The Exegetic Method of Ibn Jawzī and His Exegetic Status

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Abstract

Ibn Jawzī's commentary *Zād al-masīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr* is a narrative and oration-based commentary belonging to the 6th century LH. According to its author, this commentary is one that is not too brief or too voluminous, but is an average-sized one. Therefore, this article is to express the method and status of Ibn Jawzī's commentary. *Zād al-masīr* commentary is a summary of his larger commentary titled "*Al-Mughnī fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*" that covers all verses of the Qur'ān. The dominant method of this commentary is narrative, i.e., it relies on the narrations of the Prophet (s), the Companions, and the Successive Companions. In his commentary, Ibn Jawzī provides general information about each chapter; he starts with giving a given chapter's name, merit, revelation order, and number of verses, and then presents its occasion of revelation, discussion of language and its related evidences, the meaning of words, and the opinions of other exegetes in a satisfactory manner. Finally, he addresses the rulings derived from the verses, the abrogating and abrogated verses, and their different readings. At the end, it is concluded that Ibn Jawzī's commentary is among the high-status Sunnī commentaries of the 6th century LH.

Keywords: Commentary, *Zād al-masīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr,* Exegetic method.

Introduction

Ibn Jawzī, Abū al-Faraj Jamāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. 'Abdullāh b. Ḥumādī b. Muḥammad b. Ja' far was a Ḥanbalī historian, orator, exegete, and jurisprudent. His lineage can be traced back to Muḥammad, the son of Abū Bakr (the first Caliph) (Dhahabī, 2011, vol. 4: 1342). Ibn Jawzī's cognomen was derived from the origination of one of his ancestors from Jawz neighborhood in the western Baghdad (Ibn Khalakān, 1842, vol. 3: 142). When narrating from Ibn Jawzī, some narration transmitters call him Ṣaffār because his family was active in the copper business. 'Abd al-Raḥmān was born in Bāb Ḥabīb neighborhood of Baghdād (Ibn Rajab, 2002, vol. 1: 400). He is said to have been born between the years 1114 -1118 CE. Ibn Rajab gives in two accounts of his birthday from Ibn Jawzī himself. He asserts that Ibn Jawzī writes, "My birthday is not precisely clear. I just know that in 1121 CE when my father passed away, I have been three years old," and "In the year Ibn Zāghūnī when my teacher – Ibn Zāghūnī – passed away, I got to puberty." This way, his birthday will be in 1114 or 1118 CE (ibid).

Ibn Jawzī started writing when he was 13 years old, and since he did not stop writing until the end of his life, he has numerous works. This was possible because of his wonderful energy

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level. If we divide the number of treatises that he has written by the number of the days of his life, it gets clear that he has written a treatise every 9 days.

He writes in the introduction of his commentary,

> I examined various commentaries and figured out that some commentaries were very lengthy, some were so brief that did not express the Divine intention, and some others were average sized but were void of any special exegetic benefit. Therefore, I wrote my book with moderate levels of these two qualities such that it became concise with beneficial and excellent points so that it could satisfy the needs of the society and would not be boring for its audience (Ibn Jawzī, 2002, vol. 1: 11).

Various people have written numerous lists of works attributed to him. Nearly 384 of his works have survived, and considering the author's report about his own works (2000 works), it could be conjectured that part of his works has been lost due to various events. Excluding the lists provided by the early scholars, Sayyid 'Abd al-Ḥamīd 'Ulūchī ('Ulūchī, 1966: 145-146) has written a book titled *Mu'allifāt Ibn Jawzī* in which he counts and classifies Ibn Jawzī's works. From among the works remaining from Ibn Jawzī, the most important ones are *Al-Muntẓim fī tārīkh al-mulūk wa al-umam* in ten large volumes, *Talbīs Iblīs* in 13 sections, and *Zād al-masīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr*. The various topics he has written about include 1) the Qur'ān and qur'ānic sciences, 2) narrations, the study of narrators, and the related sciences, 3) Islamic denominations, beliefs, principles, and jurisprudence, 4) oration, ethics, and mathematics, 5) medicine, 6) poetry and language, 7) history and geography, travelling, and stories. Out of Ibn Jawzī's 384 surviving works, 'Ulūchī introduces 139 ones as handwritten manuscripts along with the libraries in which these manuscripts are kept and their classification.

With regard to Ibn Jawzī's time of death, it is said that he passed away in 1201 CE when he was 87 years old.

This article aims to address the exegetic method and its standing in *Zād al-masīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr* commentary as one of Ibn Jawzī's important and valuable works and figure out his method in selecting the material. To this end, the following research questions are proposed.

- What is Ibn Jawzī's method in this commentary?
- How is the content organized in this commentary?
- How the literary, jurisprudential, theological, and traditional discussions are presented in this commentary?

Ibn Jawzī's exegetic method

In the following lines, the methods that are used by Ibn Jawzī in *Zād al-masīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr* commentary are presented. It should be noted that each of these methods is used relatively in this commentary, and no specific method can be traced as the main one.

Content organization in *Zād al-masīr* commentary

With regard to the content organization in *Zād al-masīr* commentary, it might be said that Ibn Jawzī starts the discussion with the presentation of general information about the chapter including its name, merit, revelation order, and number of the verses. He then mentions the occasion of revelation, language and its evidences, the meaning of the words, and the assertions of other exegetes about the chapter. Next, he mentions the rulings derived from the verses, the abrogating and abrogated verses, and the different readings. Finally, he expresses points to complete the interpretation of the verses (Ayāzī, 1999: 198).

When presenting others' words about the interpretation of a verse, its occasion of revelation, and its literal, rhetorical, and other meanings, he selects the best (from the his viewpoint) and tries to quote their exact words and present the meaning of the quoted statements. In line with presenting the generally accepted readings, he mentions the rare ones, too, along with the recitation rules that reading specialists use to justify them (Ibn Jawzī, 2002, vol. 1: 9).

For example, when interpreting the Qur'ān 2, before he starts his interpretation, he presents a narration about its merit, "It is narrated by Abū Ḥurayra from the Prophet (s), 'Do not make your houses as graveyards, and Satan will not enter the house of anyone who recites the Cow chapter'" (ibid: 24).

However, when interpreting the Qur'ān 36, he does not mention any narration about its merit, just refers to its Meccan/Medinan condition, and moves on to interpreting it (ibid, vol. 3: 516).

As we noted, there is no unique method running through *Zād al-masīr* commentary. While the merits of some chapters are given, for some other chapters only the Meccan/Medinan condition is pointed out; however, the general procedure is what mentioned above.

Readings in *Zād al-masīr* commentary

Ibn Jawzī pays great attention to readings in his commentary. After presenting the verse, if there is a disagreement among reciters about its reading, he gives in its generally accepted as well as rare readings, and in most cases accepts the generally accepted readings. For instance, we can refer to his interpretation of the Qur'ān 1:3 "Mālik Yawm al-Dīn" (Master of the Day of Judgment). Under the word "Mālik" (, Ruler, Possessor, Master) Ibn Jawzī mentions all related readings. Then he refers to its generally accepted reading, and accepts it with a related reason. He says that the generally accepted reading by Ibn 'Amru and the absolute majority of reciters is that "Mālik" has fatḥa after "M" and Kasra after "L" letters, so that it denotes the highest degree of praise attributed to God. He says, "Every malik is Mālik, but not every Mālik is malik" (Ibn Jawzī, 1995, vol. 1: 15). Moreover, when discussing the word "Malakayn" (the two angels) in the Qur'ān 2:102, he presents the dispute over the use of kasra or fatḥa after "L" and finally says that the best reading is the generally accepted one (i.e., with fatḥa) (Ibn Jawzī, 2002, vol. 1: 93). Another example regards the Qur'ān 3:39 where he points out the difference in reading the word "yubashshiruka" with takhfīf (alleviation) or tashdīd (germination) of letter "sh," but does not express the generally accepted reading (ibid: 280). Overall, his method about most readings is that after mentioning the various readings, he accepts the generally accepted one by mentioning his evidences.

Jurisprudential discussions in *Zād al-masīr* commentary

Ibn Jawzī tackles jurisprudential issues in his commentary, and because he is a Ḥanbalī jurisprudent, his theological orientation gravitates toward Ḥanbalī jurisprudence as one of the four branches of Sunnī Islam (i.e., Ḥanafī, Shāfi'ī, Mālikī, and Ḥanbalī) (Ayāzī, 1999: 198).

In his discussion of the Qur'ān 2:102, "They followed what the evil ones gave out (falsely) against the power of Solomon: the blasphemers Were, not Solomon, but the evil ones, teaching men Magic …," he first gives a detailed explanation of the verse and then provides the Sunnī stance – especially that of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal – about the word "magic." He says,

> Jurisprudents disagree over the decree about magicians. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal says, "A magician is considered a disbeliever because of his magic and should be killed, no matter if he has killed anyone using his magic or not." There are two views to the questions that if his repentance may be accepted or not. The first is

proposed by Shāfiʿī that says, "He is not considered a disbeliever (due to his magic) even if he kills another person using his magic." Some believe that the magician should be killed due to his perpetration of murder. Another group believes that since the murder is not deliberate, he should pay ransom. However, a magician from the People of the Book should not be killed even if he damages Muslims, and if we [Muslims] kill him, our act will be a violation of agreement, and this ruling is the same for the male and female People of the Book. Nonetheless, Abū Ḥanīfa says, "The ruling for a magician of the People of the Book is like that of a Muslim magician." He believes that killing him is obligatory if he is male; however, if the magician is female, she should not be killed, but rather, she should be imprisoned (Ibn Jawzī, 2002, vol. 1: 97).

As we mentioned, Ibn Jawzī sometimes mentions jurisprudential issues in his commentary and extensively discusses them[1].

Using syntactic, literary, and rhetorical points

In his commentary, Ibn Jawzī is greatly influenced by sources such as Ṭabarī's *Jāmiʿ al-bayan*, Ibn Qutayba's *Mushkil al-Qurʾān wa gharīb al-Qurʾān*, Farrāʾ's and Zajjāj's *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, Abū ʿAlī Fārsī's *Al-Ḥujja fī al-qirāʾāt*, Abū ʿUbayda's *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, and Māwardī's *Al-Nukat wa al-ʿuyūn*. These influences regard issues such as quoting excerpts, dividing and organizing the book sections and discussions, etc. The majority of sources used by Ibn Jawzī are the main sources of rhetoric and figurative science. Therefore, we might say that *Zād al-masīr* commentary is affected by literary and rhetorical points. For example, the following cases can be mentioned in this regard. In the verse "They would only say: 'Our eyes have been intoxicated: Nay, we have been bewitched by sorcery'" (Qurʾān :15), Ibn Jawzī examines the word "sukkirat" (intoxicated) from literary and rhetorical aspects so that its meaning gets clear and easier to understand. He writes in this regard,

> The majority of reciters recite the word "sukkirat" with germination but Ibn Kathīr recites it with alleviation. Farrāʾ says, "The meaning of these two recitations are close to each other" and Abū ʿUmar b. al-ʿUlā says, "The meaning of the word 'sukkirat' with alleviation is taken from the 'sukr' [intoxication] of wine [i.e., the intoxication of perspective is meant by the verse], just like a man who experiences intoxication [by wine] and loses his mind." Ibn Anbārī says, "This expression of the word 'sukkirat' that comes with germination means the happening of something after another thing." Abū ʿUbayda says, "The word 'sukkirat' with germination is taken from the word 'sukūr,' which means the prevention of water from flowing, i.e., eyes are prevented from seeing just like the water that is prevented from flowing." Zajjāj says, "The word 'sukkirat' with germination means happiness and joyfulness, but without germination it means confusion and perplexity" (Ibn Jawzī, 2002, vol. 2: 526).

Moreover, commenting on the Qurʾān 106:1, "Li-Īlāf Quraysh" (For the covenants (of security and safeguard) enjoyed by the Quraish), Ibn Jawzī writes about the meaning of "L," "First, it is conjunction for [connecting this verse with] the last verse of the Qurʾān 105 (Then did He make them like an empty field of stalks and straw, (of which the corn) has been eaten up)" and says that "this is the assertion of Farrāʾ and the absolute majority of scholars." He then continues, "Second, 'L' here is used for exclamation, and this is the opinion of Aʿmash and Kasāʾī. Third, its meaning is related to what comes after it (Let them adore the Lord of this House) (Qurʾān 106:3), and this is the assertion of Zajjāj and most grammarians." After

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1. Qurʾān 5:6, p. 520-523; Qurʾān 4:3; Qurʾān 62:8, p. 283.

expressing these stances, Ibn Jawzī accepts the first one and states, "These two chapters are connected and their content is one, so 'L' is a conjunction for what comes before it" (Ibn Jawzī, 2002, vol. 4: 495).

Moreover, with regard to the phrase "famā fawqahā" (not [what is] highest) in the Qur'ān 2:26, Ibn Jawzī suggests contrariness figure of speech and believes that God's intention here is the meaning of "dūnahā" ([what is] lowest) (ibid, vol. 1: 47).

Based on what we said, it can be figured out that Ibn Jawzī's commentary is replete with literary, rhetorical, and grammatical points, and he has used important and valid literary and rhetorical books.

The status of Ḥadīth in *Zād al-masīr* commentary

Ibn Jawzī's Zād al-masīr commentary is one of the Sunnī narrative commentaries dating back to the 6th century LH. The name of this commentary and its classification among narrative commentaries reveal that a large share of this work is comprised of traditions, and Ḥadīth has a key role in it, such that traditions form the main discussion of this commentary. A common theme here is mentioning a narration on the merit and the cause of revelation of a chapter before beginning its interpretation. For example, before presenting the interpretation of the Qur'ān 18, he mentions a narration on its merit from Abū Dardā that reads, "Anyone who memorizes the first ten verses of the Cave chapter [Qur'ān 18] will not be damaged by Dajjāl if he ever meets him, and anyone who memorizes its ending will have a light in the Resurrection Day" (ibid, vol. 3: 63).

Moreover, he mentions a narration after the interpretation of a verse if he feels there is need for it. In addition, after some verses, he presents a section that entails the narrations related to the given verse and its content, expresses a narration for each part of its interpretation (such as its occasion of revelation, language, merit, reading, etc.), and tries to make clear the most sound narration as much as possible related to the given verse.

For instance, we might refer to the Qur'ān 92:17, "But those most devoted to God shall be removed far from it." Ibn Jawzī believes that this verse is about Abū Bakr and introduces it as the opinion of the majority of exegetes. To support this assertion, he uses the linguistic context provided by the following verse, "Those who spend their wealth for increase in self-purification" and suggests that Abū Bakr gave his property as Alms Tax without hypocrisy. Moreover, 'Aṭā' b. Abī Riyāḥ narrates from Ibn 'Abbās from Abū Bakr that when the polytheists tortured Bilāl, Abū Bakr bought Bilāl and freed him from slavery, and this verse was revealed then, "And have in their minds no favor from anyone for which a reward is expected in return" (Qur'ān 92:19). He believes that the majority of exegetes believe in this viewpoint (Ibn Jawzī, 2002, vol. 4: 456). However, Al-Mīzān and Majma' commentaries believe that the verse is general and does not include any specific person (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1955, vol. 20: 515; Ṭabrisī, 1981, vol. 27: 131), while some commentaries deem that this verse is revealed about his highness 'Alī (a) (Riyāḍī, 1993, vol. 14: 563).

Ibn Jawzī writes about his command of traditions, "Since my most concern has been Ḥadīth and the sciences related to that era, I can judge about any tradition that is read to me to be if it is sound, acceptable, or impossible" ('Ālimzāda, 1983, vol. 3: 274). However, these words are completely different from the judgment of Dhahabī, Suyūṭī, and others. Dhahabī writes in this regard, "Ibn Jawzī is not considered a memorizer in terms of Ḥadīth art, but he can be called a memorizer due to his vast knowledge of traditions and compiling them" (Dhahabī, 2011, vol. 4: 342). From Ibn Jawzī's perspective, when a transmitter is accused of being a liar in the chain of transmission of a narration, there remain no robust pillar for that narration tent, and the agreement with the Islamic principles and agreement and similarity to the sound narrations lose their value and status. In such cases, it seems that Ibn Jawzī allows

no second thought to the meaning of the tradition (Fallāḥpūr, 2000, vol. 8: 92). It is because of this that Ibn Jawzī rules traditions such as "Anyone who says prayers a lot during the night will be beautiful during the day" (Ibn Jawzī, 1966, vol. 2: 410) as fabricated. Of course, from the viewpoint of Ibn Jawzī, the existence of an accused or even unknown transmitter is enough to rule a tradition as fabricated and the trustworthiness of other transmitters is totally invalid and ineffective. This point is clear in some of his criticisms (ibid: 240).

In one classification, Ibn Jawzī divides traditions into six groups.

1. Traditions that are unanimously agreed upon as sound. The first person to extract the sound traditions is Bukhārī, followed by Muslim.
2. Traditions that are presented by only Bukhārī or Muslim and are deemed as sound by the majority of tradition scholars.
3. Traditions that are deemed as sound by one of the two great scholars (Bukhārī and Muslim) and these relate to the traditions narrated by both of them. These are few in number.
4. Weak traditions that can be put into practice.
5. Traditions that are very weak and their statuses are different in the eyes of different scholars.
6. Traditions that are definitely fabricated, impossible, and untrue (ibid, vol. 1: 202).

Ibn Jawzī writes,

> When tackling the first four types, we feel tranquil. However, I have compiled most of the fifth type traditions in the book *Al-'Ilal al-mutanāhiya fī al-aḥādīth al-wāhiya*. I have presented part of the content and have left out another part due to their length or disagreeableness of their statements (ibid: 14).

With regard to fabricated traditions, Ibn Jawzī expresses the types of transmitters whose traditions entail untruth and fabrication (ibid: 14-24) and curses them (ibid: 23-24). He then says, "The mere refusal of the heart to accept the words of a person is enough for [designating him as] a liar."

Therefore, we might say that Ibn Jawzī's criterion in Ḥadīth criticism is that he either trusts or distrusts them. Whenever a narration transmitter in a chain of transmission is not trustable or is accused of fabrication or untruthfulness, he deems the traditions as totally invalid. All Ibn Jawzī's effort is to defame and invalidate the transmitter. Ibn Jawzī's criteria are the existence or non-existence of a tradition in one of the valid books, its luminousness and peacefulness or darkness, repulsiveness, and disagreeableness, and its fictitiousness or soundness. He says,

> When you came across a tradition not included in Muslims' Ḥadīth collections such as Mālik's *Mu'aṭā*, Aḥmad's *Musnad*, Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Abī Dāwūd's *Sunan*, etc., be careful. If you found a tradition similar to it among the sound and good traditions, it is fine. However, if you doubted them and found them disagreeing with principles, pay attention to their chains of transmission and search for the conditions of their transmitters in our book (*Al-Ḍu'afā' wa al-matrūkīn*) to find the reason for the problem with the transmitter (ibid: 60).

He says in another occasion, "Avoid listening to a tradition from a person who is a liar, is accused of lying, or does not know what he transmits." He then supports his stance with two traditions,

A) "Whenever you were presented with a tradition that you deem as repulsive, do not accept it, because I do not say and I am not into disagreeable statements."
B) "Whenever you hear a tradition from me that your hearts like it and show agreement with it and you find yourself and your thought close to it, I am closer to it than you are. [However] whenever you hear a tradition that your heart finds as repulsive, your soul hates it, and you find yourself far from it, know that I am farther to that statement than you are."

Moreover, he narrates from Rabī' b. Khuthaym that tradition – like the day – has a light that makes it identifiable and a darkness like that of night that makes it disagreeable (ibid: 61-62).

Of course, Ibn Jawzī tries to enlarge his book so much that he makes flagrant mistakes about the criticism of traditions on usury, fornication, pederasty, etc. In the section "The worseness of usury than fornication," he mentions 11 traditions in which usury is introduced as worse than fornication. He deems all of them as fabricated due to his attribution of faults to the transmitters (ibid: 153-156).

For instance, with regard to one tradition, Ibn Jawzī writes, "This fabricated tradition has not been issued by the Prophet of Allāh" and accuses Abāṣalt Ḥirawī of forging this tradition.

In most cases of his criticism of chains of transmission, he relies on the study of narrators proposed by Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Ḥanīfa, Yaḥyā' b. Muʿīn, Ibn Ḥārith, Abū Ḥātam, Nasā'ī, Dār Quṭnī, etc., and founds his judgments based on their suggestion of some transmitters as weak. In some other cases, he refers to the problems of chain of transmission such as a solitary transmitter, and this way calls a given tradition as fabricated. For example, in one instance he says, "This tradition has a solitary chain of transmission, where the only transmitter is Ḥassān b. Thābit" (ʿĀlimzāda, 1983, vol. 3: 272).

In his perspective, no sound virtue has been narrated by the heretics. He divides heretics to three groups and says, "None of them want to transmit the sound traditions."

Ibn Jawzī believes that the textual criticism targets three problems.

1. Irrationality of the tradition content

In this case, Ibn Jawzī rules for the fictitiousness of a tradition based on the impossibility or irrationality of its content. For example, he says about a tradition in which bizarre qualities are mentioned for the Paradise, "It is even clear for an unknowing child that this tradition is fabricated" (Ibn Jawzī, 1966, vol. 3: 26), or about the tradition "Do not eat meat," he says "And this is impossible" (ibid: 132). He sometimes concludes the fictitiousness of a tradition based on the conflict of its content with doctrinal Islamic beliefs. For instance, it is suggested in a tradition that God talked with Prophet Moses (a) through Hebrew language. Prophet Moses (s) asked, "Who is this Hebrew?" God answers, "I am God." Ibn Jawzī says about this tradition, "This tradition is unsound, because God's Speech is not similar to the speech of the created."

2. Disagreement of a tradition with the Qur'ān and the sunna

Disagreement with the Qur'ān: for example, after rejecting that the Prophet of Islam (s) met Prophet Khiḍr (s) or another prophet, Ibn Jawzī says, "The issuance of all narrations about his highness Khiḍr (s) is imaginary … the Sublime God said, 'We granted not to any man before thee permanent life'" (ibid: 317).

Disagreement with other traditions: For example, about the narration "God created Ādam from stinky mud, and processed it with the Paradise water …" Ibn Jawzī says, "The Prophet of Allāh (s) truly said, 'The Sublime God created Ādam from a sum of soil He grasped from the whole earth'" (ibid: 302). Moreover, rejecting the Radd al-Shams tradition, Ibn Jawzī says, "The sun was not imprisoned for anyone other than Joshua" (Ibid, vol. 2: 133).

3. Arguing for the repulsiveness of the statements and the implausibility of the issuance of suchlike statements from the Prophet (s)

All in all, it can be said that Ibn Jawzī's mistakes in tradition criticism include unsound and questionable backings, uncharacteristic invalidations, wrong presuppositions, bias, and

lenience toward mentioning fabricated narrations and superstitious stories that support the transmitter's own denomination.

The status of Ahl al-Bayt's narrations in Ibn Jawzī's commentary

With regard to the narrations related to Ahl al-Bayt, Ibn Jawzī acts as a moderate Sunnī exegete, and mentions narrations from his highness ʿAlī and other narrations about him and his virtues with no doubt and bias. However, he does so because from the Sunnī viewpoint, the statements of the Prophet (s) and his Companions are authoritative and are called Ḥadīth (tradition). In this part, we present some points that he has mentioned about his highness ʿAlī and his virtues.

For instance, look at the verse "Only Allāh is your Walī and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay the poor-rate while they bow" (Qurʾān 5:55). Ibn Jawzī gives in two possibilities about the clause "pay the poor-rate while they bow": the occasion of revelation of the verse that was when his highness ʿAlī (a) paid charity while saying prayers, and the general importance of paying the poor-rate and the bowing down act in the prayers (Ibn Jawzī, 2002, vol. 1: 561).

Another example is "They feed the destitute, orphans, and captives for the love of God …" (Qurʾān 76:8). Ibn Jawzī suggests that the verse is either about Abī al-Daḥdāḥ or the charitable payments made by his highness ʿAlī (a) to the destitute, orphans, and captives (and for the latter gives in a detailed account along with its chain of transmission), which shows Ibn Jawzī's unbiased view.

Theology in Ibn Jawzī's commentary and statements

Ibn Jawzī says about theology,

> Nothing is more detrimental to the laypeople than theology. In the same way a child is forbidden from going to the banks of a river due to the concern that he might be drowned, people should be prevented from hearing theological issues and being drowned in them. It is sufficient for the laypeople to believe in God, His angels, the Divine Scriptures, prophets, and the Resurrection Day, believe in what has been believed by the previous people, and know that the Qurʾān is the Speech of God and is created. "Firmly established on the throne" is true, but its quality is unknown to us. The Prophet of Allāh only made it incumbent upon people to have faith, and the Companions have never talked about the substances and phenomena. Therefore, anyone who dies while he follows their path dies as a believer and away from blameworthy innovation. [However,] one who does not know swimming but goes beyond the banks will be definitely drowned" (Ibn Jawzī, n.d.: 459-460).

Oration in *Zād al-masīr* commentary

Ibn Jawzī's *Zād al-masīr* commentary is a noteworthy narrative commentary that uses an oration-based method. Expressing that he is an intense critic of fabricated traditions, Ibn Jawzī talks as a perfect orator in *Zād al-masīr*, gives in numerous stories without much accuracy inspections, and seemingly looks only for the oratory values of those stories. Under any verse and chapter, he provides the existing related statements and traditions, while his speech is beautiful and sweet literarily and rhetorically. He also pays great attention to rhetorical and literary points, abrogating and abrogated verses, differences in readings, etc. (Ibn Jawzī, 2002, vol. 1: 10). In his fairly lengthy book *Al-Mawḍūʿāt*, Ibn Jawzī criticizes numerous Sunnī

narrations, which has brought about Sunnī scholars' negative reactions (Maʿmūrī, n.d., vol. 8: 373).

Intellect and argumentation in Ibn Jawzī's exegetic thoughts

The ability to accept or reject a theory is one of the human traits. Based on his intellect and wisdom, the human examines the accuracy of a theory and then either accepts or rejects it. In other words, the real acceptance or rejection of a theory depends on the intellect and wisdom, and without reliance on the intellect, neither ruling for accuracy or falsity nor accepting or rejecting issues is logically worthwhile.

One of the exegetic qualities of Ibn Jawzī is using intellect and argumentation for the clarification of his points. Ibn Jawzī starts his words in the book *Talbīs Iblīs* by praising the intellect as the biggest grace bestowed by God upon the human, because the intellect is the instrument for gaining knowledge about God. Ibn Jawzī likens Sharīʿa to the sun and the intellect as the eye, and believes that when the human eye is sound and open, he can see the sunlight clearly (Ibn Jawzī, 2007, vol. 2: 123).

Ibn Jawzī uses the sound intellect and logical argumentation in interpretation, and in some cases, after mentioning quotations in his interpretation of verses, he gives in the theory that he deems as right along with its evidences and argumentation; by doing so, he tries to make his point understood in a better and more accurate manner. The following examples can be noted in this regard.

At the beginning of his interpretation of the Qurʾān 76, Ibn Jawzī presents an evidence-based argumentation and says,

> There are three theories about the Hal Atāʾ chapter. First, this chapter is Medinan, as the absolute majority of scholars – such as Mujāhid and Qatāda – believe. Second, this chapter is Meccan, [as] Ibn Yasār, Muqātil, and Ibn Abbās narration [assert]. Third, this chapter is both Meccan and Medinan. There are two stances to this Meccan-Medinan state: a) one verse of it is Meccan and the other verses are Medinan, b) its beginning is Medinan and its ending is Meccan." (Ibn Jawzī, 2002, vol. 4: 374)

Then he notes that he tends to the absolute majority stance that takes the chapter to be Medinan.

Ibn Jawzī writes about the boundaries of intellect, "The intellect should be used to avoid intellect." He then explains,

> Whenever we want to know God through intellect, our knowledge in the first step leads to emotions and we fall for anthropomorphism. Then, "avoiding intellect by intellect" means that we should pay attention to the fact that He is not corporeal and is not similar to any phenomenon. Sometimes the wise human looks at the Glorified God and finds things that are incongruent with intellect, such as pains, killing animals, the domination of God's Saints by their enemies, the difficulties faced by the righteous, etc., which cannot be related to any wisdom by the intellect that has got used to habits. "Avoiding intellect by intellect" in this case is to ask 'Isn't it proved that God is and the Ruler and Wise and does not do anything without a purpose?' With this intellectual review, it gets clear that His Wisdom is not known to us in suchlike issues. Therefore, we should submit to the fact that He is Wise. The opposition of many people and the opinion of many notable figures – the first of whom was the Devil – is of this essence, and this way they fall in the aberration trap. The story of Khiḍr and Moses (a) in the noble Qurʾān (Qurʾān 18:18, 68, 78) regards this point, i.e., avoiding intellect by intellect (Ibn Jawzī, 1987: 491-492).

Being influenced by the preceding commentaries and influencing the succeeding commentaries

Zād al-masīr commentary is an exegetic work that has been greatly influenced by the commentaries and other sources from which it quotes. The main sources that Ibn Jawzī has used for quotation are Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-bayan*, Ibn Qutayba's *Mushkil al-Qur'ān wa gharīb al-Qur'ān*, Farrā's and Zajjāj's *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, Abū 'Alī Fārsī's *Al-Ḥujja fī al-qirā'āt*, Abū 'Ubayda's *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, and Māwardī's *Al-Nukat wa al-'uyūn*. The influences are about issues such as quoting content, dividing and organizing the book sections and discussions, etc.

With regard to qur'ānic language, he quotes content from Farāhīdī, Khalīl b. Aḥmad, Ibn Qutayba and Abū 'Ubaydā, in grammar from Farrā', Zajjāj, Akhfash, Muḥammad b. Qāsim Naḥwī, and Kasā'ī, and in reading from 'Āṣim.

If we have a glance at *Zād al-masīr* commentary, we can figure out the extent to which Ibn Jawzī has been affected by the language and rhetoric books before himself. Have a look at the following example.

In the Qur'ān 104:1 "Waylun li-kulli humazatin lumaza" (Woe to every (kind of) scandal-monger and-backbiter), he presents others' opinions about the word "lumaza" (backbiter) that shows the depth of his interest and belief in those books. Of course, this adds to the value of his commentary and makes it richer. In this commentary, he asserts that he has taken the words from the mentioned sources so that there happen no faulty understanding. In some occasions, he only mentions others' statements, while in other places he first presents others' statements and then introduces one as preferable (Ibn Jawzī, 2002, vol. 4: 489).

The effectiveness of this commentary on the subsequent exegetic works is less than the effects of the preceding commentaries on it. The reason might be that the author of this commentary in most cases only mentions the statements of the previous authors, and infrequently puts forth his own stance definitively or by argumentation and evidence. As a result, it has received less attention by the subsequent exegetes. Nonetheless, *Zād al-masīr* commentary is one of the best Sunnī commentaries, and whatever it expresses is accompanied by evidences; this has made his work a worthwhile one. This commentary is an old one in terms of time and a superior exegetic work from the literary and theological stances, as it clarifies the miraculous aspects of the noble Qur'ān. All in all, the greatest effect of this commentary has been on the sources and commentaries that have addressed the literary and rhetorical dimensions of the Qur'ān.

The status of Ibn Jawzī's *Zād al-masīr* commentary

Due to its interesting content and its use of robust sources, *Zād al-masīr* commentary has always had a high status among people.

A) The status of Zād al-masīr commentary among Sunnīs

Ibn Jawzī enjoys a high status among Sunnīs due to his numerous useful works such that most notable Sunnī exegetes after him have referred to his commentary and have used his valuable works. Nonetheless, Ibn Jawzī's commentary has remained unknown to some extent at the same time. The reason might be that Ibn Jawzī's method in his commentary is quoting the opinions of other people; he does not usually provide his own independent stances, but rather, compiles various people's opinions along with their evidences. It might be due to this reason that this commentary has not been extensively used.

B) The status of Zād al-masīr commentary among Shī'as

Ibn Jawzī is fairly popular among Shī'as. The positive points attributed by Ibn Jawzī to Ahl al-Bayt such as mentioning the virtues of Imām 'Alī (a) (ibid: 284) and Lady Fāṭima (s) (ibid: 278), presenting narrations that praise Imām Ḥusayn (a), and offering traditions by some Infallible Imāms have caused some Shī'a figures to talk about the possibility of Ibn Jawzī being a Shī'a. Khānsārī writes, "It is not implausible that Ibn Jawzī has been a Shī'a but has been pretending to be a Sunnī due to the observation of expediency." He then gives in a set of reasons for his claim. For example, once when he was lecturing, he mentioned the "Radd al-Shams" narration about Imām 'Alī (a) (Khānsārī, 2002, vol. 5: 38).

However, we might say in response that what is figured out from his commentary is that Ibn Jawzī is a Sunnī and follows Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, one of the four Imāms of Sunnīs. In some occasions in his commentary, he refers to this issue, and his mentioning of Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal as his Imām makes it clear that he has been undoubtedly a Sunnī and a follower of Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (Ibn Jawzī, 2002, vol. 1: 8).

However, it is evident from his writings and opinions that he has been away from extremism and has tried to express facts in his commentary. For example, in the interpretation of the verse "Only Allāh is your Walī and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay the poor-rate while they bow" (Qur'ān 5:55), he expresses all theories and narrations related to this verse. One of these narrations takes the verse about his highness 'Alī (a), and Ibn Jawzī mentions it without any bias along with its chain of transmission (ibid: 560). His presentation of suchlike narrations and his avoidance of any bias has made him and his commentary popular among Shī'as and a pure scientific figure.

Conclusion

Zād al-masīr commentary is a narrative and oration-based Sunnī commentary that is written by Ibn Jawzī in the 6th century LH. The qualities of this commentary are paying attention to language, rhetoric, abrogating and abrogated verses, generally-accepted and rare readings, and related narrations (with designating some narrations as preferable from time to time). This commentary is fairly popular among both Sunnīs and Shī'as. The reason is that in this commentary, Ibn Jawzī tries to express the reality and stay away from any bias; this has increased the value of his work. When quoting others in this commentary, he observes moral responsibility and expresses different opinions, but he does not provide his own opinions extensively. As a result, his commentary has not grabbed the attention of his succeeding exegetes so much, although different uses have been made from his commentary. All in all, Ibn Jawzī's commentary has received attention in recent centuries.

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