

A review and criticism of Wahba Zuḥaylī's method in al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-‘Aqīda wa al-Sharī‘a wa al-Munhaj

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Abstract

The science of interpretation has a special position in the Islamic sciences and has been addressed seriously by Muslims from the very first days of Islam, because interpretation is to understand and discover the points of the best speech, i.e. the speech of the Sublime Allāh. One of the new commentaries on Muslims' divine book is al-Tafsīr al-munīr fī al-‘aqīda wa al-sharī‘a wa al-munhaj, authored by Wahba Zuḥaylī, the contemporary exegete and Qur‘ān researcher. The study at hand has set out to examine and evaluate this commentary by the critical-analytical as well as library research methods. This has led to the identification of the differences of this commentary with other interpretive works. The strengths of this commentary are its investigation of the contemporary social, political, and jurisprudential issues as well as its high readability. On the other hand, the insufficient references to the new and old interpretive resources along with the scarcity of the scientific references of the commentary are among its weaknesses.

Keywords:

Wahba Zuḥaylī, Al-Tafsīr al-munīr, Criticism, Methodology, Jurisprudence, Society.

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Introduction

The Noble Qur'ān is a divine book the wonders of which never end and the knowledge of which always flows. The science of interpretation has a special position among Islamic sciences and has been earnestly addressed by Muslims from the early days of Islam, because interpretation is the understanding and discovering of the points of the best speech, i.e. the Divine Speech. The first commentator and interpreter of the Qur'ān was the Prophet of Islam (s). Through the quotation of the traditions of the Prophet (s) and the addition of their own viewpoints, the Companions and the Successors of the Companions expanded the interpretation science and developed numerous works in this regard. The scope of interpretation – as a means to understand the Qur'ān – expanded day by day, in a way that there now exist some volumes specifically for the recordation of the names of the commentaries and their authors – who have set out to interpret the Qur'ān and develop interpretive works in this regard – from the end of the first century AH up to now. It is evident that the scientific and jurisprudential character of every interpreter overshadows his interpretation. One of these commentaries is al-Tafsīr al-munīr fī al-'aqīda wa al-sharī'a wa al-munhaj, written by Wahba Zuḥaylī. This is an up-to-date, highly expressive, and easy to understand commentary, and regarding the method, content, principles, and text, it originates from the old interpretive texts. This study has adopted an inductive approach and a critical-analytical method to review and criticize the methodology of this commentary, and answer the questions like "What are the general features of the Wahba Zuḥaylī's al-Tafsīr al-munīr?", "What are the principles of the interpretive method of this commentary?", and "What scientific and methodological strengths and weaknesses might exist in this commentary?" Consequently, in order to scrutinize the interpretive method of this exegete and to delineate the outstanding features and characteristics of his commentary, all volumes of this commentary have been read and investigated.

Conceptual framework

Introducing Wahba Zuḥaylī

*Wahba Zuḥaylī is a notable Sunnī scholar and Qur'ān researcher in the present era. He was born in Syria in 1932, and received his PhD in law from the University of Cairo in 1963. The title of his dissertation is *Āthār al-ḥarb fī al-fiqh al-Islāmī: Dirāsa muqārīna*. Up until recently, he was the head of Islamic Principles, Jurisprudence, and Denominations Department in the Theology Faculty of the Damascus University (Al-Laḥḥām, 2001: 10). Most of his works are about jurisprudence and the principles of jurisprudence, including *Uṣūl al-fiqh al-Islāmī* and *al-Fiqh al-Islāmī wa adillatuh*, and it seems that his commentary is the only study he has carried out on the Qur'ān and qur'ānic sciences. This commentary is called *al-Tafsīr al-munīr fī al-'aqīda wa al-sharī'a wa al-munhaj* and has 15 volumes, with each volume addressing two sections of the Noble Qur'ān. The commentary was first published in Damascus in 1990 with the cooperation of the Beirut-based *Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir* and the Damascus-based *Dār al-Fikr* publications, and was later translated into numerous languages like Turkish, Malayan, etc. Consequently, the author is sure about the interest of the Muslims from the east to the west of the Muslim world in his commentary and says, "My reason for this claim is its use in the libraries of the Arabic and Foreign countries, and its translation into Turkish and Malayan languages, as well as the admiring letters and phone calls from around the globe" (Zuḥaylī, 2003, vol. 1: 5). It is noteworthy that in Iran's Book of the Year Awards in 1993, this book was commended as the Global Year Book.*

Introducing al-Tafsīr al-munīr

At the beginning of his commentary, the author briefly introduces his motivation for the development of the commentary, his interpretive method, and the references used. Then, according to the common method among the majority of interpreters – who put forth some discussions of the qur'ānic sciences at the beginning of their

commentaries – he briefly presents some qur’ānic discussions. Some discussions of the qur’ānic sciences addressed in this section include the description of the Qur’ān, the names of the Qur’ān, the revelation characteristics, the Meccan and Medinan chapters, the collection of the Qur’ān during the lifetime of the Prophet of Allāh (s) as well as the time of Abū Bakr and ‘Uthmān, ‘Uthmānic orthography, the seven Readings, the miraculousness of the Qur’ān and its different aspects, the translation of the Qur’ān, the Detached Letters, simile, metaphor, irony, allusive proposition, and figurative speech in the Qur’ān. He briefly provides discussions on each of the foregoing topics and presents his viewpoints toward them. Moreover, following the model of some commentaries, he offers general discussions of the qur’ānic sciences under some verses. For instance, he sets forth some points on the muḥkam and mutashābih verses under the seventh verse of the Family of ‘Imrān chapter. That is to say, he presents the main discussions of the qur’ānic sciences briefly in the introduction of this commentary along with the interpretation of the qur’ānic verses in the body of the commentary.¹ After the introduction section of the commentary and the topics of the qur’ānic sciences, the interpretation of the verses begins. Here, from the beginning to the end of the Qur’ān, each chapter is divided into some parts and different interpretive points about them are provided. Zuḥaylī notes issues such as the Meccan or Medinan nature of each chapter under its title, and then expresses the themes of each chapter concisely at the beginning of the interpretation of it. Then, he proposes the virtues of each chapter and the narrations received on the dignity of that chapter and its recitation. Finally, he discusses the agreement of the intended chapter with the one preceding it.

Wahba Zuḥaylī writes in this regard,

Since I felt the dire need among various groups of people – who are at an ordinary cultural level – I concluded that people like to know the content of the Divine Book and believe that one of the most important

¹ To study more about these points, it is necessary to refer to the volumes 31 and 32 of the commentary that entail a list of the qur’ānic and interpretive topics.

things that will be asked by God is the Noble Qur'ān, because if a Muslim puts into practice the rulings of the Qur'ān, evidences will be for him, and if he does not act upon the rulings of the Qur'ān, evidences will be against him. Consequently, I decided to write a commentary to answer their needs. Due to the fact that the old commentaries are like large encyclopedias, I tried to directly express the meanings of the verses. In this way, when a person wants to read one verse or its interpretation, the meaning of the verse is carved in his mind. This is the first step for the success of the commentary, because the first important point is to understand the theme of the verse as a coherent, unified whole and then to comprehend how the verse is related to its preceding and succeeding verses, because the verses of the Qur'ān aim at specific goals and intentions, and I selected this method in al-Tafsīr al-munīr." (ibid: Introduction)

He believes that the success of his commentary is due to its agreement with the old commentaries that include rhetorical, historical, jurisprudential, and philological points. The second reason is that it has adopted a moderation manner in its expression without resorting to digression (ibid, vol. 1: 6). He tries a lot to analyze the traditions and narrations, and wants to connect them to the objectives of the Islamic law, and emphasizes that his method is based on the amalgamation of the narrations and reasoning within the linguistic context hosting the Noble Qur'ān, i.e. the Arabic language (ibid: 6-8).

The main features of al-Tafsīr al-munīr

The most important characteristics of this commentary are as follows.

1. The intensity of the author's adherence to the interpretation method mentioned in the introduction of the commentary is very high, in a way that in every part of the commentary, the division of the chapters to smaller parts and units with separate titles is completely apparent. After the explication of the single words, he addresses the rhetorical issues, and then goes on to interpret the verses. This commentary can be used to obtain a new approach to fiqh al-ḥayāt wa al-aḥkām (understanding the verses and rulings), as the foregoing method can be observed throughout the 15 volumes of al-Tafsīr al-

munīr. This is an important formal feature for this commentary.

2. *The commentary entails the investigation of some contemporary issues from the realms of jurisprudence, politics, and society, though in a concise form. Three examples of such usage are provided in the following lines.*

- a. *Marriage with the People of the Book. He writes in this regard, "The permissibility of the marriage between a Muslim man and a woman from the People of the Book is an exception for the Sunnī scholars that should be ruled for in a case by case manner, and it is not a principle! Therefore, we deem wrong and condemn the widespread inclination of the youth to this act, because suchlike marriages often weaken the faith and patriotism of the people and damage the Islamic context of the families." (ibid: 666).*
- b. *The certainty of the fall of the Jews' regime. Wahba Zuḥaylī says in this regard, "God has posed hatred and enmity among different groups of Jews, as pointed out in the 14th verse of the Exile chapter. They are the most hated people in the viewpoint of God, and are always each other's enemy and are in discord. With regard to their congregation in Palestine, it should be mentioned that this is a temporary event and a warning for us as Muslims to become conscious and order our lines; if we do so, they will experience defeat and humiliation" (ibid, vol. 3: 610).*
- c. *The illicitness of lottery tickets. With regard to this topic, he asserts, "What is gained through lottery and spent to help the poor, support the orphans and the needy, or build schools, shelters (orphanages), and hospitals is legally illicit, because it is not permissible to achieve the inherently illicit stuff like bribe and perjury through licit ways; the reason is that disobedience does not lead into obedience." (ibid, vol. 1: 652-653).*

2. *Zuḥaylī has a jurisprudential tendency in his commentary. This might have been caused by his learning and teaching background, which has been about the jurisprudence of the Islamic denominations. Under the discussions on the Verses of the Revealed Prescripts, he has explained the jurisprudential opinions of the four main Sunnī denominations. For*

instance, in the second unit of the commentary that is devoted to the interpretation of the verses 142-252 of the Cow chapter, he refers to the jurisprudential issues such as *qībla* change, Ritual Running between *Ṣafā* and *Marwa* hills, licit and illicit food, animals not ritually slaughtered and the related rulings, blood ransom, last will, fasting and its rulings, *Ḥajj* and its rulings, wine and gambling and their gradual prohibition, the ruling for the abandonment of one's swear, the waiting period after divorce and the rulings for divorce, fosterage and its rulings, children's alimony, etc. Zuḥaylī has expressed the differences among the four main *Sunnī* denominations under the abovementioned verses. It is noteworthy that, unfortunately, he has scarcely used the jurisprudence of other denominations such as Twelver *Shī'a* – a rich, robust, and dynamic jurisprudence that relies on the narrations of the *Infallibles* (a). In the few instances when the *Shī'a* jurisprudential views are examined, his discussions are very brief. Moreover, the unit *fiqh al-ḥayāt wa al-aḥkām* – which involves his understanding of the verses, the positive obligations, and legal values resulting from obligation-imposing commands – indicates the interpreter's attention to the jurisprudential understandings of the verses. To this end, he uses analysis, intellect, and free investigation, and somehow regards the proximity of the Islamic denominations. (Ayāzī, 1993: 685; Zuḥaylī, 2003, vol. 7: 316).

3. Where the verses have had clear occasions of revelation, Zuḥaylī has provided various narrations about them under the title *sabab al-nuzūl* (cause of revelation); the language here is concise and some causes of revelation are deemed superior to others. Zuḥaylī writes about the causes of revelation in his commentary, "I have tried in this commentary not to mention the unsound causes of revelation. In addition, I have also avoided some *Isrā'īliyyāt* and Israelites' statements which have entered through the books of *Kā'b al-Aḥbār* and *Wahab b. Munba* into our books and affected the culture of some Muslims in a way that some have believed these have been sentences from the Prophet of Islam (s) but later they came to be identified as assertions from the Israelites, and I have avoided mentioning any unsound matter" (Zuḥaylī, 2003, vol. 1: 116). However, he has not

taken the right path in some cases. For instance, all Twelver Shī'a interpreters and some Sunnī scholars consider Alī (a), Fātīma (s), Ḥasan (a) and Ḥusayn (a), and Fiḍḍa to be the cause of revelation of the verses 8-9 of the Man chapter. But Zuḥaylī mentions this and quotes other interpreters' concurring opinion, but considers this occasion of revelation untrue (*ibid*, vol. 29: 287).

4. The author's interpretation of simile, shortening, and concision is also one of the important features of this commentary (Ṣābūnī, 2007: 32). For instance, in the verse "Whoever submits his whole self to God, and is a doer of good, has grasped indeed the most trustworthy hand-hold: and with God rests the End and Decision of (all) affairs" (Qur'ān 31:22), Zuḥaylī takes the clause "has grasped indeed the most trustworthy hand-hold" as a simile and analogy, while even the majority of Sunnī commentaries have deemed it to be a case of metaphor (Bayḍāwī, 1974, vol. 1: 260; Zamakhsharī, 1998, vol. 1: 354; Ibn 'Āshūr, 1984, vol. 2: 243; Hāshimī, 1985: 239). Another example is the verse "When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants" (Qur'ān 7:171), where the clause "When thy Lord drew forth their descendants" uses third person singular (i.e. thy lord) but intends first person singular (i.e. I) (Zuḥaylī, 2003, vol. 1: 20). If the previous verse of this chapter is also taken into account, there is a change of the first person plural to the third person singular (i.e. in the previous verse we read "When We shook the Mount over them", which changes to "When thy lord drew forth" in the intended verse). As another example, take the verse 82 of the Repentance chapter "Let them laugh a little: much will they weep: a recompense for the (evil) that they do". Zuḥaylī takes this verse as a subcategory of paronomasia, while it is contrasting the conceptual rhetoric with the paronomasia of literal rhetoric (Zuḥaylī, 2003, vol. 5: 686). He also takes the verse "They were covered with humiliation and misery (Qur'ān 2:61) as a derivational metaphor but this is an implicit metaphor (Ibn 'Āshūr, 1984, vol. 1: 527).

1. As can be seen, most of the issues discussed by Wahba Zuḥaylī are momentary and quick. Moreover, the contemporary issues examined in his commentary include migration from the US, the

damages of wine, polygamy, the loss of Palestine and Spain (Andalusia), the treatment of the diseases with illicit stuff, and the interests derived from the usury (Zuḥaylī, 2003, vol. 1: 556 & 665; vol. 2: 108 & 366; vol. 3: 14 & 238; vol. 4: 254 & 487).

2. The writing style of this commentary is easy and expressive and not complex and weird, is mostly moderate, and avoids vagueness and digression.

3. Another feature of this commentary is its richness and inclusiveness with regard to grammatical expression, eloquence, history, legislation, and creation of the learning spirit.

4. In the introduction of his commentary, Wahba Zuḥaylī has devised a collection called "scientific introductions" in which he addresses the description of the Qur'ān, the manner of its revelation and collection, the state of being a Meccan and Medinan chapter, the occasion of revelation, the 'Uthmānic orthography, the seven Aḥruf and the seven Readings, the miraculousness of the Qur'ān and its translation, and the Detached Letters (*ibid*, vol. 1: 15-45).

The advantages of al-Tafsīr al-munīr method

Undoubtedly, one of the principles of writing is the expression of method in the introduction of every compilation, so that the level of the researcher's adherence to the method can be evaluated at the end of the text ('Umurī, 1995: 5). It seems that Zuḥaylī has done this properly in the introduction of his book. To evaluate his method, he says, "By the Grace of God, this method will have many benefits and this text is eloquent and easy to understand, and it will be a source for every researcher and scholar" (Zuḥaylī, 2003, vol. 1: 12-13). His method is as follows.

1. The theme-based division of the qur'ānic verses into separate units with clear headings
2. The general content of the chapter
3. The description of the lexical issues
4. The citation of the causes of revelation and narrations related to it, the abandonment of the weak narrations, the expression of

the prophet's stories, and the proclamation of the events of the Prophet's appointment era

5. *The presentation and interpretation of the verses*
6. *The expression of prescriptions induced from the verses*
7. *The presentation of discussions related to the grammatical inflection and eloquence of many verses in order to bring about a better understanding of the meanings*

The disadvantages of al-Tafsīr al-munīr

The main weaknesses of this interpretive method are as follows.

1. *Despite the author's claim on the topical classification of the qur'ānic verses, separate units can be found with clear titles that have been divided based on the number of the verses and statements rather than the topic. The following examples help illustrate this point. Zuḥaylī takes the verse " Go ye forth, (whether equipped) lightly or heavily, and strive and struggle, with your goods and your persons, in the cause of God. That is best for you, if ye (but) knew" (Qur'ān 9:41) as a separate unit which discusses diligence and avoidance of laziness (Zuḥaylī, 2003, vol. 1: 20). However, this is not true, because this topic starts from the verse "O ye who believe! What is the matter with you, that, when ye are asked to go forth in the cause of God, ye cling heavily to the earth?" (Qur'ān 9:38). Moreover, Zuḥaylī considers the verse "They say: "Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?" Say: "The Unseen is only for God (to know), then wait ye: I too will wait with you" (Qur'ān 10:20) as a separate section with a separate topic (Zuḥaylī, 2003, vol. 2: 123). Nonetheless, it is consisted of two parts, i.e. the conversation of the God's prophet with his people and the principle of the God's exclusive ownership of the Unseen as part of the discourse of all divine prophets. In still another example, Zuḥaylī has taken the story of Zechariah in the 15 verses of the Mary chapter as two units, the second of which is entitled "the bestowment of prophecy and wisdom to Prophet John (a) in his childhood" and examines the single words, interpretation, and*

fiqh al-hayat wa al-ahkam (ibid, vol. 8: 395). However, this story regards only one theme, that is, the position and fate of Prophet John (a). Therefore, it seems that Zuḥaylī here has intended to have more categories and exaggerate their numbers. As for another example, he takes a unit entitled "Prophet's invitation and preaching mission" in the Allies chapter from the verse "O Prophet! Truly We have sent thee as a Witness, a Bearer of Glad Tidings, and Warner" (Qur'ān 33:45) to the verse "O ye who believe! When ye marry believing women ..." (Qur'ān 33:49) (Zuḥaylī, 2003, vol. 11: 368). However, the verse 49 of this chapter has no topical relationship to the aforementioned title. Or in another stance, he asserts that an interpretive unit entitled "The attributes of the true, Faithful people of paradise" starts from the 37th verse of the Counsel chapter (ibid, vol. 13: 82). However, it is evident that the verse 36th of this chapter "Whatever ye are given (here) is (but) a convenience of this life: but that which is with God is better and more lasting: (it is) for those who believe and put their trust in their Lord" also expresses the attributes of the Faithful.

2. Another issue emphasized by Zuḥaylī in the introduction of *al-Tafsīr al-munīr* is the explication of the words and lexical points. This can be physically seen throughout the 15 volumes of the commentary. However, in most cases, his lexical explanations tend to be interpretation rather than lexical referencing. That is to say, unlike other commentaries, he does not explain the words by references to dictionaries. For example, to explain the word *bashshir* (give glad tidings) in the verse "But give glad tidings to those who believe and work righteousness, that their portion is Gardens, beneath which rivers flow. Every time they are fed with fruits therefrom, they say: 'Why, this is what we were fed with before,' for they are given things in similitude ..." (Qur'ān 2: 25), he asserts, "*wa bashshir* means inform" (Zuḥaylī, 2003, vol. 1: 114). As it can be seen, this lexical clarification is the interpretation and

explication of the statement, not a reference to Arabic dictionaries (Abū Ḥayyān Andalusī, 2001, vol. 1: 251; Ibn 'Āshūr, 1984, vol. 1: 352).

Another example is his lexical explanation of the word *shir'a* (law) in the verse "To each among you have we prescribed a law and an open way" (Qur'ān 5: 48), where he asserts that "*shir'a* is the Divine Law that God has foreseen for people through religion" (Zuḥaylī, 2003, vol. 3: 556). It is evident that this description is not a lexical one, but rather, it is an interpretation and explication that has no agreement with the title of the intended section. Another example is the phrase *min rūḥī* (of My spirit) in the verse "When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him" (Qur'ān 15:29). Here, the author's lexical explanation is that "*min rūḥī* means he came to life" (Zuḥaylī, 2003, vol.7: 335) which does not agree with the content of Arabic dictionaries, and is rather an interpretation. There are numerous examples like this.¹

3. In the introduction of his commentary, Wahba Zuḥaylī has emphasized his selection of the sound occasions of revelation and avoidance of the weak ones (*ibid*, vol. 1: 12). However, in some cases, he has mentioned occasions of revelation and then, has suggested that they are weak. This is in conflict with his claim in the introduction of the commentary. For instance, as for the interpretation of the verse "When they meet those who believe, they say: 'We believe;' but when they are alone with their evil ones, they say: 'We are really with you: We (were) only jesting'" (Qur'ān 2: 14) he says, "Exegetes believe that this verse is about 'Abdullāh b. Ubay and his hypocrite companions who praised Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Alī; [but] then he told his companions 'see how I keep these crazy people away from you.' Suyūṭī takes this evidence insignificant and worthless" (Zuḥaylī, 2003, vol. 1: 94). As is seen in this example, he has used Suyūṭī's

¹ Q.v.: Zuḥaylī, vol. 4: 266 & 310; vol. 5: 545; vol. 6: 326; vol. 13: 416; etc.

opinion as an evidence for the weakness of the interpretation. Moreover, the use of the phrase "Exegetes believe" without clarifying their names is a generality that is not congruent with the scientific principles, because many exegetes have not narrated the foregoing story and some of them have even criticized it. For instance, Shukānī and Ibn Ḥajar in the book *Takhrīj aḥādīth al-kashshāf* have deemed it weak evidence (Khafājī, 1994, vol. 1: 54), and Ālūsī also holds the same opinion (Ālūsī, 1995, vol. 1: 73).

4. In many parts of the interpretation and explication section of his commentary, Zuḥaylī gives a brief and general interpretation of the verses and does not refer to the interpretive details of the verse. For instance, in the interpretation of the verse "There is the type of man whose speech about this world's life May dazzle thee, and he calls God to witness about what is in his heart; yet is he the most contentious of enemies. When he turns his back, His aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle. But God loveth not mischief" (Qur'ān 2: 204-205) in the interpretation and explication part of the commentary, he does not make any reference to the hypocrites of the early days of Islam and unlike the occasion of revelation of the two verses, he does not mention the name or names of the people about whom the verse has been revealed. He usually emphasizes one aspect from among the different aspects of the verses of a chapter, and provides something like a thematic interpretation, but not based on the latter's common procedure (Muslim, 2005: 16).
5. Another problem with the commentary is that it does not observe the rules of quotation, in-text citation, or referencing. For instance, in the interpretation of the verse "To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth: When He decreeth a matter, He saith to it: 'Be,' and it is" (Qur'ān 2:117), he has mentioned 14 meanings for the word *amr* (decree) in two pages. This is a complete copying of the text of Qurṭabī's commentary without even citing that book (Qurṭabī, 1993, vol. 2: 85-86).

Another example is in the interpretation of the verse "Apostle! proclaim the (message) which hath been sent to thee from thy Lord. If thou didst not, thou wouldst not have fulfilled and proclaimed His mission. And God will defend thee from men (who mean mischief). For God guideth not those who reject Faith" (Qur'ān 5:67); it is evident that Zuḥaylī has not mentioned the occasion of revelation of this verse due to the concerns related to his denomination, but with regard to the clause *wa in lam taf'al* (If thou didst not), he asserts that "Prophets' preaching is a certain act and its denial is not permissible, so that people would understand this truth and do not come into disagreements about it." These sentences have been adopted with minor changes from *Tafsīr al-minār*, without citing it (Rashīd Riḍā, 1999, vol. 6: 387).

6. He has an extreme dependence on the Ṣābūnī's *Ṣafwa al-tafāsīr*, Abū Ḥayyān Andalusī's *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ fī al-tafsīr*, and Qurṭabī's *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān* as his main sources for rhetorical discussions. In the majority of his rhetorical discussions, he cites *Ṣafwa al-tafāsīr* as the main reference, and makes less use of important rhetorical books such as *Zamakhsharī's al-Kashshāf* or *Ṭabrisī's Majma' al-bayān*; in general, rhetorical elegance is a rare case in the commentary. Although the books he has used have many allusions to rhetorical discussions, they are not considered as rhetorical resources. The reason for this might be the concision and brevity of *Ṣafwa al-tafāsīr* (Ṣābūnī, 2007: 32). In some cases, there are rhetorical mistakes in *Ṣafwa al-tafāsīr* that are directly copied by Zuḥaylī into his commentary. For example, in the verse "Whoever submits his whole self to God, and is a doer of good, has grasped indeed the most trustworthy hand-hold: and with God rests the End and Decision of (all) affairs" (Qur'ān 31:22), Zuḥaylī has considered the phrase *faqad istamsaka bil-'urwatil wuthqā* (has grasped indeed the most trustworthy hand-hold) as a simile and allegory; however, it seems that it is better to take this phrase as a metaphor, because

this is what the majority of commentaries – even the majority of the Sunnī commentaries – have done (Bayḍāwī, 1974, vol. 1: 260; Zamakhsharī, 1998, vol. 1: 354; Ibn ‘Āshūr, 1984, vol. 2: 243). Some deem it an implicit metaphor, with *istamsak* (grasp) being the minor vehicle and *‘urwa* (rope; hand-hold) the main vehicle (ibid). According to what has been mentioned in the rhetoric books such as *Jawāhir al-balāghai*, an absolute metaphor is a better choice here (Hāshimī, 1985: 239). Or they believe that in the verse *Wa idh akhadha rabbuka min banī Ādama min ḍuhūrihim dhurrīyatahum* (When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants) (Qur’ān 7:172), in the clause "When thy Lord drew forth their descendants" it uses third person singular (i.e. thy lord) but intends first person singular (i.e. I) (Zuḥaylī, 2003, vol. 1: 20). However, there is a use of first person plural to mean third person singular, because in the previous verse (Qur’ān 7:171) the clause "When We shook the Mount over them" is changed to "When thy lord drew forth".

Zuḥaylī has sometimes made mistakes in quoting *Ṣafwa al-tafsīr*. For example, he considers the verse "Let them laugh a little: much will they weep: a recompense for the (evil) that they do" (Qur’ān 9:82) as an instance of contrast as a subdivision of *paronomasia*, while it is a contrast between conceptual rhetoric and literal rhetoric (Zuḥaylī, 2003, vol. 5: 686). Or elsewhere, he takes the verse "They were covered with humiliation and misery" an instance of derivational metaphor, but it is an implicit metaphor (Ibn ‘Āshūr, 1984, vol. 1: 527).

7. There is also a lack of reliance on Ahlul Bayt (a) and Shī‘a narrations, interpretations, Ḥadīth collections, and books. It is interesting that in these two cases, the criticism is a general one that can be applied to the majority of Sunnī commentaries.
8. The commentary has Ash‘arist tendencies. This is most evident in his views to the issue of vision where he has acted upon the past formalists' faith (Ma‘rifat, 2008, vol. 2: 507; Zuḥaylī, 2003, vol. 7: 316).

9. Finally, the commentary disregards scientific issues. Zuḥaylī has ignored to consider scientific issues in the interpretation of the Qur'ān verses in some due places (Ma'rifat, 2008, vol. 2: 507). However, in some other cases, he has provided appropriate details, such as the spherical shape of the Earth (Zuḥaylī, 2003, vol. 13: 108).

Conclusions

In his commentary entitled *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīda wa al-Sharī'a wa al-Munhaj*, Wahba Zuḥaylī believes that his work includes all doctrines and legal rulings of the Qur'ān. For him, the word *al-munhaj* in the title of the book represents the social and cultural issues of the societies. The findings of this research project are as follows.

1. This study is in fact the result of the reviews of various researchers and their inferences about this commentary, without the consideration of their religious disagreements in the interpretation of the qur'ānic verses and their occasions of revelation.
2. The expression of the strengths and weaknesses of the commentary intended to enhance the criticism trend in the reading of the cultural and interpretive legacy of the Muslim World.
3. The positive features of this commentary include its adherence to the style depicted in its introduction, the analysis and examination of the contemporary social, jurisprudential, and political issues through an easy to read, fluent, and eloquent text that is able to create jurisprudential, rhetorical, an inflectional improvements in its audience.
4. The main weaknesses of this commentary are the occasional lack of referencing, the selection of some weak narrations about the occasion of revelation, and the ignorance to use lexical and rhetorical books in its respective investigations.
5. A look at this investigation and criticism of this commentary reveals that the denominational issues and differences and the differences between different Islamic denominations on the

revelation of various qur'ānic verses have not been taken into account in the present article. Rather, the researchers focus on the methodological evaluation of the book and want to introduce the aforementioned commentary to the scientific world while criticizing it.

It is suggested that the methodologies of other commentaries be evaluated and criticized so that the different methods used by the interpreters can be illuminated.

Resources

The Noble Qur'ān

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