

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Through an analytical study of the five selected commentators, based primarily on their upbringings, their unique lifestyles, academic achievements and their individual ideologies, this dissertation has focused attention on their remarkable achievements in the field of Qur'anic interpretation.

Their commentaries reflect certain similarities as well as differences which renders each of their works as being unique.

I will commence with a summation of al-Tabarí's interpretative method. To label al-Tabarí as being a traditionist per se would not do justice to the excellence of his indepth commentary. A study of al-Tabarí's work shows it to be more than a collection of traditions, although this is a predominant feature, it is assuredly not the only one.

At this point it is necessary to mention that his traditionist approach relies extensively on the authority of ibn 'Abbás. The examples cited below are from chapter four of this dissertation.

Included within his tafsír are the isr'iliyát narratives with particular reference to Ka'b al-Ahbár, Suddí and ibn Jurayj. An example illustrating this trend is the explanation of جناحان in [20:22] which is interpreted as "two hands"-based on the authority of Ka'b al-Ahbár.

A common usage is that of linguistics to explain certain terms and examples of these are the following:

Al-Tabarí discusses the concept ínás [20:10] and the derivation of the term as well.

Another example is the explanation of the term **نهيّة** in [20:54] in which he draws a parallel between **نهيّة** and **كشيّة** and gives a very clear understanding of the concept.

A very predominant feature in al-Tabarí's commentary is his employment of ancient Arabic poetry.

This is illustrated in [28:29] in which he quotes a line of poetry by al-Ajjáj with relevance to **تُور**. "He saw the ruins of a vast empty space and became annoyed, drawing its wings close to **تُور**, it passed"

Another very important and common feature is the grammatical usages of both Basran and Kufan schools. These often appear in the form of footnotes as well.

Examples of these are:

Al-Tabarí outlines in [7:111] the Basran and Kufan readings of the term **أرجه** and also gives his preferred reading.

In [27:7] he illustrates the different readings of **بشهاب قيس** as explained by the Basrans and Kufans. He further gives a grammatical construction of the phrase indicating which recitations are more accurate than others.

The most distinct feature in al-Tabarí's work is the rendering of his personal opinion as to what best applies to the Qur'anic passage. This is usually prefaced by **Abú Ja'far said:...**"

Al-Zamakhsharí's Qur'anic commentary is a precise, condensed and complex piece of work. At first glance one is taken aback at the accuracy and conciseness of his work. Its brief rendering often makes comprehension difficult, but on closer reading the brevity is set aside and what emerges is a comprehensible piece of commentary.

The grammatical and philological aspects of his commentary are clearly evident and examples of these include the following:

Al-Zamakhsharí gives a grammatical analysis of *أف* in [20:10] and in [26:35] he explains the derivation of the word *تأمرون* citing precisely the definition of the term.

As a *Mu'tazilite* al-Zamakhsharí's rationalist commentary contains in it the ideologies and views as propagated by this particular school of thought.

In a rationalistic approach al-Zamakhsharí explains the existence of miracles in which he justifies the resurrection of life in the dead by using the example of the Messiah. This is elaborated in [20:88].

al-Zamakhsharí's *Mu'tazilite* influences are evident regarding his view of the vision of Allah [7:143]. He strongly denies the possibility of seeing Allah, for this would imply bodily existence which is at variance with the *Ash'arite* view of anthropomorphism.

Al-Zamakhsharí gives a very sound interpretation of the reasons why Allah has created specific things in specific ways [20:49].

Al-Rází's Qur'anic commentary is often too lengthy and detailed. He discusses issues that at times do not warrant such indepth interpretation. Frequent recourse is made to al-Zamakhsharí's work.

In [28:32] al-Rází includes verbatim the similarity of the "hand" to the "wings of the bird" in "Hold you arm to yourself."

A common feature of al-Rází's interpretation is his explanation of grammatical constructions based primarily on the works of other grammarians. Often quoted names include al-Jubbá'í and al-Qádí 'Abd al-Jabbár.

In [7:118] al-Rází gives the views of lexicographers for the phrase **فوق الحق** and an explanatory note by al-Qádí ‘Abd al-Jabbár.

The term **مسلمين** [7:126] is explained by al-Qádí ‘Abd al-Jabbár suggesting that Islám and Imán are one.

His work evolves from a philosophical approach. It is an attempt to integrate philosophy into the theological sphere.

This philosophical approach is evident in [7:107] concerning the transformation of the rod into a serpent and its subsequent comparison to the development of humans as well.

Another example is [20:11] concerning Músá's approaching the fire when he heard the voice. Al-Rází gives a very detailed philosophical explanation of the incident.

The *Ash‘arite -Mu‘tazilite* conflict is very common in his work. As an *Ash‘arite* he strongly rejects the *Mu‘tazilite* points.

An example of this very common trend in al-Rází's commentary is the conflicting *Ash‘arite - Mu‘tazilite* views. In [7:146] the argument concerning Allah's embracing people into a state of Imán is opposed to those who are denied from it. A very interesting display of this conflict is the transformation of the rod into a serpent [7:107]. Al-Rází outlines the *Ash‘arite-Mu‘tazilite* views concerning this miracle.

With the permeation of Islám in the west, a new wave of Qur‘anic interpretation swept across the world, its primary aim being to reformulate the understanding of Islám. Muhammad Asad emerged as the champion of this cause.

Asad calls for a shift from a historical approach, to one which is more relevant to present times. Modern Qur‘anic interpretation he stresses should be in conformity with reasoning and *ijtihad*.

An example here is Asad's ability to reason pertaining to the two signs presented to Músá [p.b.u.h] in [28:32] in which he refers to appearance and reality factors.

Asad's Qur'anic commentary propounds that the Qur'án be studied as a whole. This is best exemplified in [20:9] in which Asad takes the question posed to the Prophet Muhammad [p.b.u.h] and correlates it to the whole message enunciated by the Qur'án itself.

A common usage in Asad's commentary is his reference to classical commentators as well. These include al-Tabarí, al-Zamakhsharí and al-Rází.

An example of this is Asad's explanation of the origins of the Sámirí in [20:85]. He incorporates in his interpretation the views of all three commentators that have been mentioned above.

Al-Jazá'irí's commentary is a work designed largely to comply with the needs of the Muslims in present day society. Its primary aim is to guide people through the verses of the Qur'án.

In [7:103] al-Jazá'irí very poignantly stresses on the ultimate fate of the pharaoh and his people and it is this type of punishment that serves as a guide to people who should follow and take heed from such lessons.

A work of such a nature is bound to be marred by shortcomings, but tireless research has developed into what I hope to be viewed as a work of scholarly stature. In this research I have attempted to and I hope that I have succeeded in this endeavour to select the most authentic and consistent body of literature as a helping hand in the accomplishment of this task.

There are several areas in this particular field of study that I have not devoted attention to.

- ❑ Other modern commentators appeal largely to the evolving Muslim society throughout the world.
- ❑ Additional events in the life of Prophet Músá [p.b.u.h] to which significant attention has not been given.

- ❑ Events in the life of the Prophet from a narrative point of view.
- ❑ Indepth analysis of grammatical terms and phrases as rendered in the works of the classical commentators.