

NOTE FOR THE STUDY OF A 'SHĪ'Ī QUR'ĀN'

B. TODD LAWSON

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

In 1936, Arthur Jeffery published his collection of the *qirā'āt* of Zayd b. 'Alī (d. 122/740), son of the quietist Fourth Imām Zayn al-'Ābidīn (d. ca. 94/712) and eponym of the Zaydī sect of Shī'ī Islam. His interest in singling out these particular readings had been stimulated by three facts: (1) a Codex of 'Alī was said to be in the hands of the Alid family when Ibn al-Nadīm wrote the *Fihrist*; (2) the existence of traditions in which 'Alī is made to express his unqualified approval of the text published by 'Uthmān; (3) the 'Uthmānic text was only one of many rival texts. His final opinion on the material that he had collected was that it really bore little resemblance to what could be thought of as a distinctly Shī'ī text: 'a text associated with 'Alī and the *ahl al-bayt* which also had a claim to consideration'. Nonetheless, he remained convinced that 'one of the as yet untouched problems of the textual criticism of the Qur'ān is that of the Shi'a [*sic*] *Qirā'āt*'¹.

At the time Jeffery wrote this article, the extant literature on the subject was confined to three articles on the so-called 'Shī'ī suras'² published in the *Dabistān*³, which had been proven forgeries, the study of Goldziher⁴, and a few remarks in the

¹ Arthur Jeffery, 'The Qur'ān Readings of Zaid b. 'Alī', *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 16 (1936), 249-289.

² Garcin De Tassy, 'Chapitre inconnu du Coran', *Journal asiatique* 13 (1842), 431-439; Mirzā Kazembeg, 'Observations sur Chapitre inconnu du Coran', *Journal asiatique* 14 (1843), 371-429; W. St. Clair Tisdall, 'Shī'ah Additions to the Koran', *Muslim World* 3 (1913), 227-241.

³ Muhsin Fānī (ascribed), *Dabistān-i Madhāhib*, 3 vols. English edition translated by David Shea and Anthony Troyer, Paris 1843 [see the more recent abridged edition published by Washington & London: Walter M. Dunne: Washington & London 1901, 329-331].

⁴ Ignaz Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden: Brill, 1952 [first published 1920]), 263-309.

current edition of *Geschichte des Qurans*⁵. Jeffery discounted the material in *al-Kāfī*⁶ as 'more than suspect'⁷. Unfortunately, he did not give explicit reasons for this assessment and one assumes that it merely represents the once fashionable and widespread practice of discounting, ipso facto, any dissident information coming from a recognizably Shī'ī source as so much sectarian propaganda⁸.

The judgment on such sources has, in recent years, become somewhat optimistic. The question of a distinctly Shī'ī attitude to the Qur'ān was treated at length in a series of articles which appeared in 1961-1962⁹. In 1968, an important study of Shī'ism appeared in which the specific problem of the Imāmi attitude towards the 'Uthmānic Codex was raised¹⁰. In 1969, Eliash revised Goldziher's conclusions¹¹. The latter had thought that the Shī'a claim that the 'Uthmānic Qur'ān is not the true Qur'ān as revealed to Muḥammad; that many verses which supported the claims of the Shī'a had been omitted and the order of the suras altered. 'Alī possessed the complete Qur'ān, three times longer than the present Text. This longer version disappeared with the Twelfth Imām. Until his return, all believers are required to follow the 'Uthmānic text¹². From his study of the Shī'ī sources Goldziher had not taken into account, Eliash argued for the following adjustment of the above:

The Qur'ān in the form accepted by the Sunnīs as the Holy Qur'ān revealed to the Prophet, is the same book accepted by the Imāmī-Shī'a as the Holy Qur'ān. The Imāmī Shī'a maintain

⁵ See now Theodor Nöldeke, et al., *Geschichte des Qurāns* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1961), 93-112.

⁶ Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfī*, one of the four books accepted as having canonical status by the Shī'a. It occupies the same place of authority for the Shī'a as the *Sahīḥayn* of Bukhārī and Muslim do for Sunnī Muslims.

⁷ Jeffery, 250.

⁸ On Shī'ī *tafsīr* specifically: 'Nöldeke charakterisiert sie nicht mit Unrecht als elendes Gewebe von Lügen und Dummheit'. Goldziher, 309 citing *GdesQ*, xxix.

⁹ Daud Rahbar, 'The relation of Shī'a Theology to the Qur'ān', *Muslim World*, 51 (1961), 92-98, 211-216; 52 (1962), 17-21, 124-128.

¹⁰ Abdoljavad Falaturi, 'Die Zwölfer-Schia aus der Sicht eines Schiiten: Probleme ihrer Untersuchung', in *Festschrift Werner Caskel* (Leiden 1968), 62-95 (see esp. 91-95).

¹¹ Joseph Eliash, 'The Shī'ite Qur'ān: A Reconsideration of Goldziher's Interpretation', *Arabica* 16 (1969), 15-24.

¹² As summarized in Eliash, 15-16.

that only the order of some of the suras as well as some of the odd verses, and not their content (except as far as differences which arose from various readings, *qirā'āt*, are concerned) was corrupted in the 'Uthmānic Codex. 'Alī and the eleven Imāms are the only ones after Muḥammad who know the right order. 'Alī's copy of the Qur'ān contained the suras and verses in their revealed order. It did not contain any additional revealed text and included 'Alī's explanatory notes. 'Alī's notes are revered by the Shī'a to the same extent as the revealed text¹³.

Finally, Eliash stated: 'It is beyond any doubt that at least as early as Kulīnī (*sic*; d. 329/940), the 'Uthmānic Codex had been accepted by the Imāmī jurists'¹⁴.

In 1972, Kohlberg summarized much of the previous scholarship on the question and, in the process, drew our attention to some of the more interesting aspects of the problem¹⁵. Chief among these was the persistent suspicion in the writings of Shī'ī writers about the integrity of the so-called 'Uthmānic Qur'ān. He concluded his study as follows:

[The attitude that the Qur'ān we have is corrupt¹⁶] seems to be

¹³ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 24. Italics added.

¹⁵ Kohlberg, 'Some Notes on the Imāmī Attitude to the Qur'ān', *Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition: Essays presented to R. Walzer*. Edited by S. M. Stern, A. Hourani and Y. Brown (Oxford: Cassirer, 1972), 209-224.

¹⁶ The most recent representative of this view mentioned by Kohlberg is Husayn b. Muḥammad Taqī al-Nūrī al-Ṭabarsī (d. 1320/1902), *Faṣl al-khiṭāb fī ithbāt tahrīf kitāb rabb al-ārbāb*, n.p., 1298.

al-Nūrī al-Ṭabarsī, who is better known for his *Mustadrak al-wasā'il*, held that Ibn Babāwayh (d. 381/991), Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044) and Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067), who figure among Eliash's jurists, are in the minority in their opposition to *tahrīf*. He rejected al-Mufīd's equation of Qur'ān with *tafsīr* on grounds of inconsistency and argued, with Murtaḍā al-Ansārī (d. 1281/1864, the sole *marja' al-taqlīd* of the Shī'ī world from 1266/1850) 'that the corruption of the Qur'ān does not imply that one should not follow its apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning ... especially in the sections dealing with practical religious duties ... since there is no general knowledge that the apparent meaning was affected by the corruption'. Further:

In three introductory sections he attempts to prove that since the Gospels were corrupted, it is not impossible that the same fate should have befallen the Qur'ān. He also maintains that 'Alī had a copy of the Qur'ān which included additional material that was neither a 'divine tradition' (*ḥadīth qudsī*) nor a commentary (*tafsīr*) ... and hence must be regarded as having formed part of the original revelation. ... [He] defines *tahrīf* as 'abandoning and omitting parts of the revelation' and says that most Imamites accepted the theory of *tahrīf* thus defined. Ibn Babawayh (al-Ṣadūq) was 'the first who introduced (*ahdatha*)

the exception rather than the rule among modern Shi'ites, most of whom take a diametrically opposed view which totally rejects any doubts concerning the integrity of the Qur'ān. Their attitude is ... that only some uncritical traditionalists (*hashwiyya*) and the ascetists (*nussāk*) were led astray by the leaders of extreme sects in the beginning of Islam ... The internal discussion and dissension within the Imāmite community on the attitude to the 'Uthmanic Codex is a product of the intricate political and religious history of Shi'ism¹⁷.

By way of a footnote, the author hazarded the following speculation:

It may not be entirely wrong to suppose that this insistence on the integrity of the Qur'ān and the regulation of all traditions to the contrary reflect the wish to find more common ground with Sunnite Islam. The fact is that some modern Sunnite scholars still accuse the Imamites of believing in the 'omission theory'¹⁸.

Kohlberg's final word was: 'Various shades of opinion, however, persist to our own day, and we can agree with Prof. G. E. von Grunebaum that "the Shi'ites themselves have never been able to agree on the alleged distortion of the sacred text by their adversaries"'¹⁹.

This conclusion may be found reproduced in the recent general work on Shi'ism by Momen²⁰. In 1985, Mahmoud

this opinion (i.e. the denial of *tahrif*) into the Shi'a', and the implied accusation is that he was guilty of heretical innovation (Kohlberg, 218).

¹⁷ Kohlberg, 218-219, who refers to one Hibat al-Din al-Shahrestānī and the better known al-Khū'ī (on whom see below) as representative of 'most modern Shi'ites'.

¹⁸ Kohlberg, 223 which see for the books by the Sunnī authors referred to. In this connection, it is worth noting that the modern edition of Ṭabarsī's *tafsīr* (see below), which argues against the falsification theory, was published by the *Dār al-taqrīb al-madhāhib al-islāmīya* ('Centre for the reconciliation of the various sects of Islam') and contains an introduction by Maḥmūd Shaltūt, erstwhile ecumenist Shaykh of al-Azhar.

¹⁹ Kohlberg, 219 citing G. E. von Grunebaume, *Islam: Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition* (London 1955), p. 80.

²⁰ Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1985), 172-173:

There is ... considerable evidence that the early Shi'a did not accept the standard text of the Qur'an. Even as late as the time of Shakh al-Mufid [d. 413/1022], there was considerable discussion among the Shi'a as to what had been omitted from the Qur'an by the enemies of 'Ali, although by that time there was a consensus that nothing had been added. In other words, it was felt that although the standard text of the Qur'an represented God's word with no

Ayoub raised the question of the authenticity of the present Qur'ān text according to the Shī'a. Here it was again emphasized that the belief in the corruption of the present Text is 'extremist', and that the Buwayhid Shī'ī scholars had established that this belief was erroneous²¹. Just as recently, scholarship has more sharply defined a process of accommodation of belief to changing times by these tenth and eleventh century Shī'ī authors and that part of this accommodation involved denouncing previously held views on the corruption of the Qur'ān²². In what follows, I would like to ask about the contemporary Shī'ī attitude to the venerable topic of the corruption of the Qur'ān text. To do this, I would like to begin in the 4th/10th century with the work of Kulaynī.

al-Kāfī

Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī al-Rāzi al-Salsālī (d. 328/939 or 329/940) was the author of what is regarded as one of the four canonical *ḥadīth* books of the Shī'a, *al-Kāfī fī 'ilm al-dīn*²³. This huge compendium of more than 16,000

human additions, part of the text extolling 'Ali and pointing to his Imamate had been excised by his enemies.

Although most Shī'is eventually took the view that nothing had been omitted or added to the Qur'an, traces of the earlier view are enshrined among some of the *ḥadīth* and are even reproduced in some of the later books.

²¹ Mahmoud Ayoub, 'The Speaking Qur'ān and the Silent Qur'ān', *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān*. Edited by Andrew Rippin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 182 & 185.

²² Andrew Joseph Newman, *The Development and Political Significance of the Rationalist (usūlī) and the Traditionalist (akhbārī) Schools in Imāmī Shī'ī History from the Third/Ninth to the Tenth/Sixteenth Century A.D.* 2 pts. in 2 vols. (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1988 [PhD UCLA 1986]). Pt. 1: 39, 217-218; 409-412.

Kohlberg also draws attention to 'al-Mufid's careful formulations' which are in fact full of conditionals quite out of character with the rest of the book and supports the view that Ṭūsī was forced to express such views in order to conceal his true beliefs by saying that Ṭūsī 'lived to witness the downfall of the Buwayhids and the resurgence of anti-Shī'ite sentiments ... [and] was personally affected by these events: his house was burnt down and he had to flee Baghdad and spend the remaining twelve years of his life in exile in Najaf'. Kohlberg, 216 and 223 n. 92.

²³ In what follows, reference is restricted to the first two volumes of this work: *al-Usūl min al-kāfī*. 2 vols. (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīya, 1374/1954). The other three works are *Man lā yabduruhu al-faqīh* by Ibn Babāwayh (d. 381/991); *Tabḥṭīb al-ahkām* and *al-Istibṣār* by Ṭūsī (d. 460/1070).

reports (*akbbār*) traced to the Prophet or one of the members of the Holy Family revered by the Twelver Shī'a, was compiled over a period of twenty years. With special reference to the material in this work which upholds, either explicitly or implicitly, the deliberate alteration of the Qur'ān text by forces hostile to the claims of the Shī'a, opinion varies widely. Some authors have said that despite *Kāfī*'s enormous prestige, much of his material falls into the category of *khavar al-ahād*, and therefore such statements are not absolutely compelling²⁴.

Other views are that every *ḥadīth* in *Kāfī* is sound and trustworthy by virtue of its having been compiled during the period of the Lesser Occultation (A.D. 873-939) and must have therefore had the approval of the Hidden Imām. Indeed some have referred to Kulaynī as the first deputy (*nā'ib*) of the Hidden Imām²⁵. At the very minimum, therefore, the material cited below can be read with the secure knowledge that it was received by some, if not many, as trustworthy and veracious, to borrow a Sunnī term — *ṣaḥīḥ*²⁶.

While all of the above-mentioned studies have referred to this work in the course of their analyses of the problem of the Shī'ī attitude towards the 'Uthmānic Codex, none has called sufficient attention to a specific type of *khavar* whose explicit and emphatic expression is thought to be worthy of notice. Several such reports may be found in a chapter of *Kāfī* entitled in the edition at hand as: 'Various statements culled from the

²⁴ So Murtaḍā (d. 436/1046) who 'went further than many *mujtabidūn* by claiming that a tradition which is translated on the authority of a single person ... cannot be cited as legal proof' (Kohlberg, 222 n. 70), and Majlisī (d. 1110/1700), *ibid.*, 218. On the polemic revolving around the use of *akbbār al-ahād*, see Newman, 1:42-49. See also 'Khabar al-wāḥid', *EP* and now Norman Calder, 'Doubt and Prerogative: the emergence of an Imāmī Shī'ī theory of jurisprudence', *Studia Islamica* 70 (1989), 57-78. For other aspects of *ḥadīth* criticism in connection with this subject, see Kohlberg, 219.

²⁵ Newman, 47-49. Here Majlisī is quoted as saying that all *akbbār* in *Kāfī* and *Faḡīh* are *ṣaḥīḥ*. al-Qazwīnī is cited (from Khwānsārī) as saying that all *akbbār* in *Kāfī* are correct because they had been accepted by the Hidden Imām inasmuch as Kulaynī had compiled the collection during the lesser occultation and that '*rawī*' in *Kāfī* refers to the Imām himself, while '*ālim*' refers to one of his deputies.

²⁶ Or, as Kohlberg, 219: 'The traditions, even if mostly forged, which implied that deliberate omissions had occurred grew out of the deep frustration and reflect widely held views among the Imamites'.

revelation (*tanzīl*) concerning guardianship (*walāya*)²⁷. Such a chapter heading may in fact be the reason this material seems not to have been noticed previously inasmuch as there is no explicit reference to the 'hot' words *taghyīr*, *tabrīf*, *muḥarrāf*, to name a few, usually associated with this subject. That the central concern of this chapter is stated to be *walāya* indicates just how important this idea is for the study of otherwise unlikely aspects of Shī'ism. In any case, containing no less than 92 separate reports, this is one of the more extensive chapters in the *Kitab al-ḥujja*, and all of its *akhbār* concur, in some way or another, that the present 'Uthmānic text is decidedly not the text revealed to the Prophet. For example, the next to last report in it has as its subject several verses, all of which are discussed in a conversation between the Eighth Imām and his disciple Muḥammad b. al-Fuḍayl. The exchange follows the formula of the Imām being asked about a verse, to which he replies by pointing out its original form (i.e., the standard text plus some reference to 'Alī or the *ahl al-bayt*). His questioner then seeks confirmation by asking: 'Is this really Revelation (*bādhā tanzīl*)?' to which the response is always a brief and authoritative '*na'm*'²⁸. Numerous other verses are discussed in this chapter which employ similarly explicit language. The type of report to which I would like to call attention is represented by the following three examples, presented here in Qur'ānic order²⁹.

*Example A ad 2:23*³⁰

[From 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm³¹ from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Barqī from his father] from Muḥammad b. Sinān from 'Ammār b. Marwān from Munakhkhal from Jābir:
Abū Ja'far [i.e., the Fifth Imām, Muḥammad al-Bāqir, b. 57/676, d. 117/735] said:

²⁷ *Bāb fīhi nukat wa nutaf min al-tanzīl fī 'l-walāya: Kāfī*, 1:412-432. See *ibid.*, 433 for the following chapter with the parallel title: *Bāb fīhi nukat wa nutaf min al-riwāya fī 'l-walāya*.

²⁸ *Kāfī*, 1:432-5, # 91. See the varying definitions of *tanzīl* in the literature.

²⁹ *Kāfī*, 1:417 cites examples A and C (nos. 26 and 25) in reversed order.

³⁰ 'Egyptian' verse numbers are used here; the editor of *Kāfī* refers to this verse as 2:21, the following as 2:56, and the last as 2:84.

³¹ al-Qummī (d. 307/919-920), the author of one of the earliest Shī'ī works of *tafsīr*, a teacher and frequent source of Kulaynī.

NOTE FOR THE STUDY OF A SHĪ'Ī QU'RĀN

Gabriel, upon him peace, came down with this verse to Muḥammad thus³²: AND IF YOU ARE IN DOUBT ABOUT WHAT WE HAVE REVEALED UNTO OUR SERVANT (CONCERNING 'ALĪ) THEN PRODUCE A SURĀ THE LIKE THEREOF.

Example B ad 2:59

From Aḥmad b. Mihrān from 'Abd al-'Azīm b. 'Abd Allāh from Muḥammad b. al-Fuḍayl from Abū Hamza from Abū Ja'far:

Gabriel, upon him peace, came down with this verse to Muḥammad, may God bless him and his family, thus: BUT THOSE WHO DID WRONG AGAINST (THE FAMILY OF MUḤAMMAD) CHANGED THE WORD WHICH HAD BEEN GIVEN THEM FOR ANOTHER SAYING, AND WE SENT DOWN UPON THOSE WHO WRONGED (AGAINST THE RIGHTFUL CLAIM OF THE FAMILY OF MUḤAMMAD) WRATH OUT OF HEAVEN FOR THEIR EVIL-DOING³³.

Example C ad 2:90

From 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Barqī from his father, from Muḥammad b. Sinān from 'Ammār b. Marwān from Munakhkal from Jābir from Abū Ja'far, upon him peace, he said:

Gabriel, upon him peace, came down with this verse to Muḥammad, may God bless him and his family, thus³⁴: EVIL IS THAT FOR WHICH THEY SELL THEIR SOULS: THAT THEY SHOULD DISBELIEVE IN THAT WHICH GOD HATH REVEALED (CONCERNING 'ALĪ)³⁵ GRUDGINGLY ...

While these and various other examples of the ShĪ'Ī '*qirā'āt*'³⁶

³² *Kāfī*, 1:417: *Naẓala Jibrīl 'alayhi al-salām 'alā Muḥammad [sic] ḥākadhā.*

³³ *Kāfī*, 1:423, # 58. Cf. *ibid.*, # 57.

³⁴ *Kāfī*, 1:417: *Naẓala Jibrīl 'alayhi al-salām bi-ḥādhibi 'l-āya 'alā Muḥammad ṣalā Allāh 'alayhi wa-ālihi ḥākadhā.*

³⁵ The parentheses are in the printed text to which the editor has commented as follows: *ya'nī bi-ḥādhibā 'l-ma'nā nuẓilat*, arguing that this was merely the esoteric meaning of this verse, but for the other two examples he adds only the sura and verse numbers. It is not clear whether we are supposed to understand the other statements as also representing only the esoteric understanding of the verses. This recalls the debate about whether the *muṣḥaf* of 'Alī contained verses which were actually different from the 'Uthmānic Codex, or was valued by the ShĪ'Ī community only for the First Imām's exegesis which it contained in the margins.

³⁶ Classification of such verses as *qirā'āt* (rather than, say, *muḥarrarāt*) may have served to defuse the whole controversy within a milieu in which variant readings were 'tolerated'.

have been published in which the alleged omissions (indicated here by parentheses) have been noticed³⁷, as far I am able to determine, the particular type of *khabar*, complete with *isnād* and *matn*, has not³⁸. Surely by having the angel of revelation involved in the report we are meant to be in the presence of a unit of truth of the highest possible order, comparable to a *ḥadīth qudsī*³⁹, or, as the title of this chapter plainly states, the Quranic revelation itself. The comments of Kulaynī's modern editor notwithstanding, these traditions cannot be taken as suggesting that the Shī'ī material merely 'inheres' as the esoteric meaning of the verses in question. Nor, as the following will demonstrate, have these traditions been abandoned as irresponsibly promiscuous insults to the integrity of the Holy Text.

Examples A and C are related on the authority of the famous Shī'ī exegete 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (d. 307/919-920)⁴⁰ who was in fact one of Kulaynī's teachers. Qummī has apparently related this report from the Imām on the ultimate authority of Jābir b. al-Ju'fī (d. 128/745). There is of course no agreement in the sources on the reliability of Jābir⁴¹. It may be of some interest to note that in the published editions of Qummī's *Tafsīr*, the commentary on 2:23 is much less detailed than that which *Kāfī* repeats on his authority. There is no mention of Gabriel or 'Alī; Qummī is concerned with this verse only to gloss *rayb* as *shakk* and to identify the *shubadā'*⁴². As for 2:59, Qummī does repeat the verse as given in the above example, but does not mention a '*naẓala Jibrīl ḥākadhā khabar*'⁴³.

³⁷ Kohlberg, 211-212 summarizes the introduction to the *Tafsīr al-Qummī* in which these and other alterations of the text are mentioned, but without the introductory *isnād* or mention of Gabriel.

³⁸ Kohlberg, 'An Unusual Shī'ī isnād', *Israel Oriental Studies* 5 (1975), 142-149, 144-145 mentions a similar report in which Gabriel figures. But this report has nothing to do with the explicit text of the Qur'ān.

³⁹ As already mentioned, al-Nūri al-Ṭabarsī (d. 1320/1902) is quite explicit about such a comparison claiming that 'Alī had a Qur'ān which contained material that was neither *ahādīth qudsī* nor *tafsīr*, but rather revelation.

⁴⁰ Not 'the second half of the 4th/tenth century' as in Kohlberg, 211.

⁴¹ On Jābir especially see Kohlberg, 'Unusual', 144, n. 13.

⁴² *Tafsīr al-Qummī* (Tabrīz 1315/1897), 18-19.

⁴³ E.g.: *wa qāla allāh: fabaddala 'l-ladhīna ẓalamū 'alā Muḥammad ḥaqqahum qawlan ... Qummī*, 25. The *Tafsīr* of the Eleventh Imām, al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī (b. 232/846, d. 260/873), printed on the margin of this edition of Qummī, makes no mention of these reports in the appropriate places, or, as far as has been determined, elsewhere in the commentary.

It has not been possible to find his commentary on 2:90 in the expected place in available editions of the *Tafsīr*.

This interesting type of tradition does not figure in either of the two 'authoritative' works of Shī'ī Qur'ān commentary, those of Tūsī (d. 460/1067) and Ṭabarsī (d. 548/1153)⁴⁴. We know, in any case, that the attitude of these authorities on the subject of the acceptability of the 'Uthmānic Codex was quite clear: it was to be accepted⁴⁵. However, in what has been described as the third major stage in Shī'ī history⁴⁶, we see that these traditions had remained viable, as a brief look at the following three separate works of exegesis from the Safavī period will confirm.

al-Ṣāfi

This work was completed in 1664⁴⁷ by the famous student and son-in-law of the great Safavī philosopher Mullā Ṣadrā, Mullā Muḥammad b. Murtaḍā Muḥsin-i Fayḍ, known as Fayḍ al-Kāshī (d. 1091/1680). In the context of the Uṣūlī/Akhhārī debate as it was being articulated during his lifetime, Muḥsin Fayḍ was accounted among the Akhhārīyyūn⁴⁸. He was also one of the teachers of the famous Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1110/1699), author of the *Bihār al-anwār*, and the author of what is now regarded as one of the three canonical *ḥadīth* collections of later Ithnā-'asharī Shī'ism, *al-Wāfi*⁴⁹. The full title of his commentary is *al-Ṣāfi fī tafsīr kalām Allāh al-wāfi*. In

⁴⁴ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Ḥasan, al-Tūsī, *al-Tibyān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Introduction by Aghā Buzurg al-Tihirānī (Najaf, Maṭba'at al-'Ilmiya, 1376-1383/1957-1963); Abū 'Alī, al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-taqrīb al-madhāhib al-Islāmiya, 1377/1957); for 2:23 see 1:118-122; 2:59, 1:235-236; 2:90, 315-318. In discussing these verses Ṭabarsī, for example, would rather quote material from such authorities as Abū 'Ubayda, Mujāhid, and Qatada than from Qummī or the Imāms.

⁴⁵ Eliash, 21; we would not agree that Kulaynī be included in the statement here: 'it becomes clear that Kulīnī (*sic*) and other Imāmī jurists ... do not claim deliberate corruption of the contents of the 'Uthmanic Codex'; see also Kohlberg, 217.

⁴⁶ Ayoub, 185.

⁴⁷ Goldziher, 278.

⁴⁸ We are advised, however, to avoid the common equivalence Akhhārī/literalist. See Henry Corbin, *En Islam iranien: Aspects spirituels et philosophiques*, 4 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1971-1972), 4:250.

⁴⁹ The other two are *Wasā'il al-shī'a* by al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī (d. 1104/1692) and *Bihār al-anwār* by Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1110/1699).

addition to gathering the pertinent sayings of the Prophet and Imāms around a given verse, *Ṣāfi* also borrows from the very popular Sunnī commentary by Bayḍawī (d. 685/1286), *Anwār al-tanzīl*.

There seems to be no consensus on how to characterise Muḥsin Fayḍ's position in the *tahrif* debate. In this regard, some refer to him (together with Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī) as an extremist⁵⁰, while others call him a moderate⁵¹. And *Ṣāfi* is apparently sufficiently ambiguous on the question to enable another author to cite it in support of his own argument that the Shī'a do not hold that the present Qur'ān is somehow defective⁵². *Ṣāfi* is introduced with twelve 'prologues' (*muqaddamāt*), which contain the basic presuppositions informing the work⁵³. The most extensive of these prologues is entitled: 'Concerning those traditions about the collection of the Qur'ān, its corruption, its augmentation and its diminution, and the explanation of this'⁵⁴.

Ayoub points out that Muḥsin Fayḍ claimed that the first transmitters of the exegetic tradition were limited in what they related by *taqiyya* ('pious dissimulation'), with the result that much of the true tradition might have been lost. 'This, of course, left great scope for new ideas in *tafsīr* in the name of recovering the tradition'⁵⁵. One of the relevant passages in *Ṣāfi* is:

The Qur'ān which is in our hands is not the entire Qur'ān sent down by God to Muḥammad. Rather, there is in it that which contradicts that which God had sent down. There is, moreover, in it that which was altered and changed. There were many things deleted from it, such as the name of 'Alī in many places and the phrase *Āl Muḥammad* (the family of Muḥammad), as well as the names of the 'hypocrites', where they occur ... The Qur'ān, furthermore, was not arranged in accordance with the pleasure of God and his apostle⁵⁶.

Later, however, Muḥsin Fayḍ, appears to soften this position somewhat. This is explained by Ayoub as follows: Muḥsin

⁵⁰ Ayoub, 182.

⁵¹ Newman, 1:42.

⁵² Maulvi Muḥammad Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān* (Lahore 1935), xci-xcii.

⁵³ *Ṣāfi*, 1:15-78.

⁵⁴ *Ṣāfi*, 1:40-55.

⁵⁵ Ayoub, 186.

⁵⁶ Translated in Ayoub, 190; cf. *Ṣāfi*, 1:49.

Fayḍ was bound by tradition, as represented by such venerated ShĪ'ī scholars as Tūsī and Ṭabarsī who had insisted on the authenticity of the text. Ayoub explains, paraphrasing *Ṣāfi*:

The Qur'ān as it now stands is the word of God which, if interpreted correctly, contains all that the community now needs in the way of legal sanctions and prohibitions, as well as the necessary proofs of the Imams' high office as its guardians and sole authorities on its exegesis. The Qur'ān which is in our hands must, [Muḥsin Fayḍ] argues, be followed during the occultation (*ghayba*) of the Twelfth Imām. It must be assumed that the true Qur'ān is with him⁵⁷.

In light of these rather strong and undisguised statements, it is somewhat surprising that in his commentary for 2:23, Muḥsin Fayḍ does quote *Kāfi*, but not the *khabar* which is of interest here. Rather, it is a different tradition completely from the Seventh Imām, Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799). The purpose is merely to identify those to whom the verse was addressed. No mention is made of an alternate reading, whether through *tahrīf*, *tabdīl*, or any other process, let alone the one quoted above in which Gabriel is said to have brought the verse down as explicitly mentioning 'Alī⁵⁸. In his commentary at 2:59, however, we find Muḥsin Fayḍ quoting the '*nazala Jibrīl' khabar* from al-Bāqir but *not* from *Kāfi*. He quotes directly from another great early master of ShĪ'ī commentary, Abū al-Nasr Muḥammad b. Mas'ūd b. 'Ayyāsh al-Sulamī al-Samarqandī, known most widely as 'Ayyāshī (d. ca. late ninth/early tenth cent. A.D.)⁵⁹. Although the verse is given a typically ShĪ'ī interpretation, in his commentary for 2:90 we find neither mention of *tahrīf* nor of the *khabar* quoted above from *Kāfi*⁶⁰.

⁵⁷ Ayoub, 190; cf. *Ṣāfi*, 1:55.

⁵⁸ *Ṣāfi*, 1:102.

⁵⁹ Died late 3rd/9th early 10th century; he was a contemporary of al-Qummī who converted from Sunnism to ShĪ'ism. His commentary, much of which is collected from such sources as *Ṣāfi*, the two Safavī commentaries referred to below, and *Biḥār al-anwār*, is published as: *Tafsīr 'Ayyāshī*, 2 vols. in 1. Edited by Hāshim al-Rasūlī al-Maḥallātī (Qum 1380/1960).

⁶⁰ *Ṣāfi*, 1:162-163.

Nūr al-thaqalayn

This work⁶¹ was written by 'Abd 'Alī al-Ḥuwayzī (d. 1112/1700), *Kitāb tafsīr nūr al-thaqalayn*, (*Nūr*). Not much is known about his life, but as indicated by his *nisba*, he was from the small town of Ḥuwayza (the old headquarters of the Musha'sha' movement), near Aḥwāz in southwest Iran. His work contains none of the introductory material found in *Ṣāfi*; rather, it begins after a few words of doxology in veneration of the Prophet and the Imāms, with a discussion of the *Fātiḥa* by way of pertinent *ḥadīths*. The only known edition was edited by Hāshim al-Rasūlī al-Maḥallātī (the editor of 'Ayyāshī's *tafsīr*) and printed in Qum during the years 1963-1965. This edition is based on three manuscripts of varying completeness⁶². A preface by the highly regarded Shī'ī scholar Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī refers to this commentary as 'one of the best ... if not the best' work of its kind⁶³. The author of *Dharī'a* complains about the *tafsīr*'s lack of organization⁶⁴, and discusses briefly the history of its composition, stating that it was completed in 1656⁶⁵. This indicates that the work was probably extant while Muḥsin Fayḍ was writing *Ṣāfi*, but it appears to have been unknown to him.

In the edition at hand, Quranic material is set off from the text in bold type. Qur'ān 2:23 is mentioned solely in the above-mentioned *khabar*, introducing it only with '*an Jābir qāla*: ...'⁶⁶. The editor has made no attempt to distinguish the 'Shī'ī' content of the report through the use of parentheses, or any other device. Indeed, the *fī 'Alī* appears to be a natural part of the verse. This procedure is followed for the remaining two

⁶¹ 'Abd 'Alī al-Ḥuwayzī, *Kitāb tafsīr nūr al-thaqalayn*, 5 vols. Edited by Hāshim al-Rasūlī al-Maḥallātī (Qum: Maṭba'at al-Ḥikma, 1383-1385/1963-1965) (*Nūr*).

⁶² *Nūr*, 1:iv and 5:ii.

⁶³ *Nūr*, 1:iii. 'Allāma Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī also wrote a brief introduction to *Tafsīr 'Ayyāshī* and is the author of *al-Miṣbāḥ fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, the first several volumes of which have appeared in English: *al-Miṣbāḥ: An Exegesis of the Qur'ān*. Translated by Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi (Tehran: World Organization for Islamic Services, 1404/1984).

⁶⁴ Muḥammad Muḥsin, Āghā Buzurg Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharī'a ilā taṣānif al-shī'a*, 25 vols. (Tehran and Najaf: n.p., 1355/1936-1398/1978) (*Dharī'a*), 24:345, # 1967.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Nūr*, 1:36, # 55.

verses, both of which are introduced as coming from *Kāfī*⁶⁷. The difference between the way our edition of *Kāfī* and our edition of *Nūr* use this material is of course striking. Neither Ḥuwayzī, the author, nor Maḥallātī, the editor, has made any effort to explain away what might appear a troublesome *khābar*.

al-Burbān

The title of this work is *Kitāb al-burbān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān (Burbān)*⁶⁸. The author, al-Baḥrānī (d. 1107/1695 or 1109/1697, his date of birth is unknown), was born in a village in one of the districts of Baḥrayn. He is said to have been a compiler of *ḥadīths*, comparable in his efforts only to Majlisī himself. He is also said to have written seventyfive works, mostly dealing with religious sciences⁶⁹. The *Tafsīr* was written sometime during the reign of the Safavid Shāh Sulaymān or al-Ṣāfi (r. 1077/1666-1106/1694). The commentary contains introductory material similar to *Ṣāfi* and, in addition to other *akhbār* which are not found in *Ṣāfi*, carries many of the same traditions which are adduced at corresponding verses in the more famous *tafsīr*.

For each verse or group of verses, the author lists a series of pertinent *akhbār* from the Prophet or the Imāms⁷⁰. It begins with a number of reports against *tafsīr bi'l-ra'y*, and other reports which assert that only the Prophet and the Imāms were able to interpret the Qur'ān. 'God taught the Prophet the literal text (*tanẓīl*) and He taught 'Alī its interpretation (*ta'wīl*)'⁷¹. The author of this work laments that not withstan-

⁶⁷ For 2:59 see *Nūr*, 1:70, # 214; for 2:90, *Nūr*, 1:86, # 286. It should be mentioned that while other *akhbār* are adduced for 2:59 and 2:90, 2:23 is carried in the single report, although other statements are brought forth to identify some of the features in it which are also common to other verses.

⁶⁸ al-Sayyid Ḥāshim al-Baḥrānī, *Kitāb al-burbān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 4 vols. (Tehran: Chāpkhānah Āftāb 1375/1955) (*Burbān*).

⁶⁹ For a list of forty-three of these works see *Burbān*, 4:555-559. All that is known of his life is found in *ibid.*, 4:555 where the editor has summarized the information on his biography from the *Lu'lu'at al-Baḥrayn* by Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī, apparently the only work which deals with this subject. It mentions nothing of his early life or education. Information about his writings is taken from *Dharī'a*, 1:111. On this work specifically see *ibid.*, 3:93, # 294, where it is compared with a number of other works, some in manuscript, and others, like the *Tafsīr nūr al-thaqalayn*.

⁷⁰ *Burbān*, 1:2-40.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1:3.

ding such a statement, he finds the people of his time persistent in interpreting the Qur'ān without referring to the Imāms, and cites the works of Zamakhsharī (d. 539/1144) and Bayḍawī (d. 685/1286) as examples⁷².

In any case, Baḥrānī (or his editor) makes no attempt at setting off the Shī'ī material from verse 2:23, which is cited, complete with *isnād*, as it is found in *Kāfī*⁷³. Baḥrānī treats 2:59 as part of a Quranic exegetical unit which includes all of the verses 2:58-62. In explanation of this unit, eleven *akbbār* of varying lengths are quoted, the second of which is our example B above⁷⁴. Here, as was the case with *Nūr*, the Shī'ī material is reproduced as being an integral part of the text. In addition, the fifth *kbabar* carries a similar reading, but through a different *isnād*: 'an Zayd al-Shihām 'an Safwān, 'an Abī Ja'far⁷⁵. To explain the final verse, 2:90⁷⁶, Baḥrānī has brought forth three *akbbār*, the first is the same one quoted by Muḥsin Fayḍ, the second is the one mentioned in *Kāfī* and the third presents an interesting variant in the way opposition to the 'Uthmānic Codex may be expressed:

'Ayyāshī said Abū Ja'far, upon him peace, said this verse came down upon the Messenger of God, may God bless him and give him peace, thus: 'EVIL IS THAT FOR WHICH THEY SOLD THEIR SOULS THAT THEY DISBELIEVE IN THAT WHICH GOD HATH REVEALED CONCERNING 'ALI GRUDGINGLY' and God said CONCERNING 'ALI, upon him peace. 'GOD SENDS DOWN OF HIS BOUNTY UPON WHOM HE WILL OF HIS SERVANTS' that is 'Alī (*ya'nī* 'Alī) God said 'THEY HAVE INCURRED ANGER UPON ANGER' that is the Banī Umayya 'FOR DISBELIEVERS A SHAMEFUL DOOM'⁷⁷.

Conclusion

Why Muḥsin Fayḍ would have been so selective in his use of such material is open to speculation. That it was selectivity, and not mere ignorance of the material in *Kāfī*, is confirmed by reference to the two other late-Safavī works of *Tafsīr*, both of which employ these *akbbār*. If an edition of *Kāfī* containing

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1:70, # 3.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:104, # 2.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:104, # 5; this report does not employ the adverb *hākadhā*.

⁷⁶ Strangely misnumbered as '33'.

⁷⁷ *Burhān*, 1:139, # 3.

such material was known to other authors who were, for all practical purposes, contemporaries of Muḥsin Fayḍ, it would most certainly have been known to Muḥsin Fayḍ. Whatever his reasons, it is clear that these commentators felt that such traditions had sufficient merit that they took the trouble to reproduce them in their works. It may also be conjectured that such material has continued to be looked upon as in some way edifying, inasmuch as all three commentaries have been published in recent editions⁷⁸, in which there seems to be no attempt to 'explain away' the explicit language of these *akhbār*. It is also worth mentioning that such 'explosive' material continued to be reproduced during the three centuries which intervened between the original composition of these commentaries and their recent publication over the last thirty years. Not only was an edition of *Ṣāfi* published in lithograph in Tabrīz in 1869, but these traditions are found quoted in a manuscript *tafsīr* which was probably written shortly before 1844, by 'Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, known as the Bāb⁷⁹. The likelihood that such *akhbār* were known and regarded with a measure of respect by a large segment of the Shī'ī population at this time is strengthened by the fact that the Bāb did not come from a typical scholastic background, but was a member of the merchant class⁸⁰.

The question that arises, therefore, is one partly answered by Kohlberg and others, namely: What is the Imāmi Shī'ī attitude to the *tahrīf al-Qur'ān* problem? The answer thus far has been that the majority of Shī'ites hold that the Qur'ān we now have is the integral Qur'ān as communicated to the Prophet Muḥammad. But it seems that Kohlberg based this conclusion mainly on the statement of one Hibat al-Din al-Shahrastānī, and the arguments of Ayatu'llah al-Khū'ī⁸¹. It is interesting to note that

⁷⁸ Another similar work is Abū al-Ḥasan al-Isfahānī, *Tafsīr mir'āt al-anwār wa mishkat al-asrār* (Tehran 1374/1954). On the gnostic dimension of such commentaries (including those of Baḥrānī and Isfahānī) see Corbin, *EII*, 1:135-218 and 3:214-232.

⁷⁹ Cambridge, Browne Collection, F 10, 33b; 72a; 87a. On this and other of the Bāb's commentaries see B. Todd Lawson, 'The Qur'ān Commentary of Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb', Unpublished Ph. D. thesis. McGill University, 1987.

⁸⁰ On the Bāb and the rise of the Bābī movement see now Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844-1850* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1989).

⁸¹ Kohlberg, 218-219 and references.

Khū'ī, who is one of the, if not *the*, leading *marja'* of the Imāmī Shī'ī and is currently under house arrest in Iran⁸², quotes Muḥsin Fayḍ to support his position, but the work he cites is *al-Wāfī*, not the *tafsīr*⁸³.

The question remains as to how representative such statements really are. The continued reproduction of these '*naẓala Jibrīl ... ḥākadhā' akhbār*' would appear to support one of the conclusions of a recent study of the history of the Uṣūlī/Akhhārī dispute in Shī'ism which says that the writing of men like Mufīd, Murtaḍā, and Ṭūsī, whom Uṣūlī's regard as the fathers of their school, and all of whom argued strenuously in their works for the acceptance of the 'Uthmānic Codex, represents an accommodation to changing historical religio-political conditions⁸⁴. It is suggested that this analysis will continue to be borne out with the continued study of Shī'ism, particularly in the little-known period between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Of course, it has already been recognized that the position on the *tahrīf* question was conditioned by historical circumstances⁸⁵. It is important to acknowledge, however, that the continued publication of these *akhhār* suggests that certain issues of the Uṣūlī/Akhhārī argument are still being debated. One of the things called for, therefore, is an in-depth, diachronic study of all the various commentaries on this section of *al-Kāfī*. In the meantime, it seems that it may not be entirely accurate to state that the Shī'a have never been able to agree amongst themselves on the status of the Qur'ān. Rather, a more accurate characterization suggests itself: that the Shī'a view the Qur'ān as being simultaneously flawed and inerrant — inerrant for the purposes of *fiqh* but deficient as an explicit guide to the recognition of the locus and bearer of *walāya*.

⁸² Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shī'ī Islam*, 262; here Momen also says that Khū'ī opposed Khomeinī's early political activity.

⁸³ *al-Bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Zahrā, 1401/1980), 223. Khū'ī (2nd ed. Najaf 1966), 215-254. Ayoub, 10 also singles out al-Khū'ī's position on the *tahrīf* question but does not claim that this statement represents a Shī'ī consensus.

⁸⁴ 'Together these developments in doctrine and practice represented a significant alteration, and, in some cases, an outright reversal of the dominant, Imāmī *akhhārīyya* generally anti-rationalist, individual-oriented, non-authoritarian and anti-accommodationist tendencies as represented in both *al-Kāfī* and [*Man lā yaḥḍurubu*] *al-Faqīh* [by al-Ṣadūq, Ibn Babāwayh]'. Newman, 1:196.

⁸⁵ Kohlberg, 219.