a few questions that arose about some of the earlier verses of an-Nisā', warns the opponents of Islam, and consoles Muḥammad.

Not only are the three parts interlinked, each part itself is informed by nazm. The first part describes the reforms that Islam introduced in Arabia. As can be seen from the summary of the sūrah, all these reforms embody and illustrate the principle stated in the opening verse, namely, that God-consciousness and kinship constitute, or ought to constitute, the basis for the unity of mankind. Iṣlāḥī also shows that the various types of reforms as mentioned in this part are sequentially linked, discussion of one type of reform leading to the discussion of another, until the part is summed up in the verses that bring it to an end. The themes of the second part may appear to be disparate, but Iṣlāḥī explains the connection between them as follows. The reforms, as we have said, triggered the opposition of certain elements in Madīnah. It is against this background of opposition that the second part dwells on the theme of Muslim solidarity and warns the Muslims against the subversive element within their ranks—that of the Hypocrites. As for the prophecy of the establishment of an Islamic State, it is pertinent here because the establishment of such a State is a logical result of the consolidation of a Muslim community or society. The third part has an unmistakable ring of being a conclusion. Instead of raising new issues, it rounds off the discussion that has already taken place in the first two parts by replying to certain questions, giving final warnings, and consoling Muḥammad. A study of each of the three parts of the sūrah from the viewpoint of nazm, therefore, strengthens one's impression that Iṣlāḥī has offered a sound nazm interpretation of the sūrah.

And this impression is further reinforced when one looks at Iṣlāḥī's division of the sūrah into twenty-three sections (ten in the first part, eight in the second, and five in the third). Each section is obviously dominated by one main idea, which serves to distinguish it from the section preceding or succeeding it. At the same time, the sections appear to exist in a logical order: each section bears a connection to the preceding and following sections. We shall presently try to determine with greater precision the nature of the connection that Iṣlāḥī establishes between these sections, for that has an important bearing on Iṣlāḥī's method of establishing nazm in a sūrah, especially in a Madīnah sūrah. But one can hardly disagree with Iṣlāḥī when he describes the sūrah's ʾamūd as the "foundations of Muslim social solidarity." For that is the theme that runs through the three parts and the twenty-three sections and to which all the verses make explicit or implicit reference.

Farāḥi's concept of ʾamūd will thus seem to be relevant, and his method of discovering a sūrah's ʾamūd applicable, in the case of an-Nisā'. And so will many of the other devices Farāḥi uses to establish nazm in a sūrah. Like Farāḥi, Iṣlāḥī looks for parallels (e.g. between avarice and licentiousness [vss. 2-4, 15-18\(^{44}\)], both being disruptive of social order).\(^{45}\) draws contrasts (e.g. between the Jews' abandonment of the Shari'ah and the obligation of Muslims to adhere to it [vss. 58-70]).\(^ {46}\) and between the Hypocrites' unwillingness to take part in a war and the Muslims' duty to be prepared to fight when called upon to do so [vss. 71-76]).\(^ {47}\) and notes the inter-

\(^{44}\) The verses referred to in this paragraph are those of S. 4.

\(^{45}\) Iṣlāḥī, Tabābur, 2:34.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 2:90.

\(^{47}\) Ibid., 2:103-104. See also ibid., 2:109-111, for Iṣlāḥī's comment on vss. 77-85.
nal naẓm of individual sections or of certain verses. Also, use of such techniques and search for thematic rather than verbal links for the purpose of establishing naẓm enables Iṣlāhī to see unity of composition in many places in the Qur'ān where a modern scholar might suspect incoherence or disjointedness. In using this approach, Iṣlāhī is following the lead of Farāhī.

2. But this does not mean that Iṣlāhī does no more than mechanically apply Farāhī’s theory to the sūrah on which Farāhī’s commentary does not exist. For one thing, application of a theory like Farāhī’s calls for a creative endeavor. The procedure that Farāhī lays down for discovering a sūrah’s ‘amīdūd is a complex one. It is analytic in one respect and synthetic in another: it involves the breaking down of a sūrah into its constituent parts in order later to knit those parts into a unity—without at any moment compromising the received order of verses in the sūrah. The discovering of the ‘amīdūd of each new sūrah is like taking new territory, for even though the basic strategy of determining the ‘amīdūd be the same, each sūrah presents at least some problems of its own, and the strategy has to be adjusted to suit the peculiar aspects of each sūrah.

But a close look at Iṣlāhī’s treatment of an-Nisā’ will reveal that he has also developed a new technique that helps explain the naẓm of Qur’ānic sūrah, especially Madīnān sūrah. This digression is here necessary in order to explain this technique adequately.

We have already observed that, as a rule, the Madīnān sūrah possess greater thematic diversity than do the Makkān sūrah, and that, structurally, the former are discursive and the latter discrete. We can now address ourselves to the question: Do these differences between the Makkān and Madīnān sūrah have any bearing on the question of a sūrah’s naẓm?

The answer would seem to be in the affirmative. It is easy to see why fewer themes should mean fewer naẓm problems. And a little reflection will show why fewer naẓm problems are raised by a discrete structure, which characterizes many Makkān sūrah. In a discretely structured text, the units of thought presented have a sharper outline, the formal contours of one idea are relatively easily distinguishable from those of another, and the major naẓm problem one faces is that of integrating these thought-units into a whole. In other words, one’s attention is concentrated on the synthetic rather than the analytic process, though the latter does not thereby lose its importance. The synthetic process in the case of such a text is facilitated by the fact that relational categories like those of comparison and contrast (categories that form an essential element of Farāhī’s method) are easier to apply, and the naẓm, to that extent, less problematic to discover. An example of discrete structure would be two passages, juxtaposed to each other, one describing good and the other evil. The existence of a relationship of contrast between the two passages will be readily noticed, and that would explain the naẓm of the passages. It is also clear that this relationship of contrast, once perceived to exist between the two passages, will aid one in establishing that relationship between similar passages occurring anywhere. This, then, is the nature of a large number of Makkān sūrah: a few themes occur in them with great frequency and with a fairly regular degree of structural discreteness, thus making it comparatively easy for one to identify naẓm in many places in those sūrah. Perhaps an example from Makkān sūrah will elucidate the point.

A persistent theme of the Makkān sūrah is that of the warning of the two-fold punishment (destruction in this world and damnation in the next) that the Qur’ān administered to the disbelieving Quraysh of Makkah. The Quraysh insisted on being shown a “sign” or “proof” (‘ayah) of the threatened punishment. To this demand the Qur’ān often replies thus: Muhammad has been sent to present a message that should be judged on its own merits; he is not supposed to show miracles, with which, in fact, if one is genuinely seeking the truth, the universe and human history are replete. A few sets of passages in Makkān sūrah that discuss this theme are given below (the size of the passage in each case is the one given by Iṣlāhī in Tadābbur, to which the notes refer the reader for detailed naẓm explanations):

10:11-12, 13-14.

49See, for example, Iṣlāhī’s comments on vss. 86-100. Ibid., 2:121-123.


51Ibid., 3:263-264, 277.
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11:12-16, 17-24.\(^{52}\)
15:1-15, 16-25.\(^{53}\)
17:58-60, 61-65.\(^{54}\)
21:30-33, 34-43, 44-47.\(^{55}\)
25:45-60, 61-77.\(^{56}\)
26:1-9, 10-68.\(^{57}\)
54:1-8, 9-42.\(^{58}\)
98:1-3, 4-5, 6-8.\(^{59}\)

A study of these sets of passages in the Qurʾān will show that:
a) the passages in each set contain constituents of the aforesaid theme (the theme of the two-fold punishment), though not all the constituents of the theme may be present in each passage in a set; b) the thought-units in almost all passages of a given set are presented discretely, which is to say that a clear break in thought is discernible between the two passages—or any two passages if there are more than two—of a set; c) and some sets of passages (e.g. the last one on the list) are easier of comprehension from a naẓm viewpoint than others (e.g. the first one). The similarity of thematic constituents, the discrete structure, and the varying degrees of comprehensibility (from the viewpoint of naẓm) combine to drive home the point made above, namely, that comprehension of naẓm aspects in certain passages of a Makkī sūrah will aid one in comprehending naẓm aspects in like passages in other Makkī sūrah.

This does not mean, to repeat, that the Mādīnī sūras are altogether devoid of the features of the Makkī sūrah or vice versa. We have already seen, with reference to an-Nisāʾ, that Mādīnī sūrah are quite amenable to Ṣāḥiḥ’s method, something that would not have been possible had the two types of sūrah been completely different. The Mādīnī sūrah, however, do pose a certain naẓm problem that is not posed, at least not in a pronounced

\(^{52}\)Ibid., 3:348, 362 ff.
\(^{53}\)Ibid., 3:589-590, 592-596, 598-600.
\(^{54}\)Ibid., 3:715-716, 757, 758-761, 763-765.
\(^{56}\)Ibid., 4:572, 603, 606 ff., 615.
\(^{57}\)Ibid., 4:627-628, 630-633.
\(^{58}\)Ibid., 7:87-88, 90-95, 96-101, 104 ff.
\(^{59}\)Ibid., 8:474-475, 479-485.

form, by the Makkī. The many themes of a typical Mādīnī sūrah would sometimes appear to fade or melt into one another, thus blurring the distinction between the thought-units. One of the ways in which Ṣāḥiḥ seems to be able to establish naẓm connections in such places is by applying what, for want of a better expression, may be called the technique of isolating the germ idea.

The assumption underlying the technique is that a particular section in a sūrah, dominated as it is by a main idea, may contain another idea in germ form. The germ idea, while perfectly integrated into the main idea of the section, grows to become, or serves as the basis of, the main idea of the next section. A few examples will make this clear. (Again, the section-size in each case is the one established by Ṣāḥiḥ.)

In an-Nisāʾ, the section consisting of vss. 2-10 has as its main idea the responsibilities that a guardian must discharge toward the orphans under his care. But the section also contains (in vs. 7) the germ idea of the Islamic law of inheritance, which becomes the main idea of the next section (vss. 11-14).\(^{60}\) In the section consisting of vss. 19-22, the dominant idea is that of meeting out fair and just treatment to women. But present in the section is the germ idea that the pre-Islamic practice of marrying one’s widowed step-mother is a loathsome practice. This idea then paves the way for a description, in the next section (vss. 23-25), of women one may or may not marry.\(^{61}\) Likewise, the principal idea of another section in the sūrah (vss. 105-115) is that Muslims must not make undue allowances for the Hypocrites and have no soft spot for them in their hearts. The section also has the germ idea that the Hypocrites will end up in hell. The next section (vss. 116-126) explains why the Hypocrites will meet this fate.\(^{62}\)

A few examples from other Mādīnī sūrah may be given. In S. 2, al-Baqarāh (“The Cow”), vss. 215-221 reply to a few questions about the hajj, war, and the spending of wealth in the way of God. At the end of the section is introduced the idea that Muslim men are allowed to marry the mothers of orphans in their charge if that

\(^{60}\)Ibid., 2:28.
\(^{61}\)Ibid., 2:44.
\(^{62}\)Ibid., 2:153-156.
would ensure the welfare of the orphans. This idea becomes the basis for a discussion of the theme of marriage and divorce in the next two sections (vv. 222-231, 232-237). Incidentally, the two sections could have been combined to make one section. In S. 3, al-Imrân (“The Family of Imrân”), the section composed of vv. 64-71 invites the People of the Book to accept Islam.Vs. 69 in this section introduces the germ idea that a particular group from among the People of the Book is trying to mislead Muslims. The next section (vv. 72-76) takes up this idea and gives details of it. In S. 8, al-Anfāl (“Spoils”), the opening section (vv. 1-8) points out some of the marks of true Muslims. It also refers to God’s promise to help the Muslims on the occasion of the Battle of Badr. The next section (9-19) explains how God helped them.66

Iṣlāḥ’s successful application of this technique in many places in Madinan sûras not only solves naẓm problems in those places, it also highlights a characteristic feature of Madinan sûras.

3. A few problems in regard to Iṣlāḥ’s approach need to be addressed. The first has to do with the exact nature of naẓm in Madinan sûras. As before, our main point of reference will be S. 4.

In chapter II we noted that, according to Farāḥ, a discourse possesses true naẓm when it is characterized by order (ḥasan at-ta’ārib), proportion (ḥasan at-tanāsūb), and unity (gawī al-wathlāniyyah). It is this kind of naẓm or niẓām that Farāḥ and Iṣlāḥ seek to discover in the Qur’ānic sûras. For the moment, we are concerned with Iṣlāḥ’s treatment of an-Nisā’, and it would seem that his interpretation of an-Nisā’ either does not sufficiently bring out the second of the three elements of naẓm in the sûrah—proportion—or fails to offer an adequate explanation for its apparent lack of it.

Proportion implies symmetry or balance. Insofar as a building is asymmetrical, or a discourse digressive, it will lack balance. Yet a reading of an-Nisā’ is bound to leave one with the impression that

the sûrah contains a few digressions. Iṣlāḥ does show that a single āmād pervades the sûrah and that the various parts and sections of the sûrah are well-connected. But connection and digression are not mutually exclusive. A discourse may smoothly depart from the main to a side issue and with equal smoothness return to the main issue, and yet, despite its apparent continuity, the discourse will have become digressive.

To take an example from S. 4, the Hypocrites are first alluded to in the sûrah in vs. 60, are explicitly mentioned in vs. 61, and are then made the subject of a lengthy discussion. One feels that a subject that was tangentially introduced has perhaps assumed inordinately large proportions. Would Iṣlāḥ regard this as a digression or not?

To be sure, Iṣlāḥ is conscious of the fact that the Qur’ānic method of presentation might evoke the comment that the Qur’ān is digressive. Referring to the question of the Hypocrites and the other opponents in an-Nisā’, he offers the following explanation:

It should be remembered that the Qur’ān is not simply a collection of legal injunctions, but is also a book that invites people to Islam (da’ātika wa sāhilah). Accordingly, it had to take into account the reaction it provoked at the time it laid down those injunctions. Side by side with such injunctions, therefore, the Qur’ān everywhere deals with the conditions created directly or indirectly by its opponents. Also, from the point of view of spreading the Islamic message, it is imperative that these conditions be taken into account. But people who are unaware of this feature of the Qur’ān wonder why, together with these legal injunctions [in an-Nisā’], the Hypocrites and the opponents have been discussed at such great length.

That is to say, the unity of a sûrah is to be conceived of not merely in terms of presentation of themes in abstracto, but in terms of the practical, dynamic context in which the sûrah was revealed. Is this a concealed admission on Iṣlāḥ’s part that the Qur’ān does in fact depart from what one would normally call a compact treatment of a subject? Iṣlāḥ would probably reply with an emphatic “No,” saying that he has offered, as far as the Qur’ān is concerned, a restatement of the notion of “compact treatment of a subject.” And here is the rub. If it is a restatement, it does not go far enough. It is certainly necessary that a reader of the Qur’ān not lose sight of the dynamic context in which a particular sûrah was

63The word nisā’ in S. 4, vss. 3 and 4, is interpreted by Iṣlāḥ as “the mothers of orphans,” and not as “women” in general, as is usually done by Muslim commentators. See Tadābhur, 2:24-26. See also ibid., 1:475-477, where Iṣlāḥ observes that Qur’ān 2:221 has a similar context and is comparable to Qur’ān 4:2-6.

64Ibid., 1:477, 496.

65Ibid., 1:711-712, 719.

66Ibid., 3:30.

67Farāḥ, Dalā’il, p. 77.

68Iṣlāḥ, Tadābhur, 2:16.
The Sürah as a Unity (I)

oral poetry exists at one and the same time in and for itself and for the whole song.75

It is easy for an oral poet to digress: "... in the adding of one element in a theme to another, the singer [i.e. poet] can stop and fondly dwell upon any single item without losing a sense of the whole."73

It is not being suggested that all of Lord's premises and conclusions are readily applicable to the Qur'an. But the basic point he makes in the quotations given above is worth noting. Lord is saying that the oral tradition has about it a certain flexibility or elasticity that allows the poet to manipulate his material in a freer manner than is possible for a poet working in a written tradition. This is true of the pre-Islamic Arabic poetic tradition. In the qasā'īd ("odes") composed during the Jahilī period, one frequently comes across long passages that do not give an impression of discontinuity having taken place in the poem and yet constitute a digression from the subject in hand. Al-Hārith ibn Hillizah al-Yashkurī, despairing of winning his beloved, tries to divert himself with the thought of his swift and reliable she-camel, and the thought gives him occasion to dwell on the qualities of the camel in the next several verses.74 A classic example is afforded by the poet CAmr ibn al-CAbd, known as Tarafah, who, in his mu'allaqah, introduces his she-camel and then composes about thirty verses to describe her.75

It is true that the Qur'an cannot be likened to pre-Islamic poetry: there are too many differences between the two. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the Qur'an was revealed in the context of an oral tradition, and that, in order to make sense in that tradition, it had to assume certain features characteristic of that tradition. The feature of digression, I believe, is one such feature. The oral medium, by its very nature, is a "relaxed" medium, not a rigorous one, and, in the context of this medium, the concept of proportion is automatically redefined, since things like digression are sanctioned by the medium itself and not regarded as abnormalities. Perhaps we can even reconcile the dynamic context of the

revealed, and to that extent Iṣlāhī's insight is a valuable one. But appeal to context would at best seem to be a partial explanation of a phenomenon that one encounters so frequently in the Qur'an, especially in Madinan sûrah. Sometimes in Madinan sûrah there occurs a series of digressions, as, for example, in the first fifty verses of S. 5, al-Mā'idah ("The Repast")69 Here again Iṣlāhī makes a creditable attempt at explaining naẓm connections between the verses, and points out that the notion of covenant runs through not only these but the rest of the verses of the sûrah as well. But the impression of the Qur'an's having made a number of digressions stays with the reader and one wonders whether the context of al-Mā'idah could warrant so many of them and yet the sûrah, possessed as it may be of some kind of thematic unity, could be credited with tanīṣub or proportion. Can some other explanation of the phenomenon be found?

An explanation might be found in the literary tradition of pre-Islamic Arabia. This tradition was basically poetic-oral in character. Now the demands, strictures, and expectations that a poet has to meet in such a tradition are significantly different from those a poet has to meet in a tradition based on the written word. In his Singer of Tales, Albert Lord compares the techniques of oral and written poetry and finds them to be "contradictory and mutually exclusive."70 Speaking of oral poetry, he remarks that "at a number of points in any [unlettered] song there are forces leading in several directions, any one of which the singer may take."71 Again, writing about the themes of oral poetry, he observes:

Although the themes lead naturally from one to another to form a song which exists as a whole in the singer's mind with Aristotelian beginning, middle, and end, the units within this whole, the themes, have a semi-independent life of their own. The theme in

69 These verses speak of dietary law (1-5); sulh and the importance of reposing faith in God (6-11); the covenants that the People of the Book made with God (12-14) and the need for the People of the Book to accept the Islamic message (15-19); two historical events—Israel's 40-year wandering in the desert (20-26) and Cain's murder of Abel (27-31); capital punishment in Mosaic Law, and the punishment for breaking the Law of God (32-34); the need for Muslims to adhere to the Shari'ah, and the punishment for stealing (35-40); the machinations of Jews and Hypocrites; the Evangel as the book Christians had been instructed to base their decisions on, and the Qur'an as the final criterion for interpreting earlier scriptures (41-50). See ibid., 2:217-219, 224 ff., 238-239, 244-245, 250, 256, 264-265, 272-273, 280, 287-288.
70 Lord, p. 129.
71 Ibid., p. 120.

67Ibid., p. 94.
72Ibid., p. 92.
73Vs. 9:14 in his mu'allaqah ("suspended ode"). See Tibrizl, pp. 434-438. For an English translation, see Arberry, p. 222.
Qur'ān (to which Iṣlāḥī appeals) with the pre-Islamic Arabic literary tradition by saying that, while the latter explains why digression takes place in the Qur'ān at all, the former explains what kind of digression is called for in the specific context of a given sūrah.  

4. Some of the naẓm explanations Iṣlāḥī offers are questionable. He says that vss. 127-130, with which the third part in his analysis of an-Nisā' begins, occupy the particular position they do because they were revealed at a later time in reply to a question about vss. 2-4 of the sūrah. Likewise, he remarks about vs. 176 that it forms a supplement to the sūrah because it was revealed at a later time in response to a question about vss. 11-12 of the sūrah. Iṣlāḥī’s view of the positioning of such explanatory verses can be called in question on two counts.  

First, vss. 127-130 and vs. 176 open with the same formula:

And people ask you for an injunction regarding women. Say: God lays down for you the following injunction … (vs. 127-130).

And people ask you for an injunction regarding the kālalāt [a deceased person with no descendants or descendants alive]. Say: God lays down for you the following injunction … (vs. 176).

One may ask why, despite the obvious similarity in their formulaic structure, vss. 127-130 and vs. 176 were not grouped together, as in done elsewhere in the Qur'ān. In 2:215-219, for example, the formula “they question you …” is used four times, each time to reproduce a question Muḥammad was asked about a certain Qur'ānic injunction. According to Iṣlāḥī, the four questions pertained to four different sets of Qur'ānic verses. Yet the questions, with their formulaic identity, were grouped together. Iṣlāḥī does not explain why vss. 127-130 and vs. 176 of S. 4 should not likewise have been grouped together, or, conversely, why the four questions in 2:215-219 were bracketed together. The point is that Iṣlāḥī makes it sound as if, structurally, vss. 127-130 and vs. 176 in S. 4 must have remained separate because they referred to two different questions. But, as is shown by 2:215-219, the Qur'ān does not follow a strict rule about the positioning of such explanatory verses. Incidentally, the third part of Iṣlāḥī’s division begins at vs. 127, but it is equally possible for it to begin at vs. 135, where the break in the thought is equally sharp.

Also, it is not necessary that a verse that is revealed at a later time in response to a question about another verse be detached from the earlier verse to which it makes reference—another impression one gets from Iṣlāḥī’s comment on vss. 127 and vs. 176 of S. 4. Iṣlāḥī himself remarks about vs. 4 of S. 5 that it was revealed in answer to a question about vs. 3 of the same sūrah, and yet the verses were placed next to each other.

These are perhaps minor points. But, taken together with the point made about digression, they do warn against conceiving of a sūrah’s unity in a rigid and inflexible sense.

5. A fundamental objection to the concept of cāmūd is that opinions about the cāmūd of a sūrah can differ. Two scholars, studying the same sūrah, may arrive at two different, even conflicting, cāmūds, and, as a result, offer divergent interpretations of the sūrah. We have already noticed that Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī themselves have offered different accounts of the cāmūd of a few sūrahān (nos. 66, 77, and 80). The inescapable conclusion seems to be that the use of even identical methodology by two or more scholars will not guarantee identical results. At best what can be said is that, of the several or many cāmūds that may be suggested of a sūrah, the one that best explains the sūrah and satisfactorily answers most of the questions about it will be the proper cāmūd. But even this cāmūd must always remain open to further scrutiny. Thus an element of tentativeness will inhere in any given cāmūd. Once again we see that an ironclad view of naẓm would hardly be tenable.

6. This, however, in no way takes away from the value of the concept of cāmūd. We have already seen, with reference to Iṣlāḥī’s analysis of S. 4, that a properly identified cāmūd will induce coherence in a sūrah that otherwise may appear to be an aggregate of unrelated verses. Appendix B will show how some of the Qur'ānic verses and passages, which are usually regarded by scholars as isolated and disconnected, become, by virtue of the cāmūd, meaningfully integrated into the contexts in which they occur. In fact, the cāmūd does not merely provide a point of convergence for a sūrah’s themes or verses, it often becomes an important determinant of interpretation. Appendix B will also illustrate how the cāmūd may make for a different, and more cogent, Qur'ānic interpretation than

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76Iṣlāḥī, Tadabbur, 2:165.
77Ibid., 2:210-211.
78Ibid., 1:465-474.
The Sūrah as a Unity (1)

the one traditionally accepted. It will, in other words, provide support for the contention of Farāhī and İslāhī that naẓm is exegetically significant.

7. A reader of the Qurʾān will be struck by the fact that the Qurʾān, instead of exhaustively treating one theme in one place before taking up another, keeps coming back to its themes in various sūrahṣ, and he may get the impression that the Qurʾān is repetitive. The Qurʾān views the matter differently. It uses the terms taṣrīf al-āyāt, which signifies not “repetition of verses,” but “presentation of verses (or signs) from various angles.” 80 The concept of camūd also throws light on this feature of taṣrīf. A study, in the light of the camūdṣ of the relevant sūrahṣ, of any major Qurʾānic theme will suggest that, in any given sūrah, only those aspects of the theme are discussed that are apposite to the sūrah’s camūd. Let us take an example.

Among the sūrahṣ that narrate aspects of Abraham’s life and message are Ss. 6, 21, 51, and 60. The camūd of S. 6 is: Islam as the religion of Abraham. The sūrah presents Islam before the Makkān pagans, saying that Muhammad is preaching the same religion that Abraham stood for, and that, as a result, they should have no hesitation in accepting Islam. 81 Vss. 74-83 of the sūrah relate an incident in which Abraham rejects the sun, the moon, and stars as objects worthy of worship. Since the sūrah invites the Makkāns to embrace Islam, the incident, through its appeal to logic and history, is meant to facilitate the Makkāns’ conversion to Islam. 82

The camūd of S. 21 is: impending punishment for the disbelieving Makkāns. 83 Contrary to S. 6, S. 21 uses a threatening tone, and all the historical evidence it adduces in support of its thesis has a decisive ring about it. Vss. 51-70 show Abraham breaking the images made by his unbelieving people. The incident is not only consistent with the sūrah’s camūd, it also has the sūrah’s tone. 84

The camūd of S. 51, as we noted earlier in the chapter, is: reward for the virtuous and punishment for the wicked in the here-

80 The expression taṣrīf ar-riyāḥ (2:164; 45:5) means “to cause winds to blow in different directions.”

81 İslāhī, Tadabbur, 2:385, 387.

82 See ibid., 2:460-461, 466 ff.

83 See ibid., 4:253.

84 See ibid., 4:296 ff.

85 Ibid., 6:575.

86 See ibid., 6:603, 606 ff.

87 Ibid., 7:319.

88 See ibid., 7:328.

89 Ibid., 5:67, 72 ff.

90 Ibid., 5:177-179, 191 ff.

91 Ibid., 7:279-280, 283 ff.
mation found in works like Asbāb an-Nuzūl by Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Waḥīdī (d. 468/1076), and a book of the same title by Suyūṭī. Jane Waḥīdī and Suyūṭī list, under isolated verses, aḥādīth purporting to relate incidents that “occasioned” the revelation of the verses in question. That certain incidents may have caused the revelation of certain verses is quite understandable. But there are some problems with what actually passes under the name of asbāb an-nuzūl, especially when these asbāb an-nuzūl are regarded as absolutely indispensable to Qurʾān exegesis. For example, asbāb an-nuzūl for all the verses of the Qurʾān are not available, and those that are available are of varying degrees of authenticity and not infrequently conflict with one another. Quite often, the asbāb an-nuzūl would make a sūrah look like a completely disjointed discourse even when an obvious unity or coherence informs the sūrah. It is probably for reasons like these that Iṣlāḥi, like Farāhī, does not attach much significance to the asbāb an-nuzūl. But the most important reason why he does not do so is that, like Farāhī, he regards the Qurʾān as essentially self-explanatory. Tadabbur is eloquent testimony to the large measure of success Iṣlāḥi has achieved in presenting a cogent interpretation of the Qurʾān without having recourse to the asbāb an-nuzūl.

Summary

The concept of the unity of the sūrah, as understood by Farāhī and Iṣlāḥi, means that each sūrah is a thematically complete discourse that has been presented in a coherent structural framework. The received verse-arrangement in any sūrah is accepted without any alterations, and is in fact considered indispensable to a sūrah’s naẓm.

Besides propounding the concept of the unity of the sūrah, Farāhī laid down a method for arriving at that unity. Using that method, he wrote a complete commentary on a few sūrah s. It was Iṣlāḥi who successfully applied Farāhī’s method to all the sūrah s of the Qurʾān. In so doing, he developed a technique of his own that is especially useful in bringing out naẓm aspects of Madīnan sūrah s.

The notion of ʿamūd imparts an organic dimension to the

92 For Suyūṭī’s comparison of his book with Waḥīdī’s, see Suyūṭī, Asbāb, 1:7-8.

93 See Waḥīdī, pp. 3-4; and Suyūṭī, Asbāb, 1:5.
Chapter IV

THE SÛRAH AS A UNITY (2)

In chapter I we saw that a number of modern Muslim scholars regard the Qur'ân as a book endowed with coherence. Two of the 20th-century Qur'ân exegetes who have made significant attempts to present the sûrahs as unities are: Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabâtabâ'î (1312-1402/1903-1981) of Iran and Sayyid Qûbî (1324-1386/1906-1966) of Egypt. In this chapter we shall compare Islâhî's concept of the unity of the sûrah1 with theirs.

Naṣm Views of Tabâtabâ'î and Sayyid Qûbî

We shall begin by reproducing the ideas of Tabâtabâ'î and Sayyid Qûbî on naṣm.

Tabâtabâ'î

As the speech of God, Tabâtabâ'î writes in Al-Mizân fi Taṣfîr al-Qur'ân, the Qur'ân must possess unity (wâhâ dah). The unity of a discourse derives, according to him, from “the unity of its meaning,” and it is this “unified meaning” that the Qur'ân chiefly aims to put across. He then defines this unified meaning as the guiding (hidâyah) of mankind to the right path.2

Next he points out that the division of the Qur'ân into a large number of sûrahs signifies that each sûrah has “a kind of unity of composition and a wholeness that is to be found neither in the separate parts of a sûrah nor in two sûrahs taken together.” He concludes:

From this we conclude that the sûrahs have divergent aims, that each sûrah is intended to convey a specific meaning, to serve a specific purpose (gharad), on the achievement of which alone will the sûrah achieve its fulfillment.3

Thus, before presenting his interpretation of a sûrah, Tabâtabâ'î usually provides a brief account of the sûrah's gharad. As a rule, he divides a sûrah into a number of sections and tries to establish links between them. The gharad of S. 4 is stated by him as follows:

The gharad of the sûrah is to describe the rules governing matrimonial life—like the number of wives [one is allowed to marry], women one may not marry—and the rules of inheritance. Also discussed in it are some other rules, like those pertaining to ritual prayer, war, the [bearing of] several kinds of testimony, trade, etc. The People of the Book are also discussed.4

Tabâtabâ'î considers the gharad of a sûrah important enough to reject on its basis an interpretation of a verse if, in his view, the interpretation does not agree with the sûrah's gharad.5 He stresses the point that the Qur'ân is self-explanatory, and, generally, does not rely on the occasions of revelation in giving his basic interpretation of Qur'ânic verses, these occasions being "applications" (taṣqîq or hukm taṣqîq) of the verses already revealed and not "actual causes" (ashbâ haqlâqiyyah) of the revelation of particular verses. Often, however, he cites them in separate sections of his commentary after having presented his basic interpretation.

Sayyid Qûbî

Sayyid Qûbî firmly believes that each Qur'ânic sûrah is a unity, and he repeats the idea a number of times in Fi Zîlîl al-Qur'ân. The following is a typical passage:

From this it will become obvious to one who lives in the shade of the Qur'ân that each of its [Qur'ân's] sûrahs has a distinct personality. It is a personality that possesses a soul. In the company of the soul lives a heart, as if it were living in the company of the soul

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1Although the concept of the sûrah, as understood by Islâhî, originated with Farâhî, we shall here refer to it as Islâhî's, and that for two reasons. First, by creatively applying it to a very large number of Qur'ânic sûrahs, Islâhî has in a sense "acquired" the concept. Second, throughout this chapter a major basis of comparison of Islâhî with Tabâtabâ'î and Sayyid Qûbî will be the commentaries written by the three on S. 4, an-Nîsa', on which Farâhî's commentary does not exist.

2Tabâtabâ'î, 1:16.

3Ibid. This is reminiscent of one of the arguments Farâhî advances for the existence of naṣm in the Qur'ânic sûrahs. See chapter III.

4Tabâtabâ'î, 4:134.

5See, for example, ibid., 4:135-136.

6Ibid., 1:6, 8-9.

of a living being possessed of distinct traits and characteristics. And it [sūrah] has one or several principal themes which are tied to a specific central thesis (mīhwar, "pivot, axis"). And it has an atmosphere of its own, an atmosphere that affects all its themes, making the sūrah's context approach these themes from specific angles. The result is a harmony induced between the sūrah's themes in accordance with the sūrah's atmosphere. And it [sūrah] has a musical rhythm or beat, which, if it changes during the course of the sūrah, changes in deference to certain specific thematic considerations. This is the general impress or character of all the Qur'ānic sūrah.

As an example, we will see how Sayyid Qūb describes S. 4 as having a distinct identity. He writes:

This sūrah represents part of the effort that Islam made to establish a Muslim community and raise a Muslim society, and to protect that community and preserve that society. It offers an example of the Qur'ān's involvement with the new society.

And:

The sūrah tries to eradicate the features of Jāhili society—from whose midst the Muslim group was picked up—and get rid of its residual elements; to fashion a Muslim society and purify it of the vestiges of Jāhiliyyah; and to bring into relief its special identity—at the same time that it strives to mobilize [Muslims] to protect the distinctive character of their society.

But these quotations would describe, according to Sayyid Qūb, not only the mīhwar of S. 4, but, in a broad sense, the hadaf ("objective") of the entire Qur'ān as well. In his commentary on S. 5 Sayyid Qūb states this general objective of the Qur'ān in these words:

From this it will become clear that, like the three long sūrah [nos. 2, 3, 4] that precede it, this sūrah deals with various themes, the link between them being the worthy hadaf for the attainment of which the whole Qur'ān was revealed, namely: to raise a community, to establish a State, and to organize a society on the basis of a special creed, a definite outlook, and a new structure....

Typically, Sayyid Qūb would divide a sūrah into several or many sections and try to see thematic links between them. He does not regard the asbūb an-nuṣūl as a major exegetical source; in fact he does not hesitate to criticize them if they happen to contradict the results of his own study of the Qur'ān.

Comparison with Iṣlāḥī

At first sight, the three exegetes—Iṣlāḥī, Ṭabāṭabā’ī, and Sayyid Qūb—appear to have a great deal in common. All of them look at a sūrah as a whole and try to determine its c’umid (Iṣlāḥī), mīhwar (Sayyid Qūb) or gharad (Ṭabāṭabā’ī). Whenever possible, they analyze a sūrah into a number of sections and explain how they are interconnected. Again, all of them rely chiefly on the Qur’ānic text for interpreting the Qur’ān, considering the occasions of revelation to be theoretically dispensable as an exegetical aid. But, in fact, the differences between the three writers are no less striking than the similarities. The differences that set Iṣlāḥī apart from the other two are especially notable, and are discussed below.

Thematic Precision

Iṣlāḥī’s description of the central themes of the sūrah is more precise than Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s or Sayyid Qūb’s. By a more precise description is meant not one that uses fewer words to express the themes of the sūrah, but one that brings out the essential thesis of a sūrah with greater completeness, accuracy, and distinctiveness. To take the example of S. 4. Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s statement of the sūrah’s gharad is obviously sketchy and inadequate. Sayyid Qūb’s mīhwar of the sūrah is more comprehensive, but, as is clear from the quotation about Sayyid Qūb’s view of the hadaf of the whole of the Qur’ān, the particular mīhwar of S. 4 is hardly distinguishable from the general hadaf of the Qur’ān. In Iṣlāḥī, on the other hand, the c’umid of S. 4 aptly sums up the basic theme of the sūrah and is also sūrah-specific.

As another example, we will take S. 18, al-Kahf (“The Cave”). The bulk of the sūrah deals with five stories: the Sleepers in the Cave (vss. 9-26); two gardens (vss. 32-49); Adam and Satan (50:59);

See, for example, ibid., 2:832.

The summary of the sūrah given in chapter III may be used for purposes of reference.

8 Sayyid Qūb, 1:27-28. For more examples, see ibid., 1:555; 2:833.
9 Ibid., 1:555.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 2:825.
inform the whole of the surah and unite all the verses into an integrated whole. This cannot be said of Sayyid Qutb’s miḥwar, much less of Tabataba’i’s gharad: the latter is (as is frequently the case in Tabataba’i’s commentary) sketchy, while the former is a little too undifferentiated and falls short of bringing out the essence of this particular surah.

This brings us to a consideration of the method each of these writers uses to determine the central theme of a surah. Tabataba’i’s usual method of arriving at the gharad consists in examining the surah’s beginning, end, and “the general course” (as-siyāq al-jārī). Sometimes he contents himself with looking at “the generality of the verses” (Cāmmat al-ayāt) in a surah. In either case, it is difficult to determine the gharad of a surah with great precision. This probably explains why Tabataba’i is sometimes led to say that a given surah does not have a single identifiable gharad, despite the statement (noted above) he makes to the contrary. At least once in his commentary, in discussing the gharad of S. 9, he doubts the importance of discovering the gharad: “In any case, from the exegetical point of view, no great advantage would accrue from this discussion [about the surah’s gharad].”

Compared with Tabataba’i, Sayyid Qutb has a much clearer perception of the central idea of a surah. But with Sayyid Qutb we face problems of a different kind. For one thing, he does not always make a distinction between the miḥwar of a particular surah and the hadaf of the Qur’an as a whole. For another, he seems to hold that the distinctiveness of a surah’s character may derive sometimes from the surah’s content but sometimes also from the surah’s atmosphere, mood, and rhythmic and musical qualities. For example, he says about S. 54 that “the thematic contents of the surah” are the same as found in a number of Makkah surahs, and then adds:

But these very themes have been set forth in this surah in a special way, which transforms it into something completely new. They are presented with tempestuous fury, in a manner that slays and tears

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14Tabataba’i, 13:236.
15Sayyid Qutb, 4:2257.
16Islahi, Tadabbur, 4:9.
17See, for example, Tabataba’i, 16:98. For more examples, see ibid., 10:134; 16:208.
18See, for example, ibid., 5:157. See also ibid., 12:204.
19Ibid., 9:146.
20Ibid., 6:3424.
The Sūrah as a Unity (2)

But Sayyid Qūb's description of the "distinctive character" of a number of other sūrah is (e.g. Ss. 50,23 51,24 53,25 56,26 and 6927) is couched in similar, even identical terms. The problem is that things like mood and atmosphere would hardly seem to constitute a sure basis for distinguishing those sūrah from one another that have a similar mood and atmosphere, since the expressions one can use to describe such features are bound to be vague and nebulous. This fact is nowhere more evident in Fī Ṭilāl al-Qurʿān than in the general Introduction Sayyid Qūb provides to Ss. 78-114, which form the 30th and last juzʿ ("part"; pl. ajza) in the traditional division of the Qurʿān (a division that Sayyid Qūb adheres to, but is criticized by Farāhī,28 and completely disregarded by Iṣlāḥī in his Tadabbur). Most of these sūrah are Makkāni and appear to have common themes. Sayyid Qūb attempts to draw distinctions among them on the basis of mood and atmosphere, images and rhythm, etc., found in them, but obscenity rather than clarity is the result,29 and the introductions he later provides to the individual sūrah of this group do not greatly help the situation.

As against Ṭabāṭabāʾī and Sayyid Qūb, Iṣlāḥī offers pithy, sharply delineated ʾamūds of the sūrah. His attempt in the case of each sūrah is to arrive at an ʾamūd that would sum up the sūrah and, at the same time, mark the sūrah off from the others. It is in a cognitively apprehended theme or idea that he looks for a sūrah's ʾamūd. That is, he tries to distinguish one sūrah from another on a conceptual basis, and accepts a theme or idea as ʾamūd only after it

has effectively knit the sūrah's verses into a coherent whole in the context peculiar to the sūrah.

It is true that Iṣlāḥī often attributes the same ʾamūd to more than one sūrah. But the ʾamūds he suggests of such sūrah do not thereby become less distinct from each other, for in such cases he invariably provides some kind of concrete detail that clearly sets one sūrah apart from the others. For example, he will indicate the particular aspect of an ʾamūd that a sūrah takes up to the exclusion of other aspects, which may be discussed in other sūrah.30 Or he will point out that a sūrah, while it shares its ʾamūd with others, becomes distinct from them by virtue of the line of argument it takes to present the same ʾamūd.31

Structural Integration

We shall now compare Iṣlāḥī's view of the sectional division of a sūrah and the linear connection between a sūrah's verses with Ṭabāṭabāʾī's and Sayyid Qūb's view of the same. Again we shall take S. 4 as our point of reference.

Iṣlāḥī divides the sūrah into twenty-three sections, Ṭabāṭabāʾī into thirty-one, and Sayyid Qūb into sixteen. At several points, Iṣlāḥī's sectional division coincides with Ṭabāṭabāʾī's (vss. 1, 11-14, 19-22, 71-76, 101-104) or Sayyid Qūb's (vss. 36-43, 44-57, 58-70); all three writers put vs. 176 in a section by itself. But there are a few significant differences between the approach of Iṣlāḥī and the approaches of the other two writers. We shall first compare Iṣlāḥī with Ṭabāṭabāʾī.

From his analysis of S. 4 (and other sūrah) one gets the impression that Ṭabāṭabāʾī would create a new section at the slightest variation that seems to occur in the theme of a sūrah. In his breakdown of S. 4, vss. 31, 43, and 135 each make up a separate section,32 whereas in Iṣlāḥī's breakdown they are parts (and, in my view, well-integrated parts) of larger sections.33 Iṣlāḥī's attempt seems to be to include in a section as many verses as would be held together by a common idea and to create a new section only when

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22Ibid., 6:3425.
23Ibid., 6:3356-3357.
24Ibid., 6:3391.
25Ibid., 6:3404.
26Ibid., 6:3461-3462.
27Ibid., 6:3674-3675.
28On the ground that it causes an unnatural division of the sūrah. See Farāhī, Majmaʿ al, p. 61.
29Sayyid Qūb, 6:3800-3802.
30See, for example, Iṣlāḥī, Tadabbur, 7:11 (S. 52) and 7:45 (S. 53), and 7:429 (S. 65) and 7:451 (S. 66).
31See, for example, ibid., 4:9 (S. 18) and 4:85 (S. 19), 4:571 (S. 25) and 4:627 (S. 26), and 4:705 (S. 27) and 4:775 (S. 28).
32Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 4:323 (S. 4), 359 (S. 31); 5:108 (S. 43).
33Iṣlāḥī, 2:59-60 (S. 4), 74.76 (S. 31), 178-179 (S. 43).
The Sūrah as a Unity (2)

the break in ideas is a definite one. To illustrate the difference between Iṣlāḥī and Ṭabātabā‘ī, the former includes vss. 15-18 of S. 4 in one section, while the latter divides them into two (vss. 15-16, 17-18). The verses deal with the theme of fornication, lay down (the initial) punishment for the crime, and state that the persons guilty of it should be allowed to go free if they repent. Ṭabātabā‘ī’s decision to make a separate section of vss. 17-18 was probably governed by the fact that it is these two verses, rather than vs. 15-16, that describe what sincere tawbah (“repentance”) is. Iṣlāḥī combined the four verses into one section presumably because the word tawbah has already occurred in vs. 16, and also because the particle innamā (“but then, yet, however”) in vs. 17 imparts to the two sets of vss. (15-16) and (17-18) an immediacy of connection that is best preserved by making one section of all the four verses. The same difference in approach is evident from the two writers’ treatment of vss. 135-152, which form one section in Iṣlāḥī but four in Ṭabātabā‘ī.

But this does not mean that Ṭabātabā‘ī would always divide a set of verses into more sections than would Iṣlāḥī. The reverse is sometimes true. For example, vss. 105-126 of S. 4 are one section in Ṭabātabā‘ī but two in Iṣlāḥī. Vs. 115 describes the punishment for opposing the Prophet. Both Ṭabātabā‘ī and Iṣlāḥī agree that vs. 116 gives reasons for this punishment. To Ṭabātabā‘ī, this connection between vs. 115 and vs. 116 calls for the inclusion of vs. 116 (together with the next ten verses) in the same section that vs. 115 is in. Iṣlāḥī, however, groups vss. 116-126 into a different section. It is difficult to say whether it is more appropriate to make one or two sections of the verses, but the two sections of Iṣlāḥī have at least one merit: they take into account the grammatical change of person that takes place from the one to the other section. Vss. 105-115 primarily address the Prophet, whereas vss. 116-126 chiefly talk about his opponents. Thus one consideration that would seem to govern Iṣlāḥī’s, but perhaps not Ṭabātabā‘ī’s, sectional division is that of a significant change of person, tone, and mood in the sūrah.

While Ṭabātabā‘ī divides a sūrah into too many sections, Sayyid Qūṭ divides it into too few. In general, Sayyid Qūṭ is perhaps the least rigorous of the three writers when it comes to making a sectional division of a sūrah. The most striking evidence of this is afforded by the fact that he lets the traditional juz’-division of the Qurʾān influence his sectional division. The division of the Qurʾān into thirty jāz’ is a quantitative one and is meant to enable a reader to complete one recitation of the Qurʾān in a month. It is not designed to accommodate thematic breaks in the Qurʾānic text, unless coincidentally. At eleven points in Fī Zilāl al-Qurʾān (twice in S. 4, at vss. 23 and 147) Sayyid Qūṭ’s sectional division of the sūrah has to suit the juz’ of the Qurʾān, irrespective of whether that division is or is not justified on its own grounds. Neither Ṭabātabā‘ī nor Iṣlāḥī pays any consideration to the juz’ while analyzing a sūrah.

In regard to making a sectional division of a sūrah, therefore, Iṣlāḥī’s approach would seem to be more methodical, and his sections more coherent and compact, than Ṭabātabā‘ī’s or Sayyid Qūṭ’s.

Iṣlāḥī also succeeds better in maintaining a linear connection between the verses and sections of a sūrah. Ṭabātabā‘ī, while usually concerned with interconnecting the verses of a sūrah, would not claim that all the verses of a sūrah form an uninterrupted chain. “Most of [its verses],” he writes of S. 4, “are not unconnected.” Here he not only concedes that some of the verses in the sūrah may lack connection with one another, he also speaks in unsure terms (“. . . not unconnected”), which, in fact, frequently characterizes his utterances about linear connection in a sūrah. Again, sometimes he is content with establishing a tenuous connection—“a semblance of connection,” to use his own words—between verse-passages; sometimes he rejects the idea that a connection between certain verses or sections can be established; and sometimes he simply makes no attempt to establish a connection. Sayyid Qūṭ takes pains to interconnect verses and passages in a sūrah. But his chief endeavor seems to be to relate all the verses in a sūrah to the sūrah’s main theme, and, in the process, he some-

34Ibid., 2:173, 178 ff.
37Jaz’ 2-11, 13.
38Ṭabātabā‘ī, 4:134.
39See, for example, ibid., 4:323, 387.
40Ibid., 4:316.
41See, for example, ibid., 4:360.
42See, for example, ibid., 4:153; 5:19, 45, 108, 111, 124. One may conclude that, in fact, an unbroken linear connection between a sūrah’s verses is not essential to a sūrah’s unity.
times neglects to establish a linear connection between verses and passages. For example, he remarks about the section composed of vss. 105-113 of S. 4 that it illustrates the Qur'ān's attempt to purify the Muslim community of residual pagan attitudes, such purification being a main concern of S. 4. But he does not explain how this section is connected with the one that precedes it and why it occupies the position it does in the sûrah. The same observation can be made about his treatment of at least two other sections (vss. 135-147, 148-170) and many individual verses in S. 4.

To Išlāḥī, a clear and unbroken linear connection between a sûrah's verses and sections is integral to the sûrah's unity, and he makes a sustained attempt to establish such a connection. The verses of a sûrah thus not only come to bear a relationship to its central theme, they also represent, through the unbroken chain they make up, the logical development of that theme. Linear structure, in other words, enters into the thematic structure of a sûrah, and, in the final analysis, the two become indivisible.

Summary

A comparison of Išlāḥī's view of the sûrah as a unity with the similar views of Ṭabātabā'ī and Sayyid Quţ shows that the sûrah acquires greater thematic precision and a better structural integration in Išlāḥī than it does in the other two exegetes.

Chapter V

THE SÛRAH PAIRS

The concept of the pairing of the sûrahs is original to Išlāḥī. According to Išlāḥī, the Qur'ānic sûrahs in their present arrangement are, as a rule, paired. That is, just as, on one level, each sûrah is an integrated whole and is distinct from all others, so, on another level, all sûrahs exist in the form of pairs, each pair composed of two closely matched sûrahs and distinct from the other pairs. In itself a self-contained unit, a sûrah, as a member of a pair, becomes complete only when it is taken in conjunction with the other member of the pair.

As a proof of the existence of the pattern of paired sûrahs in the Qur'ān, Išlāḥī points out that a number of sûrahs look like twins, e.g. Ss. 2 and 3, and 113 and 114. He also points out that Muḥammad used to recite in ritual prayer certain sûrahs as pairs, e.g. Ss. 61 and 62, 75 and 76, and 87 and 88, another indication of the pairing of the sûrahs. That certain sûrahs appear to be forming obvious pairs will not escape the notice of even a casual reader of the Qur'ān. That Muḥammad often recited, in prayer, certain sûrahs in pairs is also well known. But Išlāḥī has developed the notion of paired sûrahs into an elaborate concept and given it an extended application, which results in some interesting insights into the composition of the Qur'ān. The concept forms an integral part of Išlāḥī's naqm theory, and, as such, is regarded by him as essential to the understanding of the Qur'ān. In fact, Išlāḥī holds, on the basis of 15:87 and 39:23 that the principle of sûrah pairing is sanctioned by the Qur'ān itself, a question that we will take up in the next chapter. In this chapter a description of Išlāḥī's concept of sûrah pairing is followed by a critical assessment of his contribution.

Sûrah Pairs: Synoptic Analysis

The vast majority of the sûrahs—82 out of 114—are unambiguously described by Išlāḥī as constituting pairs. He seems to imply

1Išlāḥī, Tuhafāt, 1:xiv.

2See, for example, Muslim, "Kitāb al-Jumu`ah, Bāb Mā Yawra'u fl Yawm al-Jumu`ah"; Nasa'i, "Kitāb Ḥibb al-Salāh, Bāb al-Qir`ah fl Zuhr"; Dārīnī, "Kitāb as-Salāh, Bāb Qadri at-Qir`ah fl Zuhr."
that another 16 surahs also fall into this category. Three surahs are described as “supplementary,” in the sense that they explain certain important themes presented only briefly in the immediately preceding surahs. Allowing for the exceptional position of S. 1, this leaves twelve surahs unaccounted for. The specifics for each of these categories are as follows:


2. Although Islahi does not specify them as paired, his description of the following surahs suggests that he considers them to be linked in the following way: 4:5; 8:9; 14:15; 40:41; 58:59; 65:66; 99:100; 111:112.4

3. S. 24 is supplementary to S. 23,5 and S. 49 to S. 48.6 S. 33 is supplementary to an entire surah group.7

4. S. 1, al-Fatiha (“The Opening”), is prefatory to the Qur’an (and also to surah group I, of which it is a part). As such, it does not need another surah to form a pair with.8

This leaves Ss. 46, 47, 48, 54, 55, 56, 57, 60, 63, 64, 83, and 84 unaccounted for. Islahi’s treatment of these surahs raises certain problems which we shall discuss later.

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3. The numbers outside the parentheses refer to surahs, those inside to volume and page(s) in Tadabbur: 2:3 (1:611-616); 6-7 (2:591); 10-11 (3:347); 12-13 (3:509); 16-17 (3:713); 18-19 (4:85); 20-21 (4:253); 22-23 (4:431); 25-26 (4:627); 27-28 (4:775); 29-30 (5:67); 31-32 (5:149); 34-35 (5:345); 36-37 (5:447); 38-39 (5:553); 42-43 (6:199); 44-45 (6:297); 50-51 (6:575); 52-53 (7:45); 61-62 (7:349); 67-68 (7:505); 69-70 (7:559); 71-72 (7:699); 73-74 (8:17, 37); 75-76 (8:99); 77-78 (8:151); 79-80 (8:191); 81-82 (8:235); 85-86 (8:297); 87-88 (8:325); 89-90 (8:365); 91-92 (8:397); 93-94 (8:409, 423); 95-96 (8:449); 97-98 (8:473); 101-102 (8:519); 103-104 (8:543); 105-106 (8:569); 107-108 (8:579); 109-110 (8:615); 113-114 (8:671).

4. Ibid., 4:5 (2:9-10, 215-216); 8-9 (3:113); 14-15 (3:589); 40-41 (6:71); 58-59 (7:279); 65-66 (7:429-430, 451); 99-100 (8:489, 497); 111-112 (8:644).

5. Ibid., 1:xxiv, 4:491.

6. Ibid., 1:xxiv, 6:479.

7. Ibid., 5:177.

8. Ibid., 1:xxiv. See also ibid., 1:26-27.
same thesis. Ss. 12 and 13 both state that good ultimately triumphs over evil. But while S. 12 substantiates this thesis with historical evidence (the story of Joseph), S. 13 appeals to reason and phenomena of nature to make the same point.\textsuperscript{13} Another example of this form of complementarity is found in Ss. 75 and 76. Both surahs deal with the necessity of human accounting on the Day of Judgment. But S. 75 cites human conscience as the basis for the accountability, whereas S. 76 presents the faculty of human reason as evidence, since man must keep one account for his use of that faculty.\textsuperscript{14}

4. Difference in Emphasis. In some cases each of the two surahs in a pair emphasizes different aspects of the same theme. Ss. 2 and 3 provide a good example. Both deal with the theme of faith and faith-oriented conduct, the emphasis in S. 2 falls on faith, in S. 3 on faith-oriented conduct. Both discuss the People of the Book, S. 2 focusing on Jews, S. 3 on Christians. Both present arguments based on natural phenomena as well as on earlier scriptures, but S. 2 chiefly presents arguments of the first type, S. 3 of the second type.\textsuperscript{15}

5. Premise and Conclusion. Some surahs are complementary to each other in the sense that one of them states a premise while the other draws a conclusion. This is the case with Ss. 105 and 106 and also with Ss. 107 and 108. S. 105 reminds the Quraysh of God's protection of the Ka'bah against a foreign invasion. The conclusion drawn by the next surah is that the Quraysh ought to worship only the Lord of the Ka'bah.\textsuperscript{16} Likewise, S. 107 indicts the Quraysh for being unworthy custodians of the Ka'bah, and S. 108 pronounces the punishment: dismissal from the custodianship.\textsuperscript{17}

6. Unity of Opposites. Sometimes one surah in a pair deals with a theme that appears to be the exact opposite of the theme dealt with in the other surahs in the pair, but the two themes resolve into a unity because they are in fact no more than the positive and negative sides of the same theme. For example, S. 65 tells Muslims how to observe the hudud ("bounds, prescriptions") of God in a relationship of hostility with others, S. 66 tells them how to observe these hudud in a relationship of love.\textsuperscript{18} To take another example, S. 103 portrays people who possess moral excellence and will therefore achieve salvation, and the following surah depicts people who are suffering from moral sickness and will therefore be condemned.\textsuperscript{19} In each of these pairs, the member surahs deal with the positive and negative aspects of the same moral category.

Isla'h sees other types of complementarity than those listed above. Also, some of the examples cited could be placed in more than one category. But the above account should give a sufficiently clear idea of how, according to Isla'h, two self-contained surahs become, as members of a pair, complementary units in a new whole.

Adjacency and Order

In Isla'h's scheme a surah pair must be composed of adjacent surahs only; surahs at one or more removes from each other may not form a pair. Also, Isla'h regards as significant the particular order of the surahs constituting a pair, offering Ss. 2 and 3 as an example. As noted above, S. 2 deals with the theme of faith, discusses Jews, and presents arguments from nature, while S. 3 deals with the practical implications of faith, discusses Christians, and presents arguments based on earlier scriptures. Since faith precedes the practice of faith, Jews are historically anterior to Christians, and arguments from nature, being of a general character, have a wider appeal than do arguments from scriptures and are logically prior to the latter, Isla'h concludes that S. 2 should precede S. 3, as is actually the case in the Qur'an.\textsuperscript{20}

Supplementary Surahs

Isla'h does not think that the existence of supplementary surahs infringes the principle of surah pairing. In fact he seems to regard these surahs as reinforcing his naqza theory. It must be owing to naqza considerations, he seems to be saying, that a certain point, raised in one surah, is discussed in detail in a supplementary surah, for a detailed discussion of it in the earlier surah might have impaired this surah's naqza. Moreover, a supplementary surah is so closely allied with the preceding surah that, for all practical pur-

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 3:509.
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 8:71-72, 99.
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 1:614-615.
\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 8:555-556, 569-570.
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., 8:579-580, 589-590.
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., 7:429-430, 451.
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., 8:543.
\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 1:615-616.
poses, it is part of that surah and does not need another surah with which to form a pair.  

Critical Appraisal

With his concept of surah pairs, İslahi introduces a new element of complexity into Farahi's nazm theory. Farahi often talks about the connections between surahs, but he is primarily concerned with explaining the nazm of individual surahs. Going beyond this, İslahi attempts to show that the Qur'an possesses nazm at the level of surah pairs as well. After a careful comparative study of the nazm of the individual surahs, he has constructed an elaborate system in which he tries to account for exceptions to what he sees as a regularly applied principle. What are the strengths and weaknesses of İslahi's concept?

1. To begin with, the concept reinforces the essential thesis of chapter III, namely, that the Qur'an possesses method and coherence. By highlighting the complementary character of the Qur'an surahs, İslahi advances a strong argument for his surah pairs. The complementarity of surahs has a two-fold significance, thematic and structural.

    On the thematic level, the notion of complementarity presents the 'amid and contents of the paired surahs in a sharper outline. In chapter III we compared Farahi's and İslahi's statements about the 'amid of S. 66 and remarked that the latter's statement is the more accurate. The greater accuracy is perhaps explained by the comparison, or contrast, drawn by İslahi between the two surahs' amid (see above). The notion of complementarity also explains why some surahs make statements without substantiating them, set down principles without sufficiently illustrating them, and present only certain types of proofs. It is in the companion surahs that one must look for substantiation of the statements, illustration of the principles, and other types of proofs.

    On the structural level, the complementarity of surahs clarifies certain aspects of the structure of Qur'an surahs. Sometimes the amount of space devoted to a certain theme in a surah may strike one as disproportionately small. In the companion surah, however, the theme will probably be discussed in greater detail. What is dis-
supplementary to Ss. 59. But Išlāḥī’s description of it does not provide any indication of that; neither does the sūrah’s content.

The position of Ss. 63 and 64 is not clear either. The two preceding sūrahs (61 and 62) form a pair, as do the two following ones (65 and 66). If Ss. 63 and 64 formed another pair, there would be no problem. But at one point Išlāḥī seems to consider S. 63 as supplementary to S. 62.27 If this is the case, S. 64 cannot form a pair with S. 63. If it is made supplementary to S. 63, we will have the odd result of one supplementary sūrah supplementing another. As if to compound the difficulty, Išlāḥī says that Ss. 65 and 66 are supplementary to S. 64.28 There seems to be a certain lack of clarity in Išlāḥī’s terminology at this point. The expressions he generally uses to describe a supplementary sūrah are takmilah, tatimmah, and damimah,29 all three words meaning “supplement” or “appendix.” But sometimes he uses these expressions loosely, that is, for sūrahs that are not “supplementary” in the strict sense of the word. His statement that Ss. 65 and 66 are supplementary (takmilah and tatimmah) to S. 64 thus complicates matters. S. 83 is likewise called by him supplementary to S. 82,30 though elsewhere he seems to imply that it is a companion to S. 84.31

3. According to Išlāḥī, only adjacent sūrahs may form pairs. But the rule of adjacency seems to break down at least at a few points. Ss. 77 and 78 are a pair. But Išlāḥī himself observes that the first of these bears a marked similarity to S. 51 on the one hand and to S. 55 on the other.32 Ss. 69 and 70 are yet another pair. But Išlāḥī notes that S. 69 closely resembles Ss. 56 and 68.33 Could one therefore suggest that the rule of adjacency be set aside as an overriding principle and sūrahs like 51 and 77, 55 and 71, and 56 and 69 be considered as pairs? On the other hand, and as an argument against

the foregoing, one could maintain that at least as far as the issue of the composition of the Qur’ān is concerned, the question of similarity in content matter between non-adjacent sūrahs is an issue quite different from that of the existence of pairs of adjacent sūrahs. The position taken on this issue would also decide whether one would want to explore the possibility that some sūrahs form triplets or even quadruplets. Išlāḥī’s own account of the sūrahs does not wholly exclude such a possibility, since at times he refers to the similar content matter of more than two sūrahs. Thus Ss. 52, 53, and 54 could be considered a triplet, and Ss. 56, 68, 69, and 70 a quadruplet.

A final question to be raised is whether Išlāḥī has not overemphasized the irreversibility of the order in which the member sūrahs of a pair occur in the Qur’ān. Further study could clarify whether, in some cases at least, it would make any difference if the order of the sūrahs were reversed.

4. As noted earlier, the notion of complementarity underlies Išlāḥī’s concept of sūrah pairing. Another critical issue, then, is whether applying the various types of complementarity one would be justified in linking adjacent sūrahs not regarded as pairs by Išlāḥī, e.g. Ss. 13 and 14,34 70 and 71,35 and 74 and 75.36

5. As for the ahādīth that Muḥammad used to recite certain combinations of sūrahs (sūrah pairs in Išlāḥī’s scheme), there are as many ahādīth that indicate that Muḥammad often combined in prayer sūrahs that do not form pairs in Išlāḥī’s scheme, e.g. Ss. 21 and 50,37 33 and 88, and 62 and 88,38 and 109 and 111.39 A cursory look at the “Comprehensive Chapter on Qur’ān-Recitation in Prayer” in the “Book of Prayer” in the Nayl al-Awtār of Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ash-Shawkānī (d. 1255/1839) will show that Muḥammad was quite flexible in his choice of sūrahs for purposes of recitation in prayer.40

34Ibid., 3:551.
36Ibid., 7:71.
37Muslim, “Kitāb Salāt al-ʿIdāyn, Bāb Mā Yuqrāʿu ʿalā ʿIdāyī.”
38Ibid., “Kitāb al-Jumā ʿah, Bāb Mā Yuqrāʿu ʿalā Yawm al-Jumā ʿah.”
40Shawkānī, 2:255-261. See also Suyūṭī, Durr, 5:140.
Summary

According to Islāḥī, the sūrahs of the Qur'ān, as a rule, are paired; the few exceptions to this rule fit into the overall scheme of pairing. A sūrah pair is made up of two specific adjacent sūrahs that usually deal with the same ʿamīd, but always complement each other in one or more significant ways. Although Islāḥī has effectively shown that the companion sūrahs in his sūrah pairs possess definite patterns of complementarity, it may be questioned as to exactly how fixed those patterns are. By means of this concept, Islāḥī has sought to bring to light some of the hitherto unperceived aspects of design and coherence in the Qur'ān.

Chapter VI

THE SŪRAH GROUPS

According to Islāḥī, not only are the Qur'ānic sūrahs paired, but they also combine to form a number of larger groups. Islāḥī has borrowed the idea of sūrah-grouping from Farāhī. But the idea exists only in a rudimentary form in Farāhī, who did not live to work it out. Islāḥī develops it into an elaborate concept with well-defined features. His treatment of it is, thus, original to a very large extent.

In Farāhī's view, the Qur'ānic sūrahs fall into nine groups. In Islāḥī the number is reduced to seven, the groups consisting of the following sūrahs: G. I: Ss. 1-5; G. II: Ss. 6-9; G. III: Ss. 10-24 (in Farāhī this group is split into two: Ss. 10-22 and Ss. 23-24); G. IV: Ss. 25-33; G. V: Ss. 34-49; G. VI: Ss. 50-66; G. VII: 67-114 (in Farāhī, this group is also split into two: Ss. 67-112 and Ss. 113-114). As can be seen, the difference between Farāhī and Islāḥī is not a major one. In point of detail and elaboration, however, Islāḥī represents a definite advance over Farāhī.

Coherence

Like the individual sūrahs of the Qur'ān, each sūrah group has a distinctive ʿamīd or theme. Each of the sūrahs in the group singles out a particular aspect of that ʿamīd. The ʿamīd, moreover, describes a logical course of development in the sūrahs of the group, and, in order to trace that development, the existing sequence of the sūrahs must be kept intact. In other words, a group is marked by both thematic and structural coherence. This coherence can be illustrated with reference to G. II.

G. II is composed of Ss. 6-9—al-Anfām (“The Cattle”), al-Aʿrāf, (“The Heights”), al-Anfāl (“The Spoils”), and at-Tawbah (“Repentance”), in that order. The ʿamīd of the group is: Islam as

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1Islāḥī, Taʿlīmah, I:xiii-xiv. Farāhī, Dalā'il, pp. 92-93.

2Each group contains themes from the other groups, but such themes are subsidiary to a group's own ʿamīd.
The Sūrah Groups

the religion of Abraham. The Quraysh claimed to be the followers of Abraham and heirs to the religion established by him. Al-Anā'īm accuses them of distorting that religion, presents Islam as the true Abrahamic religion, and invites them to become Muslims. Since the Quraysh were the direct recipients of the Islamic message, the next sūrah, al-‘A’rāf, warns them of the grave consequences of rejecting the message. The third sūrah, al-Anfūs, instructs the Muslims to unite under the banner of Islam in preparation for confrontation with the Quraysh. At-Tawbah, the last sūrah in the group, presents an ultimatum to the Quraysh, who, as the immediate addressees of the Qur’ān, had to choose between Islam and war.

The four sūrah groups would thus appear to be systematically arranged in the Qur’ān. Al-Anā'īm is the sūrah of invitation: it invites the Quraysh to embrace Islam. Al-‘A’rāf is the sūrah of warning: it warns the Quraysh against repudiating Islam. Al-Anfūs is the sūrah of preparation: it instructs the Muslims to prepare for war against the Quraysh. And at-Tawbah is the sūrah of war: it announces war against the Quraysh because they have been unfaithful to the religion of Abraham, declares Muslims to be the rightful heirs to that religion, and replaces the Quraysh by Muslims as the custodians of the Ka’bah—the symbol and legacy of Abrahamic religion.

This is an incisive analysis of the sūrah groups and would stand the test of a close study of them. The sūrah groups are, as stated by Islāhī, would seem to impart thematic coherence to the group. It will be

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3Islāhī, Tadabbur, I:xiii; 2:385. Here, briefly, are the sūrah groups as identified by Islāhī: I: The Sharī‘ah or Law; II: Abrahamic Religion; III: The Struggle between Truth and Falsehood and the Divine Law Concerning It; IV: Prophecy; V: Tawhīd or the Oneness of God; VI: The Hereafter; VII: ‘Iṣbā‘ah or Warning to the Disbelievers. Ibid., I:xiii.

4Ibid., 2:385, 386, 387.

5Ibid., 2:385, 591. Islāhī makes a distinction between a rasūl (“messenger”) and a nābi (“prophet”). Both perform essentially the same function, namely, that of delivering the message of God to mankind. But, unlike a nābi, a rasūl presents the people who are his direct and immediate addressees with a final warning. See, for example, ibid., 1:434 (also the note on that page), 697. Muhammad’s message was addressed directly and immediately to the Arabs, indirectly and mediatly to the rest of mankind. Ibid., 3:150-151.

6Ibid., 2:385; 3:9-10.

7Ibid., 2:385; 3:113-114.

8Ibid., 2:385-386.

9Ibid., 1:32, 611-615, 616; 2:386.

10Ibid., 2:386.
preceding one, thereby accelerating the overall movement of the sūrah toward the finale, that is, toward the realization of the group’s ʿamūd. In al-Anfāʾâm, the high point is reached in verses 74-90,11 where a striking incident from Abraham’s life, together with a pithy summary of the teachings of the prophets in the Abrahamic line, brings out the true character of Abraham’s religion. The first 73 verses lead up to this passage, while the verses that follow may be called the dénouement. In al-Aṣrāf, the series of stories of earlier peoples illustrating the sūrah’s ʿamūd begins with verses 40. In al-Anfāʾāl, one hardly gets past the first few verses when detailed references to the Battle of Badr begin to appear, thus determining the mood of the whole sūrah. In at-Tawbah, war is proclaimed in the very opening verse.

G. I, too, exemplifies this kind of accelerated movement. The ʿamūd of the group, as we have noted, is the Law. In the second sūrah, al-Baqara, the subject is not taken up until verse 177. In the third sūrah, al-ʾImrān, the part of legal injunctions can be said to have begun with verse 92. In an-Nisāʾ the legal part begins with verse 2, and in al-Māʾidah with verse 1.

We will now qualify our statement about the relationship between the sūrah of a group, Gs. I and II, which we have cited to illustrate the statement, are both groups with long sūrah. But while it may be easy to identify high points and dénouements in a long sūrah because of the sūrah’s large canvas, it may not be easy to do so in the case of shorter sūrah. For example, the sūrah in Gs. VI and VII gradually become shorter and shorter as we move toward the end, making it increasingly difficult for one to establish between them the kind of relationship that seems to exist between the sūrah of Gs. I and II. Even in Gs. VI and VII, however, some kind of “onward movement” can be seen to be taking place. To take the example of G. VII, there is a conspicuous difference between its earlier and later sūrah. A number of the earlier sūrah are, relatively speaking, discursive: they present the group’s ʿamūd—warning to the disbelievers12—in some detail and draw conclusions after adscribing evidence of several types. As such, they can be said to be moving at a somewhat “leisurely” pace. By contrast, many later sūrah (especially Ss. 109-111) have a decisive tone: instead of giving details, they present conclusions in categorical terms. Since they come to grips with the group’s ʿamūd in a direct and forthright manner, they can be said to be “rushing” toward that ʿamūd. One’s overall impression is likely to be that the discursiveness of the group’s earlier sūrah gradually builds an atmosphere in which the decisiveness of the later sūrah becomes relevant. An in-depth study of this and other groups may reveal that they, too, contain a structural pattern very similar to the one found in Gs. I and II.

The Makkān-Madīnān Division

Each of Ḥiṣāḥ’s groups contains at least one Makkān and one Madīnān sūrah. Moreover, the Makkān and Madīnān sūrah in any group form distinct blocs, with the Makkān bloc preceding the Madīnān. Here, following, is Ḥiṣāḥ’s group-wise breakdown of the Makkān and Madīnān sūrah.13

G. I: Ss. 1-5 (S. 1 Makkān, Ss. 2-5 Madīnān).
G. II: Ss. 6-9 (Ss. 6-7 Makkān, Ss. 8-9 Madīnān).
G. III: Ss. 10-24 (Ss. 10-23 Makkān, S. 24 Madīnān).
G. IV: Ss. 25-33 (Ss. 25-32 Makkān, S. 33 Madīnān).
G. V: Ss. 34-49 (Ss. 34-46 Makkān, Ss. 47-49 Madīnān).
G. VI: Ss. 50-66 (Ss. 50-56 Makkān, Ss. 57-66 Madīnān).
G. VII: Ss. 67-114 (Ss. 67-109 Makkān, Ss. 110-114 Madīnān).

A problem arises here. In suggesting this division of the sūrah into Makkān and Madīnān, Ḥiṣāḥ departs on a few points from the division (or divisions) traditionally given. A comparison of Ḥiṣāḥ’s division with for example that given by Zarkashī will show that the former differs from the latter in respect of eight sūrah: 13, 22, 55, 76, 98, 99, 111, and 112. Zarkashī lists the first six of these as Madīnān and the last two as Makkān sūrah,14 while Ḥiṣāḥ calls the first six Makkān and the last two Madīnān. If Zarkashī’s division is correct, then the distinction Ḥiṣāḥ establishes between the Makkān and Madīnān blocs will be called in question. On the other hand, if Ḥiṣāḥ’s division is correct, then it will be the traditional view, as represented by Zarkashī, that will be called in question.

Ḥiṣāḥ seems to be on safe ground with respect to five of the eight sūrah: 13, 22, 55, 76, and 99. The internal evidence of Ss. 55, 76, and 99 clearly marks them as Makkān. Ss. 55 and 76, at any

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11Ibid., 2:460.
12Ibid., 8:479.
13Ibid., 1:xii-xiii; 7:479.
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rate, are regarded as Makkān by many commentators.\textsuperscript{15} But there is no reason why the same may not be said of S. 99, which deals with an obvious Makkān theme.\textsuperscript{16}

Except for its 41st verse, S. 13 also strikes one as unmistakably Makkān. The verse runs: "Have they not seen that We are approaching the land [Makkah], shrinking its borders?" Commentators have understood this to be a reference to the Madīnah-based military expansion of Islam which had begun to threaten the Quraish in Makkah. Rejecting this view, Iṣlāḥī says that the verse makes reference to the popularity of the Islamic message in the Makkah phase of Muhammad's prophecy. The message was first presented before the Quraish, who refused to accept it. In the meantime, it became popular among the tribes outside Makkah and even attracted a number of Madīnahs. The Quraish now sensed that Islam, which they had tried to eradicate inside Makkah, had struck root outside Makkah, and had in effect begun to close in on them. As verse 40 of the same sūrah clearly suggests, the Quraish had demanded evidence for the Qur'ānic claim that paganism would suffer defeat at the hands of Islam. Verse 41 replies to this demand, saying: If the Quraish want to see a sign, then the fact that they are being hemmed in by it in their own home is surely one. Iṣlāḥī also points out—and this is a strong argument for the position he takes—that 21:44 is an almost identical verse, and that S. 21 is unanimously considered to be Makkān.\textsuperscript{17} Although a number of other scholars, too, consider S. 13 to be Makkān,\textsuperscript{18} Iṣlāḥī, to my knowledge, is the first scholar to have furnished clear proof of its being Makkān. And the proof, it will be observed, is adduced on the basis of a nazm interpretation of the verses involved.

The same kind of nazm approach is employed by Iṣlāḥī in his discussion of S. 22. Vss. 38-41, revealed in Madīnah, have led many to believe that the sūrah is Madīnah. But, Iṣlāḥī argues, the inclusion of a few Madīnah verses in an otherwise Makkān sūrah would not make it Madīnah; the long concluding verse of S. 73, for

\begin{enumerate}
\item On S. 55, see Mawdūdī, 5:244-246; and Suyūṭī, \textit{Durr}, 6:139. On S. 76, see Mawdūdī, 6:180-182; and Suyūṭī, \textit{Durr}, 6:297.
\item Cf. Mawdūdī, 6:418.
\item Iṣlāḥī, \textit{Tadabbur}, 3:546-547.
\item See, for example, Sayyid Qūṭb, 4:2039, n. 2; and Mawdūdī, 2:440.
\end{enumerate}

\textsuperscript{19}Iṣlāḥī, \textit{Tadabbur}, 4:341.
\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 4:396.
\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., 4:389-390.
\textsuperscript{22}Mawdūdī, 6:410.
\textsuperscript{23}Iṣlāḥī, \textit{Tadabbur}, 8:473-474. See also ibid., 6:527-528.
\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., 8:643-644.
\textsuperscript{25}See Mawdūdī, 6:530-532. Mawdūdī argues that it is Makkān, and an early Makkān sūrah at that, ibid., 6:532.
\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., 6:520.
Iṣlāḥī, is as follows. Early in his prophetic career, Muḥammad once gathered together the families of the Quraysh and warned them of the punishment that lay in store for them in case they rejected his message. Abū Lahab, Muḥammad’s uncle, sarcastically commented:  *Tābban laka a lī ḥādhā dāʾawātānā* (“Curse on you! Is this what you called us here for?”).  

Iṣlāḥī’s criticism of the view is twofold. In the first place, it is out of character for the Qurʾān to offer a tu quoque argument like that. Many leaders of Makkah and Ṭaʾīf were guilty of insulting Muḥammad, but the Qurʾān never returned the abuse, in fact never called Muhammad’s opponents “disbelievers” until their hostility exceeded all bounds and they could not be excused any longer. In the second place, the sūrah’s  *tabbat yadā Abī Lahabin* (lit., “May the hands of Abū Lahab be broken”) has a meaning very different than Abū Lahab’s  *tabban laka*. The latter is imprecatory, and hence what is called  *insāh* in Arabic grammar.  

But the former comes from an Arabic idiom (tabbat yadā fulānin) which is non-imprecatory and implies, in a non-pejorative sense, that a person has failed to achieve his object, counter an attack, or ward off something unpleasant. The verse, in other words, simply makes the prediction (made in the past tense to indicate that it is as good as come true) that the power of Abū Lahab—the “high priest,” and therefore the religious leader, of Makkah—will be broken. As such the verse is, grammatically, a  *khabar*. The prediction was fulfilled in the early Madīnah period when clear signs of Abū Lahab’s downfall appeared. An important sign was the defeat of the Quraysh, the mainstay of Abū Lahab’s power, at the Battle of Badr, which took place in 2/624; Abū Lahab himself died soon after that. The sūrah, then, must have been revealed at Madīnah.

Iṣlāḥī’s criticism of the traditional view is sound. But does it necessarily follow that his own interpretation of the sūrah is valid? Perhaps not. What Iṣlāḥī has demonstrated is the weakness of a view whose claim to validity rests on the supposed existence of a connection between a particular event that took place in Makkah and the revelation of the sūrah. But even if it is shown that the sūrah could not have been revealed in connection with that event, there still would exist the possibility that it bears a connection to some other event that took place in Makkah, or indeed to the general Makkān situation, in which Abū Lahab always played a role hostile to Muḥammad. Moreover, the argument Iṣlāḥī advances in support of the view is that it is an early Madīnah sūrah may be advanced in support of the view that it is a late Makkah sūrah. Thus Farāḥī is of the view that the sūrah was revealed a little before the Emigration to Madīnah.

These few reservations aside, Iṣlāḥī’s scheme, seen from the viewpoint of the structural arrangement of the Makkān and Madīnah sūrah in the groups, will be found to be quite consistent. But the question is: What thematic significance, if any, does this arrangement have? This brings us to a consideration of the relationship between the Makkān and Madīnah sūrah of the groups.

According to Iṣlāḥī, the Madīnah sūrah of an are related to its Makkān sūrah as the branches of a tree are related to the root of the tree [33]. This simple analogy has, in the context of Iṣlāḥī’s  *naẓm* theory, the following implications: 1) that the relationship between the two sets of sūrah in a group is integral; 2) that the Madīnah sūrah of a group bring out the practical implications of the doctrinal statements made in the group’s Makkān sūrah; and 3) that the Makkān bloc of sūrah in a group precedes the Madīnah not by accident but by design, since the “root” must exist before the “branches”. G. II would serve to illustrate this point.

Al-ʾAnṣām and al-ʾAʿrāf, the two Makkān sūrah of G. II, precede al-Anfāl and al-Tawbah, the two Madīnah sūrah. From what was said in the earlier part of the article about the four sūrah it would be easy to conclude that the first two deal mainly with theo- retical and the last two mainly with practical matters, and that, moreover, the practical issues of the last two sūrah stems from the

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28Statements which cannot be confirmed or refuted by inquiry (in Arabic:  *lā taḥṣatinu t-raqdīqa awwi t-takdhība* are called  *jumal inshāʾiyah* ("sentences characterized by inshā").) Sentences expressing command, wish, etc., fall in this category.

29Statements which may be confirmed or refuted by inquiry are called  *jumal khabariyyah* ("declarative sentences").


31Thus Mawdūdī (6:520-524) refers to the general hostile attitude of Abū Lahab and his wife, and not to a single event, as what occasioned the sūrah’s revelation.

32Farāḥī, *Dul‘il*, p. 93.

33Iṣlāḥī, 1:xliii-xliv.
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S. 57 onward) than practical injunctions become prominent. At the same time, one cannot help feeling that the relationship of a number of the Madīnān sūrah (especially Ss. 60, 61, 63, and 66) to the group's ʾamīd is not as clear-cut and definite as that of the Makkān. To take the example of S. 60, only one verse in it (vs. 12) explicitly talks about the hereafter; the four other references to the hereafter (vss. 4, 5, 6, 13) are either too brief or quite indirect. Moreover, it is difficult to see why the injunctions contained in the sūrah must follow exclusively from the ʾamīd of the hereafter, and why they may not follow, equally logically, from the ʾamīd of prophecy (the ʾamīd, according to Islāhī, of G. IV) or from that of the oneness of God (the ʾamīd of G. V). A related criticism is that several Madīnān sūrah would be “at home” in groups other than the ones they actually occur in. For example, according to Islāhī, S. 58 states that, in the end, God and His prophets triumph, their opponents suffering humiliating defeat. But this is exactly what Islāhī describes as the ʾamīd of G. III. The question is: Would S. 58 be out of place in G. III? Again, S. 66, with its injunctions about divorce (vss. 1-7), reminds one of G. I, the second and fourth sūrah of which deal with the issue of marriage and divorce in similar terms.

Account of the Islamic Movement

Islāhī holds that each sūrah group presents a phase-by-phase account of the spread, under Muhammad’s leadership, of the Islamic movement in Arabia, though, he adds, the actual manner of presentation of that account may vary from one group to another. This statement would be correct only in a very broad sense. Since the advent of Islam resulted in a struggle between the Muslims and their opponents, the main phases of the Islamic movement may roughly be stated as: presentation of the Islamic message; acceptance of the message by some and resistance to it by others; conflict between the believers and the disbelievers; victory of the form

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34 Islāhī’s view of the relationship between the Makkān and Madīnān sūrah is subject to criticism, and we will shortly offer that criticism. However, he has at least shown that there is no complete break between the Makkān and Madīnān sūrah, as is held by some Orientalist scholars, for example by Goldziher, pp. 9-12. For a criticism of the Orientalist position, see Fazlur Rahman, Major Themes, Chapter 8.

35 Islāhī, Tadabbur, 6:527.

36 Ibid., 6:528.

37 Ibid., 6:575.

38 Ibid., 7:11.

39 Ibid., 7:45.

40 Ibid., 7:87.

41 Ibid., 7:120.

42 Ibid., 7:153.
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over the latter. Once again, G. II offers a good example of the development of the Islamic movement along those lines.

It is doubtful, however, that each group relates such a development in a systematic manner. In fact, the very composition of some of Iṣlāḥ’s groups militates against such a view. G. I, for example, has five sūrah groups, and, excepting the short opening sūrah, all of them are Madinan. Obviously the Makkān period has not been dealt with in the group at any length. It is true that there are references in the sūrah to the Makkān period. But to say that the group offers a well-articulated account of the various phases of the Islamic movement would be to claim too much. Likewise, G. III has fifteen Makkān sūrah groups, but only one Madinan sūrah; and G. IV has only one Madinan as against eight Makkān sūrah groups. Again, the Madinan period, even though it may have been referred to in the Makkān sūrah of the two groups, hardly finds a well-differentiated treatment in the groups. Furthermore, almost any cross-section of sūrah groups will be found to have treated all or most of the phases of the Islamic movement; one does not have to regard such a treatment as characteristic of Iṣlāḥ’s groups only.

Sanction for the Naẓm Scheme

Iṣlāḥ maintains that his naẓm scheme, with its component ideas of sūrah pairs and sūrah groups, finds sanction in the Qurʾān itself. He cites 15:87 (and also 39:23) in support of his view.

15:87 reads: “We have bestowed upon you sāfūn mina l-mathānī and the Great Qurʾān”. Sāfūn mina l-mathānī is usually interpreted as the “seven oft-repeated ones” and thought to refer to S. 1, since this sūrah, it is argued, has seven verses and is repeated in every ritual prayer. Iṣlāḥ disagrees with this interpretation. The word mathānī in his view refers to what he believes is the phenomenon of sūrah pairs in the Qurʾān. Against the traditionally accepted view he argues, first, that only the sūrah is not agreed upon, that it can have seven verses only if the formulaic basmalah is counted as a verse, which is a controversial matter; and, second, mathānī, as the plural of mathnā, means “in two’s” (as in 4:3 and 36:46) and not “oft-repeated ones.” It, therefore, means “those arranged in pairs.” As for the conjunction wāw after mathānī in the verse, its grammatical function is explica-

tion (tafsīr). The verse accordingly means: “... seven [= seven sūrah groups] made up of the mathānī [= sūrah pairs], that is, the Great Qurʾān.” There are a few aḥādīth that term S. 1 mathānī. But Iṣlāḥ thinks that they refer to the sūrah only insofar as the sūrah, epitomizing as it does the Qurʾān, may be called the Qurʾān in miniature. In other words, in even those aḥādīth, the word mathānī refers to the Qurʾān or Qurʾānic sūrah groups, pointing out that the sūrah groups are paired.50

As for the word sāfūn, it refers, according to Iṣlāḥ, to what he regards as the seven sūrah groups.50 And Iṣlāḥ thinks that the well-known hadīth in which the Qurʾān has been described as having been revealed ʿala sāfūti ahrufūn substantiates this view. The Arabic phrase is usually translated “in seven readings” and taken to refer to the variant Qurʾānic readings. But Iṣlāḥ shows—and convincingly, I think—that such an interpretation, besides making the Qurʾān a very problematic work, is untenable on linguistic and historical grounds as well.51 According to him, the word harf (sing. ahruf) in this context means “aspect, style, dimension” and, as such, refers to the seven sūrah groups in the Qurʾān, each of the groups representing a distinctive aspect or dimension of the Qurʾānic message and employing a method or style of discussion peculiar to that group, the seven groups together bringing out the diversity-in-unity that is characteristic of the Qurʾān.52

But even if Iṣlāḥ’s criticism of the traditional interpretation of the word ahruf were to be granted, it would be difficult to say that his own interpretation of the word is absolutely correct. For one thing, one might ask why the word sāfūn may not refer to the seven manzil (= “stations,” i.e. parts; sing. manzil) into which the Qurʾān is traditionally divided for purposes of completing one Qurʾān-recitation in a week.53 For another, is it not possible that the word sāfūn gives here the sense of “many” or “numerous” and does not denote “seven”? If so, then it would be questionable to take it to refer to seven specific groups.

48See, for example, Niḥābī, 6:34.
49Iṣlāḥ, Tadabbur, 3:622-624. See also ibid., 5:580; 7:480-481.
50Ibid., 1:xv; 3:624.
51Ibid., 7:480-481.
52Ibid., 3:622-624. See also ibid., 5:580; 7:480-481.
53The manzil—division of the Qurʾānic sūrah groups is as follows: I:1-4; II:5-9; III:10-16; IV:17-25; V:26-36; VI:37-49; VII:50-114.
The Ĥûrânîc sûrahs, in their present order, fall into seven groups. Like an individual sûrah or a sûrah pair, a sûrah group has an ġamûd of its own, which is developed in a fairly methodical manner in the sûrahs of that group. Structural as well as thematic coherence marks a group. Barring a few controversial cases, the Makkân and Madaqan sûrahs in Ĥûlähî's groups, form distinct blocs, with the Madaqan bloc following the Makkân. The Makkân sûrahs in a group deal with the theoretical and the Madaqan sûrahs with the practical aspect of the group's ġamûd, though the relationship of a group's Madaqan sûrahs, unlike that of its Makkân sûrahs, to its ġamûd may not always be as close as Ĥûlähî holds it is. Each group deals, though again in a generalized sense, with the various phases of the Islamic movement led by Muḥammad in Arabia. Ĥûlähî's view that his naqâm scheme, with its sûrah pairs and sûrah groups, is sanctioned by the Qurân may be called plausible.

Chapter VII

CONCLUSIONS

1. Ĥûlähî's approach to the Qurân is direct, holistic, and cumulative. It is direct in that it is based chiefly on a study of the Qurân itself. Ĥûlähî distinguishes between the internal and external principles of Qurân interpretation and attaches primary significance to the former. Naqâm is for him the most important of the internal principles.

Ĥûlähî's approach is holistic in that it is predicated on the assumption that the Qurân is a well-integrated book and ought to be studied as such. Ĥûlähî believes that the chronological order of the Qurânic revelations was suited to the times of Muḥammad and his Companions, but, for the following generations, the compilatory order carries greater significance. The compilatory order was based on the principle of naqâm, and it is the commentator's task to discover that naqâm.

Ĥûlähî's approach is cumulative in that it conceives of Qurânic naqâm on several levels, each level being incorporated into the subsequent level. First comes the discovery of naqâm in individual sûrahs, then in sûrah pairs, and finally in sûrah groups. The naqâm of individual sûrahs is presupposed in a sûrah pair, that of sûrah pairs in a sûrah group.

2. Ĥûlähî is indebted to Farâhî in respect of ideas as well as approach. He borrows from Farâhî not only the concept of the sûrah as a unity but also the techniques for arriving at the unity of a sûrah. But this does not mean that he is not an original writer. In the first place, he has made a sustained application of Farâhî's ideas and techniques to the Qurânic corpus, in itself no small achievement. In the second place, he seems to have taken over Farâhî's ideas only after careful scrutiny. We saw, for example, that he differs with Farâhî on the interpretation of the ġamûds of a few sûrahs—a proof that independent reflection on the Qurân sometimes led him to conclusions dissimilar to Farâhî's. In the third place, his concept of sûrah pairs is original, as is his interpretation of the notion of sûrah groups. In fact, if Ĥûlähî is indebted to Farâhî, then, in a sense, Farâhî is indebted to Ĥûlähî, for it is the latter who

1Ĥûlähî, Tadhîb, 8.8.
by creatively interpreting Fârâhî's concept of naẓm and enlarging its scope, has sought to establish effectively the latter's original thesis, namely, that the Qur'ān is possessed of naẓm.

3. Islâhî has convincingly shown—although it is not necessary to agree with all of his conclusions—that the Qur'ān has design and method. He has shown that individual Qur'ānic sūrah shows revolve around specific central themes, that an essential complementarity exists between the members of sūrah pairs, and that larger sets of sūrah, which he calls sūrah groups, display identifiable patterns of naẓm. A study of Tadabbur-i Qur'ān is bound to leave one with the impression that, contrary to the usually held view, the Qur'ān is a well-ordered book. Islâhî has demonstrated that the Qur'ān has not only thematic but also structural coherence, that, for example, not only do the sūrah of a group deal with a definite master theme, but also the structure of the group is a logical one, and that the thematic and structural aspects of naẓm are ultimately inseparable from each other.

4. This in turn has a bearing on an important question: Who edited the Qur'ān? As we noted in chapter II, Muslim scholars unanimously hold that Muḥammad himself was responsible for the arrangement of the verses in sūrah; they disagree, however, on the question of who was responsible for the arrangement of the sūrah. Some say it was Muḥammad himself; others think—and this is the general orientalist position also—that the task was completed by the Companions of Muḥammad after his death. John Burton has argued in The Collection of the Qur'ān that the whole of the Qur'ān was compiled by Muḥammad. Without going into details of Burton's methodology, we may remark that what Burton seeks to prove through a study of extra-Qur'ānic sources, Islâhî seeks to prove through a study of the Qur'ānic text itself. The following 'syllogistic' argument may be constructed on the basis of Islâhî's naẓm theory.

The individual sūrah of the Qur'ān are coherent. The verses in these sūrah are known to be arranged by Muḥammad. The Qur'ān as a whole is coherent. Therefore the sūrah too must have received their arrangement from Muḥammad.

The argument has a loophole, for it presupposes that all coherence in the Qur'ān, whether in the arrangement of verses in an individual sūrah or in the arrangement of sūrah, will be attributed to Muḥammad. Is it not possible that Muḥammad's Companions achieved the same coherence with arranging sūrah that Muḥammad had achieved with arranging verses in sūrah? This is certainly possible, though perhaps not very likely. For between the naẓm of verses and the naẓm of sūrah there is an affinity of character that is best explained on the assumption that it is due to the same agency, in this case Muḥammad. Moreover, if Muḥammad took care to give a certain arrangement to verses in sūrah, how could he have remained indifferent to the arrangement of the sūrah themselves?

5. If the Qur'ān in its present form is characterized by coherence, then the chronological order of the Qur'ān becomes largely irrelevant, or at most only of historical importance. Considerable energy has been spent in attempts to identify that order. But it is universally admitted that a complete and accurate chronological arrangement of the Qur'ān is almost impossible to discover. If it is impossible to do so, and if the present arrangement is found to be significant, then perhaps it is with this arrangement that we should be principally concerned. At least that would seem to be the intention of whoever is to be credited with giving the Qur'ān the arrangement it now has.

6. Should the principle of naẓm become an integral part of the approach to the Qur'ān, it will become necessary to make a critical examination of much of the traditional exegetical corpus in the light of this principle. A regular and consistent use of the principle might result in at least a partial reformulation of the exegetical theory. It might result, for example, in a diminished dependance on the occasions of revelation as an exegetical aid. We saw that several of the authors discussed—like Râzî, Tabâtabâ'î, and Sayyid Ḥubb—tend to reject an occasion of revelation if it appears to be in conflict with a naẓm interpretation of the Qur'ān. Reliance on the principle of naẓm seems to reduce dependence on the asbâb an-nuzûl, and the correlation is easy to explain. In an atomistic approach to a text, each unit of the text (usually not more than one or a few sentences or verses) is interpreted in isolation from the other units, and thus any datum external to the text but appearing to throw light on it is welcome. An integrated or holistic approach, however, establishes a

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burton, pp. 239-240. we are not saying that all of burton's conclusions are correct. neither does the following statement in the text mean that all or most of burton's conclusions would be acceptable to islâhî.
contextual framework with definite hermeneutic constraints that must be reckoned with in interpreting the text, with the result that things like asbāb an-nuzūl have to pass the acid test of contextual relevance before they can be accepted.

7. The concept of nazm as such is not original to Farāhī and Iḍāhī. What is original, however, is their interpretation of the concept. They differ from other Muslim scholars not only in holding that the Qur’ān has structural as well as thematic nazm, but also in maintaining that nazm is an indispensable instrument of exegesis. By applying the nazm principle to the Qur’ān—and they have shown that the Qur’ān is quite amenable to such an application—they seek to place the Qur’ān in a definitive context in order to arrive at definitive Qur’ān interpretation. (See Appendix B.)

8. The Farāhī-Iḍāhī nazm theory yields results that are aesthetically pleasing. The idea that the Qur’ān is a book that presents its themes systematically in individual sūrahs, sūrah pairs, and sūrah groups confers on the Qur’ān a formal excellence that has not been attributed to it before. Also, with its emphasis on the study of the Qur’ān as a unity, the theory is in keeping with the spirit of modern literary analysis. And, with its emphasis, for purposes of interpretation, on the study of the Qur’ānic text itself, it is in harmony with, and at the same time accentuates, modern trends in Qur’ān exegesis.

9. While Iḍāhī’s nazm theory presents the Qur’ān in a new light and offers highly valuable insights, some of Iḍāhī’s positions can be called in question. Perhaps the most questionable part of the theory is Iḍāhī’s insistence that the theory, with its seven sūrah groups and sūrah pairing, has Qur’ānic sanction behind it. This view, if correct, will have to be accepted, together with all its corollaries and implications, by Muslims virtually as part of their faith in the Qur’ān. But is Iḍāhī’s nazm theory absolutely correct in each and every respect? Obviously a case can be made for its being no more than a hypothesis, albeit a strong hypothesis. One gets the impression that a personal conviction (born of many years of deep reflection on the Qur’ān and in itself quite understandable) has been presented by Iḍāhī as an objective fact, whereas to others it may not appear to be so. For example, Iḍāhī says that the seven sūrah groups of the Qur’ān are there for everyone to see. But they are certainly not as obvious to other people as they are to Iḍāhī.

10. Of the several possible areas for further research, two may be suggested. One of these pertains to the question of the interrelationship of the sūrah groups. Iḍāhī does offer a few useful hints about this interrelationship, but he does not make any sustained attempt to explain why the groups have the sequence they have in the Qur’ān. After the study of the nazm of individual sūrahs, sūrah pairs, and sūrah groups, a study of the nazm among the groups would have been the logical next step to take, but for some reason Iḍāhī does not take it.

The other area pertains to the study of the legislative Qur’ānic verses in the nazm context of the sūrahs in which they occur. Such a study promises interesting results because, under the influence of the legalistic approach to the Qur’ān that resulted from the polemical atmosphere of early Islamic centuries, a number of juridical positions on many Qur’ānic verses were taken by Muslim scholars in disregard of the context in which the verses actually occurred. This area can be expanded to include a study of the ways in which different Muslim sects have sought to obtain from (the usually isolated) Qur’ānic verses sanction for their views.

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4Iḍāhī, Tadabbur, 1:xiv; 7:481.

5Ibid., 8:12.
ISLĀHĪ'S NAZM INTERPRETATION OF SŪRAH 1

The opening sūrah of the Qur'ān is here treated in three parts. The first part gives a translation of the sūrah; the rendering is based on Islāhī's interpretation of the sūrah. The second part reproduces Islāhī's nazm analysis of the sūrah. The third part sums up Islāhī's reasons for regarding the sūrah as a preface to the Qur'ān.

The Sūrah in Translation
Grateful Praise1 is due to God, the Sustainer-Lord2 of the universe,
the Most Compassionate, the Ever-Merciful,3
Master of the Day of Recompense.
You alone do we worship, and You alone do we ask for help.

1The Arabic word hamd in vs. 1 is usually interpreted as “praise.” Primarily, however, the word means “gratitude,” though the meaning of “praise” is not excluded. Whenever the Qur'ān uses, as here, the construction al-hamdu li Ilāhī, the meaning of gratitude is obviously implied, as, for example, in 7:43; 10:10: 14:39. Moreover, one praises someone’s excellence even if one is not directly affected by it. But one is grateful to a person only when one is directly, and favorably, affected by his excellence. We must not simply praise God; we must offer gratitude to Him, for we are direct recipients of His blessings. Tadabbur, 1:12-13.

2The Arabic word rabb has two meanings: “Sustainer” and “Lord.” The second meaning is a corollary of the first, for only a sustainer or nourisher deserves to be called “Lord.” Usage, however, has made the second meaning the primary one, and the word is no longer used exclusively in the sense of “Sustainer.” Ibid., p. 13.

3Islāhī has offered what is to my knowledge a new interpretation of the words ar-raḥmān and ar-raḥmîn (respectively, “the Most Compassionate” and “the Ever Merciful”), and it is as follows. The two words have the same root, ṭāḥ-ḥā-ʾayn, with “mercy” as the essential meaning. It is usually held that the two words are simply intended to create emphasis (cf. the English “safe and sound” and “hale and hearty”). But this is not the case with raḥmān and raḥîm in the verse. Raḥmān is on the pattern of ṭaʾlān, which connotes superabundance. Raḥîm is on the pattern of ṭallit, which connotes endurance. Now there are two dimensions to divine mercy: it is enduring, but on occasions it becomes superabundant. In His superabundant mercy, for example, God brought this universe into existence. But since His mercy is also enduring, He did not neglect the universe after creating it, but has been maintaining it and looking after it as well. In other words, raḥmān and raḥîm represent two different, but complementary, aspects of divine mercy, and neither word is superfluous or simply meant to lend emphasis to the other. Tadabbur, 1:6-7. The English translation given of these two words seeks to reflect the distinction made by Islāhī.

Establish us in the Right Path,4 the path of those you have blessed,
not [of] those who became the object of [Your] wrath,
nor [of] the ones who went astray.5

Nazm of the Sūrah
This sūrah is in the form of a prayer that is uttered by the reader. The reader is not instructed to say the prayer in a certain manner. Rather, the prayer has been made to flow directly from his heart, with the implication that this is how a person who has kept the inherent goodness of his nature intact will pray to God. And since the prayer has been revealed by God, our Creator, we can be sure that it is couched in the best possible words.6

The sūrah explains the relationship between human gratitude and divine guidance. The feeling of gratitude (hamd) to God is a natural, in fact the most natural, feeling experienced by a human being. This feeling creates in man an urge to worship and serve God. To this urge God responds by revealing religion, which is nothing but a guide to worshipping and serving God.

Vs. 1. Man is under the constant care of God. There is, in this world, provision for man’s physical, mental, and spiritual growth. The whole universe, it seems, has been harnessed into service for man. Upon noticing this elaborate system of providence that God has established for his well-being, man becomes overwhelmed by feelings of gratitude for the Creator of that system and exclaims: “Grateful praise is due to God, the Sustainer-Lord of the universe.”

Vs. 2. But did God have to create such a system for us? Is He under any obligation to do so? Do we have any claims on His mercy? The obvious answer is “No.” The only possible answer is

4The verse is usually translated: “Guide us to the Right Path.” But Islāhī notes that the preposition illā (“to”), which normally follows the verb ḥadd, is omitted in the verse. In accordance with the rules of Arabic grammar and rhetoric, the omission (ḥadd) of the preposition lends an extraordinary emphasis to the prayer contained in the verse. Consequently, the verse does not simply mean: “Guide us to the Right Path”; it also implies: Give us contentment in the Right Path, make the Right Path easy for us to follow, and so on. Ibid., 1:15. Islāhī’s Urdu translation of the verse is: Hameīn sihār raste ki kidābāt tak bakhshī (ibid., 1:11), which has the following literal translation: “Give us the guidance of the Right Path.”

5Whether the sūrah consists of six or seven verses is a controversial matter. Islāhī does not consider the bazmalah to be part of this, or any other sūrah, thus regarding the sūrah as consisting of six verses. See ibid. 1:7, 11.

6Ibid., 1:12.
that, in doing so, God is acting out of mercy. This realization impels man to say: “The Most Compassionate, the Ever Merciful.”

Vs. 3. God’s being the Sustainer-Lord implies that a day of reckoning must come. For privilege entails responsibility. If God has showered us with so many blessings, then surely it is unreasonable to suppose that He will not hold us accountable for the way we receive His blessings. There must come a day of judgment on which God will administer justice, rewarding the virtuous and punishing the wicked. Man is led to say: “Master of the Day of Recompense.”

The Day of Judgment is also implied, or necessitated, by the fact that God is Merciful. For if God were to let the world come to an end without instituting such a day, then it would mean that there is no difference, in the eyes of God, between the virtuous and the wicked, that the wicked, indeed, are better off, since they can commit evil without fear of punishment. Such iniquity on the part of God would be negative of God’s mercy. In other words, God’s being merciful necessitates that He be just as well, a point that the Qur’ān makes on many occasions (as in 6:12). There is thus no contradiction between mercy and justice, the latter in fact being a manifestation of the former.

Vs. 4. God, then, is the Sustainer-Lord, is Merciful, and will one day judge mankind. Recognition of these facts makes man surrender himself to God and to acknowledge Him as the only Being who deserves to be worshipped and from whom help may be sought: “You alone do we worship, and You alone do we ask for help.”

Vs. 5. Now that man has surrendered himself to God, he wants to find out how best to serve him. And since he has acknowledged God as the only source of help, he naturally seeks from Him the light of guidance: “Establish us in the Right Path.” It is in response to this prayer that God raises prophets and sends down revelation.

Vs. 6. In order to express his unswerving commitment to the Right Path and his aversion to all the other paths, man adds: “The path of those You have blessed, not [of] those who became the object of [Your] wrath, nor [of] the ones who went astray.”

Islāḥ’s interpretation of the sūrah is obviously not the only naṣm interpretation that can possibly be arrived at. It will have to be granted, however, that his is a very plausible attempt to explain the sūrah as a coherent piece, and that he has convincingly demonstrated that the verses deal with a single theme that is logically developed in the sūrah.

The Sūrah as a Preface to the Qur’ān

This sūrah is an ideal preface to the Qur’ān, and that for three reasons. First, it contains a succinct statement of the philosophical basis, according to the Qur’ān, of religion. Observation of the phenomena of God’s munificence, mercy, and justice create in man the urge to worship God. The urge in turn creates in man a sense of need for divine guidance. The institution of prophecy and revelation are God’s way of satisfying that need. Religion, in other words, supplies a need that naturally arises in man as a result of his experience in and reflection on the world.8

Second, all Qur’ānic themes can be summed up under three heads: the oneness of God, prophecy, and the hereafter. The sūrah offers basic guidance on the three master themes of the Qur’ān.

Third, earlier peoples had lost the Right Path that God had shown them. Mankind was in the dark. The sūrah is a prayer for the replacement of darkness by light. Man says this prayer, and, in response to it, God reveals the Qur’ān, the light which men had asked for. At the opening of S. 2 we read: hudūn h l-muttaqīn, “The Qur’ān is a guidance for those who fear God.” In S. 1 man asks for guidance, and, beginning with S. 2, he is provided with that guidance. In this sense, the Qur’ān may be said to have been revealed in response to man’s prayer in S. 1.3

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9Ibid., 1:18-23.
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF A FEW VERSES IN IŞLĀḤĪ AND OTHER SCHOLARS

Six examples are given. The first three show how apparently disconnected verses are seen by Işlāḥī as contextually integrated; the verses in question are among the ones described by Montgomery Watt as "isolated," and Watt's comments on them are compared with Işlāḥī's. The next two examples show how Işlāḥī's naẓm theory helps him in arriving at a more cogent, and at the same time more definitive, Qur'ānic interpretation. In the last example we shall compare, with reference to a Qur'ānic passage, the naẓm interpretations of Işlāḥī and Rāzī. Rāzī's naẓm views on this passage are borrowed by several other commentators (including Nīsābūrī, who reproduces them in full), and this makes Rāzī's position on it representative. In other words, in comparing him with Rāzī, we shall be comparing Işlāḥī with a number of writers.

Example 1: Qur'ān 2:178-179

1. The Verse. "Believers, you have been placed under an obligation to take qiṣṣā\(^1\) for the lives destroyed: a freeman for a freeman, a slave for a slave, and a woman for a woman. If he [killer] is then shown a measure of lenience by his brother, the prevalent custom must be observed and payment made to him in a befitting manner. This is a concession from your Lord and a kindness. But a tormenting punishment awaits one who transgresses after that. In qiṣṣā there is life for you, men of wisdom—in order that you may attain to taqwā.\(^2\)

2. Watt. "Thus 2.178-9 deals with retaliation; but though it comes amongst other passages also addressed to the believers and dealing with other subjects, it has no necessary connection with them."\(^4\)

3. Işlāḥī. With vs. 163 begins the part of the "Law" in S. 2. The basis of all law in Islam is tawḥīd or the belief in the oneness of God. Vss. 163-174 state this fundamental Islamic tenet, the statement also touching upon a few ancillary issues.\(^5\) Vs. 177 points out that the measure of true faith in God is an ethically-based conduct and not performance of empty rituals.\(^6\) This verse uses two key words, bīr and taqwā, which may roughly be translated, respectively, "righteousness" and "God-consciousness." These theoretical considerations lead to the presentation, in vss. 178-179 onward, of specific injunctions that are based on the notions of bīr and taqwā and have a strong social dimension to them. There are two types of rights whose protection is essential to the maintenance of peace, justice, and harmony in society, and they are: the right to life and the right to property. Vss. 178-179 emphasize the importance of protecting the first right, and, to that effect, lay down the principle of qiṣṣā. The following two verses stress the need to protect the right to property.\(^7\)

Thus we see that a statement of belief in tawḥīd leads, through a verse that brings out the true nature of that belief, to a discussion of some of the important social implications of that belief. In other words, vss. 178-179 are logically connected with the verses that precede and follow them.

Example 2: Qur'ān 5:11

1. The Verse. "Remember God's blessing upon you—at a time when a certain people had planned to attack you, and He kept them from you. Be mindful of God. It is God in whom believers ought to place their trust."

2. Watt. "Again 5.11 stands by itself and is clear enough, if only we knew the event to which it refers, but if it had been absent we should never have suspected that something had fallen out."\(^8\)

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\(^1\) I prefer to retain the Arabic word used in the Qur'ān, because the usual translation, "retaliation," suggests a revenge motif (in the tradition of tribal feuds in pre-Islamic Arabia) that is not implied by the Qur'ānic word. As a Qur'ānic term, qiṣṣā means the meting out of just and merited punishment by a properly constituted authority.

\(^2\) On taqwā, see below.

\(^3\) I have omitted, here and elsewhere, Watt's references to Flügel's edition of the Qur'ān.

\(^4\) Watt, p. 74.

\(^5\) Işlāḥī, Tadabbur, 1:345-346, 350 ff.

\(^6\) Ibid., 1:376 ff.

\(^7\) Ibid., 1:386, 387, 393 ff. Işlāḥī notes that, in Hadīth as well as in the Qur'ān, the right to life and the right to property are often mentioned together. Ibid., 1:393, n. 1.

\(^8\) Watt, p. 74.
come a day when we will be judged for the way we have received those blessings. The verses that follow, namely, vss. 33-42, make a distinction between those who were ungrateful for the blessings and those who were not.\textsuperscript{11}

Islāhī compares vss. 24-32 with vss. 17-23. There is, he says, a structural similarity between the two passages: each begins by establishing the possibility of the hereafter, then speaks about God's sustenance of man, and concludes by stating that recompense in the next world is the logical corollary of God's sustenance of man in this world.\textsuperscript{12}

Vss. 24-32 are thus no more out of place in the sūrah than are vss. 17-23. Both passages make the same point, namely, that the coming of the Day of Judgment is a necessity.

Example 4: Qur'ān 6:74-83

1. The Verses. “Recall the time when Abraham said to his father, ʿAzar, ‘Do you make deities out of images? I [can] see that you and your people are plainly in the wrong.’ Thus did we show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, in order that he may become firm in faith. When night enveloped him, he saw a star. ‘This is my Lord,’ he said. But when it set, he said, ‘I do not like the ones that set.’ When he saw the moon shining, he said, ‘This is my Lord.’ But when it set, he said, ‘If my Lord does not guide me, I shall become one of those who have gone astray.’ When he saw the sun shining, he said, ‘This is my Lord, this is the greatest of them all.’ But when it set, he said, ‘My people, I have nothing to do with your idolatory. I turn my face away from everything else to the One Who has created the heavens and the earth, and I am not one of the idolators.’”

2. Traditional Views. Broadly speaking, there are two views about this passage. According to one of them, the verses describe the phases of Abraham's intellectual development: through reflection Abraham was able to reach the truth that there is only one

\textsuperscript{11}Islāhī, 

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.

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\textsuperscript{9}Islāhī, Tadabbur, 2:244.

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., 2:244-245.
verses were revealed in criticism of the Muslims, especially Muḥammad and Abū Bakr. Muḥammad, it is said, accepted Abū Bakr’s suggestion that the prisoners of the Battle of Badr be allowed to buy their freedom, rejecting ʿUmar’s suggestion that the prisoners be executed. The Qur’an, in other words, here approves of the suggestion of ʿUmar and criticizes Muḥammad and Abū Bakr. 19

3. ʾIṣlahī. ʾIṣlahī regards this interpretation as fundamentally mistaken, and that for several reasons. First, by allowing the prisoners to buy their freedom, the Muslim did not violate any previously revealed “decrees” from God. At the most it could be called an error of ḫithād (“independently formed judgment”), and a mistaken ḫithād is not something for which one deserves to be reprimanded in such severe terms, especially when we see that this is an ḫithād that gets immediate approval from the Qurʾān (vs. 69). Second, it was not even an error of ḫithād, for 47:4 had already permitted taking ransom from war prisoners. Third, enough blood had already been shed in the battle: seventy leading figures of the Quraysh had been killed, as many had been taken captive, and the rest had fled. The question is: Who was left to kill so that a “carnage” should have resulted? Fourth, the Qurʾān never speaks of anyone—except of die-hard disbelievers and the Hypocrites—in such harsh terms; there seems to be no reason why it should be speaking of Muslims in such terms. 20

The whole trouble arises because it is supposed that the Qurʾān is here addressing the Muslims, whereas it is the Quraysh who are being addressed. The sūrah is to be understood against the background of the Battle of Badr. After their defeat at Badr, the Quraysh tried to wipe out the effects of the battle. With the two-fold aim of restoring the badly shaken confidence of the Makkans and demoralizing the now self-assured Muslims, they launched a propaganda campaign in a new key. What kind of prophet is Muḥammad, they said, for he has caused dissension among his own people, made war against them, and taken them prisoner in order later to receive ransom from them. In a word, they tried to portray Muḥammad as a power-hungry person who would go to any lengths to achieve his ambition. Vss. 67-68 exonerate Muḥammad from the charges the Quraysh had brought against him and blame the Quraysh for what

Example 5: Qurʾān 8:67-68

1. The Verses. “It does not behoove a prophet to take prisoners, [for this purpose going] to the length of causing carnage in the land.” You [Quraysh] seek the gains of this world, whereas God seeks the next life, and God is Dominant, Wise. If a decree from God had not already existed, severe punishment would have befallen you for the way you conducted yourselves.”

2. Traditional Interpretation. All scholars agree that these

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14. See, for example, Zamakhshārī, 2:30-31; Rāzī, 13:34 ff.; Nisāḥurī, 7:142.

15. ʿAlūsī, 7:198.


17. This translation is based on ʾIṣlahī’s interpretation of the verse. A translation according to the traditional interpretation would be: “It does not behoove a prophet to take prisoners until he has caused carnage in the land.” The difference is a basic one and is discussed in the text below.

18. One of the meanings of akhādha, ʾIṣlahī says, is “to conduct oneself in a certain way,” and it is this meaning that is intended here. The word, that is to say, does not refer to the “taking” (akhādha) of ransom from the prisoners, as is generally held.

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20. ʾIṣlahī, Tadabbur, 3:100-103.
had happened. A prophet, these verses are saying, is not the kind of person who would shed blood in order to capture prisoners from whom he might extract ransom. This is the mentality of the Quraysh, but not ofMuḥammad, who is a prophet. Vs. 69 aims at neutralizing the possible adverse effect of the Quraysh’s propaganda, for the propaganda could have influenced some Muslims—perhaps many Muslims since the dominant view about religion at that time was that it taught asceticism and renunciation, a view on which the Quraysh could have capitalized. The verse therefore permits the Muslims to enjoy the spoils of war without any qualms. Finally, vss. 70-71 address the prisoners and say that they should be grateful for their release, but that they will meet a similar fate in the future if they do not desist from their opposition toMuḥammad.21

Seen in this light, the verses in question (67-68) not only fit into their context, they also yield a more satisfying interpretation than traditional scholars have offered of them.

Example 6: Qur’an 75:16-19

1. The Verses. “Do not move your tongue in haste so that it [revelation] is precipitated. We have taken it upon ourselves to collect and recite it. When, therefore, we recite it, follow the reciting of it. Then it is up to Us to expound it.”

2. Rāzī. Rāzī suggests five ways in which the verses may be connected with the ones that precede and follow them. a) Upon reaching this part of the sūrahMuḥammad recited the verses hastily, and the Qur’an forbids him to do so. b) The theme of haste, brought up in the sūrah (as in vs. 20) as the theme of the disbelievers’ love of the here and now (Qajilah), is generalized and haste of all kinds is condemned. c) Fear of forgetting wasMuḥammad’s excuse for his hasty recitation of the Qur’an. The Qur’an tells him that it is trust in God, and not haste on his part, that will aid him in memorizing the Qur’an. d) Muḥammad’s hasty recitation was motivated by his desire to memorize the Qur’an and convey it to the disbelievers so that they might believe in it. The Qur’an, however, says that their disbelief is caused by defiance and not by lack of understanding, and that their salvation should therefore not be his concern. e) On the Day of Judgment, the disbelievers, trusting their own powers, will make an attempt to escape the decree of God, but will fail in the attempt (vss. 10-12). Muḥammad should, instead of trusting his own power of retention, place his trust in God in memorizing the Qur’an.22

3. Iṣlāḥī. Essentially, Iṣlāḥī borrows his interpretation of 75:16-17 from Farāhī, but he refines it and adds to it. It is as follows. The sūrah’s cAmūd is: affirmation of the Day of Judgment by reference to human conscience, which represents, in miniature form, the Final Court that God will establish on the Day of Judgment. Doubts about the possibility of the Day of Judgment are, therefore, doubts about the existence of one’s own conscience, and, as such, have no real basis.23

Muḥammad was constantly pestered by the disbelievers with questions and objections about the hereafter. They sarcastically asked him (vs. 6): When will the Day of Judgment be? Such questions and objections naturally worried Muḥammad, and he relied upon revelation for answers. In fact, it was revelation that furnished him with a blueprint for action, aided him in coping with the problems of the present and preparing for the tasks of the future, and sustained him intellectually and spiritually. He, therefore, anxiously awaited the coming of revelation, and when it came, like an eager student tried to acquire all of it at once. It is this eagerness that the Qur’an is here speaking of. The Qur’an is saying that revelation is being sent to him in accordance with a certain plan and that he should not try to precipitate it, for God has taken it upon Himself to preserve and expound the Qur’an for him. After advising Muḥammad to be patient, the sūrah, from vs. 20 onward, again connects with the main theme of the hereafter.24

Iṣlāḥī’s interpretation of the verses is much more logical than Rāzī’s. While Rāzī tries to establish highly tentative connections between these and other—isolated—verses of the sūrah, Iṣlāḥī places the verses in the context of the whole sūrah and explains the clear and definite connection they bear to the sūrah’s cAmūd. It may be added that these verses are regarded as disconnected by a majority

21Ibid., 3:100-105.

22Rāzī, 30:222-223.

23Iṣlāḥī, Tadabbar, 8:71, 78-82. See also Farāhī, Majmū‘ah, pp. 202-211.

24Iṣlāḥī, Tadabbar, 8:84-87.
of scholars, Muslim and Orientalist.25 İslâhi would appear to have shown that they bear an integral relation to the sūrah.

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